

Between laughter and discrimination: meanings and representations of ethnic humor on Peruvian television

Jessie Angiela Montalvo Herrera (lead author)

Universidad César Vallejo, Lima, Peru

Erick Giovanni Franco Lazarte (co-author)

Universidad Científica del Sur, Lima, Peru

Shermela Anahy Alvarado Castillo (co-author)

Universidad Científica del Sur, Lima, Peru

Fabian Adriano Camacho Javier (co-author)

Universidad Científica del Sur, Lima, Peru

Annel Olenka Tello Mendez (co-author)

Universidad Científica del Sur, Lima, Peru

Samantha Nathalie Arévalo Vidal (co-author)

Universidad Científica del Sur, Lima, Peru

2026

Received: Jul 27, 2026

Accepted: Aug 24, 2026

Published: Aug 31, 2026

ABSTRACT

Ethnic humor is a form of symbolic production that may serve identity, satirical, or cohesion functions, but it may also become disparagement humor when amusement is built on the degradation of historically subordinated groups. In Peru, television comedy has repeatedly drawn on linguistic, phenotypic, territorial, and class markers to portray Andean, Indigenous, and Afro-Peruvian identities. This study aimed to analyze the meanings and representations attributed to ethnic humor on Peruvian television, as well as specialists', students', and citizens' interpretations of its normalization and ethical boundaries. A qualitative interpretive study was conducted. The available information came from semi-structured interviews with three specialists in communication, anthropology, and comedy; interviews with two university students in Communication and Advertising; and four brief interviews with citizens in Lima. The reported findings were reorganized into an analytical matrix and contrasted with academic literature and public documents on media representation and discrimination. Three interpretive axes emerged: (a) stereotyped construction of Andean identity through exaggerated accents, appearance, and practices such as blackface or brownface; (b) normalization of disparagement through formulations equivalent to "it is only humor," together with perceived processes of imitation and identity distancing; and (c) tension between creative freedom, dignity, and communicative responsibility. The study concludes that certain forms of televised ethnic humor, particularly those based on the recurrent inferiorization of social groups, may contribute to legitimizing symbolic hierarchies.

Keywords: ethnic humor, discrimination, stereotypes, racism, television, media representation.

INTRODUCTION

Humor is an ambivalent cultural practice: it can facilitate criticism, produce cohesion, relieve tensions, and challenge power relations; but it can also legitimize social distances when the identity of a group is systematically turned into an object of ridicule (Lockyer & Pickering, 2008; Morreall, 2009). This distinction is especially relevant to the analysis of ethnic humor. Not every humorous reference to a cultural identity is necessarily discriminatory; the problem arises when comedy rests on the repeated attribution of inferiority, ignorance, dirtiness, servitude, incapacity, or exoticization to groups defined by their origin, language, phenotype, or cultural belonging. At that point, ethnic humor may approach what the literature calls disparagement humor (Ford & Ferguson, 2004; Ford et al., 2015).

In the Peruvian context, this discussion has both historical and contemporary relevance. Television has been one of the spaces in which imaginaries of the criollo, Andean, Indigenous, and Afro-Peruvian have been articulated. Peirano and Sánchez León (1984) showed early on how television comedy could reproduce cultural hierarchies associated with the process of “acriollamiento,” while later studies have documented the persistence of stereotypes in comedy programs and other media representations (de los Heros, 2016; Rodríguez, 2020; Turpo-Gebera & Gutiérrez-Gala, 2019). The discussion is not limited to isolated characters: it refers to a representational system in which certain physical, linguistic, and cultural traits acquire comic value because they are already socially hierarchized.

Recent institutional data confirm that media representation remains a socially sensitive issue. The 2025 Television and Radio Consumption Study of the Consejo Consultivo de Radio y Televisión (CONCORTV) reported that television continues to be a heavily used medium in the country and that 36% of respondents identified discriminatory treatment among the inappropriate content observed on television. Likewise, CONCORTV reported in 2026 that citizens perceive negative images of Andean (40%), Amazonian (16%), and Afro-descendant (9%) communities on Peruvian television (Consejo Consultivo de Radio y Televisión, 2025, 2026). These perceptions do not by themselves constitute a causal measurement of the effect of media content, but they do show that the problem of representation remains on the public agenda.

