



# **On Social Media: The Voices of Blaan Students in Digital Age**

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## **Author's contribution**

*The sole author designed, analyzed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to describe indigenous peoples' use of social media. There are 110 ethno-linguistic groups in the Philippines who comprise nearly 15 percent of total population. Majority of indigenous peoples live in the island of Mindanao. Phenomenology was used for this study in explaining the experiences and perspectives of the Blaan students in using social media. Twenty-five Blaan students from Matanao, Davao del Sur were selected through purposive sampling. Through in-depth interviews and focus group discussion it was revealed that entertainment and leisure, emotional trauma and discrimination, research and educational purposes, and communication and socialization were the issues related to the Blaan students' experiences on using social media. As regards insights in using social media, they identified time management, stand against discrimination, staying hopeful and positive, respecting and promoting culture, and prioritizing education. This study has significance not only in but also in the indigenous peoples' cultural community in terms of promoting and preserving culture in the digital age.

*Keywords: Blaan; Social media; cultural preservation; digital age; philippines.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Education paves the way to greater and boundless opportunities. As stated in the 1987

Philippine Constitution that public education must be free and that includes the members of Indigenous Peoples' groups. It is also vividly mandated in the United Nations Declaration on

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the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). The UN Declaration sees to it that indigenous peoples' rights to cultural integrity, education, health, and political participation are protected. The UNDRIP also stands for the recognition of indigenous peoples' rights to their lands and natural resources, and the observation of their treaty rights. The UN Declaration requires countries to consult with indigenous peoples with the goal of obtaining their consent on matters which concern them. The Philippines is one of the signatories of UNDRIP [1].

There are more than 110 ethno-linguistic groups in the country who comprise nearly 15% of total population. The Philippines is a culturally diverse country with an estimated 14- 17 million Indigenous Peoples (IPs) belonging to 110 ethno-linguistic groups. They are mainly concentrated in Northern Luzon (Cordillera Administrative Region, 33%) and Mindanao (61%), with some groups in the Visayas area. The Philippine Constitution, in recognition of this diversity and under the framework of national unity and development, mandates state recognition, protection, promotion, and fulfillment of the rights of Indigenous Peoples. Further, Republic Act 8371, also known as the "Indigenous Peoples Rights Act" (1997, IPRA), recognized the right of IPs to manage their ancestral domains; it has become the cornerstone of current national policy on IPs [2].

There are approximately one million Blaan people living in the provinces of South Cotabato, Sarangani, Davao del Sur, North Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat [3]. In reality, the indigenous people in the Philippines continue their fight against discrimination and they live amidst their dying culture which also includes their language, dance, attire and oral tradition.

Today, the indigenous people in the country are not behind time in technology especially in using social media. The integration of social media and information technology in the education curriculum advances wide opportunities for Blaan people to promote their culture. As of this writing, there are 2.45 billion monthly active Facebook users revealing that among many other social media networks, Facebook is the most popular. In the Philippines, there are more than 74 million Facebook users in which 11.6% ages 13-17 years old [4].

Education, technology, and culture should work together to achieve an ultimate goal, the

improvement of human life compromising none of the three. As an educator and a member of a cultural community, the researcher was interested to know on how social media may affect the culture and cultural preservation awareness of Blaan students. In the locality of Matanao, Davao del Sur, the researcher met the Blaan students as participants of the study. The twenty-five secondary school students were chosen to share their viewpoints on this study. Seventeen Blaan students were selected for in-depth interview and eight Blaan students for focus group discussion through purposive sampling.

### 1.1 Purpose of the Study

The focus of this phenomenological study is to vividly describe and understand the experiences of Blaan students in using social media. This study included twenty-five Blaan secondary school students with the intent of gathering data information and establishing a clear outlook of their struggles, joy and endurance as members of cultural communities and as learners. This study aims to document the experiences of Blaan students as they experience the use of social media as part of their daily life. Social media only becomes a powerful and effective tool when used with a purpose, this study aims to determine if social media has played a role in promoting and preserving the Blaan culture in digital age. This study involved different secondary students with the aim of exploring the experiences and insights of Blaan students in using social media.

This study visualized to document the diverse experiences and sentiments of Blann students who are active in using social media. This phenomenological study likewise revealed data about the informants' family background, social media activities, experiences and their capacity and self-motivation to study.

In this study, the objective was to observe, pay close attention and capture the different anecdotes of the Blaan students and take note of how they utilize the different social media platforms. It was also noteworthy to understand how these Blaan students were treated by non-IP students and social media users. The school officials will also be informed on the social media experiences of IP students. Effective teachers leave an imprint to their students' lives and mark priceless learning experience to the world. It is a challenge for an educator to motivate IP students

to be participative at school especially with the growing number of bullying reports.

