

Tulfo and Chill: Perceptions of Conflict Resolution in Tabloid-Arbitration Shows

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Abstract. Tabloid-arbitration shows such as Raffy Tulfo in Action and Face 2 Face have emerged as influential platforms in Philippine media, blending public service with entertainment. This study explores how these programs shape viewers' perceptions of justice and conflict resolution, particularly among heavy viewers. Employing a qualitative design, the study focused on ten participants purposely selected from socioeconomic class D. These individuals were aged 31 to 55 and had a monthly household income ranging from ₱24,164 to ₱48,328. All participants had consistently engaged with these shows for at least one year. Data collection involved a demographic profile form and semi-structured interviews to uncover deep insights into conflict resolution. To enhance reliability and validity, the researchers utilized member checking, triangulation with a lawyer and psychologist, and consultation with a critical friend. Thematic analysis was used to examine emerging patterns. The findings reveal that tabloid-arbitration significantly influences how viewers perceive and engage with justice. Participants reported viewing these programs as faster, more accessible, and emotionally resonant alternatives to the formal legal system. Many preferred media-mediated justice over traditional legal processes, citing greater relatability and perceived fairness. These results underscore the media's decisive role in shaping public understanding of legal and social issues. The study offers valuable implications for media practitioners, legal educators, and policymakers, suggesting a need for responsible content creation and public education to address potential misconceptions about justice and legal procedures.

Keywords: Conflict resolution; Heavy viewers; Legal perceptions; Media influence; Tabloid-arbitration shows.

1.0 Introduction

Television has long played a crucial role in shaping public perception, serving as an entertainment medium and a cultural touchstone. Among its many genres, tabloid-arbitration shows have emerged as a unique hybrid of reality television and conflict resolution, captivating audiences with dramatized portrayals of legal disputes. These programs, exemplified by Raffy Tulfo in Action and Face 2 Face in the Philippines, have gained immense popularity by providing individuals with a platform to air grievances and seek resolutions outside the traditional legal system. These shows' rise reflects a shift in how Filipinos perceive justice, with more people favoring immediate, publicly mediated solutions rather than engaging in slow and costly legal procedures. However, while these programs claim to promote fairness, their sensationalized nature raises questions about how they influence the public's understanding of justice and legal processes.

Arbitration-based reality shows have become widely discussed in media and academic discourse. In the United States, shows like Judge Judy popularized the courtroom entertainment format, where real-life disputes are presented for public viewing (Friedman, 2012). Research suggests that such programs can create a distorted view of the justice system, often portraying it as quick, emotionally charged, and reliant on a single authoritative figure instead of a structured legal process (Kimball, 2005). The popularity of Judge Judy and similar shows has contributed to the “CSI effect,” a term used to describe how media influences public expectations of real-world legal proceedings (Shelton, 2008).

In the Philippine context, tabloid-arbitration shows perform a more socially embedded role. Unlike Western courtroom shows that operate within formal legal boundaries, Raffy Tulfo in Action and Face 2 Face serve as informal alternatives to legal aid, especially for lower-income Filipinos who face barriers in accessing the justice system (Eugenio, 2020). These programs combine elements of investigative journalism and public mediation, creating a spectacle that pressures individuals into televised confessions or settlements (Kabanos, 2023). The “Tulfo Justice” phenomenon has become popular among viewers who see these shows as more effective and accessible than the traditional judiciary (Cusay, 2019). Still, scholars caution that these dramatized portrayals of conflict risk trivializing serious legal issues and normalizing public shaming as a form of accountability (McKown, 2015).

Cultivation Theory, developed by Gerbner and Gross (1976), provides a valuable lens for understanding the possible effects of these programs. The theory suggests that consistent exposure to recurring messages on television can influence how audiences view reality. In the case of tabloid-arbitration shows, frequent viewers may begin to perceive media-mediated dispute resolution as a practical and preferable approach to conflict. This belief may reduce trust in formal legal institutions and reinforce simplified or exaggerated ideas about justice. Research also shows that repeated media portrayals of conflict can shape public attitudes by building trust in alternative systems or fostering skepticism toward institutional mechanisms (Hetsroni & Lowenstein, 2013).

This study focuses on heavy viewers from socioeconomic class D, specifically those aged 31 to 55 with a monthly household income ranging from ₱24,164 to ₱48,328. This demographic was selected because it reflects a meaningful overlap between traditional television and newer digital platforms. According to Balita (2022), individuals aged 18 to 44 are the primary consumers of online content, while those aged 45 to 64 prefer traditional television. Viewers between the ages of 31 and 55 represent a balance of these habits, making them a relevant group to explore both media exposure and shifting perceptions. At the same time, those from class D are often underserved by the legal system and more likely to turn to accessible media for conflict resolution. This makes them particularly susceptible to the long-term effects described in Cultivation Theory.

