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CROSS-SECTIONAL SURVEY ON HUMAN RIGHTS AWARENESS, PERCEPTIONS, AND PRACTICES AMONG FILIPINOS

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ABSTRACT
Human rights are paramount to an equitable society; however, only limited research has been conducted into the ways these rights are understood, valued, or practiced by Filipinos. The aim of this study is to determine the levels of human rights awareness, the nature of perspective surrounding human rights issues, and the manifestation of these perspectives on everyday life. Using the cross-sectional survey research design, the data on the demographic variables such as age, gender, education, socioeconomic status, and media exposure will also be assessed. Among others, specific cultural mores, historical experiences, and types of political environments that influence attitudes and behaviors regarding human rights are also targeted. By looking at these barriers to the complete realization of human rights, mainly by way of social norms, limited exposure to information, and the enforcement of human rights by the government, one can set a stage for recommendations. Implications of study findings are expected to meet demands for public-policy inputs, support advocacy efforts, and be helpful for the establishment of programs for strengthening a culture of human rights in the Philippines through education.

KEYWORDS: *Human Rights Awareness, Perceptions of Human Rights, Human Rights Practices, Filipino Society.*

INTRODUCTION
Human rights are fundamental principles that protect human dignity, freedom, and equality regardless of nationality, ethnicity, gender, or social status. These rights form the foundation of democratic societies and are essential for peaceful coexistence among individuals and communities. Despite their significance, human rights have been repeatedly violated throughout history and continue to be undermined in contemporary societies, leading to widespread suffering, marginalization, and social instability. Prakash (2020) emphasizes that human rights abuses pose a serious threat not only to individual freedoms but also to peace and humanity as a whole. Likewise, Cingranelli et al. (2020) argue that political instability, oppressive governance, and systemic injustice often serve both as causes and consequences of persistent human rights violations.

In the Philippine context, human rights concerns have gained increasing national and international attention in recent years. The government's campaign against illegal drugs raised serious allegations of extrajudicial killings and the weakening of civil liberties, drawing criticism from both local and international observers (Pernia, 2021; Regilme, 2020). The coronavirus pandemic further exposed existing social inequalities and governance challenges, intensifying the country's human rights issues (Peñalba, 2020). In addition, the Philippines' evolving foreign policy, particularly its engagement with China's Belt and Road Initiative, has raised questions regarding national sovereignty, development priorities, and the protection of human dignity (Baviera & Arugay, 2021).

Although the Philippines is a signatory to numerous international human rights treaties and has established legal mechanisms to protect its citizens, a significant gap remains between policy and actual practice. Many Filipinos continue to lack adequate knowledge of their rights or the means to assert and defend them effectively. Reports from Amnesty International (2022) and Human Rights Watch (2023) identify institutional weaknesses, political interference, and government inaction as major barriers to the protection of human rights. These challenges highlight the urgent need to strengthen public awareness and enforcement of human rights laws.

Human rights awareness extends beyond understanding legal definitions and includes recognizing violations in everyday life and taking appropriate action. Studies show that increased awareness of human rights, particularly among students and working professionals, enhances civic participation, democratic values, and commitment to social justice (Binjha, 2022; Misra et al., 2020). However, awareness levels are influenced by factors such as age, education, access to media, socioeconomic status, and geographic location (Mendoza, 2020), and comprehensive studies covering diverse sectors of the Filipino population remain limited. In response to this gap, the present study aims to assess the current state of human rights awareness in the Philippines by examining individuals' knowledge of their rights, perceptions of their relevance, and actual practices in exercising or defending them. Ultimately, this research seeks to contribute to the development of a more informed and empowered citizenry that supports democratic governance and resists injustice and authoritarianism.

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General Objective

This research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of human rights awareness, perceptions, and practices among Filipinos, contributing to more effective human rights promotion and protection strategies.

Specific Objectives

1. To assess the level of human rights awareness among Filipinos.
2. To determine the perceptions of Filipinos regarding human rights protection and violations.
3. To analyze the extent to which Filipinos engage in human rights advocacy and practices.
4. To explore demographic and socio-economic factors influencing human rights awareness and engagement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Human Rights Awareness in the Philippines

Evolution of Human Rights Education

Human rights awareness in the Philippines has continued to develop in the post-authoritarian period, with renewed emphasis in recent years due to democratic challenges and heightened global attention to rights protection. Anchored in the 1987 Philippine Constitution, the state is mandated to safeguard civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. Since 2020, the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) and the Department of Education have reinforced initiatives to mainstream human rights education across formal and informal learning environments, particularly in response to concerns regarding civic space restrictions and declining democratic participation (Commission on Human Rights, 2021; United Nations Development Programme, 2022).

Despite these efforts, recent evaluations indicate that the implementation of human rights education remains uneven. Urban institutions generally benefit from better access to structured programs, while rural and underserved communities continue to face gaps in educational resources. National and international monitoring reports from 2020 to 2024 emphasize the need for consistent integration of human rights principles into school curricula and communitybased initiatives, especially for youth and first-time voters (CHR, 2023; UNESCO, 2021).