## 1.2 Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of BLaan students in using social media?
2. What are the insights of BLaan students that they can share to the academe in general?

## 1.3 Theoretical Lens

The study is viewed from lens of Brecht (1927) who formulated the radio theory in which he emphasized the role of new technology and interactive media such as the internet and its potential in participatory communication. Participatory communication has two inherent core visions: technologies possess the potential to improve the lives of many people by giving them a voice; educational principles inherent in today's participatory communication models and dialogical communication. The free and open dialog is the encounter between men in order to name the world. Those who have been denied their primordial right to speak their word must first reclaim this right and prevent the continuation of this act of exclusion. Free and open dialog is voice, the principle of action-reflection-action and horizontal communication [5,6].

Additionally, culture is learned and transmitted from generation to generation and is an integrating mechanism (Geertz, 1973; Schein, 1983), the social or normative glue that holds together a potentially diverse group of organizational members. Berger and Luckman (1966) agreed that culture change depends on how one perceives and enacts culture. The source of new cultural elements in a society may also be another society. The cultural elements of one culture borrowed and incorporated in recipient culture are called diffusion. The processes of diffusion and acculturation bring some kind of cultural changes or shift in the culture. Sometimes diffusion is due to intermediate contact that occurs through the third party. The media proved to be influential on the belief that, in its wider cultural sense, the media largely reinforced those values and norms which had already achieved a wide consensual foundation. Media, as a powerful social system,

plays an important role in creating a person's sense of reality (Gergen, 1999).

## 1.4 Review of Related Literature

To present the background and framework of this study, selected literature, studies and readings relevant to the investigation are presented in this section. Sources of information are books, journals and internet on "indigenous people and BLaan students and their use of social media".

The United Nations Declaration on Rights of the Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) sees to it that indigenous peoples' rights to cultural integrity, education, health, and political participation are protected. The UNDRIP also stands for the recognition of indigenous peoples' rights to their lands and natural resources, and the observation of their treaty rights. The UN Declaration requires countries to consult with indigenous peoples with the goal of obtaining their consent on matters which concern them. The Philippines is one of the signatories of UNDRIP [1].

The indigenous people (IP) in the Philippines comprise 15% of the total population and majority is in Mindanao which is 61% of all IP. There are 112 ethno-linguistic groups in the country. In the 1987 Philippine constitution, it was promulgated in Section 17, Article XIV that the state shall recognize, respect, and protect the rights of indigenous cultures, traditions, and institutions. It shall consider these rights in the formulation of national plans and policies. Under the Indigenous Peoples Republic Act of 1997 (IPRA), indigenous people is a group of people or homogenous societies identified by self-ascription and ascription by others, who have continuously lived as organized community on communally bounded and defined territory, and who have, under claims of ownership since time immemorial, occupied, possessed and utilized such territories, sharing common bonds of language, customs, traditions and other distinctive cultural traits, or who have, through resistance to political, social and cultural inroads of colonization, non-indigenous religions and cultures, become historically differentiated from the majority of Filipinos (NCIP, 2012).

IPRA also emphasized the indigenous people's rights to: ancestral domains and lands, self-governance and empowerment, social justice and human rights and rights to cultural integrity. Today, there are 1.86 billion monthly active Facebook users revealing that among many

other social media networks, Facebook is the most popular. In the Philippines, there are 47 million Facebook users in 2016. Integrating information technology which also includes social media in the education curriculum creates a wider opportunities for IP's especially the B'laan students of Southern Philippines (Statista, 2016). Social media either promotes or demotes the use of their dialect, traditional costume and arts. There are more than one million Blaen people living in the provinces of South Cotabato, Sarangani, Davao del Sur, North Cotabato and Davao Occidental (NCIP, 2012).

The media proved to be influential on the belief that, in its wider cultural sense, the media largely reinforced those values and norms which had already achieved a wide consensual foundation. Media, as a powerful social system, plays an important role in creating a person's sense of reality (Gergen, 1999). Culture is both an individual construct and a social construct. To some extent, culture exists in each and every one of us individually as much as it exists as a global, social construct. Individual differences in culture can be observed among people in the degree to which they adopt and engage in the attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors that, by consensus, constitute their culture (Matsumoto, 1996).

Culture is always both socially and psychologically distributed in a group, and so the delineation of a culture's features will always be fuzzy. Culture is a 'fuzzy' concept, in that group members are unlikely to share identical sets of attitudes, beliefs and so on, but rather show 'family resemblances', with the result that there is no absolute set of features that can distinguish definitively one cultural group from another (Avruch, 1998).

