

Perception of Residents on The Ruins in Lianga: A Qualitative Descriptive Study

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Abstract

The Lianga sawmill ruins continue to shape the collective memory and identity of the community despite the decline of the timber industry. This qualitative descriptive study explored the social interactions, symbolic meanings, and forms of communication associated with The Ruins in Lianga through the lens of Social Representation Theory. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews with former sawmill workers and residents and were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that residents perceived The Ruins not merely as abandoned industrial structures but as symbolic representations of industrial prosperity, effective management, communal life, economic decline, survival, resilience, and mismanagement. The study further revealed that residents continuously construct shared meanings and collective memories through social interaction, symbolic representations, and communication rooted in their lived experiences. The study concludes that The Ruins function as representational spaces where collective memory, survival, and community identity continue to be socially preserved and negotiated within the locality.

Keywords: Perception of residents; the ruins in Lianga; qualitative descriptive study

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Background of the Study*

Ruins are significant artifacts that tell history and culture beyond their structure, as they are places where many dimensions overlap within and outside, a present, a past, and what we only imagine. Though ruins do not function as intact buildings, they still have their unique history that must be preserved and understood. Historical sites are tourist attractions that cover landscapes with cultural elements and tend to be sources of renewal, learning, reminiscence, and inspiration, producing long-term effects on societies and individuals. However, the value of sites will be drowned if no one will record its development and its contribution to the life of the people in locale.

Globally, Greece marks many tourists all over the world as it boasts its ruins and artifacts which show inimitable history and culture (Krishnaveni et al., 2015). Ruins such as the Parthenon, Delphi, and the Acropolis of Athens tell that long before they were grandiose and were noted as the mirror of civilization, showcasing riches in cultural heritage while also helping their economy at present time. In the United States, the ruins of the Bulow Plantation in Flagler Beach, Florida reflect how plantation life contributed to the culture and living of the people even today, despite no longer producing the same products

as before (Collins et al., 2012; O'Sullivan, 2012).

In the Philippines, notable ruins include The Mansion Ruins in Bacolod, which helps uplift the economy of Negros Occidental and are considered one of the top attractions. The mansion, owned by Don Mariano Ledesma Lacson during the Spanish Colonial era, was burned during World War II to prevent Japanese forces from using it as a base, leaving only the skeletal frame and earning the title “Taj Mahal of Negros Occidental” (Nacionales, 2017; Sanchez et al., 2018). Similarly, the Pindangan Ruins in San Fernando City, La Union, built in 1764, symbolizes the strong influence of Roman Catholicism introduced by the Spaniards and the rich culture of the community, despite being damaged by natural calamities (Almario, 2015).

In Mindanao, remnants of Spanish-era church ruins in Butuan City and ruin structures in Lianga, Surigao del Sur serve as evidence of past economic, religious, and socio-cultural activities (Philippine Tourism, 2018; Quevedo & Ruaza, 2014). Historically, Lianga developed as a center of trade and later experienced significant socio-economic growth with the establishment of logging industries and political subdivisions. Overall, The Ruins is a constant reminder of what transpired when they were first created. It also shows how

these ruins affect the life of many people in cultural and economic aspects, emphasizing that all things would come to an end if they are mishandled or abused.

1.2 Significance of the Study

Every person who sees a ruined infrastructure would be intrigued and could ask questions about what happened, leading to curiosity to dig more information about the history that befell that certain infrastructure, and hence significant ruins that have an impact on a community should be included in history. This study may contribute to the body of knowledge of the people in Lianga, Surigao del Sur, its Local Government Offices, and national agencies such as the National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP) and the National Commission of Culture and the Arts (NCCA) by updating historical information on culture, heritage, and historical structures that cultivated the livelihood and artistry of the people. The community may benefit from the study by identifying how their culture and identity were shaped during the existence of the Sawmill, while Social Studies teachers, teachers and students may gain knowledge on the Sawmill's history in support of fostering local history through research experience. This study encourages future researchers to further

investigate cultural and historical representations, and serves as a potential source of instructional material aligned with the Department of Education's K–12 curriculum on contextualization and localization.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

In this study, I explored the residents' perceptions regarding The Ruins in Lianga and how these perceptions shape the meanings attached to the landmark within the community. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What social interactions do residents experience in relation to The Ruins within their community?
2. What symbolic meanings do residents attribute to The Ruins as a local landmark?
3. What forms of communication emerge among residents regarding The Ruins in their locality?

1.4 Theoretical Lens

This study is grounded in Social Representation Theory (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1969), which explains that people develop meanings through social

interaction, symbols, and communication. Within society, individuals interpret their environment by using shared symbols and language, allowing them to establish meaning, develop views, and shape their understanding of reality. Mead's work, *Mind, Self, and Society* (1934), established that the self and consciousness develop through social interaction, while Blumer (1969) and Linh, (2013) further articulated the interpretive process of meaning-making within society.

