

Do Filipinos Truly Dislike Duterte's Leadership?

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine whether Filipinos genuinely hold negative feelings towards President Duterte's leadership. It analyzes public opinions through existing surveys, media discussions, and socio-political group actions. Using a descriptive research approach, the study seeks to understand the diverse perspectives on Duterte's leadership in the Philippines. It explores the reasons behind both support and criticism, taking into account factors such as economic policies, leadership style, and responses to significant events during his presidency. By uncovering the various influences on people's opinions in a changing political and social landscape, the research aims to provide valuable insights into the complex sentiments surrounding Duterte's leadership. Despite facing widespread criticism for his authoritarian leadership style, war on drugs, and attacks on the media, President Rodrigo Duterte maintained high levels of public support throughout his presidency. The study concludes that Duterte's leadership has both strengths and weaknesses, with high approval ratings attributed to his perceived strength, populist messaging, and effective communication. While not universally trusted, Duterte's ability to connect with a significant portion of the population suggests a willingness among Filipinos to support leaders who promise to address their concerns, even in the face of authoritarian measures. Overall, this research contributes valuable insights into the intricate tapestry of sentiments surrounding Duterte's leadership, shedding light on the diverse perspectives that define the Filipino public's stance on their president.

Keywords: human rights; leadership style; radical; rodrigo duterte; war on drugs

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INTRODUCTION

The leadership of President Duterte has been a subject of considerable discussion and debate in the Philippines. (Teehankee, 2016; Viray, 2019; Tenorio, Meyer, & Nurmandi, 2020). This study addresses the pivotal question: Are Filipinos genuinely harboring negative sentiments toward President Duterte's leadership? In a landscape where public opinions are shaped by diverse factors, including surveys, media narratives, and socio-political actions, this research employs a descriptive approach to unravel the multifaceted perspectives on Duterte's leadership. By delving into the reasons behind both support and criticism, encompassing considerations such as economic policies, leadership style, and responses to significant events during his presidency, the study seeks to illuminate the complex fabric of opinions within the Filipino populace. Recognizing the dynamic nature of political and social contexts, the research acknowledges the varied factors influencing Filipinos' beliefs about their leader. Previous studies have argued that President Duterte's leadership can be seen as a form of a new false Messiah. This perspective suggests that Duterte presents himself as a messianic figure who promises to bring about significant changes and address the country's problems. However, critics argue that this portrayal is misleading and that Duterte's leadership style and policies do not align with the true qualities of a messiah.

One aspect of this argument is the authoritarian nature of Duterte's leadership. Critics point to his strongman tactics, disregard for human rights, and attacks on democratic institutions and the media. They argue that these actions are not in line with the values of a true messiah, who is expected to uphold justice, equality, and respect for human rights. Another aspect of the argument is the focus on Duterte's populist messaging. While he has been able to connect with a significant portion of the population through his rhetoric and promises to address issues such as crime, corruption, and poverty, critics argue that this populist appeal is a manipulation tactic rather than genuine transformative leadership. They contend that Duterte's policies and actions often prioritize his own interests or those of the elite, rather than truly addressing the needs of the marginalized and vulnerable.

It is important to note that these arguments are based on different perspectives and interpretations of Duterte's leadership. While some view him as a false messiah, others may see him as a strong leader who is taking decisive action to address long-standing issues in the country. The complexity of Duterte's leadership and the diverse opinions surrounding it highlight the need for further research and analysis to fully understand the impact and implications of his leadership style and policies. Ultimately, the objective of this study is to offer valuable insights into the intricate sentiments surrounding Duterte's leadership, contributing to a clearer understanding of the nuanced perspectives held by the Filipino people regarding their president. Additionally, this study can contribute to broadening perspectives and enhancing understanding, particularly in the field of politics. It can provide valuable insights that scholars can utilize to create more comprehensive projects aimed at promoting awareness among people and fostering the development of a better society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Rodrigo Duterte, born on March 28, 1945, was the President of the Philippines from 2016 to 2022 (Ray, 2020). Before becoming president, he was the Mayor of Davao City for over 20 years, known for being tough on crime (Todd, 2019). Duterte's leadership, starting in 2016, brought both praise and criticism, especially for his policies on crime and drugs (Lopega, 2019; Regilme, 2021). He made significant changes, like improving infrastructure, making economic reforms, and changing the country's foreign policies (Tabbada & Pacho, 2021; Balotol, 2018). However, his way of dealing with drug issues raised concerns about human rights.

