

Game-of-the-Generals: An Ethnography

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Abstract: *Those who enjoy their jobs are more productive, whereas those who are dissatisfied with their jobs are more stressed and less productive, especially during the global crisis. This research focuses on the Game-of-the-General, which is a novel concept for the faculty members of one of Misamis Oriental's community colleges. This study used ethnography research in conjunction with action research. The study went through an elimination process and was adequately documented. The paper went through five stages namely: assembling, where the researchers explained the game; re-assembling, where the researchers divided the phenomena into three phases: initial, middle, and final; de-assembling, where the researchers' conducted interviews; interpreting, and concluding. Age, gender, civil status, length of service, subjects taught, educational background, and the participants' interest were found to be unimportant as long as participants were motivated to join and increase interaction despite the pandemic's restrictions. Because it provides benefits to cultural experts through values that can be applied in their daily activities, the game-of-the-generals is effective as an intervention to reduce stress caused by movement restrictions due to pandemics, by providing a challenging experience. It is suggested that the school organizes year-round mind games for faculty and staff, as well as expand the program to include students. It is also recommended that a similar study will be conducted for the vocabulary-building game.*

Keywords: Action Research, Game-of-the-Generals, Mental Health, Restriction, Philippines

1. Exordium

According to the World Health Organization (2021), work is an essential feature of most people's adult life, and has personal, economic and social value. Work can have, both a positive and negative effect on our mental health. People who enjoy their work tend to be more productive, as studies have shown, and people who are unhappy with their work, experience more stress and are less productive. Work, therefore, can impact one's mental health. According to the European Network for Workplace Health Promotion (ENWHP, 2021) mental health is important for business. Accordingly, the success of any organization, depend on the mental health and well-being of its employees. Just like any other organizations, the success of the school (Tagoloan Community College) depends almost entirely to the mental health and well-being of its faculty and staff. Mental health problem, such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse and stress are commonplace and affects individuals, families and organizations, and have a direct impact on work, through absenteeism, reduced productivity and increased cost.

The World Health Organization (WHO) describe mental health as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope and achieve productivity in the workplace despite experiencing the day-to-day stresses (ENWHP, 2021). The same document (ENWHP, 2021) added that mental health can affect productivity in the workplace, mental health problem can also cause problem in the workplace, and the sad thing about mental health problem,

is it can affect anyone regardless of age or educational background.

Because of the pandemic and the restriction of travel and the fear of infection from covid-19, many people prefer working at home, which contributed to a large extent to isolation and feeling of loneliness, which are also contributory to mental health problems. Games, whether organized or unorganized have been proven to improve physical, mental and even social health. According to a study by Malm, Christer, Jakobsson, Johan, and Isaksson, Andreas (2019), sport is a double-edged sword, as it affects primarily the physical body, but at the same time, have many secondary effects, such as psychosocial and mental development.

Domain of Inquiry

- 1) How have you been affected by the pandemic and the community quarantine?
- 2) What institutional strategies have been introduced by your organization to address these issues?
- 3) What is your experience playing the Game of the Generals?

Mechanics of the Game-of-the-Generals

The game is normally played between two players and officiated by a referee. The game can also be played by teams. The objective of the game is to eliminate all the opponent's pieces or officials and/or capture the opponent's flag. The

game can be won also by maneuvering the flag to the opposite side of the board.

Each player or team has 21 pieces includes the following and corresponding ranking:

1 piece - Five-star General	1 piece - Captain
1 piece - Four-star General	1 piece - 1st Lieutenant
1 piece - Three-star General	1 piece - 2nd Lieutenant
1 piece - Two-star General	1 piece - Sergeant
1 Piece - One-star General	6 pieces - Private
1 Piece - Full Colonel	2 pieces - Spy
1 piece - Lt. Colonel	1 piece - Flag
1 piece - Major	

The higher-ranked officer/official eliminates the lower ranked-officer/official according to how they are arranged in the hierarchy, as shown in the order above. The flag can only capture another flag. The spy, on the other hand can capture all officers/officials in the hierarchy, except the private. If both players or teams have the same-ranked officers/officials, both players or teams lost the same piece.

Philosophical Stance

This study has undergone ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological views (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Ontological views. The study explores the plurality or diversity of reality of the individual participant's experiences brought about by the pandemic, at the same time, acknowledges a principal pattern which in this case singular in nature.

Epistemological views. The researchers have foundational background of the game being introduced, which is grounded on the assumption that the inquirer and the object investigated are interconnected in an active process.

Axiological views. This study recognizes the values learned from the experiences, particularly how the Game-of-the-Generals enabled the participants to cope with their worries and anxiety due to the pandemic.

Methodological views. The game employed or introduced in the study provided opportunity to the participants to engage in friendly banter or conversation, which made it fun and exciting.