## 2. METHODS

### 2.1 Research Design

In this study, the researcher applied descriptive qualitative method particularly phenomenology. Phenomenology is a study that attempts to understand people's perceptions, perspectives and understandings of a particular situation. It is reliving the experiences of the participants involved in the study and going deeper into their thoughts, identifying the essence of the experience as described by the participants, through lengthy discussions [7,8,9].

The researcher employed the phenomenological approach because it is a powerful tool in getting a clear understanding of human experiences, penetrating into their thoughts, feelings and actions in order to gain insights from their experiences. It clearly illustrates the specific details of the experience and how they are seen by the subjects in the situation. It is an appropriate instrument in my study wherein I need to envision and explore the actual experiences of my participants who are Blaen students who are active in social media [10,11].

In addition, the participants' own words were used throughout the process of data analysis and phenomenological description. The method examined and scrutinized the phenomena through the subjective eyes of the participants, focusing on subjectivity of reality and continually pointing out the need to understand how humans view themselves and the world around them, and on the process, the researcher set aside his personal experiences and opinion to fully grasp the experiences of the participants, identifying its essence [7].

Nonetheless, sources of qualitative data included interviews, observations and documents [7,12] emphasizing two ways of collecting data if one wanted information about the lived experience of a phenomenon from another person, the traditional face to face interview and the written account of the experience, both could not be broken down easily by a statistical software. In this study, the researcher used specific methodologies such as in-depth interviews and note-taking, giving much attention to details and importance of the emotional content which opened up an array of human experiences of the subjects involved in the study. What one seeks from a research interview in phenomenological research is as complete a description as possible of the experience that a participant has lived through [12].

In this study, the researcher was able to classify themes of the phenomena with twenty-five informants for in-depth interviews and focus group discussion. According to Creswell (2006), in qualitative research such as phenomenology, it is recommended that for in-depth interviews, researchers could interview 5-25 participants who experienced the same phenomenon, if one would want to achieve the goal of representativeness and generalizability as a criterion, from a small number of research participants. Nevertheless, sample sizes of 5-15

are adequate, provided participants are able to provide rich descriptions of the phenomena [7].

## **2.2 Role of the Researcher**

This qualitative research study captured the phenomenon of Blaan students and their use of social media. The researcher as a media educator and Blaan, is interested to conduct this study because of the timely and relevant use of social media as a tool in cultural preservation in digital age. Thus, this provided the researcher with the opportunity to understand and respect the feelings and individual views of the Blaan students.

As a teacher, the researcher continues to understand the different behavior of students in using social media. The researcher also felt the importance of knowing their stories because this can affect and may reflect the quality education in the Philippines and social media can affect culture. It is now time that studies that focus on Blaan as learners and as part of digital age can be heard. Nevertheless, this sentiment would not be the source of prejudice in interpreting the data gathered from the participants. The researcher tried her best in discussing the data with utmost objectivity to provide neutral outcome of the exploration. The researcher asked permission from the National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP), Tribal Leaders, Barangay Capatins, and parents of the identified Blaan students before she conducted the interview.

## **2.3 Research Participants**

The key informants of the study were twenty-five Blaan students Matanao, Davao del Sur. Participants were chosen using a purposive sampling because it is the best method in order to identify focal participants (Krueger, 2000) especially when the researcher's purpose was to look for those who have had experienced connecting to the phenomenon to be researched. Subject selection in qualitative research is purposeful; participants are selected who can best inform the research questions and enhance understanding of the phenomenon under study. Hence, one of the most important tasks in the study is to identify appropriate participants. Decisions regarding selection are based on the research questions, theoretical perspectives, and evidence informing the study (Creswell, 2007).

A phenomenological study should be conducted with a heterogeneous group of at a minimum three to a maximum of fifteen individuals. The

participants who are full-blooded Blaan are assigned for in-depth interview and focus group discussion.

## **2.4 Data Collection**

In the conduct of qualitative research, careful planning and preparations are critical in order to collect data. In short, good data collection takes time and quick interviews or short observations are improbable in gaining more understanding.

The researcher went through a process. First, permission from the National Commission on the Indigenous Peoples was secured through its Free Prior Informed Consent process. The Provincial Head of the NCIP approved the conduct of the study and the researcher conducted the interview in the presence of IP elders and leaders, after the results and analysis of data were done, the results were presented to the Blaan cultural community for consultation, revision, and approval.

