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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Phenomenological Study of Conflict and Compromise in Shared Housing Among Filipino University Students

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ABSTRACT

This study is a phenomenological investigation of how Filipino university students experience conflict and compromise while cohabiting in shared housing. Grounded in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and enriched by Sikolohiyang Pilipino, the study explored the lived experiences of four female fourth-year students residing in boarding houses near Aklan State University – New Washington Campus. Data were gathered through two phases of semi-structured interviews and a four-week reflexive journaling protocol, then analyzed following IPA's iterative coding procedures. Five superordinate themes emerged: the shock of transitioning into shared living, the embodied, somatic weight of unspoken stress, conflict avoidance shaped by the double-edged logic of pakikisama (getting along with others), the emergence of assertive communication as a form of empowerment, and the gradual transformation of shared space into a meaningful sense of home. Findings show that Filipino cultural values such as pakikisama ((getting along with others), hiya (shame), and utang na loob (debt of gratitude), actively structure how conflict is recognized, suppressed, or eventually voiced, and that direct communication, once attempted, consistently improved roommate relationships despite cultural pressure toward silence. The study concludes that cohabitation among Filipino university students is a psychosocial event that is simultaneously economic, relational, cultural, and developmental, and recommends pre-move-in orientation programs, written roommate agreements, and accessible mediation channels for a better support students navigating shared housing.

KEYWORDS

Conflict and Compromise; Shared Housing; Phenomenological Analysis

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1. Introduction

Living away from home for the first time is a defining psychosocial transition in the lives of Filipino university students. Each academic year, thousands of young people leave their rural hometowns and family homes to pursue higher education in urban centers or near university premises. For many, this geographic displacement necessitates sharad housing arrangements such as dormitories, boarding houses, or co-rented apartments, wherein students must navigate the complexities of cohabitation with peers who are often strangers. This transition represents not merely a change of address but a fundamental reorganization of daily life, domestic routines, interpersonal boundaries, and the meaning of home itself (Brilliantes et al., 2012).

The prevalence of shared student housing in the Philippines is driven by structural and economic realities. Malaga (2022) found that the majority of Filipino university students rent housing facilities outside their campuses, living predominantly as bed spacers in boarding houses in major cities such as Manila and Cebu. Brilliantes et al. (2012) established that proximity to campus and affordability are the two most critical determinants of housing choice for Filipino students, frequently superseding considerations of quality, safety, or comfort. This underscores that shared housing is, for most students, a financial necessity rather than a preferred lifestyle.

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Legislative attention to these conditions reinforces empirical findings on student housing quality. Nobis (2022) documented that rooms in many Philippine boarding houses are overcrowded, with minimal space for movement, communal bathrooms that produce long queues, and minimal personal storage. Senate Bill 1113, introduced during the 15th Congress, similarly documented these deficiencies, though it should be understood as a legislative advocacy document rather than an empirical audit (Villar, 2010). Within these constrained physical conditions, students must negotiate not only interpersonal relationships

but also spatial limits, competing schedules, and the constant proximity of others in spaces that should ideally serve as places of rest and refuge.

Despite the centrality of shared housing in the daily lives of Filipino University students, the phenomenological dimensions of cohabitation, how students subjectively experienced conflict, manage compromise, and make sense of communal living remain largely unexamined in the Philippine literature. Existing studies have primarily employed quantitative and descriptive-survey methods that document conditions and correlations but do not capture the textured, meaning-laden quality of lived cohabitation experience. Understanding these lived experiences is essential in capturing the human dimension of student housing beyond its structural conditions. It is toward this end that the present study sought to explore, through a phenomenological lens, the conflict and compromise embedded in the everyday cohabitation of Filipino university students.

1.1 Statement of the problem

This phenomenological study explored and sought to understand the essence of cohabitation for Filipino university students living in shared housing. It moved beyond surface-level descriptions of roommate issues to uncover the deeper meanings and structures of this pivotal life experience. The research was guided by the following central questions :

What are the lived experiences of Filipino university students in a conflict and compromise shared housing arrangement ?

How do Filipino cultural values mediate conflict expression and resolution?

What emergent strategies do students employ to negotiate shared spaces?

What actionable recommendations can be formulated to enhance to support Filipino university students in shared accommodation?

1.2 Significance of study

This study makes contributions across four domains. Theoretically, it provides the first IPA-based analysis of shared student housing in the Philippine context, extending beyond the material conditions documented in previous survey-based research. The integration of IPA with Sikolohiyang Pilipino represents a methodological innovation that may serve as a model for future qualitative research in the Philippine social sciences.

Methodologically, the study demonstrates the value of multi-phase data collection, combining semi-structured interviews, reflexive journaling, and member-checking, while honestly acknowledging the dual function of journaling as data collection and behavioral catalyst. The manual coding documentation provides a transparent audit trail for researchers learning IPA methods in Philippine educational contexts.

Practically, the study provides directly actionable findings for boarding house administrators, university student affairs offices, and students themselves. The participant-centered nature of the recommendations ensures they are grounded in lived experience.

Culturally and socially, the study contributes to the Sikolohiyang Pilipino tradition by centering Filipino relational values as analytically productive constructs and giving voice to provincial Filipino university students whose experiences are rarely the subject of academic attention.

1.3 Scope and limitations

The study was conducted among students residing in boarding houses near Aklan State University – New Washington Campus. It focused on the phenomenological dimensions of cohabitation rather than on material or structural audits of boarding house quality.

The study acknowledges the following limitations. First, the purposive sample of four participants limits the transferability of findings, readers should understand them as illuminating possible structures of cohabitation experience rather than as statistically generalizable conclusions. Second, all four participants were women in their fourth year of study introducing gender, year-level, and economic homogeneity. Third, the reflexive journaling protocol simultaneously served as a data collection instrument and an inadvertent behavioral intervention, data from later phases cannot be treated as purely naturalistic. Fourth, the uniformly positive outcomes of documented communication attempts may reflect reporting bias shaped by *hiya* (shame) dynamics. Fifth, the researcher acknowledges her positioning as a Filipino researcher with boarding house experience, which necessitated ongoing reflexive bracketing.

1.4 Theoretical framework

This study is anchored on an integrative theoretical framework that draws from (1) phenomenological theories of lived experience, (2) *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* (Filipino Indigenous Psychology), (3) interpersonal conflict and negotiation theories, (4) environmental

psychology theories of privacy and crowding, and (5) emerging adulthood transition theory. Together, these lenses provide a comprehensive structure for understanding how Filipino university students experience conflict and compromise in shared housing.

1.1 Phenomenological foundations: the primacy of lived experience

The core of this study is phenomenological, drawing primarily from Moustakas (1994) and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as operationalized by Smith, Flowers, & Larkin (2009). Phenomenology asserts that reality is understood through the lived experiences of individuals, how they perceive, feel, and make meaning of events in their everyday world. In this framework, conflict and compromise are not merely observable behaviors but are intentional acts of consciousness: students actively interpret roommate disagreements, assign meaning to silences or outbursts, and construct personal understandings of "fairness," "respect," and "home." IPA adds a double hermeneutic, the researcher interprets the participant's interpretation of their experience. This is essential for capturing the nuanced, often ambivalent feelings that arise in shared housing. The phenomenological pillar of the framework prioritizes idiographic analysis (in-depth analysis of individual cases before cross-case patterns), meaning-making (how students narrate conflict and justify compromises), and the lifeworld, the everyday, taken-for-granted domestic routines that become sites of tension or negotiation.