The Ruins in Lianga is not only a physical structure but a symbolic place whose meaning is constructed through residents' experiences, community narratives, and interactions. The residents' perceptions, values, and attitudes are formed and continuously shaped through communication with others. Symbolic interactionism emphasizes that individuals construct meanings through interaction, and these meanings influence their perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. The study emphasizes that meaning is socially constructed, where individuals, through interaction, use symbols to interpret The Ruins, develop shared perspectives, and understand its significance within the community.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

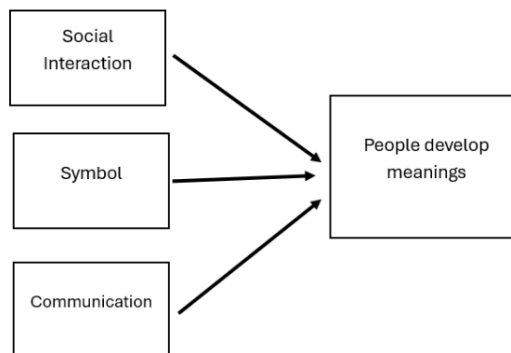


Figure .1: Mead's Symbolic Interactionism Theory

1.5 Assumptions

This study assumed that the residents of Lianga have personal experiences and social interactions that influence their perceptions of The Ruins within the community. It is also assumed that residents attach symbolic meanings and values to The Ruins through shared communication, cultural experiences, and collective memories. Furthermore, the study assumed that the participants will provide honest and meaningful responses, and that a qualitative descriptive approach is appropriate in exploring and describing these perceptions.

2 METHODOLOGY

To establish the credibility of my study, I provided a detailed account of my methodological process, outlining how each step was conducted. I

specifically addressed the research design, locale of the study, sample and sampling, research instruments, data gathering procedure, data analysis and trustworthiness.

2.1 Research Design

I employed descriptive qualitative research design to explore and understand the perceptions of residents regarding *The Ruins in Lianga*. Qualitative descriptive research is appropriate when the objective is to provide a comprehensive, naturalistic, and straightforward account of participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations within their real-life context (Kim et al., 2017; Doyle et al., 2020). This design enabled me, as the researcher, to gather rich and detailed data that accurately reflected the participants' own words and viewpoints without imposing highly abstract or complex theoretical interpretations. In this study, the design facilitated the exploration of residents' perceptions, their descriptions of the value of The Ruins, and the perceived influence of the site on their lives.

Descriptive qualitative research design enabled me to document how the people of Lianga described the history, operation, decline, and lasting significance of the AGO Sawmill. Through in-depth interviews with individuals who had personal knowledge of the sawmill, I was able to capture their

experiences, memories, and insights about the ruins that remain today. Using interview and narrative data, the study examined how residents interpreted The Ruins as a symbolic representation shaped by cultural context, community narratives, and lived experiences (Carter & Fuller, 2015).

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in the Municipality of Lianga, Surigao del Sur, particularly in Sitio Pugad, Barangay Payasan. This locale was selected due to its relevance to the study, as it is closely associated with The Ruins and the former AGO Sawmill operations. While the identified participants resided in different barangays within and near the municipality of Lianga, the interviews were conducted in their respective homes to ensure convenience, comfort, and authenticity of responses. The locations were accessible through land transportation, making data collection feasible and efficient.

2.3 Sample and Sampling Technique

This study employed a non-probability sampling technique, specifically purposive sampling, to identify participants who could provide rich and relevant information related to the study. Purposive sampling was used because it allows the researcher to intentionally select individuals who possess specific knowledge, experiences, and insights aligned with the

research objectives (Palinkas et al., 2015; Campbell et al., 2020). A total of seven (7) participants were selected for the in-depth interviews. In qualitative research, sample size is typically small and focused, as the goal is to obtain in-depth understanding rather than generalization. Studies suggest that 5 to 10 participants are sufficient when participants are knowledgeable and data saturation is achieved (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). Data saturation refers to the point at which no new information or themes emerge from the data, indicating adequacy of the sample size.

The participants were selected based on the following criteria: a) they had been directly involved in the operation of the AGO Sawmill; and b) they had worked with or had firsthand experience of the sawmill during the period 1970 to 1990. The selected participants were considered key informants, as their lived experiences and historical knowledge provided valuable insights into the significance of The Ruins in Lianga. Their narratives contributed to a deeper understanding of how the site is perceived, valued, and interpreted within the community.

