

Justice in a Fragmented Nation: Legal Advocates Narratives on Conflict, Crises, and Reforms

Angelie Bless Cañedo, Glydel Rhea M. Gomez, Darlene B. Sarnillo, Dodelon F. Sabijon, Esmeraldo Damuag, Peter Michael Ocampo

Bachelor of Science in Criminology, Faculty of the College of the Criminal Justice, University of Cebu

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100601191>

Received: 12 June 2026; Accepted: 17 June 2026; Published: 14 July 2026

ABSTRACT

This study explores the perspectives of Legal Advocates on Major National Issues in the Philippines, specifically within the municipalities of Dalaguete and Alcoy. It further describes their viewpoints on significant concerns such as Human Rights Violations, Extrajudicial Killings, Political Dynasties, Corruption, and the territorial dispute involving the West Philippine Sea. The study utilized a qualitative research method employing the transcendental phenomenological approach. The informants of this study were ten (10) private lawyers practicing in Dalaguete and Alcoy, Cebu. Selection of informants were through purposive sampling based on qualifications which is the informants should have worked at their office for a minimum period of three years in Dalaguete and Alcoy, Cebu City, Philippines.

Twelve (12) themes emerged from the findings: (1) Fragile Institutions —Weak governance, corruption, and poor protection of rights and sovereignty; (2) Balanced Governance —Accountability, democracy, and sovereignty must work together; (3) Guardians of Justice — Lawyers defend rights, promote fairness, and build public trust;(4) Law in Motion — Legal advocacy evolves with societal change and reform; (5) Laws Without Teeth — Weak enforcement leaves justice unfulfilled.; (6) Reform for Relevance— Laws must be updated and fairly applied; (7) Unequal Justice —Slow and biased processes weaken public trust; (8) Stronger Institutions, Stronger Nation — Accountability and reform restore faith in law; (9) Ethics Beyond Law — Justice requires integrity and accountability; (10) Resilient Advocates — Lawyers remain defenders despite systemic challenges; (11) Balanced Governance — Human rights and national security must coexist; and (12)Fair Implementation — Laws must be applied impartially for the common good.

Keywords: Legal Advocates, National Issues, Human Rights, Political Dynasties, Corruption, Extrajudicial Killings, West Philippine Sea, Rule of Law, Governance, Philippines

Rationale

The Problem and Its Scope Introduction

The pursuit of justice and governance reform remained a critical global imperative, particularly in nations grappling with systemic challenges to the rule of law. International bodies like the International Criminal Court (ICC) emphasized accountability for state-sponsored violence, investigated, and, where warranted, tried individuals charged with the gravest crimes of concern to the international community: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and the crime of aggression (International Criminal Court, 2023).

The International Bar Association emphasized that Duterte's arrest demonstrated the critical role of the ICC in providing justice for victims who could not obtain redress from domestic legal systems, highlighting the importance of international accountability for atrocity crimes even years after their commission. The ICC's Pre-Trial Chamber I issued a warrant based on reasonable grounds that Duterte bore criminal responsibility for murder as a crime against

humanity, particularly in connection with his leadership of the Davao Death Squad and the Philippine government's "war on drugs" between 2011 and 2019. The warrant was deemed necessary to ensure Duterte's

appearance at trial and to prevent further obstruction or continuation of alleged crimes, underscoring the international community's resolve to pursue justice where local mechanisms had failed (International Bar Association, 2025).

Simultaneously, geopolitical conflicts over maritime territories, exemplified by China's expansive claims in the South China Sea, demonstrated how international law intersected with national sovereignty—an issue intensified by the 2016 Hague ruling favoring Philippine claims under UNCLOS (Council on Foreign Relations, 2024).

Within the Philippine context, these global challenges manifested as complex national crises. The Duterte administration's anti-drug operations resulted in over 6,000 documented killings, with human rights groups estimating actual fatalities exceeding 30,000—disproportionately affecting marginalized communities. Despite international condemnation, domestic accountability mechanisms faltered, culminating in the ICC's intervention after years of stalled local investigations. Concurrently, the Philippines faced enduring structural issues: persistent corruption ranking it 116th globally and political dynasties controlling 73% of congressional seats, entrenching power through patronage networks. The Marcos-Duterte alliance's 2022 electoral victory exemplified this dynastic resilience, maintaining prior policies while avoiding ICC reengagement (Arugay, 2023).

The arrest of former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte by Philippine authorities under an ICC warrant marked a historic moment in international justice. Duterte faced charges of crimes against humanity related to thousands of alleged extrajudicial killings during his administration's "war on drugs" from 2011 to 2019. His arrest and transfer to The Hague underscored the international community's increasing willingness to hold national leaders accountable for human rights violations, despite the Philippines' earlier withdrawal from the Rome Statute (Human Rights Watch). This event raised complex questions about sovereignty, justice, and political accountability in the Philippines.

The West Philippine Sea dispute centered on the Philippines' assertion of sovereignty over maritime territories claimed by China and other neighboring countries. Following the 2016 ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, which invalidated China's expansive "nine-dash line" claim, the Philippines continued to assert its rights under international law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). This ongoing territorial conflict involved issues of national security, resource rights, and regional stability, reflecting the Philippines' struggle to protect its sovereignty against larger geopolitical forces.

Human rights concerns in the Philippines were prominently highlighted by allegations of extrajudicial killings (EJKs) linked to the government's anti-drug campaign. These alleged violations drew condemnation from domestic and international human rights organizations, emphasizing the need for accountability and adherence to due process. The EJK issue remained a contentious topic in Philippine society, sparking debates on the balance between law enforcement, human rights, and state responsibility.

The Philippines was perceived to be a highly corrupt country. It scored 33 out of 100 and ranked 116 out of the 180 countries assessed by Transparency International's 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index (Transparency International, 2023). Eighty-six percent of people thought that government corruption was a big problem while nineteen percent of public service users paid a bribe in the previous 12 months, according to Transparency International's 2020 Global Corruption Barometer. At the same time, most respondents thought that the national and local government officials, police, members of parliament, and judges and magistrates were involved in corruption.

Political dynasties dominated Philippine politics, with families maintaining control over local and national offices across generations. The deep roots and ongoing dominance of political dynasties in the Philippines were traced, noting that powerful clans had shaped the country's politics since Spanish colonization. The system of hereditary elites, or *principalia*, established by the Spanish, was further entrenched by American colonial policies that restricted political participation to the wealthy and well-connected. Recent years saw the rise of "fat dynasties," where multiple

family members held office simultaneously. The political trajectories of prominent families such as the Marcoses, Dutertes, Aquinos, Macapagal-Arroyos, and Villars were reviewed, showing how each had maintained or expanded their influence across generations and branches of government. Studies indicated that the prevalence of dynasties was linked to poorer development outcomes in their territories. Despite constitutional provisions against political dynasties, legislative inaction largely due to dynastic interests in Congress prevented meaningful reform, and the 2022 elections reaffirmed the enduring grip of these families on Philippine politics (Asia Media Centre, 2023).

These major national issues—Duterte’s ICC arrest, West Philippine Sea sovereignty, human rights violations, corruption, and political dynasties—were deeply interwoven with the country’s legal and political landscape. Examining them from the perspective of legal advocates in Dalaguete and Alcoy offered valuable insights into how these challenges were perceived and addressed at the local level, where the implementation of laws and policies directly affected communities. The researcher’s legal background and access to local legal practitioners provided a strong foundation for conducting this study, ensuring a nuanced understanding of both national and grassroots legal perspectives.

At the local level, municipalities such as Dalaguete and Alcoy in Cebu Province were not isolated from the effects of national legal and political developments. Legal advocates in these towns engaged daily with legal concerns shaped by both national policy and local application. Their perspectives on issues such as the effectiveness of current laws, the role of the legal profession in governance, and the balance between human rights and national security provided grassroots understanding of how legal principles were interpreted and applied beyond the urban centers. Despite the importance of their insights, few studies had explored the standpoints of legal practitioners in rural or semi-rural communities regarding pressing national concerns.

The researchers, as students of Criminology, acknowledged the importance of thoroughly analyzing the integrity and operation of the Philippine legal system in relation to the major national issues confronting the country. Their educational background in criminal law, human rights, constitutional processes, and justice systems had equipped them with the foundational knowledge and critical thinking skills necessary to investigate, assess, and interpret intricate legal matters. They recognized the urgent need to examine whether the existing legal framework could effectively uphold justice, the rule of law, and due process, particularly in situations involving politically powerful individuals and sensitive national policies.

As future criminologists, they were called to understand not only the implementation of legal doctrines but also the broader institutional frameworks that ensured fairness, transparency, and accountability in governance. This research was, therefore, not only timely but essential in deepening their understanding of how the legal community perceived and responded to national issues, and how such perspectives contributed to the ongoing interaction between legal advocacy, democratic ideals, and national legal autonomy.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This study is grounded on three major theories: the theory of legal positivism by H. L. A. Hart (1961), the theory of law by Ronald Dworkin (1986), and the theory of cognitive dissonance by Leon Festinger (1957). Hart’s legal positivism serves as the main theoretical framework, emphasizing law as a system of rules separate from morality. Dworkin’s interpretive theory of law provides a critical perspective that integrates moral principles into legal interpretation. Festinger’s cognitive dissonance theory offers a psychological explanation for how individuals, including judges, reconcile conflicting beliefs or decisions. These theories collectively provide a comprehensive lens through which to analyze legal processes, judicial behavior, and the interpretation of law.

According to H.L.A. Hart (1961) Theory of Legal Positivism, Hart refined and defended legal positivism by arguing that law should be understood as a social phenomenon distinct from morality. He rejected the idea that the validity of a law depends on its moral soundness, insisting instead that the existence of law is determined by observable social facts. For Hart, it is essential to distinguish between what the law actually is and what people believe it ought to be.

This analytical separation allows legal scholars to examine legal systems objectively, without conflating descriptive analysis with moral evaluation.

A central feature of Hart's theory is his explanation of law as a system of rules. He criticized earlier positivist thinkers, particularly those who defined law simply as commands issued by a sovereign backed by threats. Hart argued that such a "command theory" fails to explain the complexity of modern legal systems. Instead, he proposed that a legal system consists of primary rules, which impose duties and regulate behavior, and secondary rules, which provide procedures for creating, modifying, and interpreting primary rules. Among these secondary rules, the most fundamental is the rule of recognition. The rule of recognition is a social rule accepted by legal officials that identifies the criteria for determining what counts as valid law within a given legal system. It is not written in a statute but operates as a shared practice among judges, legislators, and other authorities who recognize certain sources such as constitutions or enacted statutes as legally binding (Hart, 1961).

Hart also emphasized that legal validity depends on institutional acceptance rather than moral approval. According to him, officials within a legal system adopt an "internal point of view," meaning they treat legal rules as standards that guide and justify decisions, not merely as habits of obedience. This internal acceptance distinguishes a functioning legal system from mere coercion. By grounding law in structured social practices and shared rules among officials, Hart provided a nuanced account of how authority operates within a legal order. His framework underscores that law is sustained by collective recognition, procedural regularity, and institutional continuity, rather than by moral agreement alone (Hart, 1961).

Ronald Dworkin (1986) advanced a distinctive theory of law that directly challenged traditional legal positivism, particularly in his work *The Nature of Law*. At the center of his theory is the claim that law is not merely a system of rules identifiable through social facts, but a normative practice deeply connected to moral principles. Dworkin rejected the view that the validity of law can be determined solely by reference to institutional sources such as statutes or conventions among officials. Instead, he argued that law is a complex interpretive enterprise in which moral reasoning plays a constitutive role. For Dworkin, understanding law requires more than identifying enacted rules; it requires examining the principles that justify and give coherence to those rules within a broader legal and moral framework.

A central component of Dworkin's critique of positivism is his objection to the strict separation between law and morality. He contended that positivism fails to capture the nuanced character of legal reasoning, especially in difficult cases where clear rules do not provide definite answers. In such situations, judges do not simply exercise discretion; rather, they rely on underlying moral principles that are embedded in the legal system. Dworkin distinguished between rules and principles, arguing that principles carry weight and guide judicial reasoning even when they are not explicitly codified. These principles inform the creation, interpretation, and application of legal norms. Consequently, legal validity is not determined solely by procedural enactment but is intertwined with the moral soundness of the principles that support a given rule. For Dworkin, the question of whether a law is valid cannot be reduced to a binary inquiry based purely on social recognition; it involves assessing the degree to which it coheres with fundamental moral standards (Dworkin, 1986).

This perspective is further developed in Dworkin's concept of "law as integrity." Under this approach, law should be interpreted as a coherent whole, expressing consistent moral principles across time. Judges, therefore, have a constructive role: they must interpret legal materials in a manner that best fits and justifies the existing legal framework. Law as integrity requires decision-makers to treat the legal system as if it were authored by a single moral voice, striving for consistency and principled coherence. In this view, adjudication is not mechanical rule application but a reasoned moral interpretation of institutional history. By emphasizing integrity, coherence, and moral justification, Dworkin presented law as a dynamic and principled practice rather than a mere aggregation of enacted commands (Dworkin, 1986).

According to Leon Festinger (1957) *Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*, he proposed that human beings have an inherent drive toward internal psychological consistency. He observed that individuals experience mental discomfort

when they hold contradictory beliefs, ideas, or values, especially when their actions conflict with those beliefs. This psychological stress arises from what Festinger described as nonfitting relations among cognitions—where one belief, attitude, or behavior logically contradicts another. According to the theory, such inconsistency is not a passive condition; rather, it generates a motivational state that compels the individual to restore balance. In this sense, dissonance functions as a form of internal tension that pushes a person toward cognitive alignment in order to maintain stable mental functioning.

Cognitive dissonance occurs when two thoughts or a thought and an action are psychologically inconsistent with one another. For example, a person may believe that a particular behavior is harmful yet continue to engage in it, creating a clash between belief and conduct. The discomfort triggered by this clash motivates the individual to resolve the contradiction. Festinger argued that people will often attempt to change their beliefs, reinterpret their actions, or minimize the importance of the inconsistency to achieve consonance. The drive for consistency means that individuals do not comfortably tolerate contradictions within their belief systems; instead, they actively seek ways to reconcile them. This reconciliation may involve reframing the situation, downplaying the significance of one cognition, or reshaping attitudes so that they align more closely with behavior (Festinger, 1957).

Festinger further explained that individuals reduce dissonance through specific psychological strategies. One common method is rationalization, in which a person adds new cognitions that justify or explain the conflicting behavior, thereby reducing the perceived inconsistency. Another method involves avoiding information or situations that might intensify the contradiction, a tendency commonly associated with confirmation bias. Rather than confronting disconfirming evidence, individuals may selectively expose themselves to information that supports their existing beliefs. In this way, cognitive dissonance theory highlights how the pursuit of internal consistency shapes attitude formation, belief maintenance, and decision-making processes, demonstrating that psychological harmony often takes precedence over strict logical coherence (Festinger, 1957).

The legal basis for this study is grounded in the 1987 Philippine Constitution, particularly Article VIII, which establishes the Judicial Department and defines the scope and nature of judicial power. The Constitution vests judicial power in one Supreme Court and such lower courts as may be established by law. Judicial power includes the duty to settle actual controversies involving legally enforceable rights and to determine whether any branch of government has committed grave abuse of discretion amounting to lack or excess of jurisdiction. This provision expands the traditional understanding of judicial power by allowing courts to review governmental acts for constitutional compliance and abuse of discretion. The Constitution also provides for the independence of the judiciary, fiscal autonomy, and the structure and composition of the Supreme Court, which is composed of a Chief Justice and fourteen Associate Justices. The Supreme Court's decisions have binding precedential value, and it holds the final authority in interpreting the Constitution and laws of the Philippines (1987 Philippine Constitution, Art. VIII; Official Gazette, 1987; Supreme Court of the Philippines, 2024).

According to Karl Arvin F. Hapal (2019), in his book "Engaging the Trolls: Reactions of 'Netizen' and Philippine Human Rights Organizations on Extrajudicial Killings" looks closely at how social media, especially Facebook, influenced the way Filipinos talked about and reacted to extrajudicial killings during the war on drugs in the Philippines. Many online users openly supported the killings, often justifying them as necessary to maintain peace and discipline in society, even when serious human rights concerns were raised. At the same time, he explained that human rights organizations tried to push back against these narratives by using the same digital spaces to share facts, promote accountability, and defend the value of human life, despite facing hostility and organized trolling. Overall, the study shows how social media became a battleground of ideas—where support for violence and calls for justice existed side by side, reflecting the deep divisions within society.

Buendia (2021) examined Philippine political development more than three decades after the fall of the Ferdinand Marcos authoritarian regime, assessing how democratic institutions have evolved since the country transitioned to democracy. He argues that political development in the Philippines remains deeply connected to the nation's ongoing search for a clear national identity and stronger sense of nationhood. Genuine political modernization, the study

suggests, cannot occur unless the country moves beyond weak national consciousness, reduces the dominance of political dynasties and traditional elites in the electoral system, and promotes more inclusive governance. Buendia further highlights three major challenges: unifying diverse ethnic and religious groups within the Philippine nation-state, balancing political stability with democratization in a way that supports economic growth rather than instability, and reshaping political culture toward more egalitarian and less hierarchical relationships among political actors. Overall, the study emphasizes that democratic structures alone are insufficient; meaningful political development requires structural reform, cultural transformation, and a more inclusive vision of governance.

Gerona (2021) examined the complex geopolitical dynamics of the South China Sea, focusing on the Philippines' foreign policy and national interests in the disputed territory. Gerona highlights how escalating tensions between China and Southeast Asian countries, coupled with the involvement of external powers like the US, Japan, and Australia, have created a highly contested maritime environment. The paper traces key events, including the Philippines' arbitration case against China under Former President Benigno Simeon Aquino III, which led to a ruling favoring the Philippines and invalidating China's nine-dash line claim. He also discussed the shift in the Philippines' foreign policy under President Rodrigo Duterte, who pursued an appeasement strategy toward China, and notes that future administrations must carefully navigate these tensions to protect national interests. Overall, the study provides critical insights into the interplay of regional and global powers in the South China Sea and underscores the Philippines' strategic challenges in safeguarding its territorial claims.

Related studies like Hazel P. Villa (2022) explored the issue of extrajudicial killings (EJKs) and human rights in the Philippines during the administration of former President Rodrigo Duterte. Using a combination of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Political Discourse Analysis (PDA) with a discourse-historical approach, the study examined how political actors expressed their views on Facebook, highlighting the tension between socio-economic progress and individual civil rights. Villa found that these actors often prioritized community safety and national development over Western notions of human rights, reflecting a distinctly Filipino perspective that values cultural context, national sovereignty, and local governance. The study suggests that addressing EJKs effectively requires strategies that are sensitive to cultural and historical factors while still upholding international human rights standards. Additionally, Villa's work demonstrates the usefulness of the discourse-historical approach in understanding how past discourses continue to shape contemporary social and political realities in the Philippine context.

Espiritu (2025) investigated how major Philippine news outlets framed the International Criminal Court's (ICC) arrest warrant against former President Rodrigo Duterte in relation to his administration's anti-drug campaign. By analyzing 114 news articles from the Manila Bulletin, Philippine Daily Inquirer, and The Philippine Star, the study identified three dominant frames: legitimacy and accountability, victimization and political persecution, and sovereignty and nationalism. These frames revealed competing narratives, ranging from viewing the ICC as a neutral legal authority to portraying Duterte as a target of politically motivated actions. The research also examined the tone of coverage, noting a plurality of articles critical of Duterte. Espiritu's findings demonstrate how news media not only influence public discourse on legal accountability and state sovereignty but also mediate the tension between international justice and domestic politics. This study highlights the important role of media framing in shaping public understanding of contested political events and underscores its implications for press freedom, democratic engagement, and transitional justice in the Philippines.

Mendoza et al. (2012) conducted an empirical study on political dynasties in the 15th Philippine Congress to assess their prevalence and socio-economic impact. Using quantitative metrics, the researchers found that political dynasties comprised about 70% of jurisdiction-based legislators, who generally had higher net worth and secured larger margins of victory compared to non-dynastic politicians. Furthermore, jurisdictions dominated by political dynasties tended to exhibit lower standards of living, reduced human development, and higher levels of deprivation and inequality. This study highlights the strong link between political dynasties and socio-economic disparities, providing empirical evidence that entrenched political families can influence not only electoral outcomes but also broader development indicators in the Philippines. The findings underscore the importance of studying political dynasties to understand

governance, equity, and democratic processes in the Philippine context.

Davis et al. (2024) investigated the relationship between political dynasties and corruption in the Philippines, addressing the lack of a reliable, provincial-level measure of corruption. The study developed a corruption risk indicator using statistical analysis of public procurement contracts from 2004 to 2018. Findings revealed that corruption risk declined between 2004 and 2013 but reached a peak in 2016. Regression analysis further demonstrated that provinces with higher political power concentration—measured through the Political Hirschman–Herfindahl Index and the size of the largest political dynasty—experienced significantly greater corruption risk. This research supports the view that political dynasties weaken checks and balances, increasing the likelihood of impunity and misgovernance. The study highlights the importance of examining corruption in conjunction with political dynasties and suggests that reforms targeting both governance and political power concentration are essential for promoting equitable development in the Philippines.

In conclusion, the integration of Hart’s legal positivism, Dworkin’s interpretive theory, and Festinger’s cognitive dissonance theory offers a multidimensional framework for understanding the complexities of legal systems and judicial decision-making. The 1987 Philippine Constitution provides the legal foundation for this study by defining judicial power and ensuring judicial independence. Together, these theories, legal bases, and related literature and studies form a comprehensive foundation for analyzing the dynamics of law, morality, and cognition in the Philippine judicial context.

The Problem

Statement of the Problem

This study delved into the Perspectives of Legal Advocates on Major National Issues in the Philippines.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What were the perspectives of the informants on major national issues in the Philippines?
2. How did the legal community perceive its role in addressing current national issues?
3. What were the prevailing views of the legal community on the effectiveness of existing laws and policies created to national issues?
4. How did the legal community assess the government adherence to the rule of law in handling national issues?
5. How had recent national issues affected the practice of law and legal profession in the country?
6. What were the perspectives of the legal community on the balance between human rights and national security in policy making?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it aimed to capture the informed perspectives of legal advocates on pressing national issues that shaped the political and legal landscape of the Philippines. Their views offered critical insights into how justice, governance, and policy were interpreted and upheld in the face of controversies such as corruption, political dynasties, extrajudicial killings, territorial sovereignty, and high-profile legal proceedings.

The outcome of this study benefited the following persons or institutions:

Lawyers. This study offered a reflective platform to examine how their interpretations of national issues aligned with

or challenged existing legal principles and ethical duties. It reinforced their role as defenders of justice and constitutional order, particularly when controversial topics such as extrajudicial killings, political dynasties, and international accountability were involved.

Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP). The study provided empirical evidence that could support policy recommendations, legal reform initiatives, and continued professional development. It could inform the IBP's stance on pressing legal controversies, helping the organization advocate effectively for justice, rule of law, and democratic governance.

Courts. The findings offered a glimpse into how members of the legal profession perceived the judiciary's performance in addressing national issues. It could aid in identifying institutional gaps or public misconceptions, thereby guiding internal reforms and confidence-building measures within the judicial system. Local Government Units (LGUs) and Department of Justice (DOJ), The research underscored the importance of legal voices in shaping and implementing law at the grassroots and national levels. These institutions could use the findings to strengthen legal education, public awareness campaigns, and more responsive law enforcement practices aligned with constitutional principles and human rights.

Community. Especially ordinary citizens, this study enhanced awareness and understanding of how legal professionals viewed and assessed controversial national matters. It encouraged civic engagement by providing a clearer picture of legal standpoints on issues that directly impacted everyday life.

Academic and community researchers. The study served as a foundation for broader interdisciplinary exploration of law and society. It supported future research endeavors that might delve deeper into legal attitudes, public policy, and the intersection of law and governance in the Philippines.

Future researchers. This study opened opportunities to expand the discussion on the legal community's role in shaping national consciousness. It also laid the groundwork for comparative studies involving other cities or regions, thereby contributing to a richer understanding of legal advocacy across various contexts.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research utilized transcendental phenomenology, a qualitative method. Fundamentally, transcendental phenomenology aimed to investigate and articulate how people encountered a phenomenon, emphasizing their conscious awareness and perception of that encounter. This study examined the views of legal advocates regarding significant national matters like corruption, human rights abuses, constitutional changes, and rule of law concerns and how they were perceived and addressed in the communities of Dalaguete and Alcoy in the Philippines. The technique highlighted the process of bracketing, where the researcher intentionally set aside personal biases, assumptions, and previous knowledge regarding the subject. This was essential since national matters frequently carried significant political, legal, or emotional implications.