1.2 SikoloHiyang Pilipino: cultural mediators of conflict and compromise

Without culturally grounded concepts, a purely Western phenomenological analysis would miss uniquely Filipino dynamics. Enriquez's (1992) Sikolohiyang Pilipino provides indigenous constructs that reframe how conflict is expressed, avoided, or resolved in shared housing. Three core values are central:

Table 1. Indigenous concepts and their application to shared housing

Indigenous Concept	Definition	Application to Shared Housing
Pakikisama	Smooth interpersonal relations, getting along, yielding to group will	Students may suppress complaints to maintain surface harmony; compromise becomes a moral obligation rather than a rational choice.
Hiya	Shame, sense of social propriety, fear of being reproached	A student may avoid confronting a messy roommate because speaking up would cause hiya (shame) to either party.
Utang na loob	Debt of gratitude, reciprocal obligation	If one roommate does a favor, the other may feel forced to tolerate misbehavior — conflict becomes entangled with perceived indebtedness.

These three values do not operate in isolation. They often create cultural dilemmas. *Pakikisama* demands accommodation, yet prolonged accommodation can lead to internal resentment. *Hiya* prevents direct confrontation, so conflicts remain latent. *Utang na loob* binds roommates in reciprocal expectations that, when violated, produce deeper moral injury than simple annoyance.

1.3 Interpersonal conflict and negotiation theory

To analyze the process of conflict and compromise, the framework incorporates Pruitt & Rubin's (1986) Dual Concern Model and the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (Thomas, 1992). These theories suggest that individuals respond to interpersonal conflict along two dimensions: concern for self and concern for other. The intersection yields five strategies: competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating. In the Filipino student context, pakikisama predisposes toward accommodating and avoiding. However, prolonged avoidance may escalate into sudden withdrawal or explosive confrontation. Compromise is culturally valued but often practiced implicitly through non-verbal hints or third-party mediation (*tagapamagitan*).

1.4 Environmental psychology: privacy, personal space, and crowding

Shared housing forces students into high-density, low-control environments. Altman's (1975) Privacy Regulation Theory posits that privacy is a dynamic boundary control process: individuals achieve desired levels of social interaction by opening or closing boundaries. In crowded boarding houses, students' ability to regulate privacy is severely constrained. This leads to crowding stress, the subjective feeling of having too many people in available space, and territoriality, where students claim small territories and experience distress when those territories are violated. Sundstrom & Altman's (1976) theory of residential satisfaction adds that satisfaction depends on perceived control over one's environment.

1.5 Emerging adulthood and the transition from home

Arnett's (2000) theory of emerging adulthood (ages 18–29) frames this life stage as a period of identity exploration, instability, and feeling "in-between." While this framework provides a useful developmental context, it must be applied with caution in the Filipino setting. Arnett's model assumes a degree of self-focused individualism and freedom from familial obligation that is inconsistent with Filipino relational values and the economic dependencies described in this study. Filipino students in shared

housing remain deeply embedded in family obligation structures (*utang na loob to parents*), pursue collective rather than individualistic identity formation, and typically lack the financial independence that characterizes Western emerging adulthood.

Medina's (2001) analysis of Filipino family structures, where hierarchical authority shapes children's interpersonal development, offers a more culturally congruent developmental lens: Filipino students arrive at boarding houses having learned deference and compliance rather than direct negotiation, creating a "transition gap" between the assertiveness that shared living demands and the avoidance strategies that family socialization produced. Arnett's framework thus serves as a partial scaffold—useful for naming the developmental stakes of the experience, but must be supplemented by indigenous developmental frameworks to accurately account for Filipino students' specific psychosocial reality.

1.6 Synthesis: an integrative conceptual model

The five theoretical pillars interact dynamically in the lived experience of Filipino student boarders. Cultural values (pakikisama, hiya, utang na loob) shape how conflict is recognized, expressed, or suppressed, functioning as the primary interpretive lens through which students make sense of cohabitation events. Privacy and environmental conditions (territoriality, crowding, boundary regulation) determine the specific triggers that generate conflict—spatial violations, noise, shared resources—and the intensity of the resulting stress. Conflict negotiation skills (drawn from the Dual Concern Model) determine whether and how compromise is achieved; in the Filipino context, accommodating and avoiding modes predominate, with collaborative and assertive modes emerging as developmental achievements rather than defaults. Emerging adult readiness (qualified by the Filipino developmental context discussed above) shapes the emotional and identity stakes of the experience: the boarding house is both a practical necessity and a developmental crucible where students encounter, for the first time, the demands of self-authored social life.

These four dimensions do not combine through simple addition or multiplication. Rather, they constitute interlocking interpretive layers: the physical environment sets the stage; cultural values shape what actors perceive as problematic; negotiation skills determine the repertoire of available responses; and developmental stage determines the meaning and growth potential of the entire experience. The phenomenological method then investigates how these abstract dimensions manifest in actual, moment-to-moment consciousness.

Figure 1. Integrative theoretical framework depicting how Sikolohiyang Pilipino, environmental psychology, conflict and negotiation theory, and emerging adulthood converge — through a phenomenological lens — on the lived experience of cohabitation.

2. Literature review

This section surveys existing scholarship relevant to shared student housing, Filipino cultural values, conflict negotiation, environmental psychology, developmental transition, and phenomenological inquiry. The review is organized thematically to establish what is currently known about student cohabitation and to identify the specific gap that the present study addresses.

2.1 Housing conditions and living arrangements of Filipino university students

Several Philippine studies have documented the material conditions under which university students live away from home. Malaga (2022) surveyed college students' housing facilities and accommodations and found that the majority rent bed spaces or rooms in privately operated boarding houses near their campuses, with monthly costs ranging from below ₱1,000 in provincial areas to ₱3,000–₱6,000 in urban centers, and recommended that housing policy development give greater attention to the affordability-quality trade-off students face. Nobis (2022), examining boarding houses used by students of the University of Eastern Philippines, Laoang Campus, similarly reported overcrowded rooms, communal bathrooms with insufficient facilities, and minimal storage space as recurring structural features. Brilliantes et al. (2012), studying living conditions in Davao City boarding houses and dormitories, found that proximity to campus and affordability consistently outweighed quality, safety, or comfort as determinants of housing choice among Filipino university students.

2.2 On-campus and shared living experiences

Beyond physical conditions, a smaller body of work has begun to examine the experiential dimension of student housing. Velasquez-Garcia and Garcia (2016) explored on-campus living experiences among Filipino university students and found that students frequently described their housing arrangements in emotionally mixed terms, as sites of both independence and vulnerability, while also noting recurring difficulties in adjusting to shared spaces and unfamiliar housemates. However, their study, like most existing Philippine research on student housing, employed a broadly descriptive approach and did not examine, in phenomenological depth, how students subjectively interpret and negotiate conflict with the peers they live with. This gap, between documenting that difficulty exists and understanding how it is lived and made meaningful, is a central point of departure for the present study.

