

“Mare Anong Latest?: Lived Experiences of “Marites” in Filipino Culture

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the experiences, motivation, and realization of *Marites* in Filipino Culture. It investigates the lived experiences of Marites who stay informed about the latest happenings and do not mind sharing them with others. Marites-ing comes naturally for many people, whether chatting with friends, family, co-workers, or even in group chat. This cultural phenomenon has become a valuable knowledge source for Filipinos. However, social tensions and disputes can also arise from the rumors and false information that Marites-ing spreads. Employing a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, in-depth one-one-one interviews were conducted and purposively selected 10 Filipino *Marites* as participants ages 18 and above, residing and attending universities within Luzon. Thematic analysis was used to extract significant data from the participants. The research highlights the key challenges of the participants concluding that being a "*Marites*" is a complex identity. It is portrayed as more than just seeking answers; it's about embracing a lifestyle that celebrates curiosity, connection, and personal growth. Additionally, the study explores the coping mechanisms these *Maritess* develop to navigate challenges which serve as stress relievers through social bonds. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of what is being portrayed. Being a *Maritess* can offer valuable insights that provide healing and comfort. It allows a person to grow personally and spiritually if done with limitations, boundaries, and self-reflection. This study not only sheds light on the distinctive characteristics of *Maritess* but also emphasizes the broader implication of how social support promotes well-being. Despite the stigma and stereotype, the results prove that *Maritessing* is part of coping when used wisely and objectively.

Keywords: marites, phenomenology, motivation, realization, curiosity, connection, personal growth

INTRODUCTION

People often associate the word "*Maritess*" with individuals engaging in discussions or spreading malicious rumors about someone absent. However, the context of "*Maritess*" in this study found meaning that contributes to the mental health, personal growth self-awareness, and responsibility of the individual. Being a *Maritess* can be beneficial and provide reflections that contribute to healing and satisfaction. It allows a person to grow personally if properly done with limitations, boundaries, reflection, and responsibility.

The motivation behind this research derives from the misconceptions of the word "Maritess." When people hear the word "Marites," they often associate it with individuals engaging in discussions or spreading malicious rumors about someone absent. However, according to Castro (2022), *Marites* are individuals who stay updated on current events and are willing to share them with others. *Marites-ing* is a natural behavior for many people, whether conversing with friends, family, colleagues, or group chats. In Filipino culture, this phenomenon has become a valuable source of information. However, gossip can also lead to social tensions and conflicts due to spreading rumors and false information (Luo et al., 2021).

The problem this study seeks to address is that to uncover the specific areas, especially on the experiences of "Marites" in the Philippines. There is still a lack of resources on the meaning behind the word "Marites." Thus, the "Marites" culture in the Philippines is still considered an understudied phenomenon in psychological research. This study aims to explore the experiences of "Marites" in Filipino culture and to discover the meaning of these experiences for them. It also aims to deeply understand the true meaning of Marites since a lot of people misinterpret its definition. This research gives us a more in-depth understanding on the actual experiences of "Marites" in Filipino culture.

The primary purpose of this research is to explore and evaluate the lived experiences of "Maritess" in Filipino culture focusing on their impartiality and justice while discussing their life events and updates of other people. The study aims to highlight the unique characteristics of "Maritess" pointing out the positive side and the implication of how social support promotes well-being.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The newly created term "Marites" in Philippine popular culture describes gossip, especially a netizen who obsesses over other people's news and keeps track of strange occurrences on social media. Since many Filipinos are still unaware of reliable sources of information, using social media to spread false information was easier when one was a "Marites". This culture shapes public opinion and drives social manipulation, which can have both positive and negative effects on behavior in society (Aguirre, 2022). Nevertheless, according to (Parnala, 2022) there is no denying that people both love and hate them, but one thing is clear: town gossip is an integral part of the community.

The term "Marites" was originally associated with the chismosa character in 2020 on the internet then the offline world started to catch on. There was no available information regarding the exact origin of the Marites memes or when it was first used on the internet. We only know that it surged in popularity during the first stage of the Covid pandemic in 6 2020 (Parnala, 2022). Like most internet sensations, it was difficult to pinpoint the exact origin of the Marites memes or when it was first used on the internet.