Sources and Channels of Awareness

Formal education remains a primary source of human rights awareness in the Philippines; however, informal channels such as mass media, social media, religious institutions, and civil society organizations have become increasingly influential. Since 2020, digital platforms have played a central role in shaping public understanding of human rights issues. While social media enables rapid dissemination of information, it has also contributed to the spread of disinformation, political polarization, and the distortion of human rights narratives (Human Rights Watch, 2021; Pernia, 2021).

Religious and community-based organizations continue to serve as key conduits of human rights education, particularly in areas with limited access to formal schooling. Faith-based and grassroots organizations have been actively involved in peacebuilding and rights-based development initiatives during the 2020–2025 period. However, scholars caution that framing human rights primarily through religious or cultural lenses may result in selective interpretation, potentially undermining the universality of rights (Regilme, 2020; Mangahas & Quiambao, 2021). These dynamics highlight the growing importance of media literacy and critical engagement in strengthening human rights awareness.

Perceptions and Practices of Human Rights Among Filipinos

Historical and Political Influences on Perceptions

Filipinos' perceptions of human rights continue to be shaped by historical memory and contemporary political conditions. Recent studies note that unresolved accountability for past abuses, coupled with ongoing debates on governance and security policies, influence public attitudes toward human rights institutions. Younger generations, whose historical understanding is often mediated through digital platforms, are particularly vulnerable to revisionist narratives that downplay past violations (Abuso, 2019; Ocampo, 2023).

Since 2020, public discourse surrounding policies such as counterterrorism legislation and law enforcement operations has further complicated perceptions of human rights. Government narratives emphasizing order and national security have, in some sectors, reframed human rights advocacy as oppositional or destabilizing, affecting public willingness to assert rights (Palabay, 2023; UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2022).

Cultural Values and Social Norms

Filipino cultural values such as *bayanihan*, *kapwa*, and *pakikisama* continue to influence how human rights are perceived and practiced. Recent literature suggests that many Filipinos interpret rights within a collective framework that prioritizes social harmony and respect for authority over individual assertion. While this orientation can foster solidarity, it may also discourage reporting abuses or challenging authority figures, particularly when social relationships are at stake (del Castillo, 2021; Núñez, 2024).

These cultural dynamics are especially significant for marginalized groups, including indigenous peoples and LGBTQ+ communities, whose rights claims may conflict with prevailing social norms. Studies published between 2021 and 2024 highlight how cultural mediation can both support and constrain the realization of human rights in everyday life (ILGA Asia, 2022; UNDP, 2023).

Discrepancies Between Awareness and Practice

Although human rights awareness has generally increased, recent findings indicate a persistent gap between awareness and actual practice. Fear of reprisal, distrust in institutions, and limited access to legal remedies continue to discourage individuals from asserting their rights (Human Rights Watch, 2023). Socio-economic pressures further exacerbate this gap, as individuals facing poverty or insecurity may prioritize immediate survival over rights-based engagement (Asian Development Bank, 2021).

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Sectoral Inequalities in Practice

Marginalized sectors, including indigenous peoples, women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and informal workers, continue to experience unequal access to justice and protection. National development reports and human rights assessments since 2020 document persistent discrimination, limited political representation, and structural barriers that undermine effective rights protection (National Economic and Development Authority, 2022; UN Women, 2021).

Factors Influencing Human Rights Awareness, Perceptions, and Practices

Socio-Demographic Factors

Age, education, and socio-economic status remain significant determinants of human rights awareness and engagement. Younger and more educated Filipinos tend to demonstrate higher levels of awareness and participation in civic activities. However, recent studies also note growing political cynicism and declining institutional trust among youth, which may limit sustained engagement despite high awareness levels (Narido et al., 2022; Bautista, 2020).

Media Influence and Political Polarization

Media plays a powerful but complex role in shaping human rights perceptions. While traditional and social media have increased visibility of rights issues, they have also contributed to sensationalism, misinformation, and polarization, particularly during politically contentious periods (Ferrer & Villegas, 2020; OHCHR, 2022). These conditions challenge the framing of human rights as neutral and universally applicable principles.

Cultural and Religious Mediation

Religious beliefs and cultural traditions continue to mediate how human rights are understood and exercised. Recent scholarship highlights how moral frameworks emphasizing duty, obedience, and social order influence attitudes toward rights limitations, particularly in debates on gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights (UNDP, 2023).

Political Climate and Government Policies

The broader political environment strongly shapes public attitudes toward human rights. Periods characterized by strong executive authority or militarized governance are associated with reduced trust in human rights institutions and increased tolerance for rights restrictions in the name of order and security (Amnesty International, 2022; Regilme, 2020).

Barriers to Effective Human Rights Practices

Weak enforcement mechanisms, political interference, and limited accountability continue to undermine human rights protection in the Philippines. Practices such as surveillance, harassment, and red-tagging discourage civic participation and advocacy. Structural inequalities rooted in poverty and unequal access to education and services further restrict individuals' ability to claim their rights (Amnesty International, 2023; CHR, 2024).