Although many studies have explored the popularity and structure of tabloid-arbitration shows, fewer have examined their influence on everyday beliefs about justice and conflict. While existing literature discusses the genre’s value as both entertainment and public service (Garcia, 2023), little attention has been given to how heavy viewers interpret these portrayals. Specifically, there is a gap in understanding how such viewers develop attitudes toward fairness, accountability, and dispute mediation based on what they see on screen. This study explores the perspectives of heavy viewers of tabloid-arbitration shows on conflict resolution. By analyzing their insights, the research seeks to understand how these programs shape their views of justice and dispute settlement. The findings will contribute to media studies, legal education, and public policy, helping stakeholders balance public service with ethical representation in televised conflict. Ultimately, the study hopes to shed light on the broader societal impact of tabloid-arbitration shows and how they influence the public’s understanding of justice.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative approach to gather information on the insights of heavy viewers of tabloid-arbitration shows regarding conflict resolution. The research also described the facilitation of conflict resolution, identified the benefits gained by the participants, identified the risks involved from watching these shows, and explored the realizations of heavy viewers. To achieve this, the research used a qualitative methodology to collect and analyze data from individuals who frequently watched tabloid-arbitration shows. As highlighted by Bhandari (2020), qualitative research is characterized by its focus on non-quantitative forms of data, including textual content, videos, and audio recordings. This methodological approach was invaluable for exploring intricate issues and viewpoints in depth. It facilitated the generation of detailed insights and paved the way for novel research

trajectories by holistically examining individuals' concepts, opinions, and experiences.

2.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted in the Philippines, where tabloid-arbitration shows have gained widespread popularity. While participants were not limited to a specific city or province, they were selected from urban and semi-urban areas, where access to television and social media platforms facilitates regular consumption of these shows. The target regions included locations where Class D households are predominant, as they represent the primary audience of these programs. This research setting allowed for an in-depth exploration of how heavy viewers perceive justice and conflict resolution through tabloid-arbitration shows in the Philippine context.

2.3 Research Participants

This study employed purposive sampling, also known as judgmental sampling, wherein participants were strategically selected based on specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives (Nikolopoulou, 2022). Purposive sampling was chosen because it allowed the researchers to target heavy viewers of tabloid-arbitration shows specifically. This method ensured the collection of rich and relevant data about the research questions, focusing on information-rich cases rather than aiming for generalizability across the broader population.

The study included ten (10) Filipino residents aged 31 to 55, belonging to socioeconomic class D, with a monthly household income between ₱24,164 and ₱48,328 (Albert, Santos, & Vizmanos, 2018). They were identified as heavy viewers of tabloid-arbitration shows, specifically Raffy Tulfo in Action and Face 2 Face, having watched these programs daily for at least one year. The study focused on this age group as it bridges two key demographics in media consumption: younger adults who dominate online streaming and older adults who primarily consume traditional television (Balita, 2022).

Participants were recruited through a direct approach and online announcements on social media platforms. The selection ensured that all participants had consistent engagement with tabloid-arbitration shows, allowing for a deeper exploration of their insights on conflict resolution. Triangulation was applied to enhance the study's validity, incorporating insights from a lawyer to provide a legal perspective on these shows and a psychologist to analyze their psychological impact. This multi-perspective approach aimed to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of these shows' role in shaping public perceptions of justice and dispute resolution.

2.4 Research Instrument

This study collected data using a profile form and an interview guide. Participants completed the profile form, providing information such as age, civil status, highest education level, occupation, religion, family living arrangement, years of watching, weekly frequency, and daily viewing hours of tabloid-arbitration shows across various media streaming platforms (Facebook, YouTube, TikTok). Concurrently, the researchers prepared an interview guide to serve as a framework for conducting interviews. These questions underwent expert validation to ensure their alignment with the study's objectives and appropriateness for the target audience. Interviews allowed participants to provide detailed answers and explanations, enabling researchers to gather richer information and draw more comprehensive conclusions (George, 2022). The guide was semi-structured to enable open-ended questions that explored participants' motivations, perceptions, and personal experiences regarding the show and legal conflict resolution. Before the main study, a pilot interview was conducted to assess the clarity of the questions and the participants' understanding. Additionally, cognitive interviews were facilitated to gather participant feedback on their experiences during the pilot study. This feedback informed further refinement of the profile form and interview guide to optimize data collection.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

To gather primary data and address the research questions, the researchers conducted a structured process to ensure participant readiness and data reliability. Before data collection, an orientation and screening session was held to introduce the study's purpose and obtain informed consent from potential participants. Consent forms were distributed through Google Forms or in printed format, ensuring accessibility for all participants. These forms included a profile form and the interview guide questions, allowing participants to familiarize themselves with the study's focus before the interview. To establish rapport and create a comfortable atmosphere, the researchers engaged in a preliminary "kumustahan" session before the interview. This informal conversation helped set a relaxed tone, making it easier for participants to share their insights openly. During the interview, guide questions aligned with the research objectives were used to explore participants' perspectives on conflict

resolution facilitation in tabloid arbitration shows. Depending on the participants' preferences, interviews were conducted virtually or face-to-face to ensure convenience and accessibility. After the interview, the researchers conducted a post-interview "kumustahan" session to check participants' well-being, acknowledging that sharing personal insights could be emotional. Participants were asked about their feelings before and during the interview to ensure they were comfortable and had no lingering concerns. As a token of appreciation, a small gesture of gratitude was provided to the participants after the concluding session, recognizing their valuable contribution to the study.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

This research proposal underwent rigorous evaluation by the University of the Assumption's Ethics Review Board (UAERB) to ensure compliance with ethical standards and protocols. Upon receiving approval from the UAERB, the research team proceeded with the study's implementation. In alignment with the commitment to participant confidentiality, the researchers implemented strict security measures to protect the participants' information, including secure data handling and protection of participants' identities and personal information throughout the research process. Upon recruitment, potential participants received an informed consent form detailing the study's objectives and elucidating their rights within this research context. This process underscored the voluntary nature of their participation, aiming to secure their informed agreement before any data collection began. The informed consent form acted as a foundational document, affirming participants' comprehension of the study's scope and their proactive decision to partake. This preparatory step was instrumental in setting clear expectations and ensuring ethical compliance throughout the research process.

