



Developing a Method for Recording Drug-Related Killings

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ABSTRACT. President Rodrigo Duterte’s “war on drugs” has fostered a culture of violence and impunity that has seen an alarming increase in the number of unresolved killings. There is a need to probe these killings in a methodological manner so as not to cause even more confusion among a people already bombarded with misinformation on a near-daily basis. There are a number of databases and estimates of the drug war’s casualty count, but few actually take the time to explain how they come up with their figures. This study aims to (1) develop a method in recording drug-related deaths in the Philippines, (2) to create a database of reported killings using the method developed, and (3) to identify key trends in the circumstances of the deaths and the media’s coverage of those deaths. The main contribution of this study is neither an exact death toll nor an exhaustive record of victims but a clear set of parameters on what constitute drug-related deaths and how they can be recorded by other concerned parties. Due to practical constraints, the study was based only on the news reports of a single source. Still, recording drug-related killings is a step toward seeking accountability from its perpetrators. It is hoped that, through this endeavor, institutions, especially the academe, will be encouraged to monitor killings in their localities, particularly those that are often out of the mainstream media’s reach.

KEYWORDS. drug-related killings · counting · database · drug war

INTRODUCTION

On the campaign trail of the 2016 Philippine presidential election, Rodrigo Duterte had promised to kill a hundred thousand criminals and dump so many bodies in Manila Bay that “fish will grow fat’ from feeding on them” (AFP 2016a). He had promised good business for funeral parlors with all the dead bodies that he was to supply (AFP 2016a). He had promised drug pushers, kidnappers, and robbers that they would be killed should they “resist” arrest (AFP 2016b). He had, on several occasions, unequivocally promised death for drug suspects (Cigal 2016; Iyengar 2016). In an event celebrating his presidential

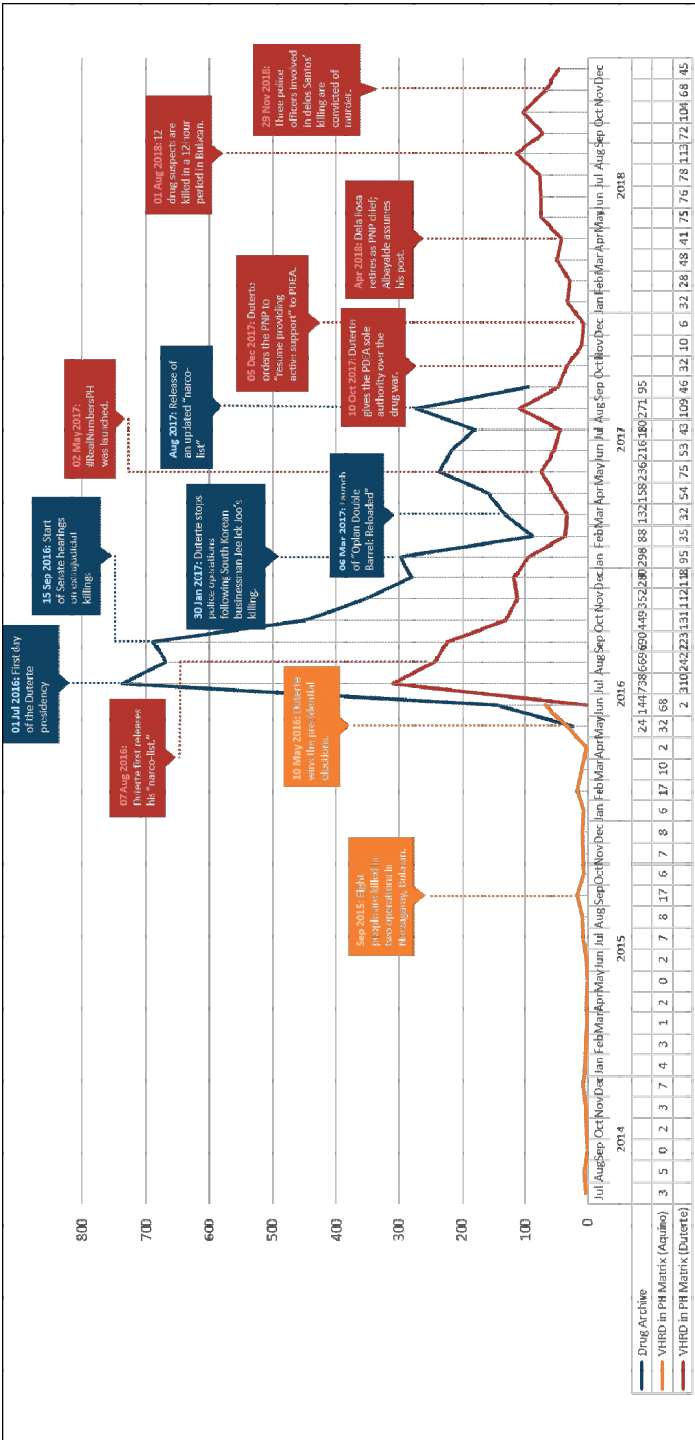


FIGURE 1. Drug-related deaths from July 2014 to December 2018 with notable events plotted. Additional source of data is the Drug Archive (see David et al., 2018).

victory, he had even encouraged citizens to take the law into their own hands by killing drug pushers themselves. “Shoot him [a suspected drug pusher] and I’ll give you a medal,” he said (quoted in Gomez 2016). Duterte had promised the Filipinos that his war on drugs would be bloody (Bascos 2015), and he has made good on that promise.

