The Kambilng a Taw: The Acceptance of Meranaw Vlogging

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Abstract: This study examines the lived experiences of Meranaw vloggers in preserving kambilang a taw, a cultural and ethical framework encompassing dignity, honor, modesty, privacy, respect, and religious propriety within the virtual environment. Guided by a qualitative phenomenological approach, the research examines how Meranaw vloggers negotiate cultural identity through contemporary social media practices. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with ten Meranaw vloggers residing in Lanao del Sur and supported by a systematic content analysis of vlog outputs. The study demonstrates that vlogging functions not merely as entertainment or self-branding but as a space for ethical self-regulation and cultural affirmation. Findings reveal that vloggers consciously internalize kambilang a taw as a guiding principle in content creation, audience engagement, and self-presentation. Participants employed selective self-disclosure, adaptive trend modification, and culturally grounded decision-making to balance digital influence with cultural integrity. These findings highlight the capacity of digital platforms to support cultural continuity rather than cultural erosion among linguistic communities.

Keywords: Meranaw vloggers, kambilang a taw, cultural identity, digital influence, qualitative study.

1. Introduction

The People of the Lake (Meranao) are one of the most conservative of the three Muslim tribes in the Philippines [25]. Proper etiquette and being respectful are two of the most valued morals of the Meranaos. Being careful not to embarrass themselves was one of the manifestations of the Meranaos of preserving their dignity. In addition, they dislike being belittled by others. As a result, they put the utmost value on their privacy. Most of the time, they prefer to keep their lives private and live in secrecy instead of seeking assistance for their livelihood to avoid shame. This preference stems from their experiences over the past millennium, which trace back to the 15th century, and that has led to their isolation from the Philippines, adding to their distinct cultural identity. Moreover, their religious beliefs greatly affected their actions and behavior. These and other events of the 21st century brought rapid increases in contact with the larger world and many changes in Meranao society [26]. In today's time, because of the digital world and the rapid rise of globalization and modernization, cultures and traditions are continuously being affected, such as through the use of modern technology for communication.

In recent years, the rise of digital media platforms has transformed how individuals express themselves and engage with society. This transformation is especially interesting among the Meranaws, who have a strong cultural orientation and religious practice. The Meranaw/an society has institutionalized the way of life called Kambilang a Taw, the concepts of social status and honor, and personal dignity, in which how people in the community deal with one another is heavily influenced. Young Meranaws are also learning it from vlogs (video blogs), garnering millions of views, where traditional family values are constantly being undermined.

Understanding how Meranaw vloggers navigate these tensions is crucial in examining how traditional cultural identities persist, adapt, or are rearticulated in the digital age. This study explores how Meranaws perceive and accept vlogging within the framework of Kambilang a Taw. Whether vlogging is seen as a meaningful platform for cultural expression, education, and identity, or as a practice that challenges established values of modesty, respect, and communal honor. It further analyzes the attitudes, motivations, and limitations of Meranaw vloggers and their audiences to illuminate the intersection between cultural continuity and technological adaptation in the contemporary Meranaw social context.

2. Statement of the Problem

This study aims to examine the lived experiences of Meranaw vloggers as they negotiate kambilang a taw while creating digital content. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1) How do Meranaw vloggers understand and define kambilang a taw in the context of digital media use?
2) How do Meranaw vloggers ensure that their online contents remain respectful, dignified, and aligned with cultural values?
3) What challenges do Meranaw vloggers encounter when digital trends conflict with cultural and Islamic values?
4) How do vloggers adapt social media trends while maintaining cultural authenticity?

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5) How does vlogging influence vloggers' awareness and practice of kambilang a taw?

3. Literature Review

Vlogging (or video logging, a blend of Video Blogging) is the latest evolutionary stage in the development of digital communication, transcending traditional text-based blogs. Studies, such as Warmbrodt's (2007) exploration of the videoblogger's society, emphasize that vlogging is characterized by its personal and private qualities. In contrast to text, the visual and audio aspects of vlogs enable a very close, empathetic exchange between creators and viewers. This is a key mechanism in the formation of virtual communities, which often follow a core-periphery architecture with an active group at the core and a less committed audience. Their primary motivations are self-expression, sharing personal stories and opinions, and documenting their daily lives — content creators look at it as an entertaining or attention-seeking pursuit. This highly personal sharing style builds close communities and enables the feeling that the viewer knows the vlogger, which is conducive to para-social development.

In the Philippines, the phenomenon of vlogging has expanded from an obscure pastime into a growing cultural and commercial force since 2016. With smartphone and social media marketing becoming a trend, vlogging has become an appealing professional aspiration for many Filipinos (De Vera & Saludadez, 2021). A qualitative study conducted by De Vera and Saludadez (2021) indicates that for content creators who have succeeded despite external factors, albeit to a certain extent, vlogging serves as an "access to possibilities" and an "expansion of capabilities", thereby making the medium a lever for social-economic progress.

