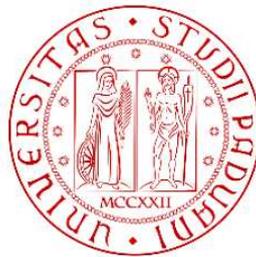


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**Master's degree in
Human Rights and Multi-level Governance**



Ang Nararapat:

**Human Rights Discourse on Facebook in the Context of
the 2016-2022 Philippine Drug War**

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“How do we recognize the shackles that tradition has placed upon us? For if we can recognize them, we are also able to break them.”

–Franz Boas

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Abstract

The state-sanctioned Philippine drug war from 2016 to 2022 is a major point of contention and controversy for Philippine politics, media, and human rights. The foundations and effectiveness of human rights are rooted in discourse, making the way human rights are articulated across various contexts an important field of study for both academics and practitioners, whether on the national or international level. This study takes comments from Facebook posts on the drug war, applying critical discourse analysis to examine their content and their underlying ideologies. Furthermore, these posts were created by three news outlets on Facebook from 2016 to 2022, demonstrating how the discourse can change over the years under the policy influenced by different newsmaking perspectives. The data reveals insight into how Facebook users articulate their discourse positions when it comes to the human rights during the drug war, which opens up new avenues of research towards the understanding of human rights in the contemporary era and its development.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, Philippine drug war, social media, discourse theory

Introduction

Human rights, in today's world, is a phrase often thrown around in the field of international relations, politics, and sometimes even in everyday conversation. It is understood as one of the pillars of contemporary international relations and international law and is a cornerstone for the establishment and mobilisation of civil society organisations, communities, businesses, and even entire movements. The ideals of human rights are known to be one of the driving factors for change, and it is often used to justify policies that include and exclude people alike.

However, the foundations of human rights and their continued credibility and effectiveness lie in the way that it is articulated across various contexts. A largely agreed-upon baseline definition for the current world order of international law and human rights was established through the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). This document was created through the joint efforts of leaders coming from different backgrounds, allowing it to be highly inclusive, flexible, and sensitive to various traditions and schools of thought. That, however, does not mean that the articulations, and thus the meanings embedded in the UDHR, are always uniformly translated into local contexts. While the UDHR can be used as a guide for advocacy, law, and morality on multiple levels of governance, that does not necessarily mean that it will be applied in a consistent manner. Furthermore, while this is the generally agreed-upon baseline, it is still heavily contested and may be selectively applied across different cases.

Such can be observed in the case of the Republic of the Philippines. While it is a founding member of the United Nations and thus subscribes to the ideals of the UN Charter, its own practice of human rights and rule of law have instances of inconsistency and frank hypocrisy. One of the most glaring examples of this practice in recent memory is the administration-endorsed drug war from 2016 to 2022 under former President Rodrigo Roa Duterte. This drug war resulted in over 6,000 victims according to official sources (Gita-Carlos 2022), many of whom were living in poverty. Individual perpetrators were rarely caught and tried, and there were many strong allegations that state police were involved in its operations. The number of victims themselves is also up for debate, with human rights organisations and watchdogs projecting as many as 12,000 to 30,000 deaths (Gavilan 2021; Regencia 2021). Although news outlets closely followed these incidents and established their connection to the drug war policy, and despite various local and international organisations

expressing their opposition towards it, public support for it and the government that enforced it remained strong throughout the term.

This dissertation will delve into the situation of human rights in the context of this drug war, particularly in how they are articulated by social media users. More specifically, it will be analysing Facebook comments on posts pertaining to the drug war killings over the course of Duterte's six-year administration using critical discourse analysis (CDA), with Foucauldian discourse theory serving as a theoretical framework. To tackle this, the paper is divided into five sections. The first section gives the rationale of the dissertation. This will be followed by the second section, which is a broad discussion of the Philippines' human rights situation and history leading up to the drug war. The paper will then examine the relevant existing literature on discourse and power, human rights discourse both on the international and national level, and social media, providing the theoretical foundations of the study. The third section details the methodology used to execute this study, together with the measures taken by the researcher to ensure compliance with research ethics. Finally, the final section discusses the findings, specifically exploring the common themes gleaned from the data and the implications and possible avenues for further research.

This dissertation is but a small contribution to the larger literature on Philippine political science, sociolinguistics, and human rights. It also serves as a case study (Jäger and Maier 2013) that can contribute to the greater discussion of human rights, how the discourse surrounding it may shift over time, its effectiveness and its development in the contemporary period. Furthermore, the study also sheds light on how social media can either facilitate or discourage political debate, or even affect polarisation (Kubin and von Sikorski 2021; Setiawati, Tiara, and Mustika 2023). This paper may also serve as a stepping stone into further research for various topics within the social sciences, such as value formation and generalisation, and dehumanisation.

I. Rationale

This section covers the significance of the dissertation and its contents. It also establishes the objectives, scope, and limitations of the study.

Significance of the Study

Although the term has come to an end, the Philippine drug war during the Duterte administration of 2016 to 2022 continues to be an important point of study and reflection for activists and politically conscious academics. The scale and intensity of the crackdown was unprecedented and seemed to come out of almost nowhere. How did it come to this? Why did it come to this? While there have been many attempts to make sense of the event in Filipino academic literature, there is still more that needs to be done to fully comprehend the gravity of this policy's effects on the national human rights situation moving forward.

This study hopes to shed light on the ways in which people on social media articulate their positions on the Philippines' drug war policy with respect to their ideas and understanding of the concept of human rights. By examining the language, justifications, and underlying ideologies and power structures, this study may reveal how the concept of human rights is understood on the ground and beyond the "working" definitions on the international level. Developing a "local" understanding of human rights is key to making its implementation and protection effective, and it can be instrumental in fields such as development and peacebuilding.

Discourse is a manifestation of existing power structures and dynamics, while also a way that these structures and dynamics are challenged. Because of this, language is an important key to understanding sociopolitical contexts, especially in relation to upholding human rights. By analysing the discourse surrounding the drug war, academics and practitioners on the field alike can gain some level of understanding of how the policy was rationalised, why it has thus far escaped any effective attempts at accountability, and how it can possibly be combatted. Besides the formally institutionalised courts, there also exists the court of public opinion. While it does not hold the same type of power that legal courts possess, this court is what every member of society takes part in, whether actively or not.

To address the issues being tackled in this dissertation, it will be guided by the following research questions:

1. How do discourse fragments touch upon what the human subject of the statement is/should be entitled to in the context of the drug war?
2. How does it relate to human rights as it is contemporarily understood?

Understanding the importance of discourse in politics and activism is a necessary and crucial part of the practical application of human rights literature. Establishing firm foundations on existing theory, this study hopes that it can be of use for future human rights and sociolinguistics scholars, as well as human rights activists and organisations. The literature surrounding the Philippine drug war is extensive, but the human rights discourse surrounding it has yet to be tackled from a critical discourse approach over the course of the entire six years it was actively being enforced. As such, this paper is grounded on the efforts of other academic scholars, and at the same time also opens up new avenues of enquiry and discussion.

Scope and Limitations

This study is limited to posts and comments written in English, Filipino, and Tagalog, and mixes of these three languages due to the researcher's own linguistic limitations. This is one of many points where further research may be done on this topic to create a more complete picture of the development of articulations of human rights in the context of human rights issues in the Philippines. This point of further research is especially important in the Philippine context given the country's linguistic diversity, and will be necessary to create a more complete picture of the situation on the ground. Furthermore, this study only covers nine posts and the reactions they elicited. While efforts were made to diversify the dataset as much as possible by choosing articles with differing ideological biases while keeping in mind popular trust in the news agencies that published those articles, this sample is but a small part of the larger discussion surrounding the drug war. That being said, as demonstrated by Soriano, David, and Atun's study in 2019, ideological bias in articles regarding the drug war extrajudicial killings was not incredibly diverse. Because of the events-focused approach and an effort towards a "just-the-facts" perspective in newsmaking, many news outlets tended to create articles that reflected the government's desired narrative, be it implicitly or explicitly, consciously or unconsciously.

While this study makes use of nine Facebook posts from news outlets to extract data from, it does not use these posts as the main texts to be analysed. This study is more

concerned with the relatively organic reactions towards the posts, taking the sociopolitical context into account. Further critical investigation is needed to analyse news outlets' posts themselves and make sense of them in light of existing literature.

Furthermore, this study will only be concerned with the Duterte administration's drug war. While Marcos, Jr.'s administration has a different policy approach towards illegal drugs, not much has been done to address the damage done by the drug war policy, and nor has the killings or impunity ceased (Rascoe n.d.). However, the immense institutional damage (Brooke et al. 2023) inflicted during the Duterte administration's drug war would not have been possible without the popular support the administration enjoyed, thus making discourse during this period an intriguing field of investigation.

With the wake of social media, the threat of bots and paid trolls' comments getting included in the dataset is highly plausible, especially when it comes to politically charged topics. This threat is especially relevant in the context of the Philippines, where independent reports have cited the existence and rampant use of troll farms to sway public opinion (Bengali and Halper 2019; Bradshaw and Howard 2017). However, there is no systematic way of identifying which comments are genuine and which ones have been written by trolls besides manually evaluating every commenter's profile at the time of writing. Even then, this process cannot guarantee the authenticity of every profile. Thus, troll comments may be included in the study, although measures have been taken to ensure that the data can still contribute substantially. Nonetheless, the way human rights is articulated, whether by a troll or not, is a relevant part of the overarching discourse on human rights. Language use and discourse reflects the subjective social reality while also shaping it, and understanding how these work is essential to the continued relevance and effectiveness of human rights.

II. Historical and Contemporary Context

This chapter provides the backdrop of this study, firstly by establishing the historical background leading up to the Duterte administration and the enforcement of the drug war policy. The social media landscape will also be discussed, as it is an integral component to understanding not only the study's significance, but also its effects on the offline world. This will be followed by a section explaining the Philippine context from the perspective of human rights, its foundations and institutionalisation within the country, and how it remains in action today.

The Philippine War on Drugs (2016-2022)

Background

Rodrigo Roa Duterte was elected as President of the Philippines on the 30th of June, 2016 (Placido 2016). He succeeded Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino III of the Liberal Party, son of the former Senator Benigno Aquino, Jr., who was a significant critic of the dictatorial regime under Ferdinand Marcos, Sr., from 1965 to 1986. Aquino's lineage played a large part in his electoral campaign's success (Tharoor 2010). However, the atmosphere of the 2016 Philippine elections was highly politically polarised. While Aquino's administration boasts of significant economic growth and development, much of this positive change was not felt at the level of the masses (Mirasol 2021). Furthermore, over the course of his term, Aquino developed an image of being detached from the common people, exemplified by government response to natural disasters. For example, when Super Typhoon Haiyan ravaged the Visayan islands, the Philippine government's humanitarian response was lacking, with foreign agencies and international organisations providing most of the aid that affected areas received. This event hurt Aquino and his government's reputation significantly (Pilling 2013). Thus, when a strong man who branded himself as “for the masses” bid for the presidency after an administration laden with unmet expectations and major shortcomings, people were eager to see the substantial positive change he appeared to represent. Duterte ran against Aquino III's partymate, Manuel “Mar” Roxas, and won, enjoying 38.6 per cent of total votes, with a historic voter turnout of 81 per cent (US-Philippines Society n.d.).

One of the reasons why Duterte was perceived as a departure from the usual image of a Philippine president is his background. As the first president hailing from the island group

of Mindanao, his election was seen as a significant shift away from Manila-centric politics. This was particularly relevant in the context of the then-ongoing conflict in Mindanao between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) (Cau 2017), as Aquino abdicated from the presidency with high tensions due to the two parties not seeing eye to eye in the peace process. The parties' relationship with each other as well as their relationship with the larger public is further nuanced by various bursts of conflict over the course of the process. Some of the most significant events in shaping public opinion are the systemic election-related killings of 58 people (at least 34 of which being journalists) in an event that is now known as the Maguindanao Massacre of 2009 (Sarmiento 2013), and the killing of the 44 Philippine National Police Special Action Force (PNP-SAF) officers by MILF soldiers in 2015 (Bajo 2024). These events made public opinion and thus political and legislative motivation towards resolving the peace process in the southern region of the Philippines rife with wariness and suspicion among the island groups.

Duterte's election as president made the national policy shift towards prioritising the peace process and facilitating greater economic and political autonomy for the Bangsamoro region (Maksum, Bustami, and Hindiarto 2024), and allowed the negotiations between the government and the Mindanao-based Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to start fresh with a new leader at its helm (Cau 2017). While the Aquino administration drafted the Bangsamoro Organic Law, it was during the Duterte administration that this law developed its key provisions, was passed and implemented (Philippine Congress 2018). His Mindanawon identity and affiliation with Mindanawon leaders was one of the major boosters of electoral support for him, and has also been a source of continuous support after the elections. The achievements of the BARMM were also attributed to his efforts and peacebuilding agenda in the region (Maksum, Bustami, and Hindiarto 2024; Tana 2023).

Besides the peace process, Duterte's time as president was also characterised by other significant traits. One of the most controversial of these is the war on drugs policy. As the mayor of Davao City prior to running for the presidency, one of Duterte's main campaign promises was to "clean up" the Philippines just as he did Davao (Nolasco 2018). His two-decade stint as mayor, based on accounts from supporters and Duterte himself, resulted in Davao City reducing its crime rates significantly. According to both local testimonies and international investigators, his approach towards criminality was also one of ruthlessness.

Various sources have provided insight into the avenues through which Duterte's mayoral administration reduced crime at a significant rate within the city. In trials held by the Senate investigating extrajudicial killings linked to the drug war (Senate hearing on extrajudicial killings, 15 September 2016 2016), witnesses, accomplices, and victims' families alike recounted how suspected criminals were identified and killed in various ways. Those involved in the "cleaning up" of Davao City were also included in the trials. Accomplices detailed the organisational structure of the operations, even naming significant leaders within the structure, including the former mayor himself (Evangelista 2023). His former hitmen have said that extrajudicial killings in Davao as far back as the 1990s (Phippen 2016), and that they were encouraged by to the monetary incentives that came with the "work." The International Criminal Court (ICC)'s preliminary investigation into the complaints against Duterte during his presidency regarding the extrajudicial killings also concluded that these executions have also been conducted in Davao since 2011, which lines up with investigations conducted by independent human rights organisations such as Human Rights Watch (Neistat and Seok 2009).

While he did not acknowledge the existence of the "Davao Death Squad" during the electoral campaign period, Duterte did not shy away from violent rhetoric when it came to solving the drug problem. By framing the issue as a "war," he emphasised that the eradication of illegal drugs would be his main priority during his administration should he be elected, and that he would not hesitate to use force to achieve this goal (Navera 2020). Duterte, according to his speeches both before and after his inauguration as president, expressed his desire to do what he did in Davao to the entirety of the Philippines. While this drew a lot of concern from human rights groups and international watchdogs (Commission on Human Rights 2021; International Criminal Court 2021; Lui 2017), he nonetheless won the elections with an unprecedented landslide victory.

Almost immediately after he was officially sworn into office, civilian killings began to headline the news, until it became an almost daily occurrence. The drug war policy spanned numerous initiatives, from rehabilitation mechanisms on the condition of "surrendering" (A Stark Choice For Filipino Drug Addicts 2016), to Oplan Tokhang ("Knock and Plead"), or Project Double Barrel. Oplan Tokhang consists of local government units submitting names of suspected drug criminals and police forces going to these suspects' houses with the aim of getting them to turn themselves in and submit themselves to

rehabilitation. However, the actual events that occur during these investigations do not always end diplomatically, and this resulted in 7,080 people killed, with 2,555 of which being a direct result of the police operations in 2017 (Tamayo 2018). It was also during this time that vigilante killings were endorsed by the President and consequently began intensifying (Kine 2017). As a result, while news journalists would try to keep up with the constant killing in various areas in Metro Manila (Evangelista 2023) and beyond, the scale at which the anti-drug operations were occurring, the enablement and systematic implementation of vigilantism (Kreuzer 2016), and the sheer volume of deaths that came with it made it difficult to do so (Manila's brutal nightshift 2017). The actual death toll of the drug war is highly contested, with the government tallying a total of 6,229 people killed in the crossfire of the anti-drug operations during the administration (Gita-Carlos 2022). Human rights organisations, on the other hand, estimate much higher numbers between 12,000 to 30,000 victims (Gavilan 2021; The Guardian 2018), as these reports include deaths not confirmed to have been perpetrated by law enforcement but were still connected to the drug war agenda. The blurred lines between official activity carried out by police forces and the killings by apparent third-party also helps perpetrators escape accountability. Government efforts to investigate these cases were slow and lacked transparency, all while Duterte's rhetoric continues to encourage ordinary citizens to "kill them [drug addicts and dealers] themselves" (BBC News 2020; Guardian staff and agencies 2016).

Politicians in the opposition put pressure on the administration for accountability, while bodies like the Philippines' very own national human rights institution, the Commission on Human Rights (CHR), warned against the development of a culture of impunity that heightened with the rise of extrajudicial killings (Commission on Human Rights 2017). By the year 2022, the institution reported investigating 3,790 case dockets with a concentration of cases under investigation in Central Luzon and Metropolitan Manila (Commission on Human Rights 2022). They, together with many human rights organisations, continuously called for an end to the bloody policy approach and demanded justice for the killings committed.

However, whistleblowers of the administration were often met with public humiliation, harassment and isolation. Former Senator Leila de Lima is a particularly well-known case as she initially facilitated the enquiries into the killings associated with the drug war policy. She was later accused of drug-related crimes, and was the subject of intense

defamation and scandal. She was eventually detained in Camp Crame for drug trafficking, obstruction of justice, and more despite organisations like Amnesty International condemning her arrest as an attempt to silence critique of the human rights violations occurring within the country (Human Rights Watch 2019). After seven years of her trial being pushed back due to witnesses failing to attend and constantly changing judges, the witnesses to de Lima's case retracted their statements against her, resulting in most of her charges being dropped as well as releasing her from arbitrary detention temporarily. She was only recently cleared of all charges in June 2024 (Amnesty International 2024).

