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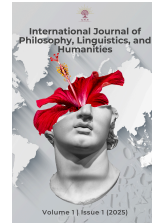
Research Article

The Arrest of Former President Rodrigo Duterte for Crimes Against Humanity by The International Criminal Court: A Sentiment Analysis

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Article Info

Abstract

This study investigates public sentiment regarding the arrest of former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for crimes against humanity, as expressed on the GMA News Facebook page. Utilizing qualitative sentiment analysis and thematic coding, the research analyzes 100 purposively selected Facebook comments to identify frequently used words and key public emotions. The most common words-such as "president," "Philippines," "arrest," "justice," and "government"-highlight the centrality of national identity, leadership, and accountability in public discourse. Sentiment analysis, conducted using Orange text mining software, revealed a divided public: 53% of comments were positive, 38% negative, and 9% neutral. Thematic analysis identified six major themes, including leadership and political legacy during Duterte's administration, international accountability and ICC, crime and national security, public trust in the justice system, public perception of crime and safety, and political divisions and partisanships. The findings underscore the polarizing effect of Duterte's arrest and the significant role of social media in shaping public debate on international justice and political accountability. This study provides valuable insights for policymakers, human rights organizations, and international institutions, and contributes to literature on computational discourse analysis of political events.

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Introduction

In today's modern era, social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and X have become essential tools for communication and public discourse. These platforms have become powerful tools for expressing sentiments, whether positive or negative, on various political issues. Social media allows individuals to voice their thoughts, share information, and engage in real-time discussions, making it a vital medium for public engagement (Ausat, 2023). The arrest of former President Rodrigo Duterte by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for crimes against humanity has sparked widespread reactions on social media, with users expressing diverse opinions about this controversial event.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) plays an important role in the global justice system by prosecuting individuals accused of the gravest crimes, including crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide. As of recent data, the ICC has publicly indicted 69 individuals, with ongoing proceedings against 35, including 30 fugitives and four defendants currently on trial (International Criminal Court, 2025). The ICTJ emphasizes that these outcomes demonstrate the ICC's commitment to upholding accountability despite political and procedural complexities inherent in prosecuting high-profile cases.

The ICC's actions against prominent leaders, such as former President Rodrigo Duterte, are regarded as significant milestones in international justice, signaling a growing willingness to hold powerful figures accountable beyond national jurisdictions. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR, 2025) highlights that such arrests serve not only as legal precedents but also as powerful deterrents against future human rights violations. By reinforcing the principle that no one is above the law, these efforts contribute to strengthening international norms and encouraging states to comply with human rights obligations.

According to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2025), the international community views such arrests as crucial steps toward holding leaders accountable for human rights abuses, setting a precedent for future cases. This perspective is reflected in the global media coverage and public discourse, where many human rights organizations and legal experts welcome these developments as a means to deter similar abuses worldwide. The international reaction highlights the broader implications of Duterte's arrest, extending beyond Philippine borders to influence global perceptions of justice and accountability (Khoo, 2025).

The arrest of Duterte is a significant moment in Philippine history, as it marks the first time a former president has been held accountable on an international stage for alleged human rights violations (Bunye, 2025). Duterte's "war on drugs" campaign has been highly polarizing, with supporters praising his tough stance on crime and critics condemning the extrajudicial killings associated with it. This division is reflected in the sentiments shared online, as social media users debate the implications of his arrest for justice, democracy, and Philippine politics. Recent advances in sentiment analysis have significantly enhanced the understanding of political discourse on social media. Lexicon-based approaches, such as Afinn, NRC, and SenticNet, remain widely used for analyzing political sentiment, especially during electoral campaigns (Valle-Cruz et. al., (2022).

Despite extensive discussions on Duterte's arrest, there is limited research analyzing public sentiment on social media regarding this event. While sentiment analysis has been applied to political campaigns and elections (Almazan & Cruz, 2020; Syahriani, Yana & Santoso, 2020), few studies focus specifically on public reactions to Duterte's ICC case. This gap limits understanding of how social media users

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perceive and emotionally respond to this landmark political and legal development.

To address these gaps, this study will explore the sentiments of the public as regards the arrest of former President Rodrigo Duterte for crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Court. Specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the frequently used words that define public opinion on the arrest of former President Rodrigo Duterte by the International Criminal Court?

2. How does a sentiment heatmap describe the emotional responses of the public to the arrest of former President Rodrigo Duterte by the International Criminal Court?

3. What sentiment analysis best describes the opinion of the public on the arrest of former President Rodrigo Duterte by the International Criminal Court?

