

Towards An Integrated Structure and Agency Construction of Political Rights in the Philippines

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Abstract. Political rights in the Philippines continue to be a persistent societal challenge despite ongoing efforts across various sectors to address issues related to their protection. Human rights studies traditionally consider political rights inherent, yet disputes over their interpretation persist, suggesting that consensus depends on aligning definitions with universal human nature. This paper contends that political rights are socially constructed through historical processes involving diverse social structures and agents. Therefore, integrating structural and agential perspectives is crucial for establishing a common societal understanding of these rights. Drawing on social constructionism theories by Benjamin Gregg (2011), Peter Berger (1966), and Anthony Giddens' structuration theory (1984), this study explores how individuals' interactions within society and culture shape the conception of political human rights. An exploratory-sequential mixed-method approach was employed, combining qualitative documentary analysis and interviews to investigate how social structures and agents construct political rights. Quantitative data triangulation further enhanced the study's comprehensiveness and depth. Key findings underscore ongoing efforts to address political rights in the Philippines, highlighting the social nature of their understanding and the necessity for collaborative efforts among government and multiple sectors.

Keywords: Human rights; Political rights; Structure; Agency; Social construction; Social constructs.

1.0 Introduction

The study of human rights encompasses the entirety of human existence. It is fundamentally linked with dignity and founded on principles of equality and fairness that safeguard individual freedoms. Human rights issues persist in the Philippines as a longstanding social concern which is traceable from colonial periods to contemporary Philippine society. Indeed, the concepts of human freedom and equality have deep historical and political roots. The pre-colonial Philippine society was characterized by tribal interdependence where the governance structure of barangays led by chieftains or Datus, reflects early forms of social organization. It was characterized with strong emphasis on communal decision-making and adherence to customs and traditions (PhilRights, 2013; Mintz, 2006). The colonial era which was from Spanish exploration in 1521 through American rule until the Japanese occupation in 1941, and the subsequent post-World War II transitions have shaped Philippine political history profoundly. Issues of human rights became evident in these periods. Furthermore, the period following the 1946 establishment of the Philippine Republic was marked by efforts to address insurgency and human rights challenges. The most remarkable clamor in human rights protection and promotion was under the authoritarian rule of Ferdinand Marcos Sr. On September 21, 1972, Marcos Sr. declared Martial Law in the Philippines which resulted to unprecedented human rights violations in the country. The post-EDSA People Power Revolution 1986 ushered in a new phase of governance and established institutions like the Commission on Human Rights in the 1987 Constitution (CHR) which has been tasked with overseeing human rights protections in the Philippines (Philippine Constitution, 1987). The past administration of former President Rodrigo Duterte

created another challenging period in human rights promotion and protection in the country. His regime was marred by alleged massive human rights violations particularly with its implementation of War on Drugs. Recent assessments show that significant challenges persist despite extensive local and international efforts and documentation promoting human rights in the country. In fact, data from Philippine Human Rights Impact Assessment in December 2021 revealed that international indices consistently point to ongoing concerns such as internet freedom, rule of law, and press freedom (Freedom House, 2021; World Justice Project, 2021; Reporters Without Borders, 2021). Understanding and addressing these issues requires adherence to international norms and consideration of cultural, religious, and social contexts that influence local interpretations and practices related to human rights (UNESCO). In the Philippine society, there are divergent perspectives on human rights which are shaped by governmental structures which are focused on national interests and by the societal elements who advocate for individual liberties. This framework often led to conflicting approaches and policy debates which underscores the need for a unified understanding of human rights concepts across all sectors of society. Bridging these gaps requires an integrated approach that acknowledges both structural influences, such as state institutions, and agential forces, including civil society and advocacy groups, in shaping policies and practices that uphold political rights (Little, 2012; Giddens, 1984; Frolich & Potvin, 2010). The social construction of political rights can be seen as to how these rights as social constructs evolve. According to Berger and Luckmann (1966) social constructs evolve or change because they are created in certain institutions and by specific cultures which are dependent in social conditions such as economic, historical, and political conditions involving social interactions of people. The dialectic relations between structure and agency pertinent to this assumption are the primary focus of this study. The structures are believed to influence the autonomy of the agency while structures are maintained and adapted through the exercise of the agency (Kipo-Sunyehzi, 2014; Chatterjee et al., 2019). This study aims to contribute to this understanding by examining the social construction of political rights in the Philippines through an integrated structural-agential framework. By exploring how these rights evolve within specific socio-political contexts, the research sought to inform policies and practices that enhance their protection and promotion in Philippine society.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