Studies have indicated that social media has increasingly become a vital source of news and information, particularly for individuals keen on staying abreast of the latest rumors and

narratives (Horne et al., 2018). On the other hand, conventional gossip customs have also impacted the Marites culture in the Philippines. The communication practices of the past and present have been combined in this culture by the Filipino people to fit their evolving social and technological environments (Cuadra, 2023). In recent times, the Philippines has experienced the rise of a distinctive online gossip trend dubbed Marites (Legazpi, 2021). Stemming from a beloved character in a local TV show, Marites characterizes individuals well-versed in current events and gossip, proficient in disseminating such information across diverse social media and online channels (Parnala, 2022). Those engaged in this culture excel at gathering the latest news and rumors, utilizing social media channels to disseminate these updates (Green, 2021).

Reflecting an emphasis on social connections, Marites culture has integrated into the societal fabric, facilitated by the accessibility of platforms like Facebook and Twitter, enabling widespread sharing of information, opinions, and rumors (Mendoza, 2021). Additionally, conventional gossip customs have left their mark on Marites culture, historically playing a role in nurturing social connections, setting norms, and wielding social sway (Baumeister et al., 2004).

In the Philippines, gossip serves as means for individuals to stay updated on community matters and forge social bonds (Reyes & Liao, 2018). The observation that Filipinos are inherently social beings who enjoy gossiping is underscored by the characterization of a particular subset of individuals as "Marites," who are particularly skilled in this practice. This phenomenon aligns with the notion of social capital, which pertains to the advantages and resources individuals accrue through their social networks (Witteck et al., 2000). Everybody has Marites in their life. Perhaps we have also been Marites in the past, keeping our closest friends updated on the newest gossip and scandals. Although we enjoy making fun of her both online and off, don't forget how much we depend on the real-life Marites to get the latest scoops on the latest stories (Parnala, 2022). However, the job of a Marites is not easy, as you can see, and it's been made more taxing by social media, which says too much but says really nothing at the same time. “Daming sabi-sabi, damping fake news”.

Experiences of Being a Marites The Marites culture observed in the Philippines reflects broader cultural tendencies within the nation, highlighting the importance placed on social relationships and the impact of long-standing gossip traditions (Mendoza, 2021). This indicates that the Marites culture embodies larger cultural norms regarding the importance of interpersonal bonds and the role of gossip in Filipino society. Moreover, according to (Cuadra, 2023) people who are adept at obtaining and sharing information—often about their peers—to gain social influence and control are known as Marites. Some academics contend that gossip kept our ancestors alive. Evolutionary psychologist Robin Dunbar initially proposed this concept, drawing a parallel between gossip and the social bonding behavior observed in primates, such as grooming (Gottfried, 2019). Because gossip can occasionally be malicious and lead to conflict between specific groups, the Marites character receives a bad rap. However, friendly and constructive gossip also plays a crucial role in spreading information and fostering social bonds through stories and active participation (Parnala, 2022). However, the drawback

lies in the possibility of disseminating misinformation and harmful content that could adversely affect individuals or communities (Cuadra, 2023).

This study is anchored on Howard Giles's Communication Accommodation Theory. Accordingly, people modify, or accommodate, one another's speech patterns. By doing this, the message sender maintains a positive social identity, improves communication efficiency between both parties and wins the receiver's approval. The relationships between language, context, and identity are the focus of this theory. (Gallois et al., 2005; Infante et al., 2009). Moreover, the theory of communication accommodation (CAT) anticipates and clarifies the reasons behind the modifications made by communicants to preserve, extend, or shorten social distance (Kim, 2017).

METHODS

This qualitative study used a hermeneutic phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences of Filipino college students who engage in "marites-ing" (gossiping). In the hermeneutic approach to phenomenology, theories can help focus inquiry, make decisions about research participants, and determine how research questions can be addressed (Lopez & Willis, 2004).

This study was conducted at universities in Luzon and employed purposive sampling to select 10 participants from the selected universities of Luzon in Region IVA based on criteria like frequency of gossip and willingness to participate. One-on-one, semi-structured interviews were used to gather data, with expert-validated questions. Ethical guidelines were followed, including informed consent and participant confidentiality through pseudonyms. A pilot study was conducted to refine the interview process. The participants of the study chose through the following criteria: (1) Filipinos living in the Philippines, (2) college students (18 and above), (3) participants who engaged in *marites-ing* not only to one person, (4) participants who do *marites-ing* more than twice a week, (5) Lastly, participants who have the willingness and availability to participate in the study.

The researchers used Thematic Analysis to identify patterns and themes within the qualitative data by coding interview segments through an inductive approach, allowing themes to emerge from the data itself. The process involved five stages: familiarizing themselves with the data by transcribing and reviewing it, generating initial codes, organizing these codes into potential themes, reviewing and validating the themes, and finally producing a report that extracted key findings and related them to the research question. This method enabled a deeper understanding of participant statements and facilitated the analysis of the qualitative data.