From May to June of 2016, before the then president-elect was even inaugurated, the number of drug-related killings had already started to increase (figure 1; Cepeda 2016; O’Neill 2016). On July 1, 2016, Duterte’s first day in office, the Drug Archive recorded a total of 39 killings (David et al. 2018). That was the same day that the Philippine National Police (PNP) released Command Memorandum Circular (CMC) No. 16-2016, more popularly known as Oplan Double Barrel, and formally launched the Duterte administration’s two-pronged, police-led drug war—with Project Tokhang at its forefront. Tokhang, an amalgam of the Visayan words *toktok* and *hangyo*—which mean “to knock” and “to plead,” respectively (Ong 2018)—was launched with the intention of conducting house-to-house visitations of suspected drug personalities and persuading them “to stop their illegal drug activities” (PNP 2016). However, with the spate of drug-related killings occurring during these operations, human rights advocates saw tokhang as but a mechanism for killing. Lawyer Jose Manuel “Chel” Diokno pointed out that CMC 16-2016 repeatedly used the term “neutralization” in reference to drug personalities (Dizon and Tubeza 2017). He argued that the word “had no counterpart in law” and that “. . . neutralization only means one thing. And that is to kill” (Dizon and Tubeza 2017). The police denied this accusation. Then PNP chief and now Senator Ronald dela Rosa retorted that to kill is but one of the many ways to neutralize (Tubeza 2017). Yet, in the months that followed Oplan Double Barrel’s implementation, the bodies of drug suspects continued to pile up in the thousands at the hands of both law enforcement agents and unidentified assailants.

ATTEMPTING TO ACCOUNT FOR THE DEAD

Due to the sudden rise in the number of killings, various institutions—ranging from media platforms and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) to government agencies, and most recently, the academe—saw the need to monitor and record the number of drug-related deaths in the country. One of the first to do so was the news website *Inquirer*. On

July 7, 2016, merely seven days into the new administration, it published a list of “casualties in the Duterte administration’s war on crime”—this became the Kill List. Despite their attempt to record victims of the “war on crime,” the editor’s note prefacing the list stated that “most of those killed were identified by the police as *tulak* (suspected drug dealers or pushers) in particular. An entry in the list generally included a person’s name and alias, the time of his/her death, the location of the incident, the assailants responsible for the killing, and other relevant details, such as inclusion in a drug watchlist. These entries were grouped according to the dates of the incidents, which were then arranged from the most recent to the least. As of February 16, 2017, *Inquirer’s* Kill List had recorded a total of 2,174 deaths since May 10, 2016—the day after the national elections. On October 8, 2016, *Vera Files* used the *Inquirer’s* data to create graphs and infographics summarizing the killings across a number of variables. Excluding entries with incomplete details, they were able to analyze 1,153 out of the then 1,213 recorded cases. They found that most of the victims were males and suspected drug pushers that were killed by the police.

A week after the release of the Kill List, the ABS-CBN Investigative and Research Group also published their own attempt to monitor the killings using news reports and press releases of the PNP and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA)—this time focusing exclusively on drug-related deaths. The list itself only reports the names and aliases of the victims and the locations and dates of the incidents, but unlike the Kill List, ABS-CBN’s death toll also includes an interactive map and charts summarizing the number of killings according to month, province, region, and assailant type. From May 10, 2016 to July 2, 2019, the group had recorded a total of 5,997 drug war deaths.

In spite of the media’s attempts to generate reliable casualty counts, the real number remained elusive, as law enforcement agencies, those at the frontlines of the war on drugs, kept their data under wraps. On May 2, 2017, amid debates about the actual death toll, the then-newly created Inter-Agency Committee on Anti-Illegal Drugs (ICAD)—consisting of various government agencies led by PDEA—organized a forum called “#RealNumbersPH” in an effort to supposedly “clarify the confusing and divisive numbers in the government’s campaign [against illegal drugs],” according to forum host and political science professor Antonio Contreras (quoted in *Rappler* 2017). In their coverage of this event, *Rappler* noted that “the need to ‘clarify’ presumably stemmed from a video message of Vice President Leni

Robredo in mid-March 2017,” wherein she claimed that, as of then, 7,000 people had been summarily executed—a figure vehemently denied by the PNP. Based on data from the police, 2,717 drug suspects were killed in legitimate antidrug operations from July 1, 2016 to April 23, 2017. As of the end of March 2017, another 1,847 cases out of the 9,432 “homicide cases under investigation” (HCUI) were classified as “drug-related”—bringing the total number of confirmed drug-related deaths to 4,564 less than a year into the Duterte administration (Gavilan 2017; *Rappler* 2017).

Following that forum, the #RealNumbersPH initiative became an ongoing endeavor. A Facebook page with the same name was set up, and on it, updates on figures that have to do with the war on drugs are regularly posted. As of this writing, their latest update claimed that a total of 5,526 people have been killed in antidrug operations during the first half of the administration, from July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2019. HCUI and drug-related deaths perpetrated by unidentified assailants were not among the reported figures, but, in a television interview with PNP spokesperson Col. Bernard Banac on March 4, 2019, he said that the number of “deaths under investigation” (DUI), a term used interchangeably with HCUI, had reached 29,000—with at least 3,062 linked to illegal drugs (Tupas 2019).

With #RealNumbersPH, the government sought to belie casualty counts they regarded as fake, bloated, and misleading (Santos and Ebbighausen 2018). This intention was made clear by the caption to the Philippine Television Network’s (PTV) livestream of the May 2017 forum: “Do not be fooled by Fake Numbers. Know the *Real* Numbers.” Yet, contrary to their goal of providing the public with “real” and reliable information on the drug war, the figures released were found to be too general and rife with inconsistencies (*Vera Files* 2018). According to the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ), for instance, the #RealNumbersPH death toll as of last May 23, 2017, (3,027) was greater than those provided by both the PNP Directorate for Operations (2,962) and the PNP Double Barrel Secretariat (3,002) for the same time period. The discrepancies in the numbers of antidrug operations conducted, suspects arrested, and individuals who surrendered reported by #RealNumbersPH and the two PNP units were found to be even greater, with the former presenting figures that were thousands more than those sourced from the PNP.