The researcher utilized interview guide questions to gather experiences, views, concepts of participants towards the use of social media and its impact in their lives. The primary methods used in gathering the data needed for this study was in-depth interview and focus group discussion. This interview guide was forwarded to the panelists and NCIP official for content validation prior to conduct the interviews. A good process to gather the data is through an interview. It could provide much more detailed information than what is available through other data collection methods. Unstructured and semi-structured interviews reveal histories, emotions, events, personality traits, desires, dislikes, disputes and more. In-depth interview is a data collection process in which the researcher asks questions and records answers from only one participant in the study at a time, while focus group interviews with group of people typically four to six [7].

The interviews were recorded using auditory recording gadget and later were transcribed into text that was used in the data analysis process. The use of recording device ensured that such device have no vested interest in the study and thus did not distort the information obtained from the participants. However, the presence of the recording device had impact on the interview as participants become reticent. To overcome this annoyance, the recording device was only activated once the researcher was definite that the participants had reached a sufficient intensity

of comfort. After completion of the interviews, the data were transcribed into text that then be used in the procedure of data analysis. Before a preliminary analysis of the research data, participants were contacted to confirm the information acquired from the interview.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This presents the participants' experiences linked with social media use of Blaan students. This also includes their perceptions and insights as well as conclusions founded from the information gathered through in-depth interviews and focus group discussion. The following research questions produced data results from the participants:

1. What are the experiences of Blaan students in using social media?

2. What are the insights of Blaan students that they can share to the academe in general?

#### 3.1 Participants

*Key informants.* There were seventeen Blaan students who are using social media as key informants in this study. They are currently enrolled in secondary public schools in Matanao, Davao del Sur. They were chosen based on their use of social media and as members of IP communities. The names of the participants as well as their schools were intently guised inasmuch as the study is perceptive for the participants. Each participant was given a pseudonym so their true identities would not be revealed. To gain the trust and confidence of the participants, anonymity and participants' privacy are considered when presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Participants' Information**

Assumed Name	Present Age	Study Groups
1. Karla	14	In-depth Interview
2. Nestor	14	In-depth Interview
3. Bobbie	15	In-depth Interview
4. Jason	14	In-depth Interview
5. Jenny	14	In-depth Interview
6. Caren	15	In-depth Interview
7. Gian	14	In-depth Interview
8. Lloyd	14	In-depth Interview
9. Beth	14	In-depth Interview
10. Luis	14	In-depth Interview
11. Joan	14	In-depth Interview
12. Ben	15	In-depth Interview
13. Jerico	15	In-depth Interview
14. Paul	14	In-depth Interview
15. Ivan	14	In-depth Interview
16. Paolo	14	In-depth Interview
17. John	14	In-depth Interview
18. Alden	14	Focus Group
19. Marc	14	Focus Group
20. May	15	Focus Group
21. Francis	13	Focus Group
22. Vanessa	16	Focus Group
23. Kirby	15	Focus Group
24. Jeremy	19	Focus Group
25. Aleya	14	Focus Group

**Table 2. Themes and Core Ideas on the Experiences of Blaan students in Using Social media**

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Entertainment and leisure	Malingaw ko sa Facebook ug naa koy mahibal-an nga bag-o. <i>(I am entertained by Facebook and learn new things from other places).</i>
	Nakabalo ko sa mga kaagi sa uban. <i>(I learned about the experiences of other people).</i>
	Daghan kog experience usahay makakita og away, usahay pod makakita og friends sa social media. <i>(I have many experiences like having enemies and meeting new friends in social media).</i>
	I post, chat, and meet some friends and enemies because of FB.
	Daghan og mga kataw-anan nga meme ug videos. <i>(There are many funny memes and videos).</i>
	Nalipay ko sa paggamit og social media pero makamahay kay makahurot og kwarta <i>(I am happy when using FB but sometimes I used up all my money).</i>
	Daghan og matabang ang Facebook kay ma-update ka sa panghitabo. <i>(Facebook helps in updating you on current events)</i>
	Klase-klase naman ang Facebook, nay kabuang, nay di tinood. <i>(There are many things in Facebook, there are silliness and fake news)</i>
Emotional trauma and discrimination	Makalingaw ang FB kay usahay magbuntag di matulog sige lang ko scroll sa mga post. Maka-adik pod. <i>(Facebook is fun, I even stay awake whole night while scrolling the posts and it's addictive).</i>
	Nakasulay ko sauna nga sa FB kay gipakaulawan ko sa akong maestra. Iyang gipost akong nawong kay bagsak ko. Pero naayos ra man paghuman. <i>(I experienced in FB when my teacher put me in a shameful situation. She posted my face because I failed. But that has been already settled).</i>
	Daghan og makaaway sa FB, bisan di sila imo ginapasabot mag-react dayon. <i>(I have enemies because of Facebook, even if my post did not mean them, they quickly react).</i>
	Ang Facebook kay bad influence. Naay mga shit post, mga comment nga di mayo. <i>(Facebook is bad influence. There are some shit post and comments are not good).</i>
Research and Educational Purposes	Naay kausa nga nakakita mi'g away sa Facebook kay gisaway mi nga Blaan mi. Among gitabangan og away. <i>(We had a fight because of Facebook, we were bullied because we are Blaan. We fought with them).</i>
	Magamit gyod ang FB sa research labi na kay free data. Kanang naa mga word nga di masabtan sa school kay among i-search sa FB. <i>(FB is useful in research when we have free data. There are words that we can't understand and search it on FB).</i>
	Pag magbuhat og assignment kay sa FB namo i-research. <i>(When doing our assignment we search it on FB).</i>
	Pag naa mi di masabtan sa klase kay among makita sa FB Dako pod siya'g tabang sa among pag-eskwela. <i>(If we didn't understand our lesson, we search it on FB. It helps us with our studies).</i>

