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## **Kapwa, Comparative Frustration, and Digital Interjection: A Conceptual Analysis of Filipino Comment Behavior in Global Social Media Spaces**

Ramon George Atento, PhD; Andrea Gwyneth B. Atento; Cherry Ann Marie Espelita, MBA

### **Abstract**

This paper examines a recurring pattern in global social media spaces: the visible participation of Filipino users in comment threads attached to international posts that do not directly involve the Philippines, often through comparison, humor, grievance, or civic frustration. Rather than dismissing this behavior as mere trolling or irrelevant online intrusion, the paper interprets it as a form of mediated comparative self-positioning. Using a conceptual and thematic review design, the study synthesizes scholarship on Filipino relational selfhood, social comparison and relative deprivation, diaspora and transnational embeddedness, symbolic participation in digital publics, and trolling or mediated identity performance. The analysis argues that Filipino interjection into unrelated international comment threads may be understood as a socially situated digital act shaped by five interacting forces: relational identity, comparative civic frustration, transnational connectedness, low-cost symbolic participation in visible online spaces, and identity performance under conditions of digital disinhibition. The paper further contends that such comments often carry collective and civic meaning, particularly when foreign public recognition or institutional support is read against perceived domestic inadequacies. In this sense, comment sections may function as informal sites where national self-evaluation and public dissatisfaction become legible in compressed digital form. The study concludes that the phenomenon is neither pure noise nor pure malice, but a behaviorally meaningful expression of identity, frustration, and symbolic public insertion under contemporary networked conditions. Recommendations are offered for future documentary qualitative analysis, cross-national comparison, and platform-sensitive research.

**Keywords:** *Filipino digital behavior, kapwa, social comparison, diaspora consciousness, symbolic participation, online commenting, civic frustration*

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### **1. Introduction**

Digital comment spaces have become one of the most visible arenas in which contemporary social behavior is enacted, negotiated, and displayed. In these environments, people do not merely react to content. They position themselves before others, signal belonging, express judgment, perform wit, vent frustration, and insert their own concerns into public narratives that may or may not directly concern them. What appears at first glance to be a trivial online remark may therefore carry broader psychological and social meaning. Commenting, especially in highly visible and emotionally charged platforms, is often less a simple response to information than a public act of self-placement within an ongoing symbolic environment.

One recurring phenomenon in global social media spaces is the visible participation of users from national communities that are not directly implicated in the original post, event, or achievement being discussed. In many instances, such participation is not neutral. It may take the form of comparison, grievance, humor, deflection, envy, self-deprecation, or national commentary redirected toward domestic frustrations. The present paper is concerned with one particular version of this phenomenon: the appearance of Filipino users in comment threads attached to unrelated

international posts, where discussion may shift from the original event toward remarks about the Philippines, local institutions, public leadership, or perceived national shortcomings. Such moments are easy to dismiss as online noise, shallow trolling, or habitual meddling. Yet this dismissal may obscure a more important question. What if such behavior reflects not randomness, but a patterned form of mediated social response shaped by deeper cultural and structural conditions?

The problem is significant because digital behavior is often interpreted too quickly through generic categories imported from platform studies, such as trolling, online disinhibition, performativity, or attention-seeking. While these concepts remain useful, they can become overly blunt when applied without regard to cultural psychology, historical social formation, and transnational conditions of communication. A comment that seems intrusive or irrelevant at the surface level may in fact be rooted in relational identity, comparative consciousness, symbolic participation, or a culturally conditioned tendency to read the self through the standing of others. This is particularly important in contexts where the boundaries between self, community, and public evaluation are experienced less as sharply individual and more as socially entangled.

The Philippine case offers a potentially rich site for such interpretation. Filipino social life has often been discussed through relational categories, communal embeddedness, interpersonal sensitivity, and value structures organized around social recognition, reciprocity, obligation, and shared personhood. Concepts such as *kapwa*, *utang na loob*, and the broader emphasis on socially situated selfhood suggest that the person is not easily separable from relational context. The self is often interpreted not only as an interior consciousness but as a being constituted in relation to others, communities, and moral expectations of interaction. When this cultural orientation is carried into digital environments, it becomes plausible that online comment behavior may also reflect relational logics, even when expressed in fragmented, impulsive, or informal form. A public comment on a foreign event may therefore function not merely as a reaction to distant news but as an entry point for local self-positioning, communal comparison, and symbolic participation in globally visible discourse.

This possibility becomes even more compelling when considered alongside the long-standing transnational character of Filipino social existence. Filipino families, labor relations, aspirations, and communication networks frequently extend beyond the territorial boundaries of the nation-state. Migration, overseas work, remittance structures, and diasporic kinship have helped produce a social condition in which “foreign” events are often not experienced as wholly external. The world is encountered through relatives abroad, mediated contact, cross-border familiarity, and a normalized awareness of lives unfolding elsewhere. Under such conditions, global events may feel socially proximate even when they are geographically distant. Digital participation in international threads may thus stem not only from platform opportunism but from a transnational habit of attention in which other people’s public moments are read against one’s own social world.

At the same time, this relational and transnational orientation may intersect with a more tense and emotionally charged dynamic: comparative civic frustration. Online users do not enter comment spaces as abstract communicators. They arrive as situated subjects carrying accumulated disappointments, political anxieties, institutional distrust, class frustrations, and unmet expectations about governance, recognition, mobility, or collective achievement. When they encounter a foreign post celebrating state support, public excellence, national pride, or institutional competence, they may not simply admire it. They may read it comparatively. The other nation’s success becomes a mirror in which local inadequacies are felt more sharply. In this sense, the comment thread becomes a site of displaced civic reflection. The original post may concern a chess player, an athlete, a cultural event, or a national celebration, but the comment becomes a vehicle for saying something else: that one’s own society appears lacking, inattentive, inequitable, or incapable of offering similar recognition and support. What appears irrelevant at the level of topic may be highly relevant at the level of affective social comparison.

This paper proceeds from the view that such behavior should not be reduced too quickly to pathology or ridicule. It may include elements of trolling, humor, impulsivity, and performative exaggeration, but these alone do not exhaust its meaning. The category of “trolling” often collapses distinct motivations into one dismissive label and obscures cases in which online interjection is socially expressive rather than purely malicious. In some situations, commenting on unrelated international posts may be better understood as an act of mediated insertion, a way of joining a public sphere from which one feels structurally excluded, emotionally dissatisfied, or symbolically peripheral. It may also serve as a low-cost form of visibility, allowing users to register national feeling, comparative frustration, or communal wit in spaces where attention is already concentrated. Under platform conditions that reward speed, visibility, and

emotional resonance, symbolic participation can easily take the form of abrupt public commentary that appears intrusive but is in fact socially intelligible.

The scholarly problem, then, is not whether such comments are appropriate in a normative sense. The more important question is how to interpret them without collapsing into caricature. Existing discussions of Filipino digital behavior often move too quickly toward familiar stereotypes, whether celebratory or pejorative. On one side, communicativeness is framed as sociability, adaptability, and global connectedness. On the other, it is treated as gossip, meddling, excessive emotionality, or digital disorder. Neither approach is sufficient for serious behavioral and social analysis. What is needed is a conceptual account that brings together indigenous relational frameworks, social comparison theory, diaspora-linked transnationality, digital participation studies, and the literature on online disinhibition and identity performance. Only through such integration can the phenomenon be approached as a patterned human response shaped by both cultural history and platform conditions.

The present paper therefore adopts a conceptual and thematic orientation. It does not claim to provide empirical measurement of prevalence, nor does it present causal proof about all Filipino users or all online contexts. Instead, it treats the phenomenon as a meaningful behavioral-social pattern that warrants disciplined interpretation. Its aim is to examine how visible Filipino participation in unrelated international comment threads may be understood as a form of mediated comparative self-positioning emerging at the intersection of relational selfhood, transnational social embeddedness, digitally intensified public participation, and unresolved civic frustration. By doing so, the paper seeks to clarify why a behavior often dismissed as mere online interference may in fact reveal deeper dynamics of identity, belonging, comparison, and public affect.

More specifically, this paper has four interrelated objectives embedded within its conceptual inquiry. First, it seeks to define the phenomenon in analytically useful terms, moving beyond casual descriptions such as “pakialam,” “marites,” or generic trolling. Second, it aims to situate the behavior within relevant psychological and social frameworks, particularly those concerning relational identity, communal orientation, social comparison, and digitally mediated participation. Third, it examines how diaspora consciousness and transnational communicative life may weaken the felt boundary between local and foreign affairs, thereby making international events available for local symbolic commentary. Fourth, it proposes that certain forms of Filipino online interjection can be interpreted as socially meaningful acts of symbolic participation and comparative civic expression rather than as mere discursive noise.