Social Media Landscape during the Philippine Drug War

Social media is considered to be one of the important factors in Duterte's successful bid for the presidency in 2016 (Dangla 2016). The Philippine population is one of the most active on social media, with 73.4 percent of Filipinos being active social media users as of 2024, which grew from around 47 per cent back in 2016 (Kemp 2016). Within this population, a further 84 per cent use Facebook, making it the most popular social media platform for Filipinos, but TikTok is experiencing a significant growth in users as well (Barangas 2024; Newman et al. 2023). Social media is one of the primary ways through which OFWs and Filipino diaspora stay in contact with their families at home, which contributes to why Filipinos are online as much as they are. Many choose to leave the country in search of better opportunities, and the country relies on its labour force export in the form of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) for about 10% of its GDP (Albert et al. 2023), with remittances reaching up to 239 million Philippine pesos in the year 2023 (Philippine Statistics Authority 2024). Thus, social media remains the best and most popular option to remain in contact with friends and family back home, which is evidenced by the 83% social network penetration among Filipinos as compared to the 58% global average (Brutas 2015). This context also makes Filipinos prone to spending a lot of time on social media and actively participating within the digital court of public opinion.

However, the Philippines is known to many media researchers as the "patient zero of the disinformation epidemic." As the "social media capital of the world," the Philippines is not safe from fake news and disinformation as formal institutions try to keep up with the unprecedented rise of social media (Ong and Cabañes 2018). While it is generally seen as beneficial for democracy as it facilitates political campaigning and political expression, social media also comes with new issues that may destabilise democracy, such as disinformation,

political polarisation, and new forms of security threats (Hunter 2023). These risks, coupled with a highly engaged audience deeply penetrated by social media, make the online playing field in the Philippines an environment vulnerable to political exploitation.

Even before Duterte's presidential bid, many people have already expressed support for him on social media due to his perceived effectiveness as a civil servant. In her book documenting her work and experience as a journalist covering the drug war, Evangelista described Facebook groups with titles like the Duterte Defence Squad, where people would express their loyalty towards then-mayor Duterte and their willingness to do anything to protect him. This support only proliferated as he announced his decision to run for President. He was given monikers like "The Punisher" for his no-nonsense and violent approach towards policy, and was even named the "King of Facebook Conversations" by the company itself in 2016 (Dangla 2016).

Media coverage throughout the drug war was intense and highly politically charged. In their 2021 study on how news articles reported killings and incidents related to the drug war, Soriano et. al. describes how the drug war's narrative was crystallised by the news outlets as cases came out. Over the course of six years, reports on the drug war were regularly published, and multiple killings often happened in one night (Manila's brutal nightshift 2017). News outlets needed to keep up with the amount of news they needed to report, which caused the process to be sped up in a way that sacrifices other perspectives that would give further nuance to the incident, and the policy's implementation as a whole. For example, because interviewing a victim's relatives tended to be less available for testimonies due to the emotional toll of losing a loved one, many journalists needed to rely on official documents like police reports to write their news articles. This approach would result in most "fresh" news stories being framed from the police's perspective, or would at least take precedence over other perspectives that may have been included in the article.

That is not to say that there were no attempts to criticise the drug war policy online. Just like their "real-world" counterparts, social media users also expressed their scepticism and opposition towards the policy. The difference, however, is that their criticism was engaged with fervently by supporters and possibly systematised troll accounts. Duterte's electoral campaign and administration in particular have been surrounded by accusations and evidence of using social media to influence public opinion in his favour (Bradshaw and Howard 2017; Ong and Cabañes 2018), which the former president has also admitted to on

several occasions (Mongaya 2017). However, regardless of whether or not the manipulation was effective or not, that does not subtract from the discussion of the overall human rights discourse on the drug war. These architects of disinformation (Ong and Cabañes 2018) employ strategic communication and articulate their political positions in order to effectively fulfill their objectives. Because these debates can generally be viewed publicly on social media platforms, by stating their opinions in a way that can encourage susceptible ordinary people to gravitate towards a certain discursive position or become less inclined towards another, public opinion can be shaped by them (Ausat 2023).

History of Human Rights in the Philippines

Martial Law

Human rights has been an important advocacy since the establishment of the Philippines, which is evident in its status as a founding member of the United Nations. However, the imposition of martial law within the state during the late 20th century was a major turning point for human rights within the Philippines.

Ferdinand E. Marcos, Sr. was the 10th President of the Third Philippine Republic, and he served from 1965 till his deposition in 1986. His regime continues to be a controversial period in Philippine history, as it was he who declared a nationwide Martial Law that resulted in then unprecedented state repression, violence, and impunity. This declaration also allowed him to keep his position well beyond constitutional limits on the premise of protecting the country from the Communist threat.

Marcos was initially elected in 1965, and later got reelected in 1969. His reelection, however, was rife with controversy, with allegations of graft and corruption as well as civil unrest due to growing wealth inequalities. Incidents like the Jabidah Massacre of 1968 (Bangsamoro Information Office 2021) also soured relations between the Mindanao island region and Manila, causing greater sentiment for Mindanawon separatism. Seeking to extend his stay in power beyond the prescribed two presidential term limits of the 1935 Constitution and completely capture control over the country, Marcos then declared a nationwide Martial Law on the 21st of September 1972 with the justification of increasingly radical movements threatening national security (Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines 1972; Philippine Free Press 1972).

From 1972 to 1986, the military and police force systematically captured, tortured, and even killed those who opposed the dictatorship. Insurgent forces like the National People's Army (NPA) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) pushed back on the government from the countryside and Mindanao, but many were not spared. According to human rights organisations like Amnesty International and Task Force Detainees of the Philippines, this period resulted in approximately 3,200 extrajudicial killings, 700 disappearances, 34,000 documented tortures, and 70,000 incarcerations, most of which were warrantless (Amnesty International 1976; Bicker 2022). Survivors of torture during the dictatorship testified to their horrific experiences while detained, with the goal of coercing them to confess to being communist (Bicker 2022). Detained women would experience brutal sexual torture, and many victims still carry the scars from their experiences until the present day (Magramo 2022; Millennials for Martial Law 2016). Those who were murdered or "salvaged" were often severely mutilated and dumped in visible areas to serve as a warning for those who dared to oppose the government. Even as this dissertation is being written, many of the disappeared, otherwise called desaparecidos, have yet to be found, and surviving relatives and victimised organisations continue to seek justice for the atrocities committed during the Marcos regime (Human Rights Violations Victims' Memorial Commission n.d.). Despite the grave human rights violations that occurred during this time, international actors, more specifically the United States, did not raise any concerns with the policy as it was framed as an effort to suppress Communist forces during the height of the Cold War (Celoza 1997). Because only selected media outlets were allowed to operate during this time, independent news cannot report the atrocities being committed on a large scale, and this lack of information dissemination may be a factor as to why Martial Law remains a controversial historical period today despite numerous efforts to memorialise it and the atrocities committed during that time (Teodoro 2002).

The beginning of Martial Law's end was sparked by the assassination of a key opposition leader, former Senator Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino, Sr., after returning from the States receiving medical treatment. This event became the trigger for a nationwide movement to remove Marcos from office. It was a movement of great diversity; the Roman Catholic Church, Protestant Churches, the liberals, military defectors, and progressive, militant student groups all came together in the name of democracy and liberty. After three days of nonviolent protest along Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA) some 2 million civilians actively participating and pushing back against military forces (Salina 2024), Marcos fled the country,

ending his 20-year stint in office. This moment in history became known as the EDSA Revolution, the Yellow Revolution (after the yellow ribbons used to commemorate Senator Aquino, Sr. throughout the protest), and most famously, the People Power Revolution.

Establishment of the Commission on Human Rights

After Marcos fled the Philippines, the triumphant political elite began creating a new constitutional order. The new constitution contained explicit and more restricting term limitations to prevent a two-decade-long regime like Marcos's from happening again. These limitations include the ability of a successful presidential candidate to hold the position only for one term of six years with no possibility of re-election, and any person who has held the position of president for more than four years cannot run again (The Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines 1987, Art. VII, Sec. 4). Furthermore, to address the grave human rights violations committed during this period, the new government established the Human Rights Violations Victims' Memorial Commission (HRVVMemCom) to handle reparations to the living victims of martial law or their surviving relatives (Human Rights Violations Victims' Memorial Commission n.d.). Lastly, the constitution also included the establishment of the Commission on Human Rights in response to these violations and any potential abuses in the future.

The Philippine Commission on Human Rights (CHR) serves as a watchdog and whistleblower for cases of human rights abuses and violations. According to Art. XIII Sec. 17(1) of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, the CHR is mandated to:

1. Investigate, on its own or on complaint by any party, all forms of human rights violations involving **civil and political rights** [emphasis added];
2. Adopt its operational guidelines and rules of procedure, and cite for contempt for violations thereof in accordance with the Rules of Court;
3. Provide appropriate legal measures for the protection of human rights of all persons within the Philippines, as well as Filipinos residing abroad, and provide for preventive measures and legal aid services to the underprivileged whose human rights have been violated or need protection;
4. Exercise visitorial powers over jails, prisons, or detention facilities;
5. Establish a continuing program of research, education, and information to enhance respect for the primacy of human rights;

6. Recommend to the Congress effective measures to promote human rights and to provide for compensation to victims of violations of human rights, or their families;
7. Monitor the Philippine Government's compliance with international treaty obligations on human rights;
8. Grant immunity from prosecution to any person whose testimony or whose possession of documents or other evidence is necessary or convenient to determine the truth in any investigation conducted by it or under its authority;
9. Request the assistance of any department, bureau, office, or agency in the performance of its functions;
10. Appoint its officers and employees in accordance with law; and
11. Perform such other duties and functions as may be provided by law.

Today, the CHR is still a significant actor within the Philippine political arena, conducting investigations and publishing reports on the current state of human rights in the country. It has played a prominent role in various issues that the State has had to address, most prevalently during the drug war. Because of that, it had often found itself at odds with the administration (Commission on Human Rights 2019, 2021). During the Duterte administration, the CHR actively investigated various drug war-related cases, most of which involved killings by the police or by unknown third party assailants (Commission on Human Rights 2022), as well as uncovered secret jails where inmates were held in subpar conditions (Human Rights Watch 2017). The administration, on the other hand, has consistently denied the CHR access to relevant police files for these investigations (Gavilan 2022).

International human rights obligations

The Philippines is one of the 51 founding members of the United Nations, having signed the UN Charter in 1945. It is also one of only four Asian countries who founded the UN (United Nations Philippines n.d.).

In line with its commitment to international human rights, the Philippines is currently party to seven UN conventions and three optional protocols, most notably the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Meanwhile, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) and its Optional Protocol have remained in the accession stage, while the Convention for the

Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CED) and its interstate communication procedure remain unratified (UN Treaty Body Database n.d.). These are the international obligations that will provide the scope for this study's discussion on human rights. While it has not yet signed the CAT and the CED, this inaction may be treated as an indicator of the country's current position on the issue in question.

During Duterte's administration, the Philippines had a tumultuous relationship with international entities. Early on in the term, the UN Special Rapporteur for extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions, Dr. Agnes Callamard, held a surprise visit in the Philippines condemning the government's approach towards illegal drugs (Lui 2017). She later requested entry into the country to investigate the possibility of extrajudicial killings occurring during the drug war policy implementation, which was strongly shut down by the government. These were complemented by harsh speeches characteristic of Duterte's rhetoric (Ranada 2017).

It was also during this time that the Philippines withdrew from the ICC. After preliminary probing into the extrajudicial killings that have been occurring during and prior to the drug war, the ICC formally opened an investigation in 2021 on the basis of Article 15(3) of the Rome Statute, specifically looking into the possibility of crimes against humanity being committed (Carranza 2021). The case would cover extrajudicial killings since as early as 2011, as it had found evidence of such killings being conducted by the Davao Death Squad (International Criminal Court 2021). However, the country withdrew from the Rome Statute in 2019 after the launch of the preliminary investigations, making further probing into the issue difficult as the government stated that it would not cooperate with the Court (Bautista, Andrade, and Gascon 2024). Because of the withdrawal as well, the investigation can only cover violations that happened between the first of November 2011 until the 16th of March 2019. Nonetheless, the ICC has attempted to continue its probe, continuously building on the case by looking for more witnesses to aid in the possible trial, and the CHR has expressed its willingness to cooperate in its efforts (Subingsubing 2023). The Philippines under Marcos, Jr. has yet to return to the ICC, and any possibility towards it is still highly uncertain (Ayalin 2024; Bautista, Andrade, and Gascon 2024).

III. Theoretical Foundations

This section provides a broad overview of existing literature relevant to the study, and establishes its theoretical framework.

Review of Related Literature

Discourse and power

Discourse is an important component of sociopolitical life, the public sphere being one of the arenas within which policies and norms are enforced and contested. According to Wodak, Fairclough, and Mulderrig (2013), discourse is both “socially constitutive” and “socially conditioned.” That is to say, it is a vital factor in shaping society, while also being shaped by it. Furthermore, it is also dynamic and is continuously changing just as society does (Anthonissen 2006). Because of its deep relationship with society, its formation, and its maintenance, discourse is a useful lens through which to study social phenomena and change, in this case the drug war policy of the Philippines during the Duterte administration.

In his seminal work, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (1971), Michel Foucault proposes the initial idea that the framework of knowledge is not universal: what is understood to be “natural” by societal standards is only considered to be so because people need it to make sense of themselves, each other, and their surroundings. There is a history behind the way society categorises knowledge, and it is by uncovering the rationale behind this categorisation that one can question it. In other words, by breaking down the rationale behind the structures that are considered “natural,” one can scrutinise how these structures come to be and why they are the way that they are. His theory of discourse hinges on three axes: discourse, power, and knowledge (Yin 2023).

As previously established, knowledge is the limits of what a society considers to be “natural.” Collections of “true” statements contribute to the establishment and maintenance of a social construction of knowledge, and the collection of these statements are discourses (Yin 2023). Language is a key component in revealing this rationale, as it is one of the primary ways through which discourse can be exercised. As such, it is through language that the thoughts behind the texts (or fragments) being analysed can be gleaned. Finally, the dynamics of power can be observed from discourse, and thus, the organisation of knowledge. As such, the meanings within these discourses, the power dynamics, can shift over the course of time

and as society continues to exist and as power continues to flow from everything (Miller 1990). These make discourse analysis an attractive approach to understanding how society functions. All of this being said, a researcher employing discourse analysis must also remain conscious that they themselves are also operating within their own frame of reference, limited by the structures that they find themselves in (Wodak 2013).

Foucault's works established the foundations of discourse theory, and this has been further elaborated by various scholars over the decades. The work surrounding discourse analysis has exhibited the development of further theoretical concepts that build upon what he has established, such as the systematisation of the components of discourse (Jäger and Maier 2013). The following are some of the key elements that this dissertation will be focusing on:

1. Discursive events: events that are extensively and intensively talked about, and affect the development of discourse;
2. Discourse fragments: the individual texts that exist within a discourse;
3. Discourse strands: discourse surrounding a particular topic; and
4. Discourse positions: the "ideologically positions" used by different members of society to "participate in and evaluate discourse."

These have led to connections with the notion of intertextuality (Alfaro 1996; Fairclough 1992; Kristeva 1980) in line with the deep interweaving of texts through discourse strand entanglement and its effect on meaning-making, fields of study such as sociolinguistics, corpus linguistics (Baker et al. 2013), political communication (Chouliaraki 2013), memory (Achugar 2007; Van Dijk 1976), and many others. The evolution of the theory then resulted in various approaches towards studying discourse, one of which being critical discourse analysis.

Critical discourse analysis (henceforth called CDA), in particular, is a discipline focused on uncovering the power and social inequalities that manifests through discourse. Scholars such as Wodak, Fairclough, and Van Dijk are among its main proponents, but a plethora of literature developing and applying the approach has also been generated by many academics over the course of time. Fairclough and Wodak (Al-Mas'udi and Al-A'mery 2021; Fairclough and Wodak 1997) sum up the largely agreed-upon main principles and assumptions of CDA as follows:

1. CDA addresses social problems,
2. Power relations are discursive,
3. Discourse constitutes society and culture,
4. Discourse does ideological work,
5. Discourse is historical,
6. The link between text and society is mediated,
7. Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory, and
8. Discourse is a form of social action.

Additionally, this branch of studies is largely agreed to be problem-based (Fairclough 1989; Jäger and Maier 2013; Van Dijk 2015; Wodak 2013), thus CDA is not considered to be a methodology or a theoretical framework, but instead is an approach to studying discourse, language, and society. For others, CDA may also be seen as a “social movement” that can greatly contribute to socio-political change (Amoussou and Allagbe 2018; Van Dijk 2015). Some prominent models used in CDA are described in the succeeding paragraphs.

Fairclough first identifies CDA as an approach for identifying social inequality and facilitating social change. He highlights the often overlooked role of language in the normalisation and institutionalisation of unequal power relations. Furthermore, discourse sees language as a social practice and a social process, meaning that it is integrated into society, its functions and phenomena, and is also a part of social processes within its context (and not just a reflection of these other processes). This makes it ideological by nature. Ideology refers to implicit assumptions of “common sense” that are indicative of power relations and dynamics (Fairclough 1989), and are usually not challenged unless one is consciously aware of it. It is apparent in language with how persons of different classes, competencies, and levels of authority speak with each other (Mayor and Bietti 2017), how discursive events are framed (Fairclough 1995), and how meaning is made and negotiated. In his proposal for a procedure to follow when using CDA, Fairclough identifies three dimensions of discourse: texts, interactions, and context.

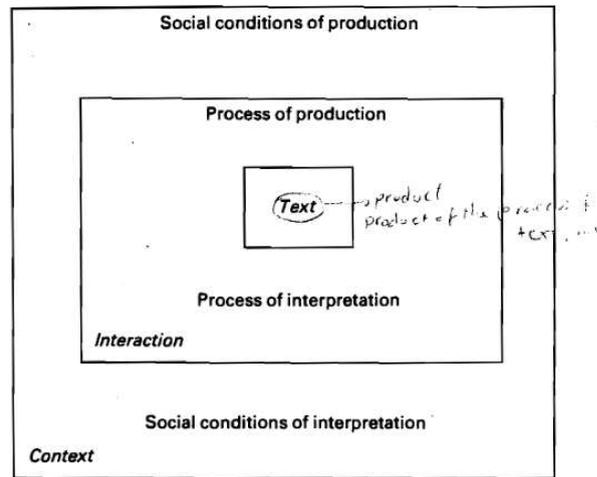


Fig. 2.1 Discourse as text, interaction and context

Figure 1. Fairclough's model for CDA, from *Language and Power* (Fairclough 1989).