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Communication and socialization	Makatabang kon lisud ang lesson <i>(It helps when the lesson is difficult).</i>
	Makatabang kay maka-communicate mi sa among mga friends ug relatives nga naa sa layo. <i>(It helps us to communicate with our friends and relatives from afar).</i>
	Proud ko sa akong pagka-Blaan ga-share ko sa mga post about sa among kultura, usahay gagamit pod ko og Blaan sa akong mga caption ug comment. <i>(I'm proud of my Blaan roots and I share post about our culture, I use our language in my caption and comments).</i>
	Nakontak nako akong aunty nga naa sa abroad ug maka-video call mi. <i>(I had a contact with my aunty who works abroad and we use video call).</i>
	Mapakita nako sa uban nga proud ko nga Blaan ko. Katong nagsuot mi og Blaan attire kay daghan ang ni-like. <i>(I can show to others that I am proud Blaan especially when I posted that we wore traditional Blaan attire and many had liked it).</i>
	Makakontak mi sa among mga classmate kon naay assignment o walay klase tungod sa group chat. <i>(I can contact my classmates if we have assignment or there is no class because of group chat).</i>
	Maka-chat mi sa among mga barkada kon wala si teacher. <i>(I can chat my friends if our teacher is absent).</i>
	Lisod usahay sabton ang social media kay English. <i>(It's difficult to understand social media because it's in English).</i>

**Table 3. Themes and Core Ideas on the Insights of Blaan students in Using Social Media**

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Time Management	Dugay kaayo ko makamata usahay kay nagbilar sa social media. Makasab-an ni mama. <i>(I wake up late sometimes because of social media. Mother reprimands me).</i>
	Di mabantayan ang oras basta mag-FB mao dapat naa gyod disiplina. <i>(I am unaware of time when I'm on FB so discipline is a must).</i>
	Mahurot ang oras ug kwarta sa internet. <i>(I consume so much time and money for internet).</i>
	Go lang gyod sa tanan. Magtaarong eskwela.
Stand against discrimination	Dili dapat mabuang sa Facebook, dili magpalabi og Facebook. <i>(We must not be crazy about Facebook, we must not spend too much time in Facebook).</i>
	Amo gyod awayon ug isumbong sa teacher kon naa mang-bully sa amo tungod kay Blaan mi. <i>(We really stand up and fight and tell the teacher if one of us will be bullied because we are Blaan).</i>
	Dili dapat gamiton ang social media para mang-discriminate o manghinaway. <i>(We must not use social media to discriminate and talk negatively of others).</i>
	Dapat proud gyod nga Blaan. <i>(We must be proud that we are Blaan).</i>
	Dili na lang patulan ang mga lain og comment. <i>(Ignore the negative comments).</i>
	Daghan man sad mi'g classmate nga mo-appreciate sa amoa nga