By employing bracketing, the researcher set aside judgment to thoroughly listen and accurately record the lived experiences of legal practitioners. This approach guaranteed that the results arose exclusively from the participants' voices and experiences, rather than from the researcher's interpretations or views. Additionally, transcendental phenomenology highlighted intentionality, indicating that each experience was consistently aimed at something. In this study, the reflections of legal advocates were not mere random musings—they were deliberate experiences molded by their identities as lawyers, their interactions with national policies or political changes, and their professional and ethical responsibilities in the community. A lawyer in Dalaguete might have viewed the matter of extrajudicial killings differently than a colleague in Alcoy, influenced by particular local events, individual experiences, or the municipality's socio-political environment. Ultimately, the aim was to reveal the essence of how national legal and political issues were experienced at the grassroots legal level, offering a perspective that was often

underrepresented in mainstream discourse.

Research Environment

This research was carried out at the Municipality of Dalaguete and Alcoy Cebu City. For more in depth description of the locations, the researchers included maps in the landmark to highlight the specific location to be included and excluded in this research. Dalaguete and Alcoy, both municipalities in southern Cebu, share several border similarities. Dalaguete is bordered to the south by Alcoy, making their boundary contiguous. Both municipalities have their eastern borders along the Cebu Strait, giving them coastal access. To the west, Dalaguete is bordered by Badian and Alegria, while Alcoy is bordered to the west by Alegria and Malabuyoc, showing overlap in western neighbors. Dalaguete's northern border is with Argao, whereas Alcoy's southern border is with Boljoon, so their northern and southern borders differ. The municipality of Alcoy, Cebu City has a land area of 61.63 square kilometers or 23.80 square miles which constitutes 1.25% of Cebu's total area. Its population as determined by the 2020 Census was 19,186. This represented 0.58% of the total population of Cebu province. The municipality has 8 barangays.

The municipality of Dalaguete Cebu City has a land area of 154.96 square kilometers or 59.83 square miles which constitutes 3.13% of Cebu's total area. Its population as determined by the 2020 Census was 74,596. This represented 2.24% of the total population of Cebu province. Overall, the municipality has 33 barangays. Furthermore, in terms of business growth in the province of Cebu, Dalaguete contributes to Cebu's economy primarily through its robust vegetable production and emerging Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry, supported by local training programs and plans for an IT park. Alcoy, meanwhile, is a key player in the province's mining sector, hosting Asia's largest dolomite quarry, which generates substantial municipal revenue. Both municipalities also engage in agriculture, supplying fresh produce to neighboring areas. Together, they enhance Cebu's economic diversity by combining agriculture, mining, and growing IT-related businesses.

Research Informants

The informants of this study are ten (10) lawyers from the municipality of Dalaguete and Alcoy, who have factual and adequate experiences in major national issues in the Philippines which includes their opinion about the arrest of Duterte and delivery in the Hague, Netherlands, The West PH Sea (Sovereignty of the Ph Over (WPHSEA), Human Rights (EJIC), Corruption and Political Dynasty. For the researchers, to know their informants the following requirements will be utilized: (a) A minimum of a Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.) or Juris Doctor (J.D.) degree, (b) possess knowledge or experience related to international criminal law, territorial jurisdictions, corruption and Politics (c) should either reside in or have their primary legal practice based in Dalaguete and Alcoy (d) has at least three (3) years in service.

Research Instruments

The primary research instrument for this study is an interview guide, through which the researchers conducted an in-depth interviews with selected informants to gather relevant data. To ensure the accuracy and clarity of participants' responses, both field notes and a voice recorder will be utilized during the interviews. This approach enhanced the precision and reliability of the documentation of informants' perspectives. The interview guide is specifically designed to explore and document the views, insights, and legal interpretations of legal advocates in the Philippines on major national issues affecting the country. These may include, but are not limited to, constitutional challenges, human rights concerns, governance and accountability, judicial independence, and the role of law in political discourse. This tool plays a vital role in capturing the depth, context, and rationale behind the perspectives of legal professionals. It enables thoughtful discussion on complex and often sensitive national issues by providing a structured yet flexible framework, ultimately yielding insights that contribute to a more nuanced and balanced understanding of the role of legal advocacy in national affairs.

The interview guide will consist of the following parts: What are the perspectives of the informants on major national issues in the Philippines, the second part is how does the legal community perceive its role in addressing current

national issues, the third part is what are the prevailing views of the legal community on the effectiveness of existing laws and policies created to national issues, the fourth part is how does the legal community assess the government adherence to the rule of law in handling national issues and the fifth part is how have recent national issues affected the practice of law and legal profession in the country and the last part is what are the perspectives of the legal community on the balance between human rights and national security in policy making.

Research Procedures

The research approach for this study adheres to the transcendental phenomenological method proposed by Clark Moustakas and based on Edmund Husserl's philosophy. The initial phase entails bracketing, where the researcher participates in profound self-reflection and journaling to recognize and set aside individual biases, assumptions, and prior beliefs regarding national legal and political matters. This guarantees that the results are based on the participants' actual experiences instead of the researcher's viewpoints. An initial examination of current literature is carried out to provide context for the study, yet it is intentionally set aside during data gathering and analysis to preserve objectivity. The subsequent stage entails the intentional choice of individuals. Legal professionals, encompassing public attorneys, private practitioners, and legal aid advisors within the municipalities of Dalaguete and Alcoy, are recognized according to certain criteria: they need to be licensed and possess a minimum of at least 3 years of legal experience in the region, along with showing knowledge or experience related to significant national matters. A group of around 10 participants is chosen to facilitate thorough interaction while guaranteeing data saturation. Data gathering is performed via comprehensive, semi-structured interviews utilizing open-ended inquiries aimed at provoking detailed, narrative responses. These interviews investigate how participants recognize national concerns, how these concerns influence their legal work, and how they perceive their roles as legal representatives in both a national and local setting. Interviews take place either face-to-face or virtually, based on participant availability, and are recorded with informed consent. Every interview is subsequently transcribed word for word to guarantee precision and thoroughness. After transcription, data analysis commences with horizontalization, identifying key statements concerning the experience of national issues throughout all transcripts. These statements are grouped into thematic units or categories that illustrate shared patterns in the experience of the phenomenon. The following phase is creative variation, where the researcher examines various viewpoints and conditions that influence each participant's experience, considering their professional position, local environment, and individual situations. This results in the formation of textural descriptions (what was encountered) and structural descriptions (how it was encountered), which are subsequently combined to express the core of the phenomenon—the collective significance of being a legal advocate addressing national matters in rural municipalities of the Philippines.

To guarantee validity and reliability, the researcher utilizes member checking by permitting participants to examine summaries of their interviews or developing themes for correctness. If accessible, secondary data like public announcements, legal documents, or regional news articles can be utilized for triangulation. Peer debriefing is utilized to improve objectivity throughout the analysis.

Ethical concerns are consistently upheld during the entire procedure. Ethical approval is obtained from a university or institutional review board, and participants are thoroughly informed of their rights, such as confidentiality, voluntary involvement, and the option to withdraw at any time. All information is safely stored and anonymized. In conclusion, the results are organized thematically, reinforced by direct quotes from participants to maintain authenticity. The findings are subsequently combined into a detailed textural-structural-essence account, emphasizing the fundamental lived significance of legal advocacy concerning national matters within the distinctive socio-political context of Dalaguete and Alcoy. These insights will enhance the comprehension of the overlap between national legal matters and local legal practices, providing significant implications for policy, legal education, and grassroots advocacy.

Gathering Data

Data collection in this study starts with obtaining ethical approval from an established institutional review board or

academic ethics committee. After receiving approval, the researcher reaches out to prospective participants—legal representatives including public attorneys, private lawyers, and barangay legal advisors in Dalaguete and Alcoy—who qualify based on the inclusion criteria of possessing at least one year of legal experience in the region and direct knowledge of or involvement in significant national matters.

The selection occurs through purposive sampling, concentrating on participants who can offer detailed, thoughtful descriptions of their experiences. Every possible participant is contacted directly or through formal communication, and informed consent is secured prior to conducting any interviews. Upon obtaining consent, detailed, semi-structured interviews are arranged at a time and place that suits the participants, with the choice to conduct the interviews in person or through secure online platforms based on availability and accessibility. The interviews use open-ended questions to enable participants to provide in-depth stories about their experiences with national legal matters within the framework of their local practice. Questions aim to investigate which national issues they view as most urgent, how these matters influence their legal responsibilities, and what individual significances and professional difficulties arise from these situations. The researcher adopts a friendly, neutral tone to promote honesty and utilizes additional or probing questions to enhance responses when needed.

All interviews are recorded with audio, with participants' consent, and subsequently transcribed word-for-word to maintain the integrity and precision of the information. Field notes are recorded during the interviews to capture non-verbal signals, context, and first impressions that could influence the following analysis. During the data collection process, the researcher practices continual bracketing and keeps a reflective journal to track and suspend personal biases, ensuring that the data gathering prioritizes the participants' viewpoints instead of the researcher's preconceived notions. The data collection phase persists until saturation is achieved—meaning no further themes or insights arise from more interviews. After all data is gathered, the transcripts are thoroughly examined, and participants might be requested to confirm the information through a method called member checking, which boosts the reliability and authenticity of the data. At each phase, participants are informed of their ability to exit the study, and all data is handled with utmost confidentiality, kept safe, and utilized only for research objectives.

Analysis

This study's data analysis adopts the systematic method of transcendental phenomenology as established by Clark Moustakas. After the interviews are transcribed word for word, the researcher starts a reflective bracketing process, consistently setting aside personal evaluations, convictions, and prior knowledge to guarantee that the analysis stays rooted in the participants' actual experiences. The initial phase of the analytic process is horizontalization, during which the researcher thoroughly examines each transcript and pinpoints all statements relevant to the experiences of legal advocates concerning national issues. These declarations, known as “horizons,” are considered equally important and are gathered as the fundamental data of meaning. Once the horizons are identified, the researcher groups them into themes or meaning units that reflect shared experiences and insights among the participants. These themes are subsequently examined more deeply through a method known as imaginative variation, which entails investigating the various structural factors and viewpoints that influence the participants' experiences. This stage aids in revealing how and under what conditions the phenomenon occurred—whether due to personal clashes with national policies, ethical conflicts in legal practice, or encounters with legal disparities in their localities.

Through imaginative variation, the researcher creates textual descriptions that convey what the participants went through—the substance and core of their stories. Simultaneously, structural descriptions are formulated to clarify how these experiences took place, encompassing the emotional, psychological, and contextual elements that shaped their perceptions. The two forms of descriptions are subsequently combined into a conclusive, cohesive narrative referred to as the essence of the experience. This essence embodies the common significance and fundamental comprehension of being a legal advocate facing national legal and political challenges while engaging with the local environments of Dalaguete and Alcoy.

During the data analysis, the researcher upholds trustworthiness by keeping a reflective journal, performing member checking as needed, and taking peer feedback into account to confirm thematic interpretations. The aim of the analysis

is not to generalize, but to thoroughly and genuinely portray the actual experiences of the participants. The outcome is a comprehensive, integrated depiction of how legal practitioners in rural Philippine municipalities perceive, react to, and interpret national concerns within the framework of their work and social setting.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers follow proper ethical research procedures to protect the informants' privacy and confidentiality before the actual gathering of data. As criminology students conducting a study on "Perspectives of Legal Advocates on Major National Issues of the Philippines" with informants from Dalaguete and Alcoy, the researchers will ensure that each participant is treated with respect, neutrality, and full transparency. All informants will be provided with an informed consent form that clearly outlines the research objectives, data collection methods, and the voluntary nature of their participation. The study will proceed only after participants from Dalaguete and Alcoy have fully understood and signed the informed consent form, signifying their voluntary agreement to take part.

All informants will be informed that any data collected will be handled with strict confidentiality. Personal identities and other sensitive details will not be disclosed under any circumstance and will not be used for purposes outside this academic research. If any future use of the data for academic or scholarly purposes is required, the researchers will seek further permission from the informants. This ensures that both their identity and professional insights remain protected at all times.

Moreover, interviews and other forms of data collection will be conducted in a respectful, impartial, and non-discriminatory manner. The researchers are committed to upholding the dignity of each participant and avoiding any form of coercion, emotional discomfort, or psychological harm. Adequate measures will be observed to ensure the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of the participants throughout the study.

Beneficence. This study aims to provide valuable insights into how legal advocates in Dalaguete and Alcoy perceive pressing national issues, such as constitutional reform, human rights, rule of law, and international legal obligations. It is hoped that the findings will contribute to informed public discourse, legal education, and potentially influence policymaking that strengthens the legal framework of the Philippines.

Non-maleficence. The researchers commit to ensuring that no harm, whether physical, emotional, reputational, or legal, comes to the participants. All data will be collected and used responsibly, with due regard for legal protocols, human rights standards, and ethical research principles. **Justice.** The study is guided by a commitment to fairness and equity.

The perspectives of various legal advocates from Dalaguete and Alcoy will be represented in a balanced and objective manner. The research will avoid favoring any political, institutional, or ideological position and will present findings that reflect the true diversity of legal thought in these communities.

Autonomy. Each participant's freedom to choose whether or not to take part in the study will be fully respected. Their professional opinions will be gathered through voluntary and informed participation, free from pressure or misrepresentation. The researchers recognize and uphold the participants' right to withdraw from the study at any stage without consequence.

Trustworthiness. To ensure the validity and ethical soundness of this study, the researchers will adopt four core criteria:

Credibility. The accuracy and reliability of the data will be ensured by cross-verifying participant statements and validating findings through established research protocols.

Dependability. The study will follow a transparent and replicable process in all phases—data gathering, analysis, and presentation.

Transferability. Data will be securely stored and may be used by future researchers upon formal request and approval, provided participants' privacy is still guaranteed.

Confirmability. The conclusions and interpretations will strictly represent the participants' perspectives, free from researcher bias or external influence.

Reliability. All analytical processes will be conducted with academic rigor. Data will be supported by direct quotations from informants and substantiated with credible legal sources to ensure the findings' consistency, transparency, and trustworthiness.

Bracketing and Reflexivity

The researchers acknowledge their own viewpoints regarding the legal community's role in addressing pressing national concerns, particularly in the context of the Philippines' evolving legal and political landscape. As criminology students trained in the principles of justice, human rights, and due process, the researchers are aware of their predisposition to uphold legal integrity, democratic ideals, and constitutional safeguards. This academic and ethical orientation may shape how they interpret legal developments, especially those involving the balance between national security and human rights, the effectiveness of laws and policies, and government adherence to the rule of law.

Given that this study seeks to explore the perspectives of legal advocates from Dalaguete and Alcoy on major national issues, the researchers recognize the need to set aside their own beliefs regarding the topics addressed by the study. These include, among others, the role of legal professionals in addressing national issues, the prevailing views on the efficacy of current legal frameworks, and the perceived impact of recent controversies on legal practice in the Philippines. Bracketing these internal assumptions is crucial to ensure that the voices of the informants are heard clearly and without distortion. The researchers commit to consciously suspending judgment and refraining from allowing their personal stances to influence the collection or interpretation of data.

Reflexivity is central to this endeavor. As future members of the criminal justice system, the researchers understand that their academic formation equips them with a particular lens—one that values rule of law, ethical governance, and institutional accountability. This lens, while valuable, can also introduce subtle biases if left unchecked. Therefore, the researchers will continually reflect on how their training, background, and expectations might shape their approach to topics such as the legal community's assessment of government performance, responses to rule of law issues, or

perceptions of human rights vis-à-vis national security. This reflection is necessary to maintain neutrality and integrity throughout the research process.

Furthermore, the researchers understand that the topic may provoke strong reactions due to its political and legal implications. As the study touches on high-stakes national debates—including recent legal developments, constitutional controversies, and national security policies—it is imperative that the research environment fosters trust and openness. Informants will be approached with respect, and their responses will be solicited in a manner that is non-leading, non-judgmental, and fully confidential. The researchers will ensure that all legal practitioners from Dalaguete and Alcoy are free to express their professional insights without fear of misrepresentation or misinterpretation.

In conclusion, establishing bracketing and reflexivity in this research is essential to ensure objectivity, transparency, and methodological rigor. By setting aside preconceived notions and consistently reflecting on their role as researchers, the study becomes more credible and ethically grounded. This approach allows for a clearer and more balanced understanding of the perspectives of legal professionals on the most pressing national issues whether related to governance, legislation, human rights, national security, or the evolving practice of law in the Philippines.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined to give further clarifications and understanding.

Balance between human rights and national security. In this research, this phrase refers to the legal community's views on how the Philippine government and its policymakers weigh the protection of fundamental human rights against the need to maintain national safety and order, particularly when crafting or enforcing public policies.

Effectiveness of existing laws and policies. This term describes how well current legislation and governmental policies are perceived by legal advocates in terms of solving or managing major national issues, especially in terms of implementation, fairness, and impact.

Government adherence to the rule of law. Operationally, this pertains to how legal professionals perceive the Philippine government's compliance with constitutional principles, legal procedures, and the consistent application of justice when dealing with national problems.

Legal community. Operationally, this pertains to professionals in the legal field, including lawyers, judges, legal scholars, and public defenders, who are based in or practicing within the municipalities of Dalaguete and Alcoy, Cebu, and who contribute their insights on national issues.

Major national issues. These are current and pressing concerns that significantly affect the political, legal, and social systems of the Philippines. In the context of this research, these include issues such as the ICC case against former President Duterte, the West Philippine Sea dispute, human rights violations (especially extrajudicial killings), corruption, and political dynasties.

Perspectives of the informants. In this study, this refers to the individual viewpoints, opinions, or legal interpretations shared by legal advocates regarding various major national issues in the Philippines, as expressed during interviews or data collection.

Role in addressing national issues. This refers to the legal community's perceived responsibilities, contributions, and participation—whether through advocacy, litigation, policy-making, or public education—in resolving or responding to national concerns.

Presentation And Analysis of Data

Presentation of Data

The transcriptions were reviewed multiple times to capture the informants' descriptions of their experiences. Significant statements from the informants that were directly related to the research topic were identified. These significant statements were then used to create formulated meanings, which were grouped into cluster themes based on shared themes. These cluster themes were further refined and reorganized, leading to the development of broader, emergent themes.

Emergent Themes

Based on the core meanings derived, 30 cluster themes were recognized and organized into twelve (12) emergent themes. These emergent themes were developed from the shared responses of the participants in this study, the emergent themes are as follows:

Perspectives of the Informants

1. Fragile Institutions: Weak governance, corruption, and poor protection of rights and sovereignty.

2. Balancing Governance: Accountability, democracy, and sovereignty must work together.

Legal community's perception of its role in handling national issues

3. Guardians of Justice: Lawyers defend rights, promote fairness, and build public trust.
4. Law in Motion: Legal advocacy evolves with societal change and reform.

Prevailing views on the effectiveness of existing laws and policies.

5. Laws Without Teeth: Weak enforcement leaves justice unfulfilled.
6. Reform for Relevance: Laws must be updated and fairly applied.

Legal community's assessments on Government's adherence to the rule of law

7. Unequal Justice: Slow and biased processes weaken public trust.
8. Stronger Institutions, Stronger Nation: Accountability and reform restore faith in law.

Effects of national issues on the practice of law and legal profession.

9. Ethics Beyond Law: Justice requires integrity and accountability.
10. Resilient Advocates: Lawyers remain defenders despite systemic challenges.

II. Perspectives on the balance between human rights and national security

1. Balanced Governance: Human rights and national security must coexist.
2. Fair Implementation: Laws must be applied impartially for the common good.

Perspectives of the Informants

Fragile Institutions: Weak governance, corruption, and poor protection of rights and sovereignty. The emergent theme recognize that the government is characterized by systemic institutional decay and inefficacy. This implies that the nation's contemporary problems stem from path dependence, where past political and institutional choices—such as those that permitted the rise of hereditary power (dynasties) or entrenched systemic corruption—have created self-reinforcing mechanisms.

Informant 1 suggests that these legacy structures continue to constrain contemporary reform efforts and inhibit the development of robust, accountable institutions necessary for upholding the rule of law and securing national interests:

I do not advocate for human rights violations because everyone should be afforded basic rights, even if we are not directly affected now, while recognizing that these issues require balance to avoid instability or totalitarian rule and to preserve democracy. I strongly oppose extrajudicial killings and believe that due process must always be followed, regardless of the desire to take the law into one's own hands. I reject corruption but accept that it cannot be completely eliminated, so I believe efforts should focus on reducing it through strong leadership and good governance. I see political dynasties as a complex and unresolved issue, since the constitutional prohibition is not self-executing and defining political dynasties risks excluding capable leaders simply because of family ties. On the West Philippine Sea, I support affirming our arbitral ruling, believe international obligations under UNCLOS should

be honored, and view the issue as a necessary balance between legal rights, economic interests, security concerns, and relations with major powers. IDI1:SS1

Informant 3 shared that the observed institutional deficiencies and governance challenges are not merely transient or superficial, but rather deeply rooted and historically embedded:

For me, I will never advocate for human rights violations kay everyone should be afforded certain rights, even if we are not affected now, it could happen in the future. I also believe in due process for extrajudicial killings, opposing corruption bisan dili gyud kini totally eliminated, supporting good governance to reduce it, and seeing political dynasties as a complex issue kay ang balaod exists pero dili self-executing ug Congress has yet to define and regulate them. Regarding territorial disputes like the West Philippine Sea, I believe it is important to balance national interests, economic ties, and security, affirming the arbitral ruling bisan pa og challenges with China, while recognizing the broader impacts sa trade, tourism, and Filipinos abroad. (IDI1:SS1)

For me, I will never advocate for human rights violations because everyone should be afforded certain rights, even if we are not affected now, it could happen in the future. I also believe in due process for extrajudicial killings, opposing corruption even if it cannot be completely eliminated, supporting good governance to reduce it, and seeing political dynasties as a complex issue because the law exists but is not self-executing, and Congress has yet to define and regulate them. Regarding territorial disputes like the West Philippine Sea, I believe it is important to balance national interests, economic ties, and security, affirming the arbitral ruling despite challenges with China, while recognizing the broader impacts on trade, tourism, and Filipinos abroad. (IDI1:SS1)

Balancing Governance: Accountability, democracy, and sovereignty must work together. The emergent theme outlines a normative framework for achieving robust and sustainable political development, posting that true progress necessitates the simultaneous and synergistic advancement.

Informant 4 stated accountability deficits constitute the foundational causal mechanism driving the observed array of institutional frailties:

One major national issue can be linked to all others, accountability. Corruption will always exist within a community. Some people take the law into their own hands. International concerns, such as those regarding the West Philippine Sea, and economic issues, like inflation, health insurance, or labor relations, also arise. What these issues all have in common is the question of accountability. When this happens, everyone pushes, hides, evades, and throws the blame onto a scapegoat, who then receives the anger of those who are injured and hurt. IDI4:SS29

Informant 5 suggests that the prevalence of systemic corruption operates as a critical institutional impediment that significantly obstructs the nation's trajectory toward sustainable socio-economic development:

Ang corruption dako kaayo og epekto sa atong kinabuhi kay kita mismo ang direktang naapektaran, ilabi na sa mga public projects sama sa DPWH flood control nga dili tarong ang pagkahimo ug dali mangaguba. Tungod sa corruption, ang pondo sa mga proyekto dili magamit sakto, mosangpot sa mga ghost projects, ug mahimong dakong babag sa kalamboan sa nasud ug sa panginabuhi sa mga tawo. Tungod usab ani, ang mga negosyante mahadlok mo-invest kay lisod kaayo magnegosyo sa usa ka lugar nga daghan og corruption. (IDI5:SS37)

Corruption has a very large impact on our lives because we are the ones who are directly affected, especially through public projects such as DPWH flood control initiatives that are poorly constructed and easily damaged. Because of corruption, project funds are not properly used, resulting in ghost projects and making corruption a major obstacle to national development and to people's livelihoods. Because of this corruption, business owners are discouraged from investing, since it is very difficult to do business in a place where corruption is widespread. (IDI5:SS37)

Legal community's perception of its role in handling national issues

Guardians of Justice: Lawyers defend rights, promote fairness, and build public trust. The emergent theme suggests that the legal advocates navigate clients, the public, and sometimes the courts through complex legal procedures,

statutes, and precedents. They clarify options and chart a course of action within the legal framework.