Materials and Methods

This study employed a qualitative research design, focusing on sentiment analysis to explore public opinions on social media regarding the arrest of former President Rodrigo Duterte by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for crimes against humanity. The study also used a descriptive approach to analyze and interpret the sentiments expressed on the GMA News Facebook page. Furthermore, it aims to provide a detailed description of the dominant emotions and opinions related to Duterte's arrest.

The corpora of this study were the sentiments posted by the public in the comment section of the GMA News Facebook page. These were the comments found on the post with the headline "Malacañang confirms that former President Rodrigo Duterte has been arrested on the basis of a warrant for crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Court." A total of 100 comments were purposively selected for analysis based on the following inclusion criteria: comments had to be publicly visible, written in either Filipino or English, directly related to the news post about Duterte's arrest, and sufficiently substantive to express clear sentiment or opinion, excluding brief or irrelevant comments such as emojis or simple affirmations. Additionally, to ensure the authenticity and

reliability of the data, each commenter's Facebook profile was examined to identify and exclude potential trolls accounts exhibiting typical troll behaviors such as repetitive antagonistic comments, inflammatory language, lack of constructive contribution, or suspicious profile details. This screening process helped minimize the influence of disruptive or non-genuine accounts, providing a more accurate representation of public sentiment regarding this significant political event.

A systematic approach was employed to collect the data for this study. The process began with accessing the GMA News Facebook page and selecting a specific post related to the arrest of former President Rodrigo Duterte by the International Criminal Court. The post in question had the headline "Malacañang confirms that former President Rodrigo Duterte has been arrested on the basis of a warrant for crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Court." These comments were then transferred into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to facilitate organization and further processing. Some comments were in Filipino, so they were translated into English to ensure uniformity and clarity throughout the dataset.

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Next, the comments underwent a pre-processing phase using Orange text mining software. This phase involved removing extraneous elements such as punctuation marks, emoticons, and URLs, which were not relevant for sentiment analysis. Pre-processing is a critical step in social media data analysis, as it ensures that only meaningful text is retained for accurate sentiment evaluation (SproutSocial, 2025). The pre-processing cleansed and transformed the data into a format suitable for analysis, enabling the researcher to extract valuable insights from public sentiment.

Moreover, this study employed a multi-step data analysis procedure to explore public sentiment regarding the arrest of former President Rodrigo Duterte by the International Criminal Court. The analysis began with sentiment analysis, using Orange text mining software to categorize comments as positive, negative, or neutral. This provided an initial overview of the prevailing sentiment among the public.

Next, Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis was applied to identify recurring themes or patterns in the comments. This involved a systematic process of coding, theme development, and refinement to ensure that the themes accurately represented the data. The thematic analysis allowed for a deeper exploration of public opinions and concerns related to Duterte's arrest.

In addition, content analysis was conducted to identify specific keywords or topics frequently discussed in the comments. This helped highlight key issues or emotions associated with the event. Furthermore, Natural Language Processing techniques were used to detect specific emotions such as anger, sadness, or surprise in the comments, providing a nuanced understanding of how people emotionally responded to the news.

Finally, data visualization tools like Orange Software were used to create visualizations that illustrated the distribution of sentiments or themes across different demographics or time frames. This facilitated the presentation of complex data in an accessible and engaging manner, making it easier to communicate the findings to various stakeholders. To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the thematic analysis, member checking was conducted by sharing the preliminary themes and findings with the subject matter experts. Feedback was solicited to verify the accuracy and resonance of the interpretations with the experiences and perspectives. The input received was carefully reviewed and incorporated to refine the themes, ensuring that the analysis authentically represented the participants' views and minimized researcher bias.

Meanwhile, this study adhered to ethical standards by ensuring that all data collected from social media comments were publicly available and did not infringe on individuals' privacy. No personally identifiable information was collected or reported, maintaining the anonymity of the individuals who posted the comments. The study also respected the rights of the participants by not manipulating or altering the data in a way that could misrepresent their opinions or sentiments. Additionally, the study was conducted with the intention of providing insights into public sentiment, without causing harm or promoting bias.

Results

Frequently Used Words in the Opinions of the Public on the arrest of former President Rodrigo Duterte by the International Criminal Court

Table 1 presents the generated frequently used words in the corpora. These are the words that are common in the comments gathered from a post on GMA News Facebook page. The

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identification of the top ten frequently used words was determined through the Word Cloud feature of Orange text mining software.

Table 1. Frequently Used Words in the Opinions of the Public on the arrest of former President Rodrigo Duterte by the International Criminal Court

The most frequently used word in the dataset is "president," which appeared 43 times in the comments. This was followed by the word "Philippines," which occurred 30 times. Another frequently used word is "countries," with a frequency of 25 occurrences. Next to it was the word "Duterte," which appeared 23 times in the corpora. The word "best" followed, with 20 occurrences, indicating positive sentiment in some comments.