Duterte's presidency focused on a "war on drugs" campaign, attracting global attention and causing debates about its effectiveness and impact on human rights (Lamchek & Sanchez, 2020; Pernia, 2019; Ochoa & Ong, 2022). His time as president reflects a complicated era in Philippine history, where people are still figuring out the results of his decisions and what it means for the country (Baclig, 2021). Whether people liked his strong actions or disagreed with his controversial policies, Rodrigo Duterte's time as president is a topic of intense discussion, showing the complex challenges of modern Philippine politics (Thompson, 2016; Maboloc, 2020; Imbong & Imbong & Torres, 2022).

Diehard Duterte Supporters

Diehard Duterte Supporters (DDS) is a term used by extreme political followers who strongly support the 16th president of the Philippines, Rodrigo Duterte (Aranda, 2021). They consider Duterte a necessary strong leader and proudly identify themselves as the most unwavering among his supporters. The term became popular during the 2016 presidential elections and is often associated with individuals, including netizens, who engage in online trolling and disruptive behavior to defend Duterte (Sinpeng & Gueorguiev & Arugay, 2020).

The acronym DDS is directly taken from the Davao Death Squad, a vigilante group that operated in Davao City during Duterte's time as mayor (Francis, 2022). DDS members are recognized for their

unswerving loyalty to Duterte and, later, to his successor, Bongbong Marcos, rather than adherence to a specific political or economic ideology. Observers often describe DDS as a right-wing populist or far-right phenomenon that supports the existing political order. The DDS has shown enthusiasm for constitutional reforms and the transition to a federal form of government. Some members may also align with left-leaning causes, but overall, the DDS is seen as maintaining the status quo rather than advocating for systemic transformation (You, 2018; Kenes, 2021; Teehankee, & Kasuya, 2020).

The DDS is known for using aggressive and harsh language, similar to Duterte (Breuil, & Rozema, 2009). They often respond strongly to any criticism of Duterte, accusing others of bias, shilling, or being associated with groups like the CPP or NPA (Ragragio, 2022; Marasigan, 2022). They engage in online bullying and harassment, targeting activists, political alliances, Vice President Leni Robredo, and even fellow Duterte supporters suspected of disloyalty. The DDS commonly uses slurs like "Dilawan" and "pulahán" to silence or manipulate those they harass (Clarito, 2021; Corcuera, 2020).

Protest Against Duterte

Protests against Former President Rodrigo Duterte increased on November 18, 2016, because Duterte supported the burial of the late president Ferdinand Marcos (Hincks, 2016). These protests are mainly organized by progressive groups and other opponents who are concerned about issues like the war on drugs, martial law in Mindanao, employment problems such as temporary work contracts and rising prices caused by the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion Law (Mogato, & Ng, 2017; Calupitan, 2021). The protests are also influenced by the government's actions during the COVID-19 pandemic, the passing of the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020, and the closure and denial of franchise to ABS-CBN.

Duterte started the fight against illegal drugs when he became president, vowing to eliminate thousands involved in the drug trade. Over 6,000, mostly small-scale drug users and suspects, were killed in police anti-drug operations. These deaths raised concerns from human rights groups, Western governments, and U.N. experts (Johnson, & Fernquest, 2018). Protests against the drug war, like one by Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap (Kadamay), began in August 2016 (IBON International, 2020). Despite criticism, Duterte's popularity remained high.

METHODS

This research utilizes the descriptive research method to explore Filipinos' sentiments towards President Duterte's leadership. This study is based on secondary data collected from different platforms like web pages, magazines, journals, surveys, media analysis, and socio-political group actions, the study aims to comprehend diverse viewpoints on Duterte's governance. It delves into the reasons behind both support and criticism, considering economic policies, leadership style, and responses to key events. Acknowledging the evolving political and social landscape, the research seeks to unveil the multifaceted factors shaping Filipinos' opinions. The ultimate objective is to offer valuable insights into the intricate sentiments surrounding Duterte's leadership, providing a comprehensive understanding of what Filipinos genuinely believe about their president.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Discussion

President Rodrigo Duterte's leadership style has been defined by his aggressive and autocratic approach (Tenorio, Meyer, & Nurmandi, 2022). Known for his blunt and confrontational manner, Duterte has not shied away from using harsh language and making controversial statements (Montiel, Uyheng, & de Leon, 2022). His "war on drugs" campaign aimed to quickly eradicate the drug problem in the

Philippines through strict policies and law enforcement operations. While this approach did lead to many arrests, it was also criticized for human rights violations and overcrowded jails (Lamchek & Sanchez, 2020; Pernia, 2019; Ochoa & Ong, 2022).