Future Research Perspectives

Recent literature identifies several research gaps, including the need for rural and indigenousfocused studies, intersectional analyses involving LGBTQ+ and other marginalized identities, and deeper examination of digital spaces as sites of both empowerment and risk. Scholars also emphasize the importance of systematic evaluations of human rights education programs and the exploration of psychological barriers that inhibit rights assertion despite awareness (UNESCO, 2021; UNDP, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

This study on human rights awareness, perceptions, and practices among college students is anchored on several adult learning and experiential learning theories that emphasize knowledge acquisition, critical reflection, and practical application.

Adult Learning Theory and Transformative Learning

Adult learning theory, particularly transformative learning and lived experiences, provides a foundation for understanding how college students acquire knowledge and internalize human rights principles. Transformative learning emphasizes critical reflection and perspective change, allowing students to challenge previously held assumptions or biases regarding human rights (Kasl & Yorks, 2014). In the context of this study, students' prior experiences, academic exposure, and social interactions contribute to their evolving awareness and understanding of human rights. Applying adult learning principles in educational programs encourages learners to connect abstract human rights concepts with their own lived experiences, fostering empathy, critical thinking, and responsible social behavior.

Community-Based Learning and Social Learning Theory

Community-based learning (CBL) and social learning theory highlight the role of shared learning experiences in shaping attitudes and social norms. College students, through discussions, group activities, and exposure to community advocacy or campaigns, reflect on their roles as responsible citizens in upholding human rights. By observing peers, mentors, or media representations of human rights practices, students learn socially appropriate behaviors and ethical decision-making (Freire, 1970). These approaches reinforce the connection between awareness, perception, and action, as students develop practical strategies to support human rights in their immediate environments.

Andragogy

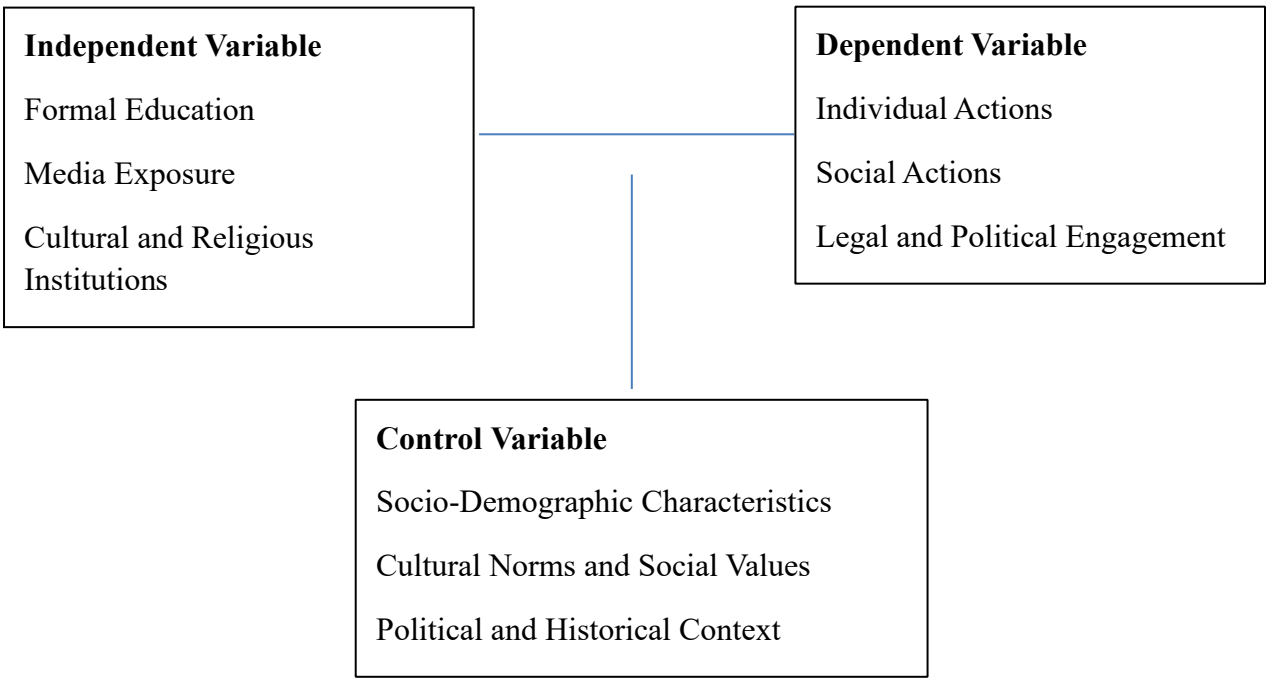
Andragogical principles focus on learner-centered methods that enhance practical decisionmaking and analytical skills. For college students, this translates to engagement in case studies, debates, or problem-solving activities related to human rights issues. By emphasizing the relevance of knowledge to real-life situations, andragogical approaches increase motivation and the likelihood that students will internalize and apply their learning. This method aligns with the study's goal of examining not only awareness and perceptions but also the translation of knowledge into tangible practices.

