



Exposing the Filipino “*Matapobre*” Hospitality Mindset: A Reversal of the Internalized Poverty Stigma through the Lens of Amartya Sen’s Capability Approach

Roseanette G. Paler

Mindanao State University – Iligan Institute of Technology

Email: roseanette.paler@g.msuit.edu.ph

Abstract

The stigma towards the poor has been a long-standing problem in society. The practices of people through social interactions can be one of the many practices that contribute to the existing stigma of poverty, thus, this could be one of the many reasons why humanistic development and a progressive society seem like far-fetched ideas with the constantly widening gap of social classes and practices that perpetuates to the problem and the stigma of poverty. Filipino hospitality is a trait commonly practiced by Filipinos as a way of showing respect and hospitality to those people they look up to or hold in high regard. It is one of the cultures of Filipinos that they take pride in, and most foreign visitors to the country vocally express their gratitude and amazement at how warm and welcoming Filipinos are towards them. On the other hand, there is a practice of hospitality in selective treatment to people whom they see as equal or “lesser beings” than themselves, who will not get the same level of accommodation, warm treatment, respect, and hospitality. This latter kind of hospitality is being referred to here as “matapobre” hospitality. It is the selective hospitable treatment of people for those they do not seem to perceive with high regard. This practice is common in establishments, and how staff and clerks treat their customers depends on how wealthy they look. This can also be noticed even in Filipino households, where the level of hospitality and respect can be

seen depending on which utensils they are allowed to use. Thus, this selective treatment of hospitality and warm welcoming adds up as a factor to the constantly widening gap of social classes in society. While Filipino hospitality may come off on a good note most of the time, and it is what Filipinos are known for, especially by foreign visitors, which helps boost tourism in the country, “matapobre” hospitality is a cultural problem among Filipinos that has often been overlooked. This underlying problem goes unnoticed because it has already become a common practice. The practice of “*matapobre*” hospitality perpetuates the stigma of poverty and is a subconscious way of normalizing inequality, for it is a practice of an internalized stigma, which will be the focus of this paper. This mentality among Filipinos is detrimental to their human development because when people perceive themselves as inferior and act superior towards others in society, it creates a setback to their development. Thus, to alleviate this mentality among Filipinos, Amartya Sen’s theory in the Capability Approach is being used. Amartya Sen highlighted in his work that when one’s capabilities are met, one can access freedom, which leads to multiple opportunities that improve one’s quality of life and social relationships.

Keywords: Amartya Sen, Capability Approach, hospitality, *matapobre*

Introduction

Filipinos are hospitable by nature, tracing back to our ancestors, being hospitable has been deeply ingrained in our culture and mentality. Filipino hospitality is a trait that has been passed down through generations in the culture of Filipinos, and it is the act of being accommodating and welcoming to guests and visitors, or other people, in general, to make them feel welcomed and respected.¹ The Filipino hospitality mindset can be traced back to the pre-Hispanic era when our ancestors treated the Malays with utmost respect by serving them special dinners for their enjoyment and to make them feel accommodated and welcomed.² Thus, Filipinos are naturally

¹ Jefbeck Eje, “11 Reasons Why Filipino Hospitality Is the Best in The World”, *Ling*, May 23, 2024. <https://ling-app.com/fil/filipino-hospitality/>

² “Filipino Hospitality: An Asset or Weakness?”

hospitable because even before the influence of our colonizers, the trait of hospitality was practiced by our ancestors. However, as much as it is a good trait to make others feel welcomed and accommodated in our own space, when Filipinos overdo the trait of being hospitable, it can also lead to something detrimental. The same trait that we make others feel with utmost regard was also the same trait that enslaved us for centuries by the Spaniards, because of how our ancestors, being naturally hospitable as they are, thought that the Spaniards were just mere visitors looking for spices in the country.³

Although we have broken the chains of oppression and enslavement from our colonizers, the hospitable mentality is still an enslavement to us even in the present times. When Filipinos treat guests or foreigners, they tend to view them with high regard and overdo things so they feel warm and welcome in our place, and most of the time, they tend to neglect their well-being by not doing their usual everyday things.⁴ In this act, we let others overstep our boundaries because we think so highly of them as visitors or foreigners. Though it can be good for the country's tourism, doing things more than usual for others without considering our boundaries can no longer be an act of service and is a form of enslavement that we are not aware of.⁵

Similarly, "*matapobre*" hospitality is not much different from the act of hospitality commonly practiced among Filipinos. The "*matapobre*" mentality is commonly experienced in establishments or institutions wherein the people who work there are selective with the people whom they entertain based on how they dress.⁶ This treatment is when the sales lady or clerks in certain establishments tend to give special treatment to people whom they think are rich, while not paying much attention to those they observe as not wealthy enough based on their physical appearance – it is like a form of hospitality. However, such hospitality is selective. Consequently, the "*matapobre*" hospitality corresponds to the trait of being accommodating, welcoming, and respectful to other people except those whom they