Apart from law enforcement agencies and the media, NGOs and unaffiliated private individuals have also attempted to gather information on and map out victims of Duterte's war on drugs. The Foundation for Media Alternatives, in partnership with the Association for Progressive Communications and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, recorded a total of 3,400 drug war victims from June 30, 2016 to February 19, 2018, and plotted them on a map in their website called *Ang Pangako* (The Promise), which the Foundation for Media Alternatives described as "an online repository of information on the aftereffects of the campaign against illegal drugs." A group of concerned individuals also sought to make a compilation of victims of the drug war. Like the Foundation for Media Alternatives, they used mostly media reports to gather information on the victims, which they then used to set up individual profiles of the dead in the form of "an online memorial" on their website, *Paalam* (Goodbye) (www.paalam.org). In accordance with their goal of countering the dehumanization that they feared may come with reporting casualties as mere numbers and statistics, they did not indicate the total number of victims that they were able to record.

Seeing the lack of individual-level data to support the numerous varying death tolls provided by both government and nongovernment organizations, the Ateneo School of Government of the Ateneo de Manila University sought to create the "most comprehensive, available victim-level list of killings in the Duterte administration's antidrug campaign"—marking the first initiative from the academic sector to record deaths resulting from Duterte's war on drugs. With De La Salle University, the University of the Philippines Diliman, and the Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism at Columbia University, the Ateneo School of Government formed the Drug Archive—a research consortium that aims to conduct "multidisciplinary and evidence-based research on the antidrug campaign in the Philippines." The consortium developed a database of drug-related killings that was first revealed to the public in a forum held at the Ateneo de Manila University in June 2018 (Talabong 2018; detailed overview in David et al. 2018). Using as much information as they could gather from media reports and other publicly available sources, the Drug Archive team accounted for cases that conformed to the inclusion criteria that they had set, and encoded information from those cases across an unspecified number of variables related to the victims and the incidents in question. In the second forum organized by the team in April 2019,

they revealed that they had recorded a total of 7,029 drug-related deaths from May 10, 2016 to December 31, 2018.

With the above death-monitoring efforts, it is clear that coming up with an accurate number of drug-related deaths is a tall order. This difficulty stems largely from a lack of transparency on the end of law enforcement agencies and partly from methodological problems encountered by those who have attempted to count the dead. The opaqueness of the PNP's data is no longer new information; the government has repeatedly refused to hand over documentation of drug war cases to probing parties for reasons related to "national security" (Gavilan 2018; Torres-Tupas 2019). Furthermore, the social cards posted on the Facebook page of #RealNumbersPH only report general and oftentimes inconsistent summary figures. Since the launch of the antidrug campaign, the police have also created confusing and overlapping categories to describe deaths occurring outside the confines of police operations—DUI in August 2016, which evolved into "murder cases under investigation" (MCUI) in January 2017, and later into HCUI in March 2017 (Santos and Ebbighausen 2018)—which are not reported as part of #RealNumbersPH. Considering that the PNP and other law enforcement agencies at the forefront of the drug war serve as the primary sources of information of those who have attempted to monitor the killings, this lack of transparency threatens the validity of the latter's data and analyses. Due to the public's restricted access to police data, concerned organizations and individuals have mostly depended on media reports to track the killings. However, the media itself largely depend on limited police reports (Santos and Ebbighausen 2018) and have, on most occasions, merely echoed what law enforcers have said (CMFR 2019). They also suffer from metropolitan bias, with killings occurring in far-flung areas of the country being less likely to reach mainstream news—a limitation that was acknowledged by the Drug Archive team as well.

Aside from these issues with the sources, there also seems to be a problem in defining what exactly qualifies as a "drug-related death." This has resulted in the conflation of the motives behind the killings. For example, the *Inquirer's* Kill List and Paalam both took note of cases that had no clear links to illegal drugs; the former recorded victims of the "war on crime" in general while the latter included "unexplained murders that have *unclear motives* but are 'copycat' by modus operandi of drug-related killings." Yet, when *Vera Files* analyzed the Kill List, this distinction was not pointed out, and their findings were presented as

an analysis of the “war on *drugs*.” The government itself appears to be confused as to the real number and nature of the deaths. After repeatedly claiming that not all deaths under investigation are related to drugs (Cudis 2019), they then included the 16,355 HCUI as of the end of September 2017 in the “#RealNumbers” section of the “Fighting Illegal Drugs” chapter of the president’s 2017 year-end accomplishment report (*Vera Files* 2019). In a resolution released April 2018, the Supreme Court questioned both the high casualty count and the fact that it was included in the administration’s accomplishment report, which they warned “. . . may lead to the inference that these are state-sponsored killings” (Supreme Court 2018, 46; specifically GR 234359). During a press conference in July 2019, Communications Assistant Secretary Marie Rafael-Banaag dismissed this inclusion of HCUI as a mere “copy and paste” gaffe committed by whoever prepared the president’s report, reiterating that “HCUIs are *not at all* related to the war on drugs” (quoted in Tordesillas 2019). Moments later, however, she contradicted herself by saying that the case of Kian de los Santos, the 17-year-old boy killed in Caloocan City under the guise of a legitimate antidrug police operation, was classified under the same category supposedly unrelated to the drug war (Tordesillas 2019).

The inconsistent use of terms and the lack of a clear set of definitions may account for the great disparity in the death toll estimates of concerned parties. Whereas the government does not report HCUI or DUI that are linked to illegal drugs in its #RealNumbersPH updates, some casualty counts include all deaths under those categories in theirs—thereby generating numbers that are tens of thousands apart. This was also *Vera Files*’s verdict when they fact-checked the vice president’s claim that 7,000 people had been summarily executed: “While it’s true that more than 8,000 have been killed since President Rodrigo Duterte waged a bloody war on drugs, not all these deaths are drug-related” (*Vera Files* 2017). This is not to say that deaths that have nothing to do with illegal drugs are not worth our attention. There is no doubt that Duterte’s “war on drugs” has fostered a culture of violence and impunity that has seen an alarming increase in the number of unresolved killings—regardless of drug link—and that, in itself, merits public attention and outrage. However, there is a need to probe these killings in a methodological manner so as to not cause even more confusion among a people already bombarded with misinformation on a near-daily basis. This is what the Violence,

Human Rights, and Democracy in the Philippines (VHRD) project of the Third World Studies Center of the University of the Philippines Diliman, in partnership with Ghent University and the University of Antwerp, sought to do in developing a method for recording the victims of the antidrug campaign.