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Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory

Kolb's experiential learning theory offers a cyclical framework that mirrors how students gain, reflect upon, and apply knowledge in practice (Kolb, 1984). Students engage in concrete experiences through classroom exercises, community exposure, or advocacy simulations. Reflective observation allows them to evaluate these experiences critically, identifying gaps in understanding or areas for improvement. Through abstract conceptualization, students develop strategies or principles for promoting and defending human rights, which they then test through active experimentation in real-world or simulated settings. Incorporating Kolb's model into human rights education encourages continuous learning, adaptability, and ethical engagement, ensuring that awareness and perceptions are translated into informed practices.

Conceptual Framework



Correlational Explanation of Variables

In this study, human rights awareness serves as the independent variable, as it represents the knowledge and understanding individuals have regarding their rights. Awareness is influenced by multiple sources, including formal education through school curricula and academic programs, media exposure via news outlets and social campaigns, and cultural or religious institutions that shape moral and legal consciousness. It is posited that higher levels of awareness are likely to enhance individuals' understanding and recognition of human rights principles.

Human rights perceptions act as a mediating variable, bridging the relationship between awareness and practices. Socio-demographic characteristics such as age, gender, education level, socioeconomic status, and geographic location may influence how individuals interpret and value human rights. Cultural norms and social values, including bayanihan (community spirit) and kapwa (shared identity), can affect whether people prioritize individual versus collective rights. Additionally, political and historical contexts, including past experiences of authoritarian rule or current sociopolitical issues like the war on drugs, may shape critical or supportive attitudes toward human rights policies

Human rights practices constitute the dependent variable, reflecting the tangible actions individuals take to uphold, defend, or promote rights. These practices can occur at the individual level, such as adhering to legal norms, standing against discrimination, or participating in awareness campaigns; at the social level, through participation in protests, advocacy, or community mobilization; and at the legal or political level, through engagement in policy support, voting for human rights-oriented leaders, or advocating for justice reforms.

The correlational framework suggests that greater awareness of human rights positively influences perceptions, which in turn facilitates more active and consistent human rights practices. In other words, individuals who are better informed about their rights are more likely to develop supportive perceptions and engage in actions that promote and protect human rights. This framework allows for the exploration of both direct and indirect relationships among awareness, perception, and practice, providing insight into how knowledge translates into meaningful behavioral outcomes.

METHODS

Study Design and Locale

This study utilized a cross-sectional survey design to examine human rights awareness, perceptions, and practices among

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selected Filipino participants. The design was chosen to capture participants' attitudes and behaviors at a single point in time without manipulating any variables.

The research was conducted in selected urban and rural communities in the Philippines, specifically targeting areas where human rights education initiatives had both been present and absent. This approach allowed for a comparative analysis of different social contexts influencing human rights awareness and practices.

Study Participants

The participants of this study were college students of legal age enrolled in selected higher education institutions in Angeles City, Pampanga, namely Systems Plus College Foundation, Angeles University Foundation, and Holy Angel University. These students were selected to assess their awareness, perceptions, and practices related to human rights. College students were considered appropriate respondents due to their exposure to civic education, social issues, and academic discussions that influence their understanding of human rights.

Sample Size and Sampling

The study involved a total of 468 participants. The sample size was determined using the Raosoft Sample Size Calculator to ensure the statistical validity of the results. The calculation was based on a population size of 601,140, with a 95 percent confidence level, a 5 percent margin of error, and a 50 percent response distribution. These parameters were used to obtain the minimum sample size required to adequately represent the target population and produce reliable findings.

A non-probability sampling technique, specifically convenience sampling, was employed in selecting participants. Data were collected from students who were readily accessible and willing to participate from Systems Plus College Foundation, Angeles University Foundation, and Holy Angel University. This method was considered practical due to limitations in accessing complete enrollment lists and time constraints. Although convenience sampling does not provide equal selection opportunities for all individuals, the use of an appropriate sample size computed through Raosoft strengthened the credibility and validity of the study's findings.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria for participation were as follows: (a) college students aged 18 years old and above; (b) currently enrolled in Systems Plus College Foundation, Angeles University
Foundation, or Holy Angel University; and (c) willing and able to provide informed consent.

Exclusion Criteria

Students below the legal age of 18 were excluded from the study. Individuals holding political office or actively engaged in formal human rights advocacy work were not included to avoid potential response bias. Additionally, students with cognitive impairments that could limit their ability to understand and respond to the survey questionnaire were excluded.

Research Instrument

Data were collected through a survey questionnaire designed to examine key variables related to human rights awareness, perceptions, and understanding among college students. A selfadministered questionnaire developed by the researcher was utilized, drawing from previously validated surveys and relevant literature to ensure content relevance and clarity. The instrument was structured to gather meaningful insights regarding the level of human rights awareness and how students perceive the importance and application of these rights in everyday life.

