



Pre-Service Teachers' Political Conversations on Social Media: *Marites*–*Makabayan* Interpretations for Social Studies Education

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study explored how Filipino pre-service teachers experience and interpret political conversations on social media, distinguish *Marites*-oriented from *Makabayan*-oriented discourse, and understand the implications for civic learning, integrated social science education, and their future responsibilities as social studies teachers.

Methodology: A qualitative descriptive design was used with eleven second-year pre-service teachers from the College of Teacher Education at President Ramon Magsaysay State University, Castillejos Campus, during the academic year 2025–2026. Individual audio-recorded interviews were conducted through Google Meet or face-to-face according to participant preference and convenience, using an expert-reviewed semi-structured guide. Audio-checked transcripts were manually coded and analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's six-phase procedure, followed by expert theme review and participant member checking; reported English translations were checked by a language expert.

Main Findings: Four themes were developed: political talk as everyday digital exposure; participation as selective and emotionally negotiated; distinguishing *Marites* from *Makabayan* discourse; and social media as informal civic learning. The themes indicate learning outcomes involving political awareness, reflective participation, source verification, evidence-based judgment, perspective-taking, respectful dialogue, and responsible digital participation.

Novelty/Originality of this study: The study advances a culturally grounded *Marites*–*Makabayan* framework for examining the credibility, tone, ethics, evidence, and public purpose of online political discourse. As a context-sensitive continuum rather than a fixed binary, the framework contributes to integrated social science education and digital civic pedagogy—teaching that connects interdisciplinary analysis with source evaluation, civic online reasoning, ethical dialogue, and the preparation of future teachers to facilitate controversial public issues responsibly.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Political talk increasingly reaches young people through feeds, reposts, short-form videos, comment threads, and private group chats rather than only through textbooks, classrooms, or scheduled news programs. These digitally mediated encounters blur the boundary between formal and informal learning because users encounter public issues while maintaining friendships, seeking entertainment, and participating in everyday

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platform routines [1]. Meta-analytic evidence indicates that digital media use is generally associated with civic and political engagement among young people, although the strength and direction of this relationship depend on the type of activity, platform practices, and surrounding social context [2]–[4]. Social media may therefore create opportunities for political contact, discussion, and participation, but exposure alone does not guarantee informed or democratic engagement [5], [6].

This distinction is especially important in the Philippines, where political information travels through highly relational and emotionally charged networks. Political posts are frequently encountered through friends, family members, influencers, and algorithmically amplified content. News-oriented social media use can support social capital, civic engagement, and political participation [7], yet visible expression may also become socially risky when users anticipate hostility, sanctions, or relational conflict [8]. Philippine studies likewise show that platforms can widen youth activism and political participation while simultaneously circulating polarized and disinformation-oriented narratives [9], [10]. Regional evidence further suggests that online political participation may support civic orientation, although movement from digital attention to sustained offline engagement remains uneven [11], [12].

These conditions are educationally consequential for pre-service teachers. They enter teacher education with political impressions, source-evaluation habits, and communicative dispositions already shaped by their digital lives. In this study, *political exposure* refers to encountering political content; *political conversation* refers to an exchange in which political claims or perspectives are communicated; *political participation* refers to a person's visible or intentional communicative action; *civic learning* refers to the development or refinement of civic knowledge, judgment, skills, and dispositions; *civic engagement* refers to participation in public or community-oriented action; and *civic competence* refers to the capacity to interpret public issues and participate critically, ethically, and responsibly. Maintaining these distinctions prevents routine exposure from being treated automatically as learning or engagement.

The relevance of these experiences extends beyond a single course. Social studies education prepares learners to interpret public life and to participate in democratic communities. Integrated Social Science Education strengthens that purpose by connecting knowledge and methods from political science, history, sociology, economics, culture, communication, and ethics. Online political conversations bring these domains together in compressed, contested, and culturally situated forms. They require users to interpret historical references, examine political claims, recognize social identities, evaluate economic or policy arguments, and consider the ethical consequences of communication. For this reason, social media can function as an informal learning context within integrated social science education, but only when exposure is accompanied by reflection, verification, perspective-taking, and responsible participation.

This interpretation is grounded in three complementary perspectives. First, a social-constructivist and informal-learning perspective treats meaning as developed through interaction, observation, language, and participation across formal and everyday settings [1], [12]. Second, digital citizenship scholarship positions civic engagement, critical perspective, ethical participation, and respect as central dimensions of citizenship in digitally mediated communities [13]–[15]. Third, critical media literacy emphasizes that learners must examine how messages are produced, whose interests they serve, what evidence supports them, and how power and representation shape their circulation [16]. These perspectives clarify that social media is not educational by default. Its learning value depends on whether users move beyond visibility and popularity cues to investigate sources, compare evidence, negotiate disagreement, and reflect on the civic purpose of communication.