Informant 5 states legal advocates assist clients through every stage of the legal process to ensure adherence to due process rights:

So para nako, dapat dili na ni ingon nga sa lawyer ra, so dapat kita gyud nga tanan na community. So unsaon man ani as a lawyer, for example naay mga reklamo diri, about sa kanang mga government officials nga involved ug corruptions, so kita ana ang atuang mabuhat ra gyud is we can file a case. Mo assist rata kung naay any person nga mo complaint, so we will file a case against that individual who is involved. Dili man ta ingon nga Ombudsman nga we will have to investigate that, ang atoa gyud, ug naay reklamo, naay mo complaint, of course we cannot do it without a lawyer, they don't know how to file a complaint, so we lawyers can assist them to file. We can gather informations, we can interview the complainant, ask the complainant to provide any documents as a proof. (IDI5:SS38) (So for me, this should not only be the responsibility of lawyers, but of the whole community. As a lawyer, for example, if there are complaints about government officials involved in corruption, what we can do is file a case. We can assist whenever a person files a complaint by pursuing a case against the individual involved. We are not like the Ombudsman who conducts investigations. Our role is that if there's a complaint, if someone comes forward, then of course they cannot proceed without a lawyer because they don't know how to file a complaint. That's where we lawyers can assist them in filing. We can gather information, interview the complainant, and ask them to provide any documents as proof.) (IDI5:SS38)

Informant 9 shares that advocates strive to ensure that all parties are treated equally under the law, and that outcomes are just and equitable, not arbitrary or biased:

As I mentioned legal advocates, legal professionals, whether we are lawyers, judges, prosecutors, public defenders. We definitely defend and represent those accused. Okay. You may think someone is guilty, but in our perspective, we do not judge the person. I said, same as a doctor who will treat everyone fairly. We believe everybody is should be given a fair. Their right to their time and forth, which they have to be properly represented by us. At the same time, when there are laws, example, there are laws being passed who have very unconstitutional stipulations, unconstitutional policy, in this hour also our job to immediately file the necessary petition who put this to it's implementation. Because we see it, we know what the basic, what is being protected by our constitution, by our loss, and anything that will violate that would necessitate us to file the necessary or make the necessary action on to ensure and people's rights in the grander impact would be protected. IDI9:SS67

Law in Motion: Legal advocacy evolves with societal change and reform. The emergent theme recognized that changes to statutes, regulations, and judicial precedent (legal reforms) necessitate that lawyers continually update their knowledge and strategies. Advocacy is essential to both shaping and implementing these reforms.

Informant 2 stated that laws are continuously developing, and legal advocates evolve alongside them:

Well that one is also tough. I could say that because of the national issues for at least for us lawyers you can say business is good. Joking aside, well I'd like to say that with these national issues, especially we have your issue on impeachment again, and on this ICC jurisdiction, it has broadened our discussion at least among lawyers in the legal community or even in fact the general public in terms of these issues that weren't touched upon much before. So we could say that perhaps it's even going to expand or enhance our Supreme Court's decision or what we call jurisprudence. So in a way with these developments in national issues you can see the law is constantly evolving and so should us legal practitioners. We should constantly involve and update ourselves because of these issues. IDI2:SS9

Informant 6 recognized that there are certain laws need to be revised or updated to adapt to the changing environment:

I believe the role of legal advocates is to engage with lawmakers such as senators and congressmen to identify and push for laws that need to be changed or updated. I see this role as including advocacy for issues like divorce,

recognizing that while opinions differ due to personal or religious beliefs, legal advocates may still push for reforms they believe would reduce suffering caused by forced or unhappy marriages. I also believe legal advocates should address emerging issues such as online gambling by calling for stricter regulations, particularly to protect vulnerable groups like minors, even if outright bans may be unrealistic due to government revenue concerns. I view legal advocacy as extending to recommending practical safeguards, such as limiting easy access to gambling platforms through digital payment systems. Overall, I understand legal advocacy as the responsibility to point out flaws in existing laws, including disproportionate penalties, and to push for reforms that make the legal system more fair and responsive. (IDI6:SS45)

Prevailing views on the effectiveness of existing laws and policies.

Laws Without Teeth:Weak enforcement leaves justice unfulfilled. The emergent theme recognized that laws may be applied incorrectly or manipulated to serve the interests of a particular group or individual, rather than being used to achieve justice or fairness.

Informant 10 states that the challenge is not the absence of laws, but rather their implementation and the ability to enforce them consistently and equitably:

There is no problem regarding with our existing laws because we have enough laws addressing these issues, but the question is the manner of implementing and enforcing it. The support provided by the government especially to those who cannot afford the services of the lawyer is much important so they will not keep in silence when their rights are being violated. IDI10:SS74

Informant 9 recognized that the implementation of laws is often biased, and there is a pressing need for their equal and impartial application. Ensuring fairness in the enforcement of laws is crucial for upholding justice and fostering public trust in the legal system:

*Ang laws are effective, pero pangutana kung ang mga tawo nga gihatagan og katungdanan sa pagpatuman niini, sama sa judge, sa senate, tinuod ba nga nagpatuman sa stick tenor sa balaod? Makita nga usahay dili patas ang implementasyon kay paspas silutan ang mga ordinaryong tawo sa gamay nga paglapas, sama sa tax, pero ang mga dagkong tao nga na-involve sa bigger schemes ug mas dako ang epekto, kasagaran wala klaro nga naparusahan. Busa, para nako, bisan pa og anaa ang balaod, dili kini implemented fairly across everyone. (IDI9:SS68)*The laws are effective, but the question is whether the people tasked with implementing them, such as judges and the senate, truly enforce them according to the full intent of the law. It is clear that enforcement is sometimes unfair, as ordinary people are quickly penalized for minor violations like taxes, while those involved in larger schemes with greater impact often go unpunished. Therefore, for me, even though the laws exist, they are not implemented fairly across everyone.(IDI9:SS68)

Reforming for Relevance: Laws must be updated and fairly applied. This emergent theme recognizes the need for legal systems to adapt to the changing times by updating laws that are no longer effective, too lenient, or full of loopholes.

Informant 2 emphasizes the importance of ensuring that laws remain relevant and capable of addressing current societal issues, technological advancements, and evolving norms:

Well, our role, first is, one, is to be the enforcers, so we have our laws, and our role is to uphold the law, to enforce it, and hopefully, I hope I speak for my brothers in the profession, brothers and sisters in the profession, that we won't abuse it. So, that's one. And the second is to help create better policies. So, not only do we help enforce it, but as legal professionals, especially for those who are serving congressmen, or even local councillors, who are in charge of crafting or creating laws and ordinances, we hope that we advise them properly to create not only good laws, but also efficient laws, and laws that are also fair, and that don't trample on human rights. IDI2:SS10

Informant 7 states that some laws have gaps or ambiguities that allow individuals or organizations to exploit them for personal gain or to avoid consequences. These loopholes can undermine the law's integrity and effectiveness:

Okay, for me, the existing policies are very weak and they are very subject to.. to be indirectly violated, meaning naay daghan mga palusot. So weak, especially that the punishment is when I say the punishment, when there's due process and then the found out nga convicted for me, it's very light and delayed because justice delayed is justice denied, so for me, it's very weak.(IDI7:SS52)(Okay, for me, the existing policies are very weak and they are very subject to be indirectly violated, meaning there are many loopholes. So weak, especially that the punishment—when I say the punishment, when there's due process and then it's found out that the person is convicted—for me, it's very light and delayed, because justice delayed is justice denied. So for me, it's very weak.)

Legal community 's assessments on Government's adherence to the rule of law

Unequal Justice: Slow and biased processes weaken public trust.

The theme reveals that while due process and legal procedures are formally present within the Philippine justice system, their execution remains inconsistent and often unequal. Informants acknowledge that the government observes procedural steps such as investigations and hearings, but these are frequently perceived as slow, performative, or influenced by power and public image. Consequently, adherence to the rule of law appears more symbolic than substantial, as enforcement tends to vary depending on who is involved in the issue.

Informant 1 recognized that government institutions continue to conduct investigations and follow legal procedures; however, these actions are often viewed as slow or merely for public display rather than efficient accountability measures:

Adherence to the rule of law. Well, if you look at it, let's put it lang the most recent one is the flood control issues. You've seen so many times about Congress, whether it's the House or the Senate, they call, what do you call the Senate Blue Ribbon Committee. So they do an investigation. And that is part of due process. There's an investigation. Although maybe some would view it as it's like a publicity stunt because of the advent of social media and technology. But if you look at it before, just an investigation. Whatever the results still forward it to the Justice Department for one, the Justice Department to properly assess if there is a cause to prosecute. But that's still part of the due process. So in a sense, we can say that government is still adhering to due process or to the procedures. It's just that maybe lang how people think. It's not going as fast as they would want it to, ana lang. (IDI1:SS5)(Adherence to the rule of law. Well, if you look at it, let's put it only—the most recent one is the flood control issues. You've seen so many times about Congress, whether it's the House or the Senate, they call, what you call the Senate Blue Ribbon Committee. So they do an investigation. And that is part of due process. There's an investigation. Although maybe some would view it as it's like a publicity stunt because of the advent of social media and technology. But if you look at it before, just an investigation. Whatever the results, still forward it to the Justice Department for one, the Justice Department to properly assess if there is a cause to prosecute. But that's still part of the due process. So in a sense, we can say that government is still adhering to due process or to the procedures. It's just that maybe only how people think. It's not going as fast as they would want it to, that's just it.)(IDI1:SS5)

Informant 9, on the other hand, emphasized the disparity in implementation, expressing frustration that accountability seems to depend on a person's social or economic status:

I think, as I've mentioned earlier it's all about the implementation. Is the government strictly implementing it fairly across the board or is it being bent "being bent" that's the disheartening part of now that we are seeing these issues. That's the disheartening area that I feel very strongly about and that's what legal profession trying to fight for that you know kung naa moy cliente gamay ray sayop

₱50.00 ray gi kawat diretso man gani sya ma guilty unsa nalang na millions ang gikawat. But we don't see that we never simply see or feel or it was never publicize it og unsa man jud ang punishment sa mga liable, found liable jud

following due process. (IDI9:SS69) (I think, as I've mentioned earlier, it's all about the implementation. Is the government strictly implementing it fairly across the board or is it being bent? "Being bent"—that's the disheartening part of now that we are seeing these issues. That's the disheartening area that I feel very strongly about, and that's what the legal profession is trying to fight for. You know, if you have a client who made only a small mistake, only ₱50.00 was stolen, he is immediately found guilty, what more if millions were stolen. But we don't see that—we never simply see or feel, or it was never publicized, what really is the punishment of those liable, truly found liable following due process.)

Stronger Institutions, Stronger Nation: Accountability and reform restore faith in law. This theme emphasizes the participants' shared belief that genuine adherence to the rule of law requires strengthening government institutions, cultivating legal expertise among public officials, and ensuring stricter accountability. Informants suggested that many public servants lack sufficient legal knowledge and fail to apply the remedies and safeguards available under the law. Furthermore, they asserted that establishing stronger institutions and imposing harsher penalties against corrupt or abusive officials would deter misconduct and rebuild citizens' confidence in the justice system.

Informant 8 noted that lapses in legal expertise among some government officials contribute to the weak implementation of the law:

My personal views do not reflect the legal community as a whole. However, it is in these times that we get to know our leaders in a wider and deeper scope when it comes to their expertise in law and the incidental matters that come with their positions. As for me, it gave me an idea that not all of our public officials who are holding office in the government are not well-versed with the law, and that not all remedies afforded by the law are properly utilized to the matter at hand. IDI8:SS62

Informant 10 reinforced the need for stronger institutions and stricter sanctions to promote discipline and integrity within the public sector:

Strengthen our government agencies or courts in addressing corruption issues, and these abusive governments officials and likewise impose harsh penalties for them to be afraid and instill in their minds to not commit crimes. IDI10:SS75

Effects of national issues on the practice of law and legal profession.

Ethics Beyond Law: Justice requires integrity and accountability.

This theme highlights that while adherence to legal procedures is vital, true justice in legal practice extends beyond mere compliance with the law. Informants underscored that lawyers and public officials must also uphold moral integrity, accountability, and ethical conduct in all their actions. The legal profession is not only bound by written statutes but also by conscience and social responsibility, especially when handling cases involving public service, procurement, or governance. Ethical awareness is crucial to preserving public trust and ensuring that the law serves its ultimate purpose

— the common good.

Informant 1 emphasized that a lawyer's role goes beyond providing legal advice; it also involves guiding clients toward ethical decisions, even when legal technicalities might allow otherwise. The informant also noted how evolving ethical standards, including social media conduct, challenge lawyers to act with greater responsibility:

Kana, as I've said, diha gyud na ma put on the spotlight as a legal practitioner, especially kung nag-serve ka sa government or as legal counsel sa contractors, sama sa procurement. Ang obligation sa lawyer mao ang pag-advice sa client unsay sakto ug ethical bisan pa og dili maminaw ang client, ug responsibilidad gihapon sa counsel nga ipahibalo ang ethical concerns sa project, sama sa substandard materials. I also see nga kinahanglan mas aware

ang lawyers karon sa amendments sa code of ethics, lakip na ang ethical use of social media, kay daghan issues nga mo-gikan ani sa government ug private practice. (IDI1:SS6) As I've said, this really puts a legal practitioner in the spotlight, especially when serving in government or as legal counsel for contractors, such as in procurement. A lawyer's obligation is to advise the client on what is right and ethical, even if the client chooses not to follow the advice, and the counsel remains responsible for highlighting ethical concerns, like the use of substandard materials in a project. I also see that lawyers now need to be more aware of amendments to the code of ethics, including the ethical use of social media, because many issues are arising from it in both government and private practice. (IDI1:SS6)

Informant 2 added that laws alone cannot guarantee justice if those in power lack moral conscience. The informant stressed that ethical awareness and a sense of divine accountability are necessary to ensure fair implementation of the law:

As far as I am concerned the legal profession when you are talking about adherence of the law. If the politicians or government officials will adhere the law, maybe this issues will not will not be, what we call this one, will be brought up that will affect the running of the the national government because the law were there for the benefit of the people, unfortunately, law is not enough, we need the what we call this one, divine interventions, clear conscience of the people in the government that runs our system for the proper implementations of the law. For me, low and there is only a law that is supposed to be followed by these politicians, by persons in the government, but unfortunately, they did not follow. They did not follow the full implementations of the law. (IDI3:SS27)

Resilient Advocates: Lawyers remain defenders despite systemic challenges. This theme reflects the legal professionals' steadfast dedication to uphold justice despite facing systemic barriers such as limited resources, corruption, and political interference. Informants revealed that the justice system's inefficiency—marked by underfunded courts, inadequate personnel, and lack of facilities—often hampers their ability to serve clients effectively. Yet, amidst these challenges, many lawyers remain steadfast in their advocacy, finding renewed purpose and strength to continue defending rights and promoting justice even in difficult circumstances.

Informant 9, meanwhile, described how national challenges have reignited their passion for advocacy despite professional exhaustion. The struggles within the justice system serve as a reminder of their purpose and responsibility as a lawyer:

Umm, I'm a — honestly I'm a labor lawyer, so predominantly labor cases jud ako gi handle now, pero before as someone in litigation, it affected my practice and forced me to speak up and join activities to show support and protect my clients' rights. Being in the legal profession can be exhausting kay di ra man mi lawyer, mahimo pud mig psychiatrist or psychologist sa akong clients, but these issues have given me more fighting spirit and reminded me why I became a lawyer. With all these issues, it has given me more purpose to keep fighting and making a difference, even locally, and it has definitely influenced me as a young lawyer. (IDI9:SS70) (I'm honestly a labor lawyer, so I predominantly handle labor cases now, but previously as someone in litigation, these issues have affected my practice and forced me to speak up and join activities to show support and ensure my clients' rights are protected. Being in the legal profession can be exhausting because we are not only lawyers but also sometimes act as psychiatrists or psychologists for our clients, yet these issues have given me more fighting spirit and reminded me why I became a lawyer. All these issues have given me more purpose to keep fighting and making a difference, even on a local level, and they have definitely influenced me as a young lawyer.) (IDI9:SS70)

Informant 9 described how resource shortages and lack of institutional support negatively affect court operations and legal proceedings:

The problem is with the court there are only a few personnel working there, possibly because the budget allocated to the court is also limited. Sometimes, the equipment needed in court is lacking. Also, the population in that locality is large, but the court is small and cannot accommodate everyone. For example, in a municipal circuit trial court, sometimes one court serves three municipalities. Ideally, there should be one court for each municipality.

IDI10:SS76

Perspectives on the balance between human rights and national security

Balanced Governance: Human rights and national security must coexist. This theme emphasizes the need for equilibrium between protecting the state and safeguarding individual rights. Informants viewed this balance as central to effective governance, asserting that while national security is vital for maintaining peace and order, it must not be pursued at the cost of fundamental human rights. The challenge lies in crafting and implementing policies that uphold security while ensuring respect for civil liberties, avoiding the extremes of either state overreach or unrestrained activism.

Informant 1 reflected on the complexity of maintaining this balance, particularly in issues involving alleged red-tagging of journalists and activists. The informant recognized that while the government has the right to protect national security, actions that infringe upon human rights or suppress legitimate dissent must be carefully examined:

National security in policy making requires balancing the state's right to protect itself and the citizens' right to exercise their legal rights, labi na sa mga isyu sama sa red tagging sa journalists ug activists. For me, human rights must be respected, pero security concerns should prevail kung ang actions mo-cross na sa realm of crimes, sama sa killings o looting nga gihimo sa armed units sa CPP. I believe kinahanglan nga naay klarong linya, avoiding automatic red tagging, samtang gitugotan gihapon ang citizens nga i-advocate ilang political ideas without committing criminal acts, aron ma-balance properly both security and human rights.(IDI1:SS7)(National security in policy making requires balancing the state's right to protect itself and the citizens' right to exercise their legal rights, especially in issues like red tagging of journalists and activists. For me, human rights must be respected, but security concerns should prevail when actions cross into crimes, such as killings or looting committed by armed units of the CPP. I believe there should be clear lines, avoiding automatic red tagging, while still allowing citizens to advocate for their political ideas without committing criminal acts, so that both security and human rights are properly balanced.) (IDI1:SS7)

Similarly, Informant 6 articulated the intricate nature of balancing these two principles, likening it to a “double-edged sword” where emphasizing one may weaken the other. The informant stressed the importance of policies that integrate both priorities rather than viewing them as opposing forces:

Maintaining a balance between human rights and national security in policy-making is a double-edged sword. One cannot sharpen itself without dulling the other. If policies are directed to national security, human rights maybe trampled on. On the other hand, if human rights are safe-guarded over national security, issues regarding safety and protection may be overlooked. In keeping a balance, the policy must aim to protect a shared goal with human rights and national security.

Fair Implementation: Laws must be applied impartially for the common good. This theme reveals that the true equilibrium between human rights and national security depends not merely on the existence of laws but on their just and consistent implementation. Informants emphasized that both rights and security can coexist only when courts, institutions, and law enforcement agencies operate with integrity, impartiality, and adherence to due process. When either side—human rights advocates or state authorities—abuses their power or misuses the law, the intended harmony between justice and security collapses, resulting in corruption, discrimination, or public distrust.

Informant 3 highlighted that while laws and frameworks exist to protect citizens, the problem lies in unequal enforcement and misuse by both sides. Some human rights advocates, according to the informant, exploit legal protections for questionable causes, while certain authorities use their power to suppress rights and commit corruption:

The challenge for me is really the implementation of human rights, kay usahay ang human rights advocates

mahimong very technical and use the law to protect or coddle certain individuals, which can be abused. At the same time, those in power, like law enforcement agencies under the guise of national security, can also violate human rights or use the law as a tool for corruption. So for me, even if we have adequate laws, kung dili patas ang implementation sa both sides, tanan efforts will be all for naught. (DI2:SS22) The challenge for me is really the implementation of human rights, because sometimes human rights advocates can be very technical and use the law to protect or coddle certain individuals, which can be abused. At the same time, those in power, such as law enforcement agencies under the guise of national security, can also violate human rights or use the law as a tool for corruption. So for me, even if we have adequate laws, if both sides do not implement them fairly, all efforts will be for nothing. (DI2:SS22)

Informant 9 further illustrated this principle by emphasizing the importance of due process and equality, even in times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. While acknowledging that certain restrictions on mobility were necessary for public safety, the informant condemned instances where authorities used such measures to discriminate or overstep legal boundaries:

As mentioned earlier, human rights and national security have a complimentary relationship, and our laws should protect national security while ensuring nga walay human rights violations. There are times, like during COVID-19, when certain rights, sama sa freedom of movement, were restricted for public safety and health, but due process must always be observed and abuse of power must be avoided. I strongly believe nga human rights and national security should always go hand in hand, and restrictions or enforcement should never discriminate or bypass legal protections. (DI9:SS71) As mentioned earlier, human rights and national security have a complimentary relationship, and our laws should protect national security while ensuring that no human rights violations occur. There are times, like during COVID-19, when certain rights, such as freedom of movement, were restricted for public safety and health, but due process must always be observed and abuse of power must be avoided. I strongly believe that human rights and national security should always go hand in hand, and restrictions or enforcement should never discriminate or bypass legal protections. (DI9:SS71)

Analysis of Data

This study was qualitative in design, employing a transcendental phenomenological approach. Phenomenology, as defined by Sokolowski (2000), is the study of human experience and the ways in which things present themselves through consciousness. This phenomenological inquiry sought to uncover the lived experiences, perceptions, and insights of legal advocates regarding major national issues in the Philippines. It explored how these advocates interpret the role of law in governance, justice, and human rights protection, as well as how they perceive the government's adherence to the rule of law. Following Moustakas (1994), the transcendental phenomenological method was used to set aside personal biases and preconceptions (epoche), allowing the true essence of the participants' experiences to emerge clearly and authentically.

This study is grounded on three major theories: the Theory of Legal Positivism by H. L. A. Hart (1961), the Theory of Law by Ronald Dworkin (1986), and the Theory of Cognitive Dissonance by Leon Festinger (1957). These theories collectively provide a multi-dimensional lens through which the perspectives of legal advocates were analyzed—philosophically, interpretively, and psychologically.

Hart's Theory of Legal Positivism emphasizes law as a system of rules distinct from morality, operating through the interplay of primary and secondary rules. In the context of this study, Hart's concept of the rule of recognition resonates with how legal advocates evaluate the legitimacy of laws and government actions. The informants' insights on selective justice, delayed due process, and weak institutional enforcement reflect the challenges of maintaining a consistent application of legal rules within a system influenced by power and politics. The study's findings reveal that while the rule of law exists in principle, its practical enforcement is often undermined by selective recognition of laws—suggesting a disconnect between the ideal of legal positivism and the realities of governance in the Philippines.

In contrast, Ronald Dworkin's Theory of Law provides a critical counterpoint to Hart's positivism by asserting that legal interpretation cannot be divorced from moral reasoning. Dworkin's framework illuminates how many legal advocates in this study interpret national issues through the lens of justice, equity, and moral accountability. Informants emphasized the necessity of reforming institutions, upholding human rights, and ensuring fairness in law enforcement—views that align with Dworkin's belief that legal reasoning involves integrating moral principles into judicial and political decision-making. Their perspectives on the need for transparency, accountability, and balance between human rights and national security reflect Dworkin's "law as integrity," wherein law should be interpreted as a coherent system that promotes moral consistency across decisions.

Lastly, Leon Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance Theory (1957) offers a psychological dimension to understanding how legal advocates navigate conflicting values and institutional realities. The data reveal that many advocates experience tension between their commitment to uphold justice and their awareness of systemic flaws, corruption, or political interference within the legal system. This dissonance often leads them to reconcile their beliefs by emphasizing reform, advocating for stronger institutions, or reinterpreting laws in ways that align with their ethical convictions. The cognitive dissonance experienced by these informants underscores the moral and emotional complexity of legal practice, where idealism and realism frequently collide.

Perspective of Informants

Fragile Institutions: Weak governance, corruption, and poor protection of rights and sovereignty. This emergent theme reveals the declining integrity of government institutions, where corruption, political dynasties, and rights abuses have eroded public trust and weakened the rule of law. Informants described a system marked by selective justice and inefficiency, where accountability mechanisms fail to function as intended. These conditions suggest that institutional decay stems from entrenched structures of power that prevent fair implementation of the law and perpetuate inequality. The persistence of these issues indicates that the legal and political systems are struggling to maintain coherence and credibility in enforcing justice and protecting national sovereignty.

