



TEACHERS AND SOCIAL MEDIA: EXPOSING ETHICAL AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

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INTRODUCTION :

Social media is the common ground of people to post and express their feeling and achievements in life. It is also the platform where they could gather information which is happening around the country and the world. In the same vein, the social media is important since it radiates positive vibes about life which in turn became an instrument of hope and inspiration.

At one hand, the social media has been the venue of fake news and toxic people. Instead of promoting the sense of humanity, they tend to expose their personal lives. In turn, this has been the beginning of conflicts. Indeed, topics have been the sources of gossips and unhealthy conversations on the social media (Cartwright et al., 2022; Tapsell, 2022).

Further, the usage of dummy accounts is rampant in the social media (Awan et al., 2022). In the Philippine contexts, trolls came into being in the virtual world. These are people who maliciously spread fake news in order to destroy someone's image in the society. Also, it is noted that many of the Filipinos lacked the netiquettes (Neilson & Ortega, 2022; Ong & Tapsell, 2022).

Similar researchers were conducted worldwide. To mention a few are the studies of Townsend and Wallance (2016), Beninger (2017), Alia (2022), and Rosidi et al., (2022). However, none of which gave a clear picture of how teachers in the Philippines and the local setting observed ethical standards in the utilization of social media. Thus, this is the basis of the gap of the study.

Moreover, this study opens the new doors of opportunities. Undeniably, this will guide teachers to be responsible enough on their dealings on the social media. As public figures, people's eyes especially the students have the track of their eyes on their teachers' social media activities. Conforming to the ethical standards for professional teachers, this endeavor will be a guidance to teachers to stand for their image.

Statement of the Problem

This qualitative study employing phenomenology aims at determining the observance of ethical standards of elementary teachers in the utilization of the social media. Specifically, it will answer the following questions:

1. What ethical standards do teachers observe in using the social media;
2. What social responsibilities do teachers highlight in using the social media;
3. What can teachers suggest to be ethically and socially responsible in using the social media; and
4. What material and policy brief can be developed that promotes ethical and social responsibilities in using the social media?

METHODOLOGY:

Research Design

In this study, I applied the concept of qualitative-phenomenological design. Qualitative is a research design where the researcher seeks to understand the phenomenon. Phenomenology is commonly described as the study of phenomena as they manifest in our experience, of the way we perceive and understand phenomena, and of the meaning phenomena have in our subjective experience (Van Manen, 2016). More simply stated, phenomenology is the study of an individual's lived experience of the world. By examining an experience as it is subjectively lived, new meanings and appreciations can be developed to inform, or even re-orient, how we understand that experience (Laverty, 2016).

This study is qualitative since I did not apply any numerical data in the interpretation of findings. Data were solely deepened through the understanding of the responses of the people who have the common experiences of the phenomena. Likewise, this is phenomenology because I try to determine the ethical standards observed by teachers in the utilization of the social media.

Locale of the Study

This locale of this study were the Municipality of Antipas. The name Antipas was derived from "anti" from the word antique and "pas" from Passi, two places found in Panay Island. The enthusiasm of the natives and their determination to run their own affairs coupled with the fertility of the soil and a promise of a brighter future of the area brought forth the unified will of the people when they petitioned the National Government through the Provincial Government headed by Governor Carlos B. Cajelo and represented by Assemblyman Jesus Amparo of the Batasang Pambansa. On October 14, 1980, by virtue of Batas Pambansa Bilang 88,[5] approved by President Ferdinand Marcos, ratified by the people of the Municipality of Matalam on December 6, 1980, and ultimately inaugurated on March 7, 1981, Antipas was created as the 15th municipality of Cotabato.

Antipas is centrally located at the heart of Arakan Valley. It is bounded on the southeast by the Municipality of Magpet, on the north-east by the Municipality of Arakan, on the north by the Municipality of President Roxas (North) and Arakan River, on the west by its mother municipality, Matalam and on the South by President Roxas (South). It has 13 barangays. The major languages spoken are Hiligaynon which is made up of 70% of the population, followed by the Cebuano, and Ilocano.