Rank	Frequency	Words
1	43	president
2	30	Philippines
3	25	countries
4	23	Duterte
5	20	best
6	19	arrest
7	16	justice
8	16	government
9	16	Filipino
10	15	people

The sixth most frequent word was "arrest," which occurred 19 times, reflecting the central theme of the discussion. The word "justice" and "government" both appeared 16 times, suggesting that these topics were significant in shaping public sentiment. Similarly, the word "Filipino" was mentioned 16 times, highlighting national identity as a recurring subject in the comments. Finally, the word "people" concluded the list with 15 occurrences, emphasizing collective perspectives and reactions to Duterte's arrest.

Figure 1 illustrates the visualization and frequency of Facebook comments using Orange's Word Cloud feature. The Word Cloud demonstrates that the larger the size of a word in the cloud, the more frequently it occurs in the comments. In Facebook comments, the most prominent words in the Word Cloud are president, Philippines, countries, Duterte, best, arrest, justice, government, Filipino, and people.

Figure 1. Word Cloud

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Word Clusters Extracted from the Sentiments of the Public on Duterte's Arrest

Table 2 illustrates the clustered sentiments extracted from Orange's Heatmap feature. These clustered sentiments were carefully analyzed to identify essential themes that reflect public opinions regarding the arrest of former President Rodrigo Duterte. The heatmap provided multiple clusters, but six major themes were derived from the data. These themes include Leadership and Political Legacy during Duterte's Administration, International Accountability and ICC, Crime and National Security, Public Trust in the Justice System, Public Perception of Crime and Safety, and Political Divisions and Partisanship.

Table 2. Description of the Sentiments of the Public on Former President Duterte's Arrest

Essential Themes	Codes	Core Ideas
Leadership and Political Legacy during Duterte's administration	Former President Duterte was a great leader	● Duterte's governance and impact on the Philippines. ● He has shown significant results during his term
International Accountability and ICC	The ICC arrest of Former President Duterte is negatively accepted by the Filipino masses	● The role of the ICC in investigating government actions. ● ICC's "illegal" arrest of former president Duterte
Crime and National Security	The interference of the international court in the crimes of the former president	● Balancing strict law enforcement with human rights protections. ● The war on drugs and its long-term effects.
Public Trust in the Justice System	Lack of trust in the Philippine justice system	● Confidence in local courts vs. reliance on international bodies. ● Perceived biases and effectiveness of the judicial system.
Public Perception of Crime and Safety	The border between crime and safety	● Belief that Duterte's war on drugs made the country safer. ● Fear of wrongful arrests and abuses of power by authorities.
Political Divisions and Partisanship	The division of political parties due to the arrest	● Polarization between Duterte supporters and critics. ● How political loyalties influence views on ICC, arrests, and governance.

Leadership and Political Legacy during Duterte's Administration

It can be inferred from the data provided that many comments expressed admiration for his governance and the significant accomplishments achieved during his time. This sentiment is summarized in remarks describing Duterte as a 'great leader,' which highlights the public's opinion of his decisive leadership despite controversies surrounding his administration.

Former President Duterte was a great leader. Based on the data, it revealed the widespread support for Duterte's leadership style and achievements during his presidency. Many Facebook comments expressed admiration for his governance approach and highlight the positive impacts of his policies on the Philippines. This appreciation for Duterte's administration is evident in remarks that portray him as an effective and transformative leader, despite the controversies that surrounded his tenure. The frequency of such comments suggested a significant portion of the public continues to view Duterte's presidency

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favorably, focusing on his decisive actions and perceived improvements in various sectors of Philippine society. It is evident in the comments below:

R - 67: *His tough and direct measures helped clear the streets and made our communities feel safer By targeting drug dealers and disrupting illegal activities many dangerous situations were avoided and more people were encouraged to change their lives for the better. His strategy wasn't just about punishment, it was about creating an environment where crime is less appealing and safer alternatives become possible. There will be no addicts, if no one is pushing drugs and no one will push drugs.*

R – 29: *I did not vote former PRRD but in his time our country is safer than today. Yes, there is a criminal drugs and corruption during his time but compare today's administration our country is in turmoil crime rate corruption and drugs are arising.*

R – 1: *I am praying for President Duterte the only president who fought against the number one problem of the Philippines and even the world illegal drugs. He was the only leader who bravely took a stand, did everything he could and tried his best to protect the country from drugs and addiction. He dedicated himself wholeheartedly to safeguarding the Philippines and ensuring a safer future for every Filipino.*

The sentiments expressed by the public regarding the theme highlight their recognition of his strong leadership and decisive governance, particularly in addressing the Philippines' long-standing issues with illegal drugs and crime. Many commenters praised Duterte's tough measures, which they believe contributed to safer communities and disrupted illegal activities. Additionally, sentiments expressed admiration for his dedication to combating illegal drugs, with one commenter describing him as the only leader who bravely took a stand against this pervasive issue.