The questionnaire consisted of four main sections. Part I covered the demographic profile of the respondents, including age, gender, educational level, and socioeconomic status, which may influence their awareness and perceptions of human rights. Part II focused on human rights awareness, specifically assessing respondents' knowledge of fundamental rights and their primary sources of information. Part III examined perceptions of human rights, measuring the level of agreement with various rights-related statements. Part IV addressed practices related to human rights, capturing how respondents apply or uphold these rights in real life situations.

The instrument primarily consisted of closed-ended questions and employed a four-point Likert scale to measure responses, where 1 indicated Strongly Disagree, 2 indicated Disagree, 3 indicated Agree, and 4 indicated Strongly Agree. This approach allowed respondents to complete the questionnaire independently, minimizing interviewer bias and ensuring consistency in data collection.

Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire was developed based on the variables identified in this study, relevant literature, and previously validated survey instruments related to human rights. It underwent face and content validation to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the objectives of the study. The validation process focused on key areas such as human rights awareness, perceptions, and practices. Experts in social sciences, education, and human rights studies reviewed the instrument to determine whether the items appropriately measured the intended constructs and were suitable for the target respondents.

The questionnaire was administered to a sample of college students in Angeles City, Pampanga. Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of the instrument. A coefficient value of 0.70 or higher was considered acceptable, indicating that the items were reliable and consistently measured the constructs under investigation.

Informed Consent

Ethical Considerations

This study followed established ethical principles to ensure that all participants were treated with respect, fairness, and autonomy. Ethical clearance was obtained from the University Research Ethics Board of Angeles University Foundation, and the study adhered to the Declaration of Helsinki and the Philippine National Ethical Guidelines for Health and Health Related Research. Participants were fully informed about the

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study's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits, and written consent was obtained in printed or digital format. They were assured that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without penalty. The study posed minimal risk, and participants were allowed to skip questions or discontinue participation if they felt discomfort. Small incentives were provided as a token of appreciation for their participation.

Privacy and confidentiality were strictly maintained throughout the research process. Data were anonymized using participant codes, with digital files stored in password-protected, encrypted systems and physical documents secured in locked locations. In compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012, data will be retained for five years after publication and then securely disposed of. Participants were informed that they could request a summary of the study results. The researchers declared no conflict of interest, and no external organization or funding agency influenced the study's design, data collection, analysis, or dissemination.

Data Analysis

In this quantitative study, the collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques to summarize participant characteristics and responses related to human rights awareness, perceptions, and practices. Frequencies, means, and standard deviations were computed to present an overall picture of the respondents' demographic profiles and survey results. These analyses provided meaningful insights into the current level of human rights awareness among college students in Angeles City and helped identify areas that may require further educational or advocacy efforts.

RESULTS

Table 1
To assess the level of human rights awareness among Filipinos.

	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	Variance
I am aware of my basic human rights as defined by international agreements such as the UDHR	3.02	High Awareness	3	3	0.79	0.63
I know where to find reliable information about the human rights in the Philippines.	3.03	High Awareness	3	3	0.79	0.62
I recognize when a person's rights are being violated in situations like discriminations or abuse.	3.02	High Awareness	3	3	0.85	0.72
I believe that everyone regardless of background has equal rights and dignity.	3.11	High Awareness	3	3	0.88	0.77
I feel confident speaking up if i see someone's rights being violated.	3.04	High Awareness	3	3	0.81	0.66
I understand the limitations of human rights under exceptional circumstances (e.g., national security).	2.85	High Awareness	3	3	0.79	0.63
I am not familiar with how human rights are protected under Philippine laws and institutions	2.57	High Awareness	3	3	0.88	0.77
I find it hard to respect the rights of people whose actions or choices I disagree with	2.64	High Awareness	3	3	0.90	0.82
I am not familiar with how human rights are protected under Philippine laws and institution	2.52	High Awareness	3	3	0.92	0.85
I rarely think about how my actions affect other people's rights.	2.66	High Awareness	3	3	0.96	0.92
Average	2.85	High Awareness	3.00	3.00	0.86	0.74

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The item with the highest mean (3.11), *"I believe that everyone regardless of background has equal rights and dignity,"* indicates that respondents generally hold strong positive perceptions regarding equality and human dignity. This suggests that college students in the sample are highly aware of the principle of universal human rights and endorse the notion that every individual deserves respect regardless of social, cultural, or economic differences. The high mean reflects not only cognitive awareness but also an internalized value system that supports fairness, equality, and inclusivity. This result is encouraging, as it implies that students' foundational understanding of human rights aligns with ethical and societal expectations, providing a solid base for further awareness and practical application in everyday life.

Conversely, the item with the lowest mean (2.52), *"I am not familiar with how human rights are protected under Philippine laws and institutions,"* points to a gap in students' knowledge regarding the legal mechanisms and institutions that safeguard rights within the country. This low score suggests that while students may conceptually support human rights, they lack specific information about how these rights are operationalized and enforced under national law. The finding highlights a critical area for improvement in human rights education, indicating the need for more targeted instruction on legal frameworks, institutional responsibilities, and mechanisms for protection and redress. Strengthening this knowledge could help bridge the gap between awareness and practical action, empowering students to advocate effectively for themselves and others.

