

# Pilipiknow: Phenomenological Inquiry on the Students' Lived Understanding of National Symbols in Bacolod City, Philippines

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## ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study explores the lived understanding of the national symbols (Lupang Hinirang, Panatang Makabayan, and Panunumpa sa Watawat ng Pilipinas) among learners in a private school in Bacolod City, Philippines. The data collected from eight (8) participants through semi-structured interviews were then interpreted using thematic analysis. The findings highlighted that through these nationalistic symbols, their sense of nationalism is heightened, which is deeply rooted in early socialization, active participation, historical consciousness, and social influences. However, the study also identified challenges such as a lack of participation and shallow participation. Thus, to heighten the participation and their sense of nationalism, there is a need for in-depth learning of these national symbols provided with reflective teaching, character-based history learning, structured guidance, historical contextualization, and opportunities for active student engagement. Educators and curriculum designers may find interesting insights from this study to better improve pedagogical efforts to boost Filipino students' patriotism and national identity.

**Keywords:** Nationalism, national identity, national symbols, phenomenology, Philippines.

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## Introduction

National symbols convey identity through belonging to a community, while the symbol itself can reinforce national identity (Tribil, 2023). In addition, state symbols also play an important role in civil identity by being a means of social cohesion, the transfer of historical and cultural value, and the legitimization of power (Grechanaya & Ceron, 2024). For South Africa, the national anthem was an important symbol of national pride. Indicators suggest that symbols that reflect a diversity of cultural legacies have a better chance of being accepted in a heterogeneous community (Bornman, 2021). The cultural and political context of a nation also shapes the meaning of state symbols. For example, in the Russian context, patriotism is oriented toward historical accomplishments, while, on the other hand, patriotism in foreign countries experiences a focus on national symbols and territorial inclusion (Rozenberg & Karpova, 2025).

Learners at universities in Malaysia show a high level of awareness with regard to the symbols of their country, such as the National Flag, National Anthem, National Emblem, National Flower, and National Language. These symbols serve as important reference points for identifying as a citizen of Malaysia, and as a means for expressing one's sense of national pride in the world. The study pointed out the significance of fostering appreciation and awareness of these symbols, starting quite early, and how educators can creatively play a role in developing national principles (Mohamad et al., 2020). Likewise, in Kazakhstan, in addition to the Kazakh's national anthem and the national currency tenge representing attributes of statehood and economic independence, their significance does not only come from the symbols themselves, but also from the functions they fulfill in the nation-building process (Insebayeva & Insebayeva, 2021).

In the context of the Philippines, it is represented in symbols

such as the *Lupang Hinirang* (National Anthem), the *Panatang Makabayan* (Patriotic Oath), and the *Panunumpa sa Watawat ng Pilipinas* (Pledge to the Philippine flag). Those things remind the country's history, past fights, and aspirations. A survey of Grade 12 students suggested that taking part in the flag ceremony builds self-discipline, respect for classmates, a sense of service, and pride in being Filipino (de Vera, 2021). Yet, research about junior high students points out that while access to information can promote national pride, personal, socio-economic, and political factors may inhibit it. In this context, it showed that students' pride is uncritical even though they focus on Filipino identity, culture, and achievements, thus highlighting the need for more reflective teaching of national pride (De Leon, 2020).

This issue is also evident in the researcher's workplace. The researcher is teaching 4 sections of eighth-grade level. Every Monday, a flag ceremony is conducted at the lobby, which shows learners express pride in being Filipino by attending the ceremony, but often lack basic knowledge of the national symbols aforementioned and struggle to explain or memorize them. Moreover, some of the students do not recite these as it is restricted by their religious beliefs despite the mandate of the law. This phenomenon that fascinates the researcher is the subject of the study.