This theme aligns with H. L. A. Hart's Theory of Legal Positivism (1961), which emphasizes that a functional legal system depends on the consistent application of both primary and secondary rules. According to Hart, when secondary rules—such as those governing legislation, adjudication, and enforcement—are corrupted or ignored, the system loses legitimacy. In the Philippine context, the failure of institutions to enforce laws impartially undermines Hart's "rule of recognition," which defines what counts as valid law in a society. When those in power manipulate the law for personal or political gain, the public begins to question its authority. Thus, Hart's theory helps explain how institutional fragility arises from the breakdown of the very rules meant to sustain justice, showing that the restoration of strong, rule-based governance is essential to rebuilding public confidence and national integrity.

Empirical evidence supports the notion of institutional fragility in the Philippines, as shown in various studies addressing corruption, dynasties, and human rights violations. Davis, Mendoza, and Yap (2024) found that regions dominated by political dynasties exhibit higher corruption risks in public procurement, demonstrating how concentrated family power undermines governance and transparency. Similarly, the U4 Helpdesk (2023) reported that entrenched clientelism, weak law enforcement, and limited institutional capacity have rendered constitutional safeguards ineffective, allowing corruption and selective justice to persist. Complementing these findings, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2020) documented widespread human rights violations and persistent impunity, revealing that institutions tasked with upholding justice often fail to deliver accountability. Together, these studies highlight how political dominance, ineffective oversight, and systemic rights abuses have eroded the integrity of state institutions, reinforcing the theme of fragile governance and weakened rule of law in the Philippines.

Balanced Governance: Accountability, democracy, and sovereignty must work together. This emergent theme highlights the need for equilibrium between authority and liberty, illustrating that national progress cannot exist without accountability, human rights protection, and respect for democratic institutions. The informants emphasized that governance must not prioritize control or security at the expense of citizens' rights. Rather, it should uphold

fairness and integrity through a system where leaders are held responsible for their actions while ensuring that policies reflect justice and inclusivity. True development, therefore, is not measured solely by political stability or economic growth but by how well governance harmonizes the enforcement of laws with the preservation of individual freedoms.

This theme is best explained through Ronald Dworkin's Theory of Law (1986), which asserts that legal interpretation and governance must always be guided by moral principles. Dworkin rejects the separation of law and morality, arguing that every legal and political decision must be grounded in fairness, justice, and respect for individual rights. Applying this theory, the theme of balanced governance reflects the idea that accountability and rights are not opposing forces but complementary obligations of a democratic state. When the government enforces laws that align with moral integrity and respect for human dignity, it strengthens both democracy and sovereignty. Dworkin's framework thus reinforces the view that sustainable national progress arises from principled governance—one that integrates legal authority with moral responsibility to protect the people it serves.

Empirical studies underscore the critical interplay between accountability, rights protection, and democratic governance in the Philippines. Arugay (2005) demonstrates how societal accountability mechanisms—through media, protests and civil society mobilization—emerged when formal institutional checks faltered, highlighting the need for governance that remains responsive and rights-grounded. Meanwhile, Gabriel et al. (2019) show that transparency and accountability at the local level correlate with stronger democratic legitimacy and better public service delivery, reinforcing the notion that enforcing laws and protecting rights are not antithetical but mutually reinforcing. Lastly, Hernando (2020) emphasizes that regulatory governance anchored in public accountability is essential for meaningful institutional performance, especially in a developing context where the balance between state authority and citizen rights is delicate. Together, these works support the view that sustainable national progress depends not only on control or stability, but on governance that harmonizes enforcement with inclusion, rights, and institutional integrity.

Lawyers perception in its role in handling national issues

Guardians of Justice: Lawyers defend rights, promote fairness, and build public trust. This emergent theme underscores the vital role of legal advocates as moral stewards within society who ensure that justice is both upheld and understood by the public. The informants emphasized that lawyers are not merely practitioners of law but also educators and protectors who embody integrity and fairness in their service. By guiding communities and ensuring the law is applied impartially, they strengthen public confidence in the legal system. Their advocacy extends beyond the courtroom—they influence social awareness, encourage compliance with the law, and defend the rights of the marginalized. This multifaceted role reflects how lawyers bridge the gap between the ideals of justice and their realization in everyday governance.

This theme aligns with Lawrence Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development (1981), which posits that moral reasoning evolves through stages, culminating in principled conscience-based judgment. Lawyers who act as guardians of justice often operate at this post-conventional stage, where decisions are guided by universal ethical principles rather than personal gain or authority. Applying Kohlberg's theory, legal advocates' pursuit of fairness and equality demonstrates a commitment to moral duty and justice as intrinsic values. Their role in addressing national issues reflects not only professional responsibility but also moral maturity ensuring that the law remains a living instrument for human dignity and the common good.

Legal advocates in the Philippines are increasingly recognised not merely as courtroom representatives but as active guardians of justice, public educators, and defenders of the vulnerable. The Integrated Bar of the Philippines emphasises that attorneys bear responsibility not only to their clients but also to the broader public and the legal system, promoting access to law and maintaining public confidence through ethical conduct. (IBP, n.d.) The Philippine Supreme Court's A.M. No. 5161 clarifies that by taking their oath, lawyers become "guardians of truth and the rule of law," placing the administration of justice above even the client's success. (Supreme Court, 2004) Furthermore, the training program for "lawyers-for-communities"

facilitated by the Alternative Law Groups and the Ateneo Human Rights Center illustrates how legal practitioners engage directly in grassroots legal education, outreach, and advocacy for marginalised sectors. (Alternative Law Groups & AHRC, 2024) Together, these sources support the view that legal advocates perform a multifaceted role—guiding, educating, defending—and thereby help bridge the gap between the ideals of justice and their realization in society.

Law in Motion: Legal advocacy evolves with societal change and reform. This emergent theme reveals that the practice of legal advocacy is dynamic, shaped by the ever-changing landscape of political, social, and economic realities. The informants expressed that lawyers must continuously evolve to remain effective, not only in interpreting the law but also in responding to societal shifts and emerging national challenges. Legal practitioners are viewed as catalysts of reform—bridging the gap between outdated legal systems and modern justice needs. Their adaptability, innovation, and responsiveness to social change ensure that the law remains relevant and aligned with public welfare. In this sense, legal advocacy is a living practice, constantly redefined by new interpretations, reforms, and the pursuit of accountability.

This theme aligns with Ronald Dworkin’s Interpretive Theory of Law (1986), which asserts that law is not a rigid set of rules but an evolving practice rooted in moral reasoning and principled interpretation. Dworkin emphasizes that judges and lawyers must interpret legal materials in their “best moral light,” ensuring coherence between justice, fairness, and societal progress. Applying this to the theme, legal advocates who adapt to reform embody Dworkin’s view that the law is a moral enterprise, one that evolves through human judgment and ethical commitment. Their role in shaping and redefining legal norms reflects an ongoing dialogue between law and society affirming that true justice requires both stability and transformation.

Legal advocacy in the Philippines is increasingly understood as a dynamic, evolving practice that must respond to shifts in society, technology, and governance. Lee (2023) argues that the rhetoric of law reform masks the deeper imperative for continuous adaptation of legal systems, asserting that lawyers and other legal actors must drive change rather than merely react to it. Meanwhile, Radics and Pontanal (2022) show how Philippine legal practice has moved beyond traditional pro bono work toward systemic “alternative lawyering”—an approach grounded in reform, community engagement and institutional change. Further illustrating the pace of change, the 2024 observation of digital transformation in Philippine legal practice reveals how tools such as AI, virtual law firms and online platforms are reshaping how lawyers deliver services, expand access to justice and meet emerging societal needs. Together, these sources reinforce the view that legal advocacy is not static but must evolve, innovate and champion accountability to keep the law relevant and aligned with public welfare.

Prevailing views on the effectiveness of existing laws and policies.

Laws Without Teeth: Weak enforcement leaves justice unfulfilled. This emergent theme reflects a widespread perception that the ineffectiveness of the country’s legal system lies not in the absence of laws but in their inconsistent and often biased enforcement. Informants observed that many laws exist merely in principle, as their implementation is hindered by corruption, political influence, and institutional weaknesses. This results in selective justice, where the powerful are often shielded while ordinary citizens struggle to find redress. Such realities erode public trust in governance and diminish the moral authority of the law, highlighting a gap between legal ideals and actual practice. The theme underscores that genuine justice is not achieved through the mere existence of statutes but through their impartial and consistent application.

This aligns with H.L.A. Hart’s Theory of Legal Positivism (1961), which emphasizes that the legitimacy of a legal system depends on adherence to recognized rules and procedures—the “rule of recognition.” Hart posits that for a legal system to function effectively, its primary and secondary rules must operate cohesively and be observed by officials in both spirit and practice. In the context of this theme, the weak enforcement and selective application of laws suggest a breakdown in the rule of recognition, where public officials fail to uphold legal norms consistently. Thus, the failure is not in the body of law itself but in the institutions and actors responsible for enforcing it illustrating Hart’s idea that the strength of a legal system depends on the faithful observance of its own rules.

Recent empirical evidence underscores that in the Philippines the mere existence of laws is insufficient to guarantee justice what matters is their consistent and impartial enforcement. Regalado (2024) finds that public trust in legal institutions hinges on perceptions of institutional performance (e.g., fairness, corruption-free service), rather than simply on the volume of statutes. Villegas' case study (2024) highlights how, despite robust legal frameworks for human rights, enforcement remains patchy abusive practices and oversight deficits blunt the protective force of the law. Meanwhile, the ICRC (2020) reports that although the Philippines has enacted major laws on humanitarian and criminal justice, awareness and capacity within enforcement and prosecutorial bodies lag behind, leaving enforcement weak and selective. Together, these sources show that the core problem is not a lack of laws but a breakdown in the "teeth" of enforcement and in the fidelity of institutions—precisely the gap that H. L. A. Hart's legal positivism flags as a collapse in the rule of recognition and secondary rules in practice.

Reforming for Relevance: Laws must be updated and fairly applied. This emergent theme highlights the perception that many of the country's existing laws no longer reflect the realities of modern society. Informants pointed out that certain statutes remain outdated, vague, or easily manipulated, creating legal loopholes that hinder justice and accountability. As social, technological, and political contexts evolve, the legal framework must also adapt to address emerging issues effectively. Without reform, the law risks becoming stagnant—failing to protect citizens' rights, ensure fairness, or promote good governance. The theme emphasizes that true justice requires not only the enforcement of existing laws but also their continuous evaluation, revision, and modernization to ensure they remain relevant and equitable in addressing contemporary societal needs.

This perspective resonates with Ronald Dworkin's Theory of Law (1986), which asserts that legal interpretation must integrate moral reasoning and evolve alongside societal progress. Dworkin argues that law is not a rigid set of rules but a living system guided by principles of justice and integrity. In relation to this theme, reforming outdated or lenient laws aligns with Dworkin's view that judges and lawmakers must interpret and refine legal standards in ways that uphold moral principles and social coherence. Thus, the call for legal modernization reflects the idea that law should not merely preserve tradition but must actively respond to changing moral and social realities to maintain its legitimacy and effectiveness.

Several studies indicate that the Philippine legal framework is increasingly misaligned with the realities of modern society, underscoring the urgent need for legal reform to preserve relevance. For example, the PIDS policy brief (2017) shows how outdated labour laws hinder job creation and force firms to circumvent legal provisions, illustrating how statutes conceived for earlier eras can become counter-productive. The Asia Foundation's (2017) review of justice reform emphasises that many laws and procedural rules in the Philippines are stale, technologically lagging and inadequate to address emerging governance and rights challenges. Moreover, Feliciano et al. (2001) provide a historical perspective showing that laws originally crafted for different socio-economic and cultural contexts require continuous updating, especially in an era of decentralisation and globalisation. Together, these sources support the view that law is not a fixed artefact but must be constantly evaluated, revised and applied fairly to meet evolving societal needs—aligning neatly with Ronald Dworkin's interpretive theory that law must evolve in moral and social coherence.

Government's adherence to the rule of law

Unequal Justice: Slow and biased processes weaken public trust. This emergent theme reveals that while the legal system upholds the principle of due process in theory, its actual implementation is often marred by inequality and favoritism. Informants expressed that justice in the Philippines tends to favor those with power, wealth, or influence, while ordinary citizens face long delays, procedural obstacles, and systemic neglect. Such inequality weakens public confidence in the government's ability to uphold justice impartially. The perception that laws are selectively applied leads to frustration and disillusionment, as people see that those in power can often evade accountability. This selective justice undermines the integrity of the rule of law and contributes to a cycle of impunity, corruption, and weakened democratic governance.

This observation aligns with H. L. A. Hart's Theory of Legal Positivism (1961), which distinguishes between the

existence of law and its moral quality. Hart explains that legal systems consist of primary and secondary rules that provide structure and authority, but their effectiveness depends on consistent application. In the Philippine context, while the rule of law formally exists through legal procedures and institutions, its moral legitimacy is compromised when enforcement becomes selective or biased. The gap between legal validity and moral justice reflects the limits of positivism illustrating that the mere presence of laws and due process is insufficient without fair, impartial, and uniform implementation. Thus, the theme underscores that for the rule of law to regain public trust, justice must not only be legal but also equitable in practice.

Several rigorous studies show that while due process and legal safeguards exist in the Philippines, their application is uneven and often biased in favour of the powerful, thereby undermining public trust in justice. Dressel, Inoue & Bonoan (2023) document how justices of the Philippine Supreme Court systematically show voting patterns aligned with the appointing president's political faction, indicating a judiciary susceptible to political loyalty rather than impartial adjudication. (Dressel et al., 2023) The 2010 assessment by Co et al. reveals that despite the legal recognition of due process and equal protection, the justice system is hindered by slow case resolution, resource disparities and weak enforcement mechanisms conditions that disproportionately affect ordinary citizens. (Co et al., 2010) Meanwhile, Elok & Setiyono (2023) compare the Philippines to Indonesia in showing how extrajudicial killings circumvent due-process protections, highlighting a scenario where legal rights exist formally but are often neglected in practice. (Elok & Setiyono, 2023)

Stronger Institutions, Stronger Nation: Accountability and reform restore faith in law. This emergent theme underscores that the strength of a nation is deeply tied to the integrity and effectiveness of its institutions. Informants highlighted that weak governance, lack of accountability, and corruption have long undermined public confidence in the justice system. To rebuild trust, institutions must be reformed to ensure that laws are enforced fairly and consistently, legal professionals are properly equipped with the expertise and ethical grounding needed to uphold justice, and accountability mechanisms are applied without exemption. Strengthening institutions also means addressing inefficiencies in the judiciary and law enforcement sectors, ensuring that penalties are proportionate and strictly implemented. In doing so, the state can foster a culture of transparency, discipline, and respect for the law laying the foundation for sustainable national progress and public trust.

This theme aligns with Ronald Dworkin's Theory of Law (1986), which emphasizes that the interpretation and application of law must integrate both legal rules and moral principles. Dworkin argues that judges and legal actors must act as moral agents who interpret the law in ways that uphold justice, fairness, and integrity. In the context of institutional reform, this means that enforcing accountability and improving governance are not merely administrative functions they are moral imperatives grounded in the ethical duty to serve the public good. By applying Dworkin's interpretive approach, institutions can move beyond rigid legalism toward a principled form of justice that restores citizens' faith in the rule of law and strengthens democracy as a whole.

Institutional reform is a linchpin for strengthening both justice delivery and national governance, and evidence from the Philippines underscores this connection. The Philippine Institute for Development Studies (2007) underscores that weak regulatory and institutional frameworks have hampered national performance, and that strategic institutional reform is essential to unlocking better outcomes. Meanwhile, the International Development Law Organization shows that enhancing the legal expertise and oversight capacity of institutions—especially anti-corruption bodies is vital to ensuring accountability and restoring confidence in governance. Furthermore, the ABA ROLI's evaluation of the JUSTICE project (2023) illustrates how tangible improvements in court systems through automation, transparency and capacity-building can bolster institutions' ability to enforce laws fairly and efficiently. Together, these sources affirm that when institutions are reformed, legal professionals are equipped, and accountability mechanisms are robust, the rule of law is reinforced and public trust can be rebuilt aligning with Ronald Dworkin's view that the law must be interpreted and applied through moral responsibility and institutional integrity.

Effects of national issues on the practice of law and legal profession.

Ethics Beyond Law: Justice requires integrity and accountability. This emergent theme highlights that the practice of law extends beyond mere compliance with statutes it is equally rooted in ethical duty and moral integrity. Informants emphasized that lawyers, as officers of the court and public servants, must uphold accountability, transparency, and fairness even amid political and societal pressures. National issues such as corruption, abuse of authority, and selective justice test the legal profession's moral compass, making ethical leadership indispensable. The theme conveys that when legal practitioners act with integrity and moral conviction, they not only strengthen the justice system but also restore the people's faith in the rule of law. Thus, genuine justice is achieved not only through the letter of the law but also through the conscience that guides its application.

This theme resonates with Ronald Dworkin's Theory of Law (1986), which asserts that law is not a mere collection of rules but a practice of moral interpretation. Dworkin argues that legal decisions must reflect principles of fairness and justice, integrating moral reasoning into the judicial process. Applied to the legal profession, this means that lawyers and judges must go beyond technical legalism and embody moral responsibility in their practice. Upholding ethical standards, therefore, becomes an act of legal interpretation grounded in integrity and principle. In this way, Dworkin's theory provides a framework for understanding how ethical leadership among legal professionals ensures that law remains not only lawful—but just.

Recent developments in the Philippine legal profession illustrate that ethical leadership and integrity are indispensable for justice and public trust. The newly adopted Code of Professional Responsibility and Accountability (A.M. No. 22-09-01-SC, 2023) explicitly states that a lawyer "as a guardian of the rule of law ... is bound by ... ethical standards" and that integrity is "the sum total of all the ethical values that every lawyer must embody and exhibit." (Supreme Court of the Philippines, 2023) The Philstar (2023) reports how the Code's launch emphasised lawyers pledging to "do justice" and adapt to ethical expectations in the digital era. (Patag, 2023) Associate Justice Gaerlan (2024) reinforces this by declaring that "divorced from ethics, legal excellence is worthless," underlining that mere legal competence without moral core erodes the profession's public legitimacy. (Gaerlan, 2024) Together, these sources confirm that the practice of law in the Philippines cannot rely solely on statutes and procedural technicalities but must be guided by moral responsibility and accountability. This aligns with Ronald Dworkin's interpretive theory of law, which holds that law is not a rigid set of rules but a moral practice grounded in fairness, integrity and the public good. By advancing an ethic-centred legal profession, the rule of law gains not only legality but legitimacy restoring citizens' faith in justice and safeguarding the common good.

Resilient Advocates: Lawyers remain defenders despite systemic challenges. This emergent theme reveals the unwavering dedication of lawyers who persist in upholding justice despite operating within a strained and often imperfect legal system. Informants described the daily struggles of the legal profession limited court resources, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and widespread corruption yet they also highlighted the persistence and moral courage of legal advocates who continue to serve the public good. Their resilience reflects not only professional commitment but also deep patriotism, as they fight to preserve the integrity of the justice system and protect citizens' rights amid systemic flaws. This enduring spirit illustrates that advocacy is not merely a profession but a calling that demands strength, adaptability, and faith in the rule of law.

This theme aligns with Leon Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance Theory (1957), which explains how individuals cope with internal conflict when their values clash with their environment. Lawyers often experience dissonance when their ethical convictions confront systemic corruption or inefficiency. To reduce this psychological tension, many choose to reaffirm their principles persisting in ethical practice, defending the oppressed, and continuing to advocate for justice despite the odds. Festinger's theory thus provides a lens to understand how legal professionals sustain moral resilience and purpose in the face of disillusionment, transforming inner conflict into renewed commitment toward justice and national service.

Despite the numerous systemic challenges under-funded courts, institutional strain, political interference—many Philippine lawyers persist as resilient defenders of justice. Regalado & Sun (2024) show that trust in legal institutions depends heavily on how legal actors perform under pressure, emphasizing that in contexts of weak confidence, the

role of committed legal professionals becomes paramount. Batongbacal et al. (2020) document how the judiciary and legal profession adapted operations during the COVID-19 crisis, illustrating how resilience, adaptability and moral commitment allowed the system to continue functioning despite major disruptions. Meanwhile, the NUPL's program for lawyer protection underscores that many advocates operate under threat yet maintain their mission of representing the marginalized, underscoring resilience as a professional and patriotic calling. Together, these sources support the view that legal advocacy in the Philippines is more than a profession it is a commitment to justice, rights and nation-building, sustained even when the system is imperfect and the odds are stacked.

Perspectives on the balance between human rights and national security

Balanced Governance: Human rights and national security must coexist. This emergent theme underscores the intricate relationship between human rights and national security, highlighting that sustainable governance depends on maintaining equilibrium between the two. Informants emphasized that while the state has an inherent duty to protect its people and sovereignty, this duty must not come at the cost of citizens' fundamental rights. The discussions reflected the real-world challenges of policy-making, particularly on issues such as red-tagging, terrorism, and civil liberties, where the line between security and rights often blurs. The theme reveals that both dimensions are mutually reinforcing national security is more meaningful when human rights are upheld, and human rights are safeguarded through a stable and secure state.

This theme resonates with Ronald Dworkin's Theory of Law (1986), which asserts that law must be interpreted in a way that integrates moral principles with legal reasoning. Dworkin's concept of principled interpretation provides a framework for balancing competing values such as liberty and security, ensuring that decisions remain consistent with both legal rules and moral integrity. In the context of national security, Dworkin's theory suggests that policies should not prioritize state protection at the expense of individual rights; rather, they should harmonize both through moral interpretation. Thus, achieving balance in governance involves not only legal compliance but also moral judgment, where justice is guided by both law and conscience.

A growing body of research underscores the critical need for governance that balances national security with human rights protections rather than favouring one at the expense of the other. Amnesty International's 2025 report finds that state-sponsored online harassment—including red-tagging of young activists—has created a pervasive climate of fear, highlighting how security practices can erode civil liberties when unchecked. (Amnesty International Philippines, 2025) Human Rights Watch (2024) documents the Philippine Supreme Court's landmark decision rejecting red-tagging as a threat to life, liberty and security, emphasizing that counter-insurgency measures must not override due process or individual rights. (Human Rights Watch, 2024) Further, the Ateneo Human Rights Center (2024) dashboard and situation report reveal hundreds of timely red-tagging incidents linked to national security efforts, underscoring how governance systems must actively guard against rights erosion even when pursuing state protection. Together, these sources demonstrate that sustainable governance hinges on the integration of security and rights; when either domain is neglected, the legitimacy of the law and the moral foundation of the state are compromised.

Fair Implementation: Laws must be applied impartially for the common good. This emergent theme emphasizes that the true strength of governance lies not merely in the existence of laws but in their fair and consistent implementation. Informants highlighted that while laws are designed to protect both human rights and national security, unequal application, discrimination, and abuse of authority often compromise justice. They underscored the importance of due process as the bridge that ensures fairness even when restrictions on certain rights become necessary such as during emergencies or crises. The theme reveals that just implementation requires integrity and accountability within the judiciary and law enforcement, ensuring that justice is not reserved for the privileged but is equally accessible to all.

This theme aligns with H. L. A. Hart's Theory of Legal Positivism (1961), which views law as a system of rules that derive their authority from social recognition rather than moral considerations. Hart's framework stresses the need for consistent application of laws based on established legal standards—the "rule of recognition"—to preserve

legitimacy and order within society. In this light, fair enforcement becomes a reflection of a well-functioning legal system where institutions act according to recognized legal norms, not personal or political interests. Upholding impartiality and due process thus exemplifies the positivist ideal that justice is achieved when laws are applied uniformly, ensuring that both human rights and national security coexist under a framework of rule-based governance.

Recent research confirms that achieving justice in the Philippines depends not simply on the existence of laws, but on their fair and impartial implementation. Lodangco (2023) finds that minority and Indigenous groups continue to face systemic bias within the criminal justice system, demonstrating how equal protection and non-discrimination remain unfulfilled in practice. The Commission on Human Rights (2024) emphasises that while the Constitution guarantees equal protection, meaningful justice only occurs when laws are accessible and applied effectively—highlighting the enforcement gap that undermines the rule of law. Similarly, the International Commission of Jurists (2022) reports that judges must integrate a gender and bias-sensitivity lens into adjudication, implying that institutional practice must align with principle for fairness to materialise.

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter dealt with the summary, findings and implications of the study.