The content that's been created is rich with discourse themes marking Daily Routine, Family & Friends, and purely for Entertainment Purposes (Rivas et al., 2022). Its appeal for local viewers is wrapped up in the relay of "true-to-life" stories. However, this relatability is often done by design – popular vloggers rely on performative authenticity precisely to attract people and make audience commodification easier for financial rewards. National cultural norms such as pakikipagkapwa (granting value regardless of economic and social position; Lykes & Kemmelmeier, 2014) are translated into the language of Filipino vlogs, even when done for profit (Rivas et al., 2022).

While existing studies provide a rich profile of vlogging within an overarching framework of general motivations, community interrelations, and commercial discourse in the Philippines, very little is known about how this is taken up and negotiated within specific, well-entrenched ethno-religious and cultural honor discourses. The current research treats vlogging primarily as a common, pan-Filipino activity and fails to account for potential constraints imposed by sub-ethnic cultural norms.

The proposed study, focusing on the Meranaw society, aims to address this gap by examining vlogging through the lens of Kambilng A Taw. The Maranao of Lanao del Sur adhere to their culture and religious beliefs. At the heart of it is Kambilang A Taw, a set of rules governing social rank, honor, and personal esteem. This structure is heavily influenced by maratabat, or excessive value placed on self and societal honor.

The underlying issue is the tension between cultural duty to uphold modesty, respect, and social dignity rooted in Kambilang a taw and the personal gains which are expressive and commercial nature of vlogging. Thus, there are many of lacunae in the literature that relate to some vital issues: how people and their community negotiate an affective mode of self-display with a need to protect face and reputation (maratabat); what are the restrictions and even opportunities the community places or gives regarding digital modes of expression; and whether vlogging is taken ascultural statement or affirmation on the one hand or less preferable means of direct contestation to nascent communal honor. By placing the investigation of digital media acceptance within the framework of Meranaw cultural persistence and technological adaptation, this study will significantly and uniquely advance communication and Philippine Studies.

4. Methodology

A. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of Meranaw vloggers. Phenomenology was appropriate because it enabled an in-depth understanding of how participants interpret, give meaning to, and reflect on their experiences of balancing traditional cultural values with digital participation.

B. Participants

Ten Meranaw vloggers from Lanao del Sur who were actively creating material for websites like Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok made up the participants. Purposive sampling was used to choose participants based on their connection with Meranaw cultural values, involvement in vlogging, and study relevance.

C. Research Locale

The study was conducted in Lanao del Sur, Philippines, a province predominantly inhabited by Maranao communities, where *kambilang a taw* and Islamic values remain deeply embedded in everyday life. The province of Lanao del Sur has a large Maranao population that strictly observes native customs (Kambilang a Taw), which stresses *maratabat,* or personal dignity and social reputation/esteem, achieved through mutual respect for one another. The province has young people who are also active on social media platforms.

D. Data Collection Instruments and Procedure

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which allowed participants to narrate their experiences, challenges, and strategies for preserving cultural values online. This was complemented by systematic content analysis of selected vlog outputs to observe how cultural values were enacted in practice. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed thematically.

E. Data Analysis

The participants were ten Meranaw vloggers from Lanao del Sur who were actively producing content for Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok. Participants were selected using purposive sampling in accordance with their study relevance, vlogging activity, and affinity for Meranaw cultural values.

5. Results and Discussion

This study explored the lived experiences of Meranaw vloggers in preserving *kambilang a taw*, a culturally embedded constellation of dignity, respect, privacy, modesty, and ethical conduct, within the context of digital content creation. Analysis of interview narratives and vlog content revealed that participants did not approach social media engagement as value-free participation. Vlogging was constantly presented as a culturally situated activity influenced by Islamic values, moral standards, and social expectations. Vloggers showed consistent attempts to preserve cultural authenticity while negotiating the demands of modern social media platforms across all data sources.

The profound absorption of dignity as a guiding concept in digital self-presentation emerged as a major theme. Participants stressed the value of ethical restraint and privacy, especially when it comes to personal challenges and family issues. Selective self-disclosure was defined as a manifestation of cultural responsibility rather than a restriction. Vloggers, who saw self-control as essential to kambilang a taw, deliberately decided what to disclose and what to keep hidden. The content analysis facilitated these stories, and did not expose too much of itself to the world, but preferred to tell the stories in a polite and non-sensationalized way.

These findings indicate that Meranaw vloggers actively negotiate digital visibility to protect both individual and collective social identity, rather than merely broadcasting content for audience consumption.

Participants' thorough knowledge of cultural standards derived from Islamic beliefs and Meranaw tradition had a significant impact on their content choices. According to interview data, vloggers specifically cited religious standards when determining whether to adopt or reject online trends, especially those that were thought to be at odds with religious appropriateness, dignity, or modesty.