DEVELOPING A DATABASE FOR DRUG-RELATED KILLINGS IN THE PHILIPPINES

There is no shortage of estimates of the drug war's casualty count, but few actually take the time to explain how they come up with those numbers. The Drug Archive was the first to produce a working paper explaining their methodology, and the VHRD research network saw the need for more similarly academic input on the matter. This study was thus undertaken with three main goals: (1) to develop a method in recording drug-related deaths in the Philippines; (2) to create a database of reported killings using the method developed; and (3) to identify key trends in the circumstances of the deaths and the media's coverage of those deaths. It must be noted, however, that the main contribution of this study is neither an exact death toll nor an exhaustive record of victims but a clear set of parameters on what constitute drug-related deaths and how they can be recorded by other concerned parties. Recording drug-related killings is a step toward seeking accountability from its perpetrators. We hope that, through this endeavor, institutions, especially academic ones, will be encouraged to monitor killings in their localities, particularly those that are often out of the mainstream media's reach.

Methods

Due to practical constraints, the database that was developed only made use of news reports from a single source—the *Philippine Daily Inquirer's* online portal, *Inquirer* (www.inquirer.net). The *Inquirer* was chosen for a number of reasons. It has a reputation for being the Philippine's "paper of record" (Claudio 2014) and has a wide reach across the country "with four regional bureaus, over 130 provincial correspondents . . . and four printing presses in Cebu, Davao, Laguna, and Manila. . ." (Philippine Daily Inquirer, n.d.). Moreover, its online portal has an organized and easily navigable article index that may be browsed on a daily level. With the Kill List, the *Inquirer* was also the

first organization to compile and publish a record of killings resulting from the Duterte administration's anticriminality campaign.¹ Thus, we believed that the *Inquirer's* coverage of drug-related deaths would provide us with a somewhat representative sample of reported drug war victims. However, we also recognize that relying on a single source—a single media source at that—comes with many limitations, which will be discussed at a later section. To be able to address these limitations, we hope to be able to utilize other sources of information on the deaths—such as other news sources, court cases, witness accounts, and government sources, should they become available to the public—in the future. We encourage other interested parties to do the same.

Inclusion Criteria

There were two sets of criteria for inclusion in the database: the (1) Article Inclusion Criteria and the (2) Subject Inclusion Criteria. The former was used to select articles reporting on drug-related incidents that led to at least one person's death while the latter was used to select the deaths that were considered in this study.

ARTICLE INCLUSION CRITERIA

The database covered articles published from July 1, 2014 to December 31, 2018. The last two years of former President Benigno Simeon C. Aquino III's administration were included to be able to see any continuities, discontinuities, or changes in the trends of *Inquirer*-reported drug-related deaths as the country transitioned to the Duterte administration. Moreover, while it is often regarded as common knowledge that the number of drug-related killings during the present administration is greater than those during the Aquino administration, we have not seen this claim backed by empirical data. Our research tried to address this gap with data drawn from verifiable information.

Only articles that were listed under the "News" and "Regions" sections of the *Inquirer's* article index were considered. Encoders were instructed to go through articles whose headlines contain keywords pertaining in general to violence, death, criminal activity and illegal

1. It is worth noting that, in 2017, business tycoon Ramon Ang, whom Duterte has described as a "fast friend," acquired a majority stake in the newspaper. There were concerns that this change in leadership would erode the *Inquirer's* journalistic standards (*Forbes* 2017), but since then, there have been no observed or reported changes in the news organization's coverage of drug-related deaths and other acts of violence implicating the state.

drugs. In particular, for articles on the antidrug campaign published after Duterte's presidential win. They then looked for at least one of the following: (1) a drug-related, law enforcement-led operation or activity, (2) a drug-related, insurgent group-led operation or activity, (3) a drug-related encounter between identified private individuals, or (4) a drug-related vigilante or unknown assailant activity. The article was then included in the database if any of those four scenarios led to a person's death in the manner specified under the Subject Inclusion Criteria.

SUBJECT INCLUSION CRITERIA

Although this database was constructed to record drug-related deaths, we also decided to make a tally of the other outcomes (e.g., injuries, arrests, surrenders, among others) occurring in conjunction with those deaths. However, complete details were still only encoded for victims who were killed through violent means—often shot, stabbed, or beaten to death—and who satisfied at least one of the following criteria: (1) was reportedly killed during a drug-related operation, activity, or encounter; (2) was reported to be involved in the drug trade or in the war on drugs in whatever capacity (e.g., alleged drug personality, law enforcer, informant, among others); (3) was reported to be in possession of illegal drugs or drug paraphernalia at the time of the killing or when his/her body was found; (4) was reported to be associated with someone involved in the drug trade or in the war on drugs (e.g., kin, employees of drug suspects, and antidrug agents); or (5) was reportedly killed by someone involved in the drug trade for drug-related reasons or while under the influence of drugs.

The first four criteria were meant to describe victims of the antidrug campaign—mostly suspected drug personalities, collateral damage victims, and law enforcement agents killed in action. On the other hand, part of the fifth criterion was meant to account for victims of drug suspects, people whose deaths are typically not explored by groups investigating drug war casualties. The inclusion of this last criterion was done in recognition of the protestations of some that only the deaths of drug suspects are of interest to human rights advocates and not those of their victims (Romero 2019). Moreover, there may be a relationship between these two kinds of drug-related deaths—those targeting and those perpetrated by suspected drug personalities—as the latter is sometimes used to justify the existence of the former. However, it is important to note that this inclusion does

not equate possibly state-sponsored killings to those carried out by criminals.

EXCLUSION CRITERIA

Killings committed for identified motives that have nothing to do with the illegal drug trade or with the war on drugs, such as personal grudges or political rivalry, were excluded from this database—even if the victims satisfied the abovementioned subject criteria. Furthermore, deaths that initially satisfied the subject criteria but were later reported as unrelated to illegal drugs were removed from the database.