Sampling Procedure

There were two groups of teachers who served as the informants and participants. The informants served for the Key Informant Interview (KII) and the participants for the Focus Group Interview (FGI). They were selected using the purposive sampling. This is a non-probability sampling (Vehovar et al., 2016). The selection was based on the following criteria, to wit:

1. An elementary teacher;
2. Assigned in one of the elementary schools of Antipas;
3. Active in using the social media (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and etcetera); and
4. At least 3 years in the teaching service.

Data Gathering Procedure

The gathering of the data followed the strict process in order to adhere to the ethical standards of research. Letters were sent to the authorities in relation to the conduct of the study. Their approval was important since it was my ticket to proceed to the interview of the informants and the participants.

Likewise, I identified the informants and participants based on the criteria set. Upon identification, I asked them of their willingness to participate in this endeavor. More importantly, the objectives of the study were profoundly explained to them to avoid any misconceptions and misinterpretations.

Furthermore, I asked them to set the date and time of the interview. Their convenience will always be the priority. During the interview, each of them will be given the free will to express themselves. I have to build rapport so that they could articulate their feelings and experiences related to the topic. After the interview, I expressed my heartfelt thanks to them aside from the token that will be given.

Henceforth, the data transcribed. Translations will follow to achieve the universality. Thematic analysis will be done using the MAXQDA software. Conversely, the data analyst will further justify the results of the data. This were followed by the comments and suggestions of the peer debriefers and the member checks. Finally, data will be returned to the informants for confirmatory purposes.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is the approach in identifying the significant meanings from the responses of the informants (Clarke et al., 2015). However, these were made into reality through the MAXQDA, a software which is responsible for the grouping of the responses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Themes and Core Ideas on the Ethical Standards observed

by Teachers in the Utilization of social media

Adhere to Privacy and Confidentiality. This theme suggested that teachers avoided posting family relate problems. In these modern times, one of the best platforms to flaunt successes is on the social media. However, it cannot be denied that there are people who are negative enough on someone's achievements in life. Also, it is the way for people to post their personal and family problems. In turn it became the ground for people to be harsh of their comments.

Adhering to privacy and confidentiality was the core of the message of the informant during the conduct of the interview. She stated that:

“Ang mga guro tulad ko ay dapat kumuha at magbigay-pansin sa makatuwirang mga pag-iingat upang tiyakin ang kaligtasan at privacy ng mga aktibidad na isinasagawa at ipinapaskil online. Bilang mga propesyonal, dapat din nating ipakita ang propesyonalismo at ipakita ang code of conduct online.” (Teachers like me should take and observe reasonable precautions in order to ensure the safety and privacy of the activities being held and posted online. As professionals, we should also exhibit professional and show code of conduct online). (Informant 1)

Another informant supported this theme. In her stated she emphasized that:

“Para sa akin, ang mga etikal na pamantayan na sinusunod ng mga guro sa paggamit ng social media ay ang paggamit nito ng wasto, maingat na pagpapalaganap ng impormasyon, pag-iisip ng dalawang beses bago magkomento o kumilos, at pakikisangkot sa mga tao sa tamang paraan.” (For me, the ethical standards did the teachers observed in using social media are by using it properly, wisely spreading information, think twice before commenting or act and engage people in a right way). (Informant 5)

This is also the content of the message of informant 6 and 7. They separately affirmed that:

“Sa paggamit ng social media, laging maging maingat sa mga ipinapaskil mo. Ang mga guro ay dapat manatiling marangal at panatilihin ang kanilang propesyonal na pagkakakilanlan.” (In using social media, always be cautious with what you are posting. Teachers should remain respectful and maintain his/ her professional identity). (Informant 7)

Conforming to this, adhering to privacy and confidentiality is of utmost importance for teachers, both in traditional settings and when utilizing social media platforms. Teachers should maintain appropriate professional boundaries when interacting with students on social media. This means refraining from engaging in personal or private discussion and avoiding sharing personal information or engaging in social media relationships that could compromise the teacher-student relationship (Al-Damaki et al., 2023).