The researchers adhered to ethical guidelines from the APA and the Data Privacy Act of 2012 to protect participants' privacy, data security, and personal information. They ensured participants' psychological well-being and provided informed consent before data collection. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, their role, and any potential risks or benefits,

with the freedom to withdraw at any time. Pseudonyms were used to maintain confidentiality and anonymity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Lived Experiences of the *Marites*

To answer Research Question 1: "*What are the lived experiences of being a Marites?*" Ten main themes were noted in this part of the study: Generates Curiosity, Entertainment, Venting emotions, Foster's social bond, Roles, A Daily Routine, Self-awareness, Stimulates Guilt, Source of Information, and Source of Conflicts. Under entertainment, a subtheme of excitement and a sense of happiness emerged. Stress reliever is a sub-theme that emerged under venting emotions. Lastly, four subthemes were noted under the theme of fostering social bonds: *Maritesing* with peer groups, interconnectedness, talking about other people's lives, and conversational corners.

Generates Curiosity

The first theme that emerged was curiosity. This implies that one of the reasons that *Marites* do "*maritesing*" is that they want to satisfy their curiosity. As described by Litman (2005), Curiosity refers to the innate inclination to seek out new information to spark interest or resolve uncertainties. It's often seen as a drive for acquiring fresh knowledge. Social curiosity, a subset of curiosity, can be understood as the overarching interest in acquiring new social knowledge that drives exploratory actions, as Hartung (2013) outlined.

Entertainment

The second theme that emerged from the coding of the interviews was that the participants engaged in *Maritesing* as their entertainment. It indicates that *Marites-ing* provides a form of amusement or distraction, a way for them to pass the time and feel connected by sharing stories or discussing the latest happening. According to Olena (2021), entertainment plays a crucial role in fostering relationships among friends by providing shared experiences, bonding opportunities, and avenues for self-expression and enjoyment.

Excitement. A sub-theme that emerged under the theme of Entertainment was excitement.. It indicates that sharing or receiving interesting information can be stimulating and captivating to the participants, resulting in a rush of excitement and anticipation. This excitement may stem from the anticipation of hearing something new, the thrill of being "in the know," or the prospect of sharing something interesting with others.

Sense of happiness. The second sub-theme that emerged related to Entertainment was a sense of happiness. From the transcript of interviews, many participants expressed that they feel happy every time they engage in *Maritesing*. A sense of happiness pertains to the feeling that comes over you when you know you are in good company with your friends or '*kapwa ka-marines*.'

Venting emotions

The third theme that emerged from the interview data was venting emotions. From the transcript of interviews, participants stated that *Maritesing* was their way of expressing their inner frustrations and venting their emotions towards their friends. You can stay informed by keeping up with the latest topic, and you want to know what your friends thought about that issue, and you also want to express your thoughts and feelings about a certain issue.

Stress reliever. A subtheme that emerged related to Venting emotion was a stress reliever. It indicates that a stress reliever helps alleviate or reduce feelings of stress and tension. The participants, Maricar and Marichu, shared the same opinion that *Maritesing* helps them to alleviate stress, unwind, and socialize. Marichu added that it was also the primary bonding with your friends and served as a breather from the academic stress.

Stress reliever. A subtheme that emerged related to Venting emotion was a stress reliever. It indicates that a stress reliever helps alleviate or reduce feelings of stress and tension. According to a Stanford study, engaging in conversations offers the benefit of alleviating stress and anxiety by providing an opportunity to share and discuss personal problems or sources of distress (Daguno, J. 2022). Gossiping has been found to reduce stress and anxiety, as suppressing emotions can be detrimental to one's well-being. Discussing concerns with friends, neighbors, or colleagues can serve as a means of relaxation for individuals experiencing stress, anxiety, or emotional turmoil (Verwoert, P. 2022).

Foster social bond

The fourth theme that emerged from the coding of the interviews was that the participants engaged in *Maritesing* as their way to foster social bonds. It indicates that *Maritesing* helps improve the bonds and relationships between the various community groups. It includes actions or attitudes to foster interpersonal understanding, empathy, and trust. It involves spending time together, engaging in meaningful conversations, and providing mutual support. Social relationships foster a sense of belonging or social group membership, cooperation, and well-being. Studies suggest that gossiping serves as a social bond, aiding individuals in forming and reinforcing connections (Araña, A. 2023).

