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Shaping the Future: Lived Experiences of Teachers in Fostering Civic Engagement and National Identity through Social Studies

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ABSTRACT

In an era marked by rapid globalization, technological advancement, and increasing cultural diversity, education plays a vital role in shaping learners' civic engagement and sense of national identity. This study explored the lived experiences of teachers in fostering civic engagement and national identity through Social Studies instruction in selected secondary schools in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat. It aimed to understand how teachers integrate civic values into their teaching practices and the challenges they encounter in promoting responsible citizenship among learners during the school year 2025–2026. A qualitative research design, specifically a phenomenological approach, was employed to capture the depth and meaning of teachers' experiences. Participants were purposively selected Social Studies teachers from secondary schools in the district. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and reflective narratives, enabling participants to share their instructional strategies, perceptions, and challenges in delivering lessons that promote civic awareness and national consciousness. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring themes and significant insights. Findings revealed that teachers actively incorporated experiential learning strategies, such as discussions on current events, community-based activities, role-playing, and integration of local history and cultural narratives to enhance civic engagement. Teachers emphasized the importance of connecting lessons to real-life contexts to make learning more meaningful and relevant. However, they also encountered challenges, including limited instructional resources, time constraints, varying student interests, and the influence of digital media on students' perspectives. Despite these challenges, teachers demonstrated commitment and adaptability in promoting values of patriotism, social responsibility, and active citizenship. The study concludes that strengthening instructional support, providing relevant teaching materials, and encouraging community involvement are essential in enhancing the role of Social Studies education in shaping civic-minded and nationally conscious learners.

Keywords: citizenship education, instructional strategies, learner engagement, social awareness



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INTRODUCTION

Background of Study

In an era marked by rapid globalization, technological advancement, and increasing cultural diversity, the role of education in shaping civic engagement and national identity had become more crucial than ever. As societies became more interconnected, individuals were constantly exposed to a multitude of worldviews, cultures, and ideologies. While this global exposure presented opportunities for cross-cultural understanding, it also posed challenges to maintaining a cohesive national identity and instilling a sense of civic responsibility among the youth

Globally, the importance of civic education has been underscored by various studies. For instance, research indicated that social studies education plays a pivotal role in shaping students' understanding of national identity and civic responsibilities (Jatmika et al. 2025). However, challenges persisted in balancing national unity with cultural diversity, especially in multicultural classrooms. These challenges necessitated a deeper exploration of educators' experiences and strategies in promoting civic engagement and national identity.

In the Philippines, the K-12 education reform emphasized the integration of civic education across various subjects, including Social Studies. A study by Stiftung (2024) highlighted the evolution of civic education policies and methodologies in the country, noting the efforts to enhance students' civic competencies. Despite these advancements, there remained a gap in understanding how teachers implemented these policies in diverse classroom settings.

Focusing on South Central Mindanao, particularly Sultan Kudarat, the region's rich cultural tapestry presented unique opportunities and challenges in teaching civic engagement and national identity (Balogun & Akintola, 2023). The interplay of various indigenous groups and the influence of local governance structures impacted how civic values were imparted. However, limited research has been conducted on the specific experiences of educators in this region concerning these aspects.

While existing literature provided insights into the importance of civic education and national identity, there was a paucity of studies focusing on the lived experiences of teachers in specific regional contexts, such as South-Central Mindanao. This gap underscored the need for localized research that considered cultural nuances and regional dynamics in the teaching of civic values.

This study aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. By examining how teachers fostered civic engagement and national identity, the research contributed to understanding and improving the quality of education in the Philippines.



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The primary goal of this study was to explore and document the lived experiences of teachers in selected secondary schools in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat in fostering civic engagement and national identity through Social Studies education. By identifying effective strategies and understanding the challenges faced, the study aimed to provide recommendations for enhancing civic education practices in the region.

Research Questions

This study aimed to explore and document the lived experiences of teachers in selected secondary schools in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat in fostering civic engagement and national identity through Social Studies education.