<https://pinoytimatetraditions.wordpress.com/2017/01/22/filipino-hospitality-an-asset-or-weakness/>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Michael L. Tan, "*Matapobre* Hospitality", *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, October 4, 2017. <https://opinion.inquirer.net/107624/matapobre-hospitality>

view as inferior to them.⁷ For instance, celebrating fiestas is a Filipino tradition that dates back to pre-colonial times and has now a mixture of colonial and religious influences after the Spanish influences, which both signify communal spirit and foster inclusivity and unity within the people in the community as everyone celebrates it together with festivity.⁸ However, it is evident nowadays that during fiestas, Filipino families are only selective about the people that they invite into their homes, undermining the true essence of what fiestas should be, which is people coming together to celebrate, like how it was practiced by our ancestors. Although the act of hospitality can already have enough negative effects when it is overdone, the “*matapobre*” hospitality has no distinction to it because having such a mentality is not only detrimental to other people’s development as human beings but can also affect human development of an individual because the ideology manifests an internalized stigma of poverty that perpetuates to the existing stigma of such. Thus, “*matapobre*” hospitality is a stigma for poor people that has been internalized among Filipinos because of the practice of hospitality, in which this study ought to determine that having the “*matapobre*” hospitality mindset as Filipinos can be a hindrance and detrimental to the Filipino people’s human development.

Discrimination may come in different forms, like the selective hospitality based on people’s appearance as a judgment of their socioeconomic status. According to social psychologists, discrimination is often linked to prejudice and stereotype, wherein prejudice is an unjustifiable negative action against certain people or groups, and the latter pertains to the overgeneralized idea of a certain group, making it resistant to change in perceptions.⁹ While the common definition of discrimination is the irrational and unjustifiable negative treatment towards others, all three have one thing in common: people treat others negatively based on baseless reasons.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Chloe, “Understanding the Rich Traditions Behind the Filipino Barrio Fiesta,” *Moments Log*, September 2024, <https://www.momentslog.com/culture/understanding-the-rich-traditions-behind-the-filipino-barrio-fiesta>.

⁹ Ananthi Al Ramiah, et. al., “The social psychology of discrimination: theory, measurement and consequences,” Chapter 5, in *Making Equality Count*, edited by Laurence Bond, Frances McGinnity, and Helen Russell. (Ireland: The Liffey Press, January 2010), 84-112.

The practice of discrimination can be classified into two types: direct discrimination towards other people and subtle, unconscious, or automatic discrimination.¹⁰ These classifications can be manifested through verbal and non-verbal cues, avoidance of contact approaches, and denying them equal treatment and opportunities.¹¹ The selective hospitality of Filipinos towards others, in fiestas or the unequal treatment in establishments by staff and clerks, is often linked to classism prejudices or stereotypes in a subtle, unconscious way, or automatic discrimination because of their face value, often linked to their socio-economic class. These socioeconomic disparities are caused by systemic prejudice, and social class shapes their attitudes and self-respect, which are often manifested in social hierarchies.¹² The research shows that those people who are in the higher part of the socioeconomic bracket are more likely to be confident or, to an extent, narcissistic than those who are in the lower part of the socioeconomic stratum.¹³ What this research shows is that disparities of socioeconomic class can have different manifestations, just like the practice of “*matapobre*” hospitality, examining why this remains an existing problem. This practice is detrimental to the human development of Filipinos. Thus, this paper will examine this problem by using Amartya Sen’s Capability Approach, focusing on his core concepts of freedom, opportunity, and equality to have a quality of life.

Amartya Sen’s Capability Approach

This paper aims to assess the Filipino “*matapobre*” hospitality mindset as a mentality of perpetuating the stigma of poverty that can be detrimental to one’s human development. This study focuses on analyzing how this mentality can be alleviated using Amartya Sen’s Theory of Capability Approach. Thus, this paper aims to address these questions: (1) What is the Filipino “*matapobre*” hospitality mindset, and how is it detrimental to one’s human development? (2) What is Amartya Sen’s Theory of Capability Approach? (3) How does Amartya

¹⁰ Ibid., 85.

¹¹ Ibid., 85.

¹² Peter Belmi, “The Social Advantage of Miscalibrated Individuals: The Relationship Between Social Class and Overconfidence and Its Implications for Class-Based Inequality”, American Psychological Association, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. (Interpersonal Relations and Group Processes, 2020), 254.

¹³ Ibid., 255.

Sen’s Theory of Capability Approach alleviate the Filipino “*matapobre*” hospitality mindset?

Amartya Sen’s Capability Approach ought to examine how the quality of life can be improved through freedom, opportunity, and equality to have the quality of life that people have the right to acquire. According to Sen in his Capability Approach, it is vital for human beings to have the capability, for it is essential to their well-being and for them to acquire more opportunities that allow them to function as members of society.¹⁴ Sen calls this the act of *functioning*; it is when the basic needs of a human being are met, such as proper nutrition, access to a person’s medical rights, and education, as well as being politically aware and being able to practice respect for oneself and other people.¹⁵ As members of society, these needs should be met to have the quality of life that a person must have.

Consequently, for Sen, poverty is the deprivation of capabilities that allow a person to achieve the life that they want.¹⁶ Thus, the capabilities of people to achieve various opportunities and to have a quality of life are based upon their freedom.¹⁷ For Amartya Sen, freedom equates to opportunities, and when people in society have freedom, they have access to different opportunities to lead the life that they want.¹⁸ Thus, freedom is vital for a person’s needs to be met and to achieve great things as an individual, because a person who is uneducated and poor cannot lead a free life wherein he/she is capable of achieving the things that he/she want to do.¹⁹ “*Freedoms are not only the primary ends of development, they are also among its principal means.*”²⁰ Thus, what Amartya Sen wants to achieve in the Capability Approach is that, regardless of the socio-economic status of a person, the standard of quality of life must be based upon their capability or capacity to achieve things freely.²¹

¹⁴ John M. Alexander, *Capability and Social Justice: The Political Philosophy of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum*, Routledge, 2016, 56.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁹ John M. Alexander, *Capability and Social Justice: The Political Philosophy of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum*, 2016, 4.