Variables

Once a subject satisfied the inclusion criteria listed above, an entry was made in the Microsoft Excel file of the database and twenty-seven variables were taken into account. These variables and their corresponding options were derived from an assessment of articles that were sampled during the initial development of this database and from the consultation of earlier counting initiatives and relevant government documents. Related variables were then grouped together to form the following nine categories:

1. Subject Status: This variable indicates whether a subject is dead or alive. A number of possible outcomes, such as “injured,” “arrested,” and “surrendered,” are available for living individuals.
2. Subject Demographics: These include both demographic information (i.e., gender, age, and occupation) and variables that serve as distinguishing characteristics (i.e., name and residence).
3. Assailant Information: This category consists of variables on the perpetration of the killing—including the type of assailant responsible, the type of operation during which the subject was killed (if applicable), and the manner through which he or she was killed.
4. Drug Involvement: One of the variables under this category specifies whether or not a subject was reportedly involved in illegal drugs, which is then used to separate targeted drug suspects from collateral damage victims. This category also includes any information on the subject’s alleged drug involvement that were acquired prior to the killing as well

- as his or her reported drug personality type: high-profile target, user, or pusher.
5. Drug Possession: Closely linked to the preceding category, this refers to whether or not illegal drugs were found with the subject. It also includes the type, amount, and value of the drugs recovered.
 6. Other Items Found: This indicates, if any, other notable items were found with the subject aside from illegal drugs, like arms, drug paraphernalia, money, placard, among others.
 7. Incident Information: This includes the date, time, and location of the incident.
 8. Number of Deaths Involved: This variable indicates whether the subject was involved in an incident with a single death or one with multiple casualties.
 9. Administration: Dependent on the date of the incident, this variable indicates if the death occurred during the Aquino or the Duterte administration.

The complete list of variables, corresponding options, and definitions devised by the researchers can be downloaded from the project website, <https://dahas.upd.edu.ph/database/>. Among these twenty-seven variables, ten allowed for multiple option selections: (1) subject status, (2) occupation, (3) specific assailants (under the state agent category), (4) manner of death, (5) source of prior information on drug involvement, (6–9) the type, amount (in number and in unit), and value of illegal drugs recovered, and (10) other items found with the body. The rest required only one entry for every variable. Furthermore, all but four of these variables were used to define the completeness of an entry. The source of prior information, the amount of drugs recovered—both the numerical component and the unit of measurement—and the value of these drugs were not considered required data points.

Aside from these variables, an “Additional Notes” section was included in the database, where encoders could input qualitative information regarding the subject or the incident which the current set variables could not encompass. The text of placards found in “body dumps” and items recovered from the victims that were not among the listed options were also encoded here.

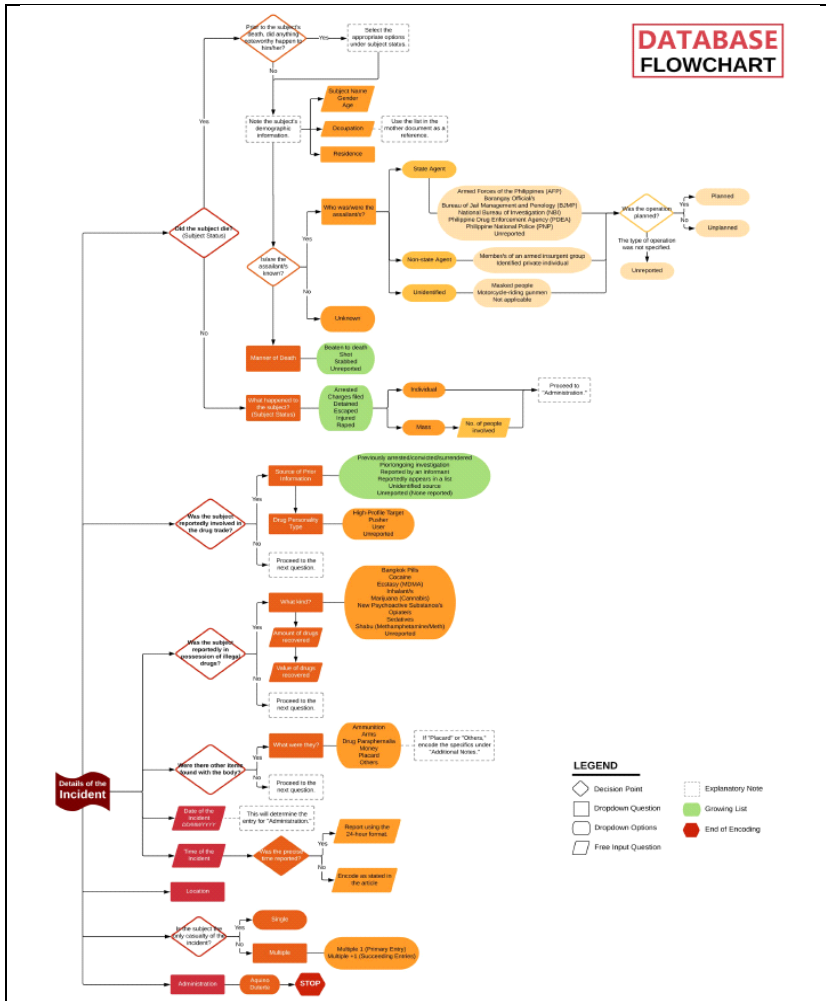


FIGURE 2. The database encoding flowchart. A high resolution copy can be downloaded from the Dahas (Violence) website at <https://dahas.upd.edu.ph/download-section/>.

Encoding

This database was created by a team of five people, of which four were responsible for encoding. All encoders were briefed regarding the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the definitions of the variables and their options, and the coding process. Once an incident was identified

to be “drug-related,” all relevant actors involved in the incident were encoded in the manner illustrated in the encoding flowchart (figure 2; a high resolution copy can be downloaded at the project website <https://dahas.upd.edu.ph/download-section/>). As seen in the flowchart, the coding process was guided by four main questions, which mirror the subject inclusion criteria:

1. Did the subject die?
2. Was the subject reportedly involved in the drug trade?
3. Was the subject reportedly in possession of illegal drugs?
4. Were there other items found with the body?