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Stay hopeful and positive	Blaan mi. Ang uban lang naay manghinaway. <i>(We have classmates who appreciate our being a Blaan. Though others really talk negatively).</i>
	Dagahn ko'g amigo tungod sa social media. <i>(I have many friends because of social media).</i>
	Makakita ko og lain kultura tungod sa social media. Daghan makaila ug maka-chat. <i>(I also learn about other cultures in social media. I meet new friends and someone to chat).</i>
	Makatabang sa eskwela ug mapakita nako nga Blaan ko. <i>(It helps us in our studies and to be proud of my being a Blaan).</i> Ang uban matabangan tungod sa viral nga mga post. Naa man maayo nga resulta sa FB. <i>(Others will be given help because of viral posts. There is still good thing in social media).</i>
Respect and promote culture	Makatabang ko sa pag-promote sa Blaan kon gamiton nako among pinulongan. Mapakita nako sa uban nga Blaan ko.
	Naga-post ko og picture sa among lugar, sa among mga sinina, videos kon naay lubong, kasal o bunyag. Makita nila nga naa mi kultura ug tinuohan. <i>(I post pictures of our place, attire, videos during burial, wedding and christening. They can see our culture and beliefs).</i>
	Gamiton ang pulong sa Blaan ug di ikaulaw. <i>(Use our Blaan language and not be ashamed of it).</i>
	Ipost nako ang picture sa ako pamilya ug nindot nga talan-awon sa among lugar. <i>(I post my family picture and beautiful views in our place).</i>
	Magpost og mga kanta ug sayaw namo nga mga Blaan. <i>(I post Blaan song and dance).</i>
	Ipost nga nagasuot mi'g Blaan attire. <i>(I post when we wear our Blaan attire).</i>
Prioritize education	Dili ikaulaw ang pagka-Blaan. <i>(We must not be ashamed of being a Blaan).</i>
	Dapat unahon ang pagtuon ug pagtabang sa ginikanan dili magsige'g FB. <i>(Prioritize study and help my parents and spend less time in FB).</i>
	Gamiton ang social media para sa eskwela. <i>(Use social media in our studie).</i>
	Usahay tudloan mi ni Ma'am sa paggamit og FB para pod magamit sa klase. <i>(Our teacher teaches us how to use FB for our lessons).</i>
	Balansehon ang oras sa paggamit sa social media ug oras sa pag-study. <i>(There must be a balance use of social media and time to study).</i> Dapat tama ang panahon sa social media ug dili gamiton samtang naa sa klase. <i>(There must be a right time to use social media and not during class time).</i>

*Focus Group.* Focus group discussion was conducted with eight secondary students. They all came from the same school and chosen as qualified participants. All discussions were organized to draw out insights to validate and confirm the outcomes of the research. The

names of the participants were also guised in pseudonyms to secure anonymity. The same questions were answered by both study groups. All of the participants came from other localities and enrolled in Bangkal National High School. The participants were identified by their Tribal

Leaders, participants must be a bona fide member of Blaan cultural community.

### 3.2 Research Question No. 1

What are the experiences of Blaan students in using social media?

To produce a deliberative discussion for the above stated research question, the following questions were asked during the conduct of in-depth interviews and focus group discussion. How old are you? Do you have social media? Do you still use the Blaan language in social media? What do you post in social media that is relevant to Blaan culture? What are the common problems you encounter in social media? What are your positive experiences in using social media? What are the bad experiences?

From the collected data based on the participants' experiences regarding this study, there were four themes on what the Blaan students experience in using social media as presented in Table 2 such as: Entertainment and Leisure, Emotional Trauma and Discrimination, Research and Educational Purposes, Communication and Socialization.

On the experiences Blaan students using the social media, four themes emerged: entertainment and leisure, emotional trauma and discrimination, research and educational purposes, and communication and socialization.

### 3.3 Entertainment and Leisure

One of the participants Karla (pseudonym) bubbly shared that because of curiosity and other people have Facebook, she also made a Facebook account.

"Other people already have Facebook and I can see that they are enjoying Facebook so with the help of my older sister, I also made FB account and it was fun, I can even stay up all night just scrolling and reading posts."

Nestor (not his real name) also quipped that:

"FB is really fun, my friends and I have fun in using it. There are funny videos and jokes and it's really a good way to past the time."

Bobbie (pseudonym) added that as a Blaan student, most of his classmates have Facebook. He also enjoyed using the group chat and other games that Facebook offers.

According to Jason (not his real name), when it is boring and he has nothing to do at home, he enjoys Facebook and takes selfies or post some "hugot" post.

Mira (pseudonym) told that:

"It's fun and engaging, I can chat with my friends and we talk a lot of things in our group chat, that includes our crushes, our dislikes."

### 3.4 Emotional Trauma and Discrimination

Despite the effort of state and private organizations to combat bullying and discrimination, one the problems encountered by the Blaan students on their social media is discrimination. Gian (pseudonym) recalled "I was discriminated by my own teacher when she posted my face on Facebook as one of the students who failed in her class. I decided to stop going to school but my parents talked with the teacher and she apologized to me."

Lloyd (pseudonym) admitted that some of their classmates bullied his fellow Blaan student and they had a fistfight with other students because of discrimination. Some students are afraid of them because Blaan are known to be warriors and fighters.

Jenny and Caren (not their real names) shared that there are people who comment and post negatively. They are also hesitant to use the Blaan language as they are afraid to be misunderstood and criticized. "There are some classmates who feel that we backbite them if we talk in Blaan" Caren added.