Specifically, the research problem revolved around understanding the following key questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of teachers in promoting civic engagement and national identity through the teaching of Social Studies?
2. What are the personal and professional meanings they derived from integrating civic values and national identity in their Social Studies instruction?
3. What challenges and successes did teachers encounter in fostering civic engagement and national identity among students within the Social Studies curriculum?
4. How did these lived experiences shape teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and teaching practices related to civic education and nationalism?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed qualitative research, specifically the phenomenological approach to explore and document the lived experiences of teachers in selected secondary schools in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat in fostering civic engagement and national identity through Social Studies education.

Phenomenological research was a method that aimed to delve into individuals lived experiences to gain deeper insights into how they interpreted these experiences. It operated under the assumption that individuals employed a universal structure or essence to derive meaning from their encounters. This research involved the interpretation of participants' emotions, perceptions, and beliefs to shed light on the fundamental essence of the phenomenon under investigation. An essential aspect of the phenomenological research design was the researcher's obligation to set aside any preconceived assumptions about the experience or phenomenon (Delve & Limpaecher, 2012).



Participants of the Study

Table 1 presents the participants' qualifications, determined by criteria established by the researcher before selecting eligible informants for the study.

Table 1 *Participants' Inclusion Criteria*

Qualifications
<i>Participants: 15 Teachers</i>
<p>1. Teaching Social Studies in Secondary Schools – Only teachers currently handling Social Studies subjects in selected secondary schools in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat were included, as they directly engaged students in discussions on civic engagement and national identity.</p> <p>2. Minimum of Three Years Teaching Experience – Participants had at least three years of teaching experience to ensure they had sufficient exposure to pedagogical practices and opportunities to integrate civic and national identity concepts into their teaching.</p> <p>3. Active Involvement in School or Community-Based Civic Activities – Teachers who had participated in school projects, civic-oriented programs, or community engagement initiatives were included, as such experiences enriched their perspectives in fostering civic responsibility and nationalism among learners.</p> <p>4. Willingness and Consent to Participate – Only teachers who voluntarily agreed to share their lived experiences through interviews or focus group discussions, and who signed the informed consent form, were part of the study to ensure ethical compliance and authentic narratives.</p>

The participants in this study consisted of 15 carefully selected Social Studies teachers from secondary schools in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat, who met the inclusion criteria set by the researcher.

Sampling Technique

During the conduct of this study, a Purposive Sampling Technique was intentionally utilized to carefully select fifteen (15) Social Studies teachers from teachers in selected secondary schools in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat who met the inclusion criteria set by the researcher.

Purposive sampling, alternately referred to as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling, constitutes a variant of non-probability sampling. Within this approach, researchers exercise their own judgment and discretion in selecting individuals from the population to participate in their surveys (Alchemer, 2021). This sampling method requires researchers to have prior knowledge of the study's objectives to identify and contact eligible participants via online



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survey platforms. Researchers use purposive sampling to secure access to a distinct subgroup of individuals; all survey respondents are selected based on their alignment with specific demographic criteria.

Research Instruments

In this study, a semi-structured interview functioned as an exploratory instrument during both in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to explore and document the lived experiences of teachers in selected secondary schools in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat in fostering civic engagement and national identity through Social Studies education.

The validity and appropriateness of this tool were substantiated through a rigorous evaluation process conducted by a panel of experts who possessed expertise in the development of relevant research instruments.

Data Gathering Procedure

To ensure the research's reliability, the researcher maintained a strict adherence to a predefined set of procedures. The primary objective of this study was to explore and document the lived experiences of teachers in selected secondary schools in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat, in fostering civic engagement and national identity through Social Studies education.

In the initial phase, the researcher sought formal authorization from both the Superintendent of DepEd-Sultan Kudarat and the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies (CGS). This authorization was essential for the researcher to conduct the study, emphasizing the importance of ethical considerations.