Duterte exhibits a firm, top-down leadership approach, expecting government agencies and personnel to follow his directives without question. His communication style is direct, dropping “truth bombs” on institutions and individuals alike. This resonated with many Filipinos who wanted immediate change and results (Teehankee, & Thompson 2016). However, Duterte has also faced backlash for sexist and tasteless remarks. His handling of the COVID-19 pandemic was a major test of leadership. While quarantines helped initially, more was needed over time. Ramped up vaccination efforts and Filipinos following safety protocols have helped the country recover. Thus, Duterte's presidency has demonstrated the strengths and weaknesses of his uncompromising, assertive leadership manner (Thompson, 2022).

Duterte's Leadership

President Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines has pursued a radical and controversial leadership style since taking office in 2016. Duterte rose to power by portraying himself as an anti-establishment candidate who would take drastic measures to address issues like crime, drugs, and corruption in the Philippines. His radical approach has generated both intense support and criticism locally and internationally. This part will explain the key factors underlying Duterte's radical political agenda and disruptive leadership approach.

1. War on Drugs

Rodrigo Duterte, the former president of the Philippines, launched a “war on drugs” upon taking office in 2016. The campaign has been widely criticized for its brutality and extrajudicial killings. The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) has admitted to killing over 6,000 people in the war on drugs, while human rights groups estimate that the actual number is much higher. Many of these killings have been carried out by police and vigilantes without due process ((Johnson, & Fernquest, 2018). Duterte has defended the war on drugs, arguing that it is necessary to protect the Philippines from the scourge of illegal drugs. He has also claimed that the killings are justified because the victims are all criminals (Reyes, 2016). However, human rights groups have argued that the war on drugs is a violation of international law and that Duterte is guilty of crimes against humanity.

The war on drugs has had a devastating impact on the Philippines. Thousands of people have been killed, and many more have been arrested and detained. The campaign has also led to a climate of fear and intimidation, as people are afraid to speak out against the government or to report crimes (Reyes, 2016). The war on drugs has also failed to achieve its stated goals. The prevalence of illegal drugs in the Philippines has remained unchanged, and the country's crime rate has not decreased. In fact, some experts argue that the war on drugs has actually made the Philippines a more dangerous place. The war on drugs in the Philippines is a tragedy. It has resulted in the deaths of thousands of people and has violated the basic human rights of many more. The campaign has also failed to achieve its stated goals. The Philippine government should end the war on drugs and focus on evidence-based approaches to reducing drug use and crime (Soriano, David, & Atun, 2021)

2. Authoritarian Leadership Style

Rodrigo Duterte, the former president of the Philippines, was known for his authoritarian leadership style (Tenorio, Meyer, & Nurmandi, 2022). He consolidated power and governed in a manner that has been widely criticized by human rights groups and the international community (Acayan, 2016). However, Duterte remained popular among many Filipinos, who saw his authoritarian behavior as challenging institutions that they believed had protected the interests of the elite rather than ordinary

people. There are several reasons why Duterte's authoritarian leadership style resonated with many Filipinos. First, many Filipinos were disillusioned with traditional politicians, who they saw as corrupt and ineffective. Duterte's brash style and outsider image appealed to those who were looking for a change (Calonzo, Jiao, & Lopez, 2020). Second, Duterte's authoritarian leadership style was seen as a way to address the country's problems with crime and corruption. Duterte promised to take a tough stance on crime and to clean up the government. Many Filipinos were willing to give him the power he needed to do this, even if it meant sacrificing some of their democratic rights (Carlos, 2019; Jennings, 2017). Third, Duterte's authoritarian leadership style was seen as a way to protect the country from external threats. Duterte took a hawkish stance on foreign policy, particularly towards China. Many Filipinos saw him as a strong leader who would stand up for the country's interests (Hibbing, 2021).