2. 4 Research Instruments

I used a semi-structured interview guide in this study. It was designed to gather in-depth information regarding the participants' perceptions,

experiences, and insights about *The Ruins in Lianga*. It consisted of open-ended questions that allowed participants to freely express their thoughts, feelings, and interpretations based on their lived experiences (Kallio et al., 2016; Braun & Clarke, 2022; Adams, 2015). The interview questions were aligned with the research objectives of the study, focusing on: (1) participants' perceptions of The Ruins, (2) their descriptions of its value within the community, and (3) the perceived influence of The Ruins on their lives.

The semi-structured format provided flexibility, enabling me to ask follow-up or probing questions to clarify responses and explore emerging themes. This approach ensures that the data collected were rich, detailed, and contextually grounded (Doyle et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2017). Prior to data collection, the interview guide underwent expert validation by research specialists and subject matter experts to ensure clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the questions. Necessary revisions were made based on their feedback in consultation with the adviser. In addition, I conducted a simulation interview to assess the effectiveness of the instrument, refine the questions for better understanding, and determine the appropriate duration of the interview process.

2.5 Data Gathering Technique

I gathered data through in-depth and semi-structured interviews, field observations, and documentary analysis of primary and secondary sources to capture the lived experiences, historical significance, and contextual background of the site. Prior to data collection, necessary approvals and permissions were secured from my adviser, the Graduate School Dean of Holy Cross of Davao College, and the research locale. Informed consent was obtained from all participants in accordance with established ethical standards (Liang, 2019; Kim et al., 2017). Interviews were conducted using open-ended questions with follow-up probes to elicit detailed responses, and data collection continued until data saturation was achieved, ensuring that no new themes emerged, as emphasized by Hennink and Kaiser (2022) and Saunders et al. (2018).

All interviews were transcribed and field notes and archival materials were used to support and triangulate the narratives, thereby strengthening the study's rigor and trustworthiness (Nowell et al., 2017; Doyle et al., 2020). The transcribed data were then subjected to thematic analysis to identify patterns and generate themes relevant to the research objectives (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Braun & Clarke, 2023).

2.6 Data Analysis

I analyzed the data using thematic analysis, which allowed for a systematic and rigorous examination of participants' perceptions, experiences, and interpretations (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Castleberry & Nolen, 2018) related to *The Ruins in Lianga*. The process followed six phases: familiarization, coding, theme development, review, definition, and reporting, ensuring that the analysis remained structured, transparent, and grounded in the data (Nowell et al., 2017). All interview data were transcribed verbatim and validated by participants to ensure accuracy and credibility. The data were manually coded, allowing the researcher to identify recurring patterns and meaningful units related to participants' perceptions, values, and lived experiences.

Field notes and documentary sources were incorporated to support data triangulation, which, according to Patton (2015) and Flick (2022) enhances the depth and trustworthiness of the findings. Moreover, the analysis was guided by Symbolic Interactionism Theory, which provided an interpretive lens for understanding how participants constructed meanings through social interaction, communication, and shared experiences (Carter & Fuller, 2015). Through this process, the study generated themes that reflected the participants' collective meanings and interpretations, ensuring that the findings were firmly grounded in their social context and lived realities.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

I ensured the ethical integrity and rigor of this study by obtaining approval from the Society for Moral Integrity and Legal Ethics (SMILE) of Holy Cross of Davao College and adhering to established ethical principles in the conduct of research. Consistent with the ethical guidelines outlined by the American Psychological Association (2020), the study upheld the principles of informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and participant welfare. Prior to data collection, participants were fully informed about the purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits of the study and were made aware of their right to withdraw from participation at any stage without penalty. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before their involvement in the study. To protect participants' identities and privacy, pseudonyms were used in all records and reports, and research data were securely stored with access limited to the researcher. Furthermore, interviews were conducted in a respectful, non-coercive, and non-intrusive manner to safeguard participants' well-being and ensure a positive research experience throughout the study.

According to Nowell et al. (2017), trustworthiness in qualitative research

can be established through the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility can be enhanced through strategies such as prolonged engagement, member checking, and triangulation. Hennink et al. (2019) explained that triangulation of multiple data sources, including interviews, field notes, and documents, contributes to the validity of qualitative findings. Creswell and Poth (2016) noted that transferability is strengthened by providing rich and detailed descriptions of the research context, allowing readers to determine the applicability of the findings to other settings. Furthermore, Nowell et al. (2017) emphasized that dependability can be supported through systematic documentation of research procedures and the maintenance of audit trails, while confirmability can be enhanced through reflexivity and by ensuring that interpretations are grounded in participants' accounts rather than researcher assumptions.

3. RESULTS

This section presents the key findings of the study based on the narratives shared by the participants. The results are organized according to the major themes and sub-themes that emerged from the interviews, highlighting how residents socially represent the Lianga sawmill in relation to its economic significance, industrial decline, and the meanings attached to the ruins that remain today. The discussion is further anchored in Social Representation Theory to

explain how shared experiences, memories, and social interactions shaped the community's collective understanding of the sawmill and its enduring significance within their social reality.