Research on civic online reasoning demonstrates that students often struggle to evaluate digital sources when they rely on surface features, familiarity, or popularity rather than lateral verification [17], [18]. Brief media-literacy interventions can improve discernment between mainstream and false content, although effects vary across populations and contexts [19]. Critical media literacy therefore requires both practical verification routines and attention to the social and political conditions under which information is created and circulated [20], [21]. For future teachers, these are not merely personal media habits. They are emerging professional capacities that may shape how controversial issues, evidence, and disagreement are handled in the classroom.

Despite substantial research on youth participation, misinformation, digital citizenship, and online engagement, an unresolved gap remains. Existing studies do not sufficiently explain how Filipino pre-service teachers themselves interpret the civic quality of ordinary political conversations encountered online, how they distinguish rumor-oriented communication from civically purposeful discourse, and how these judgments inform their emerging responsibilities as social studies teachers. The present study addresses this gap through the culturally familiar contrast between *Marites* and *Makabayan*. In popular Philippine usage, *Marites* is often associated with gossip, rumor, sensationalism, or personality-centered talk, whereas *Makabayan* invokes concern for country, public welfare, and civic responsibility. The study does not treat these labels as fixed personality types or mutually exclusive categories. Instead, it uses them as context-sensitive discourse orientations along a continuum: *Marites*-oriented discourse tends toward unverified, provocative, or rumor-driven communication, while *Makabayan*-oriented discourse tends toward evidence-informed, issue-centered, respectful, and civically purposeful engagement.

The study is both novel and urgent because future teachers must learn to facilitate public-issue discussions in an environment marked by rapid misinformation, political polarization, selective exposure, and emotionally intensified communication. The Marites–Makabayan framework offers a culturally grounded way of asking not only whether a message is political but also whether its evidence, tone, ethics, and public purpose contribute to or diminish civic learning. As a pedagogical lens, it may help integrated social science education connect political knowledge with critical media literacy and responsible participation. In this article, *digital civic pedagogy* refers to teaching practices that help learners examine digital public discourse, verify claims, deliberate across differences, and participate ethically in networked civic spaces.

Accordingly, this study aimed to explore how Filipino pre-service teachers experience and interpret political conversations on social media, distinguish Marites-oriented from Makabayan-oriented discourse, and understand the implications of these experiences for civic learning, integrated social science education, and their future responsibilities as social studies teachers.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1. Research Design

The study employed a qualitative descriptive design using semi-structured interviews. Qualitative description is appropriate when an inquiry seeks a clear, experience-near account of a phenomenon without imposing a highly abstract theoretical explanation on participants' accounts [22], [23]. This design was therefore suited to examining how pre-service teachers described political encounters on social media, the practical criteria they used to judge discourse, and the meanings they attached to these experiences in relation to social studies education. The design also supported the retention of participants' ordinary language, including shifts between Filipino and English, while allowing the researchers to identify patterned meanings across accounts.

2.2. Participants and Research Context

The study was conducted at President Ramon Magsaysay State University (PRMSU), Castillejos Campus, during the academic year 2025–2026. The final analytic sample consisted of eleven second-year pre-service teachers from the College of Teacher Education. Before recruitment, the researchers secured the necessary permission from the appropriate university authorities and coordinated with the concerned office or faculty members at PRMSU Castillejos Campus. Potential participants were identified using the stated inclusion criteria: active use of social media platforms such as Facebook, X, Instagram, TikTok, and Messenger, and prior exposure to political conversations online. The researchers personally invited qualified participants, explained the purpose and scope of the study, and obtained informed consent before interviewing them. Purposeful sampling was used because the inquiry required information-rich participants able to describe and reflect on experiences directly relevant to the research objective. Purposeful selection is appropriate when participants are chosen for their experiential relevance rather than for statistical representativeness [24].

The focused sample allowed close examination of a bounded group whose digital political experiences were directly relevant to their emerging teacher identity. Selection focused on participants who met the stated inclusion criteria; no additional exclusion condition is asserted in this report. No claim of statistical generalizability or universal saturation is made. Instead, qualitative sample adequacy is considered in relation to the focused aim, sample specificity, relevance of the accounts, and analytical strategy—the dimensions captured by the principle of information power [25]. This rationale supports the interpretive adequacy of the eleven accounts for the bounded objective without claiming that a numerical threshold alone establishes sufficiency.