This inquiry matters beyond the Philippine case itself. Social media scholarship increasingly recognizes that platform behavior cannot be understood apart from culture, political emotion, historical experience, and social inequality. Yet many analyses still rely on concepts developed in relatively individualist or platform-centered settings without sufficient attention to relational societies and transnational publics. A conceptually grounded examination of Filipino comment behavior may therefore contribute not only to local understanding but also to wider discussions of how digital publics operate in postcolonial, diasporic, and communally oriented contexts. It may illuminate how users from relational cultures inhabit global platforms, how public comparison becomes emotionally activated through algorithmic visibility, and how symbolic insertion into distant events can serve as a vernacular mode of social critique.

Ultimately, this paper argues that the behavior under consideration should be treated as a legitimate object of behavioral and social analysis. The comment thread is not merely a disposable by-product of platform life. It is a micro-arena in which identity, frustration, belonging, and perception of collective standing are continuously performed. To understand why Filipino users appear so visibly in some unrelated global threads is therefore not to ask a trivial internet question. It is to ask how a historically relational, transnationally connected, and digitally immersed population negotiates selfhood, community, and comparative national feeling under the conditions of contemporary mediated life.

## **2. Review of Related Literature**

### *2.1 Relational Selfhood, Kapwa, and Communal Identity*

Any interpretation of Filipino online behavior must begin with the long-established claim that Filipino selfhood is not best understood as radically individualistic. Across Filipino psychology, ethics, and social thought, personhood is repeatedly described as relational, socially embedded, and constituted through shared identity, reciprocity, and moral regard for others. The most important construct here is *kapwa*, commonly rendered as shared self, fellow being, or shared identity. Rather than treating the other as fully separate from the self, *kapwa* frames personhood as

intrinsically linked to others in a moral and social field (Reyes, 2015; Labor & Gastardo-Conaco, 2021; Mesa et al., 2024; Cervantes, 2025). This is not merely a descriptive cultural trait. It is an interpretive lens with consequences for how attention, judgment, obligation, and participation are understood in social life.

The literature suggests that kapwa is not a narrow sentimental value but a structuring principle of Filipino sociality. Reyes (2015), in his discussion of loob and kapwa, argues that Filipino virtue ethics cannot be reduced to private character development detached from relationship. Instead, moral cultivation is directed toward the maintenance and strengthening of relational life. Later discussions continue this line by treating loob not as isolated interiority but as a relational will oriented toward others, while kapwa serves as the field in which moral identity becomes meaningful (Solitario, 2022; Cuizon & Cuizon, 2025). In this sense, Filipino personhood is not only social in practice but relational in structure.

This relational orientation also appears in more applied and empirical work. Labor and Gastardo-Conaco (2021) show that kapwa can be elaborated as a social-relational construct grounded in how people perceive and classify others. Their analysis suggests that social response varies according to whether others are construed as kapwa or di-kapwa, which means that belonging, proximity, and shared personhood matter in shaping action. Mesa et al. (2024), in developing a measure of interpersonal orientation, further reinforce the idea that interpersonal orientation is not an incidental feature but a measurable and culturally salient dimension of Filipino social life. The significance of these studies for the present paper lies in their implication that social visibility and response are likely filtered through relational categories rather than through purely individual preference.

The literature also indicates that relational selfhood permeates ordinary and institutional life. Javier (2023) locates kapwa within everyday living, work, and livelihood, suggesting that the ordinary world of Filipino interaction is already structured by embedded social regard. Fatalla's (2023) revalidation of Filipino neighboring concepts likewise points to the moral and practical importance of relationality in local life. Even when the setting is not explicitly moral-philosophical, the underlying pattern remains one of social embeddedness, mutual awareness, and interpersonal calibration. Such a pattern matters for digital analysis because it suggests that public communication, even in highly mediated settings, may still carry traces of this relational logic.

There is also an important interpretive expansion in recent work that treats Filipino psychology as transpersonal or as extending beyond a narrow ego-centered self. Cervantes (2025) argues that Filipino psychology is fundamentally transpersonal in orientation, while Varela (2024), through the lived experiences of Filipino psychologists, points to culturally embedded understandings of selfhood and care that exceed purely individual frames. Although these works are not directly about social media, they deepen the claim that Filipino subjectivity is rarely exhausted by the model of autonomous, self-bounded agency often assumed in digital behavior theories derived from Western contexts.

At the same time, the literature is not entirely harmonious. Some recent scholarship warns against romanticizing kapwa as if it automatically implies unity, sameness, or uncomplicated communal solidarity. One study explicitly questions assumptions that kapwa can be invoked without tension, especially in diasporic and feminist fieldwork contexts, where sameness and community may themselves become problematic categories ("The Problem with Kapwa," 2023). This caution is analytically valuable. It prevents the present paper from using kapwa as a simplistic explanatory shortcut. Relationality does not guarantee harmony, nor does communal orientation eliminate hierarchy, exclusion, or conflict. Rather, it means that the social other remains central to how the self is experienced and enacted.

This tension is evident in literature on forgiveness, care, and public response. Rungduin et al. (2020) suggest that shared identity plays a significant role in forgiving others, implying that relational depth affects moral response. Romero (2021) similarly shows how kapwa can frame children's responses to crisis through a virtue-ethical perspective. Gundayao and Hernandez (2025) extend the discussion into migrant health ethics through bayanihan and kapwa, emphasizing communal care and mutual responsibility. Across these varied contexts, the pattern is clear: Filipino identity is repeatedly theorized through relationship, shared regard, and moral embeddedness, even if the practical outcomes differ.

For the present paper, the importance of this theme is straightforward. If personhood is socially constituted and if others are not experienced as radically external, then public response to others' success, suffering, or visibility may also take a relational form. In digital environments, this may translate into comment behavior that is less about detached observation and more about insertion into a shared moral-social field. The relevance of a foreign public event is therefore not exhausted by formal national belonging. Under a relational framework, visible events involving others may become available for comparative reflection, emotional uptake, or symbolic participation. The literature does not

directly prove that kapwa causes Filipino comment behavior on unrelated international posts, but it does provide a strong cultural-psychological basis for interpreting such behavior as socially intelligible rather than merely random (Reyes, 2015; Labor & Gastardo-Conaco, 2021; Mesa et al., 2024; Solitario, 2022).

## **2.2 Social Comparison, Relative Deprivation, and Comparative Civic Frustration**

If relational identity explains why others matter, social comparison helps explain why others' public success can become emotionally charged. A substantial body of literature shows that upward comparison, relative deprivation, and perceived unfair disadvantage are associated with anger, resentment, dissatisfaction, shame, and aggressive or critical outward responses. This literature is crucial to the present paper because the online behavior under discussion often takes a comparative form: users do not merely observe an international event, they read it against perceived deficiencies in their own social or national context.

Recent studies consistently show that upward social comparison can produce negative affect. Xu and Li (2024) found that upward comparison among Chinese college students was associated with social anxiety through relative deprivation and rumination. McComb et al. (2023), in a meta-analysis, likewise found that exposure to upward comparison targets on social media tends to worsen self-evaluations and emotional states. Rafiq and Linden (2024), in a scoping review of social media and self-concept, reinforce the idea that digital environments intensify comparison processes because visibility, curation, and audience awareness heighten evaluative pressure. These studies collectively support the view that seeing others publicly recognized, supported, or celebrated can activate dissatisfaction, especially when the observer reads that success as highlighting their own deficiency or exclusion.

The literature on relative deprivation sharpens this further by linking comparison not only to emotion but to grievance. Van Hootegeem et al. (2021) show that resentment shaped by experiences of social disadvantage can inform welfare critique and populist evaluation. Abts and Baute (2021) likewise argue that social resentment, blame attribution, and Euroscepticism are tied to status insecurity, relative deprivation, and powerlessness. These studies matter because they show how comparative frustration can become outwardly political or civic. The grievance is not necessarily private. It can be expressed publicly, directed at institutions, elites, or collective arrangements perceived as unjust.

Other studies show that this mechanism also operates in more interpersonal and aggressive directions. Han et al. (2024) link social comparison to aggression through relative deprivation, while Zhao and Zhang (2021) suggest that personal relative deprivation can influence moral disengagement through malicious envy. Yuan et al. (2025) connect online upward social comparisons to cyberbullying in a moderated mediation model, indicating that digital comparison can indeed move from internal dissatisfaction to hostile outward behavior. Although the present paper is not about cyberbullying as such, these findings are relevant because they demonstrate that online response is often affectively charged by perceived inferiority and unfairness.

The literature also indicates that comparison can become collective rather than purely individual. Xiong et al. (2026) show that group-relative deprivation affects intentions toward online collective behavior through group efficacy and group-based anger. This is especially useful for interpreting public comment behavior that invokes national rather than personal frustration. In such cases, the "I" is partially replaced by a "we." A post praising a foreign athlete, institution, or government may provoke not only private envy but a collective sense that "our" society lacks what "they" have. That shift from individual comparison to group-based grievance is central to the notion of comparative civic frustration proposed in this paper.