3. 1 Anchoring the "Golden Age"

During my conversations with the participants, many of them fondly recalled what they described as the "Bibo" Era of Lianga. In the local dialect, "Bibo" means lively or vibrant, and the participants frequently used this term to portray a period when the community was filled with economic activity, social interaction, and opportunities brought by the operation of the sawmill industries. Their recollections revealed how Lianga was once considered a progressive and energetic place where people gathered, worked, and celebrated together.

One participant shared:

"Ang Lianga sa una bibo sa gayod. Ang Lianga sauna, dili pud ingon nga mingaw kay ngano, duha ang Sawmill diha sa Pugad sauna. Naay AGO Timber Corporation Sawmill ug naa poy Sawmill sa Magsaysay."

“Lianga in the past was highly vibrant. It was far from being a quiet place primarily because two sawmills were operating in Pugad at that time, namely; the AGO Timber Corporation Sawmill and another sawmill located in Magsaysay.”)

Another participant recalled the lively social atmosphere during those years, sayin

“Ay oo, bibo to kay kuan man, upat man kabuok ang sawmill sa kada Sabado, magbaylehan. Oo, kada Sabado, adunay baylehan kay kadtong mga panahona, barangay captain pa nako ato.” (“Oh yes, it was really lively because there were four sawmills operating, and every Saturday there were dances being held. During those times, I was still serving as a barangay captain.”)

For the participants, the ruins now serve as a reminder of those prosperous years, symbolizing a past marked by movement, economic vitality, social connection, and a strong sense of community life.

On Classifying through the American Standard of Management. During my conversations with the participants, many of them spoke with admiration when

recalling how the sawmill industry was managed during its peak years. They often associated the success of the company with what they referred to as the “American standard” of management, using the term “Amerkano” to describe the discipline, efficiency, and organized leadership they experienced at that time. As the participants shared their memories, it became evident that they viewed the American presence as a major factor that contributed to the smooth operation of the company and the progress of the community.

One participant recalled:

“Previously, daghan to sila mga amerkano... maayu gud ang pag dumala sa mga Amerkano ... smooth sailing ang companya.” (“In the past, there were many Americans involved, and their management was highly effective, resulting in smooth operations within the company.”)

Another participant shared his personal experience of being hired during that period, saying:

“Amerkano gud to, ang ako lang na hiringan, maayu gud ang pag dumala... Maayu gud kuno, kadto pa na amerkano ang nag

approach sa akoo na appointment.” “They were Americans, and from my experience working with them, their management was really good. They were truly good because it was still the Americans who approached me regarding my appointment.”)

As I listened to their stories, I noticed how the participants connected the ruins not only to the physical remains of the sawmill industry but also to memories of order, discipline, and effective leadership.

On Naming the Site as a Self-Sustained Company Town. During my interviews with the study participants, many of them described the area as a “company town,” recalling how work, housing, and everyday life were closely interconnected during the height of the sawmill industry. As they shared their stories, the participants vividly remembered a community where people not only worked for the company but also relied on it for housing, healthcare, and other daily needs.

One of the participants shared

As I listened to their stories, I noticed how they described the ruins not simply as abandoned physical structures, but as lasting reminders of a once

thriving and fully functioning community.

On Documenting Industrial Production and Global Flow. As I spoke with the participants, many of them vividly recalled how active and productive the sawmill industry was during its peak years. They shared memories of the large volume of daily production, the continuous loading of timber, and the transportation of logs through ships and barges, reflecting the busy industrial operations that once shaped the community.

One participant narrated:

Throughout my discussions with the participants, these recollections revealed that they viewed the sawmill not only as a local industry but also as a significant source of livelihood and economic progress that once contributed to the growth and development of the community.

On Comparing Pre-Industrial and Peak Social Vibrance. From the narratives shared by the participants, many of them contrasted the quiet and less developed condition of Lianga before industrialization with the lively and socially active

environment during the peak of the sawmill operations. They recalled how the arrival of workers, outsiders, and business activities transformed the municipality into a more progressive and vibrant community filled with movement, interaction, and opportunities.

As one participant narrated:

“Dili pa tanto bibo ang Lianga sauna. Minus pa. Karun kay naa namay mga mall, sauna wala pa, minus pa gyud.” (“Lianga was not yet that lively before. It was still lacking. Today, there are already malls, before, there was really very little.”)

Another participant described:

“Daghan na didtu na kon diri ngari ga puyo sa pugad sa mga dayo, mao ng sumil.” (“There were already many people living there, especially outsiders staying in the settlement because of the sawmill.”)