In addition to the aforementioned measures, the study incorporated a contingency plan to address any potential need for debriefing participants following the data collection phase. Recognizing the potential for emotional or psychological impact, the researchers were prepared to implement appropriate debriefing measures to support participants' well-being. This plan included strategies for providing support, assistance, and referral to participants who might have experienced distress or discomfort due to their involvement in the study. By proactively addressing the possibility of participant distress, the researchers aimed to uphold ethical standards and prioritize the well-being of all individuals involved in the research process.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Participants' Demographic Profile

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the ten (10) participants, consisting of five (5) males and five (5) females, with ages ranging from 31 to 54 years. This age range falls within the median of the age groups for OTT media consumers (18-44 years old) and traditional television viewers (45-64 years old), as reported by Balita (2022). According to the same study, OTT platforms are predominantly consumed by younger audiences, while television remains popular among older demographics. The overlap suggests that the participants of this study represent a transitional demographic that engages with both traditional and digital media sources.

Regarding civil status, six (6) participants are single, while four (4) are married. The participants' educational attainment varies, with four (4) participants being college undergraduates, five (5) being college graduates, and one (1) having completed elementary education. This diversity in education highlights the participants' formal academic training range. The participants' occupations span various fields, showcasing representation from different professional sectors. One (1) participant is a Freelance AutoCAD Operator, one (1) is a Bus Driver, one (1) is an NGO Consultant, one (1) works as a Virtual Assistant, and one (1) is a Travel Consultant. Additionally, one (1) participant is an Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW), one (1) is a Nurse, one (1) is a Freelancer, one (1) is a House Helper, and one (1) is Self-employed. These diverse occupations cover technical, healthcare, service, and independent work, illustrating the varied work environments and career paths the participants come from.

Religious affiliation is primarily Catholic, with eight (8) participants identifying with this faith. One (1) participant aligns with the Born-Again Christian denomination, while one (1) participant is a member of the INC. All participants fall within socioeconomic class D, with monthly household incomes ranging from ₱24,164 to ₱48,328. This income range provides a shared socioeconomic context despite the participants' diverse occupations and educational backgrounds. In terms of media consumption, four (4) participants have been watching tabloid-arbitration shows like Raffy Tulfo in Action and/or Face 2 Face for more than five years, three (3) have been watching for four years, two (2) have been watching for three years, and one (1) participant reported that they have been watching for only a year. All participants dedicate between four (4) and six (6) hours daily to these

shows, indicating a significant amount of time spent engaging with content focusing on conflict resolution. This level of consistent viewership suggests that these programs play an important role in the participants' daily routines.

Table 1. *Participants' Demographic Profile*

Participant	Sex	Age	Civil Status	Educational Attainment	Occupation	Religion	Monthly Household Income	Years of Watching	Daily Hours Spent on Watching
P1	Female	47	Married	Elementary Graduate	OFW	Catholic	₱24,164 to ₱48,328	3	4-6
P2	Male	31	Single	College Undergraduate	Freelance AutoCAD Operator	Catholic	₱24,164 to ₱48,328	3	4-6
P3	Male	53	Married	College Undergraduate	Bus Driver	Catholic	₱24,164 to ₱48,328	4	4-6
P4	Female	31	Single	College Graduate	Nurse	Catholic	₱24,164 to ₱48,328	>5	4-6
P5	Female	32	Single	College Undergraduate	Freelancer	Catholic	₱24,164 to ₱48,328	>5	4-6
P6	Male	32	Single	College Graduate	NGO Consultant	Catholic	₱24,164 to ₱48,328	>5	4-6
P7	Female	41	Single	College undergraduate	House helper	INC	₱24,164 to ₱48,328	4	4-6
P8	Male	37	Married	College Graduate	Virtual Assistant	Christian	₱24,164 to ₱48,328	>5	4-6
P9	Female	54	Married	College Undergraduate	Self-employed	Catholic	₱24,164 to ₱48,328	1	4-6
P10	Male	35	Married	College Graduate	Travel Consultant	Catholic	₱24,164 to ₱48,328	4	4-6

Note: The Monthly Household income is based on the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS). The appendices contain other pertinent data, including detailed information about the participants' viewing habits.

3.2 Facilitation of Conflict Resolution in Tabloid-Arbitration Shows

Table 2 presents the facilitation of conflict resolution in tabloid-arbitration shows, outlining the most frequently occurring dispute categories, the methods used to resolve conflicts, and the legal aspects associated with these cases. The data illustrate the nature of conflicts brought to these programs, the approaches used in handling them, and the extent to which these cases adhere to or bypass legal frameworks.