Table 2
To determine the perceptions of Filipinos regarding human rights protection and violations.

	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	Variance
I believe human rights are often neglected or poorly protected under Philippines laws and institutions.	2.84	High Awareness	3	3	0.79	0.62
I am not aware of any human rights violations occurring in the Philippine	2.40	Low Awareness	2	2	0.90	0.80
I believe law enforcement in the Philippines often violates human rights during operations.	2.84	High Awareness	3	3	0.77	0.60
I believe ordinary citizens can report human rights violations without fear of reprisal.	2.78	High Awareness	3	3	0.86	0.73
I think that using strong leadership (even if rights are infringed) can be justified for order.	2.78	High Awareness	3	3	0.88	0.77
I feel confident that the judiciary can hold violators of human rights accountable.	2.68	High Awareness	3	3	0.86	0.74
I believe that minority groups (e.g., indigenous peoples, LGBT +) are treated equitably under the law.	2.67	Low Awareness	3	3	0.82	0.68
Media and civil society in the Philippines can openly criticize the government about human rights.	2.90	Low Awareness	3	3	0.81	0.65
I think human rights violations are sometimes exaggerated by activists or media	2.85	Low Awareness	3	3	0.75	0.56
I trust organizations like the Commission on Human Rights to investigate and act on violations.	2.84	Low Awareness	3	3	0.74	0.55
Average	2.75	Low Awareness	2.90	2.90	0.82	0.67

The item with the highest mean (2.90), *"Media and civil society in the Philippines can openly criticize the government about human rights,"* suggests that respondents moderately perceive some freedom of expression in the country. While the mean does not indicate strong agreement, it reflects a cautious optimism among students that media and civil society still play a role in highlighting human rights issues and holding authorities accountable. This awareness indicates that students recognize the importance of independent reporting

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and civic participation as mechanisms for transparency and social accountability, even if they remain skeptical about the extent or effectiveness of these channels.

In contrast, the item with the lowest mean (2.40), *"I am not aware of any human rights violations occurring in the Philippines,"* shows that students are largely aware that human rights violations do occur in the country. This low score reflects a realistic perception of ongoing rights issues and underscores that the respondents do not live in an information vacuum; they recognize that violations happen despite legal protections. This finding highlights the need to complement awareness with knowledge about reporting mechanisms and legal redress, as acknowledgment of violations is a first step toward promoting responsible action and engagement in human rights advocacy.

Table 3
To analyze the extent to which Filipinos engage in human rights advocacy and practices.

	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	Variance
I am aware of my basic human rights as defined by international agreements such as the UDHR	3.02	High Awareness	3	3	0.79	0.63
I know where to find reliable information about the human rights in the Philippines.	3.03	High Awareness	3	3	0.79	0.62
I recognize when a person's rights are being violated in situations like discriminations or abuse.	3.02	High Awareness	3	3	0.85	0.72
I believe that everyone regardless of background has equal rights and dignity.	3.11	High Awareness	3	3	0.88	0.77
I feel confident speaking up if i see someone's rights being violated.	3.04	High Awareness	3	3	0.81	0.66
I understand the limitations of human rights under exceptional circumstances (e.g., national security).	2.85	High Awareness	3	3	0.79	0.63
I am not familiar with how human rights are protected under Philippine laws and institutions	2.57	High Awareness	3	3	0.88	0.77
I find it hard to respect the rights of people whose actions or choices I disagree with	2.64	High Awareness	3	3	0.90	0.82
I am not familiar with how human rights are protected under Philippine laws and institution	2.52	High Awareness	3	3	0.92	0.85
I rarely think about how my actions affect other people's rights.	2.66	High Awareness	3	3	0.96	0.92
Average	2.85	High Awareness	3.00	3.00	0.86	0.74

The item with the highest mean (3.11), *"I believe that everyone regardless of background has equal rights and dignity,"* indicates that respondents hold strong positive attitudes toward the principle of equality and human dignity. This suggests that students are generally committed to the idea that every individual deserves respect and fair treatment, regardless of social, cultural, or economic differences. The high score reflects not only cognitive awareness but also an internalized value system that supports inclusivity and fairness, forming a strong foundation for translating awareness into ethical behavior and responsible actions in real-life situations.

Conversely, the item with the lowest mean (2.52), *"I am not familiar with how human rights are protected under Philippine laws and institutions,"* highlights a gap in specific knowledge about the legal frameworks and institutional mechanisms that safeguard human rights in the country. While students appear conceptually aware of rights and equality, they lack detailed understanding of how these rights are enforced and protected legally. This indicates the need for more targeted human rights education that emphasizes Philippine laws, institutional roles, and reporting mechanisms, bridging the gap between awareness and the ability to take informed action in defending human right

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Table 4
To explore demographic and socio-economic factors influencing human rights awareness and engagement.