These three dimensions each have their own equivalents in the use of CDA, the equivalents being description, interpretation, and explanation respectively (Fairclough 1989). Description pertains to the text being analysed, such as a poster, for example. Interpretation is concerned with how interactions affect the production of the text, as well as participant interactions with the text and with each other. Lastly, explanation investigates the text within its social context. In creating this model, Fairclough's framework and approach towards CDA is mainly concerned about a text's social, linguistic, and political aspects (Al-Mas'udi and Al-A'mery 2021), and serves as a central conceptualisation in the field (The Lingwist 2020).

Van Dijk, on the other hand, approaches CDA in a different manner as compared to Fairclough. While he also understands CDA as an approach through which power dynamics can be observed in language, he focuses on how discourse affects knowledge and ideology, which ultimately manifests in action. The perspective of social cognition and psychology (Al-Mas'udi and Al-A'mery 2021) is thus investigated more deeply, together with the effects of the Gramscian concept of hegemony in discourse. Powerful groups within society tend to hold the most control and access to different discourse planes (Jäger and Maier 2013), such as medical and political discourses, which allows them to shape these planes and impose their perspectives upon the rest of society (Van Dijk 2008). These also manifest on various levels, from the micro, meso, and up to the macro level within a society. In Van Dijk's view, because certain groups can access and control various forms of public discourse, this allows them to shape knowledge and consequently, control the opinions, ideologies, and even actions of the rest of society. The link between discourse and power (and its abuse) can thus be found

within social cognition, and is exhibited partly by language use. In other words, powerful groups can exercise some extent of “mind control” on society through discourse, and by controlling the mind, these groups and institutions may have some degree of control over actions as well (Van Dijk 2015). The abuse of this power is known as domination.

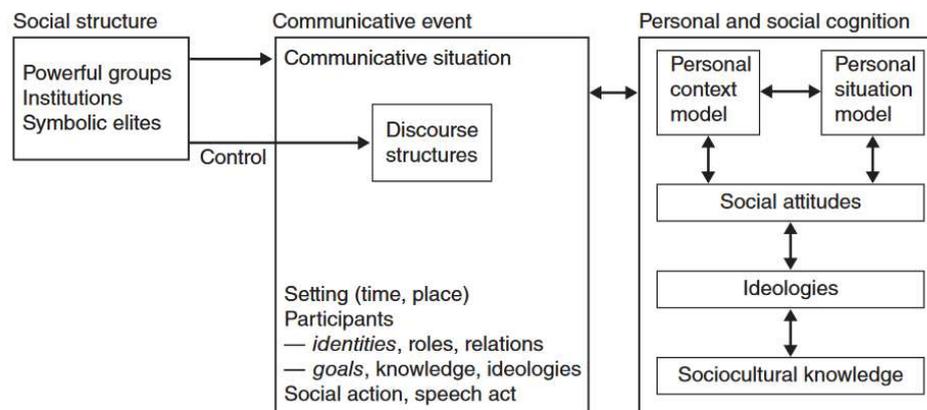


Figure 22.1 Schema of the discursive reproduction of power.

Figure 2. Van Dijk’s model of the discursive reproduction of power, from *Critical Discourse Analysis* (Van Dijk 2015).

Language from this perspective is more of a manifestation of the mental frameworks that have been established and shaped by discourse. The “us versus them” mindset is also addressed by this framework, in how dominant groups present themselves and how they present groups they designate as the “other.”

Lastly, Wodak’s Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) is based on the principle that all discourses are historical, and therefore a text’s socio-political context must be focused on during the investigation. It particularly focuses on the evolution of a discourse as the context also changes, and highlights the role of intertextuality and interdiscursivity in the changes within a context, and how it then affects the discourse surrounding a certain topic (Reisigl and Wodak 2017). Wodak divides the approach into five steps, which includes preliminary research on the topic of discourse to be studied, data collection and selection, formulation of research questions, and qualitative analysis.

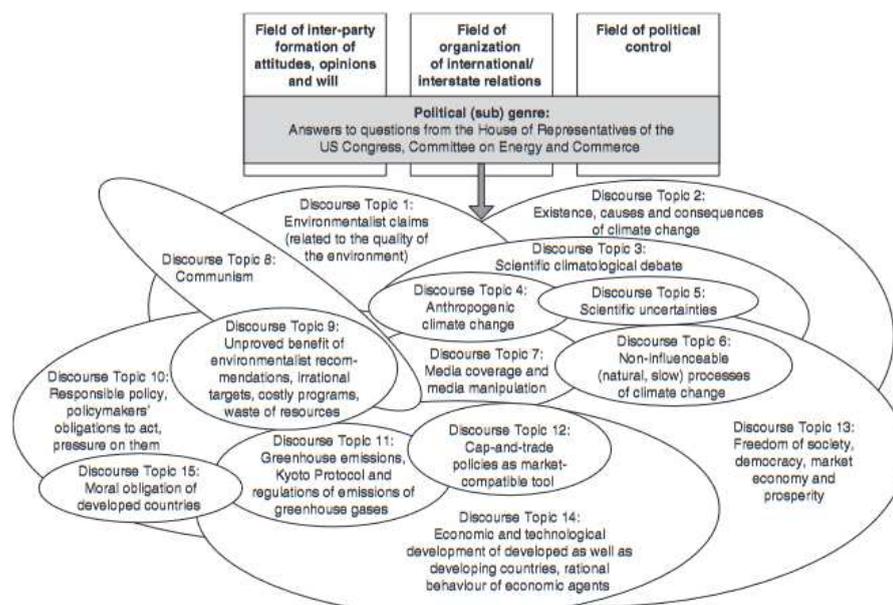


FIGURE 4.3 Selected discourse topics in the questions to, and answers of, Václav Klaus

Figure 3. Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach analysis (Reisigl and Wodak 2017).

Wodak illustrates her model through an initial analysis of discourse on climate change and environmental policy, as shown above. The discourse on climate change and environmental policy in this figure is deeply intertwined with various discourses regarding other social issues and policy areas. The relevance of intertextuality and interdiscursivity is clearly demonstrated in applying this approach, thus justifying the importance of the context within which discourse is developed (Amoussou and Allagbe 2018).

While it has these prominent frameworks that guide research, CDA does not have a strict methodology that academics must follow. As it is not associated with a specific methodology, it is also flexible in how studies can be conducted, so long as the field's principles and aims are upheld. Scholars are able to innovate in conducting research, as was demonstrated in Baker and his colleagues' article (2013) that takes practises associated with both CDA and corpus linguistics. The combination of methodology generally associated with different fields of study resulted in analyses that complemented each other, with one filling the gaps that the other cannot address.

Because of its politically conscious orientation, CDA has been used in studies that aim to uncover the underlying ideologies within a society in terms of discursive events,

which can include human rights in its context. A case study by Achugar (2007) on memory of the Uruguayan military and their articulation of human rights, for example, scrutinises texts produced by the military and how they would frame their role in the 1973-1985 dictatorship. This study reveals how language contributes to memory construction and meaning making, particularly from a perpetrator's point of view as the socio-historical context changes. Language use, such as the use of metaphors, impersonalisation or distancing through the linguistic constructions chosen (e.g. passive verb nominalisations), and the establishment of the "us" and "them" through moral or ethical evaluation, reflects how a perpetrating institution maintains its continuity, and opens up questions as to how "the past" can truly be "dealt with." Another case study on the testimonies from the proceedings held by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa (Anthonissen 2006) approaches the problem in a similar manner, but takes into account the testifiers' emotional state and how it affected their speech. The data also revealed what each testifying group (the journalist witnesses, members of the community, and the police force) thematically prioritised in their speeches, and how they spoke about the Trojan Horse Incident of 1985. Furthermore, the responses of the commissioners to these testimonies were analysed, and revealed how this contributes to the reconstruction of South African memory of the apartheid. The TRC's duty was to rebuild South African society, and this was partly done by reconstructing a unifying narrative based on the testimonies of different groups, while also helping victims look at their trauma in a way that would help them to move forward. It is apparent that issues like reconstructing collective memory after grave human rights violations, helping victims heal, and holding perpetrators accountable for their actions, can be addressed, at least in part, by CDA's approach. Thus, its practical application is not one to be overlooked, especially when it comes to important concepts with heavy implications on the world such as human rights.

Human rights discourse

Human rights itself is not a recently developed concept, and its history, particularly its origins, is highly debated upon. Early forms of "rights" can be observed in the legal code of ancient civilisations from different parts of the world. The Magna Carta of 1215 in England became a precedent for notions of universal human rights in how it constitutionally limits the power of the monarchy, alluding to inherent natural rights possessed by the ordinary people that cannot be overruled by royalty. Put simply, the actual "beginning" of human rights is not definite, because it has, in some way, always been invoked by people in response to injustice

(Salojärvi 2020). However, its current dominant articulations (Mahoney 2007) can be traced back to the Enlightenment period of Western Europe, when thinkers like Locke, Rousseau, and Voltaire produced and developed the concept of natural rights from the medieval period into natural law. These notions were then enshrined in some historically significant documents such as the United States's Declaration of Independence and in France's Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (Burke and Kirby 2018).

Human rights discourse returned to the forefront of international politics after World War 2, particularly as the atrocities and the tragedies of the Holocaust became the centre of public discourse, narrative- and identity-building (Alexander 2002; Gayim 2016). It became a more prominent part of international rhetoric, and became an instrumental element in the creation of the contemporary international rules-based world order. This is exemplified by the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which was hailed as the "common standard of achievement" for a world rising from the ashes of war (Hallo De Wolf and Moerland 2023). Contrary to popular belief, the UDHR's development was an effort that involved representatives of different cultural, political, and social backgrounds. To this day, this document continues to be an important reference for human rights and its standards for the contemporary world, whether on an international or local level.

Given the existence of the UDHR and the process that went into creating it, the notion of human rights is not a completely Western concept altogether. The UDHR drafting committee was composed of a diverse set of diplomats, philosophers, and activists. Two of the key contributors in the drafting process besides Eleanor Roosevelt were Peng Chun Chang of the Republic of China, and Charles Habib Malik of Lebanon, both of whom were philosophers who did not come from the political West. Indian activist Hansa Mehta and Hernàn Santa Cruz of Chile were also part of the drafting committee (United Nations n.d.), and offered perspectives that further nuanced the standards set within the Declaration, such as the inclusion of socio-economic rights and gender equality. Chang was a Confucian philosopher, which was evidenced by his push for an educational approach over a legislative or legal approach within the Declaration. He was also highly critical of the supposed benefits of colonialism and was supportive of the secularisation of human rights (Roth 2023). Meanwhile, Malik was well-versed in Thomism, natural rights theory, and existentialism, and contributed to the articulation of religion's role in the fulfillment of human rights (Petkoff 2023). After the draft was released for approval within the General Assembly of the United

Nations, representatives from former colonies pushed for the recognition of colonial injustice and abuse. Put simply, every step within the drafting of the UDHR was done deliberately and conscientiously, and every article was scrutinised from different angles and fiercely debated upon before reaching its final version. After intense debate regarding the content and phraseology of the declaration, none of the participants found it necessary to reject the Declaration outright. Despite this process, the universality aspect of the Declaration continues to be questioned, and this has led to a plentiful body of literature by human rights scholars from various backgrounds.

A comprehensive study by Xu (2015) analysed human rights from a Confucian perspective, the two concepts' relationship with each other and its potential impact on modernity context of China. She argued for the potential of framing human rights within the context of Confucianism, which would open up possibilities for non-Western understandings of human rights and consequently alternative forms of modernisation and development. While Confucianism does not have a concept of rights in the Western sense of the word, there are a lot of shared points such as morals from which the two may converge. According to Xu, human rights is a necessary part of modern society, and Confucianism is not incompatible with neither modernity nor human rights. While it does not share the same characteristics as Christianity and Islam when it comes to the secularisation of religion or the existence of a dedicated social institution for the propagation of its teachings, the main issues lie in three factors: the lack of concept of rights within the framework of the philosophy itself, the one-sided approach from the perspective of the ruling class, and the primacy of the State over the individual. However, Xu argues that it may be possible to articulate human rights based on Confucianism in two ways: first, by determining the "inner values" of specific human rights and second, by examining the relationship between the State and individuals in the realisation of certain human rights. As a result, it is possible to have a Confucian articulation of human rights on a two-level structure: the international and cultural levels. On the international level, determining the "inner value" of a particular human right can help connect it more strongly to a Confucian counterpart, and this approach may help address some issues posed above. For example, while Confucianism does not advocate for liberal individualism, civil and political rights can be understood as a social duty that is needed for society to live harmoniously. On the cultural level, on the other hand, human rights can be integrated through Confucianism's moral and theological foundations, the creative self-transformation

of the philosophy itself to accommodate human rights, or the promotion of Confucian liberalism to complement Western liberalism.

Shifting towards literature on human rights from yet another perspective, Hellyer compiled literature on Islamic articulations, perceptions, and perspectives on human rights in their work. Uddin (2018) saw it as possible for Islam to coexist harmoniously with human rights because human rights does not stem entirely from Western thought, because of the Muslim contributions to the drafting of the UDHR, and because Muslim activists have been able to utilise and articulate their religion in such a way that pushes for policies oriented towards human rights. Fadel (2018), on the other hand, proposes that the primary point of disagreement between Islam and human rights is each others' understandings of freedom, particularly positive or negative freedom. As such, Islamic law can only be in line with human rights law inasmuch as the practitioners wish to practise being a Muslim, and it would be impossible to completely integrate them with each other (Fadel 2018). This tension within the idea that Islam and "Western" human rights are incompatible with each other is further illustrated by Almahfali and Avery (2023)'s review of journal articles written in Arabic, which describe the clash of Islamic and Western civilisation and that human rights can only be universal through the "generalisation of a system of governance based on Shari'a law and the ideal of the Rightly Guided Caliphs." Yet other scholars see the possibility of coexistence by implementing certain actions such as the proper teaching of tarbiya and the reexamination of Islamic legal theory and roots (Hendricks 2018; el-Houdaiby 2018). These works are some examples of how the concepts and ideals of human rights can be understood and integrated into different cultural contexts, contrary to cultural relativist arguments against the applicability of human rights outside of a Western context. Nonetheless, the articulation of human rights in the context of Islam continues to be a crucial point of discussion for human rights scholars, and is a prime example of ongoing debate on the nature of human rights and how it ought to be applied in the contemporary world.

As of the time of writing, human rights literature writes of the current world undergoing a human rights crisis. Fagan (2019), for example, describes the gentrification of human rights as "the widespread displacement of what was an underdeveloped human rights-based engagement with deprivation, inequality, and social marginalisation within so-called post-industrialist societies." In other words, human rights have evolved in such a way that it has lost sight of its more radical roots, and has come to serve the interests of the

elite and marginalises the groups most in need of it. He attributes the failure of human rights to its link to neoliberal institutional capture, its over-dependence on legal frameworks for enforcement, its need to cater to the interests of the privileged to survive, and its imposition being seen as a form of cultural imperialism, among many others. The current state of human rights as it is today is one that does not respond to more pressing issues such as exploitation, discrimination, and has even become a part of the problem. He proposes that the solution for human rights to become effective in its mandate is to refocus on its initial egalitarian ideals, resist neoliberal influence, and address structural inequality.

A practical example of this phenomenon is the vernacularisation of human rights by Burmese Buddhist religious and political elites (Doffegnies and Wells 2022). Despite Myanmar's democratisation and renewed commitment to human rights under Aung San Suu Kyi, human rights remains an elusive subject among Burmese leadership, especially when it comes to religious and ethnic minorities. These leaders would respond in three different ways: avoiding human rights discourse, opposing it, or hybridising it in such a way that would allow for the exclusion of certain groups of people. As a result, human rights—or at least, its articulations and application—becomes detrimental to the society it was meant to aid. In this study on Myanmar, human rights has become something that needs to be earned, and that in order to earn these rights, minority groups like women and Muslims must in turn “take responsibility” and “forego excessive demands.” Doffegnies and Wells' study gives an idea of how the concept of human rights is received, and how it changes as it transfers from one context to another. This phenomenon makes it all the more necessary to examine how human rights gets articulated across various contexts, and whether it has actually even come to take on a detrimental meaning in some of them.

This is evident not only in academic writing. News from all around the world speak of a rise in demagoguery (Fagan 2019) and strongman personalities in national political arenas who often have explicitly anti-human rights policy agendas (Pernia 2019), which then have considerable effects on international politics. This rise has resulted in devastating consequences on human rights, especially those of minority groups such as migrants, who are often the designated scapegoats for social issues. Furthermore, multiple violent conflicts such as the continued assault on the Gaza Strip by Israel has put human rights violations at the spotlight of international media. However, this is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the human rights crisis occurring across the world. While international law sets the

worldwide standards, how these standards translate into the national and local spheres of influence is a different story altogether. How the concept of human rights is received within lower levels of governance is highly dependent on the way that the international interacts with them (Gordon and Berkovitch 2007), and also the perception of how these ideas are imposed or introduced into local contexts. Investigating these local contexts and their articulations of human rights is the first step to protecting these rights.

Human rights discourse in the Philippines

Literature on human rights in the Philippines is rich and comprehensive, although it may not appear directly related to the topic at first glance. Much of the literature in relation to the articulation of human rights is centred around policies, and the moral evaluations and reactions towards these policies, and is framed as such.