In parallel, Peru’s Ministry of Culture recorded 284 reports of ethnic-racial discrimination during 2024, compared with 215 in 2023 and 116 in 2022 (Ministerio de Cultura

del Perú, 2025). Discrimination, therefore, cannot be reduced to an aesthetic discussion about humorous taste: it is embedded in a context in which ethnic-racial hierarchies continue to be expressed in everyday practices. A recent systematic review concluded that ethnic-racial discrimination persists in Peru across different settings and that its manifestations tend to be more subtle and normalized than the openly racist forms of the past (Sánchez-Villena & Temple-Focón, 2025).

The case of La Paisana Jacinta constitutes an unavoidable reference in this discussion. De los Heros (2016) analyzed its pragmatic-linguistic and multimodal strategies and showed how the production of comedy could rely on stereotypes about Andean women. The controversy went beyond academia: the Defensoría del Pueblo (2020) highlighted the ruling of the Superior Court of Justice of Cusco, which found that rights associated with the ethnic identity and dignity of Andean women had been violated. However, the fundamental question remains open: how do different social actors interpret the boundary between humor, stereotype, discrimination, and creative freedom?

The available literature has examined specific media products, levels of racist content, and stereotypes about social groups; nevertheless, it is pertinent to deepen the analysis of the meanings attributed to ethnic humor from different positions—specialists, creators, students, and citizens—including both critical discourses and perspectives that reject the imposition of limits on humor. Analyzing these divergences makes it possible to avoid a prior prescriptive reading and to understand how society negotiates what is considered “funny,” offensive, discriminatory, or legitimate.

Within this framework, the general objective of the research was to analyze the meanings and representations of ethnic humor on Peruvian television in order to understand how certain forms of comedy may be related to the legitimization of stereotypes and discriminatory practices. The specific objectives were: (a) to identify the narrative and representational resources associated with the inferiorization of Indigenous, Andean, and Afro-Peruvian identities; (b) to interpret the perspectives of specialists, students, and citizens regarding the normalization of ethnic-racial humor; and (c) to contrast the tensions among creative freedom, ethical responsibility, dignity, and non-discrimination.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Ethnic humor, disparagement humor, and social normalization

Ethnic humor can be understood as a form of comedy that uses identities, attributes, or cultural and ethnic-racial differences as discursive material. This definition does not presuppose that every expression of ethnic humor is racist. There are self-referential, parodic, or satirical uses that may reinforce belonging, challenge power relations, or rework shared experiences. The analytical problem arises when the target of comedy is reduced to an inferiorized social category and laughter depends on accepting that inferiority as a premise.

Prejudiced norm theory proposes that disparagement humor can modify the normative climate of an interaction by communicating that the expression of prejudice against a particular group is socially tolerable in that context (Ford & Ferguson, 2004). Subsequent research has shown that humor does not necessarily create previously nonexistent prejudices, but it can facilitate their expression and reduce the normative constraints that ordinarily inhibit them (Ford et al., 2015). Consequently, the social effect of humor depends both on its content and on the position of the person who utters it, the group to which it is directed, and the normative context in which it circulates.

Billig (2005) warns that laughter can also perform disciplinary functions: ridiculing others establishes boundaries concerning who belongs, who must adapt, and which behaviors or identities are considered deviant. This perspective is particularly useful for understanding comedy that presents ways of speaking, clothing, the body, or territorial origin as signs of backwardness. In such cases, humor does not merely represent a difference; it hierarchizes it.

Media representation, stereotypes, and discursive racism

The media participate in the production of social categories by selecting traits, repeating associations, and naturalizing interpretive frameworks. Van Dijk (2010) conceptualizes discursive racism as a set of symbolic practices that contribute to reproducing inequalities between groups through representations, emphases, omissions, and narrative frames. This reproduction does not require openly hostile expressions; it can operate through indirect, normalized, or apparently trivial forms.

In Peru, Celigueta and Viola (2021) note that Indigenous women have repeatedly been represented through stereotypes that simplify their diversity and place them in subordinate positions. Rodríguez (2020), from a historical perspective, showed that the caricature of the

Andean migrant already functioned in the twentieth century as a device for fixing a distorted image of their customs, morality, and behavior. The historical continuity of these patterns helps explain why certain contemporary humorous devices are intelligible to audiences: they draw on pre-existing cultural repertoires.