²⁰ Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 2000), 10.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

By assessing the “*matapobre*” hospitality mindset of Filipinos as to how it was ingrained deeply in the Filipino culture, which is commonly experienced by how they treat other individuals, this paper ought to determine how detrimental it is to have this mentality in our human development. Thus, through the assessment of the risk of the “*matapobre*” mentality to the human development of Filipinos, I ought to examine the problem through the lens of Amartya Sen’s concepts in the Capability Approach. Although Filipinos are hospitable in nature, and it is the trait that we Filipinos are commonly known for, the “*matapobre*” hospitality trait of Filipinos is when the hospitable trait is practiced selectively. With that, it creates a gap with other people or even with their fellow Filipinos, resulting in unequal treatment among others. This study focuses on how this *matapobre* hospitality can be alleviated or reformed by using Amartya Sen’s Capability Approach, which would be vital to the human development of Filipinos as a race and as individuals. The significance of the study lies in whether the Filipino “*matapobre*” hospitality mindset can be alleviated using Amartya Sen’s Capability Approach.

This study focuses on the “*matapobre*” hospitality mindset of Filipinos and how it puts the human development of people in society and individuals at risk. The “*matapobre*” hospitality is when hospitality is practiced selectively, thus treating others with high regard and hospitality, while treating others the opposite way. Either way, the way a person treats other people is based on their socioeconomic status. By limiting the scope of this paper to the aspect of the “*matapobre*” hospitality mindset of Filipinos, I ought to examine the problem through the lens of Amartya Sen’s theory of Capability Approach and how it can alleviate this type of mindset in Filipinos which is detrimental to their human development, and other factors that arise from the idea of “*matapobre*” hospitality mindset of Filipinos is beyond the scope of this paper. Thus, the ideas and resources gathered will be analyzed using hypothetical analyses. The framework used in this paper will help support and validate the arguments in the further parts of this paper and will help in analyzing the paper objectively.

The pieces of literature provided in this part of the paper delve into the core of the “*matapobre*” hospitality mindset of Filipinos. As Filipinos are naturally hospitable, this trait can put the human development of people in society at immense risk when it is practiced

in a way that it should not be, such as the selective treatment of hospitality to other people based on their socio-economic status in what we call “*matapobre*” hospitality. The works of literature gathered will help in understanding the “*matapobre*” hospitality mindset of Filipinos and how this can affect their human development.

The Intrinsic Filipino Hospitality

In the study conducted by Carol King on his concept of Private Hospitality, dating back to ancient times when traveling and expeditions were dangerous, some towns and societies allowed the travelers to take shelter in their homes by providing them with their physiological needs, comfort, and making them feel welcomed and safe.²² Thus, hospitality is a human nature and is practiced differently depending on how a society practices it. Correspondingly, Filipino hospitality is the trait of being welcoming and accommodating to other people, even if it means compromising their comfort for the sake of pleasing the guests by exerting efforts to make them feel comfortable and welcomed in their own space.²³ This trait of Filipinos as being hospitable was practiced even in the days of the pre-colonial era, wherein Spaniards had taken it as an advantage to colonize the Philippines for centuries because of how naive our ancestors were.²⁴ This clearly shows that Filipinos are naturally hospitable and the trait was not influenced by our colonizers. Presently, this is practiced in promoting tourism by greeting guests and foreigners with the utmost respect and high regard, and Filipinos are known to the world for being hospitable.²⁵ The hospitable trait of Filipino has been a generational cultural practices, where mostly foreign visitors acknowledge Filipinos being intrinsically kind to anyone– may it be their welcoming nature, starting casual conversations in the street

²² Carol King, “What is hospitality?” *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, vol 14, 1995, 219-234.

²³ Admin of Bugtong, “Hospitality of Filipinos – The Stories Behind Filipino Hospitality”, *Bugtong*, November 24, 2021, <https://bugtong.info/hospitality-of-filipino-the-stories-behind-filipino-hospitality/>

²⁴ “Filipino Hospitality: An Asset or Weakness?”, <https://pinoytimatraditions.wordpress.com/2017/01/22/filipino-hospitality-an-asset-or-weakness/>

²⁵ Jefbeck Eje, “11 Reasons Why Filipino Hospitality Is the Best in the World”, February 27, 2023. <https://ling-app.com/fil/filipino-hospitality/>

with random foreign visitors and willing to offer a helping hand to someone in need, going beyond their ways to help someone lost, or as simple as warm smiles that makes people feel welcomed. Undoubtedly, Filipinos are intrinsically hospitable, especially to foreign visitors to the country. The inherent humanistic trait of Filipinos is practiced worldwide in wherever part of the world where there are Filipino communities. Foreigners can attest to the warmth and friendliness of Filipinos, even in their own country, where hospitality is not limited only to the Philippines.²⁶ Such practices are often linked to how overseas Filipino workers are welcoming to other Filipinos (*kabayan, kababayan*); they welcome other races too and make them feel a sense of belonging in each other's company.