One strength of this literature is that it avoids explaining negative public commentary as mere bad manners or irrational complaint. Instead, it shows that comparison-based grievances emerge from cognitively and affectively intelligible processes. One limitation, however, is that much of the work is not culturally specific to the Philippines. The challenge, then, is not to import these theories mechanically, but to use them as a middle-range explanatory layer. They help explain why public exposure to others' success might trigger local criticism, resentment, or commentary, but they do not by themselves explain why certain populations may perform such responses more visibly in networked public spaces.

In the Philippine context, this comparative civic reading is also consistent with adjacent work on diplomatic credibility, which treats governance integrity, economic resilience, and strategic adaptability as domestic bases for how national standing is evaluated externally (Atento, 2025).

For the present paper, this theme helps interpret why unrelated international posts may become sites of domestic grievance expression. When users encounter public recognition of excellence, institutional support, or national pride elsewhere, they may respond through relative evaluation. The foreign event becomes a mirror, and the mirror produces frustration. In this sense, the comment may not be irrelevant at all. It may be affectively relevant precisely because it heightens awareness of local absence, neglect, or disappointment. The literature therefore supports the argument that digitally visible comparison can intensify civic dissatisfaction and redirect attention from admiration to criticism (McComb et al., 2023; Van Hootegeem et al., 2021; Abts & Baute, 2021; Xiong et al., 2026).

### ***2.3 Diaspora Consciousness and Transnational Social Embeddedness***

A third major body of literature suggests that transnational lives blur the line between domestic and foreign affairs. This is particularly salient in the Philippine case because migration, overseas labor, remittances, and family dispersal have produced a social condition in which cross-border ties are ordinary rather than exceptional. Research across migration and diaspora studies supports the view that people living in transnational social fields often sustain emotional, social, political, and communicative ties across multiple locations, thereby weakening the felt distance between “here” and “there.”

Kim et al. (2021) describe transnationalism in migrant health research as involving ongoing ties that span origin and destination settings. Morad et al. (2024) similarly discuss transnational social fields as structures of belonging that exceed territorial containment. Nguyen (2024), writing on the Vietnamese diaspora in Thailand, shows how diasporic life can involve attachment to multiple real and imagined communities. Crisford (2022), in work on Zimbabwean social workers in the United Kingdom, likewise highlights in-betweenness and sustained cross-border identity. Across these cases, transnationalism is not a residual attachment to a homeland. It is an active form of multi-sited belonging.

This literature becomes even more relevant when digital communication is considered. Frequent contact through online platforms can sustain family bonds, everyday co-presence, and continuing obligation across borders (Kim et al., 2021; Morad et al., 2024; Elo et al., 2021). Rössel et al. (2023) show how remittances are embedded in social relations and moral obligations, reinforcing the idea that distance does not end mutual involvement. In Filipino contexts specifically, Katigbak and Roldan (2021) examine how social media platforms are used to protect migrant workers in distress, while Cabalquinto (2024) shows how Filipino migrant workers broker counter-narratives of overseas life on TikTok. These studies indicate that digital spaces are not secondary supplements to transnational life. They are part of the infrastructure through which it is lived.

The implications for public discourse are substantial. Diasporic populations do not merely receive information from abroad; they often participate in transnational publics. Aziz (2022) shows how the Rohingya diaspora uses online spaces for visibility, resistance, and transnational identity. Ventura (2023) discusses diaspora as a socio-material assemblage with political agency, while Das et al. (2026) show how Global South diasporas mobilize for political change. Shield (2021) also highlights the importance of digital media in queer migration, again underscoring that migration and mediated communication are deeply intertwined. Together, these studies support the proposition that transnationally embedded populations can develop distinctive habits of attention, belonging, and participation in global discourse.

For the Philippines, this is especially pertinent. Filipino workers, relatives, and communities are spread across multiple regions, and communication with overseas kin is deeply normalized. A foreign country is often not a psychologically remote abstraction but a place connected to work, kinship, aspiration, memory, or everyday communication. As such, international events may be encountered with a sense of familiarity or indirect ownership. This does not mean that every comment on a foreign post is driven by diaspora. It does mean, however, that Filipino participation in international comment spaces may be supported by a broader transnational habitus in which global events are read through socially proximate ties rather than through strict national distance.

Adjacent workforce research makes this transnational condition visible at the level of labor systems, showing how Philippine supply fragilities, migration pull, and international demand become intertwined in ways that keep foreign reference points structurally present in local planning and aspiration (Atento, Quinto, & Espelita, 2025).

One interpretive strength of this literature is that it provides a structural explanation for why global events might feel available for local commentary. It moves the argument beyond mere curiosity or meddling. One limitation is that diaspora literature often emphasizes migrant subjects themselves, whereas the present paper also concerns local users in the Philippines. Yet because diaspora consciousness extends through family networks and media ecologies, the

distinction between migrant and non-migrant publics may not be absolute. Even non-migrant users may inhabit a communicative environment shaped by transnational connectedness.

Thus, this theme supports the argument that participation in unrelated international posts may not be experienced by Filipino users as wholly unrelated. Under conditions of transnational social embeddedness, foreign events can become socially near. The literature therefore helps explain why comment behavior in global threads may be more common, more affectively invested, and more socially intelligible in populations whose everyday social world already exceeds the nation-state (Kim et al., 2021; Katigbak & Roldan, 2021; Cabalquinto, 2024; Morad et al., 2024).

#### **2.4 Social Media Comment Culture as Symbolic Participation**

The fourth theme concerns the act of commenting itself. A consistent finding across social media, journalism, and digital activism studies is that commenting is not merely reactive speech. It often functions as a low-cost form of participation through which users assert presence, display identity, express emotion, and signal stance. This body of literature is vital because it prevents public comments from being dismissed as disposable noise. In networked publics, commenting is one of the most accessible ways of entering a shared interpretive space.

Studies of news comments and public discourse show that comment sections are treated as participatory fora, even if actual participation remains unequal and often conflictual. K uchler et al. (2022) analyze online comment sections as spaces where users engage political and social issues, while Niemann et al. (2021) provide a structured overview of opportunities for participatory discourse on news websites. Kim and Noh (2025) further show that participation inequality and hostile engagement coexist in news comments, suggesting that these spaces are democratic in form but stratified in practice. Takahashi and Bettinson (2024), analyzing online public discourse in Australia, likewise confirm that digital public talk is not reducible to information exchange. It is a site of social positioning and contestation.

The literature on symbolic participation is especially useful here. Liu and Han (2025), in a study of Weibo comments during the T urkiye-Syria earthquake, explicitly interpret comments as forms of symbolic participation. Users expressed sympathy, helplessness, and comparative evaluation, and engagement could evolve from symbolic gestures into more substantive involvement. This finding is particularly relevant to the present paper because it shows that comments attached to high-visibility public events often carry layered meanings beyond information. They can express solidarity, comparison, evaluation, and a desire to join a public moment, even when the user is geographically or structurally distant.

Similar treatment of Facebook posts and comment threads as analyzable social discourse appears in Philippine HEI marketing research, where online community talk is used to surface trust signals, identity affirmation, and value cues embedded in everyday digital interaction (Atento & Espelita, 2025).

Digital activism research reinforces this point. Castillo-Esparcia et al. (2023) describe the evolution of digital activism toward more individualized, strategic, and low-commitment forms of participation. Kaviani and Salehi (2021) similarly examine how visual and textual content on Instagram supports connective action. Cao et al. (2021), in work on collective mourning during COVID-19, show that digital engagement can become a form of public emotional participation. Vos et al. (2023) also identify social media as a low-cost strategy for community engagement. Across these studies, low-threshold acts such as liking, sharing, posting, and commenting are treated as socially meaningful performances rather than trivial residues of platform use.

Related HEI marketing evidence further suggests that digital visibility and awareness do not automatically translate into high-effort advocacy, since students may recognize institutional channels while engaging only selectively with sharing and promotion (Espelita et al., 2026).

Another strong line of research concerns self-presentation and impression management. E. (2021) reviews self-presentation in social media and argues that online platforms are environments in which identity is continuously shaped through visible performance. Ballara (2023) shows how likes, comments, and shares contribute to social validation and behavior, while Muyidi (2025) explores how social media use shapes self-presentation strategies. Van Raemdonck et al. (2025) further show how public norms are shaped through affordances and visible interactions, with users positioning themselves in relation to groups and issues. These works suggest that commenting is often about being seen, not only about saying something. Identity, alignment, and recognition are central.

This theme is especially important for interpreting Filipino comment behavior in unrelated international posts. If commenting is symbolic participation, then insertion into a foreign thread need not be understood as accidental or meaningless. It may be a way of publicly occupying a visible space, registering emotion, signaling comparison, or performing national and personal identity in front of an audience already gathered around a noteworthy event. Under this reading, the comment is a low-cost entry into a public sphere from which the user may otherwise feel marginal. The literature therefore supports the notion that comments function as acts of public presence and self-positioning, even when the original topic lies elsewhere (Liu & Han, 2025; Castillo-Esparcia et al., 2023; E., 2021; Van Raemdonck et al., 2025).