Maritesing with peer groups. One first subtheme that emerged related to fostering social bonds is peer groups. It includes gathering, social interaction, and connections as motivations for the participants engaged in *Maritesing*. From the transcript of the interviews, most of the participants expressed that their social circles often serve as a motivation for them to engage in *Maritesing*. Within social circles, *Maritesing* is considered a common activity for bonding and entertainment, making it a natural part of social interactions within the group. *Maritesing* also provides a means of exchanging information, news, and the latest happenings within the peer group. Individuals may engage in *Maritesing* to remain informed about social events, relationships, and other relevant topics. The circle of friends significantly influences *Maritesing* behavior. The findings of this study are supported by Carchiolo et al. (2009), who have shown that peer groups play a significant role in shaping adolescent behavior. Gossip within these groups serves as a means of spreading information, whether accurate or not,

shaping individuals' perceptions and actions.

Talking about other people's lives. The second sub-theme that emerged under the theme fostering social bonds is talking about other people's lives. It showed that the participants were more focused on the lives of those around them. Individuals also engage in discussing the lives of others to uphold norms, vent frustrations, and foster social bonds, as observed in informal conversations covering various topics such as emotions, intentions, and opinions (Papay et al., 2022).

Interconnectedness. The third subtheme that emerged under the theme of social bonds is interconnectedness. It was evident from the participants that when the *chismis* is “juicy,” they immediately pass it on to their social circles. This act of participants highlights the connection between friends since rumors become a way for them to interact and establish connections with others in their social group. According to Chandra and Pal (2019), rumors serve as a means of social cohesion, aiding communities in understanding their position in society and influencing established customs. Furthermore, Immorlica (2017) expands on this concept by discussing how social standing is impacted by interconnectedness and the formation of social hierarchies within network.

Conversational corners. The fourth subtheme related to the Social Bonds theme is conversational corners. It pertains to the “where” in which the *marites* do their *Maritesing*. Most participants shared that they do *Maritesing* with their friends in public spaces, specifically inside the campus. Studies indicate that gossip holds considerable sway within school settings. While gossip in schools can facilitate information gathering and relationship building and even enhance organizational procedures, it also presents risks regarding potential harm to the institution (Hallet et al., 2009).

Roles

The fifth theme that emerged from the coding of the interview is the roles play in *Maritesing*. From the transcript of the interviews, most of the participants expressed that as *Marites*, they can act both as listeners and sharers of information in social interactions. It indicates that *Marites* often listen attentively to the information shared by others during conversations. After listening to information, *Marites* may share the information with others in their social circle, aiming to inform, entertain, or strengthen bonds with them. They may also provide their insights or interpretations before passing on the information to others. The primary element of conversation is receiving or the listener's role (Gardner, 2012). Moreover, participants in gossiping activities can fulfill dual roles as listeners and sharers, actively contributing to the group by sharing information and attentively listening to the contributions of others. (Baw, 2017).

A daily routine

The sixth theme that emerged from the coding of interviews on the participants is daily routine indicating that the *Marites* participants went as far as to say that their experience of being a *Marites* was a daily experience. The result of this study was supported by Dores et al.'s (2021)

research, which revealed that gossiping indeed plays a significant role in daily interactions. It functions as a mechanism for forging social connections by instigating discussions about behaviors that deviate from societal norms, thereby enhancing norm clarification and social cohesion (Balashevych, 2023).

Self-awareness

The seventh theme that emerged from the data was self-awareness. One of the participants noted that they are aware of their surroundings because someone might be offended by the joke. It also indicates that participants were aware of their fondness for *Maritesing* and its effects on other people and themselves. They might take shares of their actions, think through the consequences, and try to regulate them. Self-awareness implies that individuals are attentive to their environment and more deliberate in their interactions with others (Gallup, 1998). It enables individuals to understand their motivations and behaviors, potentially fostering personal growth and healthier relationships with others.

Stimulates guilt

The eighth theme that emerged from the coding of the interview is guilt. From the transcript of the interviews, most of the participants expressed feelings of guilt and regret for disclosing information or stories without thinking of its consequences. Gordon emphasizes the awareness of one's decisions and their consequences, while Wang identifies essential elements such as the necessity for optimism and detachment from outcomes. In alignment with this, Zhang (2023) explores the sharing of guilt and discovers that individuals are inclined to share social guilt for various purposes, including venting, seeking guidance, and seeking clarification.