De los Heros (2016) identified in La Paisana Jacinta an articulation of verbal, gestural, visual, and prosodic resources that constructed a stereotyped representation of the Andean woman. Along a complementary line, Turpo-Gebera and Gutiérrez-Gala (2019) analyzed Peruvian comedy programs and found the presence of racist content linked to physical, social, and linguistic traits. These antecedents place the present study within a field that does not question humor as a cultural practice, but rather certain forms of representation that transform social differences into signs of inferiority.

Identity, coloniality, and intersectionality

In Peru, social classification based on ethnic markers is closely linked to class, origin, language, and territory. Peirano and Sánchez León (1984) described “acriollamiento” as a process of symbolic adaptation in which the Andean migrant was pressured to distance themselves from attributes associated with the Indigenous identity in order to gain urban legitimacy. Pajuelo (2016) situates these hierarchies within a colonial horizon that continues to organize civic inequalities, while Vich (2010) analyzes the persistence of a “fantasy of backwardness” through which the highlands are imagined as an immobile space detached from modernity.

This logic becomes especially complex when ethnicity, gender, poverty, and territorial origin converge. Alayza (2021) highlights the value of intersectionality for understanding how different forms of subordination overlap and produce specific experiences. In a humorous representation of an Andean woman, for example, comedy may simultaneously rely on racial, class, and gender stereotypes; therefore, the analysis should not isolate each axis.

Creative freedom, dignity, and communicative responsibility

The tension between humor and freedom of expression requires avoiding simplistic responses. Humor has cultural and political value precisely because it can exaggerate, make people uncomfortable, and transgress. However, contemporary legal and communication debates

recognize that its format does not automatically neutralize its content or its social effects. Godioli and Little (2022) show that different legal systems face similar challenges when distinguishing protected satire, offense, and potentially harmful speech. Zinigrad (2025) adds that the humorous format can broaden the reach of prejudicial messages by making them more consumable for audiences that might reject the same idea if it were expressed in an explicitly hostile manner.

Therefore, the central issue is not to establish a binary opposition between censorship and freedom, but to examine who is made the object of ridicule, what hierarchies the joke presupposes, what capacity for response the represented group possesses, and whether comedy challenges power relations or reaffirms them. This framework guides the interpretation of the testimonies analyzed.

METHODOLOGY

Approach and design

A qualitative study with an interpretive orientation was conducted, appropriate for examining meanings, evaluations, and discursive tensions associated with ethnic humor (Hernández-Sampieri & Mendoza, 2018). Rather than measuring prevalence or causal effects, the study sought to understand how different participants interpret the humorous representation of ethnic-cultural identities on Peruvian television. The presentation of the method was reorganized according to transparency criteria recommended for qualitative reports (O'Brien et al., 2014).

The original manuscript referred to the design as “qualitative content analysis”; however, it did not document an audiovisual corpus delimited by episodes, dates, duration, or inclusion criteria. To avoid attributing an unsupported procedure to the study, the present version defines it as an interpretive qualitative study based on interviews and contextual documentary comparison. The television programs mentioned in the results are treated as references evoked by participants and by the literature, not as a systematically sampled audiovisual corpus.

Table 1*Summary of the revised methodological design*

Component	Description
Approach	Qualitative, with an interpretive orientation.
Purpose	To understand meanings, representations, and ethical tensions associated with televised ethnic humor.
Participants	Three specialists, two university students, and four citizens (n = 9).
Techniques	Semi-structured interviews and brief contrast interviews.
Contextual support	Academic literature and public documents on discrimination and media representation.
Analysis	Organization of units of meaning by objectives, construction of interpretive categories, and source triangulation.

Note. The reformulation avoids presenting as a “focus group” an interaction that, according to the source manuscript, consisted of interviews with individual participants.

Participants and selection strategy

Nine people were intentionally selected based on their relationship to the phenomenon or their status as audience members. The first group consisted of three specialists: a comedy professional with approximately ten years of experience, an anthropologist and academic in the field of communication, and a journalist, writer, and editor with recognized work on Andean

identities. The second group consisted of two students from a private university enrolled in Communication and Advertising. The third group comprised four citizens interviewed in public spaces in downtown Lima.

The selection criterion was informational relevance: among specialists, the aim was to obtain diverse positions encompassing humorous creation, sociocultural analysis, and communication; among students and citizens, the aim was to recover audience interpretations.