An exploratory-sequential mixed method was employed to validate the argument empirically. Qualitative methods such as documentary analysis and interviews examined how social structures and agents construct political rights. Additionally, quantitative research was employed to triangulate the data, enhancing the findings' breadth and depth. The integration of qualitative and quantitative data was done in the data analysis aspect of the study. Data obtained from documentary research and interviews with key informants anchored on the research objectives were matched and analyzed thoroughly with the quantitative results obtained from the surveys conducted pertinent to the same objectives and questions of the study. The consistency of the findings proved invaluable in establishing the validity of the data. This entire process facilitated the mixed-method approach in the study's findings.

2.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted in Metro Manila, also known as the National Capital Region (NCR), recognized as a leading region in the Philippines. The area's diverse population, complex human rights issues, and concentration of government institutions contributed significantly to the depth and scope of the human rights study. The focus was on understanding the interactions between governmental structures and societal agents within this dynamic urban setting.

2.3 Research Participants

The study employed data triangulation through a survey method involving 50 respondents from the public, enhancing the depth and breadth of data on the social construction of political rights in the Philippines. Participants included individuals with expertise and/or experience in political rights, aged 18 years and above, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or social status. The structural sources involved participants from key government institutions: policymakers from the legislative branch of the Philippine Congress, units from the executive branch such as the Commission on Human Rights, and various levels of local government units, including barangays. Agential participants included non-state actors with extensive experience in political rights, such as mass media practitioners, human rights advocacy groups, non-governmental organizations, student leaders, and academics.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure and Analysis

This study employed multiple methods for data collection: documentary research, interviews, and online data collection, aimed at triangulating findings. Documentary research involves analyzing written sources relevant to the study's focus. According to Ahmed (2010), this method is commonly used to investigate physical sources such as public and private documents. This study's documentary research encompassed human rights instruments, government policies, legislative enactments, articles, and newspaper accounts related to human rights issues and advocacy in the Philippines.

In-depth interviews with key informants were conducted onsite and online to explore the nature of human rights, political rights, and related issues based on their lived experiences. Structured interview guides and questionnaires, validated by the dissertation adviser and the Graduate School Research Ethics Committee, facilitated meaningful exploration of these topics.

Furthermore, online data collection methods were utilized for triangulation purposes. This involved administering an online survey to gather additional data sources via the Internet, complementing information obtained from physical survey forms and interviews. The same questionnaires used in onsite interviews were adapted into a Google Form for online survey distribution, allowing respondents to access and complete the survey remotely. The collected data underwent descriptive statistical analysis to derive insights relevant to the study's objectives.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered strictly to the highest ethical standards due to its involvement with human subjects. All research methodologies were coordinated by university policies and guidelines, particularly concerning human subjects. Ethical considerations were guided primarily by recommendations from the University Ethics Review Committee. The researcher meticulously followed various protocols throughout the research process. These included obtaining permits and necessary documents from agencies and seeking approval and consent from key informants before conducting interviews or gathering data. Permission letters were drafted and submitted to relevant authorities following institutional policies and guidelines. Respect for individuals in positions of authority was consistently maintained. Participation in the study was voluntary, and key informants were requested to sign informed consent forms. Participants retained the right to withdraw from the study at any point for personal reasons, and their decisions were honored without question. The researcher ensured strict compliance with the Data Privacy Act and adhered to recommendations from the Ethics Review Board to safeguard the individuals involved in the research. Participants' real identities were protected through codes and pseudonyms, ensuring anonymity and privacy. Given the sensitive nature of human rights issues in the Philippines and their political and historical context, the researcher-maintained objectivity and impartiality to preserve the integrity of the information gathered and respect the beliefs and perspectives of participants. Pseudonyms, codes, or labels were employed consistently to shield participants' identities. To mitigate risks associated with the study, the confidentiality of information and data was paramount throughout every phase of the research process. These ethical measures were implemented to uphold the welfare and rights of all study participants.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Understanding Human Rights