Table 2. *Facilitation of Conflict Resolution in Tabloid-Arbitration Shows*

Themes	Subthemes	F	Significant Statements
Common Dispute Categories	Romantic Conflicts	8	"The usual episodes nowadays are mostly about mistresses. I mean, there are many mistresses and also scammers, typically. However, there are rarely cases about financial support issues."
	Domestic Issues	6	"There was one episode I will not forget, as a mother. It was about a young boy, around 6 or 7 years old, in July 2023, who was mistreated by his mother."
	Harassment	4	"A woman claimed that she was sexually harassed, and the man accused was beaten up. However, it turned out to be a false accusation. The man did not try to harass or touch the woman. It seems the man's reputation was ruined because the incident was recorded and posted, something like that."
	Scam Incidents	4	"But most of the cases in Raffy Tulfo's show are about people being cheated by their lovers, whom they send money to. Moreover, you would be surprised that foreigners are scammed. Where do they even find these people? Something like that."
	Financial Disagreements	2	"There are also heavy cases in the show, like scams, financial-related incidents, and people who committed fraud."
Conflict Resolution Dynamics	Workplace Problems	1	"There was also a helper who became blind and got bald because of the mistreatment and torture she suffered at the hands of her employer."
	Confrontation	7	"People with these kinds of cases often go to Tulfo's show, where they usually face each other."
	Mediation by the Host	7	"Tulfo is more likely a mediator."
Legal Aspects of Conflict Resolution	Court of Public Opinion	3	"The problem is trial by publicity. In the first three episodes, the being reported faced intense bashing and ended up in the right place."
	Bypassing Legal Procedures	6	"Oih, also, there is a due process. We have authorities in the due process, and they are the ones who should be handling those kinds of cases, but it seems like they are being bypassed."
	Adherence to Due Process	5	"Uhm... many episodes are being brought to the barangay instead. Because when the case goes to court, the resolution takes a long time to progress. So, they end up discussing it at the barangay instead."

Common Dispute Categories

Among the various dispute types presented in tabloid-arbitration shows, romantic conflicts (8 responses) and domestic issues (6 responses) emerged as the most frequently reported cases. Romantic conflicts predominantly involved extramarital affairs, mistresses, and relationship betrayals, highlighting a pattern in which personal disputes became the focus of public mediation and confrontation. As Tabernero (2013) noted, tabloid-arbitration shows often highlighted highly emotional and sensational personal disputes. Participants noted that cases often involved scandals, cheating partners, and financial disputes within romantic relationships, demonstrating how these shows catered to public interest in personal grievances. This aligned with observations from Kimball (2005), who cautioned that reality-court programs often blurred the line between legal arbitration and entertainment, shaping audience perceptions of justice through dramatic and emotionally charged storytelling.

Domestic issues, which ranked second in frequency, typically involved family disputes and concerns about child welfare and household mistreatment. Cusay (2019) noted that *Raffy Tulfo in Action* became a beacon of hope for victims, particularly individuals who felt unheard by the formal legal system. One participant recalled a highly emotional case involving a young child allegedly mistreated by his mother, demonstrating how family-related conflicts were brought into the public sphere for resolution. However, these cases often carried significant emotional weight, raising concerns about whether public arbitration was appropriate for handling sensitive family matters. As Eugenio (2020) highlighted, media involvement in dispute resolution initially emerged to provide legal assistance in a country where the justice system was often inaccessible. However, its increasing role in resolving domestic conflicts underscores the potential risks of substituting legal and social services with media-based intervention.

Conflict Resolution Dynamics

The results revealed that tabloid-arbitration shows primarily employed a combination of confrontation and host-mediated resolution strategies. Confrontation is a defining characteristic of these programs, where both parties are brought face-to-face in an emotionally charged setting to resolve their dispute. Unlike traditional mediation, which encourages calm, structured discussions, this format amplified tensions, often leading to dramatic exchanges that engaged viewers but may not always have led to fair resolutions. *Face 2 Face* (n.d.) stated that episodes were structured to encourage live confrontations, often escalating into heated arguments or even physical altercations. This aligned with the observations of Lao (2019), who described the rise of “*Tulfo Justice*” as a cultural shift where the prospect of immediate, public resolution was often preferred over the slower, more bureaucratic legal process.

The host's mediation was another prominent conflict resolution method. The host took on the role of an informal arbitrator, offering advice, guiding discussions, and attempting to mediate disputes in real-time. This often involved reinforcing their authority to direct the proceedings and influence outcomes. However, unlike legal mediators, hosts lacked formal legal authority, meaning their resolutions relied on social pressure and public accountability rather than legal enforcement. As Kimball (2005) pointed out, reality-based arbitration mimics courtroom proceedings without any disclaimer about their fictional nature, potentially misleading audiences into believing in the legal weight of televised mediations. While this method provided quick and accessible dispute resolution, it raised concerns about whether these mediated agreements were sustainable or legally binding. The original *Face-to-Face* format even included a moral panel consisting of a lawyer, a priest, and a psychologist (Cusay, 2019), reinforcing that while these shows offered some form of structured dispute resolution, they did not replace legally enforceable arbitration or court rulings.