Source of information

The ninth theme that emerged is that the participants found "*Maritesing*" a source of information. From the transcript of the interviews, most participants expressed that "*maritesing*" helps them in their everyday lives by helping them stay informed and aware of the current happenings. It indicates that participants could utilize "*maritesing*" to share news, updates, or personal experiences that may interest others. According to Cuadra (2023), *Marites* are individuals skilled in collecting and sharing information, particularly about their peers, to gain social influence and control. Stirling (1956) highlights gossip as a source of information and a casual conversation.

Source of conflicts

The tenth theme emerged when the participants found "*Maritesing*" as a source of conflict. It included misunderstanding, lack of clarity, and misinterpretation as factors that cause conflict in engaging in *Maritesing*. From the transcript of the interviews, most of the participants expressed that they had misunderstood their friends or others due to ineffective communication or clarification of information or situations, resulting in conflicts and miscommunication. It indicates that *marites-ing* can result in misinformation or

misinterpretation, leading to misunderstandings and conflicts among those involved. Holmes' (2022) supports the results of this study, illustrating how gossip can lead to misinterpretations and misconceptions by spreading unverified or distorted information that shapes perceptions based on incomplete or inaccurate details. This misinformation can impact social dynamics and emotional states by fostering distrust, conflict, and confusion among individuals.

Meaning do *Marites* ascribed to their experiences.

To answer Research Question 2: What realizations do *Marites* ascribe to their experiences? Three themes emerged: Accountable for actions, Boundaries, and Personal Growth. Each of these themes will be presented and discussed as follows:

Accountability for Action

The recurring theme that emerged from the information gathered through an analysis of the responses given by the participants was that, in engaging *Maritesing* participants ought to take responsibility for every action. The participants stated having a greater understanding of the need to take responsibility for their words and to speak only to those they can trust. According to Zeelenberg (2000), individuals experience heightened emotions and a stronger sense of accountability when they actively choose to take action. According to Romans 2:12, regardless of how much a person understands the Bible, they are still accountable to it. In other words, your level of accountability increases with knowledge. "All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and the law will judge all who sin under the law."

Boundaries

The second theme that emerged from the data is boundaries. The interview transcript revealed that when engaging *Marites*, participants know their boundaries or limitations. It indicated that, based on the participants' experiences, they do not want to engage in talks that are not factual and might harm others in any way. The participants tend to remind themselves to refrain from sharing information, especially when they're not sure if the information they received is correct.

Fan and Grey's (2021) research supports this study's findings, which revealed that setting boundaries in gossiping is crucial for safeguarding the confidentiality of sensitive information. Individuals can mitigate the dissemination of harmful rumors by establishing clear guidelines on what can and cannot be disclosed.

Personal growth

The third theme that emerged from the data was personal growth. From the transcript of the interviews, most of the participants experienced personal growth by being mindful, aware, and taking responsibility for their actions based on their past mistakes and lessons from their past experiences. It indicates that engaging in *Maritesing* can encourage individuals to introspect their values and behaviors, fostering personal insights and growth. According to the study, Frith (2016) highlighted that gossiping can indeed impact personal growth by

prompting discussions about actions, fostering accountability, and shaping perceptions of responsibility through social interactions. Despite being underestimated, gossip creates connections and solidarity among individuals seeking a sense of community and shared experiences. Additionally, sharing and engaging in gossip can lead to personal growth by encouraging individuals to take responsibility for their actions within their social environment.

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION, SUGGESTION, AND LIMITATIONS

The study's conclusions emphasize that being a "*Marites*" fosters a variety of favorable traits and experiences. It encourages people to delve deeper into their curiosity and ask questions about the world they live in. As a result of this interest, one is constantly entertained by discoveries, which fill one with interconnectedness, a sense of happiness, and relief from stress. Furthermore, because those who adopt this mindset tend to find common ground with people who share their desire for certain types of information, being a "*Marites*" encourages strong social relationships. These relationships provide them with a sense of community and belonging in addition to Proverbs 25:9-10 says, "Argue your case with your neighbor, and do not reveal the secret of another, or he who hears it will reproach you, and the evil report about you will not pass away." This passage advises people to handle disputes or conflicts directly with their neighbors rather than involving others or spreading rumors. It emphasizes the importance of discretion and confidentiality, warning against the potential consequences of revealing someone else's private matters. Revealing another's secret can lead to damage to one's reputation, which may have long-lasting effects. Therefore, the passage encourages honesty, integrity, and respect for others' privacy in interpersonal interactions. Proverbs 18:21 (HCSB), "Life and death are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit." So that in everything we do and say, we bring honor to the Lord. 1 Corinthians 10:31: "So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

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