Table 2

Participant characterization

Code	Profile	Contribution to the study
EXP1	Comedy professional	Perspective on humorous creation, responsibility, and limits of satire.
EXP2	Anthropologist and communication scholar	Sociocultural reading of ethnic humor, stereotypes, and discrimination.
EXP3	Journalist, writer, and editor	Analysis of Andean identity and media representation.
STU1–STU2	Communication and Advertising students	Reception experiences, television memories, and perception of stereotypes.
C1–C4	Citizens interviewed in Lima	Views on creative freedom, respect, and media responsibility.

Note. Codes were used to avoid unnecessary identification of participants. The names of specialists should only be restored if there is express and documented authorization for publication.

Techniques and instruments

Semi-structured interviews with specialists and students were used, as well as brief interviews with citizens. The questions were organized around three areas: (a) resources used to construct humor from ethnic-cultural identities; (b) perceptions of normalization, reception, and social influence; and (c) criteria for distinguishing creative freedom, discrimination, and ethical responsibility. Interviews with specialists incorporated discourses from comedy creation, anthropology, and journalism, while interviews with students and citizens provided experiences of reception and everyday evaluation.

The statistical data from INEI, CONCORTV, and the Ministry of Culture used in the initial version were not treated as study results because they came from secondary sources. In this version, they are used exclusively to contextualize the problem in the introduction and discussion.

Analysis procedure

For the present version of the article, the qualitative evidence reported in the source manuscript was reorganized into a data-reduction matrix linked to the three specific objectives. Recurring and contrasting units of meaning were identified and grouped into three analytical categories: 1) stereotyped construction of identity; 2) social normalization and perceived effects; and 3) creative freedom and ethical responsibility. Convergences and disagreements among participants were retained within each category.

The analysis was interpretive and did not seek to quantify frequencies or establish causal relationships. Information from participants was contrasted with academic literature on disparagement humor, media representation, and discursive racism, as well as with public documents on discrimination and cultural diversity. This triangulation made it possible to situate the testimonies within a broader sociocultural context without turning secondary data into original findings.

Rigor criteria

Credibility was strengthened through triangulation of perspectives among specialists, students, and citizens, and through comparison with academic antecedents and institutional documents. Divergent positions—for example, participants who reject general restrictions on humor—were retained to avoid a confirmatory reading. Transferability is supported by describing profiles and context; nevertheless, the study does not seek statistical generalization.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research was conducted in accordance with ethical principles applied to qualitative studies involving adults. Due to the study procedures, formal approval from a research ethics committee was not required. However, before the interviews were conducted, participants were informed of their purpose, the characteristics of their participation, and the academic use of the data provided. Where participation was voluntary, written informed consent was obtained from each participant before data collection began. The right to freely decide whether to participate and what information to provide during the interviews was respected. The data obtained were used exclusively for scientific purposes, with confidentiality criteria respected during the processing, analysis, and presentation of the research.

RESULTS

Analysis of the qualitative evidence made it possible to organize the findings into three categories. These categories do not represent population frequencies, but rather patterns of meaning present in the reported testimonies. The interpretations clearly distinguish what participants observed from the analytical inferences of the study.

Category 1. Stereotyped construction of Andean and Afro-Peruvian identity

Participants primarily associated televised ethnic humor with the exaggeration of traits considered markers of origin: accent, way of speaking, physical appearance, clothing, geographic origin, and attributed educational level. In the accounts of specialists and students, these traits do not appear as neutral elements of characterization, but as devices that produce comedy by placing the character in a position of clumsiness, ignorance, or mismatch with the urban environment.

The television references most frequently remembered were La Paisana Jacinta, JB, El especial del humor, and El cholo Juanito. The recurrence of these programs in participants' memories suggests that certain representations have acquired cultural recognizability. However, because the study did not conduct systematic sampling of episodes, these mentions should be understood as audience memories and not as evidence of the objective frequency of stereotypes in each program.

Specialists also identified blackface and brownface practices as particularly problematic resources when makeup, prosthetics, or bodily exaggeration are used to represent an ethnic group from an external perspective. From the participants' perspective, this device turns identity traits into visual signs of otherness and may reinforce the idea that certain bodies and ways of speaking are, in themselves, legitimate objects of ridicule.