2.3. Data Collection

Data were gathered through a researcher-made semi-structured interview guide composed of open-ended questions. Semi-structured interviewing was selected because it provides a common topical structure while permitting probing, clarification, and participant-led elaboration. Methodological guidance emphasizes that a rigorous interview guide should be informed by the research objective, relevant literature, careful question formulation, and review before use [26]. The guide covered four areas: experiences of engaging in political conversations online, patterns of participation in political discussions, perceived influence on political views and civic engagement, and perspectives on integrating social-media literacy into education.

Before data collection, specialists in social science, journalism, and qualitative inquiry reviewed the guide, and their review informed refinement of the questions before use. Each interview was scheduled at a convenient time and conducted individually either through Google Meet or face-to-face, depending on the participant's preference and convenience. This flexible arrangement encouraged openness and reduced peer influence while retaining the same semi-structured guide across interview modes. During the interviews, follow-up prompts were used for clarification and elaboration. With permission, the interviews were audio-recorded. The recordings were transcribed, checked against the audio files for consistency, organized in a data matrix, and prepared for coding and thematic analysis. Reporting guidance for interview studies underscores that interviewer

characteristics, setting, duration, recording, field notes, and participant–researcher relationships can shape qualitative accounts [27]. The present report therefore limits its procedural claims to the confirmed interview modes, individual scheduling, consent, audio recording, audio checking, and subsequent validation of summarized themes. It does not infer an undocumented interview duration, the number or role of interviewers, repeat-interview protocol, field-note procedure, or full-transcript-return process.

2.4. Ethical Considerations

The study observed voluntary participation, informed consent, respect for persons, confidentiality, and minimization of risk throughout the research process. Before the interviews, the researchers explained the study's purpose, the nature of participation, the possible use of data in the thesis manuscript, and participants' freedom to decline any question, discontinue an interview, or withdraw. The participants in the final sample were treated as adults; therefore, assent forms for minors were not required. Participant codes P1 to P11 replaced real names, and identifying information was removed from transcripts and written reports. Because political conversations may be sensitive or polarizing, the interviews were conducted in a respectful and non-threatening manner to minimize emotional or social risk, and participants were not required to disclose partisan affiliation or voting choice.

The handling of personal information was aligned with the Philippine Data Privacy Act of 2012 [28]. Only information necessary for the inquiry was collected, and informed consent was secured directly before either interview mode. Audio files, transcripts, and coded materials were stored in password-protected digital folders accessible only to the researchers and were retained only for the period necessary to complete the study and related academic requirements. The same confidentiality and restricted-access safeguards governed their handling throughout that period. The report limits its institutional-authorization account to the confirmed university permission and its data-management account to the documented security and general retention arrangements; it does not infer an unreported committee or reference number, storage specification beyond password-protected digital folders, or final disposal schedule.

2.5. Research Procedures

The inquiry proceeded through linked authorization, instrument development, participant engagement, data generation, validation, and analytical stages. First, the researchers secured the necessary university permission and coordinated with the concerned office or faculty members. Second, they developed the semi-structured interview guide from the research objective and relevant literature. Third, specialists in social science, journalism, and qualitative inquiry reviewed the guide, after which the researchers refined the questions. Fourth, eligible second-year pre-service teachers with relevant social-media experience were purposively identified and personally invited, and informed consent was secured. Fifth, the researchers scheduled and conducted individual interviews through Google Meet or face-to-face, according to participant preference and convenience, and audio-recorded them with permission. Sixth, the recordings were transcribed, checked against the audio, and organized in a data matrix. Seventh, the researchers repeatedly read the transcripts and generated initial codes. Eighth, related codes were grouped, themes were developed and refined, and the Marites–Makabayan distinction was applied as an interpretive lens. Ninth, qualified faculty experts reviewed the emerging themes for clarity, relevance, coherence, and alignment. Tenth, participants reviewed summarized themes and interpretations through member checking; their confirmations and clarifications were documented and considered in the final refinement. Password-protected data management extended throughout the process. Figure 1 summarizes this sequence.