Understanding a form of Filipino virtue ethics is a key step in understanding how human rights can be articulated within the Philippine context. There is likely more than one form of virtue ethics due to the linguistic diversity of the country, but given the linguistic scope of the paper, the literature will only tackle this particular framework. This iteration of Filipino virtue ethics rooted in Tagalog has two pillars from which all other concepts flow from: the *loób* and the *kapwa* (Reyes 2015). For the sake of simplicity, these will simply be referred to as the “relational self” and “the persons-in-relation.” The former’s translation also contains a connotation that implies seeing the “self” in “others” (Enriquez 1992). According to Reyes (2015), the endgoal of this ethical framework is the unity of these two pillars. In other words, this Filipino virtue ethics seeks to achieve harmony in relationships between the self and others. As such, one’s relationship with the community is instrumental in realising one’s full potential, as it is through one’s community that one is able to do so (Anasarias 2008). Concepts like *utang na loób* stems from this notion, and can partly explain why corrupt practices still persist within the Philippines despite being the most “democratic” and in Asia: the protection and maintenance of relationships take precedence over the law (Enriquez 1992, taken from Reyes 2015). Furthermore, because one is expected to succeed with the community, choosing to succeed individually at the expense of the community is considered undesirable. The community will respond by redirecting the individual and compelling them to return to the collective, which has been negatively described as “crab mentality” during the colonial period, as it differs from the more individualistic outlook of Western ideals (Reyes 2015). While this phenomenon is real and stems from feelings of envy

and unhappiness towards another person's success, the practice being described is distinct from the selfish "pulling down" of individuals. Instead, it is concerned with ensuring the success of the collective, and realigning the deviating person. Given this framework of ethics, human rights discourse can now be discussed more thoroughly.

In instances of conflict or hardships, many Filipinos do not explicitly invoke human rights, but find themselves expressing it in different, less conventional ways. The Filipino word for human rights is *karapatang pantao*, with *dapat* being the root word. Compared to European languages, which use the same or a similar word to law for right—for example, *diritti*, *droits*, and *recht*—Filipino's *dapat* connotes justice, such that what is right is not necessarily legal, but is just (Diokno 1987). Following this line of argument, the understanding of human rights may not necessarily legal in nature, but is instead focused on what is needed to live (Taqueban 2013). These are especially prevalent in more impoverished populations who may be disadvantaged by the law. The concept of quiet encroachment, coined by Bayat (2013), explains how struggling families, especially those who live below the poverty line, survive their day to day lives. For example, some families may share a generator, or hook up their electricity to utility pole wires to avoid paying electrical bills because they cannot afford them. Although these actions may not necessarily be legal, it is an action that they consider imperative to remain afloat. This perspective may aid in understanding human rights in this context, as the concept and meaning of human rights may differ once applied to an institutional framework outside of the typical liberal frameworks where rule of law and democracy are expected to come together with it (Berger 2023). This is further demonstrated by Taqueban's study on mothers in poverty and their perspectives on abortion, which continues to be a daunting policy issue to tackle in the Philippines due to the Roman Catholic Church's significant influence over both government institutions and the common populace. These mothers, because of their situation, are driven to make choices that do not necessarily align with the Church nor their community's point of view, and they find ways to articulate their choices morally under the framing of *paggagawa ng paraan* or "making a way." These are only some examples of how Filipinos understand human rights and how the legal aspect of human rights within the country is unable to fully capture the complete picture, especially on the ground in areas where human rights are needed the most.

As for human rights in relation to the drug war, while there is a plethora of existing academic literature on the policy itself, literature exclusively focused on it from a bottom-up

human rights perspective has thus far been scarce. In their literature review, Lamchek and Jopson (2024) created a thematic analysis of over 140 scholarly materials related to the Philippine drug war. According to their findings, most of these works were interested in making sense of why the policy continues to be met with support. However, many of the materials investigated the war on drugs from the perspectives of penal populism and moral politics (Lamchek and Jopson 2024) rather than human rights specifically. Human rights instead tends to appear to be a factor that was affected by the drug war rather than the starting point of enquiry.

From the perspective of penal populism, killing is seen as a viable way of governance (Johnson and Fernquest 2018). Penal populism entails making “tough” but not necessarily effective policies for social issues, and implies that harsh punishment as a policy approach is popular. Notions of hypermasculinity and chauvinism play key roles in the enforcement awithin the Philippine context (Parmanand 2020), with Duterte projecting a hypermasculine figure who would “shoot them all dead” to solve the drug problem within the country. A myriad of other factors also play into how effective the approach can be in terms of public reception, such as the use of media to silence opposition (Parmanand 2023) and make the policy appear more effective than it actually is, and removing accountability mechanisms (Brooke et al. 2023). However, the penal populism approach does not adequately address how the drug war policy could also be used as a political tool to eliminate political opponents by designating them as a drug criminal, nor does it explain the drug war’s anti-poor orientation (Pangilinan et al. 2021) despite being packaged as an anti-elite initiative.

Meanwhile, the moral politics camp contributes further insight into the toleration of killing and its justification. In a similar study by Hapal (2019), victims of the drug war were condemned and that their deaths were deserved. The use of religious language was also observed (Llanera 2022), and victims and targets of the drug war were seen as “probationary citizens” while others were seen as “upright citizens” (Kusaka 2017). Fear was also a significant tool used in the enforcement of the policy such that the instillation of fear within the populace promised the reformation of “probationary citizens” (Racelis 2021). In this approach, concepts like human rights and rule of law are treated as empty elitist rhetoric, which makes many dismiss it and embrace the alternative violent proposal as the most effective way to “discipline” the poor. Other possible articulations of the support or

opposition to the policy as well as the constructions of harm inflicted by it is also deeply connected with the identification of victims and intentional actors (Ochoa and Ong 2022).

Others also attribute its acceptability to the Philippines' historical experience, citing governance during colonial rule and martial law as a possible factor for the toleration of death as a punishment for crime (Cielo 2022). Other papers cite that Filipinos perceive and understand human rights differently on a cultural level (Garcia and Kho 2019), which is said to explain why such widespread killing was tolerated and even approved of. This disconnect in meaning mentioned in Garcia and Kho's article is what this dissertation hopes to, at least in part, investigate more deeply.

Human rights from the linguistic perspective in the Philippine context is an interesting approach that also must be discussed due to its relevance to this paper. Guillermo (2024) wrote a comprehensive study on the evolution of Tagalog human rights discourse using documents across the history of the Philippines, including pre-independence conceptualisations by prominent historical figures such as Jose Rizal and Emilio Jacinto. One of the main aims while translating human rights was the firm establishment of the concept of rights inherency that is present within the source documents. Rights conditionality can be observed in Rizal's translation of the German play *Wilhelm Tell*, where he translates *Menschlichkeit* to *pagkatao* and *magandang loob ng kapwa tao*, the former which implies that to be human, one must possess the necessary moral-ethical characteristics to be considered human, and the latter referring to the inherent goodness of other humans. The word *karapatan* began appearing in Spanish-Tagalog dictionaries and the documents of the *Katipunan*, the revolutionary organisation for an independent Philippines, over the centuries also with connotations of worthiness (e.g. the right to join the *Katipunan*, etc.). The development of the concept of *karapatang pantao* begs the question of whether the *karapatan* is inherent in the *tao* (person), or if one must be *karapat-dapat* (worthy) of having *karapatan*.

Jacinto addresses this issue through the rearticulation of human rights as *katwirang tinataglay na talaga ng pagkatao*, or "rights truly possessed by being-human." The linguistic development of human rights in Tagalog continued to be honed in revolutionary texts. However, Guillermo observed a return to the conservative moral worthiness approach in human rights with Honorio's writings in the 1900s, which continues to prevail today. Alternative articulations have been proposed by Evangelista and Santos in their own works,

but this has yet to become the effective understanding of human rights on the ground. From here, the concept of human rights continues to evolve through the discourse surrounding it.

Given the discourse on human rights in the Philippines, the six-year drug war under Duterte can be considered a discursive event, an event discussed intensively and thus contributed to the development of discourse of human rights. It provides an opportunity to scrutinise how the discourse surrounding human rights has evolved until this point.

Discourse on social media

With the wake of new technology came new, unprecedented ways of establishing and maintaining relationships. Social media such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and Instagram have become new sites of public discussion and connectivity, where views and opinions may be expressed, supported, or contested. These social media platforms facilitate political discussions and the spread of new ideas. Because anyone with an account can participate in these conversations, participating and contributing to discourse is much more democratised now than ever before, compared to the one-way linear subjection of news and meaning-making and subsequently ideology from the elite to the masses. According to Leonardi and Barley (Valentini, Romenti, and Kruckeberg 2016), social media is not just a transmission channel, but also an avenue through which consumers also become producers of meaning. This new landscape opens up new possibilities, such as the rise and proliferation of counter-hegemonic discourses.

Social media and analysis of discourse within it, however, should be approached differently from how discourse is conventionally dealt with. Khosravini (2022) describes social media as a paradigm shift, and how that would affect CDA research approaches in particular. The issues that CDA concerns itself with is still very much present within the landscape of social media, but there are also other approaches to study and analyse these cases given the new medium where it is presented. These include the “likes regime,” tagging, and emojis. The development and proliferation of social media also creates a new plane of discourse: the digital space. The space itself and the practices within them are all unique, making them subjects worth studying, and these ought to be explored in further research. Future studies must also employ highly multidisciplinary approaches beyond linguistics and discourse studies due to the complexities that may be attributed to technology (Bouvier 2015). Meanwhile, from Valentini, Romenti, and Kruckeberg (2016)’s perspective, social

media is communicatively constituted, and thus the relationships within it ought to be studied based on the language and communicative practices. Because it lacks the element of direct experiences, social media is entirely composed of interactions. It is through these interactions that spaces for rhetoric and discussion are established. These spaces also come with practices that evaluate a user's legitimacy to participate in them, such as evaluating whether a user is a troll, and therefore is not considered a "member" of the discussions they try to engage with. However, in this perspective, the effect of real-life events and the interweaving of online and offline interactions do not appear to be addressed adequately. Bouvier (2015) offers yet another perspective on social media to address this. Instead of making the distinction between the offline and online world, the articulation of the relationship between the two "worlds" is the online's embeddedness in the offline. The online space becomes a way for people to connect with others in a way that would allow them access to new discourses and viewpoints that would have otherwise been more difficult to access.

Zeroing in specifically on online political discourse, social media has been instrumental in the dissemination of information, political organising, and building a base for political movements in different areas around the world. It has become a site of political recruitment and radicalisation, and has contributed to the execution of oppositional movements (Lim 2012). It has also become a site of political contestation and polarisation as more and more people enter and engage with it and each other. First and foremost, while there are many articles that tackle the issue of political polarisation on social media, an exact definition and measurement for political polarisation has yet to be established (Kubin and von Sikorski 2021). Setiawati, Tiara, and Mustika (2023) analysed Indonesian and Filipino student perception of social media in relation to political news and polarisation, and the results showed that it can be a good source of information regarding politics and political figures they would need to choose from for elections. Social media does impact public opinion as a whole, and its role in political life and decisionmaking cannot be overlooked (Ausat 2023; Kubin and von Sikorski 2021). This point is relevant in the field of political communication, as Van Dijk asserts that the media can assert some level of "control" over its consumers, but at least some users will generally be able to resist it (Van Dijk 1995, taken from Beltran 2017). In addition to this "control," counter-hegemonic discourses can be created and maintained within the spaces of social media networks, but that still does not take away the greater influence of the hegemonic discourse and its deep embeddedness within the

social fabric (Mubarak 2019). It then becomes a question of how these discourses interact with each other.

In terms of the Philippine context, however, research on social media reception of bias and possible contestation on the drug war has been scarce. Instead, research on the other side of the public sphere shows how independent news reinforced the government's narrative due to choices of sources and wording within articles (Bouvier and Machin 2018; Soriano, David, and Atun 2021). As discussed in the previous section on the social media landscape within the country, the Philippines is a country with deep social network penetration, indicating social media's embeddedness within Filipino society and culture. This is demonstrated by the emergence of online-exclusive sociolects such as Bekimon (Ramos and Luzano 2018), and the general trend of creating these online-exclusive terminology. This context makes the social media landscape an exceedingly interesting approach to study the development and evolution of human rights discourse. While it is only a factor that can contribute to the mobilisation of people for a certain cause (Lim 2012), these platforms are also a way through which people can articulate their views on certain policy issues, contest or defend political decisions, and most importantly, justify their stances.

Theoretical framework

Foucauldian discourse theory has laid the foundation for the comprehensive study of language and its relationship with power. Power continuously flows from all things, and consequently power relations and dynamics also change. Language is a medium through which power is exercised, and thus becomes an expression of these dynamics. They become enshrined as “common sense” and the “natural” way of speaking and thinking. This “common sense” then becomes the basis for what is generally understood as knowledge. Following this line of reasoning, it can be said that power constructs knowledge, and because of that, it can include and exclude certain knowledges and articulations. The Foucauldian discourse framework can therefore be used as a way to explain how ideologies are formed and maintained, while others are marginalised.

Based on the writings of Foucault, and further nuanced by the contributions of highly influential academics such as Fairclough and van Dijk, this study makes use of critical discourse analysis to inform the approach and perspective towards the findings that will be gleaned from this investigation. By making use of CDA to analyse discourse in the comments

sections of Facebook news posts about the drug war, the researcher aims to illustrate a more comprehensive picture surrounding the production of ideology and how it is embedded in human rights discourse in the context of the Philippine drug war from 2016 to 2022.

This study will primarily draw from Fairclough's approach to CDA, which focuses on discourse as a social practice and process that contributes to the institutionalisation and normalisation of power structures, while also keeping in mind van Dijk's concept of control through the media, as well as Wodak's emphasis on the historical dimension of discourse. As such, the study will be examining the text, interactions that surround the text, and the broader context within which the discourse is situated. Fairclough's framework that calls for the analysis of the text, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice can reveal much about the production of knowledge and ideology, especially from a linguistic standpoint. Van Dijk's perspective on the power of media over the maintenance of ideology provides insight into how language becomes a tool of ideological control. Lastly, Wodak highlights the importance of the context within which the discourse is situated, which is essential in a study concerned with the articulation of human rights within a national historical context over the course of more than half a decade. The unique nature of social media's online spaces is also taken into account, given that they are more democratised in the sense that the flows of discourse are not one-way, and therefore not in complete control of a powerful elite. This can result in the emergence of diverse voices and opinions that can contribute to the larger discourse. Additionally, the embeddedness of the online world into the offline world is further highlighted in this dissertation. By combining all of these into a theoretical framework, a more comprehensive understanding of how human rights is articulated can surface.

IV. Methodology

Data collection

This study will be focusing on the comments of nine Facebook posts created from 2016 to 2022 regarding the drug war policy in the Philippines, specifically on its implementation. Three of these posts come from the year 2016, three from 2019, and three from 2022. This is to get a broad perspective on how articulations of human rights in relation to the drug war shifted over the course of former president Duterte's six-year administration. Furthermore, identifying the drug war's "peak" is a highly subjective matter, which is why this study will be taking posts made from the first, fourth, and last year of the administration.

The three posts whose comments are to be analysed are taken from three different news outlets in an attempt to maximise audience diversity. The amount of comments extracted have also been limited to 20,000 public comments with respect to the software's capacity. Two of the posts extracted from are by Filipino news outlets, specifically GMA News and ABS-CBN News, which are two of the most trusted outlets in the Philippines (Newman et al. 2023). These are also the most followed local news outlets in the Philippines, GMA with a 48 per cent weekly usage and ABS-CBN with a 40 per cent weekly usage based on a report by the Reuters Institute on digital news in the Philippines. Because of the approach to news-reporting surrounding the drug war (Soriano, David, and Atun 2021), however, variation in the bias expressed in the news articles is limited. The final outlet, CNN Philippines, is an internationally-based news provider. It was included in the study to consider an external perspective, which may elicit different reactions and thus articulations of human rights. It is also the most-followed international news outlet in the Philippines (Newman et al. 2023). However, CNN has ceased operations in the Philippines from January 2024 due to "mounting financial losses" (Atienza 2024; Royandoyan 2024). NewsWatch Plus Philippines, another outlet under CNN Philippines' parent company, Nine Media Corporation, has since taken over its Facebook page. Nonetheless, as per its announcement on August 23, 2024, all of CNN Philippines' posts remain archived on NewsWatch Plus's page (NewsWatch Plus Philippines 2024).

The first post by GMA News was posted on August 22, 2016, roughly a month after Duterte's official inauguration on June 30. This post features a full video of the Senate hearing on the summary executions of drug suspects. This was a live video, thus most of the

comments under this post were posted in real-time as the hearing unfolded. It has garnered approximately 110,000 reactions and 145,600 comments. Around 60,000 of these reactions were “Angry,” followed by around 33,000 “Likes” and 10,000 “Loves.”



Figure 4. GMA News post for 2016.

The second post from GMA News that was analysed for this study was posted on November 8, 2019. It features a short video interviewing former Vice President Maria Leonor “Leni” Robredo regarding the anti-drug operations in line with national policy, as the newly-appointed leader of the campaign. In the video, Robredo states her desire to “erase the culture of killing” that surrounded the policy against drugs by replacing lethal weapons with items such as tear gas. This post garnered about 3,200 reactions and 1,900 comments, with around 1,400 “Haha,” 1,200 “Likes,” and 444 “Angry” reactions.



Figure 5. GMA News post for 2019.

The last post under this outlet to be examined was posted on November 23, 2022. This post contains a blurb and link to an article about a police officer being found guilty for torturing and planting evidence on two teenagers killed during the “height” of the drug war in 2017. One of the victims, 19-year-old Carl Arnaiz, was found dead after a run-in with the police, while the other, 14-year-old Reynaldo “Kulot” De Guzman, was found floating in a river in Nueva Ecija with 30 stab wounds and packing tape wrapped around his head. The two victims were last seen together, and Arnaiz was planted with drugs and ammunition to justify his fate (K., D., and T. 2017). This post gained around 1,400 reactions (majority of which being “Likes” and “Sad” reactions, 910 and 487 respectively) and 144 comments.

GMA News November 23, 2022 · 🌐

The Caloocan Regional Trial Court has found a police officer guilty beyond reasonable doubt for the torture and planting of evidence on two teenagers who were killed during the height of the drug war in 2017.