Table 3

Representational resources identified in the testimonies

Subcategory	Reported manifestation	Interpretation
Linguistic markers	Exaggeration of accent and way of speaking.	Linguistic difference is transformed into a sign of inferiority or lack of education.
Bodily markers	Makeup, prosthetics, and exaggeration of physical traits.	The body becomes a visual support for otherness.
Territorial and class markers	Association between Andean origin, poverty, servitude, or unfamiliarity with urban life.	Hierarchies of ethnicity, class, and territory overlap.
Remembered characters	La Paisana Jacinta, JB, El especial del humor, and El cholo Juanito.	They function as cultural references in participants' memories; they do not constitute an audiovisual corpus for the study.

Note. Synthesis based on findings reported in interviews with specialists, students, and citizens.

Category 2. Social normalization, imitation, and identity distancing

A second axis concerned the normalization of discriminatory content through expressions equivalent to “it’s a joke,” “they are only jokes,” or “it’s humor.” For critical participants, these formulas operate as mechanisms of deresponsibilization: they shift attention from the content of the message to the intention to produce laughter and make it more difficult to challenge the representation. Laughter thus appears as a frame that can reduce the immediate perception of seriousness.

The students and citizens interviewed stated that children and adolescents might reproduce expressions or forms of ridicule observed on television. This statement should be interpreted as a participant perception and not as a causal effect demonstrated by the study. The research did not include minors or longitudinally assess imitation behaviors. Its relevance lies in showing that audiences attribute an informal learning function to television.

Particularly significant was the account of a student who reported having avoided, during childhood, mentioning their family’s Andean origin for fear of being mocked by classmates. This testimony does not establish that television directly caused that behavior, but it illustrates how stigma associated with Andean identity can become integrated into experiences of identity presentation. Interpretively, the case engages with the process of “acriollamiento” described by Peirano and Sánchez León (1984), understood as symbolic distancing from socially devalued attributes.

Specialists linked these experiences to a broader problem: when humor repeatedly represents certain groups as clumsy, uneducated, or servile, repetition may contribute to making such associations appear natural. This interpretation is consistent with the concern expressed by students, who remembered La Paisana Jacinta as a character whose appearance and behavior condensed a negative representation of the Andean woman.

Table 4*Meanings associated with the normalization of ethnic humor*

Axis	Participants' perception	Interpretive scope
		It may broaden social
"It's only humor"	Humorous intent is used to relativize the offense.	tolerance toward stereotypes without implying that every audience accepts them.
Imitation	It is perceived that minors may repeat ridicule observed on television.	It is an audience perception; the study does not demonstrate causality.
Identity	Distancing from Andean traits or origins is reported in response to experiences of ridicule.	It suggests a relationship between social stigma and strategic identity management.
Persistence	Stereotyped characters are easily remembered.	The character's cultural memory may prolong its meanings beyond the original broadcast.

Note. Statements about influence and imitation correspond to qualitative perceptions, not experimental measurements.

Category 3. Creative freedom, ethical limits, and media responsibility

The third axis showed a less homogeneous tension. Specialists agreed that it is possible to develop critical humor without resorting to the degradation of historically vulnerable groups. From the comedy professional's perspective, the humorist's responsibility was not described as an absolute external prohibition, but as an ethical decision linked to the impact that content may generate.

The citizens interviewed mostly argued that some criterion of respect should exist to prevent entertainment from becoming a form of humiliation. However, an opposing position also emerged against imposing broad limits for ethnic reasons, on the grounds that restricting humor

could affect creative freedom. This divergence is relevant because it shows that the boundary between offense and humorous legitimacy has not been socially resolved.

Critical participants did not propose eliminating satire or prohibiting the representation of cultural differences. Their concern focused on the target of humor and on the asymmetry of power: they considered it problematic when comedy depends on presenting as inferior a population defined by its origin, language, or phenotype. In this sense, the finding does not constitute a consensus on censorship, but rather a demand for responsibility regarding character construction and the social meaning of ridicule.

Table 5

Interpretive tensions regarding creative freedom and responsibility

Position	Argument	Analytical reading
Ethical responsibility	Humor can challenge without degrading identities.	Creative freedom is conceived as compatible with criteria of dignity.
Avoiding censorship	Not all offensive content should be resolved through prohibition.	Transgression is a constitutive part of humor and requires contextual analysis.
Limits on humiliation	Ridicule should not be based on the systematic inferiorization of groups.	The focus shifts from the topic of the joke to the power relationship it constructs.
Dissenting position	Some participants reject general limits on ethnic humor.	Reception is heterogeneous, preventing the findings from being interpreted as a social consensus.