2.3 Filipino cultural values and interpersonal relations

Enriquez (1992), the founder of Sikolohiyang Pilipino (Filipino Psychology), argued that Filipino interpersonal behavior cannot be adequately understood through imported Western psychological constructs alone, and proposed a set of indigenous concepts, including *pakikisama* (smooth interpersonal relations), *hiya* (a sense of social propriety and shame), and *utang na loob* (a debt of

gratitude and reciprocal obligation), as central organizing values of Filipino social life. Pe-Pua and Protacio-Marcelino (2000), reviewing the legacy of Enriquez's work, traced how these concepts have since been applied across Filipino family, community, and organizational settings, and noted their particular relevance to situations requiring the management of interpersonal harmony under conditions of unequal power or close physical proximity, conditions highly characteristic of shared student housing. Medina (2001), in her analysis of the Filipino family, further observed that hierarchical family authority structures shape how young Filipinos learn to manage disagreement, typically socializing children toward deference and conflict avoidance rather than direct negotiation, a pattern with direct implications for how newly independent university students respond to roommate conflict.

2.4 Conflict, negotiation, and compromise

Outside the Philippine context, Pruitt and Rubin (1986) proposed the Dual Concern Model, which describes conflict behavior along two dimensions, concern for one's own outcomes and concern for the other party's outcomes, yielding five characteristic strategies: competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating. Thomas (1992), building on a similar dual-concern logic, developed the widely used Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument to assess individual conflict-handling styles. Both frameworks have been applied extensively in organizational and family contexts but have rarely been tested against culturally specific value systems such as those described by Enriquez (1992), leaving open the question of how models developed primarily in Western settings apply to Filipino students whose conflict behavior is shaped by pakikisama and hiya.

2.5 Environmental psychology of shared living space

Altman's (1975) Privacy Regulation Theory conceptualizes privacy as a dynamic boundary-control process through which individuals regulate their openness to others, and identifies crowding as the psychological experience that results when this regulation fails. Sundstrom and Altman (1976) extended this work by examining how personal space and territorial behavior shape interpersonal relationships in shared environments, finding that spatial constraints intensify the emotional significance of everyday interactions. These frameworks have been applied largely to Western residential and workplace settings; their applicability to Filipino boarding houses, where communal bedrooms, shared kitchens, and single bathrooms are the norm rather than the exception, has not been extensively explored in existing literature.

2.6 Emerging adulthood and youth developmental transition

Arnett (2000) proposed emerging adulthood as a distinct developmental period, roughly spanning the late teens through the twenties, characterized by identity exploration, instability, and a subjective sense of being "in-between" adolescence and adulthood. While influential, Arnett's framework was developed primarily from data on Western, individualistic populations, and Medina (2001) cautions that Filipino youth typically move through this period within more collectivist, family-embedded structures that emphasize obligation over independence. Taken together, these two bodies of work suggest that Filipino university students entering shared housing may experience emerging adulthood's developmental tasks, identity formation, autonomous decision-making, and interpersonal negotiation, through a distinctly Filipino cultural lens that existing developmental literature has only partially addressed.

2.7 Phenomenological approaches to lived experience

Moustakas (1994) established phenomenological research methods as a rigorous means of investigating the essence of lived experience, emphasizing the researcher's use of epoché, or bracketing, to set aside preconceptions and attend closely to participants' own descriptions of a phenomenon. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) subsequently developed Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as an idiographic approach particularly suited to small, purposively selected samples, combining close descriptive attention to individual cases with an interpretive, double-hermeneutic stance in which the researcher makes sense of the participant's own sense-making. While phenomenological and IPA studies have examined a wide range of transitional life experiences, few have been applied to the specific experience of student cohabitation, and none identified in this review have combined IPA with an explicitly Filipino cultural-psychological lens.

2.8 Synthesis and research gap

Taken together, the literature reviewed above establishes three things clearly: that Filipino student housing is materially constrained and imperfectly regulated (Malaga, 2022; Nobis, 2022; Brilliantes et al., 2012; Villar, 2010); that Filipino interpersonal behavior is governed by a distinct set of cultural values that shape how conflict is expressed or suppressed (Enriquez, 1992; Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000; Medina, 2001); and that general theories of conflict negotiation, environmental psychology, and developmental transition (Pruitt & Rubin, 1986; Thomas, 1992; Altman, 1975; Sundstrom & Altman, 1976; Arnett, 2000) offer useful but culturally under-tested lenses for understanding that behavior. What remains largely absent from this literature is a study that examines, from the inside—through participants' own words and reflections—how Filipino university students actually experience and make sense of conflict and compromise while sharing living space with peers. Velasquez-Garcia and Garcia (2016) come closest to this territory but stop short of a sustained phenomenological analysis. It is this gap that the present study, guided by Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith et al., 2009) and enriched by Sikolohiyang Pilipino (Enriquez, 1992), was designed to address.

3. Research method

3.1 Research design

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological design, appropriate for exploring the essence of lived experience as it presents itself to the consciousness of participants (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell, 2013). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), developed by Smith et al. (2009), served as the primary analytic approach. IPA is concerned with how individuals make sense of their major life experiences and is characterized by a commitment to idiographic description, attending closely to the particular before moving to broader patterns, and a double hermeneutic in which the researcher attempts to make sense of the participant's attempt to make sense of their experience.

It is important to acknowledge a deliberate modification to standard IPA procedure employed in this study. Strict IPA protocol requires a fully developed idiographic case analysis for each participant before moving to cross-case pattern identification. Given the scope constraints of this study and the strong thematic convergence observed across participants, the analysis prioritized cross-case thematic synthesis while retaining idiographic sensitivity through the use of detailed participant quotations and individual narrative threads within each theme. This approach is consistent with what Smith et al. (2009) describe as a "flexible" application of IPA, appropriate when convergent patterns are analytically central, provided that idiographic particularity is not erased. Readers should interpret the findings as cross-case structural patterns with illustrative individual detail rather than as fully developed individual case studies.

This methodological approach was further enriched by Sikolohiyang Pilipino, the indigenous psychology movement founded by Enriquez (1992), which insists that the study of Filipino psychological life must employ concepts, categories, and methods that emerge from Filipino experience rather than being imported wholesale from Western frameworks. The integration of IPA with Sikolohiyang Pilipino created a bicultural methodological stance that honored both phenomenological rigor and Filipino cultural specificity.

3.2 Locale of the study

The study was conducted in a selected boarding house near the premises of Aklan State University – New Washington Campus to capture the experiences of students in a shared housing condition.