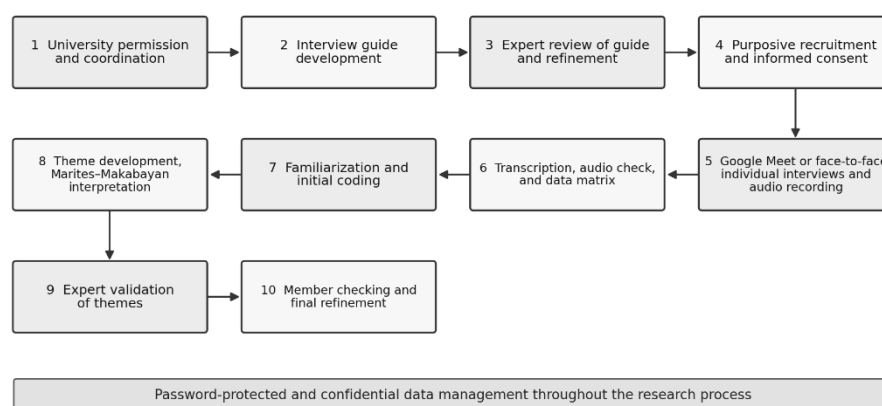


Figure 1. Research Procedure of The Study

The flowchart consolidates related activities for readability; it does not imply that analysis was mechanically linear. Familiarization, coding, theme development, interpretation, expert review, and member

checking facilitated movement among transcripts, codes, candidate themes, feedback, and the full data set, consistent with the recursive nature of thematic analysis.

2.6. Data Analysis and Research Rigor

The interview data were analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke's six-phase procedure: familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, development of candidate themes, review of themes, definition and naming of themes, and production of the report [29]. The researchers read and reread the audio-checked transcripts, manually highlighted significant statements related to the research questions, assigned initial codes, grouped related ideas into broader categories, and compared the categories across transcripts to identify shared patterns, differences, and emerging meanings. These categories were refined into themes representing how participants experienced political conversations, distinguished rumor-driven from civic-minded discourse, and related these experiences to awareness, participation, and social studies education. The phases were treated as recursive rather than rigidly sequential. Contemporary guidance further emphasizes that themes are interpretive products developed through sustained researcher engagement with the data rather than discovered as objective entities [30], [31].

The Marites–Makabayan distinction was used as a culturally grounded interpretive lens rather than a rigid pre-existing codebook. The researchers first attended to participants' actual language, descriptions, and practical judgments, then examined how the developing themes illuminated rumor-oriented and civically purposeful discourse. This preserved an inductive connection to the accounts while situating the interpretation in the study's cultural context.

Credibility and trustworthiness were strengthened through expert validation of themes and participant validation or member checking. After initial coding and theme generation, qualified faculty experts with backgrounds in social studies or social science, communication, and qualitative research reviewed the emerging themes for clarity, relevance, coherence, and alignment with the research questions and participants' narratives. Their feedback informed refinement of the wording, organization, and presentation of the themes. Participants were then provided with summarized themes and interpretations and invited to confirm, clarify, or comment on whether these represented their intended meanings. Their confirmations and clarifications were documented and considered in the final presentation. These procedures supported credibility by making interpretive review explicit; they do not convert qualitative interpretations into objectively validated facts.

The analysis also retained a clear connection among participant statements, codes, themes, and interpretive claims. Themes were reviewed across the transcripts for shared patterns and identified points of difference, and participant quotations were used to make the analytical basis of claims visible. Together with expert review and member checking, these practices are consistent with trustworthiness and qualitative-quality principles emphasizing credibility, transparency, resonance, sincerity, and coherence [32], [33].

Participants naturally shifted between Filipino and English. Quotations were retained in their original wording whenever possible, followed by bracketed English translations when needed. A language expert checked the English translations used in reporting. This approach recognizes that translation may alter culturally situated meanings and therefore prioritizes transparency between the original expression and its English rendering [34]. Beyond the documented language-expert check, the source record does not identify who initially prepared the translations, the interviewers' relevant professional backgrounds, or any prior relationships between interviewers and participants; the report therefore does not infer these particulars.

No claim of formal intercoder reliability or a separate coding-comparison procedure is made; the documented rigor procedures were expert validation of themes, member checking, audio verification of transcripts, and maintenance of visible links between participant evidence and interpretation. Because researcher positioning shapes qualitative interpretation [35], the report does not present the analysis as neutral or free from researcher influence. Instead, it identifies the Marites–Makabayan lens explicitly and grounds interpretive claims in quotations, transcript review, expert feedback, and participant confirmations or clarifications.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis generated four interrelated themes: political talk as everyday digital exposure; participation as selective and emotionally negotiated; distinguishing Marites from Makabayan discourse; and social media as informal civic learning. Table 1 presents each theme alongside its central interpretive focus and its clearest learning outcome for Social Studies Education. The learning outcomes are analytical interpretations of participants' reported experiences, not measured causal effects.