### 3.5 Research and Educational Purposes

Beth and Luis (not their real names) said that in order for them to keep up with school requirements such as reporting and research, they use the social media to collect information. With free data, they can use Facebook for free.

Ben (pseudonym) explained:

"Facebook helps me in my homework, if there is something I don't understand I use FB as a dictionary. We also use FB for ideas in doing our project. Some teachers also use Facebook for our grades like advocacy videos."

Communication and Socialization

Joan (pseudonym) also added that:

"I use FB in my research especially that it is in my phone, it is accessible and I can bring my phone anywhere."

### 3.6 Communication and Socialization

With vigor and enthusiasm, Jerico (pseudonym) quipped:

"I use FB to contact my Aunt who is an OFW. My parents also talk to my Aunt through my Facebook."

Ivan (pseudonym) narrated that he can tell whatever he wants to express through his social media. If he is sad or upset he can easily share his feelings. Paul (pseudonym) told:

"I can always contact my friends, we seldom text each other because we can now use Facebook messenger for chatting, joking and sharing of ideas."

John and Alden (not their real names) both agreed that Facebook changed the way how they communicate even their parents have Facebook to contact them and monitor their whereabouts.

However, May and Vanessa (not their real names) found it difficult to understand some posts in social media because it's in English.

"It's difficult because it's in English. It's easy to use social media but to understand some instruction is hard."

### 3.7 Research Question No. 2

What are the insights of Blaan students that they can share to the academe in general? To produce a deliberative discussion for the above stated research question, the following questions were asked during the conduct of in-depth interviews and focus group discussion: What are your learning based on your experiences in using social media? Why do you think that other students are also using social media?

On the insights of the Blaan students on using social media, five themes emerged: time management, stand against discrimination, stay hopeful and positive, respect and promote culture and prioritize education. One of the participants, May (pseudonym) confided that sometimes her mother scold her for always using social media instead of helping with house chores.

### 3.8 Time Management

Kirby (pseudonym) told that:

"Social media consumes too much of my allowance and time. I already stopped using FB because I want to manage my time efficiently."

Francis (pseudonym) added:

"We must learn to balance time to study and time to use social media." Marc (pseudonym) admitted that he spends most of his time in social media and it is consuming his time, but he realized that it is not helping him to become a better son and student.

### 3.9 Stand Against Discrimination

Aleya and May (not their real names) said that whenever they experience discrimination, they tell their teachers especially that they know anti-bullying policies at school.

Alden (pseudonym) quipped:

"Facebook helps us in meeting new friends and chatting with them. It is also a way for us, IP students to promote our culture to the world."

Kirby (pseudonym) expressed his concern over those students who are unaware of their bullying and discriminating acts towards Blaan students. He once had a fistfight against one of his schoolmates when his friend was bullied because he is a Blaan. The same with Jeremy (pseudonym), he said that there are other students from other cultural communities such as Bagobo and Manobo who experience bullying and discrimination, but together they stand up against the bully.

### 3.10 Stay Hopeful and Positive

Francis (pseudonym) proudly told that he is so proud of his roots and the beautiful sceneries in his locality. There are beautiful waterfalls, caves and mountains that he post in social media.

Aleya (pseudonym) shared:

"I am happy because I have friends who are also in social media and when I post the rivers, the forest and the mountain, my classmates from other places admire our barangay."

### 3.11 Respect and Promote Culture

Vanessa (pseudonym) admitted that even if she spends time in social media, her parents remind her to study and help with house chores. She is

also determined to finish high school and continue her college education. She added:

“Education is very important to us. We use social media wisely for our future.”

May (pseudonym) agreed that she needs to post and promote more about their culture as Blaan because even other Blaan students are already forgetting their tradition and language.

### 3.12 Prioritize Education

Francis (pseudonym) confided that he forgets to study his lessons because of social media. Their teacher and parents reminds them to prioritize education.

Aleya also told that:

“I sometimes do not understand the lesson because I enjoy Facebook. I realize that it is important to listen to my teacher. I now use social media to research and updates.

March (pseudonym) understood that social media is addictive and if will not control his desire to spend time in social media, he will get low grades. Education is my priority right now because I have dreams for myself and my family.

## 4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the study, the researcher found out that Blaan students are still facing discrimination inside the school premises. Despite the massive campaign and promotion of protection the indigenous people, there is still a need to educate other students on the rights of the IP students and how discrimination can endanger the well-being of IP learners. In addition, Blaan students have limited access to websites and information that they can use to promote and preserve their culture. Most of the experiences of the Blaan students are focused on the entertaining factor of social media but not on the informative and educational aspect of using the internet.