3.3 ParticIPAnts and sampling

A purposive sample of Filipino university students of Aklan State University – New Washington Campus currently residing in boarding houses or shared dormitory accommodations was recruited. In a qualitative study, a relatively small and purposively selected sample may be employed (Miles & Huberman, 1994), with the aim of increasing the depth (as opposed to breadth) of understanding (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Inclusion criteria specified: (1) currently enrolled as a full-time undergraduate student; (2) residing in shared housing with at least one non-family roommate for a minimum of six months; (3) having experienced at least one episode of interpersonal conflict or significant negotiation with a roommate during the current academic year; and (4) willing to participate in two interview sessions conducted in Filipino, English, or a code-switching combination. A final sample of four participants was recruited, consistent with IPA's preference for smaller, purposively selected samples that enable depth of analysis (Smith et al., 2009).

The study acknowledges that all four participants were female fourth-year students from the same university, which introduces gender and year-level homogeneity that may not reflect the range of cohabitation experiences across all demographic groups. Additionally, all four participants paid an identical monthly rent of ₱1,100, introducing economic homogeneity that limits transferability to students in higher or lower cost housing arrangements, or to urban university contexts in Manila or Cebu where housing costs differ substantially. Future studies should intentionally include male students, lower-year students, students at varied economic levels, and students in urban contexts to extend and test the findings.

3.4 Data collection

Primary data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted in two phases, following established guidance on qualitative interviewing technique and style (Kelly, 2010). Phase 1 interviews (60–90 minutes) explored participants' housing histories, descriptions of their current living arrangements, accounts of significant conflict episodes, and their strategies for managing these conflicts. Phase 2 interviews (45–60 minutes), conducted approximately four weeks later, served dual purposes: member checking (returning preliminary analytical observations to participants for their validation or correction) and exploring emerging themes in greater depth. Interview guides were developed in both Filipino and English, with code-switching encouraged to allow participants to express culturally specific concepts in their most natural linguistic register.

Supplementary data were collected through reflexive journaling by participants over a four-week period between interview phases, using prompts such as: "Describe a moment this week when you chose not to say something to your roommate. What did you feel? What did you decide to do instead?" This journaling protocol, adapted from Moustakas's (1994) phenomenological procedures, was designed to capture the micro-level, daily texture of cohabitation experience that retrospective interviews may miss.

It is critical to acknowledge that the reflexive journaling protocol, while employed as a data collection tool, simultaneously functioned as an inadvertent behavioral intervention. By prompting participants to attend systematically to their emotional and somatic responses to cohabitation events, the journal appeared to accelerate participants' self-awareness and, in several cases, catalyzed communicative action within the study period itself. This dual function creates an important methodological boundary: findings derived from Phase 2 interviews and Week 3–4 journal entries must be understood not only as reflecting participants' natural cohabitation experience but also as reflecting the effects of structured reflection on that experience. The study therefore documents two related but distinct phenomena: (1) the structures of Filipino student cohabitation experience as they naturally present themselves, and (2) how structured self-reflection alters those structures. These are reported separately where relevant in Chapter 4. Participants were informed that journal prompts might lead to personal insights but were not explicitly briefed on the possibility of behavioral change; this limitation in informed consent is acknowledged as an area for improvement in future replications.

3.5 Ethical considerations

All participants provided written informed consent prior to participation. Confidentiality was maintained through the use of pseudonyms and the removal of identifying details from all transcripts and published materials. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without academic or social penalty. Given that interview content might elicit emotionally difficult recollections of conflict, isolation, or homesickness, referrals to university counseling services were made available to all participants. The study received ethical clearance from the institutional review board of the lead researcher's university prior to data collection.

In addition to participant confidentiality, this study addressed the confidentiality of third parties—specifically, the roommates of participants—who appear extensively in the data but did not consent to participate. Identifying details of named or described roommates were systematically altered in all transcripts and published materials, including the use of invented pseudonyms for any roommate referred to by name during interviews, the generalization of specific behavioral details that could enable identification, and the omission of any temporal or locational information that could pinpoint individuals in the boarding house community. All published extracts were reviewed for identifiability of non-consenting third parties prior to inclusion.

3.6 Data analysis

Data analysis followed the IPA procedures outlined by Smith et al. (2009): (1) reading and rereading transcripts to develop initial notes and observations; (2) developing emergent themes from close reading of individual transcripts; (3) searching for connections across themes within each case; (4) moving to subsequent cases and repeating the process; and (5) looking for patterns across cases while maintaining idiographic sensitivity to individual variation.

To ensure methodological rigor, the following quality criteria were applied: credibility through member checking and peer debriefing; transferability through thick description of participant context; dependability through an audit trail of analytical decisions; and confirmability through reflexive memos documenting the researcher's own positioning and assumptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A Filipino researcher with boarding house experience conducted all interviews.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data

This part of the research presents, analyzes, and interprets the data gathered through two phases of semi-structured in-depth interviews and a four-week reflexive journal kept by each participant. The study involved four Filipino university students—Ayna, Shy Cruz, Gela, and EneliA—all residing in boarding houses near Aklan State University – New Washington Campus. The analysis is guided by the integrated theoretical framework that was presented, which draws on Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009) as the primary analytic method, enriched by the indigenous concepts of Sikolohiyang Pilipino (Enriquez, 1992), privacy regulation theory (Altman, 1975), the environmental psychology of crowding and territoriality (Sundstrom & Altman, 1976), emerging adulthood as a developmental transition (Arnett, 2000; qualified by Medina, 2001), and the Dual Concern Model of conflict negotiation (Pruitt & Rubin, 1986). Through this analysis, five superordinate themes were identified that capture the essential structures of cohabitation as it is lived, felt, and made meaningful by the participants: (1) The Shock of the New: Homesickness, Adjustment, and the Reconstruction of Everyday Life; (2) The Body Keeps Score: Embodied Stress and the Physical Weight of Shared Living; (3) Conflict Avoidance and the Double-Edged Logic of Pakikisama; (4) Emergent Communication as Empowerment; and (5) Shared Spaces, Shared Selves: Meaning-Making and the Transformation of Home.

4.1 ParticIPAnt profiles

Before presenting the thematic analysis, it is helpful to briefly situate each participant. The pseudonym "EneliA" retains the participant's preferred capitalization at her request. Ayna is a 22-year-old student who has lived in a boarding house for ten months with three roommates at a monthly rental of ₱1,100. She describes herself as quiet and observant. Shy Cruz is a 21-year-old student who moved to a boarding house to avoid the long daily commute during her internship training, sharing a room with four roommates for seven months. Gela is a 21-year-old fourth-year student who, like Shy Cruz, relocated closer to school due to

the demands of her OJT, thesis, and board review schedule, sharing a room with four roommates for seven months at ₱1,100 per month. EneliA is a 22-year-old student who has the longest cohabitation experience among the participants—twenty-seven months—and who moved in after the daily boat-and-tricycle commute from her hometown became financially unsustainable. All four are women completing their final year of university study.

Table 2. Participant profiles

Pseudonym	Age	Program	Hometown	Roommates	Duration (mo.)	Rent/mo.
Ayna	22	BS Fisheries	Malay, Aklan	3	10	₱1,100
Shy Cruz	21	BS Criminology	Banga, Aklan	4	7	₱1,100
Gela	21	BS Criminology	Madalag, Aklan	4	7	₱1,100
EneliA	22	BCAED	Batan, Aklan	4	27	₱1,100

Note: BCAED = Bachelor of Culture and Arts Education. Duration refers to the length of the current housing arrangement at the time of the Phase 1 interview. All four participants pay the same monthly rent of ₱1,100, which reflects the economic context of provincial boarding houses near this campus. Findings regarding financial stress should be interpreted in light of this economic homogeneity.