However, Duterte's authoritarian leadership style also had many negative consequences. He jailed opponents, launched attacks on the media, and publicly insulted institutions like the Catholic Church that criticized his policies (Abellanosa, 2018; McCargo, 2016). He also oversaw a war on drugs that resulted in the deaths of thousands of people. Duterte's authoritarian leadership style was a reflection of the public sentiment at the time. Many Filipinos were willing to give up some of their democratic rights in exchange for a strong leader who promised to address the country's problems (Carlos, 2019; Jennings, 2017). However, Duterte's authoritarianism also had many negative consequences, and it is important to be aware of these costs when considering the benefits of authoritarian leadership

3. Relations with China

Rodrigo Duterte's radical foreign policy, particularly his dramatic pivot towards China, is a reflection of his self-cultivated image as an anti-establishment populist leader who is willing to challenge the status quo, even at the risk of alienating traditional allies (De Castro, 2023).

Duterte's predecessor, Benigno Aquino III, had taken a tough stance on China, challenging its claims in the South China Sea and strengthening ties with the United States. Duterte, on the other hand, has openly embraced China, despite its growing regional influence and its maritime disputes with the Philippines (De Castro, 2022).

Duterte has justified his shift towards China as necessary to access Chinese investment and development aid. He has also argued that the United States has not been a reliable ally to the Philippines (De Castro, 2022). However, critics of Duterte's China policy argue that he has been too willing to appease China and that he has abandoned the Philippines' traditional strategic interests. Duterte's foreign policy is consistent with his domestic policies, which are also radical and disruptive. He has launched a brutal war on drugs, jailed opponents, and cracked down on dissent. He has also taken a populist approach to economics, promising to redistribute wealth and create jobs (Guild, 2022; Lopez, 2021).

Duterte's supporters argue that his radicalism is necessary to address the deep-rooted problems facing the Philippines, such as crime, corruption, and poverty (Caliwan, 2022; Guild, 2022; Lopez, 2021). They also argue that Duterte is a strong leader who is not afraid to stand up to powerful interests (Calonzo, Jiao, & Lopez, 2020).

However, critics of Duterte argue that his radicalism is dangerous and that it is undermining the Philippines' democracy and institutions. They also argue that Duterte's foreign policy is risking the country's security and sovereignty (Balboa, 2020).

4. Attack on Media

Rodrigo Duterte, has repeatedly attacked the media and journalists who have criticized him. He has called them "fake news" and "enemies of the state" (Peschke, 2016; Yap 2018). He has also threatened to shut down media outlets and to jail journalists. Duterte's attacks on the media are a serious threat to

press freedom in the Philippines (Rappler Research Team, 2018). The media plays an essential role in holding the government accountable and in informing the public about important issues. When the media is under attack, it becomes more difficult for people to know the truth about what is happening in their country (Obordo, 2021; Rappler Research Team, 2018).

Duterte's supporters argue that he is justified in criticizing the media because many media outlets have been critical of him. They also argue that Duterte is simply trying to protect himself from false and defamatory reporting (Peschke, 2016; Yap 2018). However, Duterte's attacks on the media have gone far beyond legitimate criticism. He has threatened and harassed journalists, and he has created a climate of fear and intimidation for the media (Freedom for Media, 2019). Duterte's attacks on the media have also had a negative impact on the Philippine economy. Several media outlets have been forced to shut down or to reduce their operations due to Duterte's threats. This has led to job losses and to a decline in the quality of journalism in the Philippines (Conde, 2019; Rosario, 2021).

The international community has condemned Duterte's attacks on the media. Human rights groups have called on Duterte to stop harassing journalists and to respect press freedom. The United States has also expressed concern about Duterte's attacks on the media (Civicus, 2020). Thus, Rodrigo Duterte's attacks on the media are a serious threat to press freedom and to the Philippine economy. The international community should continue to condemn Duterte's attacks on the media and to support the Philippine media (Griffiths, 2018; Rappler Research Team, 2018).