As I listened to their narrations, I realized how the participants associated

the “Bibo Era” with a period of transformation, social interaction, and economic activity in the community. The way they shared their stories, particularly through the expressions in their eyes and the warmth in their voices, reflected how these memories continue to hold deep personal meaning for them, as if recalling a time that brought life, unity, and progress to Lianga.

3.2 Objectifying Prosperity, Collapse, and Survival

On Materializing the Act of Sibat (Economic Betrayal). During the interview sessions with the participants, many of them described the act of sibat as a symbol of economic betrayal and industrial decline in Lianga. In their narratives, sibat referred to the alleged misuse, unlawful handling, or abandonment of company resources and responsibilities that contributed to the weakening and eventual downfall of the sawmill industry.

One participant shared:

“Mga anak nag eskwela sa Cebu, Manila. Eroplano ang mag kuan ngadto... ginatawag na causedway. May eroplano ang Lianga Bay.”

(“The children were able to study in Cebu and Manila. They traveled there by airplane... what they called the causeway. Lianga Bay even had airplanes.”)

Another participant further emphasized the company’s support for education by stating:

“Scholar ilahang mga anak sa Lianga Bay... ang kompanya maoy mo gasto... dili lang sa Manila, Cebu, Davao.”(“Their children became scholars of Lianga Bay... the company shouldered the expenses... not only in Manila, *but also in Cebu and Davao.*”)

As I listened to their stories, I could observe the sadness and disappointment reflected in the participants’ emotions. For them, these experiences transformed sibat into a lasting symbol of economic injustice, broken trust, and unfulfilled responsibilities that deeply affected the workers and the community.

On Visualizing Systemic Collapse through Fire. As participants openly shared their experiences, many of them perceived the fire incidents associated with the sawmill operations as representations of Lianga’s industrial and economic

decline. For them, the destruction of warehouses and company facilities became visible symbols of loss and marked the gradual collapse of what was once a thriving industry in the community.

One participant shared:

“Isig palusot na... sila ang pirme naga adto sa Davao di naka kwarta gud siya na ang Ginoo kay dili man gud na bakakan, di ang gaba mo epekto gihapon.” (“They kept making excuses... they were always going to Davao because there was already no money. God cannot be deceived, and eventually karma will take effect.”)

Another participant recalled:

“Lutaw raman gud ang istorya nga siya man gud ang kuan ga sunog sa warehouse... starting sa pag ka sunog sir, mao nato siya ang end.” (“There were stories spreading that he was the one who ordered the warehouse to be burned... starting from the fire, that was already the end for them.”)

Through their heartfelt recollections, I realized how the participants

associated the fire incidents with the downfall of the sawmill industry and the loss of economic stability in Lianga. These memories transformed the fire into a symbolic turning point in the community's collective memory, representing the collapse of an era once marked by prosperity and industrial progress.

On Representing the Shift toward Individual Survival. As I heard the participants' accounts, many of them perceived the decline of the sawmill industry as a turning point that forced community members to rely on individual survival strategies following the loss of employment and economic stability.

In the words of one participant, this was said:

"Kwartahan to na mga panahuna, mao ng mga taga Pugad. Ang mga sumil, an iya mga slab na wala na nagamit, nagamit kadtong mga tig asina." ("Those were prosperous times for the people in the settlement. Even the unused slabs from the sawmill were utilized by those making charcoal.")

One participant remembered:

Pag-undang sa sumil, nangundang ang tanan. Wa gayuy trabaho

ra. Iyahay lang kaugalingon ang mga panrabaho kay wa namay sumil.” (“When the sawmill stopped operating, everything also stopped. There were no more jobs. People just relied on themselves because the sawmill was already gone.”)

Through these recollections, I realized how the participants associated the closure of the sawmill with a significant shift in the social and economic life of Lianga. Their narratives reflected the community’s transition from collective dependence on the sawmill industry toward self-reliance, personal adaptation, and individual survival.

On Embodying the Mismanagement Narrative. As the participants recalled these events, many of them reflected on issues related to unpaid salaries, financial instability, and ineffective administration, which shaped their belief that the downfall of the industry was caused not only by external factors but also by internal organizational failures.

One participant stated:

Ay, dako daw to sauna... pero kadugayan, wala na gihatag sa tag-iyang among tarong nga sweldo ug mibaya na lang siya.” (“It was really big before... but eventually, the owner stopped giving us proper salaries and simply left.”)

“Simple ra gyud ang rason -mismanagement. Pagkahawa sa mga Amerikano ug pag-ilis sa mga Pilipino sa pagdumala, wala na maayos ang operasyon sa kompanya.” (“The reason was simple, it was mismanagement. When the Americans left and Filipinos took over the management, the company’s operations were no longer properly handled.”)