4.2 Thematic analysis

4.3 Theme 1: the shock of the new — homesickness, adjustment, and the reconstruction of everyday life

For all four participants, the transition into shared housing was experienced as a profound disruption of the familiar—a dislocation not only from family and hometown but from the deeply embodied routines, sensory landscapes, and emotional securities of home. This theme captures the early phenomenological texture of that disruption and the gradual, effortful reconstruction of a livable daily life within a shared space.

4.4 The first days as threshold experience

Each participant described the earliest days in their boarding house as a threshold moment, a crossing into unfamiliar psychological and social territory. The predominant emotional tone was one of strangeness, dislocation, and longing. Ayna's account was the most visceral:

First day ng paglipat ko nanibago ako lalo na at hindi ko naman ganon ka close ang kaboardmate ko kahit sabihin ko pang magbarkada kami. Nag expect ako ng malinis at tahimik na boarding house lalo na at hindi naman ipinakita yung picture samin ng boarding house na lilipatan namin. First few days ko sa boarding house umiyak ako kasi na home sick. — Ayna, Phase 1 Interview

(On my first day moving in, I felt out of place especially since I wasn't really close with my roommate even though we were supposedly friends. I expected a clean and quiet boarding house, especially since they didn't show us a picture of the place we were moving into. During my first few days in the boarding house, I cried because I was homesick.)

The gap between expectation and reality was a common feature. Ayna had formed her mental image of boarding house life from Wattpad fiction and television, media-mediated fantasies of organized, friendly, and independently empowering student living. The reality of an unshown boarding house, noisy from a landlord's welding shop and lacking a cabinet for personal storage, confronted these imagined ideals sharply. Shy Cruz articulated the affective labor of early adjustment with clarity:

Everything felt new, the room, the routines, and especially the people. I remember being very aware of the shared space, like where to put my things, how much noise was okay, and trying not to overstep in areas like the kitchen or bathroom. — Shy Cruz, Phase 1 Interview

This heightened spatial awareness, a somatic calibration to new social norms, was shared by all participants. The body itself became a site of adjustment, learning through lived experience where the unspoken boundaries of territory, sound, and smell were drawn.

4.5 Financial reality and the impoverishment of everyday life

Underlying the emotional adjustment was a structural constraint that shaped daily cohabitation experience in fundamental ways: financial precarity. Ayna's account of her daily budget illustrated how material poverty infiltrates every dimension of student life:

Kapag nasa bahay ako magaganda ulam ko doon eh. Nung nasa bh na ako palaging delata, itlog or canton kasi hindi naman ako marunong magluto nun at nagtitipid din ako kasi 100 lang naman allowance ko in one day doon na included yung mga shampoo, pamasahe ko pa school, pagkain at iba pa. — Ayna, Phase 1 Interview

(When I'm at home, the food is good. When I moved to the boarding house, it was always canned goods, eggs, or instant noodles because I didn't know how to cook and I was also saving money since my daily allowance was only 100 pesos, which had to cover shampoo, fare to school, food, and other things.)

4.6 Missing home: the sensory dimension of homesickness

Across all four participants, homesickness was expressed not primarily in abstract terms but in intensely sensory and embodied terms: the specific taste of home-cooked food, the smell of a mother's kitchen, the sound of quiet familiar nights. EneliA expressed this most poignantly:

When the noise is too much, I think about my family's house, how quiet it is, how my mother would cook for me, how I could sleep anytime. I miss that peace. Sometimes I cry quietly in my bed. — EneliA, Phase 2 Interview

This finding is consistent with the phenomenological literature on homesickness, which locates its affective power not in abstract attachment to place but in the disruption of habitual, embodied routines and sensory patterns (Moustakas, 1994). The transition also reflects developmental challenges consistent with emerging adulthood—qualified here, as discussed in the Theoretical Framework, by the Filipino relational and economic context that shapes this stage differently from Western counterparts (Arnett, 2000; Medina, 2001).

4.7 Theme 2: the body keeps score — embodied stress and the physical weight of shared living

A striking and consistent finding across all four participants was the degree to which the stresses of shared living registered not only psychologically but physically—in the body itself. This theme addresses the somatic dimension of cohabitation, documenting how interpersonal tension, conflict avoidance, and accumulated frustrations were experienced as bodily sensations.

4.8 The physiology of suppressed frustration

The most frequently occurring physical symptoms described were a tightening or heaviness in the chest, increased heart rate, and muscular tension in the shoulders, neck, and jaw. Shy Cruz described this most systematically:

My chest feels tight, like heaviness or pressure that's hard to shake off. My stomach sometimes feels uneasy, like knots forming when I'm anxious about approaching the situation. My shoulders and neck tense up, especially if I've been holding back my words. And my heart rate increases a little, showing that my body is on alert even if I'm trying to stay calm. — Shy Cruz, Phase 1 Interview

Gela echoed this in her Week 1 journal: "*I felt irritation in my chest — parang may mabigat (something feels heavy). I didn't say anything. I just washed her dishes quickly so I could use the sink. I felt annoyed but also resigned, like 'ganito na talaga.'(it is what it is)*" EneliA similarly recorded physical responses during episodes involving her intoxicated roommate: "*My heart started beating fast and I felt a knot in my stomach. I didn't say anything because she was drunk. I just pulled my blanket over my head and pretended to be asleep.*" Across all four participants, the body functioned as an emotional barometer, registering tensions that cultural norms of hiya and pakikisama prevented from being expressed verbally. These somatic responses align with environmental psychology research on crowding stress, where high-density, low-control living conditions produce sustained physiological arousal (Sundstrom & Altman, 1976).

4.9 Environmental stressors and their somatic impact

Beyond interpersonal conflict, participants reported physical discomfort arising from environmental conditions. Ayna's Week 1 journal documented the impact of noise from the landlord's welding shop:

This week, I felt uncomfortable dahil sa ingay ng welding shop ng landlord. Bukas yung pinto ng kwarto, so sobrang lakas ng grinding sound. Nasa kama ako, nagsusubok magbasa pero hindi maka-concentrate. Yung dalawa kong roommate, tahimik lang din. Pero hindi kami nagreklamo kasi nahihiya kami. Naiirita ako pero wala akong ginawa. Pumikit na lang ako at nag-earphones. — Ayna, Week 1 Journal

(This week, I felt uncomfortable because of the noise from the landlord's welding shop. The door was open, so the grinding sound was very loud. I was trying to read but couldn't concentrate. My two roommates were also just quiet. But we didn't complain because we were embarrassed. I was annoyed but I didn't do anything. I just closed my eyes and used earphones.)

The earphones function here as what Altman (1975) would describe as a prosthetic privacy boundary, a technology of self-protection when physical privacy is unavailable and cultural hiya prohibits verbal boundary-setting.