### ***2.5 Trolling, Online Disinhibition, and Mediated Identity Performance***

The final theme addresses the most obvious explanatory framework for intrusive or off-topic commenting: trolling and online disinhibition. There is indeed a substantial literature linking disruptive online behavior to antisocial motives, provocation, low empathy, and the affordances of mediated anonymity. Kühn and Riesmeyer (2025) define trolling as disruptive behavior aimed at provoking and distressing others, while Paakki et al. (2021) show how trolling-like response strategies can derail otherwise constructive interaction. Singh et al. (2023) likewise treat trolling and hostility as central forms of antisocial behavior in public comment spaces.

This literature is useful because some portion of the behavior discussed in the present paper almost certainly overlaps with trolling. Abrupt commentary, topic derailment, mockery, or aggressive comparison can indeed function as provocations. Studies also show that low empathy, psychopathic tendencies, and negative social potency are associated with trolling behavior (Kühn & Riesmeyer, 2025). Qiu et al. (2024) further demonstrate that exposure to antisocial media content can foster malicious trolling through hostile attribution bias, while Mao and Hu (2024) show that reactive trolling can be mediated by revenge and social recognition motives. These findings indicate that trolling is not a fictional concern but an empirically supported dimension of digital interaction.

At the same time, the literature also complicates any attempt to reduce all intrusive commenting to pure malice. Several studies suggest that online disinhibition alone has weak or inconsistent direct effects. Soares et al. (2023) found that young adults' antisocial behavior on social media was strongly shaped by recreation and reward motives, not simply by disinhibition. Wen and Miura (2025) similarly suggest that engagement metrics can outweigh the influence of online disinhibition, indicating that platform incentives and visibility dynamics matter greatly. Mao and Hu (2024) further show that trolling may emerge through complex combinations of victimization, revenge, and recognition-seeking. This implies that not all trolling-like behavior is purely sadistic or irrational. Some of it is expressive, status-seeking, reactive, or performative.

Philippine evidence on Generation Z social media behavior similarly cautions that online engagement styles vary, with passive consumption sometimes functioning as a regulated, lower-pressure environment rather than as overt provocation or public performance (Dancel et al., 2026).

This matters because the present paper is concerned with comments that may appear troll-like while also carrying social meaning. A user who inserts a grievance-filled comparison into an unrelated international post may be partly provoking others, but may also be performing identity, seeking recognition, venting civic frustration, or joining a visible discourse through the only available low-cost means. The literature on identity performance helps make sense of this. Gran (2025), Hernández-Serrano et al. (2022), and Haroon et al. (2025) all point to the theatrical and constructed dimensions of online self-presentation. Even research focused on adolescents' norms of self-presentation, such as Kühn and Riesmeyer (2025), suggests that online acts are deeply entangled with how people wish to be seen.

Thus, the literature recommends conceptual caution. Trolling remains a useful term, but it is not always sufficient. Some intrusive comments are best understood as antisocial disruptions. Others may be hybrid acts combining comparison, grievance, humor, status display, and identity performance. For the present paper, this distinction is crucial. If all Filipino interjection into unrelated international posts is labeled trolling, the analysis ends too quickly. If, however, trolling is treated as one possible layer within a broader ecology of symbolic participation and affective self-positioning, then the behavior becomes available for fuller behavioral-social interpretation (Paakki et al., 2021; Soares et al., 2023; Mao & Hu, 2024; Qiu et al., 2024).

### ***2.6 Synthesis of Literature***

Taken together, the literature suggests that the behavior under study can be interpreted through an interaction of at least five mechanisms. First, relational selfhood and *kapwa* indicate that the self is socially oriented and deeply

responsive to others. Second, social comparison and relative deprivation explain how others' visible success can generate resentment, dissatisfaction, or grievance. Third, diaspora consciousness and transnational social embeddedness weaken the felt distance between domestic and foreign events. Fourth, digital comment culture provides a low-cost and highly visible mode of symbolic participation. Fifth, trolling and identity-performance research show that provocative or intrusive commentary may contain both antisocial and expressive motives.

No single theme is sufficient by itself. Relational selfhood does not automatically produce online interjection. Relative deprivation alone does not explain why some frustrations are voiced in unrelated global threads. Diaspora consciousness cannot by itself account for hostile comparison. Comment culture explains the form of participation, but not its emotional content. Trolling research explains disruption, but not why particular comments may carry culturally patterned meanings. The value of the literature lies in showing that the phenomenon is likely multidimensional. It emerges not from one cause but from the intersection of culture, comparison, transnationality, platform affordances, and mediated performance.

Methodologically, this integrative reading also aligns with narrative analytics logic, which treats compact textual traces as meaning-bearing evidence only when interpreted with contextual, cultural, and ethical safeguards (Atento, Quinto, Espelita, & San Juan, 2025).

### ***2.7 Gaps in the Literature***

Despite the richness of the reviewed scholarship, a clear integrative gap remains. The literature on Filipino relational selfhood is rarely connected directly to digital comment behavior in global public spaces. Research on social comparison and relative deprivation explains grievance dynamics, but seldom in a culturally grounded Filipino framework. Diaspora studies clarify transnational belonging, yet often focus on migrant subjects without linking such conditions to everyday public commentary by broader networked publics. Digital participation studies explain comments as symbolic action, but they usually remain platform-centered rather than culture-centered. Finally, trolling research often categorizes disruptive behavior without asking whether some forms of intrusion may be socially patterned and interpretively meaningful.

There is, therefore, limited conceptual work that brings these domains together to explain why Filipino users may appear visibly in unrelated international comment threads and why their comments may take comparative, grievance-laden, or symbolically participatory forms. This paper addresses that absence.

### ***2.8 Contribution of the Present Paper***

The present paper contributes an integrative conceptual account of Filipino online interjection in global social media spaces. Rather than reducing the phenomenon to mere trolling or treating it as an unproblematic expression of sociability, it argues that such behavior may be understood as mediated comparative self-positioning shaped by relational selfhood, transnational embeddedness, social comparison, and digitally enabled symbolic participation. In doing so, it offers a more behaviorally grounded and culturally specific framework for interpreting a visible but undertheorized form of online public conduct.

## **3. Methodology**

### ***3.1 Research Design***

This paper adopts a conceptual and thematic review design within the broader form of an analytical review essay in behavioral and social analysis. The study is non-empirical in the conventional sense. It does not involve surveys, interviews, experiments, focus-group discussions, participant observation, or a formally delimited corpus of social media comments subjected to direct coding. Instead, it is designed to interpret a recurring social phenomenon through the disciplined synthesis of relevant scholarly literature.

The central purpose of the design is explanatory rather than confirmatory. It seeks to construct a plausible and culturally grounded interpretation of Filipino presence and interjection in unrelated international social media comment threads. In this sense, the paper treats the phenomenon as a meaningful object of behavioral-social inquiry and asks what existing literature makes such behavior intelligible. The design is therefore appropriate for conceptual clarification, framework building, and interpretive integration, but not for statistical generalization or causal proof.

This approach is suitable because the present paper does not claim that the phenomenon has already been empirically measured in a comprehensive way. Rather, it begins from a socially visible pattern and develops an

interpretive framework around it using existing scholarship. The paper is thus positioned as a theory-informed conceptual contribution that may later guide documentary qualitative analysis or mixed-method follow-up studies.

### ***3.2 Source Orientation and Nature of Materials***

The materials used in this paper consist of published scholarly sources that bear directly on the focal phenomenon. These sources were treated as the principal basis for analysis because the study is literature-driven and conceptually framed. The literature was drawn from five major domains that correspond to the thematic structure of the paper.

The first domain includes works on Filipino relational psychology, particularly studies and theoretical essays on *kapwa*, *loob*, interpersonal, communal identity, and socially embedded selfhood. These sources provide the indigenous psychological grounding of the paper. The second domain consists of research on social comparison, relative deprivation, resentment, and grievance expression, which helps explain how exposure to others' success or institutional support may trigger dissatisfaction or critical response. The third includes scholarship on diaspora, migration, and transnational social embeddedness, clarifying how cross-border connectedness may weaken the felt boundary between local and foreign concerns. The fourth domain covers digital participation, social media comment culture, symbolic participation, and self-presentation, which helps explain why commenting is a meaningful act of public insertion rather than a trivial by-product of media consumption. The fifth includes literature on trolling, online disinhibition, antisocial online behavior, and mediated identity performance, which helps situate the phenomenon within existing explanations of disruptive digital conduct.

Because the paper is conceptual, these materials are not treated as raw data in the same way transcripts or interview narratives would be. Instead, they function as the evidentiary base from which the interpretive model of the paper is constructed.

### ***3.3 Inclusion Logic and Scope of the Review***

The review followed a thematic relevance criterion rather than an exhaustive systematic-review protocol. Sources were included if they directly contributed to one or more of the following concerns: Filipino relational identity, social comparison and deprivation, diaspora-linked transnationality, digital comment participation, or trolling and online disinhibition. Preference was given to peer-reviewed journal articles, theoretically significant essays, conceptually relevant review studies, and empirical works capable of supporting interpretation.

The review was not limited to Philippine scholarship alone because some of the central explanatory mechanisms, especially those related to social comparison and digital participation, are more fully developed in broader international literature. However, the paper deliberately retained Filipino-centered literature as its cultural and interpretive anchor. This was done to avoid producing an analysis that is theoretically generic but culturally thin.

The scope of the review was therefore both selective and integrative. It was selective in the sense that only literature directly relevant to the behavioral-social problem was included. It was integrative in the sense that literature from multiple fields was brought into conversation to illuminate one focal pattern of online behavior. The aim was not to summarize all existing work on Filipino identity or social media, but to gather sufficiently strong conceptual resources to explain the behavior under study.

### ***3.4 Thematic Grouping of the Literature***

The reviewed sources were organized into five thematic clusters that guided both the literature review and the later analytical synthesis.

The first theme, relational selfhood, *kapwa*, and communal identity, established the cultural-psychological foundation of the inquiry. It addressed the extent to which Filipino selfhood is socially constituted and relationally oriented.

The second theme, social comparison, relative deprivation, and comparative civic frustration, focused on the affective and evaluative mechanisms through which visible foreign success may provoke dissatisfaction, grievance, or comparative judgment.

The third theme, diaspora consciousness and transnational social embeddedness, examined how the Philippine condition of dispersed kinship, overseas labor, and mediated transnational ties may make foreign events feel socially proximate rather than formally external.

The fourth theme, social media comment culture as symbolic participation, interpreted commenting as a form of low-cost but socially meaningful public action through which users assert presence, position themselves before others, and join visible discourse.

The fifth theme, trolling, online disinhibition, and mediated identity performance, explored where existing digital behavior frameworks illuminate the phenomenon and where they may oversimplify it by reducing all intrusive commentary to antisocial disruption.

This thematic grouping allowed the paper to move from indigenous Filipino frameworks to broader social-psychological mechanisms, then to transnational and platform-centered explanations, before finally confronting existing digital behavior concepts that might otherwise dominate interpretation.

### ***3.5 Analytical Procedure***

The paper used an interpretive comparative procedure. This means that the themes were not treated as isolated explanatory units. Instead, they were read in relation to one another to identify convergences, overlaps, tensions, and blind spots. The procedure involved three major steps.

First, each thematic body of literature was reviewed in order to extract its main conceptual claims, relevant empirical tendencies, and interpretive implications for the phenomenon under study. This stage clarified what each literature domain could explain on its own.

Second, the reviewed themes were compared analytically. For example, the literature on *kapwa* helps explain social embeddedness and responsiveness to others, but it does not by itself explain grievance-filled comparison. Relative deprivation explains dissatisfaction and resentment, but it does not clarify why foreign events become socially available for local commentary. Diaspora studies help explain cross-border attentiveness, but they do not explain why online participation may take provocative or symbolic forms. Comment culture explains the form of participation, but not its culturally specific emotional content. Trolling research explains disruption, but not why some disruptions may express identity, frustration, or symbolic insertion rather than pure malice. This comparative step made it possible to determine where each body of literature was necessary but insufficient.

Third, the paper integrated these themes into a synthesized conceptual model. The resulting interpretation proposes that Filipino interjection into unrelated international posts may be understood as a form of mediated comparative self-positioning. Under this view, the behavior emerges from the interaction of relational selfhood, comparative civic frustration, transnational connectedness, symbolic digital participation, and identity performance under platform conditions that lower the threshold for public commentary.

### ***3.6 Interpretive Framework***

The interpretive framework of the study is grounded in the principle that behavioral-social questions come first, and philosophical or cultural depth comes second. This means that the paper does not invoke indigenous concepts such as *kapwa* merely as abstract cultural symbols. Rather, these concepts are used insofar as they help explain actual patterns of social attention, comparison, affect, and public response in digital contexts.

Within this framework, Filipino comment behavior in unrelated international threads is interpreted not simply as random internet behavior, nor automatically as pathological trolling. Instead, it is examined as a possible expression of four interrelated dynamics. First, users may be shaped by a relational orientation in which others' public experiences are socially meaningful rather than psychologically distant. Second, users may engage in upward and collective comparison, reading foreign public moments against their own society's perceived deficiencies. Third, users may inhabit a transnational communicative world in which global events feel socially near. Fourth, users may treat comment spaces as accessible sites of symbolic participation where presence, wit, grievance, and national feeling can be publicly displayed.

This interpretive framework keeps the paper behaviorally anchored while allowing cultural concepts to enrich explanation. It also avoids the opposite danger of reducing all observable behavior to platform mechanics while ignoring the cultural and historical shape of personhood.

### ***3.7 Limitations of the Methodological Approach***

Several limitations must be stated clearly. First, because the study is conceptual and literature-based, it does not provide direct empirical verification of the frequency, distribution, or causal mechanisms of the behavior discussed. It cannot establish how common such comment behavior is across platforms, periods, or demographic groups.

Second, the study does not analyze a collected corpus of actual comments. As a result, it cannot distinguish with certainty between irony, satire, sincerity, humor, provocation, status-seeking, or civic frustration in specific comment instances. The interpretive model remains plausible and theoretically grounded, but it is not a substitute for direct discourse analysis.

Third, the literature synthesized in the paper is partly Filipino-specific and partly international. While this is necessary for conceptual completeness, it also means that some explanatory layers are more culturally grounded than others. The framework must therefore be read as an interpretive proposal rather than a finished cultural theory.

Fourth, the paper does not claim that the phenomenon is unique to Filipinos. Similar forms of digital interjection may occur in many societies. The distinctiveness of the present inquiry lies not in asserting exclusivity, but in asking how the behavior may be understood in a specifically Filipino relational, transnational, and digitally immersed context.

### ***3.8 Methodological Value for Future Research***

Despite these limitations, the methodology offers a useful foundation for subsequent research. Because it clarifies the conceptual pathways through which the behavior may be interpreted, it creates a framework that future empirical work can test, refine, or challenge. A later study may, for example, collect actual comments from international sports, politics, or culture-related posts and subject them to documentary qualitative analysis, discourse analysis, or mixed-method coding. It may also compare Filipino comment behavior with that of users from other relational or diasporic societies.

In this sense, the present methodological design serves as an initial scholarly step. It organizes the conceptual terrain, identifies relevant explanatory variables, and makes the phenomenon analytically visible. That is an appropriate and defensible contribution for a non-empirical IJBeSA paper.

## **4. Analytical Synthesis / Results and Discussion**

### ***4.1 From Random Commenting to Mediated Comparative Self-Positioning***

The literature reviewed in the previous section suggests that the behavior under study is best understood not as a random digital reflex, but as a patterned form of mediated comparative self-positioning. This phrase is important because it captures the central claim of the paper: when Filipino users appear in unrelated international comment threads and redirect attention toward domestic frustration, local comparison, or civic grievance, they are not merely speaking out of turn. Rather, they may be situating themselves and their national experience within a visible global event. The comment becomes a small but consequential act of social positioning.

This interpretation departs from the most immediate common-sense reading of such behavior. A superficial reading would classify the comment as irrelevant, intrusive, or simply trollish. That reading is not entirely baseless, since some comments are clearly provocative, unserious, or attention-seeking. However, the literature indicates that such a classification is too narrow. If commenting is also a form of symbolic participation, and if social comparison is activated by exposure to visible public success, then off-topic commentary may still be psychologically and socially meaningful. Its meaning lies not in formal relevance to the original post, but in affective and comparative relevance to the commenter.

The shift from “irrelevant comment” to “mediated comparative self-positioning” clarifies the behavior in three ways. First, it shows that the act is interpretively linked to visibility. Users join spaces where attention is already concentrated. Second, it shows that the act is socially comparative rather than merely expressive. The foreign event

becomes an occasion for evaluating one's own society. Third, it shows that the act is identity-laden. The commenter does not merely state an opinion but implicitly positions self and nation in relation to another public reality. In this sense, what looks like topic derailment may actually be a condensed social act involving comparison, dissatisfaction, and symbolic entry into a globalized public sphere.

#### ***4.2 Relational Selfhood as the Cultural-Psychological Base of Response***

One of the most important interpretive findings of the literature synthesis is that Filipino online interjection can be plausibly read against a background of relational selfhood. The literature on *kapwa*, *loob*, and interpersonal strongly suggests that Filipino subjectivity is often experienced through relation, recognition, mutuality, and other-oriented consciousness. This does not mean that every Filipino comment is consciously shaped by indigenous values, nor that classical concepts transfer neatly into online behavior. However, it does mean that the social other occupies a central place in the constitution of personhood.

In analytical terms, this matters because it weakens the assumption that users respond to international events as detached spectators. Under a more individualistic framework, unrelated foreign content may be easy to dismiss as simply "not my concern." Under a relational framework, however, visible public experience involving others may become more readily available for emotional uptake, moral commentary, or social comparison. The issue is not that users literally become part of the event, but that the event enters a shared field of visible human meaning. In relational terms, the other's public moment becomes legible as something one can answer to, interpret, or position oneself against.

This helps explain why comments on unrelated international posts often take the form of shared feeling, indirect self-reference, or public moralization. The relationally shaped self is not entirely inward and self-contained. It is attentive to how others fare, how they are recognized, and what their situation implies about one's own collective standing. In digital settings, this may produce an online behavior pattern in which users respond not only to content but to the social significance of that content. A foreign post praising a national achievement, state support, or public recognition can therefore become a social mirror. The response is not simply informational but relationally mediated.

At the same time, the literature also warns that *kapwa* should not be romanticized. Shared identity does not eliminate conflict, comparison, or tension. In fact, precisely because the self is relationally attuned, visible differences in support, recognition, and national functioning may become more affectively charged. Thus, relational selfhood should not be read as a harmony-producing variable only. It may also intensify sensitivity to disparity and collective lack.

#### ***4.3 Comparative Civic Frustration as the Emotional Motor of Comment Interjection***

If relationality provides the cultural base, comparative civic frustration appears to provide much of the emotional force. The literature on social comparison, relative deprivation, and grievance expression strongly supports the argument that visible exposure to others' success can trigger dissatisfaction, resentment, and symbolic protest. In the present paper, this becomes especially relevant when the foreign event being commented on embodies something that users perceive as lacking in their own setting: competent leadership, national pride, institutional support, recognition of excellence, or public investment in talent.

In such moments, the international post does more than present information. It functions as a comparative trigger. The commenter sees not only what happened elsewhere but what appears absent at home. The emotional response is therefore not limited to admiration. It may quickly become evaluative, and then critical. A congratulatory post about another country's athlete, artist, or public figure may be read as an indictment of one's own society's failures. The comment then becomes a vehicle for displaced civic judgment. What appears off-topic is actually a form of comparative interpretation in compressed public language.

This helps explain why comments often move toward domestic politics, national inferiority, or sarcastic self-reference. These are not necessarily irrational detours. They may reflect the fact that public visibility intensifies civic comparison. In the age of networked media, one does not merely know that another society has achieved something. One sees it being celebrated, circulated, and legitimated in real time. That visibility sharpens emotional contrast. The user is not only comparing outcomes but comparing public worlds, including how nations recognize their own people.

This is why the term comparative civic frustration is useful. It distinguishes the phenomenon from mere envy or simple political dissatisfaction. The frustration is civic because it is directed toward institutions, leadership, or the collective national condition. It is comparative because it is activated by the public success or recognition of others. And it becomes digitally visible because comment spaces provide a ready-made outlet for condensed public expression. Under this interpretation, the comment thread becomes a site where foreign success is converted into local critique.

#### ***4.4 Diaspora Consciousness and the Weakening of “Foreignness”***

A third major analytical finding concerns the role of diaspora consciousness and transnational social embeddedness. The literature suggests that cross-border social ties reduce the felt separation between domestic and foreign realities. In the Philippine case, this insight is especially significant because migration, overseas labor, transnational kinship, and routine digital contact are deeply woven into social life. As a result, “international” events may not be experienced as wholly external to Filipino consciousness.

This point should not be overstated. Not every Filipino user is a migrant or part of a directly international household. Yet the broader communicative environment of the Philippines has long been shaped by overseas family relations, remittance cultures, and daily awareness of relatives and acquaintances living elsewhere. In such a setting, foreign countries are often socially familiar rather than imaginatively distant. One’s cousin is in Dubai, one’s sibling is in Canada, one’s former classmate is in Singapore, one’s parent worked in Saudi Arabia, and one’s online networks extend across borders. This does not erase national boundaries, but it does normalize transnational attentiveness.

Under these conditions, international posts may not feel entirely “not ours.” Rather, they enter a communicative field already saturated with global reference points. This helps explain why Filipino users may feel authorized, or at least socially comfortable, entering conversations around events from places with which they have no formal relation. The sense of foreignness is weakened by transnational familiarity. This does not automatically generate critique or comparison, but it lowers the threshold for participation and helps make global discourse feel socially accessible.

This finding is important because it corrects an overly moralistic reading of comment interjection. Without a transnational lens, the behavior can look like unnecessary intrusion. With that lens, it can also be seen as a product of habituated cross-border sociality. The user enters the thread partly because the world already feels interconnected, and because the digital public sphere makes that interconnection continuously visible. A foreign public event is therefore not simply foreign. It is part of a transnationally mediated world in which Filipino users are already socially entangled.

#### ***4.5 Commenting as Symbolic Participation in a Visible Public Sphere***

The literature on digital participation suggests that comments should be understood not merely as textual residues but as acts of public presence. This is one of the strongest findings of the present synthesis. In highly visible digital environments, commenting becomes a low-cost form of participation through which users insert themselves into ongoing public discourse. They may not control the platform, shape the original event, or possess institutional power, but they can still appear, respond, and be seen. That small act matters socially.

For the present inquiry, this means that interjection into unrelated international threads is not simply about saying something. It is also about entering a moment of visibility. When a post is already widely circulated, emotionally charged, or symbolically important, the comment section becomes a public stage. To speak there is to be present within the event’s discursive afterlife. This is especially significant for users who may feel politically unheard, structurally marginal, or symbolically peripheral. Commenting offers a compressed form of participation in a world where visibility itself functions as a scarce resource.

This perspective also helps explain why humor, sarcasm, and grievance often appear together. Symbolic participation is not always solemn. It may be playful, cutting, theatrical, or exaggerated. But even when humorous, it still performs a public act of insertion. A sarcastic comparison between another nation’s support for its talent and one’s own nation’s neglect can therefore be both comic and serious. The humor makes the comment socially legible and shareable, while the comparison carries civic content.

In this sense, the comment section is not a marginal appendage to the “real” discourse. It is itself a social arena. Users join it to mark stance, identity, and belonging. The present paper therefore treats Filipino comment interjection

as a form of symbolic participation in a globally visible public sphere, one in which users may claim presence through comparison, wit, grievance, or collective self-reference. This does not make all such behavior admirable, but it does make it analytically meaningful.

#### ***4.6 Why “Trolling” Is Necessary but Insufficient***

The literature on trolling and online disinhibition remains relevant, but the synthesis shows that it is not a complete explanation. Some comments are indeed disruptive, mocking, or plainly provocative. Some are designed to draw reaction, derail discourse, or produce friction. These aspects should not be ignored. Any analysis that excludes trolling altogether would become artificially charitable and empirically thin.

However, the problem with relying too heavily on trolling as the master category is that it prematurely ends interpretation. It collapses motive into a single antisocial type and overlooks the possibility that some apparently troll-like comments also express frustration, identity performance, comparative judgment, or symbolic participation. The literature itself supports this caution by showing that online disruptive behavior can be driven by mixed motives, including recognition-seeking, revenge, play, and visibility. In other words, provocation may coexist with expression.

This is especially important in the present paper because the phenomenon under discussion often has a recognizably civic and collective content. Comments may be sarcastic or annoying, but they are often also saying something about perceived national failure, absence of recognition, poor leadership, or public neglect. They are not always empty provocations. Some are condensed forms of social critique, however crude their delivery may be. Calling all of them trolling would therefore flatten the behavior and erase its connection to broader social feeling.

The more accurate position is that trolling is sometimes one layer of the behavior, but not its full meaning. A comment may be simultaneously disruptive, humorous, comparative, and identity-laden. It may seek reaction while also expressing grievance. It may be performative without being meaningless. Thus, the concept of trolling should remain part of the analysis, but as a partial lens nested within a broader account of digital self-positioning and public affect.

#### ***4.7 A Five-Part Conceptual Model of Filipino Online Interjection***

Based on the literature synthesis, the paper proposes a five-part conceptual model for interpreting Filipino online interjection in unrelated international posts.

First, relational identity provides the cultural-psychological base. Filipino selfhood is socially oriented, and this makes others' public situations matter in ways that exceed detached spectatorship.

Second, comparative civic frustration supplies the emotional charge. International posts can trigger evaluation of local institutions, public leadership, and collective national standing.

Third, transnational connectedness weakens the felt boundary between domestic and foreign affairs. The world is encountered through diaspora-shaped communication and social familiarity.

Fourth, symbolic participation explains why comment sections become attractive sites of entry. Users do not only respond. They join, mark presence, and publicly position themselves.

Fifth, mediated identity performance, including troll-like provocation, shapes the style of expression. The same comment may combine grievance, wit, display, and disruption.

Together, these five components produce the interpretive outcome identified in this paper: Filipino participation in unrelated international comment threads may be understood as a form of mediated comparative self-positioning. This behavior is not reducible to one cause, one motive, or one platform feature. It emerges from the convergence of culture, structure, emotion, and affordance.

#### ***4.8 Behavioral-Social Implications of the Model***

The proposed model carries several implications for behavioral and social analysis. First, it suggests that digital behavior cannot be read adequately without attention to relational cultures. Comment practices that seem irrational or intrusive under an individualist lens may become more intelligible when interpreted through socially embedded selfhood.

Second, it shows that public comment behavior can function as a low-level register of civic feeling. Users may express distrust, disappointment, or comparative resentment not in formal political spaces but in opportunistic digital moments where another nation's success becomes the occasion for local critique. This means that seemingly off-topic comments may be minor yet revealing indicators of diffuse public dissatisfaction.

Third, the model suggests that transnational media environments create new kinds of social permeability. Events do not remain confined to their originating national audience. They enter a world of relationally and diasporically connected publics who may receive them through their own affective and civic concerns. This challenges a simple inside-outside model of online discourse.

Fourth, the model implies that platform behavior should not be separated too sharply from social structure. Underemployment, frustration, institutional distrust, and globalized communication are not background noise. They shape the emotional and symbolic conditions under which users speak. While the present paper does not empirically test these structural links, the conceptual synthesis strongly indicates that platform expression must be read against wider social realities.

Finally, the model underscores the value of studying comment culture seriously. Comment sections are often treated as trivial, toxic, or disposable. Yet they are dense sites of social performance, comparative evaluation, and affective public life. In the Filipino case, they may reveal how relational identity and national self-consciousness are negotiated under contemporary digital conditions.

#### ***4.9 Discussion of the Analytical Result***

The main analytical result of this section is not the proof of a deterministic theory but the establishment of a more nuanced interpretive framework. The literature does not justify saying that Filipino users comment on unrelated international posts for one single reason. It does justify saying that there is a coherent and behaviorally meaningful way to read the pattern: as an intersection of relationality, comparison, transnationality, participation, and performance.

This result matters because it rescues the phenomenon from two weak interpretations. The first is dismissive ridicule, which sees only meddling or digital bad manners. The second is romantic culturalism, which would frame such behavior as harmless sociability or proof of Filipino warmth. Both are inadequate. The present synthesis instead shows that the behavior may be socially intelligible, emotionally charged, and culturally patterned while also remaining disruptive, excessive, or unpleasant in particular instances.

In short, the literature supports a middle position. Filipino online interjection in unrelated international posts can be read neither as pure noise nor as pure virtue. It is better understood as a socially situated digital act through which users negotiate visibility, grievance, identity, and collective comparison in a networked public sphere.

### **5. Discussion of Findings and Implications**

The findings of the present paper suggest that Filipino participation in unrelated international comment threads should be interpreted as a meaningful behavioral-social phenomenon rather than as a trivial curiosity of platform culture. At the broadest level, the analysis indicates that such participation may be understood as an outcome of relationally shaped selfhood operating under the conditions of digital visibility, transnational connectedness, and comparative civic frustration. This does not mean that every instance is profound, nor that all comments carry the same weight. It means that the pattern itself is analytically intelligible. What appears as intrusion at the level of topic may reveal something more significant at the level of identity, affect, and social positioning.

One important implication of this interpretation is that it complicates how digital public behavior is usually classified. In many treatments of comment culture, behavior is divided too neatly into productive participation on one side and toxic disruption on the other. The present paper suggests that this binary is insufficient. Some forms of apparently disruptive commentary may also function as compressed acts of belonging, grievance expression, comparative judgment, or symbolic insertion into public discourse. This does not absolve the behavior of incivility or irrelevance in particular cases, but it does require that analysis move beyond moral labeling. A comment may be impolite and yet socially meaningful. It may be off-topic and yet behaviorally revealing. Such ambiguity is not a flaw in the phenomenon but part of what makes it worthy of scholarly attention.

The discussion also points to the continuing importance of culturally grounded frameworks in the study of digital behavior. Much of the dominant language around online participation has been shaped by theories developed in contexts where the self is implicitly treated as individualistic, self-bounded, and autonomous. By contrast, the present paper argues that Filipino online comment behavior becomes more intelligible when read through a relational understanding of selfhood. The concepts of *kapwa*, *loob*, and interpersonality do not mechanically explain every digital act, but they do clarify why the public experiences of others may become affectively available for response. In relational cultures, visible events involving others may more readily invite comparison, commentary, and self-placement. This is not a matter of simple collectivism, but of the moral and psychological permeability of the self to public social life.

A second implication concerns the study of civic feeling in digital environments. The analysis suggests that comment threads may function as informal and opportunistic sites where diffuse national frustration becomes publicly legible. In many cases, the user is not responding only to the content of the post, but to what the post symbolizes. A foreign event that displays competent leadership, institutional support, or collective pride may activate dissatisfaction not because it directly concerns the Philippines, but because it makes local absence more visible by contrast. This has theoretical significance because it suggests that digital commentary can operate as a low-intensity register of civic discontent. Rather than being expressed solely in formal political discourse, comparative frustration may surface through off-topic comments attached to unrelated international content. The politics here are displaced, fragmentary, and informal, yet they are not devoid of meaning.

This point is especially important for understanding the affective structure of online comparison. The literature reviewed in this paper indicates that upward comparison and relative deprivation are not merely personal phenomena. They can take collective form. The “I” that feels lacking can become a “we” that feels neglected. In the context of public comment behavior, this collective comparison can manifest in remarks that invoke the nation, the state, local institutions, or general social conditions. The foreign post becomes a trigger not simply for individual envy but for a brief performance of national self-evaluation. This helps explain why otherwise celebratory posts can become unexpectedly entangled with cynicism, sarcasm, or domestic grievance when they enter global comment ecologies.

A third implication concerns transnationality and the changing boundaries of public relevance. The present paper argues that Filipino digital participation cannot be fully understood without considering the deeply transnational structure of Filipino social life. The diaspora is not only a demographic fact. It is a communicative condition. It shapes how the world is encountered, how familiarity is distributed, and how foreign events are psychologically situated. Under such conditions, international posts are less likely to be experienced as wholly external or irrelevant. This has broader significance for digital media studies because it challenges any simple assumption that online audiences remain neatly bounded by nation. For transnationally connected populations, the distinction between local and foreign discourse is often porous. Events circulate through already entangled emotional and communicative worlds.

The implications of this are not limited to Filipino studies. More broadly, the findings suggest that digital publics are best understood as layered social formations rather than as flat aggregates of users responding to content. A given post may gather audiences who are connected to it in different ways: directly, symbolically, diasporically, aspirationally, or comparatively. When users from outside the formal community of the post comment on it, they may not be acting from ignorance alone. They may be entering the discourse through alternate pathways of connection and concern. In this sense, the present paper contributes to a more differentiated understanding of global digital publics, especially in postcolonial and migration-shaped contexts.

The present analysis also has implications for the concept of trolling. One of the strongest conclusions of the paper is that trolling remains relevant but insufficient. It remains relevant because some of the behavior in question does involve provocation, derailment, and the pursuit of reaction. Yet it is insufficient because it cannot account for why so much of this behavior carries collective, civic, or comparative content. Nor can it explain why certain comments appear to express not only a desire to provoke, but also a desire to be seen, to register dissatisfaction, or to situate one’s community in relation to another. The discussion therefore supports a more layered approach to online antagonism, one in which identity performance, symbolic participation, and grievance expression are not treated as mutually exclusive but as overlapping dimensions of the same digital act.

This has theoretical consequences for how scholars classify online incivility. It may be more useful to think in terms of a continuum of mediated public acts rather than a rigid distinction between participation and disruption. On this continuum, some comments are primarily affiliative, some primarily expressive, some primarily comparative, and some primarily antagonistic. Many are hybrid. The value of the present paper lies partly in making room for that

hybridity. The Filipino comment in an unrelated international thread may be mildly troll-like in form while also being serious in affective content. It may be humorous and wounded at once. It may seek attention while also communicating a recognizable sense of collective lack. Such complexity should not be flattened for the sake of neat typology.

At the level of identity, the paper also points to the role of digital environments in intensifying public self-consciousness. Social media platforms make recognition visible, measurable, and rapidly comparable. Users do not only encounter other societies through reports. They encounter them through spectacle, celebration, and the algorithmic concentration of attention. This visibility alters the emotional environment in which national identity is felt. One's country is not merely an abstract object of belonging. It becomes something continuously measured against others in a global stream of visible examples. Under these conditions, national feeling is more easily activated by foreign events, especially when those events dramatize forms of support or excellence that users feel are missing in their own context. The digital platform thus does not merely host comparison. It amplifies and publicizes it.