Table 1. Major Themes and Learning Outcomes

Theme	Interpretive focus	Social Studies learning outcome
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Political talk as everyday digital exposure	Political content entered routine platform use through peers, feeds, trends, and comment threads.	Political awareness, issue recognition, and contextual inquiry
Participation as selective and emotionally negotiated	Speaking depended on anticipated conflict, emotional risk, audience response, and relationships.	Reflective participation, emotional regulation, audience awareness, and dialogic competence
Distinguishing Marites from Makabayan discourse	Discourse was judged through verification, completeness, tone, credibility, respect, and public purpose.	Critical media literacy, source verification, evidence-based judgment, and ethical communication
Social media as informal civic learning	Online encounters prompted awareness, reflection, source checking, perspective-taking, and civic orientation.	Reflective citizenship, perspective-taking, responsible digital participation, and readiness for controversial-issue teaching

3.1. Political Talk as Everyday Digital Exposure

Participants consistently described political conversations as part of ordinary social-media use rather than something confined to formal civic spaces. Political content appeared in feeds, reposts, comment sections, and peer-shared posts, especially when controversies or national issues were trending. One participant explained, “Kadalasan po ay post ng kaibigan ang dahilan kung bakit ako napapasali sa discussion, lalo na kung tungkol ito sa politics o current events” [“Most of the time, it is a friend’s post that draws me into the discussion, especially when it is about politics or current events”] (P4). Another similarly stated, “Usually I join when a friend posts about a current political issue, especially when the topic is trending” (P11). These accounts show that political exposure was socially mediated and embedded in routine platform use rather than always deliberately sought.

The educational significance of this theme lies in issue recognition and political awareness. Repeated exposure placed participants in contact with public concerns, competing interpretations, and peer reactions. However, visibility did not necessarily mean understanding. Participants had to determine why an issue was circulating, what information was missing, and whether a post merited attention. Social-media ties can mobilize civic attention by connecting users to issues through ordinary relationships [36], while patterns of news engagement may also reproduce ideological segregation and uneven information quality [37]. The present findings confirm that digital networks broaden opportunities for political contact, but they extend earlier research by showing that, for future teachers, routine exposure also becomes a recurring occasion for preliminary civic judgment.

Within Social Studies Education, the learning outcome is therefore not simple content exposure but the capacity to recognize a public issue and situate it within wider social, political, historical, and ethical contexts. In Integrated Social Science Education, a trending post can become an entry point for examining institutions, policy, identity, collective memory, and social consequences. Future teachers can translate this experience into classroom practice by helping learners move from “What is trending?” to “What public issue is involved, whose perspectives are represented, what context is absent, and what evidence is needed?” This transformation from attention to inquiry is a foundational civic competence.

3.2. Participation as Selective and Emotionally Negotiated

Although political exposure was common, participation was rarely effortless. Participants described online political engagement as emotionally charged and socially risky. One participant recalled, “During the discussion, I felt nervous ... but after the discussion, I felt relieved because people agreed with this opinion” (P5). Another said, “Honestly, at first, I felt nervous ... kasi hindi ko alam kung paano mag-react ... pero ... I’m still glad that I spoke up” [“Honestly, at first, I felt nervous because I did not know how to respond, but I am still glad that I spoke up”] (P10). Speaking required more than holding a position; it involved anticipating how an audience might respond, whether disagreement would escalate, and whether relationships might be damaged.

These findings support research showing that young people may hesitate to express political views when platform audiences are ambiguous and social reception is uncertain [38]. Cross-national research likewise describes social media as a sphere of “risky” political expression, where the willingness to speak depends partly on social and political conditions [8]. Monitoring visible reactions and perceived opinion climates may also shape whether users interpret their view as safe to express [39]. The present study contextualizes these patterns among Filipino pre-service teachers, for whom political communication occurred within peer networks and a cultural environment where maintaining relationships and avoiding public conflict may carry particular weight.

The clearest learning outcomes are reflective participation, emotional self-regulation, audience awareness, and sensitivity to the relational consequences of speech. Selective participation should not automatically be interpreted as apathy. In several accounts, caution represented an ethical and strategic judgment about when, where, and how to speak. Yet silence can also leave misleading claims unchallenged. The civic task

is therefore to distinguish prudent restraint from disengagement and to develop ways of responding that remain evidence-based and respectful.