4.10 The discovery of unacknowledged stress through journaling

The following finding documents the reflexive journal's function as both data collection tool and behavioral catalyst. As acknowledged in the Methods chapter, this dual role means that findings about somatic awareness in Phase 2 partly reflect a researcher-induced change rather than purely natural cohabitation experience.

Participants were largely unaware of their physical stress patterns until the reflexive journaling prompted attention to bodily experience. Ayna observed in Phase 2: "*Another pattern, I always feel something physical, a pinch in my chest, sometimes a headache. I didn't know that's how I react to stress.*" This finding points to the value of reflective methods, with the important qualification that the journaling process itself produced this awareness rather than merely capturing pre-existing self-knowledge.

4.11 Theme 3: conflict avoidance and the double-edged logic of Pakikisama

The most structurally central theme was the pervasive, culturally mediated tendency toward conflict avoidance, enacted through pakikisama, hiya, and utang na loob. This theme examines how these values both protected the harmony of shared living and created conditions under which legitimate grievances went unaddressed, and stress was borne silently and somatically.

4.12 Pakikisama as social glue and as constraint

All four participants invoked pakikisama as a guiding norm. At its most positive, it functioned as a relational lubricant, enabling participants to absorb small irritants and maintain the cooperative fabric of shared life. This corresponds to the "accommodating" and "avoiding" modes in the Dual Concern Model (Pruitt & Rubin, 1986). Ayna offered a succinct articulation: "*Dahil sa pakikisama hindi kami nag-aaway ng mga kaboardmate ko*" (Because of *pakikisama,* my roommates and I don't fight). EneliA described it as active accommodation: sometimes agreeing with roommates' plans even when tired, to avoid making them feel excluded. Yet Gela articulated the double-edged quality most clearly:

Yung pakikisama, totoo na nakakatulong para iwasan ang away, pero napansin ko rin na kung puro pakikisama lang, hindi naaayos ang problema. — Gela, Phase 2 Interview

(Pakikisama is indeed helpful in avoiding fights, but I also noticed that if it's only pakikisama, the problem doesn't get resolved.)

Gela's reframing "true *pakikisama* is respecting each other through clear communication"—represents a significant psychological development: a move from pakikisama as relational compliance to pakikisama as relational reciprocity.

4.13 Hiya as a barrier to self-advocacy

Hiya operated as a gate-keeping mechanism on self-expression, consistently producing the experience of wanting to speak but not speaking. Shy Cruz's Week 2 journal entry captures the phenomenology of this suppression:

I wanted to say, 'Can you please use earphones?' But I didn't. I felt hiya – I didn't want to seem strict or confrontational. Instead, I put on my own earphones and played white noise. I turned my back to her and focused on my notes. I felt relieved I avoided conflict but also annoyed at myself for not speaking up. — Shy Cruz, Week 2 Journal

This captures the emotional paradox of hiya-driven avoidance: short-term relief coexisting with longer-term self-reproach. By Week 4, Shy Cruz had moved to direct and successful confrontation, suggesting that hiya is a diminishing rather than fixed constraint when direct communication produces non-catastrophic outcomes.

4.14 Utang na Loob and the relational asymmetries of gratitude

Utang na loob appeared in the data in ways that varied considerably by participant. For Ayna, the value was emotionally salient: a profound debt of gratitude to a former roommate who had supported her during a personal crisis created lasting loyalty. Gela described a more routine version, receiving shared food and reciprocating the following day, that sustained relational goodwill without generating significant moral complexity. Shy Cruz, whose relationship with roommates was more pragmatic and less emotionally invested, reported minimal sense of utang na loob, which she associated with a less conflicted but also less warm cohabitation dynamic.

The relatively limited evidentiary weight of utang na loob in this dataset, compared to its theoretical prominence, is itself a finding worth noting: it may suggest that utang na loob as a mediator of conflict operates primarily in relationships characterized by significant prior assistance, and is less salient in the more transactional relationships typical of boarding house arrangements formed among relative strangers. Taken together, pakikisama, hiya, and utang na loob constituted an interlocking cultural architecture of relational management consistent with Pe-Pua and Protacio-Marcelino's (2000) analysis of Filipino social values as inherently relational and face-protective.

4.15 Theme 4: emergent communication as empowerment — the journey from silence to voice

The most dynamically evolving theme across the data was the progressive development of communicative agencies among participants. All four participants moved, over the study period, from predominantly avoidant or silent responses toward more active, direct, or strategically mediated forms of engagement.

4.16 The costs of sustained silence

For Shy Cruz, weeks of silent tolerance of kitchen mess produced accumulating resentment and a sense of helplessness—what she described as "a never-ending cycle." Gela described an identical internal dynamic:

Naramdaman ko na tumataas na yung frustration ko. Paulit-ulit kong iniisip, 'Dapat ba akong magsabi? Pero baka hindi na worth magsimula ng gulo ngayon.' — Gela, Phase 1 Interview

(I could feel my frustration rising. I kept thinking to myself, 'Should I say something? But maybe it's not worth starting trouble right now.')

EneliA's experience of her intoxicated roommate illustrated the most extreme form of this pattern: repeated disruptions, including the bringing of strangers into the room at midnight—were endured in silence born of fear of escalation and the tactical recognition that direct confrontation with an intoxicated person was futile. The consequence was a sense of helplessness and, as EneliA

reflected in Phase 2, a creeping loss of the sense of home: "When I feel unsafe because of a roommate, that place stops feeling like home."

4.17 Week 4 as a common site of communicative transformation

Three of the four participants—Shy Cruz, Gela, and EneliA—identified Week 4 of the journal period as the moment of a significant communicative turning point. Before interpreting this convergence as evidence of a natural developmental pattern, an important alternative must be acknowledged: the convergence may reflect the structure of the research instrument itself rather than naturally occurring change. All participants began the four-week journal simultaneously; the cumulative effect of structured weekly prompting may have produced behavioral readiness at approximately the same point regardless of where participants were in any natural developmental arc. This study cannot distinguish between these interpretations. The Week 4 convergence is therefore reported as a finding about the effects of structured reflection on cohabitation behavior, not as a universal developmental milestone of Filipino student boarding life.

With this important qualification, the Week 4 breakthroughs are described as follows. Shy Cruz, after weeks of silent cleaning, spoke directly to her messy roommate:

I said, 'Can we agree to wash our dishes right after eating? It's hard for me to cook when the sink is full.' She looked surprised but said sorry and cleaned her plate right then. That moment matters because it showed me that speaking up – calmly and respectfully – doesn't always lead to conflict. It felt scary but also empowering. I realized I have a voice in this house. — Shy Cruz, Week 4 Journal

Gela's Week 4 entry mirrored this outcome. Ayna intervened between two other roommates in conflict, proposing a fan-rotation solution after speaking to each other separately. EneliA's turning point came through a trusted friend who conveyed EneliA's concerns to the problematic roommate—a form of indirect but effective third-party mediation consistent with Filipino norms around face-saving. EneliA reflected: "I learned that asking for help is not a weakness. And sometimes, people do change when they understand how much they hurt you."