Table 1 shows the research participants understanding of human rights as substantiated by the quote matrix. It is necessary to also delve on this aspect since political rights emanate for the very concept of human rights. The analysis yielded that key informants' understanding of human rights revolves around the following dominant ideas (Table 1) on the descriptions of human rights: (a) universal, (b) dignity of man, (c) God-given, (d) freedom, (e) justice, peace and protection (f) interdependent (g) social responsibility and (h) inherent. These ideas match with the quantitative results where the following dominant responses from the respondents emerged as freedom (14%), inherent (36%) and dignity of the person (10%).

Table 1. Quotation matrix of the conceptual understanding of human rights

Concepts	Quote Matrix
Rights are encompassing and universal	<i>There is an added discriminatory aspect when there is a privilege-meaning inclusiveness-but when you say human rights -those are encompassing -EA</i>
Pertains to the Dignity of man	<i>Human rights are an extension of human dignity-CD</i> <i>The heart of the Church's mission is to defend the dignity of every person-Archbishop Jose Advincula (CBCP News online)</i>
Rights are God-given	<i>So as a human being, man has the dignity given by the Creator, that he be in the likeness of God...He was created in the likeness of God-Al Phil</i> <i>we enjoy this rights not because the constitution give it to us, but these are God given rights,, not necessary in the constitution</i>
Freedom	<i>freedom from fear</i> <i>economic socio-cultural rights ay freedom from wants. -AIPHIL</i> <i>Rights are autonomies for the individual- Assoc.Justice Leonen (on Writ of Kalayaan)</i>
Justice Protection and Peace	<i>peace and order in the community-PHR</i>
Human Rights are interdependent	<i>human rights are indivisible, they are interconnected rights-</i> <i>political-civil-economic-social cultural-rights-PHR</i>
Social Responsibility	<i>Rights are part of our duties to each other, our communities and our societies= Assoc.Justice Leonen (document based)</i>
Human rights are inherent	<i>Human rights are part of human life-in real life rights are there. In everyday life- there are rightst. He eats-that's a right-a right to food</i> <i>He has a job, that is also a right</i> <i>He is part of the union, that is also a right - EA</i>

Table 2 shows the results of the data triangulation using quantitative data pertaining to the understanding of human rights.

Table 2. Descriptive analysis of the conceptual understanding of Human Rights

Concepts	Frequency	Percentage
Freedom	7	14%
Accorded by law, which protects people	1	4%
Basic Foundation of Life	1	2%
Consolidation of Rights	1	2%
Equality	4	8%
Fundamentally God-given	3	6%
Inherent to human beings	18	36%
Principle on how to treat others	1	4%
Protection of People	1	4%
Expression of the right to Live	1	2%
Dignity of the person	5	10%
Entitlement/ Privilege of an individual	3	6%
Guaranteed by Law	1	2%
Guiding principles on how to treat others properly	2	4%
For the protection of people	1	2%
Right to Defend oneself	1	2%
Right to Vote	1	2%
To develop ourselves/ our abilities	1	2%

Table 3 shows the participants' understanding of how human rights ideas are constructed among individuals. The initial ideas that surfaced from key informants in the interview conducted regarding institutions or sectors of society that shape the individual's ideas of human rights connect heavily with the responses gathered through the following quantitative results with the majority, i.e. 56% of the respondents, asserting that the education sector is very influential in terms of how human rights are learned by individuals, followed by media influence (38%) and home or family (22%). Understanding human rights is consistent in all data sources used in the study. Responses

such as the dignity of man, freedom, and inherent are descriptions of human rights that relate to the human rights theories initially discussed in this study. These are, in fact, reflective of how individuals value human rights aside from the mere awareness or knowledge of their existence in human lives. Another significant idea in the data set is the role of different sectors in learning human rights. The social interactions of individuals with different elements of society create knowledge and awareness of human rights. Though dominant sectors were identified from the data sources, the variety of responses, as shown in Table 3, strengthens that social processes are invaluable in constructing ideas about human rights that connect with the theories used in this study.