Following this, a secondary authorization letter was sent to the District Supervisor, explicitly requesting access to the specific data required for this research. A meticulously crafted survey questionnaire was developed, subjected to rigorous evaluation, and then administered to the targeted participants.

The researcher employed a Purposive Sampling Technique to carefully select secondary school teachers as participants in this study. Assuming strict adherence to established EWMCI-Research Ethics Committee, the researcher proceeded with conducting interviews and facilitated Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), all of which were conducted through face-to-face interactions.

Ultimately, the data collected from interviews and FGDs were systematically organized, subjected to comprehensive analysis, and interpreted using the thematic analysis approach. This approach was expected to provide a deeper understanding of the issues under investigation.

Data Transcription Process

All gathered raw data from the participants through interviews and FGDs were transcribed using the transcription process of Kvale and Brinkmann (2009). By following these



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step-by-step processes, the researcher aligned their transcription approach with the guidelines outlined by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009). This rigorous transcription process ensured the trustworthiness and credibility of the qualitative data, which served as the foundation for the subsequent narrative analysis and the meaningful interpretation of the gathered raw data.

These categories were either drawn from established frameworks or custom-crafted to align with the study's objectives. To execute this analytical process, a series of vital steps were meticulously followed:

Step 1: Data Organization and Preparation. In the initial phase, all data sources, including interview transcripts, notes from FGDs, and pertinent documents, were thoroughly organized and prepared for analysis. This step ensured the structured arrangement and accessibility of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

Step 2: Data Immersion. Subsequently, the researcher deeply immersed herself in the data by reviewing interview transcripts and FGD notes. This immersive process helped her understand the content and context inherent in the collected information (Nowell et al., 2017).

Step 3: Systematic Coding Process. The third step involved commencing a systematic coding process. Initial codes were generated by identifying meaningful segments or patterns within the data. These codes encapsulated fundamental concepts, ideas, or themes relating to exploring and document the lived experiences of teachers in selected secondary schools in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat, in fostering civic engagement and national identity through Social Studies education.

Step 4: Clustering and Preliminary Themes. Following coding, the identified codes were clustered into preliminary themes based on shared meaning or relevance. This step established an initial framework for organizing the data (Vaismoradi et al., 2016).

Step 5: Theme Scrutiny and Refinement. Following this, the emerging themes and their corresponding codes were scrutinized and refined. Researchers ensured their coherence and clarity, making necessary adjustments as needed. Each refined theme was assigned a descriptive label that succinctly represented its content, facilitating easy identification and interpretation (Terry et al., 2017).

Step 6: Linking Data Excerpts. Relevant data excerpts, such as quotations or segments from interviews and FGDs, were selected and linked to the themes. These excerpts served as supporting evidence for the identified themes (Nowell et al., 2017).

Step 7: Thematic Analysis. Finally, the thematic analysis transcended superficial identification. Researchers delved into interpreting the significance and implications of each theme within the context of the study's objectives, ensuring a deeper understanding of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2022).



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They identified patterns, correlations, and variations within the themes to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities involved in fostering civic engagement and national identity through social studies.

This meticulous and well-structured process of thematic analysis empowered researchers to investigate and comprehend the strategies systematically and approaches the challenges and opportunities involved in fostering civic engagement and national identity through social studies.

Ultimately, this approach yielded valuable insights contributing to the enhancement of intervention programs aimed at addressing the issues on lived experiences of teachers in fostering civic engagement and national identity through social studies in selected secondary schools in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat, in fostering civic engagement and national identity through Social Studies education.

Data Analysis

In this study, on the lived experiences of teachers in selected secondary schools in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat, fostering civic engagement and national identity through Social Studies education, a content or thematic analysis approach was employed to examine the collected data.

This methodology, as described by Flick (2014), Ngag (2023), and Braun (2009), involved the systematic categorization of textual components, including statements, phrases, and words, into organized groupings or categories. These categories were either derived from established frameworks or custom-developed to align with the study's specific objectives.