Read the details of the convictions here: <https://www.gmanetwork.com/.../caloocan-court.../story/>

CALOOCAN COURT CONVICTS COP OF TORTURE, PLANTING EVIDENCE IN CARL ARNAIZ'S CASE

PUBLISHED: NOVEMBER 23, 2022



The Caloocan Regional Trial Court has found a police officer guilty beyond reasonable doubt for the torture and planting of evidence on two teenagers who were killed during the height of the drug war in 2017. In a 36-page decision dated November 10, the Caloocan RTC Branch 122 imposed the convictions against Police Officer 1 Jeffrey Perez for the torture of Carl Angelo Arnaiz and 14-year-old Reynaldo de Guzman.




👍👎 1.4K 144 comments 99 shares

👍 Like
💬 Comment
🔗 Share

Figure 6. GMA News post for 2022.

The study's chosen 2016 post for ABS-CBN News is on the Philippine government cancelling the visit by the UN rapporteur on extrajudicial killings. The post itself contains a short blurb of the article and a link to it on ABS-CBN's website. It was released on December 14, 2016, and has about 3,000 reactions and 841 comments. The majority of the reactions are "Likes" and "Haha," approximately 2,500 and 348 respectively.



Figure 7. ABS-CBN News post for 2016.

The second post was released on September 14, 2019, and reports Senator Christopher “Bong” Go’s position on drug convicts seeking medical care in hospitals. The post contains a link to the full article, as well as a soundbite from Senator Go’s speech, where he states that these convicts ought to be poisoned in place of being given dextrose when they go to the hospital. This post garnered approximately 4,100 reactions and about 2,000 comments. Around 2,000 of the reactions were “Likes,” followed by around 1,700 “Haha” reactions. Of the total comments, 1,434 are publicly viewable, and 201 references were gleaned for the study.



Figure 8. ABS-CBN News post for 2019.

The final ABS-CBN post to be examined is dated May 31, 2022, and reports the legacy of the war on drugs policy from the perspective of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA). It contains a link to the article as well as a brief segment of its contents. This post gained approximately 7,300 reactions and 3,000 comments, with about 3,900 “Haha,” 2,100 “Likes,” and 1,000 “Sad” reactions.



Figure 9. ABS-CBN News post for 2022.

The first CNN Philippines post was released on August 22, 2016, and contains a video of Senator Miguel “Migz” Zubiri’s opening statement during the Senate hearing on extrajudicial killings. It has garnered about 81,000 reactions and 12,600 comments, with about 75,000 “Likes” and 4,500 “Loves.” Of the 9,585 publicly available comments, 227 references were eligible for the study.

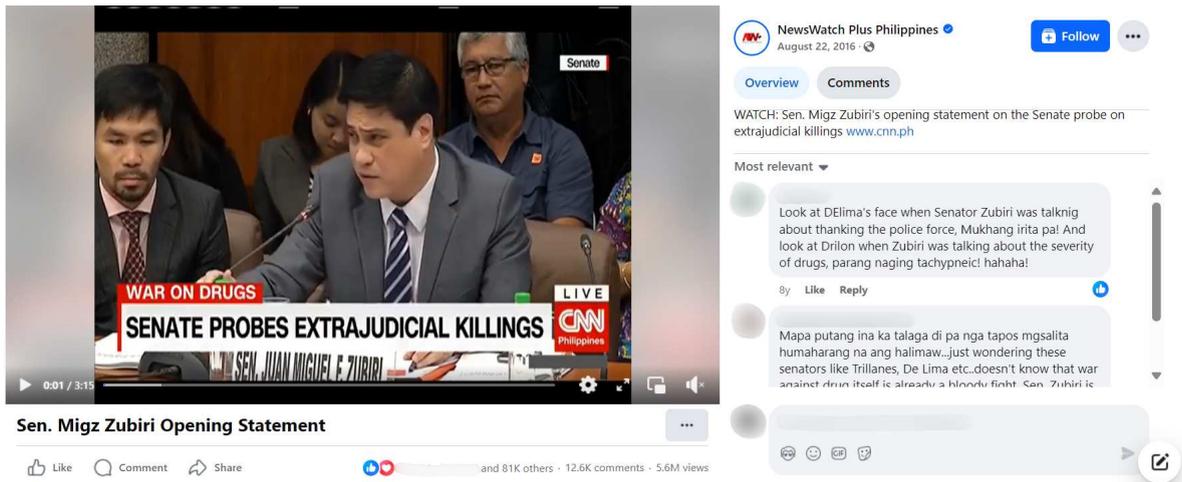


Figure 10. CNN Philippines post for 2016.

CNN Philippines' 2019 post is dated January 4 and covers the killing of Talib Abo Sr., a former mayor of Maguindanao who former President Duterte accused of being a narcopolitician. He and his brother died of gunshot wounds after a shootout with anti-drug police forces who were dispatched to search their home. This post has about 2,200 reactions (around 1,900 "Likes" and 143 "Loves") and 142 comments. The total 69 public comments yielded 14 references for the study.

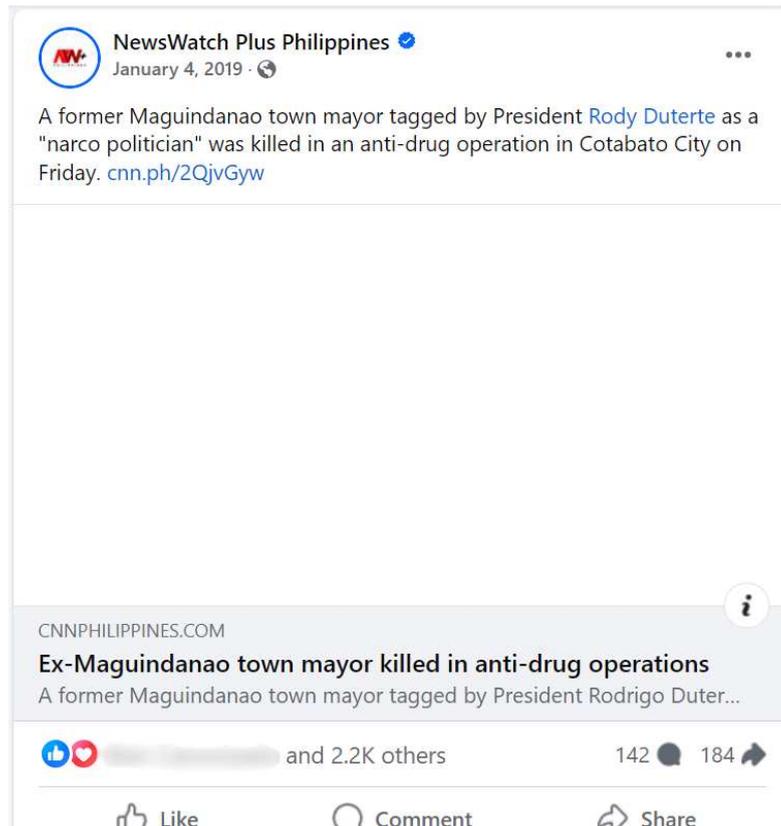


Figure 11. CNN Philippines post for 2019.

The last post under CNN Philippines was released on May 12, 2022, and covers a speech by former President Duterte right before he stepped down from the presidency. The post contains a link to the article as well as a soundbite of his speech, where he addresses the police force, urging them to kill drug lords and offering to represent them in court should they be put on trial for doing so. This post garnered around 10,000 reactions and 1,900 comments. The reactions include approximately 5,300 “Likes,” 2,700 “Haha,” and 1,600 “Loves.” Of the 1,716 public comments, 169 references were selected for the study.



Figure 12. CNN Philippines post for 2022.

In summary, three Facebook posts are taken from three different news outlets, namely GMA News, ABS-CBN News, and CNN Philippines. GMA News and ABS-CBN News were chosen for being the most accessible and trusted news outlets in the Philippines (Newman et al. 2023), while CNN Philippines is a wide-reaching international news source. Posts compiling general news for a single day were not considered to keep the scope limited and lessen comments that are not directly related to the subject of the study. Furthermore, the posts selected for each news agency and year were based on their public traction in the form of comments and reactions (i.e. like, love, haha, etc. reactions on Facebook) and their relevance to the killings committed during the war on drugs. As such, although issues such as former Senator and Commission on Human Rights Chairperson Leila de Lima's removal from office and following imprisonment are closely related to the drug war policy and its politics, posts dedicated to such issues were not included. This study is mainly interested in how social media users articulate human rights in the context of the state-sponsored killing of people suspected to be related to the drug trade in the Philippines, be it as users, distributors, pushers, or drug lords. As such, the subject of examination will be posts that report deaths of drug war suspects, or discussions and debates on the crimes committed in the midst of the drug war. Furthermore, the post must explicitly link the crimes to the drug war policy.

The data was gathered using a Facebook comment scraper and organised by post in different Excel files. It was organised in this way to facilitate the analysis of each individual dataset on their own, then later on for comparison. Comments with repeating content as well as empty comments were removed from the datasets at the initial stages of collection.

Data analysis

After collecting the data, this study makes use of the critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach to identify underlying ideologies and power structures within the language used in the comments. CDA differs from other forms of discourse analysis such that it focuses more closely on issues of social inequality and the legitimation or contestation of existing political ideologies, norms, and institutions (Wodak 2013). As CDA does not have a set methodology and is a problem-based approach, the researcher opted to refer to relevant literature to inform the processes for conducting the study. Jäger and Maier (2013) outlined a process for discourse analysis in their chapter on the theoretical and methodological aspects of the approach, which helped disaggregate the data. After gathering the data, the subtopics are determined as the data is read. Then, the frequency of the subtopics are measured. As a diachronic study, this paper's investigation also takes note of which subtopics and articulations are dominant at certain periods of time as compared to others.

Then, Fairclough's approach towards CDA was applied to the selected data. The study's investigation is composed of the examination of words used, the sentence structures, the content itself, all in the backdrop of the social context. As discussed in the literature review, discourse is composed of three dimensions which have equivalents in CDA: text and description, interaction and interpretation, and context and explanation. While the texts being analysed are the comments responding to their respective Facebook post, the content of the post itself will also be taken into account as this serves as the basis of the discussions within the datasets without losing sight of the main goal of uncovering the discourse of human rights.

The data was analysed with the help of the software Nvivo. After converting the Excel files into .txt files, the sets were fed to the software for analysis. Themes were determined manually by the researcher. To actually determine these themes, the researcher was guided by the following research questions:

1. How does the discourse fragment in question touch upon what the human subject of the statement is/should be entitled to in the context of the drug war?
2. How does it relate to human rights as it is contemporarily understood?

The researcher also chose certain keywords to focus on for identifying the articulation of discourse positions. “(Human) rights” in Filipino and Tagalog is most commonly translated into *karapatan(g pantao)*, and as discussed in the literature review, individual positions on topics and issues related to human rights are often not explicitly linked with the concept itself (Ochoa and Ong 2022; Taqueban 2013). More often than not, the articulation of discourse positions relating to human rights can be implicit and creative, and thus a direct reference to words like *karapatan* would be limiting. In an attempt to address this caveat, *karapatan*’s root word, *dapat*, will also be used as a keyword. Compared to *karapatan*, *dapat* is a more colloquial word, as it can be directly translated to the words “should,” “deserving,” or “ought to” in English.

Additionally, the study is not limited to these keywords alone. While they would likely contain the most evident expressions of Facebook users’ discourse positions on human rights, these are not the only ways through which they can be expressed from a linguistic perspective. Furthermore, the prevalence of communication dialects such as Jejemon (Ramos and Luzano 2018) makes it more difficult for the software to detect patterns within the data corpus. These factors influenced the decision to approach this study manually.

Because of the volume of data used in the study, with two of the nine posts producing disproportionately large datasets compared to the others, the researcher opted to subject the sets to undersampling using the principle of data saturation in an attempt to equalise them. To do this, references were continuously taken from the datasets until data saturation was reached. In this case, data saturation was determined when a dataset would yield 100 references for at least one theme. Should a theme have subcategories, the total within that single theme will be considered. This principle would not apply if a dataset had already been exhausted before the threshold could be reached. This was also done to prevent the possibility of data getting skewed upon determining the prevalence of themes and subtopics during the actual analysis while taking into account the level of engagement the posts received online.

At the end of the study, the data yielded nine themes:

1. Development and human rights,

2. Failures in the practical application of human rights
3. Faith and human rights
4. Governance and human rights
5. Innocence, guilt, and human rights
6. International relations and human rights
7. Memory and human rights
8. Security and human rights, and
9. The nature of the issue and human rights.

The theme on innocence, guilt, and human rights also yielded two more subthemes:

1. Perceived guilt and human rights, and
2. Perceived innocence and human rights.

Development and human rights covers discourse positions that defend or criticise human rights violations for the sake of development. The term has been defined in this study as the development of the community or even the country, whether socially or economically. Security is covered in a separate theme.

Failures in the practical application of human rights covers discourse positions that direct attention towards other cases of what the social media user commenting the position perceives to be a human rights violation rather than addressing the actual topic of the conversation. This does not explicitly express the user's thoughts on the drug war victims, but implies what they believe to be more important issues to be addressed. It is a form of whataboutism that reveals what could be a hierarchy of human rights, or more broadly, social issues.

The theme faith and human rights covers discourse positions that articulate human rights in terms of faith. The Philippines is a predominantly Catholic country that is still heavily influenced by the Roman Catholic Church, and individual ideologies and discourse positions are no different. These influences can manifest through language. In this theme, social media users make sense of the human rights violations committed during the drug war using their understanding of their faith.

The innocence, guilt, and human rights theme contains discourse positions that express the relationship between being "innocent" or "guilty" and human rights. In other

words, this theme explores how social media users perceive a person's "worthiness" for human rights depending on whether they see them as "guilty" or "innocent." However, this theme needed to branch into two further subthemes as the data also focused on the specific "rights" of those who were perceived as "guilty" separate from who are "innocent."

Positions under the international relations and human rights express express how social media users perceive the involvement of the international community during the drug war. These extend to the international law of human rights.

The theme memory and human rights covers discourse positions that refer to previous discursive events to express their stance on the human rights violations committed during the drug war, whether justifying or contesting them. One example of such a discursive event is the nationwide imposition of Martial Law under Marcos Sr.

Security and human rights focuses specifically on the safety of an individual or a community. In the context of the drug war human rights violations, these would cover how safe a person feels with these crimes regularly being committed.

The final theme on the nature of the drug issue and human rights covers discourse positions that view human rights violations as a necessary evil when combating the proliferation of illegal drugs.

These themes intertwine with each other, and more often than not, one text may produce multiple themes.

Compliance with Ethics for Research

Measures were taken to ensure that the data used in this research remains anonymous. After extraction, the researcher removed data such as usernames before processing the comments and their content themselves. As such, the research process allowed for a level of anonymity and the minimisation of familiarity with the commenters, should there be any. Because of the tagging function, any names in the comments were removed unless they are of public figures such as public servants. The data extraction process was also done in compliance with Facebook's Terms of Service, with only publicly available comments being taken for the study.

V. Findings and Discussion

This chapter details the study's findings and the discussion of the results. The findings section has been separated by news outlet, detailing the results of each post. These results are also broken down, analysing the trends within their respective datasets. The discussion section comprehensively brings the insights gleaned from the datasets together, indicating policy implications and recommendations for future human rights campaigning within the Philippines. It also has separate, smaller subsections dedicated to human rights and its relationship with religion in the Philippine context, the reimposition of the death penalty alongside traditional articulations of human rights, and the role of international actors in the safeguarding of human rights. The full list of references included in the datasets used in the study can be found in the appendices below.

Findings

GMA News

Due to the limited capacity of the comment scraping software, GMA News' chosen post for 2016, the dataset for this post was limited to the 18,350 most relevant public comments. This in turn yielded 242 references. A visual distribution of the themes found within the dataset can be found below:



Figure 13. Hierarchy chart of themes that emerged in the comments of GMA's 2016 post.

This dataset reached the data saturation threshold, with the innocence-guilt theme reaching 100 references which includes 22 references under perceived guilt and 7 references under perceived innocence. This was closely followed by the application failure theme at 84 references. 21 references reflected the development theme, 12 reflected security, 12 reflected governance, 6 reflected faith, 4 reflected memory, 2 reflected nature, and 1 reflected international relations.

The post featured the full-length enquiry into the allegations of extrajudicial killings chaired by former Senator Leila De Lima, who was a staunch critic of Duterte and his approach to drugs even before he was officially sworn in as president. This hearing was conducted at the start of Duterte's term, in the early days of the implementation of the drug war policy. Many were still deliberating on its viability as a response to the rampant drug issue within the country. Based on the discussions under this post, many social media users were in favour of the drug war policy, with some stating that this policy also needs to be implemented "in the right way," citing principles such as due process. Other comments suggested more radical approaches, such as feeding captured criminals involved with the drug trade with the drugs they would sell as a form of retributive justice. The policy itself was

also seen as necessary to address the crime rates, as many asserted that a majority of crimes were perpetrated by drug addicts and caused “innocent” citizens to live in fear.

The prevalence of the articulation of human rights based on moral “worth” can be seen as early as the start of the Duterte administration as seen in the comments under this post. One of the victims whose death was being investigated in the hearing was a drug user and distributor, and commenters responded to this by stating that he deserved his fate as “someone who destroys society and life.” Blame is also removed from police officers who were involved, stating these as a part of their job and that the victim’s death would not have happened if they did not resist arrest. This kind of treatment not only applies to suspected criminals, but this also extends to their families, who are seen as having fallen short in ensuring that their family member does not fall to vices. This was demonstrated by how social media users reacted to a victim’s widow when she was giving her testimony, stating that she had no right to seek justice for her husband as he brought his fate upon himself. She also became the subject of scrutiny in the comments, with other commenters condemning her for her complicity in her husband’s crimes because she did not do anything to stop his involvement in drugs.

Instead of justice for the victims of the drug war’s summary killings, a large part of the comments under this post clamoured for justice for the victims of drug addicts, who were seen as overlooked by the law. Many social media users argued as to why the killing of a drug addict warranted an investigation as opposed to the countless victims of robbery, rape, and murder that were committed by drug addicts across the country. This deliberate and constant focus on the “innocent” and unheard rather than the “guilty” is indicative of a hierarchy of who is deserving of justice.