This investigation brought the researcher into a conclusion that Blaan students do not maximize their social media time to promote and know more about their culture as indigenous people. Social media is a powerful tool to encourage the IP learners that they have their rights as part of IP community and anybody who steps on their rights can be held liable before the law. IP education in the curricula will improve the awareness of IP students on rights as well as

their privileges such as scholarships and state sponsorships.

The contributions of this study depend on the availability of Blaan students who use social media and whose views and insights on social media and cultural preservation derived from the results. These views assisted the researcher to achieve a broader perspective as to the experiences of the Blaan students and their use of social media.

It also provides opportunities for future researches in other fields of media and culture not yet explored and studied and could be used by the future researchers to distinguish useful features of this qualitative research. There is much to be studied in this area, the researcher believes that this study is just one of the many contributions and wide sources of researches on media and culture. This study was conducted in the Philippines.

## CONSENT AND ETHICAL APPROVAL

Since my research study involved IP students, the researcher saw to it that necessary permits were secured from authorities such as the NCIP. The study was guided by ethical principles as described by [13], namely: respect for persons, beneficence, justice, consent and confidentiality.

Respect for persons requires a commitment to ensure the autonomy of research participants and where autonomy may be decreased, to protect people from exploitation of their weakness. As a sign of respect, prior to the conduct of the study, it was necessary to secure permission from the persons in authority of the school where data would be gathered. Permissions to gather data from school heads of research participants were obtained at an early stage in the research [7].

Informed and voluntary consent is a way to see to it that people understand what it means to participate in a particular research study so they can decide in a conscious, deliberate way whether they want to participate. Informed consent is one of the most important instruments for ensuring respect for persons during research [13]. Before the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, the parents and the participants were provided copies of Informed Consent written in local language and they signed the consent forms in their cultural community and in the presence of IP elders. The purpose of the study was verbally explained to

the participants and the proceedings were video recorded. The informants were also informed of the findings and results of the study since they have the right to know because they were the ones involved and to give them due recognition as well.

Beneficence requires a commitment to minimizing the risks associated with research, including psychological and social risks, and maximizing the benefits that are due to research participants [13]. To minimize the risks or harm to the participants, anonymity of the interviewee in relation to the information shared was maintained [14]. Participants were protected at all times so data or files of information were not left lying around in notebooks or un-protected computer files.

Confidentiality of the findings and protection of the identities of the informants by using a coding system to hide their true identities, will be explained to them. Students were informed, as recommended by Maree and Van der Westhuizen [15], that the entire database (i.e. digital voice recorders, typed transcripts, field notes, and other related materials) would be destroyed upon completion of the analysis.

Justice requires a commitment to ensuring a fair distribution of the risks and benefits resulting from research. It is important to build into the research plan a method of acknowledging the contributions that participants make to the success of the research process and to reimburse them in various ways for their efforts [14]. In conducting the study, participants did not spend any amount for the interview and their comfort was a top priority. They were also given tokens of appreciation for their efforts, and their contributions would be a legacy because it was through them that people especially in the education industry as according to Bloom and Crabtree (2006), research should enrich the freedom of the participants more than it improves the author's career.

## **IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

A coordinated effort to deal with bullying and discrimination is necessary and timely to address their needs in the light of the findings of this study. The researcher believes that to counter discrimination, a curriculum-based approach on IP and peace education must be included in basic and higher education, a concerted effort of the school community, private organizations, the

government and even the non-government sectors are of great help in helping the indigenous people in promoting and preserving their culture.

This indicates that state officials may devise a strategic plan and action to assist IP students by creating activities that promote culture, these activities can encourage other learners to respect and value the culture of IP students. The integration of social media in the curriculum may also be closely monitored and guided by the policies of the Department of Education as not all social media activities are relevant and helpful to the needs of IP students. In fact, they may become susceptible to bullying and discrimination.

School administrators, Guidance Counsellors and teachers may conduct activities and policies that cater to the needs of IP students. Informative materials, film viewing, advocacy through multimedia and even the creation of IP clubs and organizations can help them in facilitating an IP child-friendly community. In social media of schools, they can also provide information on the rights of the indigenous people such as information drive.

The school, in partnership with the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and Guidance Counsellors, IP students may receive counselling and support to those who have stressful, traumatic experiences and even addiction caused by social media. Likewise, intensify the campaign within the community on cultural preservation and promotion to be conducted by the local government unit and non-government organizations who advocate for the protection of indigenous people. These activities may be done through symposiums.

Cultural centers and studies may also be established in Davao del Sur to promote researches on cultural preservation of the indigenous people in the province with the coordination of the only state college in the province –Southern Philippines Agribusiness and Marine and Aquatic School of Technology (SPAMAST) and the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) such as School of Living Tradition.

## **COMPETING INTERESTS**

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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