Table 3. Descriptive analysis of how human rights are learned

Concepts	Frequency	Percentage
advocacy groups/civil society organizations	6	(12%)
cultural norms	2	(4%)
democratic environment	1	(2%)
education/ school	28	(56%)
environment	2	(4%)
existing laws / legal system	4	(8%)
experiences of an individual	1	(2%)
formal institutions of the society	1	(2%)
home/family	11	(22%)
social interactions/friends	4	(8%)
Mass media/ Social Media/ internet	19	(38%)
through reading books	4	(8%)
barangay discussions	1	(2%)
discourse	1	(2%)
the conventional way of learning	1	(2%)
experiences of a person	1	(2%)

3.2 Social Construction of Political Rights

Using thematic analysis and MAXQDA, the data from the research participants' interviews were analyzed regarding their interpretation of political rights. The data obtained showed that the dominant understandings of political rights were social responsibility, participation in state affairs, and legal entitlement. These are the same concepts that emerged from the data triangulation employed to determine the respondents' understanding of political rights based on the survey results presented in Figure 1.

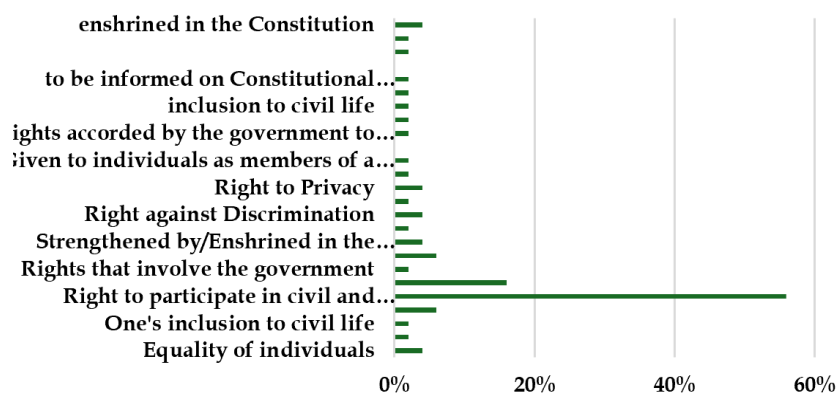


Figure 1. Respondents' understanding of political rights

Political rights are generally interpreted in the political landscape based on the ideas given by the research participants. Most respondents (Figure 1) connected political rights to the right to participate in civil and political affairs or activities of the state and society, which is also considered social responsibility. They are strongly associated with aspects of the right to vote or suffrage and ideas reflective of the state's role in terms of political rights enjoyment or realization.