This thoughtful approach is consistent with previous research showing that social media activity in culturally embedded environments is greatly influenced by ethical culture and privacy concerns (Kim & Lee, 2020; Abu et al., 2025).While privacy concerns control the degree of personal revelation, ethical considerations favorably impact information sharing when users feel that their moral frameworks are honored (Abueet al., 2025).Cultural knowledge served as a primary cognitive resource that guided digital decision-making in this study.

The findings further demonstrate that Meranaw vloggers possess high ethical awareness regarding dignity, privacy, and religious propriety, extending beyond platform norms and incentives. Participants articulated sensitivity toward family honor and communal reputation, rejecting content that could be perceived as degrading or inappropriate. This resonates with scholarship on culturally contextualized digital ethics, which emphasizes that ethical behavior online emerges from localized value systems rather than abstract, universalist norms (Anom & Rassanjani, 2026). From a broader ethical perspective, privacy violations are understood to undermine dignity and moral autonomy, reinforcing the importance of ethical awareness in responsible digital citizenship (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2025). In this context, *kambilang a taw* operates as a practical ethical framework that regulates digital conduct and safeguards both personal and communal dignity.

Another salient theme was the strong sense of confidence and self-efficacy demonstrated by Meranaw vloggers in navigating digital trends while maintaining cultural identity. Participants described modifying popular formats to preserve modesty and cultural appropriateness rather than disengaging entirely from online trends. This reflects a robust belief in their capacity to balance cultural commitments with creative expression. Self-efficacy theory suggests that individuals' beliefs in their capabilities shape goal-directed behavior and responses to challenges (Getenet et al., 2024). In this study, self-efficacy was evident in vloggers' reflective learning processes, evaluative decision-making, and assertive cultural positioning within digital spaces. Their practices align with digital resilience literature, which highlights the role of cognitive, emotional, and social competencies in navigating online challenges (Springer Nature, 2025).

Participants also demonstrated advanced digital skills through their strategic use of selective self-disclosure, trend adaptation, and audience engagement management. Many described creatively reshaping popular content to align with Meranaw modesty standards, indicating both technical proficiency and cultural fluency. Research on digital authenticity emphasizes that perceptions of authenticity vary across platforms and audiences, and are deeply shaped by cultural nuance (Yılmaz, 2025). The vloggers' practices reflect this balance, combining performative engagement with culturally grounded authenticity. Such competencies suggest that Meranaw vloggers are not merely content producers but cultural stewards who actively manage ethical representation and audience relations within digital environments.

Triangulation of interview narratives and observational vlog analysis revealed strong coherence between articulated values and observable practices. Where vloggers emphasized dignity, privacy, and respect in interviews, these priorities were consistently reflected in their content through respectful communication, modest presentation, and careful boundary-setting. This convergence strengthens the validity of the qualitative findings and demonstrates that *kambilang a taw* is not merely conceptual but lived and enacted in everyday digital practices. Consistent with digital media research emphasizing the role of symbolic representation and social engagement in identity construction (Liu et al., 2025), this study shows how localized, community-embedded values are performed and reproduced within globalized digital platforms. Thus, the findings indicate that Meranaw vloggers successfully uphold

core aspects of *kambilang a taw* in their online presence. Rather than yielding to viral appeal or performative aesthetics, they weave dignity, ethical care, and cultural responsibility into their digital narratives. In doing so, they demonstrate that social media can function not only as a site of cultural negotiation but also as a tool for sustaining cultural dignity and identity within contemporary digital environments.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The paper has examined the experiences of the Meranaw vloggers in keeping kampilang a taw within a cultural context of dignity, honor, modesty, privacy, respect, and religious decency in the online communities. The results indicate that the Meranaw vloggers are negotiators who transcend their cultural identity to follow modern trends in social media, which proves a conscious equilibrium in relation to being personal, actively interacting with viewers, and following the traditional values. Vloggers can effectively uphold dignity, protect family privacy and present cultural authenticity online through selective self-disclosure, creation of adaptive content, and decision-making with a cultural conceptualization. These practices were supported by observational data because it revealed that vlogs are always characterized by ethical awareness, respectful communication, and humble presentation, which emphasize that digital platforms can be used as a tool of cultural preservation, and not as a tool of cultural dilution.

Besides, the research highlights the wider scope of the implications of kampilang a taw as a moral and practical policy of creating digital content among marginalized cultural groups. The reflective practice of vloggers, their ability to navigate through social media trends, and their ability to make changes to their content and still maintain the cultural identity depict the interaction between knowledge, self-efficacy, and other practical skills in maintaining the culture online. The research results are relevant to the scholarly discourse on digital identity, cultural resilience, and ethical media practices, showing that the local culture values can be present in a digital participation which is global. Finally, the experiences of Meranaw vloggers indicate the possibility of social media to act as a platform of cultural affirmation, educating their audience and validating the community values, which can be useful to other ethnolinguistic groups that need to find a way to balance traditional and digital modernity.

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