The researcher described the lived understanding of the the *Lupang Hinirang* (National Anthem), the *Panatang Makabayan* (Patriotic Oath), and the *Panunumpa sa Watawat ng Pilipinas* (Pledge to the Philippine flag) among learners. This study focused on a private school in Bacolod City where no similar study has been conducted to date. Although the proper conduct of flag-raising and lowering ceremonies in public schools is mandated, which also prescribes the sequence of national anthem, pledge, and prayers to instill patriotism in children. But at the same time, the policy guarantees ritual observance (DepEd Order 50, s. 2015), and the question of whether students really comprehend or can articulate the national symbols has not been answered; this is the gap that the present research aims to fill. Thus, it is a pioneering study that described the learners' lived understanding of the *Lupang Hinirang* (National Anthem), the *Panatang Makabayan* (Patriotic Oath), and the *Panunumpa sa Watawat ng Pilipinas* (Pledge to the Philippine flag) in a Private School in Bacolod City, Philippines. This study is a contribution to the body of knowledge needed for future reference.

The primary objective of this phenomenological study is to describe learners' lived understanding of the *Lupang Hinirang* (National Anthem), the *Panatang Makabayan* (Patriotic Oath), and the *Panunumpa sa Watawat ng Pilipinas* (Pledge to the Philippine flag) in a private

school in Bacolod City, Philippines. The study examines ways in which learners understand, read, and experience these national symbols as forms of expressing patriotism, nationalism, and national identity, despite the obstacles learners face in understanding these texts. The study seeks to examine students' difficulties, understandings, and reflections on those symbols. Overall, the primary goal of the research is to contribute to an understanding of the process of young learners' formation and acceptance of national identity and patriotic symbols. The knowledge acquired could assist teachers to work out more significant, applicable, and context-conscious methods for presenting national symbols, thus empowering civic consciousness and promoting a more genuine attachment to the country among the young people.

## Methodology

### Research Design

This qualitative study adopted a phenomenological method to explore the lived understanding of learners with the *Lupang Hinirang*, *Panatang Makabayan*, and *Panunumpa sa Watawat ng Pilipinas* at a private school in Bacolod City, Philippines. A phenomenological approach was thought to be fitting for this study because it allows researchers to analyze the essence of lived experience (Moustakas, 1994). The use of an instrumental lens also allows us to connect the shared experiences to a more general social meaning.

### Participants

There were eight (8) Grade eight participants purposively selected for data collection. It is recommended that approximately 5 to 10 participants be included in phenomenological studies for in-depth inquiry and to reach saturation of lived experiences (Creswell, 2013). The inclusion criteria were: (1) enrolled learners in private school, (2) participated in flag ceremonies for at least one academic year, and (3) able to articulate a lived understanding of patriotic recitations.

### Instrument

The data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which are often used in phenomenological research because of their flexibility (Seidman, 2019) and their ability to elicit deep personal meanings of lived experience (van Manen, 1990).

### Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process began with obtaining the institutional permit to conduct the study. Further, learners were asked to submit informed consent as well as to their guardians or parents. Prior to the interview commencing, each participant was made aware of the study's objectives,

their participation was voluntary, and the conversation was confidential. During data collection, each participant participated in an individual one-on-one interview in a private setting, which the researchers audio-recorded with each participant's permission. At the conclusion of the interviews, the researchers transcribed the audio recording to each participant's exact words and translated them into English, then returned the transcription to each participant to return their account to their reporting of experience (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### Data Analysis

The data were analyzed through thematic analysis, which was organized in a six-phase process of thematic analysis: familiarization, coding, generating thematic analysis, reviewing, defining, and reporting (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This was chosen because of its flexibility and agreed with the work of phenomenological inquiry, which focuses on identifying essential meanings in a participant's story.

### Data Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the study was established by the use of the following criteria in establishing trustworthiness: member checking for credibility, documentation for dependability, audit trails for confirmability, and rich description reporting for transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

### Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were upheld concerning informed consent, anonymity of participation, and the right to withdraw from the study at any time, as per the ethical principles - respect, beneficence, and justice for participants (American Psychological Association, 2017).

## Results

In this study, careful data explication of the interviewees was conducted. Six (6) major themes emerged in the detailed experiences of the participants: Early Foundations of Nationalistic Awareness; Active Participation by Doing Proper Conduct in Patriotic Rituals; Nationalism Rooted in National Pride and Historical Consciousness; Social Influences Shaping Nationalistic Behavior; Challenges in Participation and Understanding; and Need for Deeper and More Meaningful Nationalistic Education. Under the Social Influences Shaping Nationalistic Behavior, the sub-themes are: Teacher and peer influences, and Contributions to Nationalistic efforts. Under Need for Deeper and More Meaningful Nationalistic Education, the sub-themes are Need for In-depth learning and Role of the Teachers.