Note. The inclusion of divergent positions helps reduce the risk of confirmatory bias.

DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that the central problem is not the presence of ethnic identities in comedy, but the relationship between difference and hierarchy constructed by certain forms of humor. Participants described a recognizable repertoire: linguistic exaggeration, bodily characterization, association between Andean origin and lack of education, and blackface or brownface devices. This pattern converges with de los Heros's (2016) analysis, which showed that La Paisana Jacinta articulated verbal and multimodal resources to produce comedy through a stereotyped representation of the Andean woman.

The distinction between ethnic humor and disparagement humor is key to interpreting these results without adopting a normative conclusion in advance. Ford and Ferguson (2004) argue that disparaging humor can create a context of normative tolerance for the expression of pre-existing prejudice. Ford et al. (2015) clarify that this mechanism does not mean that humorous exposure automatically generates racism, but that it may reduce the social constraints that inhibit its expression. This perspective is consistent with the axis identified in the testimonies: the formula "it's only humor" does not eliminate the stereotypical meaning, but may make it more acceptable or less likely to be challenged.

Historically, the findings also engage with Rodríguez (2020), who documented the stereotyped construction of the Andean migrant in twentieth-century Peruvian caricature. The continuity between print caricature and television suggests that ethnic comedy does not emerge in isolation within a program, but reuses long-standing cultural repertoires. The "fantasy of backwardness" described by Vich (2010) helps explain why unfamiliarity with the city, ways of speaking, or rural origin can function as humorous signs: the joke presupposes that there is a modern center from which the Andean subject appears displaced.

The student's testimony about hiding their family's Andean origin adds an experiential dimension to this discussion. It is not possible to attribute that behavior to a specific television program; however, it shows how stigma can influence the everyday management of identity. The systematic review by Sánchez-Villena and Temple-Focón (2025) confirms that ethnic-racial discrimination persists in Peru through direct and subtle forms, while recent empirical evidence indicates that experiences of discrimination are associated with unfavorable outcomes in self-esteem and well-being, although with small effect sizes and the limitations inherent in cross-sectional designs (Sánchez-Villena & Temple-Focón, 2026). Consequently, it is

methodologically more prudent to speak of a context of vulnerability and stigma than of psychological effects caused by television humor.

The findings concerning the representation of the Andean woman also require an intersectional reading. Celigueta and Viola (2021) show that media stereotypes about Indigenous women simplify complex identities and reproduce subordinate positions. In characters where gender, ethnicity, poverty, rurality, and language converge, comedy may simultaneously activate several hierarchies. Alayza's (2021) contribution helps explain that these dimensions should not be analyzed as isolated variables because the experience of discrimination occurs precisely at their intersection.

The third finding—the tension between creative freedom and responsibility—avoids reducing the debate to an opposition between prohibition and permission. Participants recognized the value of humorous freedom, but questioned its use to naturalize the disparagement of groups with less symbolic power. This dilemma is consistent with comparative research on humor and freedom of expression. Godioli and Little (2022) note that legal systems face difficulties distinguishing the satirical value of expressions that may cause harm, while Zinigrad (2025) warns that humor can amplify the circulation of prejudicial messages by reducing the emotional cost of receiving them.

In the Peruvian context, the ruling associated with La Paisana Jacinta constitutes a precedent that requires dignity and ethnic identity to be considered when analyzing the limits of representation (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2020). However, the present study does not allow the conclusion that every caricature of an identity should be restricted. The dissenting position found among citizens is important: it shows that part of the audience interprets regulation as a threat to creative freedom. This heterogeneity suggests that more productive communication responses may lie in media literacy, editorial self-regulation, diversity within creative teams, and the development of representation criteria, rather than exclusively punitive solutions.

Recent CONCORTV data reinforce the social relevance of this discussion. In 2025, a significant proportion of citizens identified discriminatory treatment and deficient representations on television; in 2026, the organization particularly highlighted negative images of Andean, Amazonian, and Afro-descendant communities (Consejo Consultivo de Radio y Televisión, 2025, 2026). These data do not causally validate the study participants' testimonies,

but they do show that the concerns expressed by participants form part of a broader public problem.