These public sentiments align with findings from previous research. Duterte's anti-drug campaign, known as Tokhang, was widely supported by Filipinos, with surveys indicating that two out of three believed drug-related problems in their areas had decreased during his presidency (Lopez, 2020). Moreover, Manila Standard (2021) added that this campaign also contributed to a reduction in crime rates and strengthened perceptions of Duterte as a "strongman" capable of delivering results through decisive action. Nonetheless, public admiration for Duterte's governance reflects a belief in his ability to prioritize safety and stability during his tenure.

International Accountability and ICC

The theme reflects the public's polarized sentiments regarding the arrest of former President Rodrigo Duterte by the International Criminal Court (ICC). Many reactions expressed strong opposition to the ICC's actions, describing the arrest as negatively received by the Filipino masses. The sentiment is rooted in concerns over national sovereignty and the perceived illegitimacy of the ICC's jurisdiction over Duterte, given that the Philippines withdrew from the Rome Statute in 2019. This withdrawal was seen by critics as an attempt to evade accountability for alleged extrajudicial killings during Duterte's war on drugs.

The ICC arrest of Former President Duterte is negatively accepted by the Filipino masses. It is evident from the data that the ICC arrest of former President Duterte was met with widespread disapproval among the Filipino masses. Many Facebook comments expressed dissatisfaction with the

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ICC's actions, viewing them as a violation on national sovereignty. This sentiment is reflected in remarks rejecting the ICC's arrest as illegitimate and unwelcome, showing national pride and opposition to external intervention. The frequency of such comments suggests that a significant portion of the public rejects the ICC's role in this matter, focusing on concerns about sovereignty and the perceived overreach of international bodies. As reflected in the comments below:

R – 40: *Philippines is not an ICC member country, so any arrest warrant issued by that foreign court is null and void. Only Filipino courts can issue an arrest warrant against Duterte.*

R – 58: *What an insult to the Philippine justice system!*

R – 66: *The ICC has not been investigating other world leaders for the crimes they did against humanity. Is this because they are afraid of them? I believe they are really afraid of them.*

R - 84: *Former President Duterte's arrest warrant from the ICC has torn my heart. There are intense debates about justice sovereignty and human rights in the Philippines. For many his leadership represents a time of stability and progress and I believe his efforts to help the nation should not be overlooked. He deserves recognition and definitely not abandonment. This is a call to honor differing opinions with respect avoiding hateful or divisive comments and not alienating others. I may not know what you know of but none of us really know what is happening in our government and country.*

These public sentiments aligned with broader discussions on international accountability and national sovereignty. Previous research has highlighted the complexities of international justice mechanisms, particularly in countries with strong nationalist sentiments (Sikkink, 2011). Additionally, studies have shown that the ICC's actions can be perceived as intrusive by local populations, especially when they involve high-profile figures like former heads of state (Hagan and Hyde, 2010). This shows the challenges faced by international bodies in balancing global justice with national sensitivities.

Crime and National Security

The theme highlights public concerns regarding the interference of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the crimes committed under former President Rodrigo Duterte's administration. Many commenters expressed mixed sentiments, with some criticizing the ICC's involvement as an overreach into Philippine sovereignty, while others viewed it as a necessary step toward justice for alleged extrajudicial killings during Duterte's war on drugs.

The Interference of the International Court in the Crimes of the Former President. It can be observed from the data that the theme highlights the public's polarized reactions to the International Criminal Court's (ICC) investigation into former President Rodrigo Duterte's alleged crimes during his war on drugs. Many Filipinos view the ICC's actions as an infringement on national sovereignty, with some describing it as unwarranted interference in the country's internal affairs. This is exemplified in the responses below:

R – 99: *We can't deny the fact that during PRRD's time crime in the Philippines significantly decreased. The government is just diverting the real issues to cover up the ongoing trial of the Bicam the PhilHealth scandal and impeachment issues because they are losing the legal battle. They can't even resolve the*

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PhilHealth issue involving a certain person who is supposedly a health and women's rights advocate. This may serve justice for some but it also shows how unfair justice is for others.