Consequently, Filipinos being hospitable dates back to the era of pre-colonialism, when our ancestors welcomed the Malays with a warm welcome by giving them special treatment with the best food, and as a means of appreciation for their presence.²⁷ It may seem that hospitality is a Filipino's natural trait because it was highly practiced back in the pre-Hispanic era by our ancestors as a way to welcome foreign guests into the country, and not influenced by colonial ideology. However, it was the same hospitality traits of Filipinos that have put the country into three long centuries of enslavement, oppression, and colonization because the Spaniards had taken advantage of the innocence and welcoming nature of Filipinos.²⁸ Nonetheless, the country's long history of enslavement had not been a hindrance for Filipinos to be naturally hospitable. Even in this time of modernity, hospitality is still being practiced in society; thus, Filipino hospitality has been deeply ingrained in the culture of Filipinos and has been passed down from one generation to another. However, Filipinos fail to recognize the idea that practicing hospitality still has its downside and can still be a form of modern-day enslavement.²⁹

²⁶ Andrea Chloe Wong, "What Filipinos Can Be Proud Of", Philippine Daily Inquirer, July 29, 2012. <https://globalnation.inquirer.net/45875/what-filipinos-can-be-proud-of>.

²⁷"Filipino Hospitality: An Asset or Weakness?", <https://pinoytimatetraditions.wordpress.com/2017/01/22/filipino-hospitality-an-asset-or-weakness/>

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

Delving Into the Nuance of Hospitality and *Matapobre* Hospitality as a Practice

To quote Michael L. Tan, “A janitor or a chancellor deserves the same treatment, and never try to figure out who they are by what they’re wearing.”³⁰ Filipinos claim to be hospitable people, yet it is undeniable that this practice of hospitality is shown selectively.³¹ “*Matapobre*” hospitality is the practice of hospitality towards select people whom people think of as equal and superior.³² This is when socioeconomic status plays a role in how people think less of some people and think highly of others, and treat people with hospitality depending on how they see them. The Filipinos have a special way of entertaining their guests at home to make them feel warmly welcomed. As stated by Kyle Harvey, shared in his blog, whenever there are guests or visitors in their house, they bring out the best utensils; however, if it is only their relatives, they would only let them use their second-best utensils, and if it is someone from the family only the ordinary silverware.³³ This clearly shows the differences between how Filipinos treat their guests depending on how they view them. However, this may often be glorified and viewed as harmless because of how this problem has been overlooked culturally. This attitude has been normalized for a long period of time and most people are practicing it. People may seem to accept it as is due to the initial idea of what hospitality should look like. This is by being hospitable only to foreign visitors or those whom people perceive as rich, which seemingly does not inflict direct harm.

Consequently, the seemingly hierarchical treatment of guests in Filipino households is also present in various aspects. The “*matapobre*” hospitality is a kind of hospitality with an exception to the poor or when people see them as “lesser beings” than they are, based on socio-economic status.³⁴ This is why it is usually common in

³⁰ Michael L. Tan, “*Matapobre* Hospitality”, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, October 4, 2017, <https://opinion.inquirer.net/107624/matapobre-hospitality>

³¹ Tan, “*Matapobre* Hospitality,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 2017.

³² *Ibid*.

³³ Kyle Harvey, “How Filipinos Entertain Their Guests”, Medium, January 9, 2019, https://medium.com/@kyleharvey_72499/how-filipinos-entertain-their-guests-5fa78d2fd71e

³⁴ “Michael L. Tan, “*Matapobre* Hospitality”, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, October 4, 2017, <https://opinion.inquirer.net/107624/matapobre-hospitality>

institutions or establishments where clerks have selective treatment of their customers only when they view them as wealthy, solely based on how they present themselves, mostly in fashion statements.³⁵ Clerks in establishments judge people on what they can afford based on how their look of wearing branded items. While this may come off as a marketing strategy, this is an irony to the hospitality culture that Filipinos would claim to be. This perpetuates the stigma of poverty. Thus, hospitality is not only how Filipinos treat people just because they want to or it is an intrinsic trait to them but it is also based on how much respect they have for them based solely on their socio-economic status. For instance, in fiesta celebrations where the whole town celebrates festivity with a feast and vibrant decorations, people claim to be celebrating with everyone in their household. However, evidently, in a communal celebration of a town's festivity, some households are selective with whom they allow to celebrate it. Most invited are only those people whom they see as equal or with high regard.³⁶

The Anti-Poor Ideology

People who suffer in poverty experience not just an economic burden but also the psychosocial aspect. The stigma of society towards poverty adds to the burden they are experiencing.³⁷ Poverty is an unfortunate fate for people and how society treats and stigmatizes the poor adds to their burden of poverty. The stigma of the poor varies from the societal norms of a certain community; some or most people who belong to a certain community are not aware that they are being stigmatized.³⁸ In the study by Collin in 2005, women who do not have that much privilege think that people perceive them as lesser beings

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Mickelson, Kristin & Williams, Stacey, "Perceived Stigma of Poverty and Depression: Examination of Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Mediators" *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 2008, 904, <https://acesse.dev/5iIWO>

³⁸ Mickelson, Kristin & Williams, Stacey, "Perceived Stigma of Poverty and Depression: Examination of Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Mediators" *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 2008, 904, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/240296582_Perceived_Stigma_of_Poverty_and_Depression_Examination_of_Interpersonal_and_Intrapersonal_Mediators

because of how much money they are making.³⁹ This study shows that others will tend to look down on people who make less money than they do. Another research shows that the stigma of the poor can be seen in how society and agency staff treat poor people on their premises.⁴⁰ Consequently, the types of stigma on poverty that are present in society, such as internalized stigma, which is the negative perception of poverty, like the feeling of shame and embarrassment is the experienced stigma that other feels when being stigmatized.⁴¹ Thus, how society treats the poor makes it a contributing factor to the stigma of poverty.