Notably, all documented communication attempts in this study resulted in positive outcomes. While this pattern is encouraging, it must be interpreted with caution. Participants may have been more likely to record successful confrontations in their journals and to recount them during interviews, while omitting or minimizing episodes where speaking up worsened the situation or produced no change. This reporting bias, shaped by the same hiya dynamics that the study documents, means that the study cannot claim that direct communication reliably produces positive outcomes in Filipino boarding house conflicts—only that, in the episodes that reached sufficient salience to be recorded and discussed, outcomes were positive. Future research employing longitudinal behavioral observation rather than self-report journaling would be needed to assess the full distribution of outcomes.

4.18 The catalytic role of reflexive journaling

Participants credited the journaling process with enabling recognition of previously invisible patterns. Ayna reflected: "The journal helped me realize that I actually feel a lot — I'm not numb." Shy Cruz noted: "The journal made me pay attention. The second interview made me realize I actually changed a little." These accounts support the principle of the double hermeneutic in IPA (Smith et al., 2009), while reinforcing the methodological caveat that the journaling instrument was simultaneously a data collection tool and a behavior-change catalyst.

4.19 Theme 5: shared spaces, shared selves — meaning-making and the transformation of home

4.20 Roommate experience as metaphor and meaning

When asked to describe their experience through metaphor, all four participants produced images of journey and shared navigation. Ayna and EneliA independently chose the metaphor of a boat on water:

My roommate experience is like sharing a small boat, at first we move out of sync, but over time we learn to work together to keep things steady. Dahil ang pamumuhay kasama ang mga roommate ay isang pinagsasaluhang paglalakbay. — Ayna, Phase 1 Interview

(Because living with roommates is a shared journey. We may have different personalities and habits, but we all go through the same situation, so balance, effort, and understanding are the keys.)

I would describe my experience like riding a boat on the sea. Sometimes the water is calm and peaceful, but sometimes there are big waves and strong winds. Just like sailing, we need to balance ourselves and be strong to reach our goal. — EneliA, Phase 1 Interview

Shy Cruz offered a more domestic metaphor—"a crowded kitchen during breakfast time"—capturing both the friction and comedy of shared daily life, while Gela described the boarding house as a "training ground," positioning cohabitation as preparation for the interpersonal demands of professional life.

4.21 The transformation of the concept of home

All four participants reported that their understanding of home had been fundamentally altered. Before cohabitation, home was understood primarily as a given—a natural, familial condition of comfort and belonging. Through the experience of its absence and its reconstruction, home became an achieved rather than ascribed condition. Shy Cruz articulated this shift:

Home is more about how you feel in a space and how you navigate relationships within it. Even in a shared or sometimes chaotic environment, home can be a place where you create your own comfort, establish routines, and find balance between your needs and others'. It's less about perfection and more about adapting, respecting, and making the space your own while coexisting with others. — Shy Cruz, Phase 1 Interview

4.22 Personal growth and the emergence of adaptive selfhood

All four participants described significant personal growth through their cohabitation experience—not in spite of its difficulties but through them. Ayna's reflection captured the relational learning:

Dati akala ko ang pagiging tahimik ay ang pinakamabuting paraan para iwasan ang gulo. Pero ngayon, alam ko na ang totoong kapayapaan ay hindi galing sa katahimikan – galing ito sa tamang usapan. Kapag sinabi mo ang problema nang mahinahon, mas nagiging magaan ang lahat. — Ayna, Phase 2 Interview

(Before, I thought being quiet was the best way to avoid trouble. But now, I know that true peace doesn't come from silence — it comes from the right conversation. When you state the problem calmly, everything becomes lighter.)

Shy Cruz arrived at a complementary insight: "I used to think that keeping quiet was the mature thing to do — to avoid drama. Now I realize that silence can become resentment. Speaking up early, before the anger builds, is actually kinder to everyone." These statements constitute a form of indigenous wisdom about conflict, harmony, and communication deeply consonant with both phenomenological psychology and Sikolohiyang Pilipino. This developmental trajectory mirrors the psychosocial maturation tasks of emerging adulthood as re-framed through the Filipino developmental context (Arnett, 2000; Medina, 2001).

4.23 Member checking outcomes

During Phase 2 interviews, preliminary analytical observations were returned to each participant for their validation or correction. All four participants confirmed the accuracy of the five superordinate themes as broadly representative of their experience. Ayna requested a nuanced addition to Theme 1: she clarified that her homesickness diminished significantly after the first month and that the paper should not suggest it was a permanent state. Shy Cruz validated the characterization of hiya but noted that the paper underemphasized the positive social bonding aspects of boarding house life; this was addressed in Theme 5. Gela confirmed the Theme 3 analysis and added that by the end of her seven months, she no longer experienced hiya about routine reminders to roommates. EneliA confirmed the Theme 4 account of third-party mediation but clarified that the mutual friend who served as intermediary was someone she had known prior to boarding house life—a distinction relevant to the transferability of the mediation strategy for students without pre-existing social networks.

4.24 Summary of superordinate themes

The following summarizes the five superordinate themes and their constituent sub-themes identified through the IPA analysis.

Theme 1 — The Shock of the New encompasses three sub-themes: (a) first-day threshold experiences marked by dislocation and unmet expectations; (b) financial precarity and the hidden costs of independent living; and (c) the sensory and embodied dimensions of homesickness.

Theme 2 — The Body Keeps Score encompasses: (a) the physiology of suppressed frustration; (b) the somatic impact of environmental stressors; and (c) the discovery of unacknowledged stress patterns through reflexive journaling.

Theme 3 — Conflict Avoidance and the Double-Edged Logic of *Pakikisama* encompasses: (a) *pakikisama* as both social glue and relational constraint; (b) *hiya* as a barrier to self-advocacy; and (c) *utang na loob* and the relational asymmetries of gratitude.

Theme 4 — Emergent Communication as Empowerment encompasses: (a) the mounting costs of sustained silence; (b) Week 4 as a convergent site of communicative transformation (with the research-instrument alternative explanation acknowledged); and (c) the catalytic role of reflexive journaling.

Theme 5 — Shared Spaces, Shared Selves encompasses: (a) the use of journey and navigation metaphors; (b) the transformation of home from an ascribed to an achieved condition; and (c) the emergence of relational wisdom and adaptive selfhood.