R – 24: *As an American married to a Filipina over 20 years, I don't agree with this He was tough on crime and drugs. He made a difference for your country God be with him.*

R - 26: *Almost all of Philippine politician should be arrested because of being corrupt. Philippines is one of most corrupt places in the world. We always say I'm proud to be a Filipino and yes you are also proud voting for corrupt officials. Yes, I know his crime but I am just adding corruption in these comments.*

R – 29: *I did not vote former PRRD but in his time our country is safer than today Yes there is a criminal drugs and corruption during his time but compare today's administration our country is in turmoil crime rate corruption and drugs are Arising.*

This sentiment is evident in remarks rejecting the ICC's jurisdiction, particularly since the Philippines formally withdrew from the Rome Statute in 2019. Critics argue that such interference weakens the nation's ability to address its own issues and reflects a broader tension between international accountability and national autonomy. The ICC investigation has been met with strong resistance from Duterte's allies and supporters, who frame it as a political attack rather than a search of justice.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. echoed this sentiment, stating that the ICC probe is a "threat to sovereignty" and asserting that the Philippines does not require external intervention to handle its affairs (Philippine Star, 2023). Similarly, Duterte's legal team has dismissed the ICC as a "propaganda apparatus" used by political opponents (CBC News, 2021). These perspectives emphasize a widespread belief among critics that international bodies should not interfere in sovereign matters.

On the other hand, proponents of the ICC investigation argued that it represents a crucial step toward justice for victims of extrajudicial killings during Duterte's presidency. Amnesty International has emphasized that even after withdrawing from the Rome Statute, the Philippines remains obligated to cooperate with the ICC to ensure accountability for crimes against humanity (Amnesty International, 2021).

Public Trust in the Justice System

The results indicate that the theme reflects the public's perception of the Philippine judiciary's integrity, fairness, and effectiveness. Trust in the justice system is foundational to societal stability, as it ensures citizens believe in the rule of law and equitable resolution of disputes. However, data indicates widespread skepticism toward the judiciary's ability to uphold these principles.

Lack of Trust in the Philippine Justice System. The emerging patterns from the data indicate that public distrust in the Philippine justice system stems from perceived inefficiencies, corruption, and a history of politicized rulings. This sentiment is evident in remarks criticizing delayed justice, inconsistent enforcement of laws, and allegations of judicial favoritism toward powerful individuals. This finding is reflected in the following participant responses:

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R - 58: *The ICC is a court of last resort and its jurisdiction is complementary to that of national courts. It can only exercise its jurisdiction when national courts are unwilling or unable to genuinely prosecute the perpetrators.*

R – 76: *So, what are the justices doing if the ICC is already involved?*

R – 98: *The Philippines is NOT a part of ICC. The Philippines is a sovereign state therefore, we should be the first to implement our justice as it is in our jurisdiction.*

The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2023) noted that access to justice for victims of human rights violations and abuses remained very limited in the Philippines, particularly for marginalized groups affected by extrajudicial killings during Duterte's anti-drug campaign. Public dissatisfaction is also fueled by reports of exemption from punishment for human rights violations, particularly those linked to extrajudicial killings. The OHCHR (2020) highlighted that police abuses and red-tagging of activists persist, with many killings remaining uninvestigated. These failures compromise the judiciary's credibility and reinforce perceptions that it serves political interests rather than justice.

Public Perception of Crime and Safety

The lack of trust in the Philippine justice system is closely tied to public perceptions of crime and safety. Many Filipinos believe that systemic inefficiencies, corruption, and politicized rulings prevent the judiciary from effectively addressing criminal activities and ensuring justice. This sentiment is evident in remarks criticizing delayed justice and unequal enforcement of laws, where powerful individuals often escape accountability while ordinary citizens face harsh penalties.

The Border Between Crime and Safety. As shown in the findings, it reflected the delicate balance between maintaining public safety and addressing criminal activities in the Philippines. This balance is shaped by various factors, including crime prevention strategies, law enforcement efforts, and community perceptions of security. This claim is supported by the following responses:

R - 46: *My tears has been fallen when I'm seeing the former president were serving the best of his work to protect his people during his term in presidency but now, he is in control of the new president we don't know what's going on. We hope to pray for his safety and the truth shall be prevailed in the right time. God save the Philippines.*

R – 48: *He did it for the Filipino people in general. We are all the beneficiaries—those of us who are still alive, the children and women who are not being raped or abducted, the young and the elderly who can safely walk the streets, those of us who still enjoy vacations and pleasures in our country, and everyone who has not fallen victim to crimes committed by drug addicts.*

R – 52: *We must admit during his reign we all have felt safe. Lives must be sacrificed to protect the rest of us, if he has not done those, we and maybe our children have also been victims of unacceptable actions. Our president still has done the best he could with genuine intention not for name power and money but out of love for his fellow Filipinos, I love the nation of the Philippines. This is what he has said and I believed in him.*

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R - 57: *He might be arrested but, in the end, God is the one who looks at his heart and will judge him accordingly.*

It can be inferred that while crime rates in the Philippines have shown a general decline in recent years, public perception of safety remains inconsistent due to underlying issues such as systemic corruption, uneven law enforcement, and socioeconomic disparities (Leikuma-Rimicane et al., 2022). It is influenced by factors such as media coverage of crime, public awareness of law enforcement efforts, and personal experiences of crime. For instance, sensationalized media reports can amplify fears of crime, even if actual crime rates are declining, leading to a mismatch between perceived and actual safety levels (Bennett, 2017).