Summary

This study delved into the Justice in a Fragmented Nation: Legal Advocates Perspectives on Conflict, Crises, and Reforms.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What were the perspectives of the informants on major national issues in the Philippines?
2. How did the legal community perceive its role in addressing current national issues?
3. What were the prevailing views of the legal community on the effectiveness of existing laws and policies created to national issues?
4. How did the legal community assess the government adherence to the rule of law in handling national issues?
5. How had recent national issues affected the practice of law and legal profession in the country?
6. What were the perspectives of the legal community on the balance between human rights and national security in policy making?

This study employed a transcendental phenomenological approach, a qualitative research method aimed at understanding the lived experiences and perspectives of participants. In-depth individual interviews were conducted with ten (10) legal advocates from Dalaguete and Alcoy, Cebu, Philippines. To qualify as informants, participants were required to have a minimum of three (3) years of professional legal practice. All qualified informants voluntarily participated in the interviews and provided rich insights relevant to the study's objectives.

All interviews are recorded with audio, with participants' consent, and subsequently transcribed word-for-word to maintain the integrity and precision of the information.

Findings

Based on the results, the researchers developed twelve (12) emergent themes.

Two (2) emergent themes described the perspectives of the informants on major national issues in the Philippines, namely: *Fragile Institutions: Weak governance, corruption, and poor protection of rights and sovereignty*; and *Balanced Governance: Accountability, democracy, and sovereignty must work together*.

Two (2) emergent themes reflected how the legal community perceives its role in addressing current national issues, to wit: *Guardians of Justice: Lawyers defend rights, promote fairness, and build public trust*; and *Law in Motion: Legal advocacy evolves with societal change and reform*.

Meanwhile, two (2) emergent themes were formulated to describe the prevailing views of the legal community on the effectiveness of existing laws and policies created to address national issues, namely: *Laws Without Teeth: Weak enforcement leaves justice unfulfilled*; and *Reform for Relevance: Laws must be updated and fairly applied*.

Two (2) emergent themes were identified to explain how the legal community assesses the government's adherence to the rule of law in handling national issues, to wit: *Unequal Justice: Slow and biased processes weaken public trust*; and *Stronger Institutions, Stronger Nation: Accountability and reform restore faith in law*.

Two (2) emergent themes were also developed to express how recent national issues have affected the practice of law and the legal profession in the country, namely: *Ethics Beyond Law: Justice requires integrity and accountability*; and *Resilient Advocates: Lawyers remain defenders despite systemic challenges*.

Finally, two (2) emergent themes were created to describe the perspectives of the legal community on the balance between human rights and national security in policymaking, to wit: *Balanced Governance: Human rights and national security must coexist*; and *Fair Implementation: Laws must be applied impartially for the common good*.

Implications

Implications for Practice

The study emphasized what are the perspectives of legal advocates on major national issues in our country. It aims to identify, understand and enhance the connection of national security and human rights or the law in general. It highlights the essential role of the legal community in promoting justice, transparency, and national integrity. Legal practitioners, courts, and institutions must strengthen their commitment to ethical practice, accountability, and public service. Continuous legal education, policy engagement, and collaboration with communities are necessary to ensure that the law remains responsive to evolving national challenges.

For lawyers, the study shows that they must go beyond courtroom advocacy and strengthen their engagement in promoting social accountability, human rights, and democratic governance. This implies a need for continuous ethical reflection and professional development to ensure that their actions uphold integrity and public trust. Lawyers should actively participate in public dialogues, legal reforms, and community outreach initiatives that advance equitable access to justice. Moreover, they must serve as role models of ethical conduct and civic responsibility, using their legal expertise to influence policies that foster transparency, accountability, and good governance.

The study highlights the importance of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) in promoting ethical leadership, accountability, and unity within the legal profession. The IBP should strengthen its initiatives on legal education, public engagement, and policy advocacy to help lawyers address national issues responsibly. By fostering integrity and social awareness among its members, the IBP can reinforce public trust and ensure that the legal profession remains a force for justice and good governance.

For courts, study shows that it plays a vital role as guardians of justice and the rule of law amidst complex national challenges. The judiciary must reinforce its commitment to impartiality, transparency, and efficiency to sustain public trust. Strengthening judicial reforms, promoting accessibility, and reducing case delays are essential to improve public service. Continuous judicial education and technological integration can further enhance fairness

and accountability. By maintaining independence and integrity, the courts can remain a steadfast pillar of democracy and protect the rights of all citizens.

The study suggests that the community is encouraged to promote justice, transparency, and accountability. Citizens should take part in legal awareness and civic education initiatives to better understand their rights and responsibilities. Strengthening cooperation between communities and legal institutions can build trust, ensure fair access to justice, and support national development. An informed and engaged public remains essential to a just and responsive legal system.

The study highlighted that academic and community researchers are advancing understanding of legal advocacy and its social impact. Researchers should continue producing evidence-based studies that inform policy and legal reform. Stronger collaboration between academic institutions, legal organizations, and communities can ensure that research supports justice, transparency, and good governance.

Implications for Future Studies

The findings of this study open several avenues for future research that could further deepen the understanding of legal advocacy and justice in the Philippine context. Future studies may explore a wider range of perspectives by including other stakeholders in the justice system—such as judges, prosecutors, law enforcement officers, and policymakers—to provide a more comprehensive view of how major national issues affect legal processes and governance. Expanding the scope of participants beyond Dalaguete and Alcoy to include other regions would also enrich comparative insights into how local contexts shape legal advocacy and public trust in the rule of law.

Moreover, future researchers may consider examining the long-term effects of policy changes, social reforms, and national controversies on the legal profession. Longitudinal or comparative studies could reveal patterns of progress or persistent challenges within the justice system, helping identify which reforms have been effective and which require further strengthening. This approach could also highlight how legal professionals adapt their practices, ethics, and advocacy roles in response to evolving social and political environments.

Another important direction for future research is to investigate the relationship between legal education and the development of ethical and socially responsible practitioners. Studies focusing on law schools and training institutions could assess how academic and professional preparation influences a lawyer's ability to uphold justice, advocate for reforms, and resist external pressures such as corruption or political interference. This would contribute valuable insights into how educational reforms can shape a new generation of principled and competent legal advocates.

Finally, further qualitative and mixed-method studies could explore public perceptions of the legal system and the effectiveness of advocacy in promoting justice. By integrating both legal and societal perspectives, future research could offer practical recommendations for strengthening institutional integrity, improving public engagement, and enhancing the overall effectiveness of legal advocacy in addressing national issues. These continued efforts will not only enrich the body of knowledge but also guide policymakers, educators, and practitioners in shaping a more just, accountable, and democratic legal system.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The researchers wish to extend their profound gratitude and appreciation to all individuals and institutions whose support, guidance, and assistance made the completion of this research study possible. This undertaking would not have been realized without their invaluable contributions and encouragement throughout the process.

First and foremost, the researchers express their deepest gratitude to the Almighty Father for His divine wisdom, strength, and guidance. His blessings have provided the perseverance, clarity, and fortitude necessary to complete this study successfully. To God be all the glory and praise.

The researchers are sincerely thankful to their respective families for their unwavering moral, emotional, and financial support. Their encouragement, patience, and prayers have been an enduring source of motivation, enabling the researchers to persevere and remain steadfast in achieving this academic milestone.

Special thanks are extended to **Atty. Dodelon F. Sabijon**, the group's adviser, for his guidance, expertise, and valuable insights that greatly contributed to the success of this study.

The researchers also acknowledge the **Legal Advocates and Private Lawyers of Dalaguete and Alcoy, Cebu**, for their participation and perspectives that served as the foundation of this research.

Gratitude is likewise expressed to the **University of Cebu – Main Campus, the College of Criminal Justice Education**, and its faculty for their continuous support and mentorship.

Lastly, the researchers extend their gratitude to their classmates, peers, and all individuals who, in one way or another, contributed to the success of this study. Their assistance, encouragement, and presence throughout the research process have been greatly appreciated.

REFERENCES

Books

1. Dworkin, R. (1986). *Law's empire*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
2. Festinger, L. (1957). *A theory of cognitive dissonance*. Stanford University Press.
3. Norman, E. B. (1977). *Taking rights seriously*. Harvard University Press.

Journals

1. Arugay, A. A. (2005). Societal accountability and democratization in the Philippines. *Politikon: The IAPSS Journal of Political Science*, 9(1), 71–85.
2. Davis, D. B., Mendoza, R. U., & Yap, J. K. (2024). Corruption risk and political dynasties: Exploring the links using public procurement data in the Philippines. *Economics of Governance*, 25(1), 81–109.
3. Dressel, B., Inoue, T., & Bonoan, C. R. (2023). Justices and political loyalties: An empirical investigation of the Supreme Court of the Philippines, 1987–2020. *Law & Social Inquiry*, 49(2), 955–979.
4. Elok, B., & Setiyono, J. (2023). Extrajudicial killing vs due process of law (Comparative study in the Philippines and Indonesia). *International Journal of Social Science & Humanities Research*, 6(6).
5. Espiritu, R. A. (2025, July 27). Framing Rodrigo Duterte's ICC arrest: Examining coverage in Philippine news media. *Journal of Social and Political Sciences*.
6. Gabriel, A. G., Antonio, M. A. B., Ramos, V. B., & Marasigan, J. T. (2019). Transparency and accountability in local governance: The nexus between democracy and public service delivery in the Philippines. *Public Policy and Administration Research*, 9(7).
7. Hernando, C. M. D. (2020). Public accountability in regulatory governance. *Journal of Public Affairs and Development*, 7(1), Article 5.
8. Lodangco, J. M. (2023). Bias in the law: A definitive look at racial prejudice in the Philippine criminal justice system: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Advances in Humanities Research*, 2(3), 9–34.
9. Regalado, J. (2024). Trust in legal institutions: An examination of the Philippines. *Asian Journal of Criminology*, 19(3), 527–550.
10. Regalado, J., & Sun, I. Y. (2024). Trust in legal institutions: An examination of the Philippines. *Asian Journal of Criminology*, 19(3), 527–550.
11. Villegas, P. S. L. (2024). Human rights and the law enforcement in the criminal justice system: A case study of the City of San Jose del Monte, Bulacan, Philippines. *Journal of Advances in Humanities Research*, 2(3).
12. Villa, H. P. (2024). Oriental and Western worldviews on extrajudicial killings in the era of Duterte with Facebook as space of discourse: A discourse-historical approach. *Journal of Contemporary Social Sciences*

and Humanities.

Internet Sources

13. Alternative Law Groups & Ateneo Human Rights Center. (2024, August 8). Legal Pathfinders Fellows Training – Essential to Forming Lawyers-for-Communities.
14. American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative (ABA ROLI). (2023). The success of the JUSTICE project, a six-year effort to advance justice in the Philippines.
15. Amnesty International Philippines. (2025, April). Left to their own devices: The chilling effects of online harassment among young human rights defenders in the Philippines.
16. Asia Media Centre. (2023). Asia's political dynasties: Philippines.
17. Asian Legal Resource Centre. (2021). Extrajudicial executions with impunity require access to justice.
18. Ateneo Human Rights Center. (2024, August 8). Anti-Red-Tagging Monitoring Dashboard and Situation Report: "Unraveling the Web: The Red-tagging Situation in the Philippines".
19. Batongbacal, J. L., Disini, J. J., Esquivias, M., Gatmaytan, D., Reyes, O. X. A., & Te, T. (2020). Building a resilient judicial system.
20. Buendia, R. G. (2021, April 25). Philippine political development: Challenges and prospects after Marcos authoritarian rule.
21. Co, E. E. A., Malaluan, N., Neame, A., Manuel, M., & Musngi, M. R. (2010). Philippine democracy assessment: Rule of law and access to justice.
22. Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines. (2024, September 17). Statement welcoming the measure prohibiting all forms of discrimination (SB No. 2766).
23. Commission on Human Rights. (2017). Report on extrajudicial killings and rights violations in the Philippines.
24. Council on Foreign Relations. (2024). The South China Sea dispute.
25. Dagooc, E. M. (2017). Job prospects missed due to outdated laws.
26. Feliciano, M. S., Agabin, P. A., Magallona, M. M., & Sison, C. V. (2017). Modernization of laws in the Philippines.
27. Gaerlan, S. H. (2024, March 22). Justice Gaerlan emphasizes importance of ethics in legal excellence.
28. Harnessing digital tools: The evolution of legal practices in the Philippines. (2024, April 15).
29. Hilbay, F. (2016, July 20). Why the Philippines excluded Itu Aba in the South China Sea arbitration.
30. Human Rights Watch. (2011, July 18). "No justice just adds to the pain": Killings, disappearances, and impunity in the Philippines.
31. Human Rights Watch. (2024, May 8). Philippines: Supreme Court rejects 'red-tagging'.
32. Human Rights Watch. (2025, March 12). Philippines: Duterte arrested on ICC warrant.
33. Integrated Bar of the Philippines. (n.d.). Professional legal conduct and ethics – Duty to the public.
34. International Bar Association. (2025). Statement on the ICC arrest warrant for Rodrigo Duterte.
35. International Commission of Jurists. (2022, November 26). Philippines: Judges affirm the need to incorporate gender perspective in adjudication.
36. International Committee of the Red Cross. (2020, August 13). Philippines: Strengthening domestic knowledge and enforcement of IHL.
37. International Criminal Court. (2023). About the ICC.
38. International Development Law Organization (IDLO). (n.d.). Integrity and anti-corruption in the Philippines.
39. IP Defense Forum. (2025, January 24). Philippines seeks multilateral arbitration case against PRC's South China Sea aggression.
40. MTF Counsel. (2023, August 3). Fighting corruption in the Philippines.
41. National Union of People's Lawyers. (n.d.). Protection and Welfare of Lawyers Program.
42. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2020). Report on the human rights situation in the Philippines.
43. Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines. (1987). The 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines.

44. Patag, K. J. (2023, April 13). New lawyers' code includes behavior on social media, pledge to 'do justice'.
45. Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism. (2025, May 20). Obese dynasties of the Philippines: Results crowned again, but reform hopes rise for 2028 polls.
46. Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS). (2007). Policy reforms and institutional weaknesses: Closing the gap.
47. Philippine Star. (2023, March 22). Philippines ineffective at implementing anti-corruption laws, US report finds.
48. Supreme Court of the Philippines. (2004). A.M. No. 5161: Code of Professional Responsibility & Accountability.
49. Supreme Court of the Philippines. (2011, August 16). Prof. Merlin M. Magallona, et al. v. Eduardo Ermita, et al., G.R. No. 187167.
50. Supreme Court of the Philippines. (2023). Code of Professional Responsibility and Accountability (A.M. No. 22-09-01-SC).
51. Supreme Court of the Philippines. (2024). About the Supreme Court.
52. The Asia Foundation. (2017). Legal & justice reform in the Philippines.
53. Transparency International. (2020). Global Corruption Barometer 2020.
54. Transparency International. (2023). Corruption Perceptions Index 2022.
55. Transparency International. (2024). Corruption Perceptions Index 2023.
56. U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission. (2016, July 12). South China Sea arbitration ruling: What happened and what's next?
57. U4 Helpdesk. (2023). The Philippines: Corruption and anti-corruption efforts.
58. United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2020, June 4). Philippines: UN report details widespread human rights violations and persistent impunity.

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

University of Cebu Research Office

(032) 255-7777 local 183

Informed Consent for the Study on Justice in a Fragmented Nation: Legal Advocates Perspectives on Conflicts, Crises, and Reforms

Name of Principal Investigator: Angelie Bless Cañedo

Name of Organization: University Of Cebu

Name of Proposal: Justice in a Fragmented Nation: Legal Advocates Perspectives on Conflicts, Crises, and Reforms

This Informed Consent Form has two parts:

- Information Sheet (to share information about the research with you)
- Certificate of Consent (for signatures if you agree to take part) You will be given a copy of the full Informed Consent Form

PART I: Information Sheet Introduction

The researcher is from the University of Cebu Main Campus, presently enrolled in the Degree of Bachelor of Science in Criminology, and is conducting qualitative research entitled "**Justice in a Fragmented Nation: Legal Advocates Perspectives on Conflicts, Crises, and Reforms.**" The researcher is asking for your permission and invites you to be part of this research. You do not have to decide today whether or not you will participate in this research. Before you decide, you can talk to anyone you feel comfortable with about the research.

This consent form may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask me to stop as we go through the information, and I will take the time to explain. If you have questions later, you may contact me directly.

Purpose of the Research

This research aims to explore and understand the perspectives of legal professionals in Dalaguete and Alcoy, Cebu on major national issues in the Philippines. These issues include, but are not limited to, the possible arrest and delivery of former President Rodrigo Duterte to the International Criminal Court (ICC), the West Philippine Sea dispute, extrajudicial killings and human rights concerns, corruption, and political dynasties. It seeks to gather legal insights, professional opinions, and interpretations from members of the legal community regarding the implications of these pressing national matters.

Type of Research Intervention

This research involves individual in-depth interviews with approximately ten

(10) informants from the legal community in Dalaguete and Alcoy, Cebu. These interviews will primarily be conducted face-to-face at a mutually agreed-upon location. However, depending on prevailing health or scheduling considerations, the researcher may utilize online platforms such as, but not limited to, Zoom, Google Meet, or video calls. Each interview is expected to last between forty (40) minutes to one (1) hour. To ensure the confidentiality of

the informants' identities, the researcher will use audio recording only. If an online platform is used, informants may choose to turn off their video before the interview commences.

Participant Selection

The researcher is inviting approximately ten (10) selected members of the legal community (e.g., lawyers, judges, prosecutors, and legal scholars) who are practicing or residing in Dalaguete and Alcoy, Cebu, to participate as key informants in this study. All selected informants will be invited to participate in a one-on-one in-depth interview.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You have the right and the freedom to change your decision later and to stop participating at any time, even if you initially agreed. This decision will not be taken negatively against you. Your agreement to participate will be greatly appreciated and will significantly contribute to the depth of this study.

Procedures and Protocol

In this study, you will be asked to share your opinions, perspectives, and insights regarding selected national issues as part of an individual in-depth interview. The interview will be conducted by the researcher at a time and place that is convenient for you. The questions in the interview guide will be read aloud, and you are free to answer only those questions you feel comfortable addressing. Follow-up questions may be asked to gain a deeper understanding of your views. If you prefer not to answer a particular question, you may inform the researcher, and we will proceed to the next question.

All information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. Only the researcher will have access to the interview transcripts and audio recordings, which will be securely stored and permanently deleted six (6) months after the completion of the research.

To ensure you fully understand the study's purpose, the researcher will explain the objectives, significance, and potential contributions of your participation before the interview begins.

Duration

The data collection phase of this research is expected to last for approximately three (3) months. During this period, the researcher will contact potential informants to schedule individual in-depth interviews at a mutually convenient time and location. Your participation will involve a single interview lasting between forty (40) minutes and one (1) hour.

Risks

During the individual in-depth interview, you will be asked to share your professional opinions and legal perspectives on potentially sensitive national issues such as human rights, corruption, political dynasties, or the West Philippine Sea dispute. You are not obligated to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. Your decision to decline answering specific questions or to withdraw from the study at any point will be fully respected without needing to provide a reason. Please rest assured that all your responses will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality.

Benefits

There are no direct personal benefits for you in participating in this study. However, your valuable insights as a member of the legal community in Dalaguete or Alcoy will contribute to a broader understanding of how legal professionals interpret and engage with national issues in the Philippines. The findings may support future legal

discourse, advocacy, and policy analysis related to the rule of law, national sovereignty, and human rights.

Reimbursements

You will not receive any monetary payment or compensation for your participation in this research.

Confidentiality

All data and responses you provide during this study will be treated with strict confidentiality. Your name and any other identifying details will not appear in any written report, presentation, or publication. To protect your identity, all information collected will be coded and anonymized. Audio recordings and interview transcripts will be stored securely, with access limited to the researcher. These materials will be kept in a locked file cabinet within the UC Main Campus Research Office and will be destroyed six (6) months after the completion and dissemination of the research.

Sharing the Results

The findings of this study will be shared with the academic and legal communities through research conferences, presentations, and potential publication in academic journals. In all cases, your identity and personal information will remain fully anonymous. If you would like to receive a summary of the research results, please inform the researcher, and a copy will be provided upon completion of the study.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to take part or to withdraw at any point during the interview process without facing any negative consequences. Your decision will be respected and will in no way affect your professional standing or relationship with the University of Cebu.

Who to Contact

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, you can ask them now. You may also contact the researcher or the University of Cebu Research Office at the contact information provided below:

Angelie Bless Cañedo – 09952501304

Atty. Dodelon Sabijon Ph.D. CRIM. Email add: delon.ucgs@gmail.com Dr. Renato Sagayno - 09212297427 - UC Main Research Director

Dr. Juanito N. Zuasula Jr., MD - 233-5503 (UC CAREC)

This research project has been reviewed and approved by the technical panel of the University of Cebu Graduate School and the UC Research Office. If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the University of Cebu at 032-255-7777

PART II: Certificate of Consent

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I 52 have had the opportunity to ask questions about it, and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to participate in this research.

Print Name of Participant _____

Signature of Participant _____ **Date** _____

Day/Month/Year

If Illiterate

A literate witness must sign (if possible, this person should be selected by the participant and should have no connection to the research team). Illiterate participants should include their thumbprints as well.

I have witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form to the potential participant, and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the individual has given consent freely.

Print Name of Witness _____ AND Thumb Print of the Participant Signature of Witness _

Date _____

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for a thumbprint or signature.

Statement by the researcher/person taking consent I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant, and to the best of my ability made sure that the participant understands the following will be done:

- 1. Individual in-depth interview**
- 2. Record the proceeding of the interview (audio only)**
- 3. Manually record other responses/answers during the interview**

I confirm that the participant was allowed to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

A copy of this ICF has been provided to the participant.

Print Name of Researcher/Person Taking the Consent: Signature of Researcher/Person Taking the Consent: _____

Day/Month/Year

PORMASYON SA TINUD-ANAY NGA PAGSUWAT SA PAGTUGOT

University of Cebu Research Office (032) 255-7777 local 183

Tinud-anay nga Pagtugot alang sa Katarungan sa usa ka Nagkabahin-bahin nga Nasod: Ang Panlantaw sa mga Abogado bahin sa mga Kagubot, Krisis, ug Kausaban

Pangalan sa Pangunang Imbestigador: Angelie Bless Cañedo

Organisasyon: Univesity Of Cebu

Tituló sa Proyekto:Katarungan sa usa ka Nagkabahin-bahin nga Nasod: Ang Panlantaw sa mga Abogado bahin sa mga Kagubot, Krisis, ug Kausaban

Kini nga porma sa pagtugot adunay duha ka bahin:

- Impormasyon nga Sheet (aron ipaambit ang kasayuran bahin sa panukiduki)
- Sertipiko sa Pagtugot (alang sa mga pirma kon mouyon ka nga moapil)

Ikaw hatagan og kopya sa tibuok nga porma sa tinud-anay nga pagtugot.

BAHIN I: Sheet sa Impormasyon

Pasiuna

Ang imbestigador naggikan sa University of Cebu Main Campus ug kasamtangang nagtungha sa kurso nga Master of Science in Criminal Justice nga may espesyalisasyon sa Criminology. Siya nagahimo og usa ka kwalitatibong panukiduki nga gitituloan, **“Katarungan sa usa ka Nagkabahin-bahin nga Nasod: Ang Panlantaw sa mga Abogado bahin sa mga Kagubot, Krisis, ug Kausaban.”** Naghangyo siya sa imong pagtugot ug nag-awhag nga ikaw moapil sa maong panukiduki. Dili kinahanglan nga magdesisyon ka karon dayon. Mahimo ka nga makigstorya sa bisan kinsa nga imong kasaligan una magdesisyon. Kung aduna kay mga pulong nga lisod sabton, palihug sultihi ko aron akong ipasabot. Mahimo ka usab mangutana bisan unya.

Tumong sa Panukiduki

Ang katuyuan sa maong panukiduki mao ang pagsabot ug pagsusi sa mga panan-aw sa mga propesyonal sa legal nga larangan sa Dalaguete ug Alcoy, Cebu bahin sa mga pangunahing isyu sa nasud sama sa: posibleng dakop ug paghatod kang dating Presidente Rodrigo Duterte sa International Criminal Court (ICC), isyu sa West Philippine Sea, extrajudicial killings ug kabalaka sa tawhanong katungod, korapsyon, ug political dynasties. Ang panukiduki nagtinguha sa pagkolekta sa ilang mga legal nga opinyon ug interpretasyon.