Going further, as a manifestation of discourse strands intertwining, they also brought up other discursive events such as the slaying of 44 SAF soldiers and the massacre of activist farmers at Hacienda Luisita, which have not been satisfactorily responded to by the government (Cabreza et al. 2021; Ranada 2014). The Hacienda Luisita massacre in particular was alleged to have been left without proper compensation due to the property being owned by the Cojuangco family, former President Noynoy Aquino’s maternal family. This part of the context may have made Facebook users see the investigation into the summary killings under the new administration’s drug war policy as a way to weaken it, as the previous administration’s members and supporters were critical of it.

The findings above describe the general trends within this dataset. Although contestations in the data can be found, they are significantly few and far between compared to the rest of the corpus. These contestations appealed towards the humanity of the surviving relatives of the victims to spare them from the public scrutiny they received from the social media users following the livestream.

The second post under GMA contained 1,306 public comments which yielded 204 references for the study. The graph of the distribution can be found below:

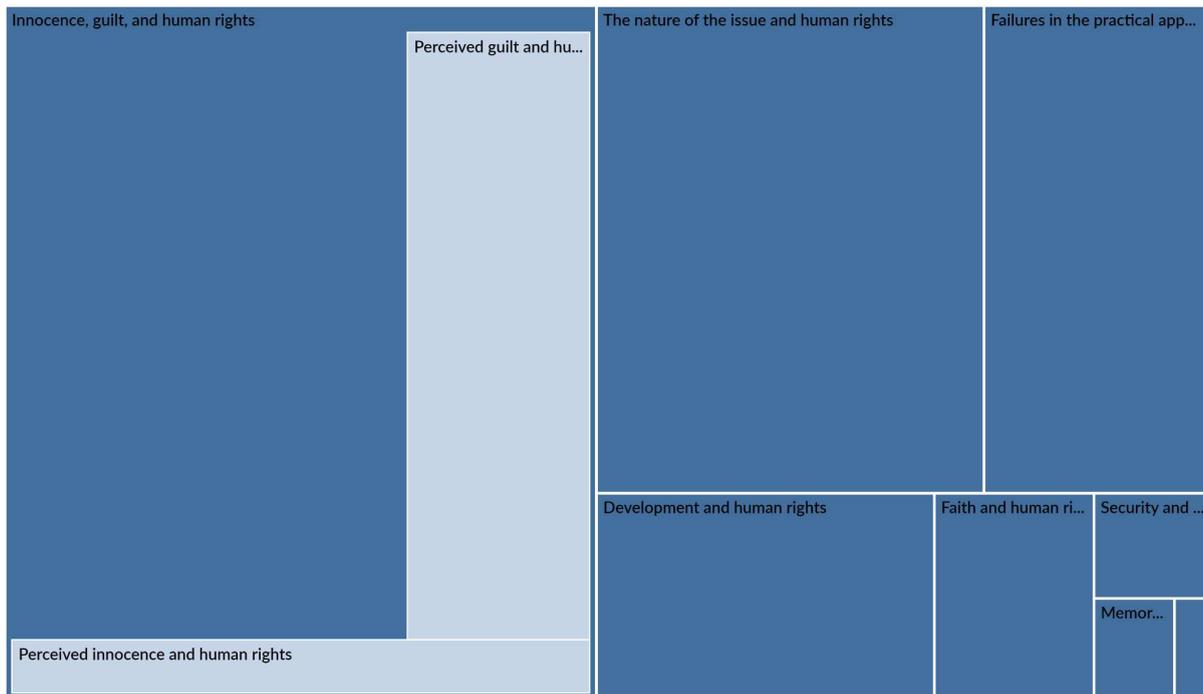


Figure 14. Hierarchy chart of themes that emerged in the comments of GMA’s 2019 post.

This dataset also reached the data saturation threshold, with the innocence-guilt theme again reaching 100 references, including 29 under the guilt subtheme and 8 under the innocence subtheme. This is followed by 46 references on the nature of the drug issue, 27 references under application failure, 17 references on development, 8 under faith, 3 under security, 2 under memory, and 1 under governance.

In this post, social media users were reacting to Leonor “Leni” Robredo’s no-lethal-weapons approach to apprehending drug criminals. This approach was her response to the mounting allegations of impunity by police, who have been said to use

disproportionately violent methods to apprehend their targets. These are said to often result in the deaths of suspects during drug bust operations.

Majority of the comments were against this policy, and criticised Robredo of disregarding the lives and safety of the police force. They also assert that this approach towards illegal drugs would not solve the issue, and would instead make the government even less effective. Another common line of argument commenters would use is that the lack of firearms would embolden drug addicts, distributors, and drug lords, as the police force would not be seen as a legitimate threat without them. The same logic also applies to keeping the younger generation from entering the drug trade; they believe that without a show of dangerous force, the youth would not be afraid of disobeying the law and dabble in drugs. As one of the comments states, “Filipinos cannot be governed with a ‘soft approach.’”

The prominence of theme on the nature of the drug issue under this post also implies that social media users see violence as an inevitable and even necessary measure for combating the drug problem in the country. They argued that by effectively disarming the police force, they would be disadvantaged against the drug lords and drug pushers during a drug bust operation. Discourse fragments would often employ the use of hyperbole to ridicule Robredo’s proposal by blowing it out of proportion or illustrating satirical scenarios. For example, they would say that instead of guns, police forces would have to bring water guns or tableware to drug bust operations. Some comments also suggested that Robredo join the operations themselves without any protective gear so that she can learn why police officers need to be equipped with firearms, and so that she can learn why persons involved in drugs “deserve to die.” Because the drug war is a “war,” law enforcement must be ready to use lethal force to combat the drug threat.

In line with the police not being able to protect themselves using lethal weapons, social media users saw this as the prioritisation of the lives of suspected criminals over those of the law enforcement. This once again plays into the innocence and guilt line of articulation of human rights, where the innocent are seen as worthy of human rights while the guilty are not. Many social media users see human rights in this context, especially those of the drug criminals’, as *wala sa lugar* or inapplicable to the situation, because if they were left to go about their business without fearing the law, they would go on to “ruin more innocent lives.” The appropriate response, according to this logic, is to kill these perpetrators before they can do more damage than they already have, which would also send a message for others who

have ties to the illegal drug trade. Those who are killed during those operations would have gotten what was coming from them for being involved in drugs, and their deaths would only be a natural result of the drug war. The human rights of suspected criminals, from this point of view, is out of place.

The last post examined for GMA contained 120 publicly available comments, which resulted in 34 references for the study. The theme distribution can be found below:

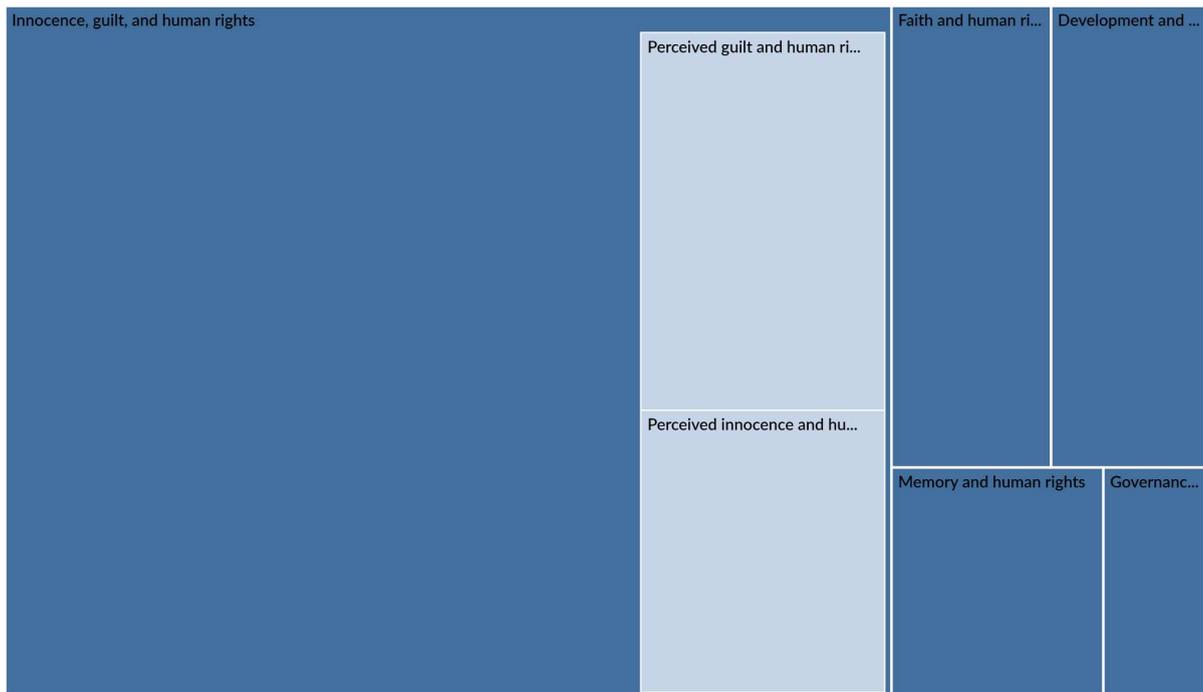


Figure 15. Hierarchy chart of themes that emerged in the comments of GMA's 2022 post.

This dataset was exhausted before reaching the threshold, with the innocence-guilt theme having 25 references, which includes 4 under the guilt subtheme and 3 under the innocence subtheme. The faith theme and the development theme each had 3 references, followed by memory at 2 and governance at 1.

This post featured the development of a criminal trial against police officers who were found guilty of planting evidence, torturing, and killing innocent teenagers under the premise of anti-drug operations. This case is a famous example of the impunity being committed by law enforcement officers in the name of the drug war, and people on social media were quick to add their own input on the matter.

The conversation in the comments section mainly revolved around the innocent victims of the police officers. The commenters mourned the losses of Arnaiz and De Guzman, and expressed their sympathies for the “innocent lives” who got caught in the middle of the drug war and its operations. It is here that many of them express what they believe to be the shortcomings of the drug war policy. The discourse fragments within the dataset discussed how the policy had resulted in a multitude of cases of collateral damage, and how these cases were unfair because innocent (and oftentimes, poor) people were killed despite not being involved in drugs at all. Although it was not a major talking point within the dataset, commenters have also expressed their willingness for the ICC to intervene and investigate the Philippines’ case in line with these killings. These give some insight into the structure of Philippine society, one that oppresses and victimises the poor and powerless while powerful criminals such as drug lords still remain unaccountable. In this post, the police and their role in society was scrutinised, with Facebook commenters condemning police who did their jobs with impunity for the sake of impressing their superiors or fulfilling a quota. For this, commenters suggested various forms of punishment, and some went as far as to extend the punishment to Duterte himself, who enables the police through his speeches. However, the extent of the punishments social media users believe should be imposed on the perpetrators were not as extreme as those of suspects involved in drugs. According to them, the convicted police ought to be fired in front of their families, imprisoned, and have a difficult time in prison, which is a considerable difference compared to the condemnation that drug suspects received.

Besides determining punishment for the perpetrators, the commenters also revealed a shift in perspective on who the drug war should be targeted at. From targeting the entirety of the illegal drug trade, they began to emphasise on the importance of catching the “bigger” drug lords rather than going after “smaller” drug pushers and addicts. Although this shift may be a manifestation or a result of changing perspectives on who the “innocents” of the drug war are, the overall traditionalist mindset towards human rights has not changed.

ABS-CBN News

ABS-CBN’s first post contained 232 public comments, which yielded 204 references for the study. A visualisation of the theme distribution can be found below:



Figure 16. Hierarchy chart of themes that emerged in the comments of ABS-CBN's 2016 post.

This dataset was exhausted before reaching the data saturation threshold, and the theme with the most references was the international relations theme with 39 references. This was followed by the failed application theme at 27 references. The innocence-guilt theme yielded 10 references, including 3 under perceived guilt and 1 under perceived innocence, while governance yielded 7, development yielded 3, and security and faith each yielded 1.

Although this post exclusively talked about the rapporteur's cancelled trip to the Philippines, social media users responded by bringing up other human rights issues in other parts of the world, such as Myanmar, Palestine, and Syria, saying that there are other situations more worth investigating than the case of the Philippines. While some social media users acknowledge the existence of killings related to the drug war policy, their position against independent investigation was explained on the grounds of the victims of these killings being "bad people," and that human rights violations abroad are more worth investigating because the victims of those violations are "innocent people." They would also criticise the UN and its ability to mitigate the crises it tries to get involved in, thus questioning whether their investigation would be helpful in stopping the proliferation of drugs and drug-related crimes in the country. This line of argument was generally used within the dataset among comments criticising the UN, and was also a way of finding fault within the organisation and its members such as the United States. In this regard, they would employ

metaphors such as “meddling with another person’s backyard” or “telling a person how their family should be run” to emphasise their point. The personalisation of state affairs, notably in the use of the metaphor invoking family, is further highlighted by questions of loyalty to the state if another social media user expressed their opposition to the cancellation. This can reveal some insight into how people on social media articulate their relationship with their home country, and how this affects their mindset towards actors whom they would consider as foreign. This position was also articulated as an assertion of sovereignty against foreign influence, which was praised and attributed to Duterte’s strongman image.

Those that did oppose or express concern for the trip’s cancellation, on the other hand, criticised the Philippine government’s conditions for the rapporteur to fulfill before entering the country to investigate. These discourse positions were guided by the principle of truth, or that there would not be such conditions if there was nothing to hide. They also contained a different perspective on the cancellation. As opposed to an assertion of national sovereignty, users articulated their position along the lines of dodging accountability and becoming the spotlight of international attention. The proportion of comments between those who supported the government and welcomed the cancellation and those who questioned the government’s unwillingness to cooperate was relatively equal to each other, although those who supported the trip’s cancellation were slightly more plentiful.

The comments under this post used a mix of English and Filipino, with both languages being used to express discourse positions criticising the UN and criticising the Philippine government. Comments in Filipino tended to codeswitch only when using terms such as rapporteur, extrajudicial killings, and genocide, which do not have a commonly used equivalent in the Filipino language.

The second post under ABS-CBN had a total of 1,434 public comments, and this resulted in 201 references for the study. The theme distribution is as follows:



Figure 17. Hierarchy chart of themes that emerged in ABS-CBN's 2019 post.

This dataset reached the data saturation threshold, with the innocence-guilt theme reaching 100 references, which contains 45 under the perceived guilty subtheme and 25 under the perceived innocence subtheme. The governance theme follows with 66 references, then development with 15, faith with 11, security and application failure both with 4, and the nature theme with 1.

While social media users' reactions towards Senator Go's proposition (poisoning drug lords when they sought "unnecessary" medical help in hospitals) were mixed, a unifying point within this dataset was the preservation of the medical staff's "innocence." Those who were supportive of Go's proposal emphasised that while poisoning drug lords was a favourable course of action, the doctors and nurses should not be the ones administering the poison itself. This unifying point reveals the importance of keeping medical staff from "becoming criminals," which, when considering how persons identified as criminals are treated in the context of the drug war, could be related to the concept of moral "worthiness" (Guillermo 2024). This was argued along the lines of *nandadamay*, or causing others to be dragged into one's problems, as well as abiding by the Hippocratic oath. The concern expressed in this dataset demonstrated the intertwining of discursive strands, in this case, medical ethics and morality being intertwined with human rights.

The levels of support for the proposal varied, with some suggesting that Go create a legislative bill to institutionalise the practice, while others offered alternatives without opposing the active killing of people. Some of these alternatives included using confiscated drugs on drug lords, barring the drug lords from receiving medical treatment, and reinstating the death penalty. Meanwhile, those who were against the proposal insisted on the suspects' *pagkatao*, and that because of that, they should still be treated like people, while others highlighted the importance of constitutionality and due process.

Senator Go also received criticism for his remarks. Besides the content of his speech, social media users also saw his words and manner of speech as unbecoming of a statesman, calling it *usapang kanto*, or street talk. Many social media users criticised him and his manner of speaking, calling him a bad influence on the younger generation who grow up in an environment that normalises killing. These criticisms indicate a divide between life as a public servant and common public life as indicated by how language is used. While this does not reveal much about how the public explains the human rights (or lack thereof) of people considered to be criminals, it does demonstrate what manners of talking is acceptable or not given one's public identity. This is an interesting caveat to have as Duterte enjoyed popular support with his manner of speech, which Go may have adopted in this instance.

The final ABS-CBN post yielded 2,667 publicly available comments, from which 188 references were extracted. The visual representation of the theme distribution is as follows:

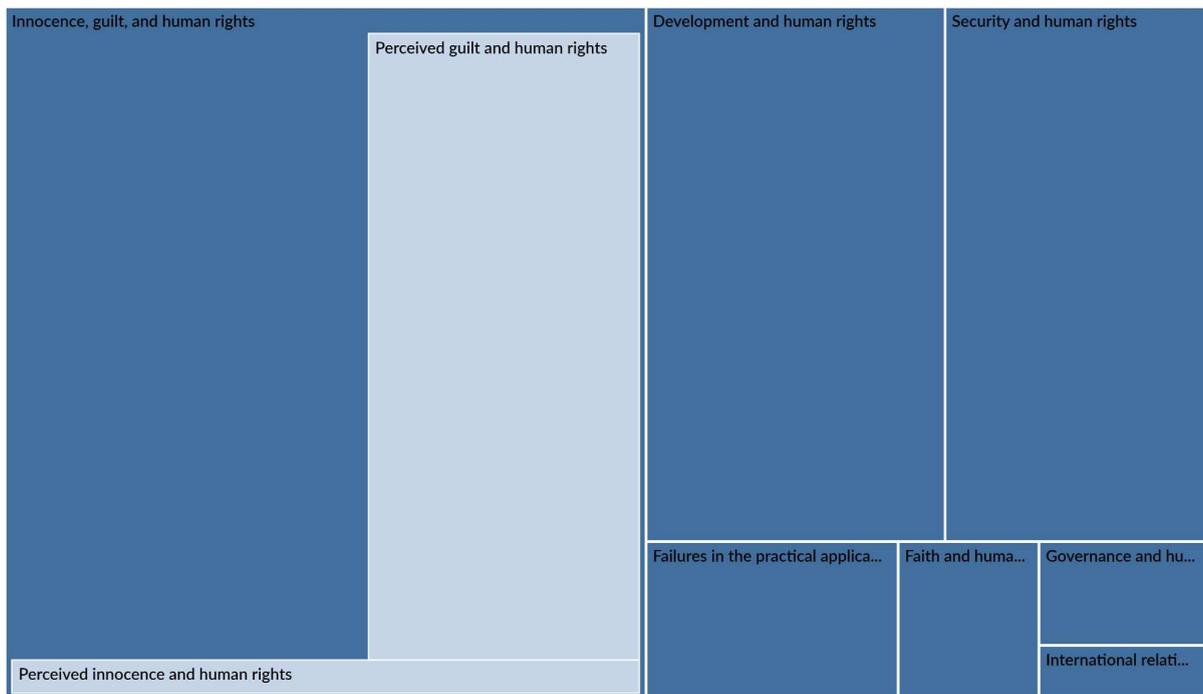


Figure 18. Hierarchy chart of themes that emerged in the comments of ABS-CBN's 2022 post.