First, they were to note whether or not a subject died, as complete details were only encoded for the dead. At most, only three variables were encoded for living individuals involved in the same incident as dead victims—subject status, the number of individuals involved in an outcome (if applicable), and administration. Under subject status, encoders could select multiple outcomes for the same subject or set of subjects granted that those outcomes were mutually exclusive from one another—that is, they could occur simultaneously. For example, for individuals who were arrested, detained, and then released with charges filed, only the outcomes “Released” and “Charges filed” were encoded. If a particular outcome or set of outcomes, excluding death, involved more than one person, encoders chose the mass counterpart of that outcome and indicated the number of individuals involved in the succeeding column. Otherwise, they chose the individual counterpart. After indicating the subject status, they proceeded to encode the administration under which the outcome occurred and leave everything else blank.

For victims who died, encoders were given the discretion to encode outcomes prior to a subject’s death which they deemed noteworthy. Examples of these include detention, torture, and rape before the death. After selecting relevant outcomes, they then encoded the victim’s name, gender, age, occupation, and residence. To ensure that occupations were encoded in a uniform manner, encoders were instructed to consult and contribute to a reference list of occupations. Even previously held occupations were encoded, but if they were reported along with positions held by victims at the time of their death, the latter were encoded first. For residence, encoders used a dropdown list of the 2018 Philippine Standard Geographic Code published

online by the Philippine Statistical Authority. This list contains all regions, provinces, cities, municipalities, and *barangay* (villages) in the country, and encoders were instructed to encode the most specific level reported in the article.

After indicating the subjects' demographic information, encoders distinguished between assailants that were seen by witnesses or captured by surveillance cameras—or both—(Known Assailants) and those that were not (Unknown Assailants). Known assailants were divided into three general categories—state agent, nonstate agent, and unidentified assailants—which were further divided into specific agencies and groups of people, as shown in the figure 2. State agents were defined as members of law enforcement agencies, such as the PNP, PDEA, the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, and the National Bureau of Investigation. Barangay officials were also classified as state agents given their key role in peace-and-order maintenance within their unit of government and their involvement in antidrug operations conducted by the police. Nonstate agents, on the other hand, were defined as either members of armed insurgent groups or private individuals whose identities were revealed. The third and final category consisted of unidentified assailants, who differ from unknown assailants as we have defined them in that the former are those *seen* by witnesses or captured by surveillance cameras *but merely failed to be identified*. These include masked or hooded figures and motorcycle-riding gunmen. If the killing happened during a law enforcement-led operation, encoders indicated whether or not the said operation was planned. The last variable under assailant information then asked for the manner through which the victim was killed by these assailants.

The three succeeding questions guiding the coding process served to establish subjects' involvement or lack thereof in the illegal drug trade. The second question directly asked whether or not the individual was reportedly involved in the trade, to which an affirmative answer would necessitate entries under the next two variables: the source of any information in existence prior to the individual's death regarding his/her involvement in illegal drugs and his/her drug personality type. Although drug suspects are sometimes reported to play multiple roles in the drug trade, encoders were instructed to select only one of three possible options: (1) high-profile target, (2) pusher, or (3) user (based on "Glossary of Terms," PNP 2014). These three options were assigned hierarchical values such that if a suspect was reported to be both a pusher and a user, only "pusher" would be encoded.

TABLE 1. Victim categories

Category	Cell/variable to be highlighted	Definition
Armed accomplice	Subject status	The subject (1) was killed during a drug-related law enforcement-led operation, (2) is not reportedly involved in the drug trade or the drug war in any capacity, (3) allegedly engaged—usually via a "shootout"—or fought back against state agents during the operation.
Body dump	Known/unknown assailant	The subject (1) was abducted (by a Known Assailant), killed, and then dumped in the street or in a secluded place; or (2) was killed somewhere with no witnesses (by an Unknown Assailant), with the exception of his/her residence, and left at the scene of the crime.
Collateral damage	Subject status	The subject (1) was killed during a drug-related operation, encounter between private individuals, or vigilante assault but (2) is not reportedly involved in the drug trade or the drug war in any capacity. This usually includes passersby or individuals associated with targeted drug suspects (e.g., kin, employees, neighbors).
Contested account	Additional notes (under which the specifics are encoded)	Opposing narratives are being presented by the different actors involved in the incident—typically between the police and witnesses or the victim's kin.
Highly publicized case	Name	The case received considerable media attention, perhaps due to or leading to national or international uproar.
Mistaken identity	Subject status	The subject was killed reportedly because he/she was believed to be involved, erroneously or without sufficient evidence, in the drug trade or the drug war in any capacity.
Officer killed in action	Occupation	The subject (1) is a law enforcer who (2) was killed during a law enforcement-led operation, drug-related or otherwise.
Victims of drug suspects	First cell of the entry	The victim (1) was killed by a drug suspect but (2) is not reportedly involved in the drug trade or the drug war in any capacity.

As some individuals are not directly reported to be involved in illegal drugs but are implied to be so with the discovery of drugs, drug paraphernalia, or accusatory placards with their bodies, the last two questions were asked about the recovery of drugs and other items in the crime scene. The type, amount, and value of the drugs recovered were then encoded for those reportedly in possession of illegal drugs. On the other hand, encoders chose among six possible groups of items to encode under “Other Items Found”: (1) ammunition, (2) arms, (3) drug paraphernalia, (4) money, (5) placard, and (6) others. As mentioned, the specific text written on these placards and the specific items under the “Others” option were encoded under the “Additional Notes” section provided.