Klase sa Panukiduki

Kini nga panukiduki maglambigit og tagsa-tagsa nga lawom nga panag-istorya (interview) sa napulo (10) ka pinili nga sakop sa legal nga komunidad sa Dalaguete ug Alcoy. Kasagaran kini buhaton sa personal nga panagtagbo, apan mahimo usab online (Zoom, Google Meet, o video call) depende sa kahimtang. Ang matag interbyu molungtad og 40 minutos hangtod 1 ka oras.

I-audio record kini alang sa kasayuran ug seguridad sa mga tubag. Kung online, mahimo nimo patay-on ang video.

Pagpili sa mga Partisipante

Ang imbestigador mopili og 10 ka miyembro sa legal nga komunidad (abogado, huwes, piskal, legal scholars) nga nagpuyo o nagpraktis sa Dalaguete ug Alcoy aron mahimong tinubdan (informants).

Boluntaryo nga Pag-apil

Ang imong pag-apil sa panukiduki usa ka boluntaryo nga desisyon. Aduna kay kagawasan nga mopahunong bisan sa tunga-tunga sa proseso. Ang imong desisyon walay negatibong epekto sa imong reputasyon.

Proseso ug Protocol

Ikaw pangutan-on bahin sa imong opinyon ug panan-aw sa mga isyu sa nasud. Mahimo nimo likayan ang mga pangutana nga dili ka komportable. Ang tanang kasayuran himoong kompidensyal ug ang mga record sa interview pangalagaan ug i-delete human sa unom (6) ka bulan matapos ang panukiduki.

Gidugayon

Ang tibuok koleksyon sa datos molungtad og tulo (3) ka buwan. Usa ra ka interview ang gikinahanglan.

Risgo

Aduna'y mga sensitibong isyu nga hisgutan, apan dili ka obligado motubag sa mga butang nga dili nimo gusto. Protektado ang imong identity ug opinyon.

Benepisyo

Walay diretso nga personal nga benepisyo, apan makatampo ka sa kalambuan sa pagsabot sa papel sa legal nga sektor sa isyu sa nasud.

Bayad o Kompensasyon

Walay bayad o kompensasyon nga ihatag sa partisipasyon.

Pagka Kompidensyal

Ang tanang kasayuran nga imong ihatag pagatipigan ug dili ilakip ang imong ngalan sa bisan unsang report. Ang tanang datos i-code ug i-anonymize.

Pagpahibalo sa Resulta

Ang resulta ipahat sa mga akademikong miting, journal, ug presentasyon. Kung gusto nimo makadawat og kopya sa resulta, palihug sultihi ang imbestigador.

Katungod sa Pagdumili o Pag-undang

Aduna kay katungod sa pagdumili o pagtapos bisan unsang orasa sa interview. Walay negatibong epekto ang imong desisyon.

Kinsa ang Kontakon

Kung aduna kay mga pangutana o kabalaka bahin niini nga panukiduki, mahimo nimo kini ipangutana karon. Mahimo usab nimo kontakon ang mananaliksik o ang Research Office sa University of Cebu pinaagi sa kontak nga impormasyon nga gihatag sa ubos:

Angelie Bless Cañedo – 09952501304

Atty. Dodelon Sabijon Ph.D. CRIM. Email add: delon.ucgs@gmail.com

Dr. Renato Sagayno - 09212297427 - UC Main Research Director Dr. Juanito N. Zuasula Jr., MD - 233-5503 (UC CAREC)

BAHIN II: Sertipiko sa Pagtugot

Nabasa nako ang kasayuran sa ibabaw, o kini gibasa kini kanako. Nakatubag ko sa mga pangutana bahin

niini, ug ang tanan nakong pangutana gitubag sa paagi nga akong nasabtan. Ako motugot nga boluntaryo nga moapil sa maong panukiduki.

Pangalan sa Partisipante: _____

Pirma sa Partisipante: _____

Petsa: _____

Adlaw/Bulan/Tuig

Kung Dili Kabalo Mobasa o Mosulat

Kinahanglan adunay literado nga saksi nga mopirma (mas maayo nga ang saksi pilion sa partisipante ug walay koneksyon sa research team). Ang mga partisipante nga dili kabalo mobasa/mosulat kinahanglan magbutang sa ilang thumbprint.

Nakita nako ang tukmang pagbasa sa porma sa pagtugot ngadto sa potensyal nga partisipante, ug siya gitagaan sa kahigayunan nga mangutana. Gisiguro nako nga ang partisipante mitugot nga walay pagpugos.

Pangalan sa Saksi: _____ **Thumbprint sa Partisipante Pirma sa Saksi:** _____

Petsa: _____

Pahayag sa Imbestigador o sa Nagtake sa Pagtugot

Nabasa nako pag-ayo ang impormasyon ngadto sa potensyal nga partisipante, ug akong gisiguro nga siya nakasabut sa mosunod nga mga kalihokan:

- Tagsa-tagsa nga lawom nga panag-istorya
- Pagrekord sa interbyu (audio lamang)
- Manual nga pagrekord sa ubang tubag atol sa panag-istorya

Gisiguro nako nga ang partisipante gitugotan nga mangutana, ug ang tanan niyang pangutana akong gitubag og insakto ug tinud-anay.

Gisiguro nako nga siya wala pugsa ug boluntaryo nga mitugot sa pag-apil.

Gihatagan usab siya og kopya sa niini nga porma. Pangalan sa Imbestigador o Nagtake sa Pagtugot:

Pirma sa Imbestigador o Nagtake sa Pagtugot: _____

Petsa: _____ **Adlaw/Bulan/Tuig**

Instruction: APPENDIX C INTERVIEW GUIDE

University of Cebu Research Office

(032) 255-7777 local 183



The purpose of this study is to explore perspectives of the legal advocates in the municipalities of Dalaguete and

Alcoy on major national issues in the Philippines. This will be accomplished through an individual in-depth interview (IDI) within 60-90 minutes. Rest assured that the information that you give will be regarded with utmost confidentiality.

Preliminary Questions

Name (Optional) :

Address (Optional) :

1. What are the perspectives of the informants on the major national issues in the Philippines?

(Unsa ang mga panglantaw sa mga informant bahin sa mga pangunang isyu sa nasud sa Pilipinas?)

2. How does the legal community perceive its role in addressing current national issues?

(Giunsa pagtan-aw sa legal nga komunidad ang ilang papel sa pag-atubang sa kasamtangang mga isyu sa nasud?)

3. What are the prevailing views of the legal community on the effectiveness of existing laws and policies related to national issues? (Unsa ang nag-una nga mga panglantaw sa legal nga komunidad sa pagka-epektibo sa kasamtangan nga mga balaod ug mga palisiya nga may kalabutan sa nasudnong mga isyu?)

4. How does the legal community assess the government's adherence to the rule of law in handling national issues?

(Giunsa pagtimbang-timbang sa legal nga komunidad ang pagsunod sa gobyerno sa lagda sa balaod sa pagdumala sa nasudnong mga isyu?)

5. How have recent national issues affected the practice of law and legal profession in the country?

(Giunsa pag-apekto sa bag-ong mga isyu sa nasud ang praktis sa balaod ug ang propesyon sa abogasya sa nasud?)

6. What are the perspectives of the legal community on the balance between human rights and national security in policy – making?

(Unsa ang mga panglantaw sa legal nga komunidad bahin sa balanse tali sa katungod pantawo ug nasudnong seguridad sa paghimo og polisiya?)

Part I. Perspectives of the informants on the major national issues in the Philippines.

1. What are your thoughts on the most pressing national issues currently facing the Philippines?

(Unsa ang inyong mga hunahuna sa labing dakong mga isyu nga giatubang sa Pilipinas karon?)

2. How do you personally view issues such as human rights violations, extrajudicial killings, corruption, political dynasties, and territorial disputes like the West Philippine Sea?

(Unsay imong personal nga paglantaw sa mga isyu sama sa paglapas sa tawhanong katungod, extrajudicial killings, korapsyon, political dynasties, ug territorial dispute sama sa West Philippine Sea?)

3. How do you think these issues have impacted Philippine society and its legal system?

(Unsa sa imong hunahuna ang epekto niini nga mga isyu sa katilingban sa Pilipinas ug sa legal nga sistema niini?)

4. How do you think these issues have evolved over time?

(Sa imong tan-aw, giunsa pag-uswag o pag-usab sa mga isyung kini sa paglabay sa panahon?)

Part II. Perception of legal advocates in its role in addressing current national issues.

1. How would you describe the role of legal advocates in addressing national issues?

(Giunsa nimo paghulagway sa papel sa mga legal nga tigpanalipod sa pag-atubang sa mga nasudnong isyu?)

2. What motivates legal advocates to engage with these issues?

(Unsa ang nagdasig sa mga legal nga tigpanalipod sa ilang pag-apil sa mga isyung kini?)

3. How do legal advocates influence public discourse and policy? *(Giunsa sa mga abogado pag-impluwensya ang pampublikong diskurso ug mga polisiya?)*

4. What do you think are the limitations and strengths of legal advocacy in the Philippines?

(Unsa ang imong tan-aw nga mga kalig-on ug limitasyon sa legal nga adbokasiya sa Pilipinas?)

Part III. Views of the legal community on the effectiveness of existing laws and policies related to national issues.

1. How effective do you think the current laws and policies are in addressing these major issues?

(Sa imong tan-aw, unsa ka epektibo ang kasamtangang mga balaod ug polisiya sa pag-atubang sa mga dagkong isyu?)

2. What aspects of the legal or policy framework do you believe need improvement or reform?

(Unsa nga aspeto sa legal o polisiya nga balangkas ang kinahanglan pa og pagpaayo o reporma?)

3. What factors contribute to the success or failure of these laws?

(Unsa ang mga hinungdan nga nagdala sa kalampusan o kapakyasan sa mga balaod?)

4. How do you think the legal system responds to emerging national challenges?

(Unsa sa imong hunahuna ang tubag sa legal nga sistema sa mga mitumaw nga nasudnong mga hagit?)

Part IV. Legal community's assessment of the government's adherence to the rule of law in handling national issues.

1. How would you evaluate the government's commitment to the rule of law in dealing with national issues?

(Unsaon nimo pagtimbang-timbang ang pasalig sa gobyerno sa pagmando sa balaod sa pag-atubang sa nasudnong mga isyu?)

2. What examples come to mind when thinking about the government's compliance or non-compliance with legal standards?

(Unsa nga mga ehemplo ang imong nahinumduman nga nagpakita sa pagtuman o paglapas sa gobyerno sa legal)

nga mga pamantayan?)

3. How does the legal community respond when the rule of law is perceived to be undermined?

(Giunsa pagtubag sa legal nga komunidad kung ang pagmando sa balaod gitan-aw nga gidaot?)

4. What mechanisms do you believe are effective in ensuring government accountability?

(Unsa nga mga mekanismo ang imong gituohan nga epektibo sa pagsiguro sa tulubagon sa gobyerno?)

Part V. Effects of the national issues in the practice of law and legal profession in the country?

1. How have current national issues influenced your practice as a legal professional?

(Sa unsang paagi ang kasamtangang nasudnong mga isyu nakaimpluwensya sa imong praktis isip legal nga propesyonal?)

2. How do these issues shape the ethical responsibilities of legal practitioners?

(Giunsa paghulma sa mga isyung kini sa etikal nga responsibilidad sa mga legal nga practitioner?)

3. In what ways has the legal profession adapted to these changes?

(Sa unsang paagi nga ang legal nga propesyon mipahiangay niini nga mga kausaban?)

Part VI. Perspectives of the legal community on the balance between human rights and national security in policy – making.

1. How do you view the relationship between human rights and national security in policymaking?

(Giunsa nimo pagtan-aw ang relasyon tali sa tawhanong katungod ug seguridad sa nasud sa paghimo og palisiya?)

2. What challenges arise when trying to balance these two priorities? *(Unsang mga hagit ang motungha sa dihang mosulay sa pagbalanse niining duha ka prioridad?)*

3. What principles should guide the creation of laws that affect both human rights and national security?

(Unsang mga prinsipyo ang kinahanglang mogiya sa pagmugna ug mga balaod nga makaapektar sa tawhanong katungod ug nasudnong seguridad?)

Parting Statement:

Thank you for your participation in this interview for the accomplishment of this research. All the answers that have been given will be transcribed. If you wish to have a copy of the results, please don't hesitate to ask the researcher. Thank you and God Bless.

APPENDIX D VERIFICATION OF TRANSCRIPTION

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW (IDI)

Transcript of Interview

Informant : Informant 2

Session : 2

Date : September 01, 2025

Time Started : 1:31 pm

Time Ended : 2: 33 pm

Duration : 24:12 minutes

Location : Dalaguete City, Cebu

Interviewed by : Darlene Sarnillo

Transcribed by : Angelie Bless Cañedo Glydel Rhea Gomez

Reviewed by : Atty. Dodelon F. Sabijon, Ph.D.,Crim

Adviser : Atty. Dodelon F. Sabijon, Ph.D.,Crim

Line Number	Responses	Code
1	Well, my perspective is that these national issues, they're always present. Regardless of what the administration, it's just maybe different players, maybe different styles, or not really styles, but whatever you call that. Anyways, different sub issues but more or less it's almost the same issues always, about corruption, about politicking, etc. It's always there, and perhaps you can expect it's always going to be there.	IDI2
2	Well, I guess our role is to first uphold the rule of law. I mean, we have our laws, and we just... How we navigate through these issues, we just ensure that the rule of law is at least complied with. At least we can't totally... As much as we want to, for example, eradicate corruption as one of the main national issues, we can at least try to abate it, or at least lessen it to a certain degree, by applying our national laws that are already in place..	IDI2
3	Well, that's actually a bit tough, a tough one. You have some lawyers or policy makers who say that we need to add more laws. At the same time, we also have other policy makers or lawyers saying, we have enough laws, this is more of the implementation. Personally, I think that I lean towards that we have sufficient laws, that we have to fine-tune them, maybe make a few amendments, especially to cater to more current and pressing issues, especially related to technology. But more or less, we actually have sufficient laws.	IDI2

4	Well, so far, I think, not to... you know, favor one administration over the other. I think, lately, the general opinion among the legal community is that this administration so far has done a better job in upholding, at least, the rule of law. We have less clamor about extrajudicial killings, and we have more support in the administration when it comes to the issue on the Philippine territory, especially with the West Philippine Sea. So, we are trying to adhere to the ruling of the tribunal. So, I think, for this administration, regardless of what you think or have criticisms about it, at least it has been trying its best on those aspects.	IDI2
5	Well that one is also tough. I could say that because of the national issues for at least for us lawyers you can say business is good. Joking aside, well I'd like to say that with these national issues, especially we have your issue on impeachment again, and on this ICC jurisdiction, it has broadened our discussion at least among lawyers in the legal community or even in fact the general public in terms of these issues that weren't touched upon much before. So we could say that perhaps it's even going to expand or enhance our Supreme Court's decision or what we call jurisprudence. So in a way with these developments in national issues you can see the law is constantly evolving and so should us legal practitioners. We should constantly involve and update ourselves because of these issues.	IDI2
6	That's an interesting but tough one. I always like to think it's really a push and pull, trying to uphold human rights at the same time uphold national security, at least the interests of national security. It's always going to be a push and pull, not just here in the Philippines, but in even any, even in developed countries. So, I think we should really just try to find a balance..	IDI2
7	My thoughts is, as I mentioned earlier, as allergic as we are to most of these issues, it's always balik-balik. Balik-balik gyud ni kaning corruption, balik-balik gyud ni ang disputes of the department, or who's being targeted. It's a bit disheartening at the same time. Maybe it's a cultural thing more than what we lack in laws. But I always try to remain optimistic that now there is going to be perhaps a new generation, or a shift someday that we could finally address these issues.	IDI2
8	That's a bit of a loaded question. Well, my opinion, my general opinion, is that, you know, these issues is that perhaps the most guiding principle is to uphold the rule of law. We have laws in place for that purpose, so that these issues can be addressed, especially in guarding human rights. On a more personal level, I'd like to also talk about extrajudicial killings, which is always a recurring issue, even if perhaps in this administration you don't see much of it. But when it comes to these extrajudicial killings, as someone who is also teaching criminal procedure, one of the things I teach my students is what we call due process. And what I find difficult about extrajudicial killings, although from a human perspective we can understand, we want to punish, we want to try to find justice in this world by punishing those who have done wrong. But the problem with that is, without due process, what happens to the innocent? And the thing with extrajudicial killings is that you can't take it back. At least, if you imprison a person, you can expunge their records and bring them back to society. But, dead is dead, it's final. So, that's my problem with	IDI2
	extrajudicial killings, the lack of due process, which, if abused, can lead to things that are irreversible, and a lot of damage to especially the concerned families.	

9	Well, the impact, at least to the public, is that you have now a generation, especially among younger generations, who are more sensitive to these issues and actually try to make their voices heard, which is interesting. And with that, it has also crossed to the legal profession in the sense that we are also trying our best to uphold our rule of law because of this clamor from the public. We are trying to push for the concepts of due process, which used to be just something lawyers talk about, or political students, pol-sci students, but now you have even high school students or even, for example, college students such as yourselves talking about these difficult concepts of due process. So it's interesting in that sense.	IDI2
10	Well, our role, first is, one, is to be the enforcers, so we have our laws, and our role is to uphold the law, to enforce it, and hopefully, I hope I speak for my brothers in the profession, brothers and sisters in the profession, that we won't abuse it. So, that's one. And the second is to help create better policies. So, not only do we help enforce it, but as legal professionals, especially for those who are serving congressmen, or even local councillors, who are in charge of crafting or creating laws and ordinances, we hope that we advise them properly to create not only good laws, but also efficient laws, and laws that are also fair, and that don't trample on human rights.	IDI2
11	The limitations I would like to say is perhaps our culture. Our culture that, it's very complicated. We have years of these issues of corruption and politicking and kini ang political dynasties. One of the things that, for me, really hinder our progress is this political dynasty or basically how we love to have this kind of culture also of tending to worship our leaders, in the sense that it becomes more of blind worship. So things, even though there are certain issues that are sensitive or perhaps important, they don't get pushed enough because perhaps these issues are against the ideals of certain political clans. I know it sounds general, but a good example would be basic human rights. For example, it's against the agenda of a certain political party, so they won't push for it. And because they have these blind allegiances to them, they support the Congress. So these are some of the limitations for me.	IDI2
12	I'd like to say they are fairly effective. When it comes to corruption, we have a very clear law under the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act. We have the Revised Penal Code, which has been there since the 1930s about punishing those who will abuse their power. I think it's more on the issue of implementation. Going back to culture, we have this culture of impunity for our public officers where they feel so powerful that they are untouchable. As much as we have these laws, the problem is that if we have a government that can't enforce them because they are afraid of repercussions in the future, the laws will be wasted. We have these laws, but we can't enforce them. That's one major issue for me.	IDI2
13	Well, I'd like to be more specific here, technical. For me, our legal framework, or our laws, are in a way sufficient, but as I mentioned earlier in this interview, there are certain aspects that also still need to be covered, such as the issues on more recent, for example, relating to cybercrime. Of course, we have our cybercrime law, but we haven't really covered about	IDI2

	what happens if there are crimes committed through the use of artificial intelligence. Or	
	how do we, police, but to give constraints to the use of artificial intelligence, because if we let it run rampant, it can create issues, or problems rather. Like, for example, if AI would create a, have you heard of the phrase, fake videos, and what if it puts a face of a minor on a sexual video, and the minor is engaging in sexual activities. Although, yes, we have certain laws but it's not clear, it becomes a gray area. So, we need to amend our laws, or at least improve our laws, in contemplation of these technologies, which weren't there at the time when these laws were crafted. So, more of updating, and to align ourselves with current world issues. We're a bit behind, the Philippines is a bit behind in that aspect.	
14	Well, like any administration, it has its pluses and minuses, to put it simply. It has its strong points and its weak points. At least for this administration, although we have the issue again on corruption, and we have the issue on DPWH, contractors, and etc. But currently, they're playing the blame game. They're saying it started in the previous administration. Some say it's been in the administration even before that. And now we have also others saying that it started in this administration. So, more blame game. Here, although I have to applaud or give credit where it is due, as to their stance on at least the West Philippine Sea. This has been a clamor among at least most or majority of the legal community is upholding our territory, our sovereign rights. Our constitution provides it. And we really want to lay claim at least our rights or at least to protect our fishermen in that area. And then, sorry to say, the previous administration has been a bit more passive on that, the last one. To the point where our fishermen or even our Coast Guard and even our Navy felt a bit abandoned in that aspect. But now, the Philippine government has been at least more bold in facing off against a superpower, which is China. So, I'd like to at least give them credit for that. As to the ICC issue, that's a bit more complicated. Because we have some scholars saying that they're upholding the rule of law in that aspect. It's an international commitment. You also have some scholars who also like to argue that it is a violation of our own sovereignty. So, whoever is in the right will know in a few years. But it's still trying to be resolved by our Supreme Court.	IDI2

15	What mechanisms? That's also a complicated one. I think the best for me, I'm not sure if it can be considered a mechanism, but I believe it's really the listening to the people, the voice of the people. By listening to the constituents which the public service are supposed to serve. Because after all, that is why they're in power, it's for the people. By listening to their clamor, by listening to their complaints or how they feel, is the best way to ensure good governance. I'm not saying I'm favoring a certain political candidate, or rather a particular individual, but I guess the most concrete example right now we have is really Mayor Vico of Pasig. I think from our perspective, I'm from Cebu, but from our perspective, it seems like the way he governs Pasig is by really listening to the people. By listening to his constituents, what they need, and addressing them right away. Not to say that our here locally, they're not doing it, but the problem is that, you know, maghulat pa sila ng may mamatay, or maghulat pa sila naay maguba sa kaning issues of flooding. There's such big public clamor before they do anything, before they start fixing things, which is, instead of being proactive, it's reactive. So by being sensitive to the needs of the people, by trying to, you know, just considering what they really need, I think that's the best mechanism for me. It all starts from there. Good governance starts by thinking of the people first.	IDI2
	Personally, I'd like to say it has made my life harder. Life harder in the sense that, even though this is just levities, a la joking aside, you have also, for example, we're dealing with	
16	clients, it's interesting, or even with my students, we're trying to discuss what is a subject matter, but they'll always like to talk about these national issues. And sometimes we come a bit unprepared, because we're focused on our work, sometimes we have no time to update ourselves and to be informed. And as a lawyer, you don't want to give the wrong information, or to feed the wrong information, or to give them the wrong principle, because if we feel responsible for explaining to the public, since we are going to argue that. It has made my life harder for example, I'm focused on litigation, I have to review my Constitutional Law again, which I haven't read in the last couple of years. But on a more serious note,, I think it has also enhanced our practice, at least in my perspective of my legal practice, because it has forced me to keep updated with the current events, and it has reminded me a piece of our duty as lawyers, not just to serve our clients, but to also serve the public. The one way you can serve the public is by helping them keep informed of what is legally, or morally, or at least legally, morally it's not really our concern, but legally, right? What is within the bounds of the rule of law. So we, if we need it, we need to correct the public. If there are certain people who come to us saying, "si kuan attorney, kaning issue ni kuan", so for us, we try to explain in a calm manner. We try to explain to them that it's like this, the process is like this, because that's what the law provides, that's what the rule provides, as hard as it may be. That there will be other issues that we understand from a layman's perspective, because there is a certain process. Just to give an example, issues are like the rest of... si Duterte. Even if you don't feel strongly about it, the problem is, there really is a warrant already, so technically, the administration is just complying. So that's become more of a political question, in how they complied with it, or the ease with which they complied. That's partly political. Or even the impeachment. A lot will complain based on technicality. Well, that can still be argued, but if that's a decision of the Supreme Court, we have to respect it. So some people can accept that, and also, we remind them that just because you don't like it, doesn't mean you can't voice out your opinion, in a respectful manner. So, kami as lawyers, we try to help educate the public by being more level-headed. Level-headed na lang. Dili ta magpadala sa emotions, and to see also that we are governed by certain laws.	IDI2