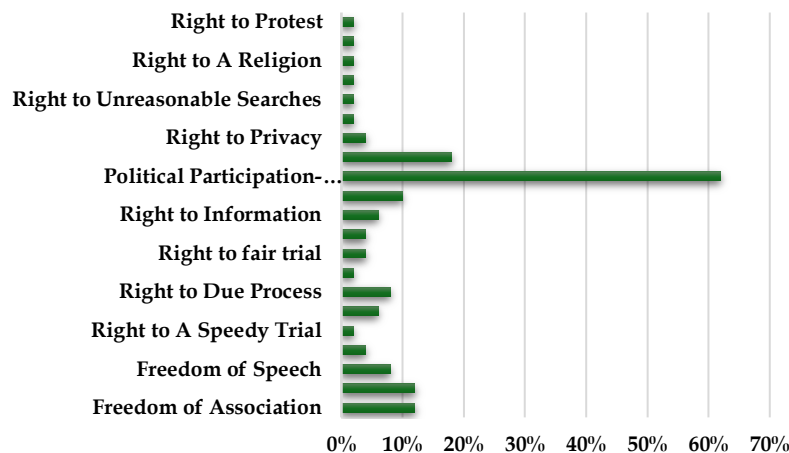


Figure 2. Different types of political rights

There is apparent awareness of the kinds of political rights identified by the respondents that are relevant to their interpretation of political rights. Those political rights shown in Figure 2 are consistent with the dominant interpretations yielded by the data presented in Figure 1, with suffrage/ election/right to vote as the dominantly identified political rights (62%). It must be noted that the notion of equality and justice is evident in the other rights identified by respondents, such as freedom of expression (12%) and freedom of association (12%). The data in Figure 2 also show that respondents view freedom of religion as relevant to political rights (20%), strengthening the concept that kinds of human rights are interrelated and indivisible. The interviews with key informants provided results similar to those of the survey. Political rights are seen as participatory, which dominantly pertains to the right to vote and freedom of speech and expression. Table 4 shows how political rights are socially constructed based on the ideas shared by key informants and other respondents.

Table 4. Quotation matrix of the social construction of political rights

Concepts	Quote Matrix
Education - Teachers - Curriculum/lessons - History - Immersive /actual engagements of students - Civics and Values Education	<i>That's why education is important...to have consciousness so that people have an idea about their political rights -ACT-JG</i> <i>Then, in school, of course, political rights are also learned, in values education, in civic education-MEDIA</i> <i>Based on the survey we conducted in 2020 with SWS, the educators are the most trusted in introducing human rights to people- CHR1</i>
Involvement in Community /student/youth organizing	<i>that's why organizing is a big help...not only inside the school... it's important, so that you can develop critical thinking and translate it into collective action. -CD</i>
Influence of Progressive political organizations	<i>The role played by different organizations, especially the political progressive organizations, is very important to inform our citizens from different sectors of society about their rights. ACT-JG</i>
Family Upbringing	<i>parents molding their children since they were young about sense of social justice because that includes teaching right or wrong, what is appropriate for you to give to others, what is the right justice, parents teach them to their children-MEDIA</i>
Teachings of the Church	<i>even the ten commandments don't lie, don't steal, things like ...those basic tenets of morality TFDP</i>

Actual engagement on advocacies	<i>our actual encounter with the laws..like the basic traffic laws. .as far as maybe complex issues, I think that can contribute to some of our knowledge of the political right- ACT-JG</i>
Legal Frameworks 1987 Philippine Constitution	<i>The Constitution Article 3 Bill Rights reflects the importance of political rights –the provisions addressed to state actors- CHR1</i>
Media/ social media	<i>The media or the social media are of great help in informing people about political rights or issues...just like the last election...the content...the campaigns -CHR2</i>

Delving on the meaningful lived experiences of the key informants, the data obtained in Table 4 show how political rights are socially constructed through the individuals' interactions with structures of the government and the various agencies of society. The data were consistent with the quantitative results as shown in Figure 3.