For future Social Studies teachers, this theme has a direct pedagogical implication. Classrooms dealing with controversial issues require conditions in which learners can disagree without humiliation, coercion, or partisan pressure. Pre-service teachers need practice in asking clarifying questions, paraphrasing an opposing view accurately, separating criticism of a claim from attack on a person, and recognizing when emotion signals that discussion procedures need attention. These practices develop dialogic competence and prepare teachers to facilitate intellectually demanding but relationally safe civic discussion.

3.3. Distinguishing Marites from Makabayan Discourse

A central analytical contribution of the study lies in how participants judged the civic quality of political talk. They did not treat all political content as equally credible or valuable. Instead, they distinguished rumor-driven or sensationalized communication from civically purposeful discourse through practical criteria: verification, completeness, tone, source credibility, evidence, respect, and public purpose. One participant remarked, “My trust has become more cynical. I no longer trust a source just because it has many likes” (P2). Another explained, “Ah, yes. So, in the part of fact-checking, because some information are not or incomplete or rather it is not stating the whole or background knowledge” [“Yes, in terms of fact-checking, some information is incomplete, or rather, it does not provide the full context or background knowledge”] (P9). Rumor-oriented discourse was therefore recognized not only through obvious falsehood but also through missing context, weak checking, and persuasive circulation based on popularity.

Participants also identified Marites-oriented discourse through hostility, provocation, and erosion of respect. One described how discussions became “Medyo intense at heated po yung discussion ... May mga pagkakataon din po na nawawala na yung respeto sa usapan” [“The discussion was somewhat intense and heated ... There were also times when respect was lost in the conversation”] (P4). Another explained, “When I see offensive political content, I try to avoid engaging in arguments. Instead, I either ignore the post or report it if it spreads harmful misinformation” (P6). These accounts indicate that the civic quality of communication was judged through both epistemic criteria—whether claims were supported and contextualized—and ethical criteria—whether communication respected others and served public understanding.

By contrast, Makabayan-oriented discourse was associated with learning, responsibility, and issue-based engagement. One participant stated, “I participate because it allows me to express my thoughts and learn from the perspectives of other people” (P6). Another linked responsible information sharing to professional identity: “Gusto ko na maka-spread ng information correctly ... since gusto ko rin maging teacher, feel ko na kailangan ko na maging responsible” [“I want to share information correctly ... since I also want to become a teacher, I feel that I need to be responsible”] (P10). In these accounts, civic purpose was visible when a discussion supported understanding, invited perspectives, and treated accurate information as a professional and public responsibility.

Prior research distinguishes fabricated or deceptive information from other problematic forms of digital content and emphasizes the continued influence of misinformation even after correction [40], [41]. The wider science of misinformation also shows that platform structures, human judgment, and social circulation interact in ways that complicate the detection of false or misleading claims [42]. More recent work continues to identify misinformation as a threat that spreads through social networks and requires both individual and institutional responses [43]. The present findings support these concerns, but add a culturally grounded interpretive vocabulary that combines credibility, communication ethics, and civic purpose.

The learning outcomes are critical media literacy, source verification, contextual reading, evidence-based judgment, and ethical communication. The Marites–Makabayan framework can function as a classroom heuristic rather than a labeling device. Learners can ask: Who created this message? What evidence is provided? What context is missing? Can the claim be corroborated laterally? What tone is used? Whose dignity or interests are affected? Does sharing the content advance public understanding or merely provoke attention? Because actual discourse may contain both orientations, the framework is best represented as a continuum. A message may raise a legitimate public issue while using incomplete evidence or inflammatory language; conversely, an informal or humorous post may still direct attention toward a genuine civic concern. The pedagogical goal is reasoned evaluation, not moral stereotyping.

3.4. Social Media as Informal Civic Learning

Participants described social media as an informal space of political learning. One explained, “Reading different opinions and news articles shared online has helped me understand political issues more deeply” (P6). Another observed, “Social media exposes us ... sa maraming topics na hindi talaga natin naririnig sa school” [“Social media exposes us to many topics that we do not really hear about in school”] (P10). Participants therefore encountered topics, arguments, and perspectives that extended beyond scheduled classroom content. This finding supports research identifying social media as a source of political learning and a bridge between formal and informal educational settings [1], [12].

Several participants also described reflection and reconsideration. One said, “Nagkaroon ako ng reflection sa sarili ko na bakit yun yung pinili kong panigan ...” [“I reflected on myself and asked why I chose to support that side”] (P3), while another stated, “I sometimes reconsider my opinions and try to learn more about the issue” (P8). These accounts indicate perspective-taking and metacognitive civic judgment: participants did not only acquire information but examined why a position appeared convincing and whether further inquiry was necessary. Such reflection is especially important in environments where motivated reasoning and partisan identity can shape what users accept as credible.