The last variables to be encoded were those under incident information, the number of deaths involved, and administration. Under incident information are the date, time, and location of the incident during which the death occurred. Whenever possible, the exact date and time were encoded. However, when these were not available, month- or year-level reports of date and phrasal indicators of time, such as morning, afternoon, and evening, were accepted. Mentions of date or time ranges were also encoded as they were reported in the article. Incident location was then encoded in the same manner that residence was: using the 2018 Philippine Standard Geographic Code list, encoders selected the most specific geographic level possible. Under the number of deaths involved, encoders selected “Single” if a subject was the sole casualty in a particular incident. On the other hand, victims of an incident involving more than one death were encoded as either “Multiple 1” if they were the first entry for that incident or as “Multiple +1” if they were succeeding entries. Finally, dependent on the date of the incident, the deaths were classified as having occurred under the Aquino (July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2016) or the Duterte administration. Though not of direct analytical value, the events surrounding the death of a victim, the almost negligible details in the background can aid in the checking and validation of database entries. Out of these considerations, eight categories of victims were developed (see table 1).

Each category was assigned a unique color, which was used to highlight one cell in one entry. In some instances, victims were classified under more than one category and had multiple highlighted cells. These color codes later allowed the researchers to filter the database and look at particular cases that were of interest. It is worth noting that although these categories were developed and applied after

all entries in the database were encoded, they could have easily been applied, and perhaps were better off applied, during the course of encoding.

Checking

Once the encoders completed their assigned dates, their outputs were rechecked both manually and via Excel functions.

MANUAL CHECKING

Manual checking entailed rereading the articles added by the encoders and making sure that (1) they met the article inclusion criteria, (2) unique entries were made for all reported victims that satisfied the subject inclusion criteria, (3) the information encoded conformed to the definitions that were set, and (4) these information were encoded in the manner specified in the coding guide. This phase of checking aimed to minimize any errors due to possibly differing interpretations of the criteria and the variables and those brought about by human error. It was also during this phase that victims belonging to any of the victim categories developed were classified accordingly.

CHECKING VIA EXCEL FUNCTIONS

Excel functions, on the other hand, were used to ensure unique entries and logical content. First, a frequency table of the victims' names was generated via a pivot table. The names were then sorted in descending order of frequency to see if any were encoded more than once. Entries of those with names or aliases appearing multiple times were reviewed to ensure that they represent unique individuals. Any duplicate entries found were then removed from the database. A similar procedure was followed for individuals with similar sounding names. The list of names was arranged alphabetically and reviewed one-by-one. The entries of victims whose names had little variation in spelling were revisited to ascertain uniqueness and duplicate entries were subsequently removed.

Excel filters were also used to check if options matched their logical pairs. Two things, in particular, were checked. First, the possession of either illegal drugs or drug paraphernalia necessitated an affirmative entry in drug involvement but not the other way around. Second, all drug suspects who were killed during planned (i.e., antidrug) operations should have "prior/ongoing investigation" as a source of prior information on the victim's drug involvement. This is in accordance with the notion of planned operations as the police have defined them

TABLE 2. Secondary filters used to separate victims of drug suspects from the rest of the entries

Additional notes	*Must be neither an informant/asset nor related to anyone involved in the drug trade or the drug war
Occupation	*Must not have any link (direct or indirect) to the drug trade or the drug war
Specific assailant	Identified private individual
Type of operation	Not applicable
Involved in the drug trade?	No
In possession of drugs?	No
Single or multiple death/s?	*Victims killed in the same incident must not be involved in the drug trade or the drug war

in their *Revised PNP Manual on Anti-Illegal Drugs Operations and Investigation* —“a designed police operation” requiring at least some investigation into suspected drug ties (PNP 2014, 24–66,94).

Data Preparation and Analysis

After being checked, the entries were combined in a single worksheet. Since they were to be analyzed separately, entries for victims of drug suspects were then transferred to a different sheet. To do so, the color assigned to such entries during the classification of victims were used to filter the main database. As a confirmatory measure, the filters shown in table 2 were also applied and used to separate the said cases from the rest.

Once a separate sheet was created for victims of drug suspects, frequency distribution tables were generated for both databases using a combination of Pivot tables and Excel formulas. These include a percentage breakdown of each of the options under the variables. Finally, results were visualized with charts, graphs, or maps whenever possible.

Results and Discussion

This database covers drug-related deaths from the last two years of the Aquino administration to the first two and a half years of the Duterte administration, overall covering 1,645 days from July 1, 2014 to December 31, 2018. From those four and a half years, we were able to

TABLE 3. Summary of outcomes recorded in the database

Subject status	Aquino administration <i>July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2016 (731 days)</i>	Duterte administration <i>June 30, 2016 – December 31, 2018 (914 days)</i>	Total
Dead	226	2,511	2,737
Arrested	183	813	996
Charges filed	4	31	35
Detained	21	15	36
Escaped	30	152	182
Injured	31	188	219
Relieved from duty (Police officers)	0	30	30
Released	0	1	1
Surrendered	1	3	4
Transferred	0	6	6
Under investigation	0	2	2

record a total of 2,737 deaths, excluding those of victims of drug suspects, from 1,501 *Inquirer* articles. Two hundred and twenty-six (226) deaths were recorded under Aquino while 2,511 were recorded under Duterte. Excluding the 472 deaths that were recorded during the second half of 2018, there was an 802 percent increase in the number of reported drug-related deaths from the last two years of the former president to the first two years of Duterte. Apart from those deaths, we also arrived at a tally of other outcomes that occurred in conjunction with those deaths (see table 3).

The succeeding sections discuss the trends that surfaced in our analysis of the killings of these 2,737 drug suspects and victims typically regarded as “collateral damage” in the span of four and a half years. To do so, we attempt to answer the following four questions:

1. What do we know about the victims?
2. What do we know about the killings?
3. How are the killings related to illegal drugs?
4. When and where did these killings happen?

Before we answer these questions, however, two things must be noted. First, out of the 2,737 entries in our database, only 118 (4 percent) had complete details reported. David et al. (2018) worked

through the same difficulty but did not disclose their exact threshold. These unreported data points emphasize the need to consult other sources to further develop and improve this database. Second, with the exception of variables with options comprising less than 1 percent of the total values, the percentages reported under each variable were rounded off to the nearest whole number. Thus, readers may find that they may not always add up to a 100 percent.