	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	Variance
My knowledge of human rights is not influenced by my level of education.	2.90	High Awareness	3	3	0.87	0.75
My access to human rights information is not affected by my household income	2.94	High Awareness	3	3	0.78	0.61
Whether I live in an urban or rural area does not affect my involvement in human right activities.	2.78	High Awareness	3	3	0.83	0.68
My age group affects how frequently I participate in human rights discussions or forums.	2.87	High Awareness	3	3	0.79	0.62
My occupation (e.g., student, professional, informal sector) influences my level of involvement in rights advocacy.	2.97	High Awareness	3	3	0.79	0.62
Access to the internet and social media affects how often I learn about human rights	2.94	High Awareness	3	3	0.78	0.61
My gender influences my comfort in expressing opinions on human rights.	2.93	High Awareness	3	3	0.81	0.66
Membership in community, religious, or civic groups affects my engagement in human rights efforts.	2.88	High Awareness	3	3	0.80	0.65
My family's socio-economic background shapes my awareness and attitudes toward human rights.	2.85	High Awareness	3	3	0.79	0.63
Religious beliefs or cultural background influence my perception of human rights norms and practices.	2.98	High Awareness	3	3	0.78	0.60
Average	2.90	High Awareness	3.00	3.00	0.80	0.64

The item with the highest mean (2.98) is *"Religious beliefs or cultural background influence my perception of human rights norms and practices."* This result indicates that respondents generally recognize the strong role of religion and culture in shaping how they understand and interpret human rights. It suggests that personal values, traditions, and belief systems significantly affect attitudes toward human rights, influencing how individuals view issues such as equality, justice, and acceptable social behavior.

The item with the lowest mean (2.78) is *"Whether I live in an urban or rural area does not affect my involvement in human rights activities."* This lower mean suggests some uncertainty among respondents about the extent to which location influences participation in human rights efforts. While many believe that involvement is not strictly determined by place of residence, the result implies that differences in access to information, organizations, or opportunities between areas may still affect individuals' engagement in human rights activities.

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Table 5
To examine the public understanding and relevance of transitional justice mechanisms (e.g., truth commissions, reparations, institutional reforms) in the context of human rights discourse in the Philippines.

	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	Variance
I question the effectiveness of truth commissions in addressing past human rights violations in the Philippines.	3.06	High Awareness	3	3	0.77	0.60
Reparations (e.g., conpensation, apologies) may not be meaningful to victims and communities affected by human rights abuses.	3.06	High Awareness	3	3	0.79	0.62
Institutional reforms (e.g., police, judiciary changes) may not be enough to prevent future human rights violations.	2.97	High Awareness	3	3	0.84	0.71
Knowing the truth about past abuses (e.g., through hearings or reports) promotes national healing.	2.97	High Awareness	3	3	0.80	0.65
Transitional justice efforts align with universal human rights principles.	2.97	High Awareness	3	3	0.74	0.55
I trust government institutions to implement transitional justice mechanisms effectively.	2.85	High Awareness	3	3	0.84	0.71
Public participations (e.g., hearings, consultations) is important for the success of transitional justice in the Philippines.	3.12	High Awareness	3	3	0.72	0.52
Memorials, museums, or commemorations are important for remembering victims of past abuses.	3.04	High Awareness	3	3	0.79	0.62
Knowledge of transitional justice increases my sense of civic responsibility.	3.04	High Awareness	3	3	0.73	0.53
I believe that without transitional justice efforts, past human right violations could recur in the Philippines.	2.96	High Awareness	3	3	0.81	0.66
Average	3.00	High Awareness	3.00	3.00	0.78	0.62

The item with the highest mean (3.12) is *"Public participation (e.g., hearings, consultations) is important for the success of transitional justice in the Philippines."* This finding indicates that respondents strongly value the role of citizen involvement in transitional justice processes. It suggests a shared belief that inclusive mechanisms such as public hearings and consultations enhance legitimacy, transparency, and trust in addressing past human rights abuses. The result highlights that respondents see transitional justice not merely as a government-led process but as one that requires active engagement from affected communities and the broader public to be effective and meaningful.

The item with the lowest mean (2.85) is *"I trust government institutions to implement transitional justice mechanisms effectively."* This lower mean reflects a degree of skepticism toward the government's capacity or willingness to carry out transitional justice initiatives. While respondents acknowledge the importance of transitional justice, the finding implies concerns about institutional credibility, accountability, and consistency in implementation. This gap between support for participatory approaches and limited trust in institutions underscores the need to strengthen transparency, independence, and public confidence in agencies responsible for addressing past human rights violations.

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that college students demonstrate strong normative support for the core principles of human rights, particularly equality and human dignity. The consistently high mean score for the statement affirming equal rights regardless of background reflects a clear internalization of universal human rights values among respondents. This aligns with recent literature suggesting that younger and more educated Filipinos tend to express strong commitment to democratic ideals and social justice, even amid political and social challenges (UNDP, 2023; UNESCO, 2021). Such alignment is encouraging, as internalized values form a critical foundation

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for ethical decision making and civic responsibility, and they suggest that human rights education has been effective at the level of attitudes and beliefs.