17	So medyo advanced ako answer. But going back to that, so that's the ethical aspect. By these issues we are reminded of our sworn duty as lawyers to uphold the rule of law and to serve the public by also helping them keep informed of these things. At the same time, I'd like also to say that with the national issues on corruption and kaning mga lifestyle checks, kami mga lawyers pod, naay times mag-lifestyle check pod mi, but you'll notice some lawyers gusto mag-posturing, mag-showing kanang mga grandure. So what we're trying to do is that we have in our ethics kaning what we call propriety. So as lawyers, we have to also give the semblance that di mi parts sa corruption noh. So we lifestyle check pd in a sense sa amoa sad.	IDI2
18	As I mentioned earlier, that's always going to be a difficult challenge, because it's going to be, regardless of the generation or administration, there's always going to be a push and pull. Because there are, in a way, conflicting human rights and national security. Because I think, as criminology students, you'd understand that sometimes, in order to protect national interests and security, there is a, for lack of a better term, flirtation with violating certain human rights. Not really violating, at least, you're coming close to the boundaries now. Because enforcing national security sometimes limits or impedes certain human rights. For example, arrests or detention. So there's always going to be a push and pull, what would be reasonable.	IDI2
19	The challenge comes for me is really the implementation. You have the implementation of human rights. Sometimes you have your human rights advocates who tend to be very technical so they can help exculpate would be... They use the protection, rather the law, as to protect individuals in which... How do I say it in a more simple term? They can use it to coddle, to protect. They can abuse it. At the same time, the abuse can also go both ways in which you have these under the guise of national security. They can use their power, kaning mga law enforcement agencies, to violate certain human rights or not just human rights, basically to use it as a tool of corruption by using this. So that's really for me the challenge is even though you have adequate laws, as hard as you try to balance it, if the dili sad ang both sides ang mag execute or implement, it will be all for naught.	IDI2

APPENDIX E

Location Map

Dalaguete



APPENDIX E LOCATION MAP

Alcoy



APPENDIX F

CODED SIGNIFICANT STATEMENT

Significant Statement Number	Significant Statements	Informant Number	Line Number
8	Well, my perspective is that these national issues, they're always present. Regardless of what the administration, it's just maybe different players, maybe different styles, or not really styles, but whatever you call that. Anyways, different sub issues but more or less it's almost the same issues always, about corruption, about politicking, etc. It's always there, and perhaps you can expect it's always going to be there.IDI1:SS8	IDI2	1
9	Well that one is also tough. I could say that because of the national issues for at least for us lawyers you can say business is good. Joking aside, well I'd like to say that with these national issues, especially we have your issue on impeachment again, and on this ICC jurisdiction, it has broadened our discussion at least among lawyers in the legal community or even in fact the general public in terms of these issues that weren't touched upon much before. So we could say that perhaps it's even going to expand or enhance our Supreme Court's decision or what we call jurisprudence. So in a way with these developments in national issues you can see the law is constantly evolving and so should us legal practitioners. We should constantly involve and update ourselves because of these issues. IDI2:SS9	IDI2	5
10	Well, our role, first is, one, is to be the enforcers, so we have our laws, and our role is to uphold the law, to enforce it, and hopefully, I hope I speak for my brothers in the profession, brothers and sisters in the profession, that we won't abuse it. So, that's one. And the second is to help create better policies. So, not only do we help enforce it, but as legal professionals, especially for those who are serving congressmen, or even local councillors, who are in charge of crafting or creating laws and ordinances, we hope that we advise them properly to create not only good laws, but also efficient laws, and laws that are also fair, and that don't trample on human rights. IDI2:SS10	IDI2	10
20	Well, like any administration, it has its pluses and minuses, to put it simply. It has its strong points and its weak points. At least for this administration, although we have the issue again on corruption, and we have the issue on DPWH, contractors, and etc. But currently, they're playing the blame game. They're saying it started in the previous	IDI2	14

	administration. Some say it's been in the administration even before that. And now we have also others saying that it started in this administration. So, more blame game. Here, although I have to applaud or give credit where it is due, as to their stance on at least the West Philippine Sea. This has been a clamor among at least most or majority of the legal community is upholding our territory, our sovereign rights. Our constitution provides it. And we really want to lay claim at least our rights or at least to protect our fishermen in that area. And then, sorry to say, the previous administration has been a bit more passive on that, the last one. To the point where our fishermen or even our Coast Guard and even our Navy felt a bit abandoned in that aspect. But now, the Philippine government has been at least more bold in facing off against a superpower, which is China. So, I'd like to at least give them credit for that. As to the ICC issue, that's a bit more complicated. Because we have some scholars saying that they're upholding the rule of law in that aspect. It's an international commitment. You also have some scholars who also like to argue that it is a violation of our own sovereignty. So, whoever is in the right will know in a few years. But it's still trying to be resolved by our Supreme Court. (IDI2:SS20)		
21	So medyo advanced ako answer. But going back to that, so that's the ethical aspect. By these issues we are reminded of our sworn duty as lawyers to uphold the rule of law and to serve the public by also helping them keep informed of these things. At the same time, I'd like also to say that with the national issues on corruption and kaning mga lifestyle checks, kami mga lawyers pod, naay times mag-lifestyle check pod mi, but you'll notice some lawyers gusto mag-posturing, mag-showing kanang mga grandure. So what we're trying to do is that we have in our ethics kaning what we call propriety. So as lawyers, we have to also give the semblance that di mi parts sa corruption noh. So we lifestyle check pd in a sense sa amoa sad (So my answer is kind of advanced. But going back to that, so that's the ethical aspect. By these issues we are reminded of our sworn duty as lawyers to uphold the rule of law and to serve the public by also helping them keep informed of these things. At the same time, I'd also like to say that with the national issues on corruption and these lifestyle checks, we lawyers too, there are times we also undergo lifestyle checks, but you'll notice some lawyers want to do posturing, showing off that grandeur. So what we're trying to do is that we have in our ethics what we call propriety. So as lawyers, we also have to give the semblance that we are not part of corruption,	IDI2	17

	right? So we also do lifestyle checks in a sense, for ourselves as well.)(IDI2:SS21)		
22	The challenge comes for me is really the implementation. You have the implementation of human rights. Sometimes you have your human rights advocates who tend to be very technical so they can help exculpate would be... They use the protection, rather the law, as to protect individuals in which... How do I say it in a more simple term? They can use it to coddle, to protect. They can abuse it. At the same time, the abuse can also go both ways in which you have these under the guise of national security. They can use their power, kaning mga law enforcement agencies, to violate certain human rights or not just human rights, basically to use it as a tool of corruption by using this. So that's really for me the challenge is even though you have adequate laws, as hard as you try to balance it, if the dili sad ang both sides ang mag execute or implement, it will be all for naught. (The challenge for me really comes in the implementation. You have the implementation of human rights. Sometimes you have your human rights advocates who tend to be very technical so they can help exculpate would-be... They use the protection—rather, the law—to protect individuals in which... How do I say it in a more simple term? They can use it to coddle, to protect. They can abuse it. At the same time, the abuse can also go both ways in which you have these, the law enforcement agencies, who can use their power to violate certain human rights—or not just human rights—basically to use it as a tool of corruption by using this. So that's really, for me, the challenge: even though you have adequate laws, as hard as you try to balance it, if both sides also do not execute or implement, it will all be for nothing.)IDI2:SS22	IDI2	19

APPENDIX F1

Sample Formulation of Core Meaning

I. Perspectives of the Informants

SIGNIFICANT STATEMENTS	FORMULATED MEANINGS
What's the first one? Human rights violation, my viewpoint there is that I will never advocate for human rights violations, because everyone should be afforded certain rights because although we may not be affected, now, it might happen to you sometime in the future, so, it's always there. But of course, maka frustrate lang, because you also here, for example, it also being for lack a better term, ma weaponized or to use against pud, on certain systems. You've heard of those, let's say, a socialist idles, they, they want this, they want change. It's actually good, but sometimes it's mo go sad over, for example, what we've always been hearing, for example, certain mga groups, yes, they are fighting for freedoms or whatever that their causes that they're fighting for. But who suffer? about our fellow Filipinos, ordinary farmers suffer or farmers or even those not supposed to be not involved in their conflict ma involved na hinoun. For me, I stand for human rights, but sometimes it's also in the end of the day, it's balancing. It's also a balancing. I also don't want our situation will be in in some countries where it's a totalitarian rule. I would still still go for democracy. But of course, nothing is perfect mao man jud na siya on the base on human rights. The next one is extrajudicial killings. I think I tackled that earlier, huh? So I always go for there should always be due process, no matter how much you want to take the law into your hands, kinahanglan jud ang due process. Corruption. Oh, corruption. corruption, no. I never stand with corruption, but problem is small mao lang to. Being a realist also, we cannot eliminate it totally. Even countries like Singapore cannot eliminate it totally, but what can be done is to reduce it? What to reduce it stands from leadership. good governance there. So that's the difficult part on corruption, but hopefully maybe we can see that cit an be reduced. We grew up na corruption has been there, always not to it is a news on social media. But what can be done,? To reduce it if it cannot be eliminated totally. Political Dynasties. Ah kana, that's a difficult issue. Because one, although the Constitution mentions na there's a probation of a political dynasties in the Constitution, but it is not self executing Meaning Congress has to pass a law. To define what it is a	The national issues demand balance—democracy, due process, anti-corruption, limiting dynasties and defending West Philippine Sea FM1

political dynasty and what can be done against it. So medyo lisod siya as to because double edge diba?. If you have good politicians, good families now, govern area as well, you'd want them to continue, but it will still fall under the definition of political dynaties. If ever it is defined, if it is from the same family. So if you notice that's always the issue there. How can you define that? Why are you restricting that just because my father, my grandfather served, that I cannot longer serve because of that prohibition? What if I can also do good about. So that's the problem there. So until now, if you've noticed the political dynasty thing, it's been there since the 1987 constitution has been put in placedaghan na kaynang mga groups clamoring that it should be passed, never gud na na pass. I think there was I forgot which congress who attempted, but never jud na na file or never na pass. Next is territorial disputes like the West Philippine Sea. Hmm, these are are sensitive issues, sensitive because it involves you, other countries, other powers. West Philippines in my opinion, man gud if you followed the issue on China's claim on sa nine dash line, technically, when China became part of the United Nations Convention on the laws of the sea, or UNCLOS in 1980, one portion is a convention like an undertaking by those states who become members is to give up any mga other claims and to follow unsa na ang mga regulations, as agreed by the nations who became part of the UNCLOS. China became part of the UNCLOS. I think mas una sila pa sila nato before we came in. It's just that mao na siya, it's actually the dispute noise, it's because of resources. There's the potential of unsa ni siya ah petroleum nga resources there in the area of the South China Sea. West Philippines Sea is technically a small portion long carved out from the South China Sea, because that's the bigger sea, so far part pani siya sa atong territorial waters and West Philippine Sea. That's the issue along there, is because China is still ascerting. Of course, luckily, we have our allies over also there. But it's also a balancing. Why, China has, for the longest time, has been our trade partners, even way before the Spanish rule nato here in the Philippines trade partner na nato ang China. But of course, we cannot also set aside our other partners like the U.S. A lot of our we have a lot of fellow Filipinos also in the U.S. as compared to China, but kana it's a balancing economic interests and also our political and political security here and kato atoa mga fellow Filipinos abroad na ma affected sad sila. So karon i would stand. If would China took on those obligations before, they should honor them, although karon diba they exited from UNCLOS na because of their claim on the nine dash line and they lost sa arbitual ruling. So, they won't even recognize ourbitual ruling, but we have our allies who

are helping us. Of course, I think you've failed siguro the effect of that. It's a political matter, but it was not to economics as well. Tourism has slowed down, Trade has slowed down, So it's a domino effect. But on a legal point, I would say I would affirm our arbitral ruling.

(Human rights violation my viewpoint there is that I will never advocate for human rights violations, because everyone should be afforded certain rights, because although we may not be affected now, it might happen to you sometime in the future, so it's always there. But of course, it can be frustrating, because you also hear, for example, it also being, for lack of a better term, weaponized or used against certain systems. You've heard of those, let's say, socialist ideals, they want this, they want change. It's actually good, but sometimes it also goes overboard. For example, what we've always been hearing, certain groups — yes, they are fighting for freedoms or whatever causes they are fighting for. But who suffers? Our fellow Filipinos, ordinary farmers, suffer. Even those not supposed to be involved in their conflict end up getting involved. For me, I stand for human rights, but sometimes, in the end of the day, it's about balancing. I also don't want our situation to become like in some countries where there is totalitarian rule. I would still go for democracy. But of course, nothing is perfect — that's just how it is based on human rights. The next one is extrajudicial killings. I think I tackled that earlier. So I always go for — there should always be due process, no matter how much you want to take the law into your hands, there must be due process. Corruption. Oh, corruption. Corruption, no — I never stand with corruption. But the problem is small, that's just how it is. Being a realist also, we cannot eliminate it totally. Even countries like Singapore cannot eliminate it totally. But what can be done is to reduce it. That reduction must come from leadership, from good governance. That's the difficult part of corruption, but hopefully maybe we can see that it can be reduced. We grew up with corruption always there — it has always been in the news, in social media. But what can be done? To reduce it, if it cannot be eliminated totally. Political dynasties — ah, that's a difficult issue. Because one, although the Constitution mentions there's a prohibition of political dynasties in the Constitution, it is not self-executing. Meaning Congress has to pass a law to define what is a political dynasty and what can be done against it. So it's a bit difficult because it's double-edged. If you have good politicians, good families who govern an area well, you'd want them to continue. But it will still fall under the definition of political dynasties if ever it is

defined, since it is from the same family. So if you

notice, that's always the issue there. How can you define that? Why are you restricting someone just because my father, my grandfather served — that I can no longer serve because of that prohibition? What if I can also do good? So that's the problem there. Until now, if you've noticed, the political dynasty issue has been there since the 1987 Constitution was put in place. Many groups have been clamoring that it should be passed, but it never was. I think there was, I forgot which Congress, who attempted, but it was never filed or never passed. Next is territorial disputes like the West Philippine Sea. These are sensitive issues, because they involve other countries, other powers. The West Philippine Sea, in my opinion, if you follow the issue on China's claim on the nine-dash line, technically, when China became part of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, or UNCLOS, in 1980, one portion is a convention like an undertaking by those states who became members to give up any other claims and to follow the regulations as agreed by the nations who became part of the UNCLOS. China became part of the UNCLOS, I think earlier than us, before we came in. It's just that the dispute is actually because of resources. There's the potential petroleum resources in the area of the South China Sea. The West Philippine Sea is technically a small portion carved out from the South China Sea, because that is the bigger sea. So it is still part of our territorial waters. And the West Philippine Sea issue is because China is still asserting. Of course, luckily, we have our allies also there. But it's also about balancing. Why? Because China has, for the longest time, been our trade partner even way before the Spanish rule in the Philippines, China was already our trade partner. But of course, we cannot also set aside our other partners like the U.S. We have a lot of fellow Filipinos in the U.S. compared to China. But that's the balancing economic interests and also our political and security concerns here, and our fellow Filipinos abroad who may be affected as well. So now I would stand if China took on those obligations before, they should honor them. Although now they exited from UNCLOS because of their claim on the nine-dash line and they lost in the arbitral ruling, they still won't recognize the arbitral ruling. But we have our allies who are helping us. Of course, I think you've felt the effect of that — it's a political matter, but it also affects economics. Tourism has slowed down, trade has slowed down. So it's a domino effect. But on a legal point, I would say I affirm our arbitral ruling.) (ID11:SS1)

Well, my perspective is that these national issues, they're always present. Regardless of what the administration, it's just maybe different players, maybe different styles, or not really styles, but whatever you call that. Anyways, different sub issues but more or less it's almost the same issues always, about corruption, about politicking, etc. It's always there, and perhaps you can expect it's always going to be there.	The national issues persist because politics and corruption remain unchanged across leaders.
As far as first issue that you want to ask me is the corruption, no, when you read the Bible, corruption has already there, long before Christ came to the world, so it is part of our life. It's just unfortunate for us that corruption that is too high and corruptions in the Philippines involves not from the top, but from bottom to the top. So that's the problem. As far as the dynasties and the political dynasties is concerned, when the 1987 constitutions were being prepared by the framers of the constitution, they have in mind to what do what we call this one, to prevent a political dynasty. Unfortunately, those primers of the Constitution pass the burden to the congress to banning political dynasty. Unfortunately, the Congress wanted task by the constitutions to pass the law to implement, to pass the law for the implementations of anti dynaties, they did not pass it simply because most politicians in the Philippines are political dynasty. We cannot blame these politicians for their dynasty, because they were voted by the people. Despite the fact that people knew that this family are controlling the politics in their area, they still continue to vote. Not because this political dynaties brings good to the community, but usually the political dynasty does not bring good to the community. You know why? When you are talking about political life, it's really difficult. Because the community owns you being a public officials. And if this politicians, does not give anything from their positions, they will not allow anybody or any members of their family to follow their post. Because when you are politicians even in the hours of the morning, you will be disturbed by the people because the people wanted help from you. And if they didn't get something from that will you allow your wife or your children to do that to do the same thing? No. So this political in our country does not bring good to the community. As far as another issue, Extrajudicial killings. As far as it's a judicial killings, for me, it brings good and it brings bad. It brings good simply because people wanted to has an intention to commit a crime will be this time will be afraid. Because if they will do that and the government knew or the police officers knew that this person's committing a crime, so he will be executed. As far as due process is concerned, the other side, we being christians, we	The corruption and dynasties are deeply rooted. EJKs deny justice; the Philippines is weak in ICC and WPS disputes.

believe that there is second chance. given the chance, so we have to follow the due process because there persons intentions to commit crime, we did not know what was really the reason why he committed the crime. So because we believe that this are people will be given a second chance. So we must do the process. It is for this reason that the president was according to him because he had admitted he was brought to him what do you call this one, netherlands right now he was in prison there, to the ICC. But in reality, some nations do that, but we, we have to admit the reality that we are poor country, so we can be. We can always be bullied by the rich country. So in short, since the philippines is a poor country, ICC can enforce the law here. When you are talking about enforcement of ICC lookat, what is this one, there's a warrant of arrest issued for Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel can ICC enforce that?, definitely don't. Because ICC know Israel will fight. But here, sine it's a poor country, we were bullied by the rich country. And another one is the West Philippine Sea. The same way, the same thing, we are poor country compared to China. That's why we were bullied by the China. As far as West Philippines is concerned, while it is true that we have a decision coming from the international court, awarding jurisdictions or ownership over the area is stated in the West Philippine Sea. But since the international court has no right or power to implement to enforce the decision. So that decision will remain a paper dictory. Also, China will never honor the decision, so who will enforce the decision? So definitely, we will always be bullied by the China. Well it is true that the previous administration during the Duterte's time be the China, but it did not bring positive results to the country. Because China has its own interest. And since we cannot fight China, so definitely in the future, that area there will be controlled by China. IDI3:SS23

Of course, kung kini ang corruption, dako kaayo kini ug impact sa atuang kinabuhi, kay syempre kita may ma directly affected . For example, pareha anang, diba unsa may controversy karon, kaning mga sa DPWH flood control projects. So syempre , tungod sa corruption, dili maayu pagkabuhat, nangaguba, so dili lang kami mga lawyer ang naapektaran so ang tanan gyud na community. So, tunod sa corruption mao pod na ang usa sa mga rason nga ang usa ka nasud maglisod sa paglambo ba. Isa gyud na sa hindrance sa development sa usa ka nasud. Just imagine kung magpahimo ka ug karsada, tungod sa corruption ang budget wala napadulong, gamay ra ug napunta, dali nangaguba, ang

Corruption blocks development, wastes resources, and scares away investments.

FM4

uban pa gyud ana ge declare nga naa pero wala, mao nay gi ingon nila nga ghost projects. So maapektaran gyud ang atoang national development, atoang panginabuhi. Tungod pud niining corruption, syempre ang mga negosyante dili moari sa atua because it's very hard to do business if there's corruption. (Of course, when it comes to corruption, it has a huge impact on our lives because we are the ones directly affected. For example, take the current controversy regarding the DPWH flood control projects. Because of corruption, the projects are poorly built and end up getting damaged, so it's not only us lawyers who are affected, but the whole community. Corruption is also one of the main reasons why a country struggles to progress. It is truly a hindrance to national development. Just imagine when you build a road—because of corruption, the budget doesn't go where it's supposed to, only a small portion is actually used, the roads get damaged easily, and sometimes, projects are even declared finished even if they don't exist at all. These are what we call “ghost projects.” So our national development and our livelihood are really affected. And because of this corruption, businessmen are also discouraged from investing here since it's very hard to do business in a place where corruption exists.) IDI5:SS37	
For the first part, I strongly disapprove of extrajudicial killings, I strongly disapprove of human rights violations, as well as corruption. We're taught early on as lawyers that nobody should be forced to give their life unless they are given a fair and just trial. It's not to say that death penalty is illegal, but if there is death penalty, there must be a proper way to go about it. I understand that people are sometimes fed up with how much drugs are rampant in the country, but I don't think it's right to kill people without proper procedure or proper adherence to the law. I wouldn't mind if they put in a death penalty for drugs, but he should have pushed for it as a law first before, and not just told people to kill people without a proper trial. For the last part, the West Philippine Sea, it's wholly dependent on adherence to UNCLOS, as well as the international court that ruled on it. The obvious answer would be to support the international court that ruled on the issue, but it's	The human rights violations and EJKs weaken justice, while west philippine sea shows the limits of global law. FM6

difficult because in international law, states are considered independent entities. For an international court to have jurisdiction over the state, the state must submit their jurisdiction to the court. When you're a signatory to the UNCLOS or to the international law, you say you are submitting to it. But sometimes there are instances like China. China is a signatory, but they're refusing to adhere to the international law because they can. There's no policing body. There's no way to enforce decisions from the international court because it's just expected that everybody who's a member of it, it's like an honor system. You have to follow because you signed it, you will follow. But if a country does not want to follow, the international court can't do anything about it because they don't have a way to enforce a decision that they ruled upon. So in that case, it's unfortunate, but that's how international law works. It's frustrating, but it's basically politics. IDI6:SS44

How do I usually feel? So let's start with one.. human rights violation. Human rights violation, for me, let's talk about kanang mga nag rally, protesters. For me, the police have been very lenient on them, respectful on them. Sometimes protesters sobrang nasad.. For me, the right to protest is a right protected by law but disad pwede nga over nasad. Akong na observe is the current PNP, or the army is very maximum tolerance. Next. The next is extra judicial killing. Extra judicial killings. For me dili man gud na pwede ang extrajudicial killing. Because no one has the right to take any life, you know, kanang extra judicial killings mao manang nipatay kag taw nga ikaw ray nagbout. So, in my opinion, it's a no. And those people who promote that should be liable, should be held liable. The next one is the corruption. Corruption. For me, you personally corruption corruption has always been there, but importantly kinahanglan masakpan gyud. And if masakpan, there should be the corresponding punishment. So if there's no liability or punishment or any consequence, they will be encouraged to do it again.. Next one is Political Dynasties. Political, no to political dynasties kinahanglan overdue nana nga one only per family, even anak, igsuon kinahanglan disad pwede. So the last one is territorial disputes like the West Philippines Sea. Territorial disputes for me, West Philippines Sea, I see it as protecting our country. and I can see China is really bullying. They cannot own that area and what they they are doing is para nako bullying gyud. So we have to keep on doing, we have to keep on protecting our area areas atong maritime zone, nagbuhat

The rights must be respected, corruption punished, dynasties limited, and west philippine sea sovereignty defended.