Circumvent from pornography and violence. Indeed, the social media is prone to pornographic materials. It is the easiest way where people can transfer from one person to another. The spread of this explicit material may have a detrimental effect to the victims. Aside from that, this has an impact on the image of the teachers who would have to share this on their social media account. Eventually, this will affect the respect and their reputation as the public figure.

Above all, teachers have to respect for life and identity. They should have to avoid in engaging into social media violence. Erstwhile, the social media has been the haven of violence. People have been so cruel with their words. They thought that they own the world. As such, it ruined humanity in the sense that they are losing respect and ruining life of others.

It was confirmed from the interview the ethical values which is observed by the informant relative to explicit media.

“Ang mga etikal na pamantayan na sinusunod sa paggamit ng social media; Iwasan ang pagpapalaganap ng usapin tungkol sa lahi, pornographya, at karahasan, suriin ang kredibilidad ng balita, at huwag magbahagi ng labis na personal na impormasyon.” (The ethical standards observe in using social media; Avoid spreading race, pornography and violence issues, check the news validity, and do not share personal information too much). (Informant 3)

Indeed, teachers have a responsibility to create a safe and appropriate learning environment, which includes ensuring students are not exposed to pornography or violence. Teachers have to teach students about responsible digital citizenship, including the appropriate use of technology, online behavior, and the potential risks and consequences of accessing inappropriate content (Tu et al., 2023).

Table 1. Themes and Core Ideas on the Ethical Standards observed by Teachers in the Utilization of social media

Themes	Core Ideas
Adhere to Privacy and Confidentiality	Avoidance of posting family related problems Creation of separate account for personal and professional views Observance of professionalism on posting on social media
Circumvent from pornography and violence	Avoidance of pornographic materials on social media Respect for life and identity

Themes and Core Ideas on the social responsibilities highlighted by

teachers in using the social media

The second research question aims at determining the themes and core ideas on the social responsibilities highlighted by teachers in using the social media. There are three themes which emerged. These are adherence to code of conduct, limitations of posting on personal information, and the utilization of the social media for instruction.

Adhere to code of conduct. Teachers as public figure should have to adhere to the code of conduct. As professionals, teachers need to prim and proper in the utilization of the social media.

As mentioned during the interview, it was confirmed by the informant that:

“Laging sundin ang code of conduct at netiketa dahil ang code of ethics ay bahagi ng pagiging propesyonal na guro at dapat itong ipatupad sa anumang plataporma; virtual man o harapan.” To always adhere to the code of conduct and netiquette since code of ethics is a part of package of being a professional teacher and it should be applied in any platform; virtual or face to face). (Informant 2)

Teachers should treat students, colleagues, and all member of the school community with respect, recognizing their inherent worth and dignity. This includes maintaining a respectful and unbiased attitude towards students’ cultural backgrounds, beliefs, abilities, and individual differences (Ede et al., 2023).

Limit Posting on Personal Information. Sharing too much information on social media can compromise the privacy and security of teachers. It can be inferred that it would help teachers to enjoy the essence of life. People will not interfere in their personal lives. Also, by limiting posts on the social media can reduce the amount of personal information available for potential misuse and becoming victims of cyberbullying.

Similarly, the informant shared that:

“Ilan sa mga responsibilidad ng mga guro sa paggamit ng social media ay pagmamay-ari ng iyong mga larawan, personal na impormasyon, at ang paraan kung paano ito ginagamit. Magtakda ng limitasyon sa pagpapaskil at huwag ibahagi ang password sa mga kaibigan.” (Some responsibilities of teachers is using social media are own your pictures, personal information and how these are used. Set limit in posting and don’t share password with friends). (Informant 2)

As a matter of fact, social media can be addictive, and excessive posting can consume a significant amount of time and attention. Thus, it is easy to get caught up in scrolling through feeds, crafting posts, and responding to comments which can be detrimental to productivity and real-life interactions. By setting limits on posting, teachers can regain control of their time focus on more meaningful activities.

More so, an informant shared that:

“Maglagay ng limitasyon at magpahinga.. Halimbawa, huwag mag-post sa panahon ng trabaho, patayin ang telepono o ilagay ito sa ibang silid kapag oras na ng pagtulog. Magtakda ng mga patakaran na "walang teknolohiya" kasama ang mga kasama sa trabaho at pamilya.” (Set limits and take breaks. For example, no posting during worktime, shut phone off or keep in another room during sleeping hours. Make “technology free” rules with peers and family members). (Informant 10)

In a professional or academic context, excessive or inappropriate social media post can have serious consequences. Educational institutions often review social media posts to assess teachers’ suitability and ethical values. Limiting posting helps maintain a positive online image and prevents potential damage to career and educational opportunities. By finding a healthy balance in the social life usage, one can enjoy the benefits of online community while safeguarding their offline lives (Zegura et al., 2023).

Utilize the social media for instruction. This implies that teachers use the social media as an avenue for improving learners’ progress and development in research. In addition, social media is an integral part of modern communication and information sharing. By integrating social media into instruction, educators can bridge the gap between the classroom and real-world applications. Students can explore current events, follow experts in different fields, and engage with relevant content, which helps them connect theoretical concepts to practical examples.

The importance of social media utilization has been reiterated in the statement of the participant. She said that:

“Sa pamamagitan ng paggamit ng social media, madaling maisama ng mga guro ang pag-aaral sa mga mag-aaral sa pamamagitan ng pagpayag sa ligtas at responsableng pakikisalamuha sa pagitan nila.” With the use of social media, teachers can easily integrate learning to the learners by allowing a safe and responsible interactions between them). (Informant 6)

This is also the view of Informant 7.

“Sa pamamagitan ng paggamit ng social media, maaaring mapabuti ng mga guro ang pakikilahok ng kanilang mga mag-aaral sa pag-aaral at edukasyon. Mapapalakas ang kanilang kakayahan sa teknolohiya, magbibigay ng malaking pakiramdam ng pakikipagtulungan sa silid-aralan, at palalakasin ang mga kasanayan sa komunikasyon ng mga mag-aaral.” (Using social media, teacher can improve the involvement of their student in studies and education. Improve technological ability, provide a great sense of collaboration in the classroom, and build communication skills of students). (Informant 7)

And by informant 8 who explicitly revealed the importance of social media for research and instruction.

“Gamitin ang social media upang magdagdag ng interes sa tunay na mundo tulad ng pagsasagawa ng pananaliksik at pagpapamahagi ng impormasyon.” (Use social media to supplement real world interest like doing research and sharing information). (Informant 8)

However, it is important to note that utilizing social media for instruction also comes with potential challenges, such as privacy concerns, distractions, and the need to navigate platform policies and guidelines (Al-Rahmi et al., 2023). Therefore, it is essential for educators to establish clear guidelines, educate students about responsible social media use, and ensure a safe and inclusive online learning environment. When used effectively and responsibly, social media can be a valuable tool to enhance the learning experience and prepare students for the digital world they will navigate beyond the classroom.

Table 2. Themes and Core Ideas on the social responsibilities highlighted by teachers in using the social media

Themes	Core Ideas
Adhere to code of conduct	The teachers should show the proper behavior in the utilization of the social media The teachers keep away from fake news
Limit posting on personal information	The teachers practice the restrictions of sharing information on the social media
Utilize the social media for instruction	The teachers use the social media for teaching and learning process The teachers use the social media as an avenue for improving learners progress and development in research

Themes and Core Ideas on the teachers’ suggestions to be ethically

and socially responsible in the social media usage

The third research question determines the themes and core ideas on the teachers’ suggestions to be ethically and socially responsible in the social media usage. Respect for someone’s opinion and being responsible social media user are the two emergent themes.

Respect someone's opinion. Respecting someone's opinion on social media is crucial for fostering a positive and inclusive online environment. It is the reflection of the commitment to freedom and expression. Also, it should be remembered that everyone has the right to express their thoughts and opinion, even if they differ from the others. By respecting diverse viewpoints, one can contribute to a culture of open dialogue and free exchange of ideas.

In the same vein, an informant confirmed this by saying that:

“Dapat tayong maging maingat sa mga bagay na ibinabahagi at pinipindut online. Dapat nating igtalang ang opinyon at kalayaan ng iba, ngunit hindi natin dapat ipagwalang bahala ang ganitong pagsasalaula at di makatotohanang balita. Dapat nating pahalagahan ang ating kalayaan sa pamamahayag ngunit may mga limitasyon.” (We should be mindful on what we share and click online. We should respect other's opinion and freedom, but must not tolerate such misconduct and fake news. We should value our freedom of speech but with limitations). (Informant 1)

While it is important to respect someone's opinion, it is also essential to distinguish between respectful disagreement and harmful or offensive behavior. Respect does not mean accepting or endorsing harmful views, hate speech, or misinformation. It is important to uphold ethical standards, promote critical thinking, and challenge ideas, when necessary, but in a respectful and constructive manner.

Overall, respecting someone's opinion on social media is a fundamental aspect of promoting open dialogue, empathy, understanding, and a positive online community. By embracing diversity and engaging with different perspectives, one can contribute to a richer and more inclusive social media environment (Casmara et al., 2023).

Responsible Social Media User. This theme provides an idea that responsible social media use involves safeguarding personal information and privacy. One should be mindful of the information shared. Through this, it reduces the risk of identity theft, cyberstalking, and other forms of online harassment. In the same manner, it can impact mental and emotional well-being. Responsible usage involves being aware of the potential negative effects and taking steps to mitigate them. This includes setting boundaries, limiting screen time, and being mindful of online behavior and how it makes someone feel. Therefore, it is important to prioritize self-care and balance online activities with offline experiences.

Generally, the informants substantiated this by saying that:

“Unahin ang etika at matuto na gawin ang tamang bagay sa paggamit ng social media. Maunawaan ang pagkakaiba sa pagitan ng kung ano ang puwede mong gawin at kung ano ang dapat mong gawin.” Put ethics first and learn to do the right thing when using social media. Understand the difference between what you can do and what you should do. (Informant 3)

In addition, with the response of informant 3, Informant 4 said that:

“Ibahagi lamang ang mga bagay na hindi malilimutan at may kahalagahan, kapaki-pakinabang, at impormatibo. Iwasan ang pagtatalo. Maging isang responsableng gumagamit ng social media.” (Only share memorable, useful, and informative things. Avoid conflict. Be a responsible social media User). (Informant 4)

More so,

“Mag-post o magkomento nang may pag-iingat. Laging tandaan na anumang ipinost o binatikos mo sa post ng iba ay maaaring bumalik sa iyo. Palaging isipin ang code of ethics kahit sa iyong sariling social media account.” (Post or comment with caution. Always remember that anything you post or comment on someone else's post can come back to haunt you. Carry the code of ethics with you always even into your personal social media account). (Informant 6)

Finally, the informant suggested that:

“Maging mapagmatyag sa inyong mga pinopost sa social media. Maging mapili sa inyong mga tinatanggap na mga kaibigan dahil di mo sila kilala. Mag post ng mga bagay-bagay na may kabuluhan hindi ang tsismis at walay kabuluhang argumento.” (Be careful on what you post and what you share on social media. Be selective with friend request, don't accept people you have no idea who they really are. Spread love not hate. Post something informative not a gossip and fake news to avoid misunderstanding and arguments). (Informant 8)

And,

“Maging responsible sa pag gamit ng inyong social media. Ang paggamit nito ay magbibigay sayo ng kasiyahan, maging Mabuti sa kapwa, and magboibay ng kasiyahan sa iba.” (Responsibly managing your social media use. Allows you to have the best of both worlds. The prevalence of social media in everyday life offers a place to be kind to others, find humor or create something meaningful). (Informant 10)

Responsible social media use includes adhering to ethical guidelines and standards. This means respecting copyright laws, giving proper credit when sharing content, and avoiding plagiarism. It also means being transparent about sponsored or promotional content and disclosing any conflicts of interest. Upholding ethical standards helps maintain trust and integrity in online transactions (Pimdee et al., 2023).