Legal Aspects of Conflict Resolution

Tabloid-arbitration often operates outside traditional legal structures, with many cases bypassing legal procedures (6 responses). Participants noted that individuals frequently turned to these programs as an alternative justice system, believing that public exposure would pressure the opposing party into compliance. Lao (2019) highlighted that the phrase “*Ipapa-Tulfo kita*” (meaning “I will bring you to Tulfo”) became synonymous with seeking immediate justice, underscoring how media intervention was often perceived as a faster and more effective method than filing formal complaints. This bypassing of legal frameworks reinforced that justice could be sought more effectively through media influence rather than official legal channels. While this may have provided immediate solutions for complainants, it raised concerns about whether such resolutions aligned with due process and legal fairness.

Despite this, some cases still demonstrated adherence to due process (5 responses). In certain instances, participants observed that cases were referred to legal authorities after media exposure, ensuring that serious offenses received appropriate legal intervention. Eugenio (2020) explained that while tabloid-arbitration programs played an important role in making legal assistance more accessible, they did not completely replace the legal system. In cases of severe misconduct, shows like *Raffy Tulfo in Action* and *Face 2 Face* often coordinated with law enforcement or legal institutions to ensure proper adjudication. This selective application of legal protocols highlighted an inconsistent approach to justice, where legal procedures were sometimes followed but often secondary to public mediation. The blurred boundaries between informal dispute resolution and legal enforcement suggested that while tabloid-arbitration shows provided an alternative platform for grievances, they could not fully substitute for a structured and impartial judicial system.

3.3 Benefits Gained by Participants

Table 3 presents the benefits participants gained from watching tabloid arbitration shows, categorizing them into entertainment value and protective knowledge. The data highlight how these programs serve as both a source of entertainment and an informal educational platform, shaping viewers' understanding of legal rights and procedures.

Entertainment Value

Participants reported gaining passive enjoyment (5 responses) and active entertainment (5 responses) from watching these shows. Passive enjoyment refers to viewers consuming these programs as leisure, with little active engagement beyond watching. Many participants indicated that they enjoyed the drama, confrontations, and real-life disputes, making these shows an appealing alternative to scripted entertainment. As Garcia (2023) explained, Filipinos are naturally curious and enjoy gossip. They want to feel involved in the issues they are watching, reinforcing that these programs provide a voyeuristic appeal that keeps audiences engaged.

On the other hand, active entertainment suggested a more engaged viewership, where individuals actively followed the cases, formed opinions, and even participated in online discussions about the disputes presented. According to Gregori-Signes (2000), the genre of tabloid-arbitration shows has evolved into an inexpensive daytime program focusing on discussions and analysis through interviews with influential individuals, making these programs both engaging and interactive. Similarly, Timberg and Erler (2002) noted that the rise of reality-based legal programs has transformed traditional court narratives into mass entertainment, where audiences watched and participated in conversations surrounding legal and social issues.

Table 3. *Benefits Gained by Participants*

Themes	Subthemes	Number of Responses	Significant Statements
Entertainment Value	Passive Enjoyment	5	<i>"It is like my entertainment, a way to pass the time... When I am waiting for something, that is what I watch. It helps me pass the time until whatever I am waiting for is done. Because, you know, we have work too."</i>
	Active Entertainment	5	<i>"Like when I watch Tulfo, you also get an idea, and you will realize that their problems are worse than yours, but they are still managed, especially if there is help. So, I feel like I still have a chance and not to lose hope."</i>
Protective Knowledge	Understanding Legal Rights	9	<i>"I think I have learned a lot, like when it comes to the laws that I did not know before, since I did not get a chance to study in college or high school."</i>
	Exposure to Legal Procedures	5	<i>"I also learn which government agency to go to when I need assistance."</i>
	Awareness of Scams	2	<i>"And then, if you are buying a vehicle, if there is something you need to do, you should do it to avoid falling victim to a scam."</i>

Protective Knowledge

Beyond entertainment, participants also gained protective knowledge, particularly in understanding legal rights, exposure to legal procedures, and awareness of scams. Most responses indicated that tabloid-arbitration shows serve as an informal legal education platform, helping viewers understand their fundamental rights in various disputes. As McGrath (n.d.) asserted, these programs act as educational tools, helping viewers understand the protocols and regulations underpinning the legal system to uphold fairness. Additionally, Shelton (2008)

described the CSI effect, a phenomenon in which repeated exposure to legal drama influences public perception of real-world legal proceedings, leading to inflated expectations of justice and forensic accuracy.

Furthermore, tabloid-arbitration shows often feature interactions with lawyers, law enforcement, and legal experts, giving viewers a general sense of how legal channels can address conflicts. According to Tabernero (2013), TV5's Face-to-Face was dubbed a 'Barangay Hall on Air' because of its distinct content, structure, and controversial topics, reinforcing that these programs have played an educational role in Philippine society. Another notable benefit was the awareness of scams, where viewers became more informed about typical fraud schemes and deceptive practices. As McKown (2015) noted, reality court shows create a trial-by-publicity environment, where exposure to real-life cases of fraud and deception alerts audiences to potential scams and unethical business practices. Similarly, Vogel (2012) found that reality-based arbitration influences consumer awareness, making audiences more critical of financial dealings and online transactions.

3.4 Risks Associated with watching Tabloid-Arbitration Shows

Table 4 presents the data on the risks associated with watching tabloid-arbitration shows, categorizing them into views on shows' realism, emotional impact, and skepticism towards legal authority. The data highlights how these programs can influence viewers' perceptions of reality, emotional responses, and trust in formal legal systems.