Empirical studies highlight that effective crime prevention strategies significantly influence public perceptions of safety. For instance, Patalinghug et al. (2023) found that awareness of crime prevention initiatives positively correlates with a sense of security among residents in Zamboanga del Sur. However, the same study noted that fears of victimization persist in communities with limited trust in law enforcement or where crimes such as theft and physical injury remain prevalent.

Political Divisions and Partisanship

From the gathered data, it is apparent that the theme highlighted the deep-seated polarization within the Philippine political landscape. This division is characterized by strong allegiances to specific political figures and ideologies, often leading to intense partisanship. For instance, supporters of former President Duterte continue to defend his policies, while critics **strongly** oppose them, creating a **clear** divide in public opinion. This division is worsened by social

media, where political discourse often becomes heated and controversial, further deepening partisan views.

The political divisions also reflect broader societal issues, such as economic inequality and access to justice, which are often politicized and contribute to the widening gap between different political camps.

The Division of Political Parties Due to the Arrest. The arrest of former President Rodrigo Duterte has significantly impacted the political landscape in the Philippines, leading to a division among political parties. This division is evident in the reactions of various political factions to Duterte's arrest, which reflect broader ideological and strategic alignments within the country's political sphere. The responses below illustrate this point:

R – 63: *I am not Filipino but I think the current Philippines administration is playing the role of western and American puppet thing Allowing the arrest of one of the best presidents your country has ever had is nothing but proving to the West that you are ready to serve them as to be allowed a second term just like they are doing with some puppet African leaders. It's so annoying to me as a foreigner who lives in the Philippines and witness some years of Duterte leadership to wake up this morning and see this type of news about him. This is what African and Asia leaders get when they oppose America and the West and its really sad Marcos that Filipinos loved for his Father's sake and thinks he will do better is being use for such unfair treatment towards Duterte. Without the harsh approach of Duterte towards DRUGS maybe Philippines would have been like Colombia and that of Philadelphia state of the US.*

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R – 72: *Do not interfere with Tatay Digong! Send him home here to Davao we do not need Luzon. We do not support the Marcos government.*

R – 85: *Let's make this a trend IMPEACH MARCOS NOW.*

R – 10: *They want to put him in so that he can't help Sara. Pres. Marcos again proved that he is the son of his father.*

R – 14: *The administration is very obvious and desperate for the election. We are not to vote the BBM senatorial line up even in the future coming if the Marcoses running for higher position in the government we never to vote.*

On one hand, Duterte's most devoted supporters, often referred to as the 'diehard Duterte supporters' (DDS), have remained firm in their loyalty. They viewed his arrest as a political attack and an infringement on national sovereignty, echoing sentiments that have been central to Duterte's appeal (Contreras, 2025). This loyalty is rooted in Duterte's firm approach to crime and his image as a strongman leader willing to oppose from political norms. However, the Marcos loyalists, who have historically aligned with Duterte, have distanced themselves from his situation. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has maintained a neutral stance, emphasizing that the ICC's actions are based on legal processes initiated before his presidency (Manila Times, 2025).

Table 3. Sentiment Analysis of the Public on Former President Duterte's Arrest

Polarity	Percentage
Positive	53%
Negative	38%
Neutral	9%
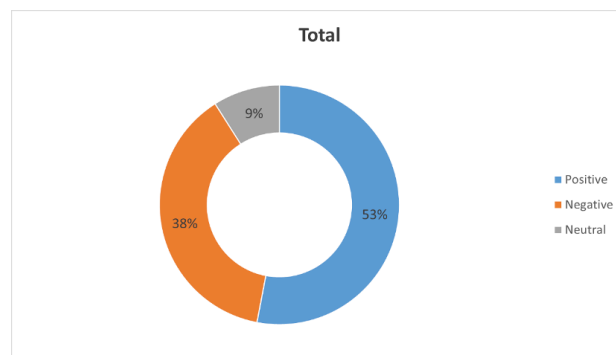
Figure 2. The Doughnut Representation of Polarity

In Table 3, the results revealed that the standpoint of the public on the arrest of former president Rodrigo Duterte was divided into three major categories. As shown in the table, 53% of the respondents shared a positive polarity, while

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38% of them were negative polarity, and 9% are in neutral polarity.

Sample comments for positive polarity to demonstrate it clearly are the following:

R1: *I am praying for President Duterte the only president who fought against the number one problem of the Philippines and even the world illegal drugs. He was the only leader who bravely took a stand did everything he could and tried his best to protect the country from drugs and addiction. He dedicated himself wholeheartedly to safeguarding the Philippines and ensuring a safer future for every Filipino.*

R9: *I like the way he led our country. He's the best President of our country God will protect him Let the truth come out God bless Po FPPRD*

R21: *Should we not protect a former president who served the nation with the people's welfare in mind. He did what he did for his country yet now when he is the one in need, he stands alone. Meanwhile some remain in power despite facing charges and others even behind bars are still allowed to run in the elections. A man who gave his life in service is punished while those who betrayed the nation are given a chance to lead again.*

R48: *He did it for the Filipino people in general the beneficiaries. We all are the ones who are still alive the children and women not being raped and abducted the young ones the old men and women safely walking in the streets we who still enjoy vacations and pleasures in our country and every one of us who are not victims of the crimes being done by drug addicts.*

R62: *Forever Duterte is the best president in the Philippines. You are the only president who brought peace to Mindanao especially in Sulu. Thank you so much sir for your dedication to the good Filipino people. In 2028, you will have your chance to get back at them, you are still the best president ever. Stay strong sir millions of Filipinos love you*

A majority of respondents (53%) demonstrated positive sentiment toward Duterte, as reflected in comments that praise his leadership, express gratitude for his anti-drug campaign, and emphasize his contributions to national security. For example, one commenter described Duterte as "the only president who fought against the number one problem of the Philippines and even the world—illegal drugs," highlighting his perceived bravery and dedication.

Others expressed a sense of loyalty and admiration, with remarks such as "Forever Duterte is the best president in the Philippines" and "He did it for the Filipino people in general, the beneficiaries." These comments reveal a persistent "halo effect" around Duterte, where his strongman image and perceived successes in crime reduction continue to inspire support and even sympathy following his arrest. Big data analyses confirm this trend, showing that positive and humorous reactions dominated social media engagement after the arrest, with "Like," "Love," and "Haha" reactions comprising over 85% of interactions.

These remarks align with findings from Thompson (2020), who argues that Duterte's "strongman" image resonated with voters frustrated by systemic corruption and crime. The persistence of this support despite legal controversies reflects what Curato (2016) describes as the "durability of populist appeal," where leaders maintain loyalty through perceived decisive action against societal threats. This positive sentiment is also reflected in electoral behavior, as pro-Duterte candidates

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saw a noticeable boost in pre-election surveys following the arrest.

Sample comments for negative polarity to demonstrate it clearly are the following:

R3: *The ICC is a court of last resort stepping in only when national efforts fail to deliver justice so can we conclude now that our judicial system is not working.*

R4: *This government is a whole different breed of evil.*

R26: *Almost all of Philippine politician should be arrested because of being corrupt Philippines is one of most corrupt places in the world We always say I'm proud to be a Filipino and yes you are also proud voting for corrupt officials. Yes, I know his crime but I am just adding corruption in this comments*

R57: *Hallelujah the justice is served. This abusive family needs to be punished for all their wrong doings They always thought they are above the law Hallelujah for all the victims*

R90: *Total abuse of power.*

Conversely, 38% of participants expressed negative sentiment, focusing on issues of justice, accountability, and systemic corruption. Sample comments include, "The ICC is a court of last resort stepping in only when national efforts fail to deliver justice so can we conclude now that our judicial system is not working," and "Hallelujah the justice is served. This abusive family needs to be punished for all their wrong doings." These remarks indicate a demand for accountability and a belief that Duterte's arrest is a necessary step toward justice for victims of extrajudicial killings and abuses during his administration.

Recent surveys also show a shift in public mood, with a clear majority now supporting Duterte's trial at the ICC and believing that such proceedings are important for uncovering the truth about the drug war deaths. This aligns with Teehankee & Thompson (2021), who document how Duterte's war on drugs exposed weaknesses in domestic accountability mechanisms, necessitating international intervention. The demand for justice in comments mirrors global trends observed by Sikkink (2011) in The Justice Cascade, where victims of state violence increasingly seek transnational legal redress when local systems are compromised. This negative sentiment is amplified by ongoing concerns about impunity and the lack of accountability for powerful political figures in the Philippines.

Here are the comments which are under the neutral polarity:

R12: *Again, the ICC has no jurisdiction. It's illegal."*

R19: *Kudos to INTERPOL Manila. Let justice be served but let it be served rightfully Hold wrongdoers accountable enforce internationally recognized and legally binding laws and ensure that fairness prevails at every step of the process.*

R40: *Philippines is not an ICC member country so any arrest warrant issued by that foreign court is null and void. Only Filipino courts can issue an arrest warrant against Duterte. Any Filipino police officer who implements the arrest warrant will be guilty of kidnapping and illegal detention. ICC as a foreign*

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court has no jurisdiction authority over Constitution only rests judicial power in the Supreme Court and regional trial courts.

R58: What an insult to the Philippine justice system. The ICC is a court of last resort and its jurisdiction is complementary to that of national courts It can only exercise its jurisdiction when national courts are unwilling or unable to genuinely prosecute the perpetrators.

R:84: Former President Duterte's arrest warrant from the ICC has torn my heart. There are intense debates about justice sovereignty and human rights in the Philippines. For many his leadership represents a time of stability and progress and I believe his efforts to help the nation should not be overlooked. He deserves recognition and definitely not ABANDONMENT. This is a call to honor differing opinions with respect avoiding hateful or divisive comments and not alienating others. I may not know what you know of but none of us really know what is happening in our government and country.

A smaller portion (9%) of participants held neutral views, often focusing on legal and procedural aspects rather than expressing strong opinions for or against Duterte. Comments in this category include statements such as "Again, the ICC has no jurisdiction. It's illegal," and "Let justice be served but let it be served rightfully. Hold wrongdoers accountable, enforce internationally recognized and legally binding laws and ensure that fairness prevails at every step of the process." These remarks reflect a desire for due process, respect for legal institutions, and a balanced approach to the controversy.

This pragmatic stance reflects Leahy (2022)'s analysis of sovereignty debates in international law, where populations often prioritize national judicial autonomy over universal jurisdiction principles. Neutral sentiment is characterized by calls for fairness, respect for sovereignty, and recognition of the complexity of the situation, rather than emotional or partisan responses.

This study's findings on the polarized public sentiment surrounding former President Duterte's ICC arrest align with previous research highlighting the inherently political nature of ICC interventions. Similar to the Kenyan context, where ICC prosecutions became entangled with electoral politics and domestic power struggles (Kendall, 2014), Duterte's case has generated significant political contestation and divided public opinion. Scholars have argued that ICC actions, while legally grounded, often operate within complex political dynamics, as seen in Uganda and Sudan where the Court's interventions have been used by opposing factions to legitimize their positions (Nouwen & Werner, 2011).

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample size is relatively small and non-representative, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to the broader population. Second, the analysis is confined to a single social media platform, Facebook, potentially overlooking sentiments expressed on other platforms such as X or Instagram that might offer different perspectives. Third, the use of machine-assisted sentiment categorization, while efficient, carries the risk of misclassification due to the inherent challenges of natural language processing, including difficulties in detecting sarcasm, irony, and contextual nuances. Finally, translation bias may have affected the results, as comments originally posted in Filipino were translated into English for analysis, possibly leading to subtle shifts in meaning or emotional tone. These limitations suggest that future research should consider larger, more diverse samples, multiple platforms, and enhanced qualitative validation methods to

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improve the robustness of sentiment analysis findings.

Conclusions

The findings of this study reveal a deeply polarized public sentiment regarding the arrest of former President Rodrigo Duterte by the International Criminal Court, as expressed on Facebook. The analysis highlights key themes such as national identity, leadership legacy, justice, crime, and political divisions that dominate the online discourse. The sentiment distribution is comprising positive, negative, and neutral reactions, reflects the complexity of public opinion on this political and legal event. This study underscores the significant role social media plays in shaping and amplifying political debate, providing a valuable lens through which to understand contemporary public attitudes toward international justice and accountability.

By employing qualitative sentiment analysis and thematic coding, this research offers insights that are relevant for policymakers, human rights organizations, and scholars interested in the intersection of digital communication and political processes. The findings demonstrate how social media platforms serve as critical arenas for public engagement and contestation, influencing perceptions of leadership and governance. Ultimately, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on digital political discourse and international criminal justice, highlighting the importance of monitoring and interpreting online sentiment in a rapidly evolving political landscape.

Recommendation

1. Research teams and data analysts may combine machine-assisted sentiment analysis tools with manual qualitative coding by trained coders. This hybrid approach will improve the accuracy of sentiment classification and deepen thematic interpretation in political sentiment research.

2. Research institutions and project leaders may engage professional translators or bilingual coders fluent in Filipino and English to minimize translation bias. This will ensure that nuanced meanings and emotional tones in social media comments are accurately preserved during analysis.

3. Academic researchers and policy think tanks may design and implement longitudinal studies that track public sentiment over time. This will provide valuable insights into how public opinion shifts in response to ongoing legal proceedings and political developments related to international justice.

4. Policymakers, human rights organizations, and media outlets may be actively involved in reviewing and disseminating research findings. Their engagement will help inform effective public communication strategies, advocacy efforts, and policy formulation aimed at promoting transparency and accountability in international justice matters.

5. Future researchers may include larger and more diverse samples across multiple social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok. This will help capture a broader range of public sentiment and reduce sampling bias in digital political discourse studies.

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