Implications for communication practice

The results suggest three directions for the field of communication. First, the humorous construction of culturally marked characters should distinguish between representing difference and producing inferiority. Second, scriptwriting, production, and acting teams can incorporate review processes that examine whether comedy depends on stereotypes historically associated with subordination. Third, media literacy can help audiences recognize the mechanisms through which a joke transforms social differences into symbolic hierarchies, without denying the critical and transgressive value of humor.

These recommendations should not be interpreted as evidence in favor of a general censorship regime. The study precisely shows that audiences hold diverse positions. Communicative responsibility requires contextualizing content, considering the relationship between the person making the joke and the person who is its target, and assessing whether the humorous device challenges power structures or reproduces the vulnerability of the represented group.

Limitations and future research directions

The study has relevant limitations. First, the sample is small, purposive, and concentrated in Lima; therefore, the results are not generalizable to Peruvian audiences. Second, the source manuscript did not document a systematic audiovisual corpus of episodes, scenes, or sketches; consequently, references to programs and characters come from participants and academic background rather than from an original measurement of content frequency. Third, the interviews with students and citizens were limited in scope and did not constitute formal focus groups.

Fourth, perceptions regarding influence on children and adolescents cannot be interpreted as demonstrated effects because the design did not include minors, experiments, or longitudinal follow-up. Finally, the study works with accounts already reported in the original manuscript; future research should analyze the complete transcripts through an explicit coding protocol, incorporate a delimited audiovisual corpus, and compare different generations of programs and digital platforms.

A subsequent research agenda could combine multimodal analysis of sketches with interviews with scriptwriters, comedians, producers, and members of represented communities. It

would also be relevant to incorporate reception designs with more geographically diverse samples and experimental or longitudinal studies that specifically assess when disparagement humor modifies norms of tolerance toward discrimination.

CONCLUSIONS

The study allows us to conclude that, within the testimonies analyzed, certain forms of ethnic humor on Peruvian television are interpreted as mechanisms of stereotyped representation when comedy depends on exaggerating the accent, appearance, territorial origin, or supposed lack of education of Andean, Indigenous, or Afro-Peruvian groups. Practices such as blackface and brownface were identified by participants as resources that intensify this construction of otherness.

Regarding normalization, participants described the formula “it’s only humor” as a frame that can relativize discriminatory content. The study does not demonstrate that television causally produces prejudice, imitation, or identity distancing; it does show that specialists and audiences attribute to these representations the capacity to reinforce existing social associations. This interpretation is consistent with the literature on disparagement humor and discursive racism.

Finally, the findings show that the relationship between creative freedom and ethical responsibility is a field of negotiation, not a closed consensus. Participants valued the possibility of producing critical and transgressive humor, but an important proportion questioned whether laughter should depend on the inferiorization of historically discriminated populations. Therefore, the main communication challenge is not to eliminate ethnic humor, but to distinguish cultural representation, satire, and self-reference from formulas that turn a social identity into a stable marker of inferiority.

From an academic and professional perspective, the transition toward more plural comedy requires systematic research, media literacy, and greater diversity in production processes. These measures make it possible to protect creative freedom while also safeguarding the right of individuals and communities not to be represented through degrading frameworks that perpetuate racial, cultural, or class hierarchies.