FM7

pa silag island didto. [P]_[SEP]So I view it as something positive sa Philippine government nga gi do to protect the integrity of the country. Although the land, what they're doing is protect protecting their right to fish, right to use that area. [P]_[SEP]

(How do I usually feel? So let's start with one: human rights violation. Human rights violation—for me, let's talk about those who are rallying, protesters. For me, the police have been very lenient with them, respectful of them. Sometimes protesters also go overboard. For me, the right to protest is a right protected by law, but it also cannot be too much. What I've observed is that currently, the PNP or the army is showing very maximum tolerance. Next. The next is extrajudicial killing. Extrajudicial killings—for me, that really cannot be allowed. Because no one has the right to take any life, you know, those extrajudicial killings mean you killed someone at your own decision. So, in my opinion, it's a no-no. And those people who promote that should be liable, should be held liable. The next one is corruption. Corruption—for me, personally, corruption has always been there, but what's important is it must really be caught. And if caught, there should be the corresponding punishment. So if there's no liability or punishment or any consequence, they will be encouraged to do it again. Next one is political dynasties. Political—no to political dynasties. That's long overdue; there should only be one from the family, even children or siblings should also not be allowed. So the last one is territorial disputes like the West Philippine Sea. Territorial disputes—for me, West Philippine Sea, I see it as protecting our country. And I can see China is really bullying. They cannot own that area, and what they are doing, for me, is really bullying. So we have to keep on doing, we have to keep on protecting our maritime zones. They even built islands there. So I view it as something positive that the Philippine government is doing to protect the integrity of the country. Although the land, what they're doing is protecting their right to fish, their right to use that area.) IDI7:SS50

Human Rights Violations, the law enforcement agencies are given so much power when not all laws are enacted with proper guidelines. As for Extrajudicial Killings, no one should place the law in their own hands. The killings are ineffective as it only prunes the branches and not the roots. Ultimately, the problem will still arise once the

The human rights abuse, EJKs, corruption, and dynasties harm governance; west philippine sea shows weak defense of resources.

pruning has ceased. Corruption, the government is so outward-looking without even realizing that the root of the problem stemmed out from the people in power. In Political Dynasties, I personally do not have any problem with this so long as the person in the position is competent and worthy. However, if political dynasties are producing incompetent leaders, then this is where the problem arises. Last is Territorial Disputes, the Philippines has too much to protect with so little resources to protect ourselves. IDI8:SS58	FM8
Personally, these are, regardless of which side are you on, these are in itself, these things are very- it hurts me because it violates the very constitution that we fought for. Whichever, whatever incidents that violated human rights, extrajudicial killings kana bitawng we fought for our, ancestors fought really heard to escape the dictatorship of regardless of whether it's local or another country took over and to see this unfortunate things to happen. I know it's not that it happens in every country, but it forces me as somebody who doesn't, like conflict kana bitawng to speak up which is a basic freedom of expression is something that is guaranteed. So it is necessary for me. Personally I don't like it. I hate it but kana bitawng as a legal professional. I am forced to as somebody who doesn't speak up that much, I am forced to advocate the rights of my clients, the rights of those who have suffered in the hands of whoever these people are. And it makes me, it makes me more in line, but it forces me to be in the forefront, to be able to protect all those I love, not only to my clients, the people and the reason why I became a lawyer comes back. It returns back to me, Mao diay nag abogado ko because these things happen and somebody has to protect these people, the victims of it. (Personally, regardless of which side you are on, these issues really hurt me because they violate the very Constitution that we fought for. Whatever incidents involve human rights violations, extrajudicial killings—those very things that our ancestors fought so hard against, to escape dictatorship, whether from local leaders or foreign powers—and now to see these unfortunate things happening again is painful. I know it doesn't only happen here, it happens in many countries, but it forces me—as someone who doesn't really like conflict, those very moments—to speak up. And speaking up is a basic freedom of expression,	The human rights violations and EJKs break constitutional freedoms, pushing advocates to protect justice. FM9

something guaranteed by the law. So it becomes necessary for me. Personally, I don't like it, I even hate it, but those very circumstances, as a legal professional, compel me. As someone who usually doesn't speak up much, I am forced to advocate for the rights of my clients and the rights of those who have suffered in the hands of whoever committed these acts. It makes me more aligned with my purpose, but at the same time, it pushes me to the forefront, to be able to protect not only my clients but also the people I love. It reminds me why I became a lawyer in the first place. That's the very reason I became a lawyer—because these things happen, and somebody has to protect these people, the victims of it) IDI9:SS66

As to legality my personal view is that there was no proper observance of due process here in the Philippines. He can be sent to the ICC, and he can be arrested here in the Philippines and then sent to the ICC, there's no question about that. However, before that happens, there must be legal intervention here in the Philippines to determine whether it is appropriate to send our former President to the ICC. Why? Because we have a constitution and existing laws that define the procedures and rules on how to handle situations like this. The problem is that those procedures were not observed it was just an arrest without due process. As a legal advocate, I view corruption and political dynasties as deeply rooted structural problems that continue to erode public trust in our institutions. From a constitutional standpoint, while political dynasties are implicitly discouraged under Article II, Section 26 of the 1987 Constitution, the absence of an enabling law has allowed these dynasties to flourish unchecked. This is a clear gap in our legal framework. Corruption in the Philippines is not just a political issue it is a legal crisis that undermines the rule of law and weakens democratic institutions. As a lawyer, I see corruption as a betrayal of public trust and a violation of the constitutional mandate that public office is a public trust. The problem is not the law but only the enforcement of it. IDI10:SS72

The due process lapses, corruption, and dynasties erode democracy because laws exist but aren't enforced.

FM10

APPENDIX F2

Sample Development of Clustered Themes

Perspectives of the informants

Formulated Meanings	Cluster Themes	Emergent Themes
FM1. The national issues demand balance—democracy, due process, anti-corruption, limiting dynasties, and defending the West Philippine Sea.	IV. Accountability and the rule of law are central—laws exist but are poorly enforced, leading to blame-shifting and loss of democratic governance.	II. Balanced Governance: Accountability, democracy, and sovereignty must work together.
FM2. The national issues persist because politics and corruption remain unchanged across leaders.	I. Corruption and political dynasties remain deeply rooted, blocking development, wasting resources, and eroding democracy.	I. Fragile Institutions: Weak governance, corruption, and poor protection of rights and sovereignty.
FM3. Corruption and dynasties are deeply rooted; extrajudicial killings deny justice; the Philippines is weak in ICC and West Philippine Sea disputes.	I. Corruption and political dynasties remain deeply rooted, blocking development, wasting resources, and eroding democracy.	I. Fragile Institutions: Weak governance, corruption, and poor protection of rights and sovereignty.
FM4. Accountability is the root issue behind major national problems—whether corruption, lawlessness, territorial disputes, or economic struggles—since blame-shifting and scapegoating prevent real responsibility.	IV. Accountability and the rule of law are central—laws exist but are poorly enforced, leading to blame-shifting and loss of democratic governance.	II. Balanced Governance: Accountability, democracy, and sovereignty must work together.
FM5. Corruption blocks development, wastes resources, and scares away investments.	I. Corruption and political dynasties remain deeply rooted, blocking development, wasting resources, and eroding democracy.	I. Fragile Institutions: Weak governance, corruption, and poor protection of rights and sovereignty.
FM6. Human rights violations and extrajudicial killings weaken justice, while the West Philippine Sea highlights the limits of international law.	II. Human rights violations and extrajudicial killings weaken justice, break constitutional freedoms, and harm governance.	I. Fragile Institutions: Weak governance, corruption, and poor protection of rights and sovereignty.
FM7. Rights must be respected,	IV. Accountability	II. Balanced

corruption punished, political dynasties limited, and West Philippine Sea sovereignty defended.	and the rule of law are central—laws exist but are poorly enforced, leading to blame-shifting and loss of democratic governance.	Governance: Accountability, democracy, and sovereignty must work together.
FM8. Human rights abuse, extrajudicial killings, corruption, and political dynasties harm governance, while the West Philippine Sea reflects weak defense of resources.	II. Human rights violations and extrajudicial killings weaken justice, break constitutional freedoms, and harm governance.	I. Fragile Institutions: Weak governance, corruption, and poor protection of rights and sovereignty.
FM9. Human rights violations and extrajudicial killings break constitutional freedoms, pushing advocates to protect justice.	II. Human rights violations and extrajudicial killings weaken justice, break constitutional freedoms, and harm governance.	I. Fragile Institutions: Weak governance, corruption, and poor protection of rights and sovereignty.
FM10. Due process lapses, corruption, and political dynasties erode democracy because laws exist but are not enforced.	IV. Accountability and the rule of law are central—laws exist but are poorly enforced, leading to blame-shifting and loss of democratic governance.	II. Balanced Governance: Accountability, democracy, and sovereignty must work together.

Lgeal community’s perception of its role in handling national issues

Formulated Meanings	Cluster Themes	Emergent Themes
FM11. The legal advocates should guide groups with balanced advice, ensuring democracy by listening to all sides before taking action.	I. The role of legal advocates in guiding people and communities—ensuring lawful actions, promoting fairness, and filing cases to uphold justice.	I. Guardians of Justice: Lawyers defend rights, promote fairness, and build public trust.
FM12. The national issues push lawyers to evolve, update, and enrich jurisprudence, showing law is constantly developing.	III. The evolving nature of law and jurisprudence, where disputes, reforms, and outdated regulations create both challenges and opportunities for legal professionals.	II. Law in Motion: Legal advocacy evolves with societal change and reform.
FM13. The lawyers benefit from conflicts in law implementation since disputes create demand for their services.	III. The evolving nature of law and jurisprudence, where disputes, reforms, and outdated regulations create both challenges and opportunities for legal professionals.	II. Law in Motion: Legal advocacy evolves with societal change and reform.
FM14. The legal advocates guide people to act lawfully, ensuring both sides are heard to promote fairness and	I. The role of legal advocates in guiding people and communities—ensuring lawful actions, promoting fairness, and filing cases	I. Guardians of Justice: Lawyers defend rights, promote fairness, and

understanding.	to uphold justice.	build public trust.
FM15. The lawyers assist communities by filing cases against corrupt officials and guiding complainants through legal processes.	I. The role of legal advocates in guiding people and communities—ensuring lawful actions, promoting fairness, and filing cases to uphold justice.	I. Guardians of Justice: Lawyers defend rights, promote fairness, and build public trust.
FM16. The legal advocacy involves pushing for reforms, updating outdated laws, and addressing harmful practices like weak gambling regulations.	III. The evolving nature of law and jurisprudence, where disputes, reforms, and outdated regulations create both challenges and opportunities for legal professionals.	II. Law in Motion: Legal advocacy evolves with societal change and reform.
FM17. The legal advocates must uphold proper procedures, fight misinformation, and rely on facts and documents over hearsay.	II. The responsibility of lawyers to uphold due process, fight misinformation, and rely on facts and proper legal procedures.	I. Guardians of Justice: Lawyers defend rights, promote fairness, and build public trust.
FM18. The legal advocates promote proper implementation of laws to protect the country and its people from harmful effects.	II. The responsibility of lawyers to uphold due process, fight misinformation, and rely on facts and proper legal procedures.	I. Guardians of Justice: Lawyers defend rights, promote fairness, and build public trust.
FM19. The legal professionals ensure fair representation for all and challenge unconstitutional laws to safeguard people's rights.	IV. The function of lawyers as protectors of rights—ensuring fair representation, challenging unconstitutional laws, and enriching the development of jurisprudence.	I. Guardians of Justice: Lawyers defend rights, promote fairness, and build public trust.
FM20. The legal advocates, being respected voices, explain laws clearly, guide public understanding, and file cases to uphold justice.	I. The role of legal advocates in guiding people and communities—ensuring lawful actions, promoting fairness, and filing cases to uphold justice.	I. Guardians of Justice: Lawyers defend rights, promote fairness, and build public trust.

Prevailing views on the effectiveness of existing laws and policies.

Formulated Meanings	Cluster Themes	Emergent Themes
FM21. The laws are generally good, but they are often misused and fail in execution.	I. The adequacy of Philippine laws, but weakness lies in poor or selective enforcement and misuse during execution.	I. Laws Without Teeth: Weak enforcement leaves justice unfulfilled.
FM22. The Philippine laws are adequate; the problem lies in weak implementation and	I. The adequacy of Philippine laws, but weakness lies in poor or selective enforcement	I. Laws Without Teeth: Weak enforcement leaves justice unfulfilled.

enforcement.	and misuse during execution.	
FM23. Legal professionals must uphold laws and help create fair policies that respect human rights.	IV. The call for balanced reforms—ensuring laws adapt to changing national issues while safeguarding fairness, human rights, and deliberate justice.	II. Reform for Relevance: Laws must be updated and fairly applied.
FM24. The country has enough laws, but greed and poor implementation undermine them.	II. The role of greed, corruption, and powerful offenders escaping prosecution, which undermines justice and equality before the law.	I. Laws Without Teeth: Weak enforcement leaves justice unfulfilled.
FM25. The laws must be revised and properly enforced to adapt to changing national issues.	III. The need to revise, update, and strengthen outdated laws and policies to address modern challenges and loopholes.	II. Reform for Relevance: Laws must be updated and fairly applied.
FM26. The laws are ineffective against corruption because powerful offenders are rarely prosecuted.	II. The role of greed, corruption, and powerful offenders escaping prosecution, which undermines justice and equality before the law.	I. Laws Without Teeth: Weak enforcement leaves justice unfulfilled.
FM27. The laws exist but lack proactive enforcement; prosecution depends too much on complaints being filed.	I. The adequacy of Philippine laws, but weakness lies in poor or selective enforcement and misuse during execution.	I. Laws Without Teeth: Weak enforcement leaves justice unfulfilled.
FM28. The legal system is good overall, but reforms are needed; change should be balanced and deliberate.	IV. The call for balanced reforms—ensuring laws adapt to changing national issues while safeguarding fairness, human rights, and deliberate justice.	II. Reform for Relevance: Laws must be updated and fairly applied.
FM29. The policies are weak due to loopholes, light penalties, and delayed justice.	III. The need to revise, update, and strengthen outdated laws and policies to address modern challenges and loopholes.	II. Reform for Relevance: Laws must be updated and fairly applied.
FM30. The laws exist, but their enforcement and implementation remain ineffective.	I. The adequacy of Philippine laws, but weakness lies in poor or selective enforcement and misuse during execution.	I. Laws Without Teeth: Weak enforcement leaves justice unfulfilled.
FM31. There are many laws that are outdated and need updating	III. The need to revise, update, and strengthen outdated	II. Reform for Relevance: Laws must be

to address modern challenges.	laws and policies to address modern challenges and loopholes.	updated and fairly applied.
FM32. The laws exist but are applied unfairly, with ordinary people penalized quickly while powerful violators go unpunished.	II. The role of greed, corruption, and powerful offenders escaping prosecution, which undermines justice and equality before the law.	I. Laws Without Teeth: Weak enforcement leaves justice unfulfilled.
FM33. The existing laws are sufficient, but fair implementation and accessible legal support are crucial.	IV. The call for balanced reforms—ensuring laws adapt to changing national issues while safeguarding fairness, human rights, and deliberate justice.	II. Reform for Relevance: Laws must be updated and fairly applied.

Legal Community's Assessments on Government's adherence to the rule of law

Formulated Meanings	Cluster Themes	Emergent Themes
FM34. The government still follows due process through investigations, but the pace makes people think it's ineffective.	I. Due process exists but is slow, making the justice system appear weak and ineffective.	I. Unequal Justice: Slow and biased processes weaken public trust.
FM35. Every administration has strengths and weaknesses: corruption persists, but credit is due for a stronger stance on the West Philippine Sea, while the ICC issue remains unresolved.	II. Corruption remains persistent, with leadership seen as weak and reactive, though some progress is made in areas like the West Philippine Sea.	II. Stronger Institutions, Stronger Nation: Accountability and reform restore faith in law.
FM36. National issues benefit the legal profession—young lawyers push reforms, while senior lawyers guide clients to avoid corruption.	III. The legal profession evolves with generational roles—young lawyers push for reforms, while senior ones guide against corruption.	II. Stronger Institutions, Stronger Nation: Accountability and reform restore faith in law.
FM37. The rule of law requires unbiased application, due process, and respect for rights despite political influence.	IV. The rule of law must be applied fairly, yet political influence and unequal treatment allow powerful officials to escape accountability.	I. Unequal Justice: Slow and biased processes weaken public trust.
FM38. The government is only now taking real action on corruption, but leadership is still seen as weak and reactive.	II. Corruption remains persistent, with leadership seen as weak and reactive, though some progress is made in areas like the West Philippine Sea.	II. Stronger Institutions, Stronger Nation: Accountability and reform restore faith in law.

FM39. The rule of law is applied fairly to ordinary citizens but inconsistently to powerful officials who often escape accountability.	IV. The rule of law must be applied fairly, yet political influence and unequal treatment allow powerful officials to escape accountability.	I. Unequal Justice: Slow and biased processes weaken public trust.
FM40. Public trust in the police is low due to unequal treatment, conflicts of interest, and corruption influenced by wealth or connections.	V. Public trust in law enforcement is undermined by corruption, conflicts of interest, and bias favoring the wealthy and connected.	I. Unequal Justice: Slow and biased processes weaken public trust.
FM41. Many officials lack legal expertise and fail to fully use legal remedies, exposing weaknesses in governance.	VI. Weak institutions, lack of legal expertise among officials, and failure to impose harsher penalties expose governance gaps.	II. Stronger Institutions, Stronger Nation: Accountability and reform restore faith in law.
FM42. The implementation of laws is unfair—ordinary people are punished quickly, while large-scale offenders often escape justice.	IV. The rule of law must be applied fairly, yet political influence and unequal treatment allow powerful officials to escape accountability.	I. Unequal Justice: Slow and biased processes weaken public trust.
FM43. The government must strengthen institutions and impose harsher penalties on corrupt officials to deter abuse of power.	VI. Weak institutions, lack of legal expertise among officials, and failure to impose harsher penalties expose governance gaps.	II. Stronger Institutions, Stronger Nation: Accountability and reform restore faith in law.

Effects of national issues on the practice of law and legal profession.

Formulated Meanings	Cluster Themes	Emergent Themes
FM44. Lawyers must ethically guide clients to do what is right in procurement and uphold the amended Code of Ethics, including responsible use of social media.	I. Lawyers must uphold ethics and integrity by guiding clients responsibly, avoiding corruption, and practicing accountability—even in areas like social media and lifestyle checks.	I. Ethics Beyond Law: Justice requires integrity and accountability.
FM45. Lawyers are reminded to uphold propriety by avoiding corruption and showing integrity, even through lifestyle checks.	I. Lawyers must uphold ethics and integrity by guiding clients responsibly, avoiding corruption, and practicing accountability—even in areas like social media and lifestyle checks.	I. Ethics Beyond Law: Justice requires integrity and accountability.
FM46. Laws exist for the	II. Ethical leadership and	I. Ethics Beyond

people's benefit, but weak adherence by politicians shows that conscience and ethical leadership are as important as written laws.	conscience are as vital as laws themselves, since weak adherence by politicians undermines the spirit of justice.	Law: Justice requires integrity and accountability.
FM47. National issues increase the legal profession's involvement in human rights and administrative cases, highlighting accountability and adaptation to digital reforms.	III. The legal profession's role expands in national issues, handling human rights and administrative cases, digital reforms, and accountability measures.	II. Resilient Advocates: Lawyers remain defenders despite systemic challenges.
FM48. Lawyers must always be aware of their accountability for professional actions.	I. Lawyers must uphold ethics and integrity by guiding clients responsibly, avoiding corruption, and practicing accountability—even in areas like social media and lifestyle checks.	I. Ethics Beyond Law: Justice requires integrity and accountability.
FM49. Corruption in flood control directly affects the legal profession by disrupting court operations and access to justice.	IV. Corruption affects the legal system indirectly by disrupting justice processes, though its political damage may not always directly impact legal practice.	II. Resilient Advocates: Lawyers remain defenders despite systemic challenges.
FM50. Government corruption issues damage politics but have little direct impact on the legal system or profession itself.	IV. Corruption affects the legal system indirectly by disrupting justice processes, though its political damage may not always directly impact legal practice.	II. Resilient Advocates: Lawyers remain defenders despite systemic challenges.
FM51. National issues highlight the importance of lawyers in defending both victims and government, showing they deserve respect despite challenges.	V. Lawyers remain vital defenders of justice and rights, serving both government and victims, earning respect for their resilience and patriotism despite challenges.	II. Resilient Advocates: Lawyers remain defenders despite systemic challenges.
FM52. National issues deepen patriotism and remind lawyers of their duty to keep fighting for justice and protecting people's rights.	V. Lawyers remain vital defenders of justice and rights, serving both government and victims, earning respect for their resilience and patriotism despite challenges.	II. Resilient Advocates: Lawyers remain defenders despite systemic challenges.

FM53. National issues inspire young lawyers to stay resilient, purposeful, and committed to protecting rights despite exhaustion and challenges in the profession.	V. Lawyers remain vital defenders of justice and rights, serving both government and victims, earning respect for their resilience and patriotism despite challenges.	II. Resilient Advocates: Lawyers remain defenders despite systemic challenges.
FM54. Courts are underfunded, understaffed, and overburdened, making it hard to deliver justice effectively.	VI. The courts face structural problems such as underfunding, understaffing, and heavy caseloads, which weaken justice delivery.	II. Resilient Advocates: Lawyers remain defenders despite systemic challenges.

Perspectives on the balance between human rights and national security

Formulated Meanings	Cluster Themes	Emergent Themes
FM55. The national security and human rights must be balanced; rights should be respected but not used to justify crimes, while security measures should avoid automatic red-tagging.	I. Human rights and national security must be balanced—security measures should respect rights, while rights must not shield criminal acts.	I. Balanced Governance: Human rights and national security must coexist.
FM56. The real challenge is implementation: both human rights advocates and law enforcers can abuse the law, so fair execution is key.	II. The real challenge lies in fair implementation: both advocates and enforcers can abuse the law, so execution must remain just and impartial.	II. Fair Implementation: Laws must be applied impartially for the common good.
FM57. Human rights and national security must cooperate in policymaking to avoid conflict and achieve laws that serve both interests.	III. Policymaking must integrate safeguards and cooperation between human rights and security to avoid conflict and protect both interests.	I. Balanced Governance: Human rights and national security must coexist.
FM58. Human rights generally take priority, but national security cannot be compromised; courts must set clear boundaries in conflicts.	IV. Courts play a vital role in setting clear boundaries, ensuring constitutional enforcement, and protecting citizens from abuses.	I. Balanced Governance: Human rights and national security must coexist.
FM59. Policymaking must include safeguards to protect rights, even when laws focus on national security.	III. Policymaking must integrate safeguards and cooperation between human rights and security to avoid conflict and protect both interests.	I. Balanced Governance: Human rights and national security must coexist.
FM60. Lawyers play a key role in ensuring laws are enforced constitutionally, protecting people from unlawful searches and abuses.	IV. Courts play a vital role in setting clear boundaries, ensuring constitutional enforcement, and protecting citizens from abuses.	II. Fair Implementation: Laws must be applied impartially for the common good.
FM61. Human rights should be respected first since people empower government, but national security is also vital and often abused for personal interests—	IV. Courts play a vital role in setting clear boundaries, ensuring constitutional enforcement, and protecting citizens from abuses.	I. Balanced Governance: Human rights and national security must coexist.

courts must ensure balance.		
FM62. Both national security and human rights must go hand in hand; violations affecting security must still be strictly addressed.	V. Human rights and security are complementary—overemphasizing one weakens the other; true national security is impossible without respect for rights.	I. Balanced Governance: Human rights and national security must coexist.
FM63. Balancing rights and security is a double-edged sword; favoring one too much weakens the other, so policies must aim for shared protection.	V. Human rights and security are complementary—overemphasizing one weakens the other; true national security is impossible without respect for rights.	I. Balanced Governance: Human rights and national security must coexist.
FM64. The true goal is general welfare; rights and security are only tools to achieve national safety, progress, and stability.	VI. The ultimate goal is general welfare—rights and security serve as tools to achieve national stability, safety, and progress.	I. Balanced Governance: Human rights and national security must coexist.
FM65. Human rights and national security are complementary; restrictions may happen, but due process and non-discrimination must always be upheld.	V. Human rights and security are complementary—overemphasizing one weakens the other; true national security is impossible without respect for rights.	II. Fair Implementation: Laws must be applied impartially for the common good.
FM66. Human rights are essential because they protect individuals from abusive enforcement; true national security is impossible without internal respect for rights.	V. Human rights and security are complementary—overemphasizing one weakens the other; true national security is impossible without respect for rights.	I. Balanced Governance: Human rights and national security must coexist.

Appendix G Diagram Of Common Themes

JUSTICE IN FRAGMENTED NATION: LEGAL ADVOCATES NARRATIVES ON CONFLICT, CRISES, AND REFORMS					
Perspective of the Informants	Legal Community's Perception of it's Role in Addressing National Issues	Prevailing Views on the Effectiveness od Existing Laws and Policy	Legal Community's Assessments on Government's Adherence to the Rule of Law	Effects of National Issues on the Practice of Law and Legal Profession	Perspectives on the Balance Between Human Rights and National Security
I. Fragile Institutions: Weak governance, corruption, and poor protection of rights and sovereignty.	I. Guardians of Justice: Lawyers defend rights, promote fairness, and build public trust.	I. Laws Without Teeth: Weak enforcement leaves justice unfulfilled.	I. Unequal Justice: Slow and biased processes weaken public trust.	I. Ethics Beyond Law: Justice requires integrity and accountability.	I. Balanced Governance: Human rights and national security must coexist.
II. Balanced Governance: Accountability, democracy, and sovereignty must work together.	II. Law in Motion: Legal advocacy evolves with societal change and reform.	II. Reform for Relevance: Laws must be updated and fairly applied.	II. Stronger Institutions, Stronger Nation: Accountability and reform restore faith in law.	II. Resilient Advocates : Lawyers remain defenders despite systemic challenges.	II. Fair Implementation: Laws must be applied impartially for the common good.