2. Method and Materials

Design

This study utilized the Ethnographic-action research which involved the introduction of intervention, the observations of the participants during and after the series of game; interviews among the semi-final qualifiers; and collection of documents from the key offices which keep and documents the faculty members' consultation and anecdotal records, to produce a

detailed and comprehensive accounts the phenomena being studied (Murchison, 2010).

Locale

In ethnographic study, (Ethnography and education publications," 2013) the research attempts to interpret the data from the perspective of the faculty members who participated in the Game-of- the-Generals organized and facilitated by the institution, through the College of Education of Tagoloan Community College, Tagoloan, Misamis Oriental, Mindanao, Philippines.

Cultural Experts

This study looked into the experiences of the college instructors during the pandemic, particularly their mental health, and how they are able to cope with these challenges through their participation in the game-of-the-generals, and how the games and the limited interaction with their fellow participants helped them adjust with the depressing situations.

At the beginning of the tournament, there were 30 participants, representing the ten [10] departments, namely Arts and Sciences, Business Administration, Criminology, Education, Engineering Technology, Hospitality Management, Information Technology, Library Information Science, Midwifery, and one (1) mixed-up team, representing the faculty members who are assigned in the different offices. The 10 teams were divided or grouped into two brackets, five teams each bracket. The teams in each bracket played in single round robin format, and after the elimination round, the top two (2) players from each bracket or a total of four (4) players were chosen and interviewed. To protect the privacy of the participants, the researchers have assigned code to represent the four participants, namely: Cultural Expert#1- Provoking Player; Cultural Expert#2- Calculating Player; Cultural Expert #3- Reserved Player; and Cultural Expert#4- Bubbly Player.

Data Analysis

The information were gathered through the five stages or steps, as popularized by Creswell and Poth (2016): Assembling- where the researchers determined whether the approach suits the problem; Re-assembling- where the researchers identified the phenomenon affecting the participants; De-assembling- where the researchers gathered data through informal and in-depth interview of the participants; Interpreting- where the researcher highlighted the significant statements and classifying these statements according to their common themes; and finally Concluding- where the researcher define the studied phenomenon based from the identified theme.

3. Results and Discussion

The phenomenon being studied underwent the Five Stages of Creswell & Poth (2016).

Assembling

The researchers discovered that many faculty members were anxious and fearful as a result of the pandemic, based on

informal conversations with the deans of various departments. The faculty members were required to report to school despite the risk of infection. Vocabulary-Building [VB] and Game-of-the-Generals were offered as two (2) interventions by the researchers. The researchers concentrated on the experiences of the Game-of-the-Generals players in order to alleviate mental health difficulties among faculty members, as well as to accommodate more participants while adhering to the IATF Health Protocols.

Re-assembling

Based on the initial observation of the participants during the actual games, the researcher observed the following:

Initial phase

The participants were hesitant to join because the game was unfamiliar to them; they were perplexed by the game's dynamics; and they were concerned about becoming infected with the covid-19, despite meticulous adherence to the IATF Health Protocols, given the lack of vaccine at the time.

Display 1: Personal and Professional Profile of the Cultural Experts

Cultural Expert	Age	Gender	Civil Status	Length of Service	Educational Qualifications	Subjects Taught	Interest/s	Reasons for Participating
#1 Mindful	26	Female	Single	2 years	Graduate-Level	Engineering Technology	Chess, Online Games, Singing karaoke/ videoke, Watching movies, Table Tennis	Enjoyment
#2 Calculating	55	Male	Married	19 years	Post-Graduate Level	NSTP	Hiking/walking, Lawn Tennis, Travelling, Watching movies	Reward
#3 Reserved	23	Male	Single	1 year	Graduate-Level	Management	Basketball, Chess, Billiard, listening to music, Travelling	Diversion
#4 Bubbly		Male	Married	6 years	Post-Graduate Level	Business	Chess, Online Games, Surfing, Basketball	Friendship

Display 1 depicts the personal and professional profiles of the semi-final qualifiers who were interviewed to better understand the phenomenon of their experiences.

The Game-of-the-Generals players ranged in age, with a majority of men, an equal number of single and married men, and a wide range of service experience, including master's degrees in various fields of specialization and a common interest in mind games. The motivations for enrolling or participating in the mental health game vary among cultural specialists. Age, gender, civil status, length of service, educational qualifications, subjects taught, and interest are not requirements for participation in activities, according to the data in Display 1, as long as participants are motivated to participate.

Middle phase

The participants were slowly adjusting to the games; started to like the game due to familiarity of the game; and less worried because they saw the strict implementation of the Inter-Agency Task Force [IATF] Health protocols.

Final phase

The participants were more engaged due to the interaction with the other participants; showed mastery of the game by developing strategies; 'worry-free' because they were enjoying every game.