5. Findings, conclusions, and recommendations

5.1 Summary of findings based on research questions

Table 3. Summary of findings by research question

Research Question	Key Findings	Theme(s)
RQ1: Lived experiences of conflict and compromise	Students experienced cohabitation as a multi-layered psychosocial event. Conflicts centered on cleanliness, noise, and guests. Avoidance was the initial default; compromise emerged gradually. All documented communication attempts produced positive outcomes, though reporting bias is acknowledged.	T1, T2, T3, T4
RQ2: Cultural values as mediators	Pakikisama, hiya, and utang na loob shaped every dimension of conflict and compromise. All three were dynamically reframed by participants as the study progressed. Utang na loob appeared less consistently in the data than theorised; its relative absence is itself discussed as a finding.	T3
RQ3: Emergent negotiation strategies	Five strategies identified: silent compensation, sensory self-protection, behavioural adjustment, direct assertive communication, and third-party mediation. Structured collective solutions emerged after communication breakthroughs.	T3, T4
RQ4: Actionable recommendations	Four domains of needed support identified by participants: pre-move-in orientation, written roommate agreements, accessible mediation channels, and structural/financial support.	T4, T5

5.1 Research question 1: lived experiences of conflict and compromise

The findings suggest that cohabitation is experienced as a multi-layered psychosocial event with three consistent dimensions. The first was the transition shock of the first days, characterized by homesickness, dislocation, and the gap between media-formed expectations and the material reality of shared housing. The second was the embodied nature of conflict and stress: all four participants described significant physical symptoms—chest tightness, elevated heart rate, stomach knots—that most were unaware of carrying until the reflexive journaling process brought them to attention. The third was the arc of conflict and compromise across the study period: the predominant initial strategy was avoidance, shaped by pakikisama and hiya; over the course of the study, three of the four participants made communicative breakthroughs, with consistently positive outcomes—though reporting bias means this finding must be held with appropriate epistemic caution.

5.2 Research question 2: the mediation of Filipino cultural values

Pakikisama was the most pervasive organizing value. It was invoked to explain why conflicts were not raised and why surface harmony was maintained at the cost of internal frustration. By Phase 2, all participants demonstrated a more nuanced understanding: Gela articulated that "true pakikisama is respect through clear communication"; Shy Cruz reframed it as "speaking up respectfully so that harmony isn't fake." Hiya functioned as a gate-keeping mechanism, producing the cycle of silence and subsequent self-reproach, but proved to be a diminishing rather than fixed constraint. Utang na loob operated differently by participant; its relatively limited evidentiary presence compared to its theoretical prominence may reflect the transactional nature of most boarding house relationships—a finding in itself.

5.3 Research question 3: emergent negotiation strategies

Five strategies were identified: (1) silent compensation—performing tasks belonging to other roommates to make shared space usable without confrontation; (2) sensory self-protection—earphones, physical withdrawal, early bedtime; (3) behavioral adjustment—changing one's own routines to minimize friction; (4) direct assertive communication—initiated by Shy Cruz and Gela in Week 4 using calm, needs-based language; and (5) third-party mediation—employed by EneliA through a trusted friend, and by Ayna intervening between two other roommates. Collective solutions (whiteboard schedules, shared extension cords, quiet-hour agreements) emerged organically after communication breakthroughs.

5.4 Research question 4: actionable recommendations

Participants collectively identified four domains of needed support: pre-move-in orientation covering communication skills and house rules; written roommate agreements or contracts; accessible and non-threatening mediation channels; and structural and

financial support including shared cooking facilities, scholarships, and emergency funds. These are elaborated in the Recommendations section below.

5.2 Conclusions

The lived experience of shared student housing among Filipino university students is a profound psychosocial event that is simultaneously economic, relational, cultural, somatic, and existential. A phenomenological approach is not only theoretically appropriate but practically necessary for designing effective support interventions.

The three Filipino cultural values of *pakikisama, hiya, and utang na loob* are active, dynamic forces—not merely contextual background—shaping every dimension of conflict and compromise. These values are double-edged. Utang na loob, while theoretically significant, appeared with less consistent evidentiary weight in this sample than pakikisama and hiya, a finding that may reflect the transactional rather than deeply relational nature of most boarding house relationships.

Conflict avoidance is a culturally rational response to the relational demands of shared Filipino life, not a personal failing. However, sustained avoidance has measurable costs in physical stress and unresolved tension. The finding that direct communication—when documented—consistently produced positive outcomes is encouraging, but the possibility of reporting bias means this conclusion must be held with appropriate epistemic caution.

Furthermore, communicative agency is developable rather than fixed, as reflected in all four participants' growth in assertive, respectful communication over the study period. This growth was catalyzed in part by the reflexive journaling process, though the distinction between natural development and researcher-induced change must be maintained.

The concept of home undergoes a fundamental transformation through the boarding house experience: from an ascribed condition given by family membership to an achieved condition created through relationships, routines, and mutual consideration.

And lastly, the positive dimensions of cohabitation—unexpected acts of care, shared meals, friendships forged in proximity—are central to the phenomenon's meaning and to what makes it bearable and ultimately valuable.

5.3 Recommendations

5.5 For boarding house administrators and landlords

Establish and distribute written House Rules at move-in. Unspoken rules are learned slowly through observation and trial and error, creating unnecessary friction. A clear document covering bathroom schedules, kitchen cleanliness expectations, quiet hours, guest policies, and shared space responsibilities would provide a shared reference point that reduces ambiguity.

Introduce a Roommate Agreement signed by all residents at the beginning of each occupancy period. This agreement, co-authored by residents, should cover chores rotation, quiet hours, guest notification protocols, and conflict resolution procedures. Co-creating the agreement builds shared ownership of house norms.

Establish a clear, accessible, and non-punitive channel for reporting concerns, with an explicit distinction between interpersonal conflict (appropriate for peer mediation) and safety concerns (requiring administrator or authority intervention). EneliA's experience of an intoxicated roommate admitting unknown persons at midnight constitutes a personal safety issue, not merely a communication failure, and must be treated accordingly. Administrators should communicate clearly that such situations warrant immediate reporting rather than tolerance or self-mediation.

5.6 For university student affairs and guidance offices

Develop and implement a Pre-Move-In Orientation for Off-Campus Students covering boarder rights and responsibilities, common sources of roommate tension, communication strategies adapted to Filipino cultural values, and available university support services. All four participants independently identified orientation as the single most important intervention they wished had been available.

Offer a Communication and Conflict Resolution Workshop specifically designed for student boarders, engaging directly with Filipino cultural dynamics: how to honor pakikisama while advocating for oneself; how to speak up in face-saving ways; how to distinguish between hiya as a guide and hiya as a trap. Practical components such as scripted sentence starters for initiating difficult conversations are recommended.

5.7 For students living in shared housing

Speak up early, calmly, and specifically. In every documented case in this study, with the reporting bias caveat acknowledged—speaking up produced compliance and improved relationships. Silence, by contrast, produced accumulating resentment and perpetuated the behavior causing frustration. Address concerns before they become grievances.

Reframe pakikisama as genuine harmony, not surface compliance. Real pakikisama means communicating honestly, even about difficult things, in ways that respect both oneself and one's roommate. A relationship built on unexpressed resentment and silent compensation is brittle, not harmonious.

Distinguish between interpersonal conflict and safety concerns. Not every difficult situation is a communication problem. If a roommate's behavior creates genuine physical safety concerns—such as bringing unknown persons into the room at night—students should report to their landlord or university authority rather than attempting self-mediation.

Accept help and ask for it when needed. Whether the help needed is a friend to mediate a difficult conversation, a counselor to process stress, or a classmate to share food costs, accepting support is a sign of maturity, not inadequacy.

Invest in the small moments of shared life. The most emotionally significant positive experiences in this study were small, unannounced acts of care: warm rice left on a table, a bathroom cleaned without being asked, a shared pot of sinigang on a Sunday evening. Cultivating these small kindnesses builds the relational goodwill that makes difficult conversations easier and the shared space genuinely habitable.

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