Views on Shows' Realism

One of the key risks identified was the challenge of discerning between dramatization (7 responses) and authenticity (4 responses) in tabloid-arbitration shows. Participants frequently expressed that these programs often presented disputes exaggeratedly and dramatically, employing techniques standard in fictional narratives to heighten viewer engagement. This theatrical presentation made viewers perceive the shows as entirely factual rather than recognizing that they are often carefully curated for entertainment value. Gregori-Signes (2000) highlighted this aspect, noting that tabloid-arbitration shows have evolved into an inexpensive daytime format that strongly emphasizes discussion and analysis, sometimes at the expense of strictly adhering to legal accuracy. The focus shifts towards creating compelling television, which can involve amplifying emotional elements and streamlining complex legal situations.

Table 4. Risks Associated with Watching Tabloid-Arbitration Shows

Themes	Subthemes	Number of Responses	Significant Statements
Views on Shows' Realism	Believing in Dramatization	7	"I can say that Face-to-Face.. What I can say is, at first, it seems scripted."
	Trusting in Authenticity	4	"I guess if there is any drama, it is just the effects they use, but the emotions of the people seem legit."
Emotional Impact	Frustration	9	"But when I hear about someone getting scammed again, I just think – what is happening? You keep saying the same thing, you are so ridiculous! Haha. Or when it is about an affair, I think, another affair? Come on! There are so many more important problems in the Philippines, and you prioritize that? That is usually my reaction."
	Discomfort	6	"Then, most of the time, you cannot help but feel sorry, especially for those seeking help, like the elderly or children with illnesses. It is heartbreaking to see them in such situations."
	Blind Attachment	5	"That is my idol, ma'am, that is why I always watch his show."
	Tension	2	"People might start to have suspicions, like I do, thinking, 'Oh, this might be a scam,' especially since I saw something similar on Tulfo."
Skepticism Towards Legal Authority	Reliance on Alternative Authorities	7	"That is why people go to Tulfo: in just one day, you talk for thirty minutes, and your problem is solved. That is why people always turn to him."
	Distrust in Law Enforcement	6	"Because it is slow, the person you are supposed to help is not getting assistance immediately. What if, because of the delays, the victim is gone? Then, who will you help if the victim is no longer there?"

This tendency to prioritize entertainment can create a distorted view of legal proceedings. Kimball (2005) pointed out that these shows often depict what appear to be formal legal proceedings without providing viewers with disclaimers about the fictionalized or dramatized nature of the content. This lack of transparency can lead to potential misconceptions about the cases' authenticity, blurring the lines between media representation and actual legal processes. Viewers might incorrectly assume that the outcomes and procedures they witness on television directly reflect how the legal system functions.

Emotional Impact

Tabloid-arbitration shows also evoked strong emotional reactions among viewers, significantly influencing their engagement and perception of the content. The most reported emotional response was frustration (9 responses), particularly when cases featured unresolved disputes, instances of perceived injustice, or emotionally charged conflicts that left viewers unsettled. The heightened emotional stakes in these shows can create a sense of dissatisfaction or even anger when issues are not resolved in a way that viewers deem fair or just. Mustafa (2022) noted that exposure to intense emotional content on television can lead to heightened frustration and anxiety. This is because viewers may internalize the unresolved conflicts and injustices they witness, experiencing a vicarious emotional response that mirrors the distress of those involved in the disputes. The unresolved nature of some cases can leave viewers feeling emotionally invested and frustrated by the lack of closure.

Furthermore, the data showed that some viewers developed a blind attachment (5 responses) to the host, coming to see them as an ultimate authority figure in conflict resolution. This phenomenon is tied to the way television personalities can establish a strong sense of credibility and rapport with their audience. Black and Bryant (1992) explained that television personalities often cultivate a perception of trustworthiness, which leads viewers to place a high degree of confidence in their judgments, sometimes without applying critical evaluation. In the context of tabloid-arbitration shows, this over-reliance on the host's decisions and pronouncements can be problematic. It may discourage individuals from seeking formal legal institutions or advice, reinforcing a dependency on media-driven justice to resolve disputes. This dependency can undermine the importance of due process and established legal procedures.

Others reported tension (2 responses), particularly when watching episodes where conflicts escalated dramatically. Tabloid-arbitration programs often employ emotional escalation as a narrative device, deliberately amplifying conflict to sustain viewer engagement. Krakus (2012) emphasized that this approach, while effective in drawing and maintaining an audience, can have negative consequences. Instead of promoting constructive discourse and problem-solving, it often intensifies audience stress and can contribute to heightened emotional reactivity around conflict.

Skepticism Towards Legal Authority

Another significant risk associated with prolonged engagement with tabloid-arbitration shows was the development of skepticism towards formal legal institutions. The data revealed that some participants expressed a reliance on alternative authorities (7 responses), having developed a belief that public mediation and media intervention are inherently more effective and efficient than the traditional legal system. This shift in perception can erode trust in the established legal framework, leading individuals to prioritize media-based solutions over seeking redress through official channels. McKown (2015) pointed out that the prevalence of "trial by publicity" in these shows has contributed to a decline in public confidence in formal legal institutions. When justice is perceived as readily available and swiftly delivered through media intervention, it reinforces the perception that justice can be better served outside traditional legal channels.