Participants also connected online encounters with offline civic orientation. One shared, “Nung bago pa ako bumoto ... yun yung nag-push sa akin na mag-register agad para maging botante” [“Before I voted for the first time, that was what pushed me to register immediately as a voter”] (P10). Another said, “It made me more interested in participating in civic activities like voting and discussions in school or the community” (P7). This pattern resembles evidence that online activity may contribute to civic orientation and later participation, although the relationship is contingent rather than automatic [2]–[4]. Philippine research on slacktivism similarly cautions that visible online activity can take different forms and does not necessarily translate into sustained action [44].

A related learning outcome was critical caution. One participant said, “I try to verify the credibility of sources before believing or sharing political information” (P6), while another emphasized, “My trust has become more cynical. I no longer trust a source just because it has many likes” (P2). The educational value of this skepticism depends on whether it leads to verification rather than generalized distrust. Civic online reasoning provides concrete routines for turning doubt into investigation: leaving an unfamiliar source, checking what other credible sources say, tracing claims to their origin, and comparing evidence [17], [18].

Within Social Studies Education, the principal outcomes are political awareness, reflective citizenship, perspective-taking, verification habits, and readiness for responsible participation. In Integrated Social Science Education, teachers can connect these competencies to the analysis of institutions, social groups, historical narratives, economic claims, cultural identities, and ethical responsibilities. Social media becomes a teachable civic text: not a substitute for disciplinary knowledge, but a setting in which learners apply it.

3.5. Implications for Social Studies Education and Digital Civic Pedagogy

Participants explicitly connected their experiences with future classroom responsibilities. One stated, “Teaching them how to engage responsibly in political discussions can help them become informed and respectful citizens” (P6). Another argued, “Students ... nag-i-spend ng time nila more sa social media. So why not ... teach them how to use it responsibly” [“Students spend more of their time on social media, so why not teach them how to use it responsibly”] (P10). Their responses position digital citizenship as a civic and pedagogical concern rather than merely a matter of technical safety.

Participants identified concrete competencies: fact-checking, source evaluation, bias recognition, critical thinking, and respectful dialogue. One emphasized, “Check kung yung information ay totoo, hindi bias, and gamitin yung critical thinking bago maniwala o mag-share” [“Check whether the information is true, not biased, and use critical thinking before believing or sharing it”] (P3). Another said that students should learn how to “verify information online, identify bias ... recognize misinformation and communicate respectfully” (P8). These priorities are consistent with digital-citizenship frameworks that combine critical inquiry, participation, and ethical interaction [13]–[16].

Participants also stressed pedagogical balance. As one stated, “Don’t be political, be pedagogical. We shouldn’t tell students whom to vote for, but we must teach them how to evaluate a platform” (P2). Another emphasized the need for a safer space for disagreement: “Kailangan nating mag create nang classroom environment where students would feel comfortable sharing their opinions ... even though nag didisagree sila” [“We need to create a classroom environment where students would feel comfortable sharing their opinions even when they disagree with one another”] (P10). Structured deliberation can make disagreement intellectually productive when teachers establish evidence standards, listening norms, and safeguards against humiliation [45]. High-quality listening can also reduce defensiveness and improve how political interlocutors perceive one another after disagreement [46].

These findings support four practical directions for digital civic pedagogy. First, teacher-education programs can use lateral-reading exercises in which students leave a post, investigate the source, trace the original claim, and compare independent evidence. Second, courses can use guided deliberation protocols that require claim–evidence reasoning, accurate paraphrasing, and respectful response. Third, students can analyze examples along the Marites–Makabayan continuum by examining credibility, completeness, tone, ethics, and public purpose. Fourth, reflective tasks can ask pre-service teachers to document how their own assumptions, emotions, and social relationships influence whether they believe, share, challenge, or avoid political content.

The framework’s contribution to Integrated Social Science Education lies in joining disciplinary interpretation with civic action. A single political post may require historical contextualization, institutional analysis, sociological attention to identity and networks, economic evaluation of policy claims, communication analysis of framing, and ethical consideration of harm. Treating these dimensions together prepares future teachers

to move classroom discussion beyond partisan reaction and toward evidence-oriented public reasoning. This is particularly urgent because misinformation and motivated reasoning can persist even among knowledgeable learners; instruction must therefore address both verification skills and the dispositions that make people willing to reconsider preferred claims [21], [47]. Media-literacy education may increase digital political engagement when it gives learners meaningful opportunities to evaluate and participate rather than only warning them about risk [48], [49].