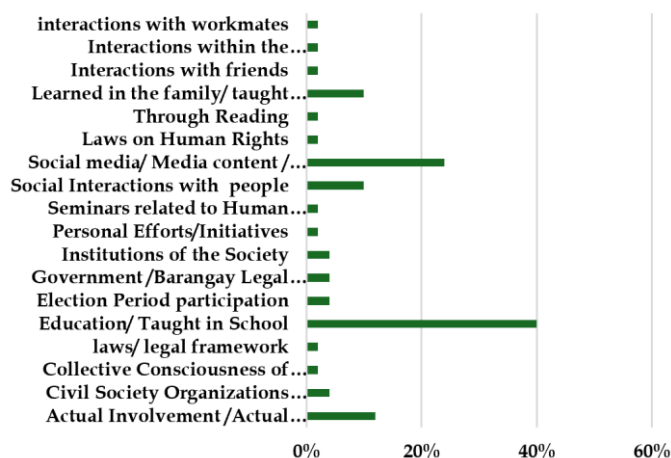


Figure 3. Social construction of political rights

The social construction of political rights transpires within the structures and agencies of society through the social interactions of individuals with one another and with the different social institutions that create the understanding of political rights. It is perceived to be greatly shaped by the education sector (40%), media platforms (24%), actual involvement in society (12%), social interactions (10%) and the role of the family (10%) as presented in Figure 3. These are consistent with the perspectives shared by key informants on how political rights are learned by individuals through identified sectors of society based on the data in Table 4, where education also emerged as the dominant sector that facilitates the social construction of political rights among members of society. This clearly shows the significance of different social institutions in developing awareness of political rights for every individual, i.e., from the personal sphere to the public sphere, political rights can be socially constructed. The message received from different sectors of society forms the basis and context of political rights among individuals. There are three aspects to be considered (Vinney, 2019) in social constructionism, namely: "(a) knowledge, which is the result of the interactions between the society and the individuals; (b) language, which shapes how individuals understand the society and (c) knowledge is politically driven". Berger (1966) theorized that social constructs can evolve because they are created in certain institutions and specific cultures. Anchored on these assertions, analysis, and synthesis of the gathered data of this study, it can be said that the message or knowledge individuals receive from both structures and agencies of society forms the basis and context of political rights among individuals that influence their social behaviours. The impact, thus, creates the knowledge and understanding of political rights, whether positive or negative. Data analysis shows that there are aspects that can be both within the domains of structures and agencies, such as education, which is the dominant sector identified by almost all participants and is reflected in various documents as the most influential in shaping awareness and understanding of political rights. On the other hand, there are elements confined to the government's structures, such as the

Commission on Human Rights, government policies, enactments, and other legal frameworks, which are also acknowledged by civil society that contribute to the understanding or awareness of human rights. The other agencies of society also shape people's awareness and understanding of political rights, such as the strong influence of media platforms, the teachings of the Church and the impact of progressive civil society organizations.

3.3 On Political Rights Situation

The analysis of the data as shown in Figure 4 pertaining to political issues currently taking place in the Philippine society reflect the status of political rights in the country with the numerous issues identified (24 issues). The diversity of issues cited in the study implies the complex political rights issues in the society which research participants perceive as political in nature and the need to analyze the role portrayed by the state. Dominant responses (Figure 4) as regard political rights issues in the Philippine society are red tagging (16%), curtailed freedom of speech (16%), correlated to attacks on journalists (10%); extrajudicial killings (10%) and corruption (10%). These are the same dominant issues perceived to be currently taking place in the Philippines based on the interviews conducted with human rights experts which actually depict a negative image of political rights status in the present society. This includes the controversial Executive Order No.70 or the Whole of Nation Approach to counter insurgency in the country, the Anti-Terrorism Act, and the creation of NTF ELCAC which research participants described as threats to promotion of human rights in the country.

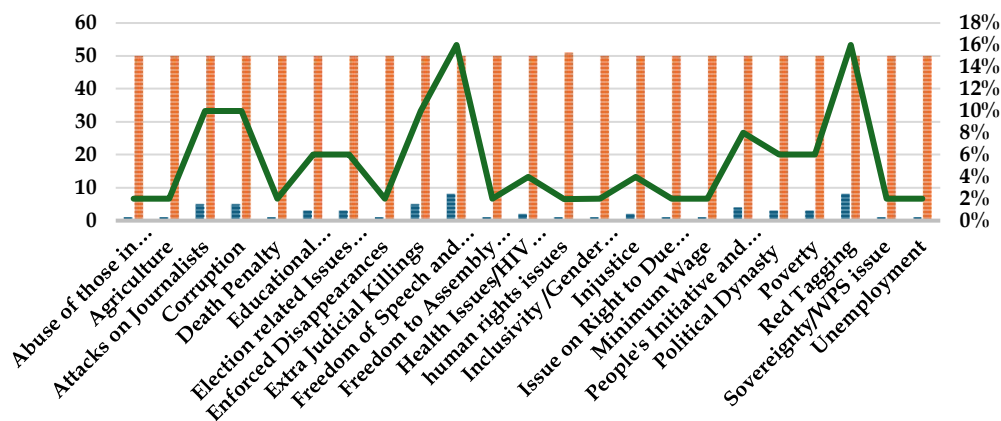


Figure 4. Political rights violations

The struggle towards upholding political rights in the country persists because of the continuing distinction between two social-political frameworks- the government's structures continue to adhere to and promote the National Security Doctrine-everything allegedly for the benefit of the state, i.e. to maintain peace and order by protecting, national security against its perceived enemies. On the other side is the democratic framework of civil society where the government is viewed as duty bearer and the citizens as rights holders. The joint analysis of qualitative and quantitative data on political rights situations and issues in contemporary Philippine society point at the following structural flaws allegedly disguised as national security blankets, namely- the Anti-Terrorism Act, Executive Order No. 70 and the establishment of National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF ELCAC) are perceived to have a chilling effect on democratic ideals. Failure of the state to fulfil its duties or responsibilities to its people pushes civil society to use its political rights to redress grievances through collective and progressive social movements, which the government eventually perceives as threats to national security. Thus, it is viewed as a shrinking civic space, especially for progressive political organizations. Freedom is curtailed, and voices are not heard as to redress grievances which the government sees otherwise, the adherence to the rule of law and the protection of national security from the threats of insurgents as one of its primary responsibilities.

Table 5 Joint analysis of qualitative and quantitative data on upholding political rights

Sectors	Course of Action	Quote Matrix
Education	Seminars and trainings for teachers and students on human rights	<i>Teachers really play a big role in developing the critical mind of students...of course I will go back and relearn my lessons from my teachers back then...religion, social studies...history.... PHR</i>
	Capacity training of teachers on Human Rights Education	<i>the basic thing that is really important there is education..to have consciousness so that people have an idea about their political rights..-ACT JG</i>
	Courses/ subjects on human rights	
	Inclusion of human rights in the curriculum More responsive and relevant curriculum on human rights in the Philippine context	<i>ideally it would be part of the curriculum from elementary school, it will be repeated in high school, it will be required in college, regardless of what course you take, we will understand our rights and the obligations of the government because in other countries it is part of the curriculum-A I Phil</i>
	Actual student participation on activities related to human rights study Immersive way of teaching human rights	<i>we only learn about him when we are involved in politics- either -directly or indirectly...EA</i>
	Teaching proper ways of engaging on human rights concerns	<i>When you said directly, you can be in the LGU or in the government...you can also be in civic work or humanitarian...so that's a challenge, so it's like we only know or realize human rights there-PHR</i>
Church	Strengthen call for social justice through preachings/sermon	<i>When you trace the development part of the social teachings, it really became, this is the guide, well of course we have the gospel...but the social doctrines, the social teachings are really strong guides for the hierarchy, lay people, members of the organization who are really engaged on human rights, workers rights, humans rights, protection of life, now we have environmental rights and Pope Francis is emphasizing it ... it is said there that the cry of the earth is the cry of the poor.- CD</i>
	Integrate human rights in preaching	<i>Of course, the church has been a big help, the Catholic and other churches that we can say have an appreciation for human rights. In particular, the Catholic Church has played a big role in developing social teachings because it gives appreciation from the very beginning. in recognizing the rights and dignity of workers. Basically, if you look at the teachings shared by the church, there are those things, basic rights, human rights. Basically, when you look at the teachings shared by the church, there are those things, basic rights, human rights. - A I Phil</i>
	Continued moral guidance-	<i>The institutional Church should be, for example, the Catholic Church being the largest , it should share teachings about human rights as a part of being human.. That's why I welcome Pope Francis' synodality that has a process to listen to ordinary citizens -EA</i>
	Join commercials/TV ads about human rights	
Mass Media/social media	Provide more informative programs on human rights/educational information on human rights	<i>"...to invest a lot of resources on good journalism and good reporting that could touch on the reporting of human rights issues. ...the upheaval of technology that has shaped people's preference" MEDIA FS</i>
	Expose human rights violations/ abuses Post educational content on human rights Stop spreading fake news/control fake news Raise awareness through content/programs Make creative/informative ads on human rights Reach out to younger generation	<i>"People have higher awareness of their political rights because of social media" CHR2</i>