Moreover, distrust in law enforcement (6 responses) was another recurring concern among viewers. Influenced by the portrayal of cases and law enforcement personnel in these shows, some viewers reported developing negative perceptions of the police, courts, and government legal systems. They came to view these institutions as slow, ineffective, or even biased. Timberg and Erler (2002) asserted that depicting inefficient or flawed law enforcement in popular media can significantly contribute to declining public trust in institutional justice. When law enforcement is consistently portrayed negatively, it can shape public opinion and undermine confidence in the system's ability to deliver fair and equitable outcomes. This growing distrust raises significant concerns about the broader societal implications of how tabloid-arbitration shows shape public confidence in legal and judicial processes.

3.5 Participants' Realizations

Table 5 presents participants' realizations from watching tabloid-arbitration shows, categorized into justice system insights, personal reflection, viewer responsibility, and socio-cultural perspectives. The data highlighted how these programs influence viewers' perceptions of justice, self-awareness, critical thinking, and cultural understanding.

Table 5. Participants' Realizations

Themes	Subthemes	Number of Responses	Significant Statements
Justice System Insights	Delayed Government Response	4	<i>"So, from what I observed, our government needs to improve its response and the processes. So that people would not have to run to Tulfo, but they could instead rely on the government. So that our tax can also be used, like that."</i>
	Flawed Justice System	2	<i>"When I watch their show, our justice system here is not supposed to be like this. However, why do we need to use media to air our concerns, when it could be resolved without that, right?"</i>
Personal Reflection	Practicing Precaution	6	<i>"Let us say, do not rush into things. Always think before you act, because you could face serious consequences."</i>
	Valuing Integrity	4	<i>"Just be a good person so you do not end up in that situation. That is the valuable lesson, to be good and do what is right."</i>
	Pursuing Self-Improvement	1	<i>"Maybe, I should have focused more on my studies or found a way to better my life, so I would not experience what those people on Raffy Tulfo go through. Something like that."</i>
Viewer Responsibility	Encouraging Critical Thinking	4	<i>"But if you think deeply about it and consider it, it is not good. We lose the essence of why we have a justice system. Because we need that. We need the justice system so that everyone is treated equally."</i>
	Promoting Fairness	1	<i>"Do not be one-sided, always stay neutral so you can listen to both sides, like that."</i>
Socio-cultural Perspective	Understanding Gossip Culture	2	<i>"We are Filipino; that is just how Filipinos are sometimes. We like those things when we are bored, like, "Let us see what the problem is."</i>
	Exploring Self-in-the-Other	1	<i>"Maybe it is because of our concept of fellowship. Our perspective of society differs from that of other countries, where people only think about themselves. We ask, "How does this affect me about others?" Because of that, we are somewhat affected, we get invested because we become part of what is happening to our fellow beings."</i>

Justice System Insights

Participants expressed frustrations with the justice system, particularly concerning issues such as delayed government response (4 responses) and a perceived flawed justice system (2 responses). Many viewers indicated that the cases depicted in tabloid-arbitration programs often highlighted inefficiencies and shortcomings within the traditional legal process. This portrayal led them to believe that seeking resolution through media intervention could sometimes be a more effective and immediate way to achieve justice.

Eugenio (2020) emphasized this point, noting that the popularity of tabloid-arbitration programs in the Philippines is closely linked to the public's perception of these shows as an alternative avenue for pursuing justice. This perspective arises from a widespread view of the formal legal system as slow and largely inaccessible, especially for those with limited resources or influence. Echoing this sentiment, Cusay (2019) observed that figures like Tulfo are frequently seen as symbols of the Philippine justice system. In some cases, they are even considered to have surpassed the effectiveness of formal institutions such as the Barangay justice system and the courts. These observations collectively reinforce the idea that individuals often turn to public arbitration to address their grievances due to a deep-seated dissatisfaction with the perceived inadequacies of traditional legal proceedings.

Personal Reflection

Many participants reported that watching tabloid arbitration shows led them to practice greater precaution (6 responses) in their own lives. Exposure to real-life disputes and conflicts made them more cautious, particularly in personal and financial dealings. This increased vigilance extended to relationships, contracts, and their general level of trust in others. McGrath (n.d.) supported this finding by asserting that tabloid-arbitration programs can function as educational tools. These programs offer viewers insights into legal procedures, inform them about their rights, and illustrate the broader implications of conflict resolution. By witnessing the consequences of specific actions and disputes, viewers gain a practical understanding that encourages them to act more cautiously in similar situations.

Furthermore, some respondents reported that watching these shows prompted them to place a higher value on integrity (4 responses) and actively pursue self-improvement (4 responses). The ethical and moral dilemmas presented in the featured cases encouraged viewers to reflect on their behavior and values. The Insight Management Academy (n.d.) explained that the insights derived from media content often go beyond the mere

acquisition of isolated facts. Instead, these insights shape a viewer's understanding of broader societal and ethical issues. In the context of tabloid-arbitration shows, this suggests that viewers internalize the lessons and moral narratives presented, using them as a reference point for their own personal decision-making and ethical conduct.

Viewer Responsibility

Participants also recognized the importance of encouraging critical thinking (4 responses) when consuming tabloid-arbitration shows. Some respondents acknowledged that while these programs offer entertainment value, it is crucial to adopt an analytical mindset. This involves questioning the accuracy of the information presented, evaluating the fairness of the resolutions, and considering the potential long-term impact of relying on media-driven conflict resolution.