Findings

Despite the critics of Duterte's leadership, there is significant support for him among Filipinos (Dulay et al., 2023). Many Filipinos appreciate Duterte's strong-willed leadership and view him as a decisive leader who is willing to take bold actions to address long-standing problems in the country. They see his unconventional and effective leadership style as what the Philippines needs. Duterte's popularity can also be attributed to his ability to connect with ordinary Filipinos and address their concerns about poverty, crime, and corruption (Esguerra, 2019). Additionally, Duterte's focus on poverty reduction and combatting crime and corruption resonates with many Filipinos (Calonzo, Jiao, & Lopez, 2020). These sources highlight the reasons why Filipinos continue to support Duterte's leadership despite the criticisms. They emphasize his perceived strength, effectiveness, and ability to address pressing issues in the country. While there are differing opinions and perspectives on Duterte's leadership, these sources provide insights into the reasons behind the support he receives from a significant portion of the Filipino population.

As a widely criticized for his authoritarian leadership style, his war on drugs, and his attacks on the media. However, he also enjoyed high levels of public support throughout his presidency. Pulse Asia, a credible polling firm in the Philippines, conducted a survey in September 2020 that found that President Rodrigo Duterte had a 91% approval rating (Reuters Staff, 2020). This was despite the fact that the Philippines was experiencing a series of scandals, including corruption allegations, ineptitude in handling the COVID-19 crisis, and failure to adequately prepare for the resumption of classes in public schools.

There are several reasons why Duterte remained popular despite the criticism. First, he was seen as a strong leader who was not afraid to take on powerful interests. He promised to address the country's problems with crime, corruption, and poverty, and he was perceived as delivering on his promises (Carlos, 2019; Jennings, 2017). Second, Duterte appealed to many Filipinos with his populist message. He spoke to the people's concerns about inequality and social injustice. He also projected an image of himself as a man of the people, despite his wealthy background (Tenorio, Meyer, & Nurmandi, 2022). Third, Duterte's critics were often seen as being out of touch with the concerns of ordinary Filipinos. They were accused of being elitist and of protecting the interests of the privileged. Duterte was able to capitalize on this public sentiment by portraying himself as an outsider who was fighting for the common man (Maboloc, 2020).

Finally, Duterte's high trust rating was also due to the fact that he was a master of communication. He was able to connect with people on an emotional level. He was also a skilled storyteller, and he used his speeches to create a narrative of himself as a hero who was fighting for the Filipino people (Lasco, 2016).

It is important to note that Duterte's high trust rating was not universal. Many Filipinos, particularly those who were critical of his policies, did not trust him. However, Duterte was able to maintain a strong base of support throughout his presidency. This suggests that there is a significant number of Filipinos who are willing to support authoritarian leaders who promise to address their concerns.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the complex sentiments surrounding President Duterte's leadership in the Philippines reveal a nuanced landscape shaped by diverse perspectives. Despite facing substantial criticism for his authoritarian style, war on drugs, and attacks on the media, Duterte maintained significant public support throughout his presidency. The research indicates that Filipinos appreciate his perceived strength, populist messaging, and effective communication, which resonate with a substantial portion of the population. While critiques of Duterte's leadership point to his authoritarian tactics, disregard for human rights, and questionable populist appeal, it is crucial to acknowledge the multifaceted nature of public opinion. The dichotomy between Diehard Duterte Supporters (DDS) and those protesting against his policies illustrates the polarized discourse in Filipino society. The study underscores the importance of understanding the socio-political context, acknowledging the complexities of Duterte's leadership style, and recognizing the varied factors influencing Filipinos' beliefs about their president.

Duterte's radical and controversial approach, particularly in the war on drugs, authoritarian leadership, relations with China, and attacks on the media, has sparked debates about the trade-offs between decisive action and democratic values. The findings highlight that, despite the criticisms, Duterte's ability to connect with a significant portion of the population suggests a willingness among Filipinos to support leaders who promise to address their concerns, even if it involves accepting authoritarian measures. This research contributes valuable insights into the intricate tapestry of sentiments surrounding Duterte's leadership, shedding light on the diverse perspectives that define the Filipino public's stance on their president. This study can contribute to broadening perspectives and enhancing understanding, particularly in the field of politics. It can provide valuable insights that scholars can utilize to create more comprehensive projects aimed at promoting awareness among people and fostering the development of a better society.

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