Across the cultural, historical, and socioeconomic domains in society, there is an existing disparity between the dominant group and the non-dominant group. Certain practices perpetuate this anti-poor ideology, such as the disparity between groups under the domains of cultural, historical, and socioeconomic groups, and the labeling of dominant sectors and the non-dominant groups. A theory on system justification suggests that one’s social identity is based on how good they feel about themselves; thus, people who are in the higher socio-economic bracket are often justified for their egoistic behavior because the system believes that their being in a high status equates to their worthiness.⁴² However, this belief leads to bias against the other socio-economic class, most especially towards the lower socio-economic bracket that is most vulnerable to discrimination. On the other hand, the theory also examines that those who acquire a low socio-economic status deserve the biases and unequal treatment they experience as a punishment for their unworthiness, and that the other end of the bracket deserves the privileges because of being worthy of it.⁴³ The reason behind this is due to the mentality that people who are in the upper class are most likely to score higher in self-esteem than those who are in the lower class, which makes them think that they

³⁹ Ibid., 905.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 905.

⁴¹ Ibid., 905.

⁴² Ananthi Al Ramiah, et. al., “The social psychology of discrimination: theory, measurement and consequences,” Chapter 5, in *Making Equality Count*, edited by Laurence Bond, Frances McGinnity, and Helen Russell. (Ireland: The Liffey Press, January 2010), 84-112.

⁴³ Ibid, 90.

have power over anyone else.⁴⁴ These underlying and manifestations of class disparities perpetuate the stigma of poverty.

Destigmatizing Poverty

Amartya Sen's Capability Approach talks about how poverty is not only determined by income or economic status but also by the incapability of achieving the things that a person wants.⁴⁵ For Sen, poverty is when a person is naturally deprived of something and not just by how big or small his/her income is. According to Amartya Sen, the concept of poverty is the incapability of a person to lead the quality of life he/she ought to have and acquire the needs of a human being, like self-esteem and access to opportunities.⁴⁶ Sen also points out that capability deprivations can be determined by the unequal holistic needs of people and the lack of institutional rights.⁴⁷ Poverty hinders human beings from unleashing their full potential of being social animals. For Sen, the starting point of human development is not just in the aspect of economic growth but also in the aspect of the capabilities of a person.⁴⁸

The main goal of the Human Development Index (HDI), is to shift the focus from an income-centered approach to a people-centered approach as a solution to poverty.⁴⁹ Another objective of the Human Development Index (HDI) is to sustain these three basic capabilities, which are being able to live a long life, to be literate, and to be able to buy their basic necessities.⁵⁰ The goal proposed by the United Nations Development Programme has similar aspects to Amartya Sen's Capability Approach; they ought to alleviate or reduce poverty at its roots to address all forms of stigma perpetuating the

⁴⁴ Peter Belmi, "The Social Advantage of Miscalibrated Individuals: The Relationship Between Social Class and Overconfidence and Its Implications for Class-Based Inequality", American Psychological Association, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Interpersonal Relations and Group Processes, 255, 2020.

⁴⁵ Alexander, "Capability and Social Justice: The Political Philosophy of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum," 2016, 59.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 59.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 53.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 59.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 59.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 59.

problem and ensure that no one will be left behind.⁵¹ The United Nations Development Program uses a parallelism approach with Amartya Sen in addressing the problem of poverty in a holistic approach. “*Ending poverty in all its forms everywhere...*”

The United Nations ought to address and alleviate poverty through developmental projects and programs that would hit the grassroots of the problem by reducing the stigma of poverty in vulnerable communities by implementing people-centered and communitarian approaches.⁵²

The “*Matapobre*” Hospitality Culture

Filipinos often show hospitality to guests or foreign visitors through warm welcome messages, remarks, or gestures to make them feel comfortable and accommodated even if it oversteps their personal boundaries or compromises one’s well-being.⁵³ Although this helps with the improvement of the country’s tourism industry because it is well-known to the world that Filipinos are naturally hospitable and we take pride in it. The downside of it is indeed a form of enslavement in a subconscious manner and no longer a form of service when we do not do the usual things we do in our everyday lives just to please foreign visitors or guests that we look up to. A Filipino shared on his blog his personal experience of the hospitality of Filipinos and how they treat their guests at home. Kyle Harvey, the author of the blog under the username *@kyleharvey*, shared that when they have visitors who come by their house who are not their relatives, his mom would put out the best utensils that they have, which they are not allowed to use as members of the household.⁵⁴ When relatives visit their house, his mom would put out their second-best utensils for them to use, and when it

⁵¹ Singh PK, Chudasama H. “Evaluating Poverty Alleviation Strategies in a Developing Country”, *PLoS One*, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0227176>

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Admin of Bugtong, “Hospitality of Filipinos – The Stories Behind Filipino Hospitality”, *Bugtong*, November 24, 2021, <https://bugtong.info/hospitality-of-filipino-the-stories-behind-filipino-hospitality/>

⁵⁴ Kyle Harvey, “How Filipinos Entertain Their Guests”, *Medium*, January 9, 2019, <https://medium.com/@kyleharvey/72499/how-filipinos-entertain-their-guests-5fa78d2fd71e>

is just them in the household, they use the everyday utensils.⁵⁵ As a Filipino myself, I have also observed that whenever there are visitors in our house, the adults in the household ask me to prepare the silverware that we are not allowed to use daily. Although this practice of hospitality seems good, arguably, it has no distinction from the concept of “*matapobre*” hospitality.