### Early Foundations of Nationalistic Awareness

A strong pattern among most of the participants is that familiarity with nationalistic recitations began early in

childhood, either at home or in school, through repetitive memorization. Many participants shared that their parents taught them the *Lupang Hinirang* and patriotic recitations even before entering school. For instance,

“Before pa gid ko ya nag school, Sir. Gintudluan gid ko ni first sang mommy ko kag sang kuya ko kay hambala nila kuno para indi na budlay sa akon mag flag ceremony para maka memorize na ko.” (*Even before I started going to school, Sir, my mom and my older brother already taught me because they said it would make the flag ceremony easier for me once I memorized it.*) (Participant 6, personal communication, November 20, 2025)

“Before pa ko nag school, gintudluan ko ni mama pano e memorize ang *Lupang hinirang* para indi na ko mabudlay and to respect the flag mag flag ceremony ta.” (*Even before I started going to school, my mom taught me how to memorize the Lupang Hinirang so I wouldn't have a hard time and so I could show respect during the flag ceremony.*) (Participant 7, personal communication, November 21, 2025)

“Huo, Sir. Gintudluan ko ni mama kag ni papa before nag school.” (*Yes, Sir. My mom and dad taught me even before I started going to school.*) (Participant 8, personal communication, November 21, 2025)

Others gained awareness through early-school practices such as memorization, and day care and primary school flag ceremonies:

“Yes, since I was in Day Care, we have always been taught to be aware on national anthem. I've like, pretty much known the entire song.” (Participant 1, personal communication, November 17, 2025)

“Sang grade 1 pa gid ko Sir dira ko pa gid nabal an ang panunumpa sa watawat ng pilipinas kag panatang Makabayan and that time Sir nag girl scout ko kag didto ko gin memorize and respect our country and nation, Sir.” (*When I was in Grade 1, Sir, that's when I learned the Panunumpa sa Watawat ng Pilipinas and the Panatang Makabayan. And during that time, Sir, I also joined the Girl Scouts, and that's where I memorized them and learned to respect our country and nation, Sir.*) (Participant 7, personal communication, November 21, 2025)

Others are also aware of the *Lupang Hinirang*, *Panatang Makabayan*, and *Panunumpa sa Watawat ng Pilipinas*.

“I already know this.” (Participant 2, personal communication, November 17, 2025)

“From my standpoint, yes. I have been introduced from these things since I was a child and it has helped to shape my understanding then my devotion to the country and ethnicity.” (Participant 4, personal communication, November 18, 2025)

### **Active Participation by doing Proper Conduct in Patriotic Rituals**

Most participants noted that they are actively participating in flag ceremonies at the same time observing proper conduct in doing the ceremony. Some of them stated this way:

“Yes, I’m very active in reciting.” (Participant 1, personal communication, November 17, 2025)

“For me, Sir, I’m trying to act respectfully and follow the instruction as a Filipino to recite and participate to our culture.” (Participant 5, personal communication, November 19, 2025).

“Syempre ma stand still ko Sir kag kung mag lupang hinirang ang right hand ko ara sa chest kay amo man gid na ang ubrahon.” (*Of course, Sir, I stand still, and when the Lupang Hinirang is played, I place my right hand on my chest because that is really what should be done.*) (Participant 6, personal communication, November 20, 2025).

“For me, Sir, I will show respect. I would stand still, be quiet and sing the National Anthem, Panatang Makabayan, and Panunumpa sa Watawat ng Pilipinas, and while ga play ang lupang Hinirang Sir my right hand is in my chest to show respect to the flag and my nation man, Sir.” (*For me, Sir, I will show respect. I will stand still, stay quiet, and sing the National Anthem, the Panatang Makabayan, and the Panunumpa sa Watawat ng Pilipinas. And while the Lupang Hinirang is being played, Sir, I place my right hand on my chest to show respect to the flag and to our nation, Sir.*) (Participant 7, personal communication, November 21, 2025).