3.6. Study Impact and Limitations

The study contributes a localized account of how Filipino pre-service teachers interpret political discourse within their everyday digital environments. Its principal conceptual impact is the Marites–Makabayan framework, which translates abstract concerns about misinformation, incivility, evidence, and civic purpose into a culturally recognizable continuum. Its educational impact lies in showing how ordinary online encounters may be transformed into learning opportunities involving political awareness, source verification, reflection, perspective-taking, ethical communication, and readiness to facilitate controversial issues. For teacher-education institutions, the findings provide a basis for integrating critical media literacy, civic online reasoning, and structured deliberation into Social Studies methods courses and related professional preparation.

The findings must nevertheless be interpreted within several limitations. First, the purposively selected sample consisted of eleven second-year pre-service teachers from one campus and institution. The results therefore offer contextual depth rather than statistical generalizability, and their transferability depends on similarity to other settings. Second, the study relied on self-reported experiences. Participants may have presented themselves as more careful, respectful, or verification-oriented than their actual online behavior, particularly because political communication is sensitive and socially evaluated. Third, the study did not directly observe participants' social-media activity or analyze their posts, comments, or sharing histories. It therefore cannot determine whether reported practices consistently matched actual behavior. Fourth, the Marites and Makabayan concepts are culturally specific and may carry meanings that vary across communities, generations, and situations. Their analytical value should not be interpreted as universal validity. Finally, the study focused on a particular stage of teacher preparation; later coursework, practicum experience, and professional socialization may alter how participants understand and facilitate political discussion.

3.7. Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies should examine the transferability of the findings through multi-institutional research involving pre-service teachers from different Philippine regions, program specializations, year levels, and institutional types. Comparative work could investigate whether the Marites–Makabayan continuum is interpreted differently across linguistic, cultural, and political contexts. Cross-platform studies could compare how the affordances of Facebook, TikTok, X, Messenger, and other platforms shape political exposure, expression, verification, and discourse quality. Longitudinal research could follow pre-service teachers from coursework through practicum and early teaching to examine how digital civic competencies and controversial-issue pedagogy develop over time.

Methodologically, digital ethnography or consent-based analysis of naturally occurring online conversations could compare reported practices with observable behavior while maintaining strict privacy safeguards. Mixed-method studies could combine qualitative accounts with measures of civic online reasoning, digital citizenship, political efficacy, or discussion tolerance. Classroom-based studies could examine how pre-service or practicing teachers use Marites–Makabayan analysis and controversial-issue protocols during actual Social Studies lessons. Intervention studies could evaluate whether lateral-reading instruction, guided deliberation, fact-checking tasks, or Marites–Makabayan analysis improves source evaluation, reflective judgment, and respectful participation. Further conceptual research should refine and undertake context-sensitive validation of the framework's dimensions without reducing culturally complex discourse to a simplistic binary.

4. CONCLUSION

This study addressed how Filipino pre-service teachers experience and interpret political conversations on social media, distinguish Marites-oriented from Makabayan-oriented discourse, and understand the implications for their future work as Social Studies teachers. Political talk was embedded in participants' ordinary digital routines, but visible participation remained selective and emotionally negotiated. Participants evaluated discourse through verification, completeness, tone, source credibility, respect, and public purpose. Their accounts also showed how social media may function as an informal context for political awareness, reflection, perspective-taking, source checking, and civic orientation.

The educational meaning of the four themes lies in a progression from exposure to inquiry, from cautious expression to dialogic competence, from popularity cues to evidence-based judgment, and from ordinary platform use to reflective citizenship. The Marites–Makabayan framework captures this progression as a culturally

grounded continuum rather than a rigid binary. Marites-oriented discourse tends toward rumor, incompleteness, sensationalism, provocation, and personality-centered exchange; Makabayan-oriented discourse tends toward evidence, context, respect, social responsibility, and public understanding. Its value for Integrated Social Science Education and digital civic pedagogy is its capacity to connect disciplinary knowledge with critical media literacy, ethical communication, and responsible participation.

Teacher preparation should therefore help future educators analyze political content without prescribing partisan conclusions, verify claims without cultivating generalized cynicism, and facilitate disagreement without sacrificing intellectual challenge or relational safety. The findings do not establish causal effects or universal categories, but they provide a context-sensitive foundation for designing pedagogies that help learners judge digital political discourse more carefully and participate in public life more responsibly.

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