“*Matapobre*” hospitality is the selective practice of hospitality towards others; it is when people look at the socio-economic status of a person as a basis for what treatment they will give to that person.⁵⁶ The practice of hospitality within Filipino households is also a selective way of practicing it, but there is a side of it that has not been often recognized and that is the practice of “*matapobre*” hospitality. According to Mickelson et al., the stigma of the poor most likely occurs in institutions by agency staff.⁵⁷ This validates the idea of “*matapobre*” hospitality that is common in establishments because of how the staff use people’s appearance as a basis for their socio-economic status.

In addition, when Kyle Harvey’s mother would put out their best utensils for other people but would only put out their second-best utensils when it is just their relatives and only the ordinary ones when it is them shows the hierarchy of treatment and level of respect they have for their guest as can be observed in household utensils. Respect can also be correlated with practicing hospitality. Thus the practice “*matapobre*” hospitality trait is when people only show respect to people who they see as equal to them or someone with a higher status that they would view with high regard.⁵⁸ The hospitality that Filipinos show towards foreign visitors is a way of putting it, Filipinos see foreigners with high regard and often give them special treatment compared to fellow Filipinos. According to Michael L. Tan, “*matapobre*” hospitality is often shown by clerks in establishments to their customers whom they think are not wealthy enough to buy the

⁵⁵ Kyle Harvey, “How Filipinos Entertain Their Guests”, *Medium*, January 9, 2019, https://medium.com/@kyleharvey_72499/how-filipinos-entertain-their-guests-5fa78d2fd71e

⁵⁶ Michael L. Tan, “*Matapobre* Hospitality,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, October 4, 2017, <https://opinion.inquirer.net/107624/matapobre-hospitality>

⁵⁷ Mickelson, Kristin & Williams, Stacey, “Perceived Stigma of Poverty and Depression: Examination of Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Mediators” *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 2008, 904, <https://acesse.dev/5iIWO>

⁵⁸ Michael L. Tan, “*Matapobre* Hospitality”, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, October 4, 2017, <https://opinion.inquirer.net/107624/matapobre-hospitality>

products they are selling based solely on their physical appearance.⁵⁹ Although it does not necessarily mean that they would ask the person to leave, they will not give them that much attention and would entertain those they think are rich. Additionally, as to how Filipinos treat foreign visitors, arguably, in institutions, they will also get more welcoming treatment compared to the locals.

Although there is no doubt that in business, sales should always be considered. However, when it comes to human development, these kinds of traits are a form of internalized stigma of Filipinos to the poor that perpetuates the anti-poor mentality that could be a setback to our human development as individuals and Filipinos as a whole. The internalized stigma of poverty is when people feel shame and embarrassment for the poor.⁶⁰ The internalized stigma of poverty is manifested in the practice of “*matapobre*” hospitality because of how the selective treatment of others shows that they feel embarrassed by people whom they think are lesser than them. According to Mickelson et al., the experience of the poor is already a burden for them, and how society stigmatizes and treats them as lesser beings is a contributing factor to that existing burden.⁶¹ With this mentality being evident and prevalent in society, it is less likely for Filipinos to alleviate poverty in our country because the said mentality is perpetuating its existence in our society through the selective treatment of respect and hospitality they show to people. It is detrimental to our human development because it does not only widens the gap between the rich and the poor but it also feeds the stigma of poverty and the unequal treatment of other people. If Filipinos cannot treat their fellow Filipinos the same way as they treat foreigners, then how can they treat them fairly when they view them as equal or, in some cases, “lesser beings” if socio-economic factors are to be considered? With the lack of respect towards other people and to ourselves, we are not just looking down on other people but also on our own members of the family.

⁵⁹ Tan, “*Matapobre* Hospitality,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 2017.

⁶⁰ Mickelson, Kristin & Williams, Stacey, “Perceived Stigma of Poverty and Depression: Examination of Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Mediators” *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 2008, 904, <https://acesse.dev/5iIWO>

⁶¹ Mickelson, Kristin & Williams, Stacey, “Perceived Stigma of Poverty and Depression: Examination of Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Mediators” *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 2008, 904, <https://acesse.dev/5iIWO>

Redemption through Amartya Sen's Capability Approach

Amartya Sen's Capability Approach aims to holistically improve the quality of life of people by providing them with the freedom to access opportunities. One of the major factors why people are incapable and unfree is because of the chains of poverty.

*"There are good reasons for seeing poverty as a deprivation of basic capabilities, rather than merely as low income."*⁶²

For Sen, this means that poverty is more than just having a lower income than other people; rather, it is the inadequacy of people to meet their basic needs. The fundamental concern when talking about the quality of life is how to address the issues of poverty and the deprivation of man's opportunities.⁶³ Asking this question aims to hit the grassroots of the problem in addressing poverty and deprivation, and the other factors that arise from it.