De-assembling

The researchers planned the interview schedule, guide questions, and a recorder to capture the semi-final qualifiers' verbatim narrative. The narration was organized by themes.

Display 2: Cultural Experts' Experience during the Pandemic

Cultural Experts	1. How have you been affected by the pandemic and the community quarantine?	2. What institutional strategies have been introduced by your organization to address these issues?	3. What is your experience playing the Game of the Generals?		
			Initial Phase	Middle Phase	Final Phase
#1 Mindful Player	Restricted	Mental Games	Adjusting	Interested	Engaging
#2 Calculating Player	Restricted	Zumba & Mental Games	Adjusted	Affected	Excited
#3 Reserved Player	Restricted	Mental Games	Observing	Adjusted	Engaging
#4 Bubbly Player	Restricted	Zumba & Mental Games	Adjusted	Excited	Engaging

Display 2 depicts the cultural specialists' experience of being restricted from their typical activities during the pandemic. The semi-final qualifiers were concerned and worried about the community quarantine, as well as the ever-changing restriction levels and increasing number of infections. The mental games were only experienced by those who were freshly hired as a school intervention. Due to various histories and beliefs, the entire phase had a wide range of experiences. The following themes were extracted from the transcription of the cultural experts' experiences.

The Cultural Experts were all in agreement that the constraints imposed by the Inter-Agency Task Force [IATF] had an impact on their job and even their family relationships. The school used a variety of strategies to help faculty and staff cope with their stress.

The game-of-the-generals, which incorporate analysis, mystery, and connection to their life problems, was the talk of the town among the strategies used by the school.

Adjusting

Cultural Expert #1 expressed adjustment in her way of teaching as part of her job. (Session 001, Line 15-19, Transcript No. 001-000-001).

Adjusted

Cultural Expert #2 expressed familiarity of the game (Session 002, Line 96 to 100, Transcript No. 002-000-002). While Cultural Expert #3 informed about being able to acquire strategies from watching the game. (Session 003, Line 76 to 79, Transcript No. 003-000-003). In addition, Cultural Expert #4 clarified having played the game before. (Session 004, Line 121 to 123, Transcript No. 004-000-004).

Observing

Cultural Expert #3 expressed enjoyment while observing awkward movements. (Session 003, Line 64 to 66, Transcript No. 003-000-003).

Interested

Cultural Expert #1 divulged being curious about the game, considering it is something new to her. (Session 001, Line 69 to 72, Transcript No. 001-000-001).

Affected

Cultural Expert #2 narrated that the game also caused him stress after losing the game. (Session 002, Line 118 to 121, Transcript No. 002-000-002).

Excited

Cultural Expert #4 confessed being happy meeting new people. (Session 004, Line 148 to 152, Transcript No. 004-000-004). Cultural Expert #2 revealed being happy winning the game. (Session 002, Line 118 to 120, Transcript No. 002-000-002).

Engaging

Cultural Expert #1 explained that the game was entertaining. (Session 001, Line 169 to 170, Transcript No. 001-000-001). While Cultural Expert #3 expressed excitement learning from the game and interaction with other players. (Session 003, Line 88 to 90, Transcript No. 003-000-003). Subsequently, Cultural Expert #4 emphasized the intention of the game is to build friendship. (Session 004, Line 182 to 188, Transcript No. 004-000-004).

Interpreting

The confessions of the Cultural Experts generated two themes: Challenging, which includes adjusting, challenge through incorrect moves, finding ways, transfer of learning, stress reliever, and diversion; and Value-laden, which includes positive mindset, boost confidence, excitement, flexibility, and enjoyment. This means that if the activity is relevant to the participant, they are likely to engage in the activity. This is supported by the principle of adult learning presented by Lieb, Stephen. (2019), which states that adults are more involved when they are able to connect the learning to their experience.

The confessions of the Cultural Experts suggested further that curiosity, especially if what they are engaging into is something new, increase learning by motivating individuals to think more about the material being presented (*Stimulating Curiosity to Enhance Learning, n.d.*). This is also confirmed by another study which showed that curiosity has positive relationship with intrinsic motivation (*Impact of Curiosity and External Regulation on Intrinsic Motivation: An Empirical Study in Hong Kong Education, n.d.*).

4. Conclusion

The researchers agreed that the philosophical stances of ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology affirmed that the phenomena are multiple in nature to the participants' experiences caused by the pandemic, the assumption that the inquirer (researchers) and the object (experience playing the game) investigated are interconnected in an active process, the values learned from the experiences are varied, and the game introduced provided opportunity to the participants not only to learn and enjoy the game but at the same time, to engage with the other participants.

5. Recommendation

The researcher recommends that the Game-of-the-Generals [GOG] will be introduced and organized year-round and at the same time, the same should be introduced to the students. It is also recommended that similar study will be conducted for the participants of the vocabulary-building game.

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