The findings also carry practical implications, even though the paper remains conceptual. For digital literacy educators, communication scholars, and those concerned with online civic culture, the analysis suggests that problematic comment behavior should not be addressed solely as a matter of etiquette or rule violation. Some of it may reflect deeper frustrations tied to social belonging, recognition, and institutional distrust. This does not mean that moderation should be abandoned. It means that interventions aimed at improving online discourse may need to consider the social emotions and comparative pressures that animate behavior. If users are participating in visible public threads partly because these spaces allow them to express otherwise unvoiced civic dissatisfaction, then responses that focus only on surface civility may fail to address the conditions that make the behavior recurring and socially resonant.

At the same time, the paper must be careful not to overreach. The interpretive model developed here is conceptually persuasive, but it is not empirically conclusive. The present discussion cannot determine how representative the observed pattern is across Filipino users, nor can it specify the relative weight of each explanatory factor in any given comment. It cannot prove whether relational identity is more important than platform affordance, whether diaspora consciousness matters more than relative deprivation, or how these dynamics vary by class, age, region, or level of political engagement. These are important boundaries, and they must remain explicit. The value of the present discussion lies in framing a stronger set of questions, not in closing them.

Another important boundary concerns the risk of essentialism. The analysis should not be read as claiming that Filipinos are uniquely disposed toward comment interjection, nor that the behaviors described here define Filipino digital culture as a whole. Similar patterns of comparative insertion likely exist in many societies, especially those shaped by migration, inequality, and intense social media use. The distinct contribution of this paper is not to exoticize the Philippines, but to show how Filipino relational and transnational conditions provide a particularly rich case through which to theorize such behavior. The discussion therefore remains most credible when it speaks of a visible pattern among Filipino users in certain contexts, rather than of a universal national trait.

Within these limits, however, the paper makes a clear theoretical contribution. It demonstrates that comment threads can serve as analytically rich sites for examining identity, civic feeling, and social comparison in contemporary digital life. It also shows that indigenous and culturally grounded concepts, such as *kapwa*, remain relevant even in technologically mediated settings often assumed to be governed only by platform logic. More broadly, it argues that online behavior should be approached as socially embedded action. Users do not arrive in comment sections as disembodied profiles. They arrive as historically shaped, emotionally situated, relationally constituted actors navigating visibility, frustration, and belonging in an unequal global media order.

The broader implication, then, is that contemporary digital behavior cannot be adequately understood through technological affordances alone. Platform design matters, but so do social history, cultural selfhood, transnational life, and public dissatisfaction. In the case examined here, Filipino participation in unrelated international threads appears to emerge from precisely this intersection. The comment is small, but the forces behind it are not. It condenses a relational culture, a comparative public mood, a transnational communicative world, and a platform environment that rewards visibility and immediacy. Seen in this light, the behavior becomes not an internet triviality but a revealing fragment of contemporary social life.

## **6. Conclusions and Recommendations**

### ***6.1 Conclusions***

The present paper set out to interpret a recurring and easily dismissed form of digital behavior: the visible participation of Filipino users in unrelated international social media comment threads, often through comparison, grievance, humor, or civic frustration. Rather than treating this behavior as mere online noise, the paper argued that it may be more usefully understood as a form of mediated comparative self-positioning. This interpretation emerged from the integration of five explanatory domains: relational selfhood, social comparison and relative deprivation, diaspora-linked transnational embeddedness, symbolic participation in digital publics, and mediated identity performance including troll-like expression.

The central conclusion of the paper is that Filipino online interjection in unrelated international posts is best understood as a socially situated digital act rather than a purely random or purely antisocial reflex. In many cases, the behavior appears to reflect a relationally attentive mode of selfhood encountering globally visible moments of recognition, success, or state support and reading them against local experiences of dissatisfaction, disappointment, or institutional lack. The comment, in this sense, becomes more than an irrelevant remark. It becomes a compressed act of comparison, public feeling, and symbolic entry into a visible transnational discourse.

A second conclusion is that the concept of *kapwa* and related Filipino relational frameworks remain analytically useful even in technologically mediated contexts. The digital environment does not erase the cultural shape of selfhood. If anything, it provides new settings in which relational identity, public moral attention, and communal sensitivity are expressed in fragmented but recognizable ways. The paper does not claim that indigenous concepts determine online behavior directly, nor that every digital act is culturally transparent. However, it does conclude that Filipino digital conduct becomes more intelligible when read through a culturally grounded understanding of personhood rather than through generic platform theories alone.

A third conclusion is that comparative civic frustration appears to be one of the strongest affective mechanisms behind the behavior. International posts may serve as mirrors that intensify awareness of perceived domestic shortcomings. Under conditions of constant digital visibility, another country's public recognition of talent, competence, or excellence can become an occasion for local grievance expression. This suggests that comment sections can function as informal sites where diffuse civic dissatisfaction becomes publicly legible, even when the original post is not political in any direct sense.

A fourth conclusion is that diaspora and transnational connectedness help explain why many international events are not experienced by Filipino users as wholly external. The Philippine social world is deeply shaped by migration, overseas work, family dispersion, and sustained cross-border communication. This transnational condition lowers the felt distance between domestic and foreign spheres and helps make global discourse socially accessible. In that sense, Filipino presence in unrelated international threads is not only a product of platform behavior but also a reflection of a communicative world in which international affairs are woven into everyday life.

A fifth and equally important conclusion is that trolling is an insufficient master category for the phenomenon. While some comments may indeed be provocative, derailing, or antagonistic, the literature reviewed in this paper indicates that such behaviors may also carry expressive, comparative, and identity-performing dimensions. To classify all such interjection simply as trolling would be analytically reductive. A more credible conclusion is that Filipino online interjection often occupies a hybrid space where provocation, humor, grievance, and symbolic participation overlap.

At the same time, the paper recognizes clear limits to what can be concluded. It does not establish prevalence, causality, or uniformity. It does not claim that all Filipino users behave this way, nor that such behavior is unique to Filipinos. It does not prove that any one explanatory factor is decisive in a given instance. The conclusions are therefore interpretive and conceptual rather than empirical in a strict sense. Their value lies in offering a more disciplined way of seeing the phenomenon and in identifying a theoretically coherent framework for its further study.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

First, future research should move from conceptual interpretation to documentary qualitative analysis. A logical next step would be to collect actual comment threads from international sports, politics, entertainment, or cultural posts in which Filipino users appear visibly and then analyze these comments through thematic coding, discourse analysis, or digital ethnography. Such a study would help determine whether the conceptual model developed in this paper is supported by actual textual patterns.

Second, subsequent studies should compare types of comments rather than treating all interjection as one category. It would be useful to distinguish among civic grievance comments, humorous interjections, identity-affirming remarks, sarcastic national comparisons, plainly disruptive trolling, and expressions of symbolic solidarity. Such differentiation would produce a more precise understanding of motivation and social meaning.

Third, comparative cross-national research is recommended. Similar studies may examine whether users from other diasporic, postcolonial, or relationally oriented societies exhibit parallel forms of online insertion into unrelated international posts. This would help determine which aspects of the phenomenon are specifically Filipino and which are part of broader global patterns of digital public behavior.

Fourth, platform-sensitive analysis should be undertaken. Future work should compare how the behavior differs across Facebook, TikTok, X, YouTube, Instagram, and news comment platforms. Each platform has distinct affordances, audience structures, and visibility logics, and these may shape the style, intensity, and frequency of interjection.

Fifth, research should examine the relationship between online comparative commentary and broader civic sentiment. Since the present paper suggests that comment threads may act as low-intensity registers of national dissatisfaction, future scholarship may investigate whether these behaviors correlate with distrust in institutions, perceived exclusion, class frustration, or experiences of underrecognition.

Sixth, digital literacy and civic discourse interventions should avoid overly moralistic framings. While there is legitimate reason to discourage disruptive and irrelevant comment behavior, the analysis in this paper suggests that some of these comments are animated by deeper frustrations tied to identity, belonging, and comparative national feeling. Interventions that focus only on etiquette may therefore miss the social emotions that sustain the behavior.

Finally, Filipino digital culture should be studied through both indigenous and global frameworks. The present paper recommends a scholarly approach that neither romanticizes Filipino sociability nor reduces it to stereotype. Concepts such as *kapwa*, *loob*, and interpersonalit should remain in conversation with contemporary theories of digital participation, social comparison, transnational publics, and online antagonism. That combined approach is more likely to yield interpretations that are both culturally grounded and analytically robust.

In conclusion, the paper argues that Filipino participation in unrelated international social media threads is not a trivial anomaly but a revealing fragment of contemporary mediated life. It condenses relational identity, civic frustration, transnational awareness, symbolic participation, and public performance into brief digital acts that are often messy, excessive, or impolite, yet socially meaningful. To study such behavior seriously is not to dignify every comment. It is to recognize that even small acts of online interjection may disclose larger truths about how people understand themselves, their nation, and their place in a world of constant comparison and visibility.

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