NGOs/ Advocates	Collaborate with the government to strengthen human rights promotion and protection-planning and implementation	<i>Various organizations, especially the political progressive organizations, are doing a great job to inform our citizens from different sectors of society about their rights.</i>
	Continue peacefully with what it is presently doing Go to rural areas and teach people about their rights Community engagement and education Be the voice of those without voice	<i>I think this civil society is becoming an alternative space ACTJG</i>
Commission on Human Rights	Conduct seminars	<i>There are things in the structure that are working. Like The Commission on Human Rights, because mandated by the Constitution</i>
	Support advocacies that will be beneficial to all	<i>No matter who becomes president, nothing can be done, there is CHR..the participation court of the progressive groups of civil society- MEDIA-FS</i>
	Appreciation on the role of CHR as the conscience of the government	
	Continue with its programs and activities to promote human rights in the country	<i>CHR services and initiatives are anchored on Protection, Promotion, Prevention and Policy. -CHR2</i>

Table 5 shows the need to address political rights issues and the perceived ways by which they could be upheld. The primary responsibility emanates from the government which must collaborate with other sectors of society. Institutions considered influential in the social construction of human rights in general and political rights in particular are the same sectors identified as invaluable in upholding human rights in society, such as education, media, family, church, NGOs and the Commission on Human Rights.

3.5 Needs Arising from Political Rights Situation

The data gathered helped determine the needs arising from the political rights situation in the country. Analysed and categorized into two aspects, the agential needs are (a) social justice, (b) responsive and good governance, (c) participatory governance, and (d) rights-based development. On the other hand, the government system asserts (a) the rule of law, (b) peace and order, and (c) progress and development within the ambit of its authority and power. Asserting political rights comes from two vantage points- democratic ideals and national interest. Civil society asserts people's political rights in the context of the democratic system, and the government implements policies in the context of national interest. It must be emphasized that rights are not absolute and are coupled with responsibilities in the same manner that the state has moral and legal obligations to its people, particularly in terms of upholding their human rights. It can be said that the journey of promoting human rights in the country continues. Data shows the need to revisit, if not abolish, existing laws perceived to be detrimental to the flourishing of political rights in the country, such as the Anti-Terrorism Act, EO No.70 and the NTF _ELCAC. They remain the crucial points of contention of government and non-government sectors.

3.6 Structure-Agency Construction of Political Rights

The study points at how the integrated structures and agencies of society influence the individuals' construction of political rights. Documents analysed and data gathered also adhere to the significance of integrated response mechanisms from the structures and agencies of the society to address political rights issues. It must be mentioned that data from this study proves that both the government sector and the other agencies of society recognize and value the contribution of one another in this particular social issue. Table 5 identifies the course of action that sectors can take to uphold political rights in the country. The national government's right-based development agenda (2020-2022) report reflects the need for multi-sectoral participation and integration. As one research participant asserted that the government cannot do it alone, nor can one sector do it, the integrated structure agency approach is already operationalised in theory and in practice.

4.0 Conclusion

The struggle to uphold human rights in Philippine society is ongoing. Political rights are understood within the context of the political landscape, emphasizing participation in state affairs, suffrage, and freedom of speech and

expression. The social construction of political rights emerges from interactions among individuals, shaped by societal structures and agencies. Key influences on understanding and appreciating political rights include education, media, family, the church, and NGOs. These sectors are considered crucial in upholding political rights, with significant roles attributed to the state in their realization. The education sector is the most influential in shaping individuals' understanding and support of political rights. This highlights the necessity for a new legislation or sets of policy programs that institutionalize the teaching of human rights within the Philippine educational system. Integrating state power with the collective efforts of various societal agencies can enhance the promotion and protection of human rights through multisectoral approaches and a rights-based development agenda. This necessitates revisiting existing laws or amending policies, such as Executive Order No. 70, to address human rights broadly and political rights specifically. Such measures would ensure a more comprehensive and effective approach to human rights education and advocacy in the Philippines.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

The authors express their equal contribution in this work. The authors reviewed and approved the final version of this research output.

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest

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