*"It is as important to recognize the crucial role of wealth in determining living conditions and the quality of life as it is to understand the qualified and contingent nature of this relationship."*⁶⁴

Examining the role of wealth in society is also as important as examining poverty and identifying the roots of the issue, as these factors determine the quality of life and living conditions of people, or whether their elementary needs are met, which are crucial for their development. Thus, for Sen, attaining development has something to do with the freedom that people can live with, that are vital for their lives as social beings in interaction with others and in exercising one's will that further shapes the community they live in.⁶⁵ According to Amartya Sen, the significance of the Capability Approach is to build a system where citizens have socio-political freedom to lead the life that they want by creating a society where there are accessible and

⁶² Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 2000), 15.

⁶³ John M. Alexander, *Capability and Social Justice: The Political Philosophy of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum*, 2016, 1.

⁶⁴ Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 2000), 15.

⁶⁵ Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 15.

sufficient goods for people.⁶⁶ Thus, having this capability would lead a person to live a more quality and decent life.

The basis of one’s quality of life should be based on their capabilities to have access to what Sen calls “*valued functioning*.”⁶⁷ Sen introduces two notions, functioning and capability; functioning is what Sen calls the capability of a person to achieve a good life because his/her needs to function are provided, while capabilities reflect the freedom to do what one wants for the life he/she wants to lead.⁶⁸ There are basic functions that are considered to be the bare minimum for every citizen to have access to; these are health and medical benefits, education, values like self-respect, social networks, socio-political knowledge, and awareness.⁶⁹ Thus, achieving these basic needs follows a sense of fulfillment and gratification in one’s life. Consequently, what Sen refers to as capabilities is when one’s function is fulfilled, they have the freedom to achieve a quality of life with access to various opportunities.⁷⁰ Freedom gives opportunities, and when the basic functions are fulfilled, everything follows.

For Amartya Sen, the concept of capabilities refers to the capacity of a person that links to the fulfillment of medical and health needs, one’s nutrition, and life expectancy that are vital for them to practice a valuable and more complex role in society such as social awareness and the practice of respect to oneself and to other people in the community.⁷¹ Another thing is that when these capabilities are given and honed, they give people the opportunity to participate in economic activities and socio-political understandings that will play a role in their familial dynamics and social relationships.⁷² Amartya Sen envisions one’s capability in the aspect of freedom to achieve valuable things and opportunities that would improve one’s standing in society.⁷³

⁶⁶ John M. Alexander, *Capability and Social Justice: The Political Philosophy of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum*, 2016, 2.

⁶⁷ Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 2000), 75.

⁶⁸ John M. Alexander, *Capability and Social Justice: The Political Philosophy of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum*, 2016, 56-57.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 57.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 58.

Poverty has created a grave impact that hinders people from achieving their freedom to improve their quality of life. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in connection with Amartya Sen's Capability Approach, ought to make a holistic approach to the problem of poverty through its three basic approaches to the problem which are, (1) the ability of an individual to live a long and healthy life, (2) literacy rights, (3) the improvement of one's standard of living.⁷⁴ The problem of poverty hinders people from leading the life they want or having limited and selective access to opportunities that hinder their human development. In aiding the problem of poverty, other factors that arise from the problem and the stigma that perpetuates it, Amartya Sen stated in his Capability Approach that people having the freedom to create the quality of life they want to acquire, have access to opportunities. Sen would refer to it as "*Instrumental Freedom*," which is divided into these five categories: (1) political freedoms, (2) economic facilities, (3) social opportunities, (4) transparency guarantees, and (5) protective security.⁷⁵ This "*Instrumental Freedom*" that Sen refers to allows people to be capable of having their needs met.

*"Instrumental Freedoms directly enhance the capabilities of people, but they also supplement one another and can furthermore reinforce one another."*⁷⁶

Furthermore, Amartya Sen focuses on improving the "well-being" and "agency" aspect of people in society, wherein basic needs are effortlessly provided, such as medical health needs, well-nourished food, education, shelter, or the things that people should have the right to as human beings.⁷⁷ On the other hand, Sen refers to "agency" as how people put into action valuable decisions and goals, and the opportunities they have, that would significantly make an impact in society.⁷⁸ By having these capabilities met, one can live a life with freedom where society is progressively striving with no

⁷⁴ Ibid., 59.

⁷⁵ Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 2000, 38.

⁷⁶ John M. Alexander, *Capability and Social Justice: The Political Philosophy of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum*, 2016, 40.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 58.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 58.

inferiority or superiority with one another, because a quality life is not a privilege but should be a right.

Putting an End to the *Matapobre* Superficiality

The Role of Hospitality in Social Hierarchies

Discrimination manifests itself in various forms, and these discriminatory practices can be one of the factors perpetuating the stigma of poverty. There are underlying factors to this, socioeconomic status, and the gap between the rich and the poor can be one. Studies have shown that those people who are in the upper class of the socioeconomic bracket are most likely to acquire self-respect and higher self-esteem. Reasons for this may vary, but one thing is for sure: because of the opportunities they are presented with and the resources they have that allow them to live a quality life. This becomes a systemic problem because it has been normalized, and they are enabled by the same system into thinking that what they have equates to power and privileges; the same system that perpetuates the idea that people who are in the lower class do not deserve the equal treatment rich people have because of what the resources they failed to acquire. This practice has been accepted as reality for people in both socioeconomic statuses, which remains an underlying problem in the system.