What Do We Know About the Victims?

Regardless of administration, most of the victims were identified by either their aliases (Aquino, 8 percent; Duterte, 10 percent) or their full names (Aquino, 77 percent; Duterte, 74 percent). A small number of them, however, were not named or not yet identified when the articles reporting their deaths were released (Aquino, 15 percent; Duterte, 15 percent).

For both administrations, most of the victims killed were male (Aquino, 84 percent; Duterte, 83 percent) and only a small percentage were female (Aquino, 3 percent; Duterte, 4 percent). Those with unreported gender (Aquino, 13 percent; Duterte, 12 percent) were even greater than the number of female victims, who collectively comprised only 114 (4 percent) of the 2,737 individuals killed. One victim who was killed in January 2017 identified as a transgender woman.

Our records for the two administrations were also alike in that majority of the victims did not have reported ages, occupations, and residences. Only eighty-five (38 percent) had reported ages under the Aquino administration. Of those eighty-five people, one was a minor—a one-month-old baby who was killed when his father, a suspected drug pusher, was shot to death by two unidentified men—and five were senior citizens. On the other hand, 885 (35 percent) had reported ages under the Duterte administration—of which forty were aged eighteen and below and twenty-three were aged sixty and above. Furthermore, for both administrations, most of those with reported ages were in their thirties. However, a major point of difference between the two in terms of victim age is that more teenagers and children aged twelve and below were killed under the Duterte administration. While there was one such case during the Aquino administration, the number of children and teenagers killed in drug-related incidents rose to forty-eight under his successor. Aside from this difference in magnitude, we

TABLE 4. Type of assailants in drug-related killings

Assailants	Aquino		Duterte	
	N	%	N	%
State agent	125	55.3	1,685	67.1
Nonstate agent	19	8.4	41	1.6
Unidentified	57	25.2	652	26.0
Unknown	25	11.1	133	5.3
Total	226	100	2,511	100

TABLE 5. State agents involved in drug-related killings

Specific Agency	Aquino		Duterte	
	N	%	N	%
Armed Forces of the Philippines			5	0.30
Bureau of Jail Management and Penology			2	0.12
Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency	1	0.80	19	1.13
Philippine National Police	110	88.00	1,569	93.12
Multiple agencies	14	11.20	89	5.28
Unreported			1	0.06
Total	125	100	1,685	100

also observed that, as opposed to the Aquino administration, during which one child was killed alongside his father who was targeted by gunmen, the current administration has seen the targeting of teenagers

themselves after being accused of drug involvement. Thirty-one of the forty-eight teenagers killed under this administration were suspected drug personalities.

Majority of the victims did not have reported occupations for both administrations as well. Of the occupations reported (Aquino, 20 percent; Duterte, 19 percent), most had to do with law enforcement and barangay governance. Taken together, these two groups of occupations still only made up less than 10 percent of the total number of victims. Under the Aquino administration, twenty were current or former law enforcement agents when they were killed while four were barangay officials—of which four and two, respectively, were reportedly involved in illegal drugs. On the other hand, under the present administration, ninety-three out of the 142 current and former law enforcement agents killed and sixty-one out of the seventy-three current and former barangay officials killed had reported drug ties. One victim, who was a barangay councilor at the time of his death but served as a police officer before being relieved due to suspected involvement in the drug trade, was included in both counts. Compared to the past administration, a greater percentage of law enforcement agents and barangay officials killed under Duterte were said to be involved in drugs.

As for residence, majority also had unreported entries for both administrations (Aquino, 32 percent reported; Duterte, 33 percent reported). Of those with reported residences, most were from Metro Manila (Aquino, 6 percent; Duterte, 15 percent).

What Do We Know About the Killings?

A total of 1,230 drug-related incidents were recorded from July 1, 2014 to December 31, 2018. Of these, 872 incidents involved one death each while 358 involved multiple deaths.

ASSAILANT INFORMATION

Under both administrations, most of the victims were killed by state agents (table 4). However, there was a 12 percent increase from the Aquino to the Duterte administration in the number of deaths perpetrated by law enforcers. During the Aquino administration, 110 out of the 125 victims of state agents were killed solely by members of the PNP (table 5); 112 out of these 125 were killed during planned operations while twelve were killed during unplanned operations and one was killed during an unspecified operation. Under the Duterte

TABLE 6. Items found with the body of those killed by different types of assailants

Items found	State agent		Nonstate agent		Unidentified assailants		Unknown assailants	
	Aquino (N=125)	Duterte (N=1,685)	Aquino (N=19)	Duterte (N=41)	Aquino (N=57)	Duterte (N=652)	Aquino (N=25)	Duterte (N=133)
Arms	105	1,121		2	4	29		1
Ammunition	52	321	2	1	5	130	3	16
Drug paraphernalia	20	156		2	1	30		7
Money	11	177			4	11	1	
Placard		1			5	39	1	65
Others	13	172	2		1	16	3	34

administration, on the other hand, 1,569 out of the 1,685 victims of state agents were killed by the police. Of those 1,685 victims, 1,423 were killed during planned operations, 199 were killed during unplanned operations, and 49 were killed during unspecified operations. As opposed to the Aquino administration, more were noticeably killed during unspecified and rather vague “operations” and encounters. The remaining fourteen victims were killed by law enforcement agents outside of state-sanctioned operations, incidents that were not recorded under the previous administration. An example of this is the killing of South Korean businessman Jee Ick-Joo by members of the PNP and the National Bureau of Investigation, whose highly publicized case of tokhang-for-ransom-turned-murder generated much public outrage. Jee’s gruesome demise highlighted Oplan Tokhang’s potential to be exploited by law enforcers for their own gain and pushed President Duterte to temporarily suspend his war on drugs.

Following state agents, the next two most common types of assailants for both administrations were unidentified (Aquino, 25 percent; Duterte, 26 percent) and unknown assailants (Aquino, 11 percent; Duterte, 5 percent). