

# Social Media, Filipinos, and Key National Issues in the Philippines: A Macro Analysis

Prof. Mark Gabriel Wagan Aguilar, CTP, CNA, CMC

*School Director, Abe International Business College-Quezon City, Philippines*

**Abstract:** The Philippines as the top user of social media worldwide has witnessed Filipinos rely on information posted in social media for knowledge on key national issues. This research clearly explained the root cause why people of the Philippines has become ignorant towards issues but remained highly confident when it comes to giving comments on such through social networking websites. It has been found that Filipinos are likely to give comments and/or feedbacks to issues despite knowing nothing on it, and tend to rely on information posted in social media without checking its validity and the sources' reliability due to the illusory truth effect caused by the continuous commenting, posting, and sharing of information verified or not. The results also show that poverty is the reason why a person has limited access to reliable information that affects their perception towards key national issues, thus, regulating social media in countries where poverty rate is high is highly recommended.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Filipinos, Social Issues, Poverty, Ignorance

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Philippines as a country with a democratic form of government gives its people freedom of speech and expression. It's more fun in the Philippines; the country's slogan for Tourism could easily be a justification to what Philippine-Style Democracy is; colorful, occasionally chaotic, and arguably inspiring, *Abad (2014)*. However, the country has yet to prove the real power of democracy, that resides in the possibility of a new collective salvation since it has been analyzed to concentrate on the few and the privileged, that is has been shared discriminately, and has been found incapable of tirelessly challenging frozen assumptions and prevailing worldviews, *Untalan(2015)*.

Democracy in the Philippines is undoubtedly alive with 75-78% voter turnout on the 2019 election out of around 62,000,000 registered voters of the 108,116,615 nation's population that time. It is further justified by Geronimo (2018) in his article where it was stated that 84% of Filipinos are satisfied with how democracy in the country works.

However, democracy was questioned by Socrates, an Athenian Philosopher stating that democracy should not be for everyone, thus, it is only for those people who are educated. In Book Six of The Republic, Plato, another Athenian Philosopher described Socrates falling into a conversation with a character named Adeimantus; Socrates compared

elections to choosing someone to be in charge of a sea vessel, just anyone or someone who is educated in the rules and demands of seafaring. He pointed that voting in an election is a skill and not a random intuition, and that letting someone to vote without an education is as irresponsible as putting them in charge of a trireme sailing. (Chapter 2, Work: Politics and Government, The Book of Life).

The Philippines on the other hand, has embraced democratic traditions of participation and freedom of choice and expression over the years, *Abad (2014)*, and that democracy aside from the right to vote, is speech freedom having it heavily emphasized in the 1987 Constitution which is the current fundamental principle of the country; "No law shall be passed abridging the freedom of speech, of expression, or of the press, or the right of the people to peaceably to assemble and petition the government for redress of grievances". (*Article III, Section 4, Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines, 1987*). Facebook, a social networking website, with 2.2 billion facebook users worldwide which Filipinos are named as the top user with an average of 10 hours a day usage, technically has given another platform for people to exercise freedom of speech. According to *Ohme (2018)* in his article, facebook has now become a vital part of democracy where daily news is being shared and political discussions are conducted among others. This gives people an opportunity to also discuss other matters such as key national issues.

This study guided by the Think before you Speak (Is it True, Helpful, Inspiring, Necessary, and Kind) principle by Alan Redpath, with the author's own interpretation; Know before your Click, Ipsos MORI's The Perils of Perception 2017, and a number of published researches, macro analyzed the knowledge of Filipinos towards Key National Issues and details behind the confidence despite lack of awareness on issues, leading to a conclusion that the platform-social media where they are able to speak freely should be regulated once and for all.

## II. METHODS

A qualitative research approach was used to analyze data gathered for this study. The results in Ipsos MORI's The Perils of Perception 2017, relevant published researches, and news articles were used as sources of data. Data from these resources were collated and macro analyzed with heavy emphasis on the knowledge of Filipinos towards key national

issues, and how and why they respond with full of confidence even they know nothing about it.

### III. DISCUSSION

Ipsos Mori's The Perils of Perception 2017 survey showed how wrong the online public across the globe is about their country's key national issues, not limited to crimes and health. The Philippines ranked third as the most ignorant with South Africa and Brazil in the first and second spots respectively. The result of the study also showed that Filipinos despite being one of the most ignorant are still among the most confident with their answers, together with Indians and Peruvians. This clearly shows that Filipinos are likely to give comments and feedbacks on issues even they know nothing about it or they have not known the facts behind it.

The Philippines as the world knows is historically a third world country but now is a developing one. Based on World Population Review, an independent organization based in California, USA and source of the world's demographic data, the Philippines' Gross Domestic Product is low while the infant mortality rate is high, leaving many of its citizens very limited access to health care and higher education. The Philippines is in fact at rank 28 in the list of poorest countries published by Focus Economics, [www.focus-economics.com](http://www.focus-economics.com).

According to Child Fund International, a non-profit organization based in Virginia, poverty and education is inextricably linked with each other. In the research conducted by DeNavas-Walt and Proctor (2014) on Income and Poverty in the United States of America, it was found out that people who had lower educational attainment particularly those who had no high school diploma comprise a greater share of the population in poverty. The root cause of poverty is lack of education, Hickman (2015), and like a tree, poverty has many roots, but among many causes of global poverty, one factor still stands out; Education, Geovetti (2019).

In the Philippines, most of those living in poverty have failed to obtain a diploma. While lack of education makes someone lacks confidence in showing up for work and apply by himself, it leaves him unemployed, Hickman (2015), making him incapable of acquiring means that will give him access to information, such as cellphone, tablet, internet, television, and radio among others. Though an android cellphone in the Philippines is quite affordable, access to information is still limited since people without internet can only access social media for free without the provision of all information particularly photos and link sources, thus, creating a wrong perception towards national issues posted, making them ignorant on what really is happening, but still with the freedom to comment, react, and share such post.

The Illusory truth effect that was first identified by Hasher, Goldstein, and Toppino on 1977 in their research on referential validity, is the tendency of people to believe false information to be correct after repeatedly exposed, is the

current event in social media as Filipinos continuously copy, paste, and share information validated or not.

Sherman (2014) in his article published in Inc.com cited Dunning's statement that in his several studies, it was confirmed that people who don't know much about a given set of skills tend to grossly overestimate their prowess and performance. While the Philippines is a third world country with almost a quarter or about 18 million of the population living in poverty in 2018, who has no formal education and has only limited access to information, this perfectly reflects on the way Filipinos react on key national issues posted in social media; full of confidence. Manstead (2018), identified the lower class to less likely define themselves in terms of their socioeconomic status and are more likely to have interdependent self-concepts, that they are also inclined to explain social events in situational terms, which as a result is having a lower sense of personal control; this in addition perfectly reflects the way Filipinos react on key national issues posted in social media; based on their feelings and not on facts, react positively on information that is pleasing to their eyes and react negatively on those that are not.

To give a concrete example; in a poll conducted by Pinoy Ekspres, a public page in facebook with around 5,100 followers, the administrators asked people to give grades to their Mayors based on their performance against Corona Virus 2019 Outbreak in the Philippines. Majority were not satisfied resulting to 40% of them giving their Mayor a score of 1, which is the lowest grade that can be given. Most messages to the Mayors were negative; some even asked their Mayors to step down due to his/her allegedly poor performance. However, in the question regarding their knowledge towards the current state of their city/ municipality amidst COVID19 Outbreak, 18% which is 3<sup>rd</sup> to the highest, said that they have no idea. This has technically proved that Filipinos are indeed more likely to speak and judge without having enough knowledge on an issue.

This data undeniably explain also the increase of cybercrime cases in the country, which according to the Philippine National Police Anti-Cybercrime Group, had increased by nearly 80% or to 4,103 on 2018 from the 2,284 cases reported on 2017.

### IV. CONCLUSION

This matrix is hereby conceptualized based on the results of this study.

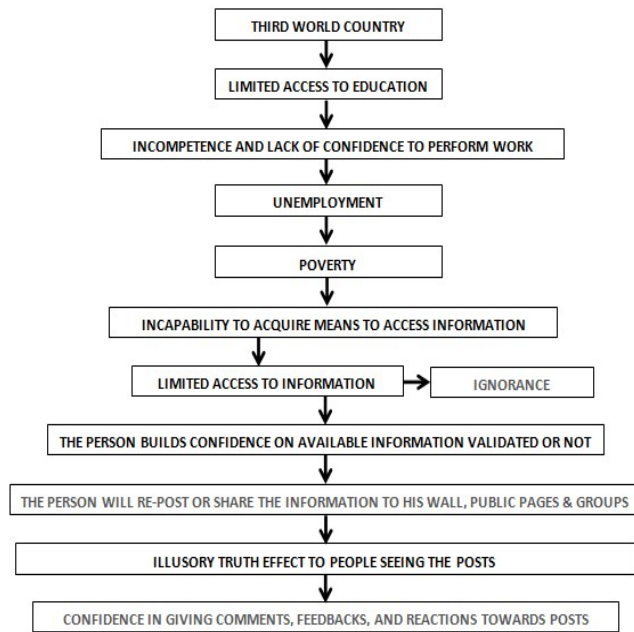


Figure 1: Matrix showing the relationship among poverty, social media, and perception of people; The Author's own interpretation based on what has been analyzed in this study.

Figure 1 explains how the different situations affect the perception of people towards information posted in social media. In a third world country, people has limited access to education, which leads to people having low confidence and incompetence towards doing work or performing a job, and this will automatically put them in an unemployed status. Unemployment means no source of income which will definitely result to poverty. People living in poverty do not have sufficient budget to purchase things that are not considered necessities, some of them do not have budget at all, and this will result to limited access to information which will eventually make people ignorant. However, having limited access to information would also make people base what is factual on whatever information they could access to, that they would share to others believing that the information they have gotten is legitimate. People who have received the information from others would also believe on it due to the illusory truth effect it has brought to their mind. These clearly explain why they are confident in giving comments, feedbacks, and reaction towards key national issues.

Moreover, Filipinos when they know nothing about a national issue will respond based on what they have only read and on what information is available within their access at a certain moment. Lower social classes won't bother to do further

researches to make sure that what they have read is sufficient since they have limited access to such means. Reason why sources of information should provide clear and sufficient information on their social media posts as much as possible. In addition, Filipinos tend to believe on information posted in social media without having it checked for truthfulness and the sources for reliability due to the illusory truth effect. It is further concluded that aside from the Philippines, there is indeed a need to regulate the use of social media particularly facebook in other countries where the poverty rate is high. This will avoid the spread of fake news, and probably would contribute in changing the way people respond to issues affecting the economy.

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