REFERENCES

- Alayza, A. (2021). El aporte de la interseccionalidad a una política pública que responda a las necesidades de las mujeres indígenas. *Politai: Revista de Ciencia Política*, 12(22), 98–119. <https://doi.org/10.18800/politai.202101.006>
- Billig, M. (2005). *Laughter and ridicule: Towards a social critique of humour*. SAGE.
- Celigueta, G., & Viola, A. (2021). Pantallas y prejuicios: estereotipos mediáticos sobre las mujeres indígenas en Perú y Guatemala. *Disparidades. Revista de Antropología*, 76(2), e015b. <https://doi.org/10.3989/dra.2021.015b>
- Consejo Consultivo de Radio y Televisión. (2025, 9 de septiembre). *Hábitos y percepciones sobre los medios de comunicación en el Perú: ¿qué cambió en 2025?* <https://www.concortv.gob.pe/habitos-y-percepciones-sobre-los-medios-de-comunicacion-en-el-peru-2025/>
- Consejo Consultivo de Radio y Televisión. (2026, 29 de mayo). *Diversidad cultural: un desafío pendiente para los medios de comunicación en el Perú*. <https://www.concortv.gob.pe/diversidad-cultural-un-desafio-pendiente-para-los-medios/>
- Defensoría del Pueblo. (2020, 17 de octubre). *Defensoría del Pueblo destaca sentencia de la Corte Superior de Justicia del Cusco en relación al personaje de la Paisana Jacinta*. <https://www.defensoria.gob.pe/defensoria-del-pueblo-destaca-sentencia-de-la-corte-superior-de-justicia-del-cusco-en-relacion-al-personaje-de-la-paisana-jacinta/>
- de los Heros, S. (2016). Humor étnico y discriminación en La Paisana Jacinta. *Pragmática Sociocultural*, 4(1), 74–107. <https://doi.org/10.1515/soprag-2015-0011>
- Ford, T. E., & Ferguson, M. A. (2004). Social consequences of disparagement humor: A prejudiced norm theory. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 8(1), 79–94. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327957PSPR0801_4
- Ford, T. E., Richardson, K., & Petit, W. E. (2015). Disparagement humor and prejudice: Contemporary theory and research. *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research*, 28(2), 171–186. <https://doi.org/10.1515/humor-2015-0017>
- Godioli, A., & Little, L. E. (2022). Different systems, similar challenges: Humor and free speech in the United States and Europe. *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research*, 35(3), 305–327. <https://doi.org/10.1515/humor-2021-0121>
- Hernández-Sampieri, R., & Mendoza, C. P. (2018). *Metodología de la investigación: Las rutas cuantitativa, cualitativa y mixta*. McGraw-Hill Education.
- Lockyer, S., & Pickering, M. (2008). You must be joking: The sociological critique of humour and comic media. *Sociology Compass*, 2(3), 808–820. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2008.00108.x>
- Ministerio de Cultura del Perú. (2025, 23 de enero). *Ministerio de Cultura: cerca de 300 reportes de discriminación étnico-racial fueron recibidos durante el 2024*. <https://www.gob.pe/institucion/cultura/noticias/1096100-ministerio-de-cultura-cerca-de-300-reportes-de-discriminacion-etnico-racial-fueron-recibidos-durante-el-2024>

- Morreall, J. (2009). *Comic relief: A comprehensive philosophy of humor*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- O'Brien, B. C., Harris, I. B., Beckman, T. J., Reed, D. A., & Cook, D. A. (2014). Standards for reporting qualitative research: A synthesis of recommendations. *Academic Medicine*, 89(9), 1245–1251. <https://doi.org/10.1097/ACM.0000000000000388>
- Pajuelo, R. (2016). *Un río invisible: Ensayos sobre política, conflictos, memoria y movilización indígena en el Perú y los Andes*. Ríos Profundos Editores.
- Peirano, L., & Sánchez León, A. (1984). *Risa y cultura en la televisión peruana*. DESCO.
- Rodríguez, L. (2020). Migration, racism, and humor: Stereotypes of the Andean migrant in the comic strips of oligarchic Peru. *Argumentos*, 1(2), 151–157. <https://doi.org/10.46476/ra.v1i2.32>
- Sánchez-Villena, A. R., & Temple-Focón, I. (2025). Discriminación étnico-racial en el Perú: Una revisión sistemática. *Revista Argentina de Ciencias del Comportamiento*, 17(3), 46–61. <https://doi.org/10.32348/1852.4206.v17.n3.44000>
- Sánchez-Villena, A. R., & Temple-Focón, I. (2026). Experiences of ethnic-racial discrimination, self-esteem, and subjective well-being in the Peruvian population. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 17, 1777639. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2026.1777639>
- Turpo-Gebera, O., & Gutiérrez-Gala, Z. (2019). Racismo en la televisión peruana: ¿qué mensajes transmiten los programas cómicos? *Universidad y Sociedad*, 11(4), 184–192. <https://rus.ucf.edu.cu/index.php/rus/article/view/1289>
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2010). Análisis del discurso del racismo. *Crítica y Emancipación*, 2(3), 65–94.
- Vich, V. (2010). El discurso sobre la sierra del Perú: la fantasía del atraso. *Crítica y Emancipación*, 2(3), 155–168.
- Zinigrad, R. (2025). Laughing matters in courts: Humor's role in normalizing hate speech. *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 50(1), 33–51. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03043754241244891>