### **Nationalism Rooted in National Pride and Historical Consciousness**

Participants associated their sense of nationalism through showing pride and awareness in the history which was brought by the singing of the *Lupang Hinirang*, and recital of *Panatang Makabayan* and *Panunumpa sa Watawat ng Pilipinas*. Some of them expressed it as follows:

“It’s a very gratifying or rather feeling like very proud of my national identity. The fact that we’ve gone through so much, and this is where we’ve gotten today. Even though there’s hardship, even if there’s corruption, the fact that we, as a country, is still standing today and is pretty much stable minus the fact that our government is pretty corrupt. It makes me aware, as a Filipino, I should be proud of who I am.” (Participant 1, personal communication, November 17, 2025).

“When I hear this songs I feel very proud of my country and that I am a Filipino after all the sufferings like

the colonization of the past years. And it makes me seem so happy we have this.” (Participant 2, personal communication, November 17, 2025).

“Nationalism is an important thing because we should love our country, to love our ethnical neighbors like our fellow Filipinos, and we should try do acts of nationalism to love other. We need to learn to love our country before we love others so it very important to recite it.” (Participant 4, personal communication, November 18, 2025)

“For me ya Sir, I’m very proud to recite and participate gid ya bisan ano man da basta about Philippines because kay ang mga heroes ta bala Sir gin sacrifice nila ila self para sa Philippines that’s why I love Philippines gid ya Sir and the whole history.” (*For me, Sir, I am very proud to recite and participate, no matter what, as long as it’s about the Philippines, because our heroes, Sir, sacrificed themselves for the Philippines. That’s why I really love the Philippines, Sir, and its entire history.*) (Participant 5, personal communication, November 19, 2025)

### **Social Influences Shaping Nationalistic Behavior**

Interacting with their teachers and peers shapes how students understand, express, participate, and contribute in nationalistic acts.

#### **Teacher and peer influences**

“It’s a very interesting experience because, to this day, of course, our teachers are our guardians in their own way, have taught us about history. Taught us about the fact that we should be proud of who we are as human beings, and that our country, despite all of its corruption, despite all of its negative events, we should not be ashamed of who we are and where we came from.” (Participant 1, personal communication, November 17, 2025)

“I have had many teachers who taught me a lot about the world and the country I’ve been in. They made me realize that even after all the struggles we are in today.” (Participant 2, personal communication, November 17, 2025)

“So far, my teachers and classmates. Ginapa aware ko nila about sa gakaalatabo pati pa gid sa social media kag kay Ker mostly gid kay ker. Si Ker daan Sir focus daan sa politics. Nalipay gid ko kay ginapa aware niya ko knowing nga dyutay lang bala social media accounts ko kag gina update niya ko sang gakaalatabo. (*So far, it’s my teachers and classmates. They make me aware of what’s happening, even on social media, and mostly Ker. Ker has always been focused on politics. I’m really happy because he keeps me informed, even though I have very few social media accounts, and he updates me on what’s happening.*) (Participant 3, personal communication, November 18, 2025).

"In my opinion, our environment can help us form or shape us on how we think, act, or do things that we normally do. So, for me, my experience on this is that they've helped me memorize those hymns because I can just go with them and learn the hymns, and also, from what I noticed with my peers, from my ethnicity, is that they try to act good, so it drives me to also act good from my ethnicity and my beliefs." (Participant 4, personal communication, November 18, 2025)

### ***Contributions to Nationalistic Efforts***

"Mostly, I try to advocate about it on others, my opinions, on how we should try to change our country because there's a lot of issues and dilemmas we are facing because of our systems and the main thing is that we should try the system before we try to change the country because if we change the system, we can, at least contribute to some in changing the country." (Participant 4, personal communication, November 18, 2025)

"For me, Sir, naka contribute ko probably sang girl scout ko, nang, gin teach ko ang mga bata ka girl scout on how to recite Lupang Hinirang, Panatang Makabayan, and Panunupa sa Watawat ng Pilipinas, nang, properly, to give respect and be proud of our nation, Sir." (*For me, Sir, I probably contributed through my Girl Scout activities. I taught the younger Girl Scouts how to properly recite the Lupang Hinirang, Panatang Makabayan, and Panunumpa sa Watawat ng Pilipinas, to show respect and be proud of our nation, Sir.*) (Participant 7, personal communication, November 21, 2025)

### **Challenges in Participation and Understanding**

Although students participate, many expressed concerns that others do not observe proper behavior, lack participation and understanding, and only participate for compliance. Some of the participants expressed their observation this way:

"For suggestions, I don't believe that I have a lot of things but what I've noticed that barely anyone recites. Like it's a very silent thing, like there's only 2 or 3, it's barely anyone." (Participant 1, personal communication, November 17, 2025)

"Nanotice ko Sir taga flag ceremony ta daw halos half of the students ga kita ko wala gakanta or gapinalagpat lang gid kanta, gadinagyang, samtang ga flag ceremony especially sa Lupang Hinirang, Sir." (*I've noticed, Sir, that during the flag ceremony, almost half of the students either don't sing or just sing carelessly, especially during Lupang Hinirang.*) (Participant 7, personal communication, November 21, 2025)

"Yes, from what my perspective, just recite the hymns, or

those chants, or what do you call them to be very vain and repetitive. They never think of what its meaning and its purpose of why we say in flag ceremony." (Participant 4, personal communication, November 18, 2025)

"Yes, Sir. Ang ila tani understanding sa Panatang Makabayan. Kay ang ila Sir magrecite sila Sir daw gakadlaw sila kis a sir pagkatapos daw waay lang sa ila. Daw nagrecite lang sila okay na dayun." (*Yes, Sir. It's their understanding of Panatang Makabayan. Sometimes, when they recite it, it seems like they're just joking around or not taking it seriously. They just recite the words, and that's it.*) (Participant 8, personal communication, November 21, 2025)

### **Need for Deeper and More Meaningful Nationalistic Education**

With the challenges that the participants observed, they believe that nationalism should be taught in a way that is more engaging, meaningful, and guided. They also put emphasis the role of the teachers are important. Some of them answer this way:

#### ***Need for In-Depth Learning***

"The best thing we could do is, that we could make them understand, we could have an in-depth lesson or lecture on this because many of them just disregard its history and that's why we should alter it a bit so that many of us, of course, we should see an emergence of how we should recite it and do it from our hearts and from will and intellect." (Participant 4, personal communication, November 18, 2025)

"Para sa akon kun may bag uhon man ko dapat ginapakita nila nga palangga man bala nila ang Pilipinas. Kag indi lang tungod sa magtindog ka lang kag amo lang na. kag syempre sir ipakita mo man bala indi lang sa hambal." (*For me, if there's something to change, they should show that they truly love the Philippines. It's not just about standing up; of course, Sir, you have to show it, not just say it.*) (Participant 4, personal communication, November 18, 2025)

#### ***Role of the Teachers***

I think the teachers should enforce better rules that all of the students have to memorize the National Anthem, Panatang Makabayan, and Panunumpa, and everyone has to recite in the assembly." (Participant 2, personal communication, November 17, 2025)

"Mas ano na lang tani if ang teachers gabantay gid literal indi lang galibot2x lang. Mas nami tani if gasaway gid sila dayun makita nila diretso kuna no problema sa amon." (*It would be better if the teachers really monitored us closely, not just walking around. It would be more effective if*

*they corrected us immediately so we can see exactly what the problem is.)* (Participant 3, personal communication, November 18, 2025)

“Yes, because if we don’t have any advisers when we have our flag ceremony especially from the youth, they need someone to guide them and discipline them, because most people, most youth, if they have no one to guide them or advise them, discipline them while having the flag ceremony, then it might cause disruptions from other people who are trying to listen and teachers are the core part during the flag ceremony since they help the students to learn about the significance of the things we recite during the event.” (Participant 4, personal communication, November 18, 2025)

“Yes, Sir, gapati gid ko kinaglan ang mga teachers. Kay syempre may mga children dira, bosan kami nga mga grade 8 kag mga manongs and manangs , may iban gid yad aw bata-bata bala dyapon. Syempre ang mga gamay nga bata indi pa man na aware kinanlan gid nila teacher para maggabay during flag ceremony.” (*Yes, Sir, I really believe that teachers are necessary. Of course, there are children, while we are in Grade 8, there are also younger students. Naturally, the little kids are not yet aware, so they really need teachers to guide them during the flag ceremony.*) (Participant 6, personal communication, November 20, 2025)

“Yes, it is important. Ila duty nga itudlo sa students ang Lupang Hinirang kag iban nga recite sa flag ceremony para ma respect man bala ka Pilipino or student ang aton nga ano lupang hinirang Panatang Makabayan, and Panunumpa sa Watawat ng Pilipinas. Tas, daw ka para ma lead man ka teachers ang iban nga bata nga indi kabalo magbasa, nga daw gapadungol man bala gyapon. Para masaway nila and ma discipline nila para mas marespect pa gid ang flag, Sir.” (*Yes, it is important. It is their duty to teach students Lupang Hinirang and other recitations during the flag ceremony so that Filipino students can respect our Lupang Hinirang, Panatang Makabayan, and Panunumpa sa Watawat ng Pilipinas. Also, it helps teachers guide the younger children who may not yet know how to read or follow properly. This way, they can correct them and teach discipline so they can respect the flag even more, Sir.*) (Participant 7, personal communication, November 21, 2025)

“For me, Sir, yes very need gid especially sa mga elementary, Sir. Kay kis-a Sir kun wala man gid teacher Sir, damo ga tumbling nga bata, ga sparring, ga dogsing bala Sir haw daw wala lang labot samtang flag ceremony but kun may teacher gakalkulbaan sila, Sir. Amo lang na, Sir para ma disiplin sila Sir.” (*For me, Sir, yes, teachers are really necessary, especially for elementary students.*

*Sometimes, Sir, if there’s no teacher, many children just tumble around, spar, or play as if the flag ceremony doesn’t matter. But when a teacher is there, they become more careful and disciplined. That’s why, Sir, teachers are important, to help maintain discipline.*) (Participant 8, personal communication, November 21, 2025)

## Discussion

### Early Foundations of Nationalistic Awareness

Participants stated that their knowledge of the *Lupang Hinirang*, *Panatang Makabayan*, and *Panunumpa sa Watawat ng Pilipinas* was rooted in early childhood, often before they attended school. They indicated that parents were very important in teaching them these patriotic values and that day care and primary school developed their ability to memorize and recite these nationalistic symbols through their participation in daily flag-raising ceremonies. The findings show similarly, in Saud (2020), that individuals’ awareness of national identity originates from several sources of socialization, including family, school, and community. In addition, previous research showed that early exposure to school (Purwadi et al., 2024) and family (Elsayed, 2024) provides the foundation for cognitive familiarity and emotional readiness for active civic engagement later in life.

However, in a study conducted by Sari et al. (2023), there were challenges in how nationalism should be fostered in young children. To combat these challenges, there is a need to emphasize the roles of parents, teachers (Afreen & Abraham, 2024), educational institutions (Saputra et al., 2023), and supportive public policies, ensuring that their experiences from an early age will translate into a sustainable national commitment.

### Active Participation by doing Proper Conduct in Patriotic Rituals

Participants described themselves as active and respectful participants during flag ceremonies. They emphasized proper conduct, such as standing still, maintaining silence, and placing the right hand over the chest when singing the national anthem. This demonstrates that learners not only understand the expected patriotic behaviors but have also internalized them, reflecting behavioral expressions of nationalism (Kassa, 2023). This also aligns with de Vera (2021), that taking part in the flag ceremony builds self-discipline, respect for classmates, a sense of service, and pride in being Filipino.

Similarly, with Jabbarli (2024), repeated ritual participation strengthens shared meaning and norm internalization, which is evident in how students perform these nationalistic gestures willingly and consistently. Not only that, it strengthens that national symbols convey identity through

belonging to a community, while the symbol itself can reinforce national identity (Tribil, 2023). These show that conducting flag ceremonies (Paramesthi & Suwartono, 2023) fosters national identity and reinforces national awareness and patriotic sentiments (Sasmita & Aryani, 2024).

### **Nationalism Rooted in National Pride and Historical Consciousness**

Through the singing of "Lupang Hinirang" (Viray, 2025) and the recital of "Panatang Makabayan" and "Panunumpa sa Watawat ng Pilipinas," many participants related the concept of nationalism to pride in and respect for Philippine history, accomplishments, and challenges. This reinforces the notion that state symbols also play a crucial role in civil identity, serving as a means of social cohesion, the transmission of historical and cultural values, and the legitimization of power (Grechanaya & Ceron, 2024). This shows that their sense of nationalism is not shallow but grounded in historical consciousness and emotional connection. This strengthens the findings of Qodirov (2023), stating that it is important to instill in the hearts and minds of Uzbekistanis the sense of nationalism.

Such sentiments reflect the affective dimension of national identity, where feelings of pride, belonging, and gratitude deepen one's sense of national attachment. This aligns with a survey of Grade 12 pupils, which suggested that taking part in the flag ceremony builds self-discipline, respect for classmates, a sense of service, and pride in being Filipino (de Vera, 2021). Moreover, it also strengthens the sense of nationalism, similar to the findings of a study conducted among Senior High School students, which found that such practices heightened nationalism and positive behavior towards history (Ildefonso et al., 2024).

### **Social Influences Shaping Nationalistic Behavior**

Teachers (Afreen & Abraham, 2024) and peers have important roles in developing their nationalistic conduct, which is emphasized by the participants. Learners were supported by their teachers through discussion on the meaning of patriotic rituals, modelling respectful conduct, and maintaining discipline during the flag ceremonies. This supports Banks (2020), who argues that teachers play a central role in developing civic identity by providing meaningful explanations, modeling expected conduct, and connecting rituals to historical understanding. Similarly, Zarrett et al. (2021) found that organized activities positively affect both moral and civic character development in youth. Peers also contribute to their awareness by giving information, encouraging proper behavior, and talking about national issues, most especially on social media. This also aligns with Riccardo et al. (2024), who showed that adolescents' nationalism and civic engagement

increasingly emerge from peer discussions and online interactions.

Some students actively take part and assist in providing patriotic education to youth by teaching the steps for reciting the Pledge of Loyalty. Students are additionally aiding other youth by demonstrating characteristics associated with civic responsibility. Such instances illustrate that students build upon and reinforce their own understanding of nationalism through their interaction with one another, as students learn from other students, while also acting as an active contributor to his/her fellow students' understanding of nationalism. This strengthens the study of Okada (2021) and Rusticus et al. (2023), which stated that students are more engaged when their peers also participate in similar activities, which shaped attitudes and actions.

### **Challenges in Participation and Understanding**

Participants observed different problems among their peers, including a lack of seriousness during ceremonies, a lack of participation, joking around, and shallow recitation without understanding the meaning of the national anthem and pledges. Similar challenges were seen in the study of Hanifa and Arifin (2023), where students struggled to internalize these meanings in practice. These challenges (Sari et al., 2023) highlight gaps in internalization and comprehension, suggesting that some learners engage only for compliance rather than conviction. Participation in ceremonies does not guarantee meaningful connection and interaction unless accompanied by the right guidance and reflective understanding, which reflects issues noted in civic education research. This supports Kerr and O'Neill's (2020) study, which found that without guided reflection, students may perform civic rituals mechanically, limiting their comprehension of national and civic responsibilities. Another study by De Leon (2020) provides greater strength to the concept of Filipino national pride through the notion of uncritical pride shown by learners, despite the emphasis placed on developing a strong Filipino identity, a culturally rich history, and achievements. It showed that because learners have an uncritical pride, you can see how teaching will require a more reflective approach and character-based history learning (Maulani et al., 2022).

### **Need for Deeper and More Meaningful Nationalistic Education**

The participants did not just want a nationalistic education that consisted of passive involvement and memorizing of facts, but rather a nationalistic education that would involve active participation. However, the majority of the participants commented that although students are allowed to sing and recite the *Lupang Hinirang*, *Panatang Makabayan*, and *Panunumpa sa Watawat ng Pilipinas*,

they usually do not even internalize the meaning in practice (Hanifa & Arifin, 2023), the historical importance, civic value, or emotional connection to those activities. Thus, this calls for an in-depth learning of these nationalistic symbols because training in traditional cultural practices significantly strengthened students' sense of nationalism and patriotism (Bay et al, 2023). In addition, character education is important in giving space in internalizing nationalism (Pradana et al., 2020). Furthermore, positive reinforcement is necessary for students' active participation and exposing them in direct experience helps in fostering nationalistic attitudes (Dahnial et al., 2024). Moreover, the study of Banks (2020) emphasized the role of the teachers in developing civic identity by providing meaningful descriptions, modeling expected conduct, and connecting practices to historical consciousness.

In essence, the participants' understanding of the *Lupang Hinirang, Panatang Makabayan, and Panunumpa sa Watawat ng Pilipinas* showed that sense of nationalism develops gradually rather than immediately. Through exposure in early socialization, active participation, historical awareness, and social influence, students move from memorizing national symbols to forming personal meanings and a deeper sense of national identity. Despite challenges in comprehension, their lived understanding and reflections enable them to negotiate their own understanding of nationalism, illustrating that national identity is formed through continuous experience, reflection, and interaction rather than immediate understanding.

## Conclusion

This study explored the lived understanding of learners on *Lupang Hinirang, Panatang Makabayan, and Panunumpa sa Watawat ng Pilipinas*. The findings of this study highlighted that through these nationalistic symbols, their sense of nationalism is heightened, which is deeply rooted in the early socialization, active participation, historical consciousness, and social influences. Early exposure to these nationalistic symbols through their school, family, and community establishes their cognitive and emotional foundation for their civic participation in the future. Moreover, taking part actively and respectfully in flag ceremonies shows that students have internalized national symbols; at the same time, linking these rituals to a historical narrative and national pride makes students feel more emotionally attached to the country. Social factors, such as the teachers' support and the students' interactions, will still intensify the nationalistic viewpoint, as the young ones will be learning from each other and also giving their input to each other's comprehension of patriotism.

However, the students also face challenges such as a lack of participation, and shallow participation indicates that

rote memorization alone is not enough for meaningful nationalistic development. Thus, to heighten the participation and their sense of nationalism, there is a need for in-depth learning of these national symbols provided with reflective teaching, character-based history learning, structured guidance, historical contextualization, and opportunities for active student engagement. By combining cognitive comprehension, emotional connection, and social support, teachers can develop a deeper and meaningful enduring sense of nationalism and civic responsibility among learners.

The lived understanding of the participants of the *Lupang Hinirang, Panatang Makabayan, and Panunumpa sa Watawat ng Pilipinas* showed that nationalism develops gradually rather than immediately. Through exposure in early socialization, active participation, historical awareness, and social influence, students move from memorizing national symbols to forming personal meanings and a deeper sense of national identity. Despite the challenges they faced, their lived understanding and reflections enable them to clarify and heighten their own understanding of nationalism, illustrating that national identity is formed through continuous experience, reflection, and interaction.

## Limitations of the Findings

The study has various limitations that must be considered when interpreting the findings. The participants were seven (7) females and one (1) male. This could affect the generalizability of the results. Moreover, the participants came from only two (2) out of six (6) sections, which were represented because there were no volunteers from the other sections. This could affect the diversity of viewpoints and may not fully capture the range of understanding present across the entire grade level.

## Directions for Future Research

Based on the findings, future researchers should include more gender-balanced participants to get a wider scope of perspectives. Moreover, researchers should involve all sections or different grade levels to increase the representation of the data. In addition, future studies may combine qualitative and quantitative methods to have a more comprehensive understanding of learners' nationalistic conduct. Lastly, conduct a similar study in public schools and compare them with the findings in private schools. This may give valuable information about how these national symbols were taught and experienced.

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