However, the results also reveal a significant gap between value-based awareness and practical or institutional knowledge. The lowest mean scores highlight students' limited familiarity with how human rights are protected under Philippine laws and institutions. This finding echoes concerns raised by the Commission on Human Rights (2023) and Human Rights Watch (2023), which note that many Filipinos support human rights in principle but lack sufficient understanding of legal mechanisms, enforcement processes, and avenues for redress. This gap weakens the translation of awareness into action and underscores the need for human rights education programs to place greater emphasis on national legal frameworks, institutional roles, and reporting mechanisms, rather than focusing solely on abstract norms.

Students' perceptions of the broader human rights environment further reflect a critical yet cautious stance. Moderate confidence in the ability of media and civil society to criticize the government suggests recognition of democratic spaces, while continued awareness of ongoing human rights violations indicates that respondents are not detached from current realities. This dual perception aligns with recent analyses showing that while media and civil society remain active in the Philippines, their work is increasingly constrained by political pressure, disinformation, and intimidation, which can dampen public trust and participation (Amnesty International, 2022; OHCHR, 2022). Awareness of violations without full confidence in accountability mechanisms may contribute to hesitation in active engagement, reinforcing the importance of safeguarding civic space.

Cultural, religious, and social factors were also shown to influence how students perceive and engage with human rights. The relatively high mean indicating the influence of religious beliefs and cultural background supports existing studies that emphasize the role of Filipino cultural values in mediating rights consciousness (del Castillo, 2021; Núñez, 2024). While these values can foster solidarity and empathy, they may also discourage confrontation or rights assertion when social harmony is prioritized. Similarly, uncertainty about the effect of geographic location on engagement suggests that structural inequalities in access to information and opportunities may persist, even if students do not always explicitly recognize them (NEDA, 2022).

Finally, perspectives on transitional justice highlight a meaningful tension between participatory ideals and institutional trust. Strong support for public participation in transitional justice processes reflects an understanding that legitimacy and healing are enhanced through inclusive and transparent approaches, consistent with international human rights frameworks (UN OHCHR, 2022). At the same time, lower trust in government institutions to implement these mechanisms effectively mirrors broader public skepticism toward accountability and governance in the Philippines (Amnesty International, 2023). This gap suggests that strengthening transparency, independence, and credibility of justice institutions is essential to rebuilding public confidence and encouraging sustained civic engagement. Overall, the findings emphasize that while human rights values are widely endorsed among students, greater effort is needed to connect these values to institutional knowledge, practical action, and trustworthy governance structures.

CONCLUSION

Given these findings, several implications emerge for policy, education, and advocacy. First, human rights education should be strengthened across secondary, tertiary, and professional levels to move beyond rote knowledge toward internalization of rights, skills, and attitudes. Interactive and participatory approaches, such as those promoted by the Commission on Human Rights' Human Rights Education and Promotion Office, can deepen understanding and make learning more meaningful for students.

Second, education should incorporate contextual and critical learning, helping students discern between legitimate limitations of rights in exceptional circumstances, such as public health emergencies, and abuses disguised as necessary measures. Programming should also encourage active engagement and empowerment by providing opportunities for civic participation through community projects, advocacy, and reporting mechanisms, thereby bridging the gap between awareness and practical action.

Finally, the findings highlight the need to support safe civic spaces and protect activists, particularly in the context of online or offline harassment that can discourage youth from advocating for human rights. Strengthening legal safeguards, secure reporting channels, and institutional support is essential to protect human rights defenders. In addition, monitoring and accountability mechanisms must be enhanced and made more visible to ensure that citizens observe real consequences for violations, reinforcing trust in the legal and human rights institutions and encouraging active participation in upholding democratic values.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, a feasible recommendation is to strengthen human rights education among college students by integrating applied and context based learning into existing curricula. While students demonstrate strong support for equality and human dignity, gaps in knowledge about Philippine laws, institutions, and reporting mechanisms remain evident. Universities in Angeles City can address this by incorporating short modules, seminars, or classroom discussions that focus on national human rights frameworks, the role of institutions such as the Commission on Human Rights, and practical steps for reporting and responding to violations. Collaborations with human rights practitioners, legal professionals, and civil society organizations can further enhance learning by providing real life examples that connect human rights principles to everyday situations.

In addition, schools and local institutions should promote student engagement through safe and inclusive civic

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participation opportunities. Given students' belief in the importance of public participation alongside their limited trust in institutions, activities such as forums, dialogues, campus based advocacy projects, and community outreach programs can help bridge the gap between awareness and action. These initiatives should be supported by clear policies that protect freedom of expression and encourage respectful dialogue, ensuring that students feel secure in expressing their views. By combining practical education with participatory experiences, institutions can foster a more informed, confident, and active generation of human rights advocates.

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