To execute this analytical process, a series of essential steps were diligently followed:

Initially, all data sources, such as interview transcripts, notes from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and relevant documents, were meticulously organized and prepared for analysis. This phase ensured the systematic arrangement and accessibility of the data.

Subsequently, the researcher deeply engaged with the data by conducting a thorough review of interview transcripts and FGD notes. This immersive process aided in gaining a comprehensive understanding of the content and context embedded within the collected information.

The third step involved initiating a systematic coding process. Initial codes were generated by identifying meaningful segments or patterns within the data. These codes captured essential concepts, ideas, or themes related to the narratives of the teachers about their professional development and its outcomes in their teaching effectiveness.

Following coding, the identified codes were grouped into preliminary themes based on shared meaning or relevance. This step aims to establish an initial structure for organizing the data.

Next, the emerging themes and their corresponding codes underwent a process of review and refinement. Researchers ensured the consistency and clarity of these themes, making



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necessary adjustments. Each refined theme was assigned a descriptive name that succinctly represented the content it encapsulated, facilitating easy identification and interpretation.

Relevant data excerpts, such as quotes or segments extracted from interviews and FGDs, were selected and associated with the respective themes. These excerpts served as supporting evidence for the identified themes.

Finally, the thematic analysis extended beyond surface-level identification. Researchers will interpret the meaning and implications of each theme within the context of the study's objectives. They sought patterns, connections, and variations within the themes to provide a comprehensive understanding of narratives of the teachers.

This meticulous and structured process of thematic analysis enabled researchers to explore and document the lived experiences of teachers in selected secondary schools in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat in fostering civic engagement and national identity through Social Studies education.

Scope and Limitations

The study explored the personal and professional experiences of selected Social Studies teachers in secondary schools in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat, during the 2025–2026 school year. It specifically examined what strategies, challenges, and insights teachers encountered in promoting civic engagement and national identity among students, who were considered the primary beneficiaries of such efforts. The study was conducted within identified secondary schools in the locality, where cultural diversity and socio-political awareness played a crucial role in shaping educational practices. Using a qualitative phenomenological design, data were collected through in-depth interviews and thematic analysis to capture the teachers' authentic voices.

This research was delimited to teachers of Social Studies subjects and did not cover other disciplines or stakeholders such as students, administrators, or parents. The study was undertaken to provide a deeper understanding of how Social Studies education serves as a platform in instilling nationalism and active citizenship, thereby justifying its significance in fostering a socially responsible and united community.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the results, teachers' experiences reveal that promoting civic engagement and national identity requires fostering student voice, facilitating respectful and critical dialogue, connecting historical and cultural content to emotions, applying lessons to real-life contexts, and exercising creativity and resilience amid limited resources. Their engagement is both adaptive and reflective, responding to students' needs while sustaining meaningful civic learning.

Also, integrating civic values and national identity gives teachers a strong sense of purpose, supports character formation, deepens appreciation of Filipino heritage, enhances



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professional commitment, and strengthens the relevance of lessons beyond the classroom. These experiences affirm teaching as both transformative and socially impactful.

Moreover, teachers face challenges such as student apathy, curriculum limitations, misinformation, and the complexity of addressing sensitive or diverse perspectives. Successes emerge through fostering critical thinking, meaningful participation, and the application of lessons through projects and community engagement, demonstrating that obstacles can be mitigated through adaptive teaching strategies.

Finally, teachers' experiences shape their understanding of civic education as real-life learning, emphasize critical thinking and media literacy, inspire them to model civic values, promote inclusive and reflective nationalism, and draw on personal histories to strengthen patriotism. These experiences directly inform pedagogical decisions and classroom culture.

Conclusion

Considering the findings of the study, the following were concluded:

Effective civic education is dynamic and relational, shaped by both classroom interactions and community experiences, highlighting the importance of connecting learning to students' realities.

Embedding civic and national education in Social Studies nurtures not only students' citizenship but also their own professional growth and sense of responsibility toward nation-building.