Black and Bryant (1992) highlighted a tendency among audiences to place a high level of trust in television personalities. This trust can lead viewers to overlook these shows' entertainment-driven aspects and uncritically accept the presented narratives. Therefore, fostering critical thinking is essential to counteract this tendency and encourage viewers to engage with the content more discerningly. Additionally, a few participants emphasized the importance of promoting fairness (1 response) when watching these shows. They stressed the need to avoid mindlessly siding with either complainants or respondents without thoroughly understanding all perspectives involved in the dispute. Krakus (2012) observed that tabloid-arbitration frequently shapes legal perspectives around personal issues. This can inadvertently reinforce biases in how people perceive and approach conflict resolution, potentially leading to skewed judgments if viewers do not actively strive for fairness and impartiality.

Socio-Cultural Perspective

In terms of socio-cultural realizations, participants highlighted understanding gossip culture (2 responses) and exploring the concept of "self-in-the-other" (1 response) as key takeaways. Some participants noted that watching these shows helped them better understand how gossip culture operates within society. They became more aware of how it shapes public opinion and influences people's perceptions of justice, morality, and accountability. Garcia (2023) described how Filipino viewers are often deeply engaged in the narratives presented in tabloid-arbitration shows. This engagement reinforces their sense of involvement in societal discourse, as these shows frequently touch upon culturally relevant issues and interpersonal dynamics. The concept of "self-in-the-other" refers to viewers relating their experiences, feelings, and values to those featured in the shows. This process encourages empathy and promotes reflection on how viewers handle personal conflicts and navigate social relationships. Tabernero (2013) highlighted that the structure of tabloid-arbitration programs in the Philippines, particularly "Face-to-Face," is designed to encourage viewers to identify with the disputes presented. This fosters a moralistic framework that extends beyond mere entertainment, prompting viewers to consider the ethical dimensions of the conflicts and their potential resolutions.

4.0 Conclusion

This study revealed that tabloid-arbitration programs serve as more than just entertainment; they function as alternative platforms for conflict resolution, making justice feel more accessible and relatable to everyday experiences. This finding supports Lao's (2019) observation that phrases like "Ipapa-Tulfo mo" signify a desire for immediate justice, highlighting a societal inclination towards these shows for their perceived efficiency. Heavy viewers reported gaining validation, legal awareness, and practical insights, perceiving media-driven arbitration as a more immediate and effective option than traditional legal processes. The results are consistent with the idea that these shows address the accessibility gap in the formal legal system, providing a relatable form of conflict mediation.

However, the study also underscored critical risks associated with tabloid-arbitration shows, including unrealistic expectations of legal outcomes, ethical concerns surrounding public exposure, and over-reliance on media figures as conflict mediators. This aligns with Kimball's study (2005), which indicated that the fictional nature of courtroom scenarios in these shows can distort viewers' understanding of law and justice. As Garcia (2023) noted, they also blurred the line between entertainment and justice, reinforcing confrontation-based dispute resolution over legal mediation.

To address these findings, policymakers should establish and enforce stricter regulations to ensure these shows adhere to ethical standards, responsibly representing the complexities of legal processes without sensationalizing conflict. This recommendation is crucial to protect public understanding of justice and maintain the credibility of

formal legal institutions, addressing concerns about the blurring line between entertainment and justice. Furthermore, policymakers should initiate comprehensive public education campaigns to inform citizens about their legal rights, the limitations of media-driven justice, and the appropriate channels for conflict resolution. This proactive approach can help reduce dependency on media-driven solutions and reinforce trust in the judicial system, directly addressing the issue of viewers lacking accurate legal knowledge.

Additionally, promoting accessible and affordable Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) options, such as community mediation and barangay justice systems, to provide citizens with viable and trusted alternatives for resolving conflicts is vital, given the study's finding that individuals often turn to these shows for quick resolutions due to perceived delays and inaccessibility within the formal legal system. Increased funding and support for ADR can make it a practical option for more people. For media practitioners, it is recommended to incorporate mandatory media literacy segments within the shows to educate viewers about the limitations of media-driven justice, the importance of verifying information from multiple sources, and the potential biases inherent in televised conflict resolution. This will foster a more critical and discerning viewership.

Moreover, striving for more balanced and nuanced portrayals of legal processes, showcasing the legal system's efficiency and due process aspects to provide a more comprehensive and realistic understanding, is essential. This means moving beyond sensationalism to offer constructive insights. Finally, engaging legal professionals and ethics experts to provide regular commentary and context on complex legal issues and ethical dilemmas presented in the shows will enhance the educational value and accuracy of the content. This collaboration will ensure that information is both accurate and responsibly presented.

5.0 Contribution of Authors

All authors contributed to the study's conception and design. Specific contributions were as follows: Author A conducted the interviews and performed the initial data analysis; Authors B and C contributed to the data analysis and were primarily responsible for formatting and preparing the manuscript; Authors D and E were responsible for transcription of the interviews. All authors were involved in the writing and revision of the manuscript, ensuring a balanced and collaborative effort throughout the research process.

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7.0 Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise, that could have influenced the research process or findings presented in this study.

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