Another participant recalled:

As the participants reminisced about the past, I could sense the sadness and disappointment in the way they narrated their experiences of neglected responsibilities, declining operations, and abandoned workers. Their emotions reflected how these memories continued to shape the community’s narrative of mismanagement and the painful downfall of an industry that once brought stability and livelihood to Lianga.

3.3 Naturalizing Survival, Resilience, and Adaptation

On Sustaining Life through Normalized Survival Systems. In hearing their

personal experiences, I realized how company-provided housing, healthcare, employment opportunities, and credit systems had become normal parts of everyday life for the residents. For the participants, these forms of support were no longer viewed as special privileges but as essential structures that sustained the community and shaped their daily routines.

“Nakatabang gihapon kay sige man ug sweldo man usahay, usahay bale ra ng kuan, na bugas.” (“It still helped because salaries were regularly given, and sometimes rice could even be obtained through credit arrangements.”)

One participant shared:

“Bibo ang Pugad kay basta mag Sabado na, mo ari man ang mga trabahante... manginhas ang uban, mag inom.” (“Pugad was lively because whenever Saturday came, the workers would gather in the area—some would go fishing while others would drink and socialize.”)

Another participant emphasized the economic support provided by the company, saying:

As I listened to their stories, I understood how the sawmill industry became more than just a source of employment for the residents. It evolved into a socially accepted system that shaped their understanding of normal life, economic security, and community functioning in Lianga.

On Reclaiming the Site through Resource Recovery. During the participants' sharing of memories, I noticed how their stories reflected the community's gradual adjustment to life after the decline of the sawmill industry. Many of them recalled how residents reclaimed the abandoned site through resource recovery activities such as gathering scrap materials, reusing remaining structures, and utilizing available resources to support their daily needs and livelihoods.

As one participant shared:

"Nagpangahoy na lang ang uban didto sa mga ruins... mangolekta na lang sila ug kahoy gikan sa mga ruins." ("Some people would just gather wood from the ruins... they would collect wood from the remains of the ruins.")

Another participant recalled:

“Pagkahuman ato, gi-guba na nila ang lugar. Ang mga kahoy, yero, ug mga balay gipangkuha ug gipangguba. Ang mga tag-iya, ambot asa na sila padulong, murag sa Butuan siguro.” (“After that, the place was eventually dismantled. The wood, roofing sheets, and houses were all taken apart and destroyed. As for the owners, I’m not sure where they went, perhaps they transferred to Butuan.”)

“Iyang mga slab nga wala na nagamit, gigamit na lang sa mga naghimo og asin... doble ang kita kay mahal man ang asin niadtong panahona.” (“The unused slabs were utilized by those engaged in salt production. Their income doubled because salt became expensive during that time.”)

“Mo-consider ko nga utang na loob ang akong dugang nga nasayran. Dakong natabang ang Lianga Bay sa akoa.” (“I consider the additional knowledge and experiences I gained as a debt of gratitude. Lianga Bay was a great help to me.”)

As I reflected on their narratives, I could sense how the participants viewed these practices not merely as acts of survival, but as ways of adapting to difficult circumstances after the collapse of the industry. Their stories revealed the

resilience of the community and how residents learned to make use of whatever resources remained in order to continue sustaining their everyday lives.

On Internalizing Hardship as Personal Resilience. As their narratives unfolded, I realized how difficult social and economic conditions gradually became normalized through repeated experiences and collective adaptation within the community. Over time, the participants internalized these hardships as part of their everyday lives, reflecting resilience, perseverance, and the ability to endure despite the challenges brought by the decline of the sawmill industry.

Participants' narratives reveal how struggles within the sawmill industry were accompanied by experiences of gratitude, perseverance, and personal growth.

Another participant recalled receiving scholarships and support, stating:

“Ako’y mga voucher sa ilahang mga scholarship... na-prove gyud nako nga maayo gyud.” (“I was one of the recipients of their scholarship vouchers, and I was truly able to prove that it was highly beneficial.”)

At the same time, participants also recounted labor-related struggles. As one resident narrated:

“Sukad pagtrabaho nako dinhi sa AGO, usahay lagi palpak ang akong sweldo... midaog mi sa labor.” (“Since I started working at AGO, there were times when my salary would be delayed or insufficient, but we were able to win the labor case.”)

Through these experiences, I realized how the participants transformed hardship into stories of personal resilience and collective endurance. As they shared their struggles, it became evident that they no longer viewed themselves merely as victims of industrial decline, but as individuals who learned to persevere, adapt, and continue living despite the challenges they faced. Their narratives reflected a strong sense of resilience that became deeply rooted in the community's shared identity and survival.