Cultivating civic engagement requires persistence, creativity, and deliberate efforts to make learning relevant, indicating that challenges often become opportunities for innovative pedagogy.

Personal and community experiences enrich their teaching philosophy, enabling them to foster responsible, critically minded, and patriotic learners who can translate knowledge into action.

Recommendations

Considering the findings of the study, the following were recommended:

1. DepEd (Department of Education) may develop policies and programs that integrate hands-on civic learning, media literacy, and community engagement across Social Studies curricula. Provide funding for updated teaching materials and teacher training focused on fostering critical thinking, inclusive discussions, and real-life applications of civic values.
2. School Administrators may support teachers by allocating time for interactive lessons, debates, and community projects, and create a classroom culture where student voices are valued. Encourage professional collaboration to share creative strategies for overcoming resource constraints and student apathy.



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3. Curriculum Planners may design curricula that balance civic content with practical application, including local history, cultural heritage, and current social issues. Ensure lesson plans provide flexibility for teachers to adapt materials for diverse student needs while promoting critical thinking and reflective patriotism.

4. Teachers adopt innovative teaching approaches such as small group discussions, projects, and community activities to engage students meaningfully. Model civic and national values consistently, encourage respectful dialogue, and connect lessons to students' real-life responsibilities.

5. Future Researchers may investigate effective strategies for motivating student engagement in civic education, combatting misinformation, and measuring the impact of experiential learning on national identity. They may also explore inclusive practices that address diversity, sensitivity, and student apathy in Social Studies classrooms.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

In preparation for this study, all plans and recommendations were presented to East-West Mindanao Colleges Inc to ensure compliance with prescribed procedures and protocols. In this research examining the lived experiences of teachers in selected secondary schools in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat, in fostering civic engagement and national identity through Social Studies education, it was imperative to emphasize the paramount importance of ethical considerations. Before commencing this study, the following ethical principles were highlighted:

Informed Consent: Before participation, consent was obtained from all school heads involved in the study. They must possess a comprehensive understanding of the study's objectives, methodologies, potential risks, and benefits. Furthermore, participation remained entirely voluntary, allowing the participants to withdraw from the study at any juncture without adverse consequences.

Anonymity and Confidentiality: To safeguard identities and responses, rigorous measures were followed to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Rather than using actual names, pseudonyms or codes were used to uphold the participants' privacy. The collected data was securely stored with access restricted solely to the research team.

Avoiding Harm: Delicate subjects, such as the challenges inherent in their roles, were discussed with potential emotional and psychological impact on participants. Strategies were in place to minimize distress, and a support system was readily available to assist participants.

Researcher-Participant Relationship: The researcher maintained a professional and respectful rapport when engaging with the school heads. Any actions that might harm the participants were scrupulously avoided, ensuring their utmost dignity and respect throughout the research process.



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Data Protection: Adherence to data protection regulations and laws was observed to safeguard the participants' personal information. Stringent measures were employed to ensure secure storage and transmission of data.

Voluntary Participation: Participants were assured that their participation in the study was devoid of any coercion or external pressure.

Researcher Bias: The researcher remained vigilant regarding potential biases that might influence data collection and analysis, upholding objectivity and transparency throughout the research endeavor.

Institutional Approval: Before initiating the study, the researcher sought ethical clearance from the pertinent institutional review boards or ethics committees.

Honesty and Integrity: The research findings were reported truthfully and accurately, free from manipulation or distortion to align with preconceived notions or biases.

Beneficence: The potential benefits of the research in educational practices and policies were thoughtfully considered, ensuring that the study contributes to the education system.

Cultural Sensitivity: The researcher demonstrated cultural sensitivity by respecting local customs, beliefs, and practices within the research setting and refraining from imposing external values on participants.

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Declaration AI Tools Utilization

I do hereby declare the use AI tools, such as Chat GPT and Grammarly for grammar checking and sentence organization purposes only.



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