The innocent-guilt theme reached the data saturation threshold first, with 41 documented under the perceived guilt subtheme and 5 in the perceived innocence subtheme. The development theme yielded 36 references, while security yielded 32. These were followed by 9 under failed application, 5 under faith, 4 under governance, and 2 under international relations.

Comments under this post are highly politically and emotionally charged, containing reactions and evaluations of the success of the drug war policy after six years under the Duterte administration. Reactions towards the drug war policy after six years under Duterte were generally positive, with many hoping for the policy to continue into the next administration. Others also hoped to intensify it further, to completely “clean” the Philippines of drugs. Although they acknowledged the possibility of “collateral damage,” they asserted the sacrifice of the few was necessary for the common good. In other words, if suspected drug addicts, pushers, or lords were left alive, they would victimise more “innocent” people, which would be a bigger loss to society than if they were to be killed. Instead, this side of the conversation suggested directing the killing towards the “bigger” fish, the drug lords and suppliers. They presented their experiences of significantly lessened crime in their towns, feelings of safety, and rekindled hope for the future generation to justify that the “sacrifice”

was necessary for the country to progress and become secure, hence their support for the continuation or intensification of the drug war policy.

Furthermore, social media users continued to clamour for justice for the victims of drug addicts, with many also questioning why there was so much attention for the killed “guilty” as compared to the people that they killed. While giving more importance to serving justice to the “innocent,” they also put down the justice for the “guilty” who were killed under the pretense of the drug war. This constant call for justice for the “innocent” is a stark contrast to the condemnation of the “guilty” who refuse to change: the drug addicts, pushers, and lords, the “scourges” of society. Redemption is granted for those who have quit drugs and became productive members of the community, but the same positive approach is not applied to those who are still within the clutches of drug addiction or are part of the illegal drug trade. Views on rehabilitation are also mixed, with some sharing successful rehabilitation stories of people they know while others question why these programmes should continue as they are a “waste of public funds.”

On the other side of the debate, social media users emphasised the “innocent” people who were killed over the course of the drug war. They cited famous cases of these “innocents” and “collateral damages” such as Kian delos Santos to explain how this policy was not as effective as it makes itself out to be. This became a main talking point for those who viewed the drug war in a negative light. They also highlighted how many of the victims of the drug war lived in poverty, and that the policy did not do much to address the proliferation of drugs due to it only targeting “small-time” drug pushers rather than going after the bigger, more powerful drug lords. Others also articulated the drug war as lawless and indiscriminate, as the killings that occurred under its name has contributed to a general shift towards impunity within the country.

Some trends within this dataset also indicated the intertwining of discursive strands, specifically on the legalisation of the death penalty. Some social media users suggested it in line with the intensification of the drug policy. These discourse fragments cite its use in other countries and view it as a reason as to why these countries are “clean” and relatively free of crime. The institutionalisation of death penalty was also articulated as a way to scare citizens, notably the younger generations, from carrying out crime.

The first CNN post contained 9,585 publicly available comments, which yielded 227 references for the study. The visual representation of the themes is as follows:

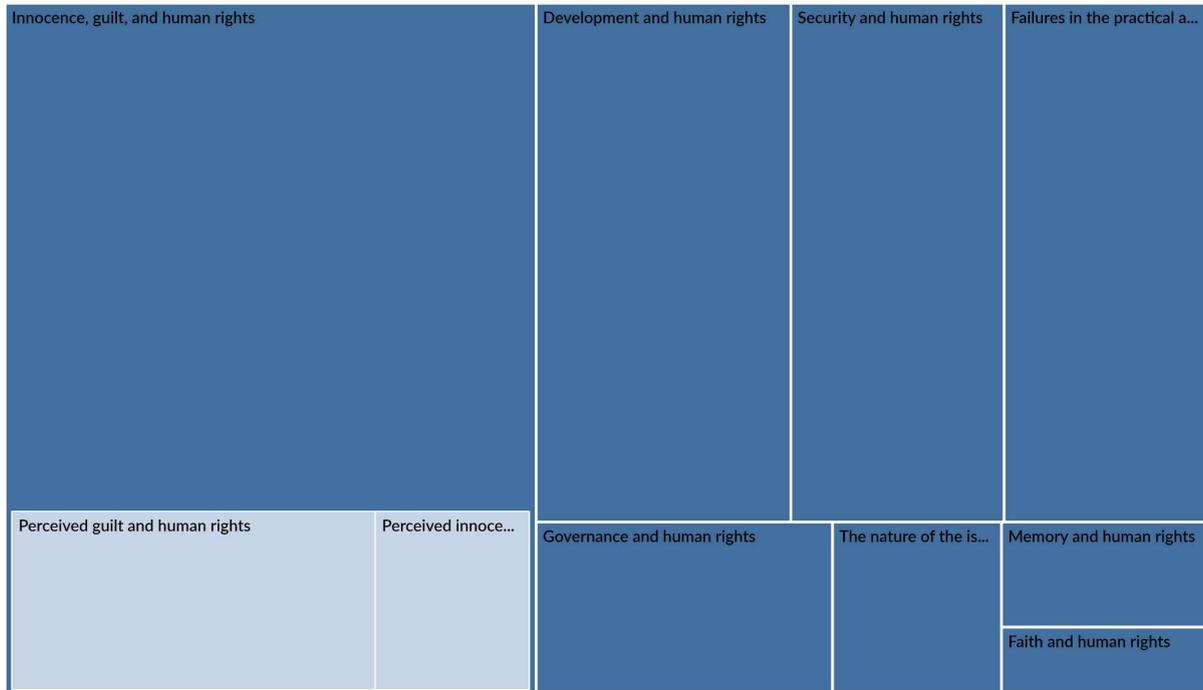


Figure 19. Hierarchy chart of themes that emerged in the comments of CNN's 2016 post.

The innocence-guilt theme reached the data saturation threshold in this dataset as well, which includes 19 references under perceived guilt and 8 under perceived innocence. The development theme yielded 36 references, followed by security at 30 and failed application at 29. The governance theme yielded 14 references, as well as 8 under nature, 6 under memory, and 4 under faith.

Many of the commenters responded positively to Senator Juan Miguel “Migz” Zubiri’s opening statement during the Senate hearing on extrajudicial killings. Just as Senator Zubiri recounted his experiences with drugs within his business’s workforce to justify his position supporting the drug war policy, commenters also explained how they felt safer with the implementation of the policy. According to them, there are less occurrences within their daily lives and news reports of crimes by drug addicts, which, for them, justified that the policy was effective and should therefore not be hindered or criticised by the opposition. Some take this a step further by suggesting that the opposition, specifically Senator Leila De

Lima, the chair of the hearing, had political interest in allowing the illegal drug trade to run rampant.

Many people in the comment section also appear to view the drug war as a zero-sum game, where the eradication of the illegal drug trade and its proponents is necessary for the common good of the country. Discourse fragments often make use of the verb *linis* or “clean” to describe what the drug war is meant to do in the Philippines, effectively becoming a euphemism for the killing of drug suspects (Nolasco 2018). “Cleaning up” the country, in this sense, is seen as the only way for the Philippines to develop as a nation. Those who oppose or are hesitant to support this policy are also compelled to look at its positive effects, such as the safety of innocent lives, and peace and order within society.

Human rights is also talked about much more explicitly and extensively in the comments of this post. Social media users called on human rights activists and the CHR, asking why human rights suddenly apply now that the deaths of drug suspected and socially determined criminals are being investigated, while the innocent victims of these drug criminals and other cases that have not been satisfactorily addressed such as the slaying of the SAF 44 did not receive the same treatment. This resulted in a growing scepticism towards human rights due to the perceived selective action towards human rights protection and realisation.

Majority of the comments within this dataset are in Filipino, but there are occasional instances of comments purely in English, with occurrences of code switching being even more common. In cases of code switching within a discourse fragment, the part in Filipino tends to appeal more towards the emotions of the reader, while the English portion tends to be more factually or logically driven. For example, the Filipino component would often discuss personal experiences and their feelings towards these experiences in the context of the drug situation. When the fragment switches to English, they would make use of logical reasoning to convey their discourse position. The same applies to discourse fragments that are purely in Filipino or in English.

The second CNN Philippines post used for this study yielded a total of 69 public comments, resulting in 14 references. The theme distribution can be found below:

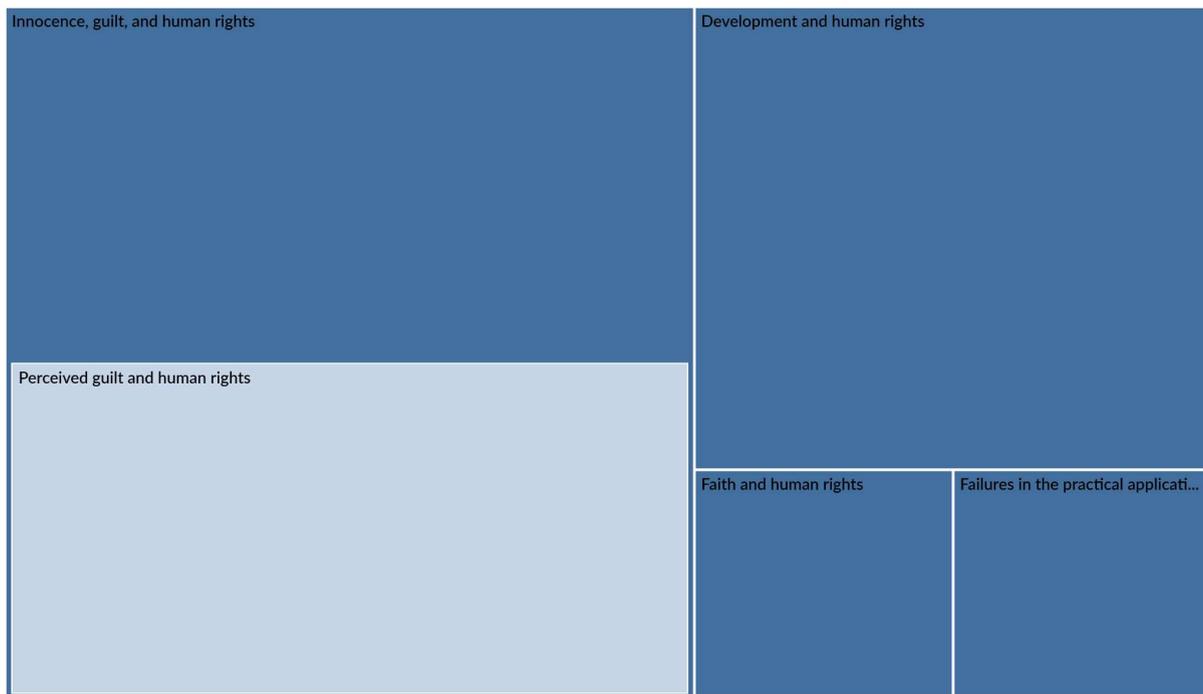


Figure 20. Hierarchy chart of themes that emerged in the comments of CNN's 2019 post.

This dataset was exhausted before reaching the data saturation threshold. The theme with the most number of references is the innocence-guilt theme at 8 references, with half of this coming from the perceived guilt subtheme. The development theme has 4 references, while faith and failed application both have 1 reference each.

This dataset covers how social media users reacted to the killing of Maguindanao ex-mayor Talib Abo Sr., who was accused by Duterte of being a narcopolitician. Like the previous datasets, many expressed their distain for drugs and those involved in the industry and that drug criminals had their fates coming. Because this post was about an ex-mayor from the Mindanao region, this may have also encouraged commenters who lived in the provinces and away from Manila to relay their experiences with crime and drugs, and these gave insight into how far-reaching the illegal drug trade is within the country, particularly in Mindanao. These social media users called for the reimposition of martial law for the sole purpose of eradicating drug criminals, specifically by killing them so as not to waste government resources when they are put in prison.

However, the conversation within this dataset is more contested than others, as some commenters express their scepticism towards the implementation of the drug policy. While

they are still agreeable to it, they also assert that the killing of suspects should be done only if the suspect fought back. While this is not a large improvement from a human rights perspective, it is a considerable shift from immediately killing suspects whether or not there was independent proof of them having resisted arrest.

The final post for CNN Philippines had 1,716 publicly viewable comments, and this resulted in 169 references. The theme distribution can be seen below:



Figure 21. Hierarchy chart of themes that emerged in the comments of CNN's 2022 post.

This dataset was also exhausted before reaching the data saturation threshold, with the innocence-guilt theme reaching 62 references, 15 and 9 of which are under the perceived guilt and perceived innocence subthemes, respectively. This is followed by the governance theme at 53 references, development at 20, security at 17, faith at 11, international relations at 3, failed application at 2, and memory at 1.

Social media users' opinions on Duterte's declaration were mixed, leaning towards support. Many use the same examples of heightened feelings of security and hope for a future without the influence of illegal drugs, while others continue to condemn the "guilty," declaring that they deserve the fate that is coming for them now that Duterte had ensured his assistance should any member of the police force be tried for a crime related to eliminating

drugs. The topic of the institutionalisation of the death penalty is also often brought into the conversation in this post.

An interesting development that can be observed from this is the expansion of the scope of “innocent” in the context of the drug war to include “small” addicts, and the “guilty” largely referred to the “big” drug lords who supplied the illegal substances, and this distinction is emphasised in the discourse fragments. In other words, whenever a person condemns the “guilty,” they make sure to clarify that this condemnation is specifically towards the drug lords in the name of “killing the roots of the problem.” When put into context, most of the drug war killings were of impoverished people accused of being mere addicts or pushers (Pangilinan et al. 2021), but the killing of drug lords were few and far between. This may be indicative of a general realisation that despite numerous killings, these did not result in an overwhelming and sustainable change within society.

One notable trait of this dataset is that those who openly supported the opposition often commented in English, while those who supported the Duterte government commented in Filipino. As this post was created a few days after the national elections, many citizens were still coming down from the tensions that have been building up for the past months leading up to it. The opposition, led by the former vice president Leonor “Leni” Robredo, was one of many critics of Duterte’s war on drugs approach to the illegal drug trade. Supporters of the opposition took to this post and engaged with Duterte’s supporters, many of whom are supportive of the newly elected Marcos administration, who has Duterte’s daughter Sara Duterte as Marcos’ running mate and vice president. Although all parties can understand each other, the linguistic distinction and choices made between opposition supporters and government supporters are clear. That being said, Filipino remains the most used language within this dataset, similar to the previous sets.

That is not to say that only supporters of the opposition were contesting Duterte’s speech and the implications of his continued support of controversial killings. Other social media users argued that the drug war policy was not effective as illegal substances are still rampant in the Philippines, while others referenced due process, legality, and government competence. Others also referred to their understanding of faith, but this line of argument was also used by supporters of the drug war policy.

Discussion

Across the nine posts whose comments were analysed, the idea of human rights being intertwined with the discussion on a person's innocence and guilt was prominent. In this theme, persons accused of being involved with drugs are seen as unworthy of human rights. Dehumanisation can also be observed across the datasets, with drugs and the people involved with it being replaced with words such as *salot* (scourge), *peste* (pest), *hayop* (animal), and *demonyo* (demon). Discourse fragments that do not necessarily make use of these words and still acknowledge the human-ness of drug criminals on all levels assert that their killing was a predictable and deserved outcome. Other articulations also see their deaths as necessary for the good of the community, and the punishment of crime using death is seen as a deterrent from drugs for future generations. These sentiments can be rooted in the concepts of Filipino value ethics, particularly in how one's actions affect the *kapwa*. The understanding of human rights in the context of innocence and guilt within this study can be best encapsulated by this quote by Atty. Persida Acosta, the current chief of the Public Attorney's Office, which was commented by one of the social media users within the data corpus:

“[H]uman right[s] is not only for the criminals...it is also [the] same human right that is applicable to the victims... Pero pag alam mo na may ginagawa kang masama, ay ikaw na rin mismo ang nag aalis ng right na yon sa sarili mo. [But if you know that you have done something bad, then you have removed that right from yourself.]”

This quote reflects the traditionalist view of human rights that has been a persistent conceptualisation within the Philippine context, where only those morally “worthy” are “granted” human rights. In this case, the people considered morally “worthy” are those who are not involved with illegal drugs, its consumption, or its distribution, and their deaths, especially at the hands of drug criminals, must be brought to justice. In contrast, committing crimes that “ruin other (innocent) people's lives” retracts one's human rights, and death in the midst of the drug war is seen as justified and a “natural” consequence of one's actions. This view is further emphasised by the use of the verb “give” in conjunction with human rights, indicating that it is something that is granted rather than something inherent to the human being. The relationship between the “innocent” and the “guilty” is often seen within discourse fragments, to emphasise the contrast between how each group should be treated and how they are perceived. In other words, the determination of who “deserves” human rights is

approached antithetically, demonstrating that one person can be “given” human rights while the another cannot based on their ties to drugs.