Table 3. Themes and Core Ideas on the teachers' suggestions to be and socially responsible in the social media usage

Themes	Core Ideas
Respect someone's opinion	There is the necessity to recognize someone's being
Responsible Social media user	Set limits on posting anything on the social media
	Practice cautions when posting and commenting on the social

CHAPTER V

IMPLICATIONS

This chapter presents the implications for practice, implications for future research, and concluding remarks.

Implications for Educational Practice

Teachers are subject to highest level of ethical considerations. They are public figures who need to be careful of their actions especially on the social media. We all need to be responsible of what we are posting. As much as possible we have to be private in all the things that we are doing. It is difficult to recant a mistake as toxic people begin to linger in the issues. They would try to look spread it like a wildfire without even knowing the root causes.

Basically, it is a big problem now since almost everybody has access on the social media. Undeniably, the Philippines is now lagging behind with its neighboring countries because of the intelligence quotient (IQ). This means that Filipinos has the lower level of it. This is a manifestation that even on the social media Filipinos behaved to be the least educated people in the world.

In addition, they tried to insinuate the issues which are beyond their concerns. Supposedly, they have to focus on things that would enhance the level of the quality of their lives knowing that many Filipinos are on the threshold of poverty line. Though we have to look into the silver lining, it is still impossible to totally free from this bondage because of the mindsets of being mindful to the lives of others.

Furthermore, this study implies that regardless of profession, we Filipinos should be aware of what we are posting on the social media. We have to be careful of what we are sharing and what we are commenting because it might have an impact to our lives and to those who will be affected by it. As much as possible, we have to make ourselves as an example with wisdom where the young generation can learn something which will serve as their guiding torch in their quest for a better life.

Implications for Future Research

Delving into the issues on the ethical standards observed by teachers on the social media is timely and relevant in today's world. It is an issue that become part of the toxic Filipino mindset. In the parlance of research, the following points should be considered by the future researchers.

First, the same study shall be conducted with different demographics. Like for example it shall include jobless mothers, jobless graduates, and those coming from other institutions like the military including the police. It is assumed that the jobless individuals will be busier on spending their time on the social media. They would engage into nonsensical issues that adding to the rotting society.

As compared to the uniformed and non-uniformed personnel of the military and police, it is observed that they are not even using their real name on the social media. Posts are limited especially on the aspects of their identities. Hence, a comparative analysis will be presented by future researchers. From this, they can make a vivid conclusion of the toxicity of the Filipino culture based on the demographics.

Second, this would concur to the findings about the Intelligence Quotient of the Filipinos. The dwindling IQs can be associated to the irresponsible utilization of the social media. As such, future researchers can look into this aspect to prove whether this is really an influential factor.

Finally, the same study will be conducted among the students. This time it would look into the impact of social media on their mental health, well-being, and ethical values. As young as they are it is important to determine these aspects because of the social media on their quest for a healthy living.

Concluding Remarks

As a Filipino and as a teacher who is prone to social media bashing, I am very careful of my actions. In as much as possible, I limited my posting especially about my family. My private life should not be known by the public. If I have the misunderstanding with my husband or with my family, I prefer to make it solved within us instead of letting the whole world get informed of the things that we are struggling to solve with.

Correspondingly, I do not comment on the posts of people where I do not have the first-hand experience of the issues. Most of the time I am into sharing quotes pictures, and videos that can serve as the source of inspiration. As a teacher, I have a lot of priorities in life. I would rather tend to the needs of my children and my husband because they are more important that engaging into nonsense issues on the social media.

As well, I believe that the social media is no longer helping people to be better. There are bits of information that they internalize which indeed changed their perspectives. Generally, Filipinos are now losing their ethical values in life. They do not think of what they are posting on the social media. In short, many Filipinos are becoming irresponsible of their social responsibilities.

These are the saddest realities of the effect of the social media. Instead of being the source of useful information it became the haven of negativities. Teachers who are struggling in their career because of the meager salary sometimes are the victims of these irrational beings. At the end of the day, teachers are humans that need privacy. They also need to become happy to fulfill their duties and responsibilities in molding and honing the minds of the innocent children.

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