3.4 Summary of Findings

The social interactions experienced by the residents in relation to The Ruins within their community centered on remembering the “Bibo Era” as a period of

industrial prosperity, describing the sawmill operations based on American management practices, recognizing the site as a self-sustaining company town, recounting the industrial production and global distribution of resources, and reflecting on the differences between the pre-industrial period and the height of Lianga's social and economic vibrancy.

The symbolic meanings attributed by the residents to The Ruins as a local landmark were associated with social status through causeways and scholarships, economic betrayal through *sibat*, systemic collapse through fire incidents, the shift toward individual survival, and the narrative of mismanagement that contributed to the downfall of Lianga's sawmill industry.

The forms of communication that emerged among residents regarding The Ruins were centered on sustaining life through normalized survival systems, reclaiming the site through resource recovery, and internalizing hardship as personal resilience. Through their shared stories and everyday interactions, residents communicated experiences of adaptation, survival, and resilience following the decline of the sawmill industry.

4. DISCUSSION

Discussed in this chapter are the findings of the study. Presented as well are the implications for practice and future directions.

4.1 Social Interactions of Residents in Relation to The Ruins

In my study, I found that the social interactions experienced by the residents in relation to The Ruins were centered on recalling the “Bibo Era” of industrial prosperity, classifying the sawmill operations through the American standard of management, naming the site as a self-sustained company town, documenting industrial production and global flow, and comparing the pre-industrial and peak social vibrance of Lianga.

My finding aligns with the study of Farashah et al. (2026), which revealed that local communities construct collective memory and identity through their shared perceptions and emotional associations with industrial heritage sites. Similarly, Seduikyte et al. (2025) asserted that heritage spaces strengthen social interaction, collective participation, and shared cultural experiences that contribute to community identity and social resilience. My findings affirm these studies by showing that residents actively construct shared meanings and collective memories

about The Ruins through social interaction and communication.

However, the present finding further emphasizes that the residents' narratives are deeply rooted not only in heritage preservation but also in lived experiences of industrial prosperity, economic decline, and community transformation in Lianga. This supports the assertion of Dehghan Pour Farashah et al. (2026) that industrial heritage is closely linked to collective memory, emotional associations, and socio-cultural identity within communities. It is also supported by Fan and Xie (2023), who explained that industrial heritage carries memory and emotional value that shape urban culture and preserve the place spirit of communities.

Symbolic Meanings Attributed by Residents to The Ruins The findings reveal that the symbolic meanings Lianga residents attribute to The Ruins are deeply intertwined with social status (causeways and scholarships), economic betrayal (*sibat*), and systemic collapse (fire incidents). These symbols reflect a broader shift toward individual survival and a shared narrative of mismanagement that precipitated the downfall of the local sawmill industry. This aligns with Fan and Xie (2023), who posited that industrial heritage sites harbor symbolic meanings tied to collective memory, identity, and localized emotion. Similarly, Farashah et al. (2026) asserted that these spaces embody dual narratives of prosperity and

decline, while Liao and Yang (2025) viewed physical remnants as spatial mediums where communities decode historical decline into public cultural symbols.

Moreover, in line with the results, it can be affirmed that The Ruins function as active symbolic landscapes of progress, loss, survival, and resilience. However, these findings contrast with the assumption that industrial heritage automatically fosters a unified sense of nostalgic pride. Instead, Lianga's localized memories of betrayal and collapse highlight a narrative of contestation and emotional friction, where traumatic industry closures generate a fragmented collective memory rather than a harmonized local legacy (Goluzha & Bole, 2025).

Emerging Forms of Communication Regarding The Ruins of Lianga. The forms of communication that emerged among residents regarding The Ruins were centered on sustaining life through normalized survival systems, reclaiming the site through resource recovery, and internalizing hardship as personal resilience. Through their shared stories and everyday interactions, residents communicated experiences of adaptation, survival, and resilience following the decline of the sawmill industry.

This observation mirrors the assertions of Hu and Zhang (2026), who argued that cultural continuity within transitioning spaces hinges on spontaneous resilience mechanisms and proactive adaptation strategies designed to absorb external disturbances. In a similar vein, Abbas et al. (2023) established that amidst

systemic crises, communities cyclically leverage their immediate environments to buffer economic shocks, fostering an adaptive dialogue that ultimately reconfigures daily routines.

In contrast, these findings contradict the perspective edited by Liere and Sremac (2025), alongside standard industrial heritage literature, which often asserts that communities construct a "de-conflictualized" narrative of the past. Such literature suggests that local populations completely sanitize or erase memories of industry failure, regulatory violation, and economic trauma in favor of pure, untarnished nostalgia (Liere & Sremac, 2025). Instead, the communication patterns in Lianga prove that community discourse remains actively anchored to the stark realities of survival and resource recovery rather than moving toward a romanticized history.