This kind of mentality manifests itself through the practice of “*matapobre*” hospitality mindset of Filipinos which is the selective treatment of hospitality and respect toward other people. This is a common practice when there are visitors in the household or when staff in establishments treat every customer. This perpetuates the prejudice and stereotypes of classism for Filipinos. The practice of this mentality is crucial and detrimental to the development of every individual and Filipinos as a whole. This type of mentality perpetuates the existing gap between the rich and the poor and the unequal treatment of people toward each other based solely on socioeconomic status. The practice of hospitality is one of the natural traits of Filipinos; we are known to the world for being hospitable, and we take pride in that. However, the practice of selective hospitality is not the true aim of hospitality nor is it the true practice of hospitality itself.

The problem of poverty is what hinders a state from progressing; it affects the status of the people living in the community, the government, and the quality of life of every individual. The stigma of poverty is one of the many contributing factors to why poverty remains unresolved in our society. Thus, having the trait of selectively showing hospitality to people solely based on their socio-economic status is an internalized stigma of poverty, and with the systemic discrimination and classism issues that perpetuate this stigma. The crucial part is that people are unaware that they are perpetuating not just the stigma of poverty but the unequal gap between the rich and the poor. This is detrimental not just to its impact on society but also to the human development of every individual. To address the problem is not just to examine and point out its roots; awareness is also a must, because most of the time, the problem starts within oneself. Filipinos who practice the mentality of “matapobre” hospitality often think that there is nothing wrong with the selective treatment of hospitality towards people, but the underlying problem, which is often left unnoticed, will continuously persist in society if we do not see the problem in things that we have normalized.

Alleviating “*Matapobre*” Hospitality as Internalized Poverty Stigma

There are numerous approaches to solving or reducing the problem of poverty, through governmental aid, non-government organizations, foreign aid, and many more. Amartya Sen’s Capability Approach aims to give people the freedom to lead a quality of life they have the right to acquire. In leading a quality life, all the basic needs must be met effortlessly, as these are part of the rights of every individual. Sen wants to establish a society where all the basic needs are met for them to function in a much more complex and higher degree as members of society. When the basic needs are met, such as food, shelter, education, and access to medical and health services, people in society can have the opportunity to look into things in a much more complex way. Additionally, when these basic needs of people are met, they will no longer have to live each day like it’s a matter of survival in meeting their everyday needs. Thus, they can unleash their higher cognitive faculties and become more functioning, such as being able to participate in social, political, and economic

awareness. And when people participate in socio-political and economic affairs, they are more aware and sensitive to their surroundings. For Sen, being able to have these capabilities not only provides opportunities for people, but it also helps them improve their social and communitarian relationships, as capabilities go along with self-respect. Having this set of capabilities provided to people boosts their self-esteem and self-respect and will help in eradicating inferiority to other people in society. This will also contribute to dismantling the systemic problem of discrimination that the higher socioeconomic bracket deserves more respect and privileges than those who are in the lower class.

Thus, in alleviating the mindset of “*matapobre*” hospitality among Filipinos using Amartya Sen, when the basic capabilities of every individual have been provided and met, other people can use their cognitive faculties to a higher degree. One can feel superior to others because he/she thinks of himself or herself as higher than other people solely based on socioeconomic status. It shows that people who selectively treat others perpetuate the unequal capabilities of people in society. Until the existing problem of inequality in our society is resolved, we cannot find a solution to the factors that perpetuate the stigma of the poor. To alleviate the mentality of Filipinos on the selective treatment of hospitality, it is important to start improving their capability, as it helps them to improve their mindset. Sen believes that when one’s basic needs are met, he/she will not constantly think of merely surviving the day but will think of ways to acquire opportunities and will focus on achieving great things for a higher cognitive function. Sen’s Capability Approach also highlights that when the bare necessities are being provided, people can shift their focus to improving their social networks and communitarian relationships and values. Thus, if everyone has equal opportunities, no one will feel inferior or superior to others regardless of one’s socio-economic status; they will feel humanly equal and will not downplay anyone’s role in society based on one’s socio-economic status.

Conclusion

The “*matapobre*” hospitality mindset among Filipinos, where people give selective hospitality and respectful treatment to others, perpetuates the existing stigma of poverty present in society. Thus, if

the stigma of poverty continues to exist, alleviating poverty is a far-fetched idea. As Filipinos are naturally hospitable, the practice of “*matapobre*” hospitality to others based solely on their socio-economic status defeats the purpose and the essence of hospitality itself. Being selective about who to accommodate and being hospitable to is perpetuating the existing gap of the socio-economic classes puts the human development of every individual in grave danger because this mentality is internalized and has not been given enough attention. Through the Capability Approach by Amartya Sen, this underlying problem can be solved if people in society are provided with their basic needs and opportunities to view things in life from a much greater perspective. When people’s capabilities are attained, they can have the freedom to live a quality life where they have the choice and access to opportunities. Furthermore, when these capabilities are met, this allows them to improve their self-esteem and respect for themselves and others, which will contribute to building a healthy social environment. Because when these capabilities are met, people will not feel inferior or superior to others, as they will see each other equally as human beings. A decent life and a quality type of living should not be a privilege but a right for every human being. No human being should look down on others because, at the end of the day, we should all coexist together for a progressive society and the development of humanity.

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