On the other hand, accountability and blame for the killings, as well as emphasis on who is being killed, can be observed through the conjugation of the Filipino word for kill (*patay*). In demonstrative discourse fragments, three conjugations of *patay* were observed: *napatay*, *namatay*, and *pinatay*. *Napatay* roughly translates to having been killed, but the act of killing being described by the verb is implied to be accidental. *Namatay* can be translated as to have died with an implication that this death is considered natural, thus completely erasing the existence of a perpetrator. Lastly, *pinatay* refers to intentional killing. Within the overall data corpus, the conjugations of *namatay* and *napatay* often refer to the “guilty” deaths, those who do not have the moral “worth” to have human rights. Additionally, using *napatay* in a sentence allows for the omission of the perpetrator, which further removes accountability for the death. Meanwhile, the conjugation *pinatay* is frequently used with the “innocent” deaths, and the perpetrator of their deaths (the “guilty” drug addicts and distributors) are cited as well. This usage demonstrates a clear difference in weight on the perpetrator depending on who was killed. This linguistic detail, while it may be easily overlooked, is indicative of social media users’ perceptions of various actors over the course of the drug war.

The illegal drug trade issue is deeply interwoven with other political matters as demonstrated by the intertwining of discourse strands observed in the datasets. The drug war strand is almost always talked about in conjunction with poverty, security, and the governing powers and their decisions. Some datasets, especially those from the posts created in 2022 and from the 2019 ABS-CBN post concerning Senator Go’s remarks, also contained racially-charged negative sentiments towards the Chinese community, specifically Chinese drug lords who had evaded the punishments of the drug war. Across all of these strands, human rights remains a relevant concept that is touched upon, usually implicitly through the assertion of what one and one’s community needs.

Because the drug war had been framed as a war from the beginning of Duterte’s campaign, and has been used to legitimise the government and discredit its critics (Navera 2020), attitudes surrounding it have been oriented towards war, and this manifested in the language used in the dataset. Drug criminals, from the addicts to the main distributors, are identified as “the enemy” against whom “we,” the innocent, drug-free Filipino people, must

win. This mentality heightens polarisation within society, as it institutionalises an “out-group” that everyone must “wage war against” and eradicate. While the framing was created by Duterte’s electoral campaign team and later maintained by the state administration, people on social media responded to this by using war imagery to reflect their own positions and understanding of the drug war policy, such as police and drug suspects as soldiers on opposite sides, and the valourisation of the police. This was also used to justify the use of deadly force, because violence and casualties in war is inevitable. This finding is indicative of how people on social media receive Duterte’s remarks and respond to them on their own terms.

However, this framing is not strict and can shift or even change completely based on different elements, such as time. The datasets from 2022, for example, contained more contestation as compared to the datasets from 2016. The discourse shifted away from justifying the killings as they did in 2016, to identifying new targets, intensifying the crackdown, or changing the policy altogether in 2022. This says a lot about how the conversation has evolved over the years, and may be a product of the six year war on drugs policy. The discourse was also affected by the content of the post corresponding to each dataset. The GMA post in 2022 that covers the trial of the police officers guilty of killing Arnaiz and De Guzman, for example, had more sympathetic sentiments and were more likely to talk about the shortcomings and failures of the drug war policy. Meanwhile, ABS-CBN’s 2022 post, which reports on the continued calls for justice for extrajudicial killings by the bereaved family members of alleged drug suspects, did not get the same reception as the previously described dataset, and commenters were more likely to maintain their discourse positions from 2016 because they did not empathise with the victims (suspected drug addicts and pushers) as much as they did with Arnaiz and De Guzman. Looking as well at the case of Talib Abo Sr., the ex-mayor of Maguindanao, social media users also considered whether or not a person fought back as a determinant for their “innocence,” and by extension, their “worthiness” to enjoy human rights.

As for the general dynamics between the use of English, Filipino, and Tagalog, majority of the material was written in Filipino, with code switching being a common phenomenon across the datasets. This usually occurs between Filipino or Tagalog and English. All language speakers have different discourse positions, and they all articulate them in various ways, such as metaphors. However, discourse fragments containing Filipino tend

to argue in a way that appeals to human emotion, and makes use of personal experiences to support themselves. Fragments containing English, while also appealing to the emotions of the receiver, tends to use logical reasoning to justify themselves. The concept of rights inherence tends to be more used in discourse fragments that contain English, but there are also cases of it being embedded in Filipino. An important point to consider is that concepts such as extrajudicial killings and due process do not have a commonly used word in Filipino. Because language helps shape reality just as reality shapes language, these words not having an equivalent in Filipino make it more difficult to articulate them as they are more “foreign,” and must undergo its own process of meaning-making on the local level. It is possible that these words have already acquired meaning on the local level, but further research will need to be done to uncover their localisation processes.

Human rights and religious belief

Religion, particularly Roman Catholicism, is present within the datasets, and is used by both supporters and opponents to the drug war policy to justify their positions. Supporters of the policy would frame the drug suspects as “evil” and “demons” that must be “sacrificed” for the sake of the rest of Philippine society. They may also look to God for a way to get rid of the perpetrators of the illegal drug trade, and see the lives of criminals as less worth those of the souls of “innocent” citizens. Meanwhile, those that oppose the policy claim that God is the only one who can take life away, and therefore the killings cannot be accepted. Both sides also support their arguments by making use of Bible passages and their own understandings of the teachings of the Church. Retribution is also a common theme across the different positions, with the commenters warning either drug criminals or the police and state administration to think twice about their actions as they will someday be judged before God.

The Roman Catholic Church has a substantial amount of influence within the Philippines, and has been a major social actor that lawmakers and activists alike would find advantageous to cater to when lobbying for social change. It has been a critical actor from a historical perspective, having co-led the People Power Revolution that deposed Marcos, and it continues to be an important voice in issues such as divorce, abortion, and marriage. This study thus shows how the Church’s influence is embedded in language and discourse, and how it is used to justify to opposing sides of the discourse surrounding the war on drugs.

On the death penalty

This study's findings reveal significant implications for policy, one of these being the reinstatement of the death penalty. The Philippines' 1987 Constitution does not allow the imposition of the death penalty, save for "compelling reasons surrounding heinous crimes" that the Congress can thereafter provide (The Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines 1987, Art. III, Sec. 19). This clause makes it the first Asian state to disallow the death penalty on a constitutional level. However, it was once again introduced by former President Fidel V. Ramos for 14 categories of heinous crimes (Macaspac 1993). It was only after ratifying the Second Optional Protocol to the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights in 2007 that the Philippines definitively abolished the death penalty (Aves 2023; United Nations 1989).

However, discussions surrounding its reimposition remain strong, especially in relation to drug-related crimes as Duterte's electoral campaign and drug war policy came into effect. Drug trafficking was one of the heinous crimes punishable by the death penalty when it was still being practised, thus a precedent exists for reinstating it for drug-related crimes. Given as well that it was only abolished recently, tendencies towards its reimposition despite international agreements remain a relevant talking point within Philippine society. This goes to show that while the Philippines may have agreed to abolish death penalty, the situation and conversations going on on the ground are different. The concept of human rights within the Philippine context is still heavily dependent on traditional articulations based on moral "worth," thus those who are identified as "unworthy" of human rights do not get to enjoy them despite internationally agreed-upon obligations. Discourse can be used as a marker for understanding what is considered "natural" within a society, and this does not always line up with the discourse on higher levels. Thus, while the death penalty cannot be legalised (for as long as the Philippines respects its international obligations), the acceptance of death as an viable punishment as observed within language use and the discourse surrounding what is and is not acceptable can manifest in reality in alternative ways, such as extrajudicial killings.

The role of the international community in the safeguarding of human rights

The international community and independent watchdogs remain an indispensable part of ensuring that human rights violations are documented and accountable for. While scepticism and rejection of international intervention can be observed in the ABS-CBN 2016

dataset, this was still contested by other social media users. The other datasets also mentioned the international community's involvement in the drug war, although to a much lesser extent, and while aversion towards outside involvement still exists, this position continues to be contested.

However, local actors are key to creating an iteration of human rights that would address the issue of rights inherence within the contemporary understanding of human rights in the country. Because they participate directly within Philippine society and understand it, they are more able to shape the discourse on the ground. As discussed in the section regarding death penalty, it is not enough to have an agreement on an international level to uphold human rights. While international discourse can be used as a tool to support their contestation, it is necessary to establish and mainstream an articulation of human rights with strong sociolinguistic roots that builds upon existing attempts to encompass its inherent nature in order for it to be truly effective.

Conclusion

Social media is a relatively new development, and the online world's embeddedness in its offline counterpart (Bouvier 2015) has interesting implications when it comes to the public sphere. It can be highly beneficial for the most part, bringing together people from different parts of the world and keeping them connected to each other in ways that would not have been possible a few decades ago. At the same time, this new space creates new opportunities to affect political discourse. While it is but one factor in the larger scheme of movement building (Lim 2012), it is an efficient way of building mass base, recruiting potential organisers and protesters, as well as disseminating information and raising awareness beyond national borders. This study has endeavoured to analyse human rights discourse on the Philippine drug war through social media, specifically Facebook news posts' comment sections. It reveals a small section of the large tapestry of human rights discourse, one that is extremely complex and must be unpacked further, especially as the discourse on human rights and justice continue to evolve over time.

There is an expansive literature on the topics touched upon in this dissertation. First, discourse is deeply intertwined with power, as elucidated by Foucault in his work *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1971). Power manifests through language, and through language, ideologies are formed, maintained, and marginalised. It is through discourse that society organises and limits knowledge, and ultimately, determines the boundaries between the natural and the unnatural, the acceptable and unacceptable. There are different approaches to uncovering ideology within discourse and language, such as Fairclough's sociolinguistic perspective (Fairclough 1995), Van Dijk's framework of social cognition and psychology (Van Dijk 2015), and Wodak's historical approach (Reisigl and Wodak 2017).

Human rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was first conceptualised through discourse, and its continued use as a moral reference and framework for advocacy is a testament to the power it possesses (Hallo De Wolf and Moerland 2023). At the same time, human rights continue to be contested across various social contexts. These discussions are exemplified by the various academic works debating on articulations of human rights within more specific contexts, such as Confucianism (Xu 2015) and Islam (Almahfali and Avery 2023; Hellyer 2018). The contestation of its universality is a manifestation of a struggle of ideology within discourse. This contestation is further explored in the Philippine context.

In the context of the Philippines, a Tagalog moral framework is rooted in the concepts of the *loób*, the *kapwa*, and the relationship between them. It reveals as well how the moral does not always equate to the legal, such that maintaining and protecting relationships are seen as more important than abiding by the law. Given these moral foundations, human rights needs to be understood beyond the current legal context within the country. Academic literature on the drug war has mainly focused on two themes: penal populism and moral discourse. While penal populism explains the drug war policy as a tough yet ineffective policy that has gained support due to its strictness, moral discourse looks into the reasoning behind its support, such as the deterrence of crime through fear and the concept of “upright” and “probationary citizens” (Kusaka 2017). Human rights is dismissed as a part of elite moral rhetoric that is seen as ineffective (Lamchek and Jopson 2024). Its Filipino term, *karapatang pantao*, can be broken down into its root words: *dapat* and *tao*. The main tension within the development of the concept of human rights in the Philippines is between the traditional idea of being “worthy” or *karapat-dapat* of human rights, and the idea of rights being inherent within the *tao*. Although the dominance of the traditional articulation has not always been the case, and there have been efforts to change it, alternative conceptualisations have yet to counter its current mainstream acceptance (Guillermo 2024).

The theoretical foundations of this study is rooted in Foucauldian discourse theory surrounding power and knowledge, and approaches the data from a critical discourse analysis perspective. As such, it investigated how social media users articulate the idea of human rights in the context of the Philippine drug war.

This study both confirms and adds to the rich literature of Filipino political science and communication by examining the comments sections of nine Facebook posts on the Philippine drug war. These Facebook posts were taken from three different news outlets in the Philippines, two local sources (ABS-CBN and GMA) and one international source (CNN), at three separate years during the implementation of the drug war policy (2016, 2019, 2022). It illustrates a general understanding of how human rights were articulated, negotiated, and contested in the midst of rampant nationwide killings that were condoned and even perpetrated by the State. The nine comment sections yielded the following themes and subthemes:

1. Development and human rights,
2. Failures in the practical application of human rights

3. Faith and human rights
4. Governance and human rights
5. Innocence, guilt, and human rights
 - a. Perceived guilt and human rights, and
 - b. Perceived innocence and human rights.
6. International relations and human rights
7. Memory and human rights
8. Security and human rights, and
9. The nature of the issue and human rights.

Out of all of these themes, The innocent-guilty dialectic was used most frequently by social media users to justify or argue against the drug war killings. However, this theme was also used in conjunction with other themes, demonstrating the intertwining of discursive strands. Social media users have cited feelings of heightened security within their communities with the implementation of the drug war policy, and put more emphasis on justice for the victims of drug criminals rather than suspected drug criminals themselves. Dehumanisation can be observed when describing drug users, distributors, and suppliers, and the accountability for deaths during the drug war varies based on who was killed. Furthermore, social media users' reactions to the drug war killings also respond to the use of war and its terminology by Duterte, further asserting the "normalcy" of deaths due to the framing of the policy.

The traditional understanding of human rights as something to be "worthy" of continues to be the hegemonic narrative in the conceptualisation of human rights, but this view must be nuanced with the context of the policy. What makes one "worthy" of human rights is dependent on one's relationship with the *kapwa*, and how one treats it. In other words, those who do morally deplorable acts to other people, such as murder or rape, are no longer "worthy" of their rights because of their actions. This makes it acceptable for them to die or be killed. In contrast, those who simply live within society as part of the *kapwa* and suffer at the hands of others, specifically the victims of drug-related or drug-induced crimes, are elevated. In line with Foucault's understanding of ideology production within discourse, the killing of criminals is considered "normal," and therefore indicates how these suspected criminals are believed to "deserve" what is coming for them.

The data also revealed some insight into human rights and its linguistic relationship with religion, current positions towards death penalty, and the role of international entities in the protection of human rights in the country. Religion and religious language can be used to articulate the justification or the condemnation of the killings during the drug war, but regardless of the position, it demonstrates the great influence religious institutions have in the Philippine context, and thus has important practical implications for practitioners. Although the country is bound by international law to disallow death penalty, support for it still remains at the popular level, indicating a mismatch between the discourses going on in the international and local communities. This mismatch does not, however, mean that international entities are useless altogether. They can still serve as a general guide, especially for non-government and human rights organisations working on the ground. However, the role held by local actors is indispensable in ensuring that rights inheritance is embedded in contemporary understandings of human rights.

From an academic standpoint, the dissertation adds further to the discussion on moral discourse surrounding the drug war. It provides more nuance to the traditionalist idea of moral “worth,” as a victim needs to be identified in a certain way in order to gain social media users’ sympathy and, consequently, appear to “deserve” human rights. Additionally, the scope of the “guilty” appeared to shift over the course of the drug war. From referring to all those involved in the illegal drug trade, from the consumers to the suppliers, the “guilty” largely now referred to only the suppliers or drug lords. Although the overall approach and mindset towards human rights has largely remained the same, the identified scapegoat changed instead. It also asserts the importance of the *kapwa* in the Filipino (or at least, Tagalog) moral framework, as the data often references faults or violations against the innocent *kapwa* when discussing the “natural” and “deserved” outcome of death for those involved in the illegal drug trade.

This study has many practical implications, especially for those concerned with political communication. The case of the Philippine drug war is one of many examples of how social media and public discourse as a whole can be a factor in the normalisation of human rights as something that is meant to be obtained rather than something that a person inherently possesses, which has heavy consequences on how suspects and criminals are treated in society. Conducting studies on these issues can be highly beneficial for political positioning and advocacy-building for those working within the context with the issue in

question. Human rights campaigns within the Philippines can particularly benefit from the findings of this dissertation, as it provides not only a comprehensive snapshot of the current conceptualisations of human rights on the ground, but also an idea of how it has evolved and developed over the course of the drug war. This study can be a stepping stone for the reconceptualisation of human rights within the Philippines that acknowledges human rights as an inherent characteristic of the human being, especially from the grass-roots level. The practical application to policy-making can also be explored, allowing for the possibility of the rearticulation of human rights in such a way that would imbue the concept with rights inherence using a top-down approach.

This dissertation was limited by the posts selected for the study. Although the study made use of the most engaged with posts regarding the killings over the course of the drug war, these are not representative of the entirety of human rights discourse in the Philippines. Due to the linguistic and sociocultural diversity of the country, further research focused on the other languages and social groups present within the islands will be needed to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the conceptualisation of human rights in the country. Furthermore, the Philippine drug war is a highly complex phenomenon that spans across various social issues, and can be nuanced further using other lenses of analysis. There are also other issues through which the conceptualisation of human rights can be investigated given the unique political landscape of the nation.

The social media landscape as a space for political discourse and decision-making would also be a worthwhile endeavour to pursue. With the rise of artificial intelligence and its integration into social media through algorithms, public opinion can be skewed to favour or condemn different individuals and peoples. The translation from vocal political support online to actual electoral votes, as well as the effects and relevance of electoral campaigning spectacles, for example, would be some interesting directions of research in terms of political discourse and social media.

The findings of this study can be used for further research into human rights in the Philippine context. Given the gap between the legal framework and the moral reality, the embedding of this conceptualisation of human rights in political life would be a worthwhile area of study to explore further, especially given the political climate not just in the Philippines, but in many other parts of the world. The innocent-guilty dialectic and the

dynamics that play into how an “innocent” person becomes “guilty” (and vice versa) is an intriguing question to look into.

As of the time of writing, the traditionalist approach towards human rights remains prevalent in Philippine society. Those who have transgressed their community are seen as deserving of death, and those responsible for their deaths escape accountability. But that does not mean that this will always be the case. As this dissertation has demonstrated, language is a witness to and an actor in social change. It is often an overlooked factor in building movements and advocacy, as rhetoric and discourse is dismissed as mere words, just as the UDHR often has been. However, it is from rhetoric and discourse that change can begin, as it is one of the grounds upon which power is exercised, and where power dynamics shift. Thus, perhaps in that same way, it can be through language that reality can change.

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Appendices

A. [*Coding Summary by Theme*](#)

B. [*Coding Summary by Post*](#)