4.2 Modified Paradigm

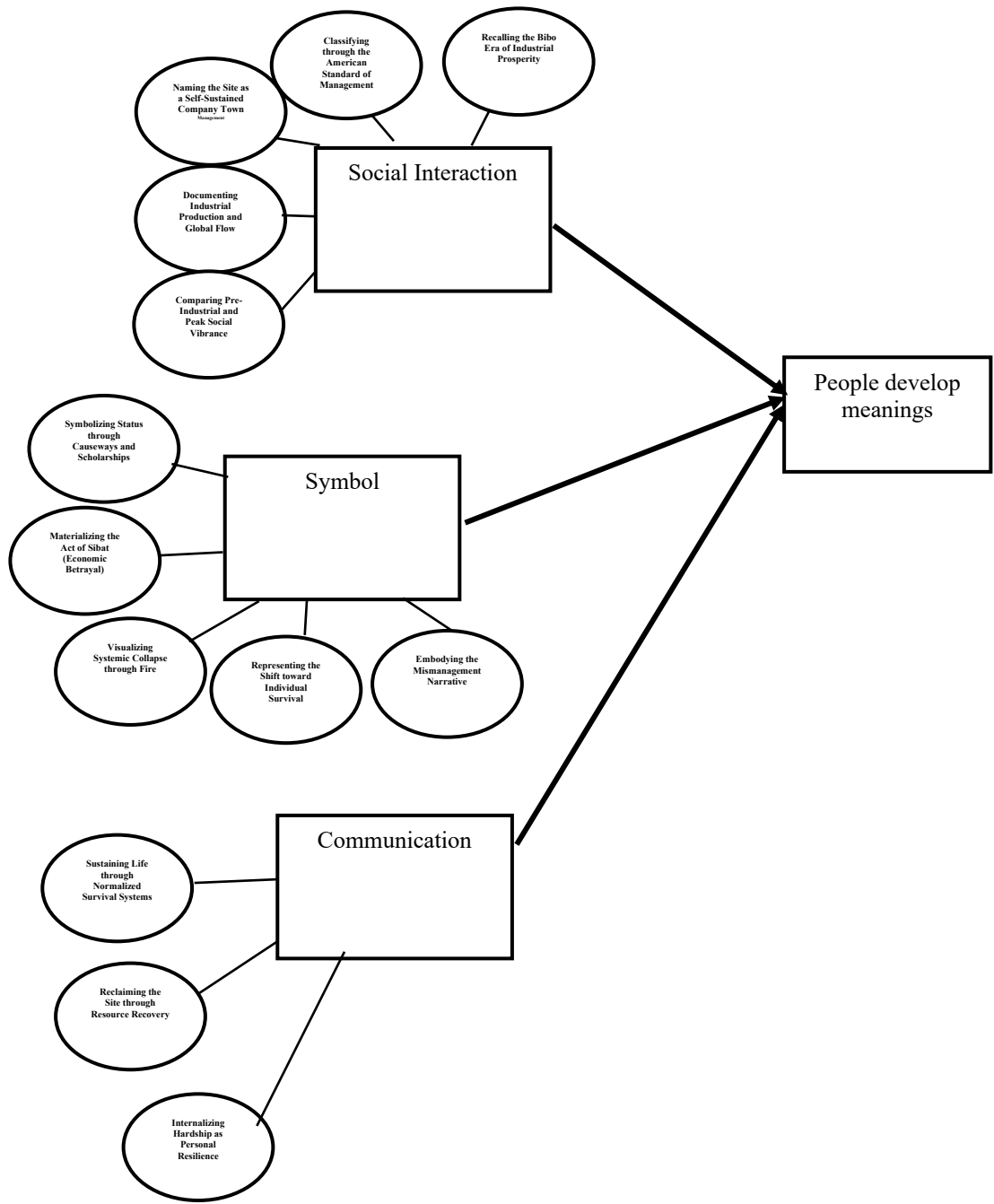


Figure 1. Modified Paradigm of Social Representation Theory

4.3 Future Directions of the Study

Future research may expand this study by exploring post-industrial ruins in different cultural and geographic contexts, particularly within Caraga and other regions of the Global South, to examine how community meanings and economic transitions vary across settings. It may also include intergenerational perspectives from younger residents, local authorities, and extended community members to track how collective memories of systemic collapse and economic betrayal (such as the *sibat*) either fade or transform from survival narratives into historical heritage. Methodologically, subsequent inquiries could utilize quantitative or mixed-method approaches, such as combining spatial analysis of physical ruins with oral histories, to further examine the direct relationship between physical landmarks and community identity. Additionally, future studies may further investigate how the core mechanisms of Social Representation Theory (anchoring and objectification) operate within environments marked by narrative contestation, determining whether localized discourse moves toward a unified, romanticized history or remains permanently anchored to the stark realities of survival, emotional friction, and resilience.

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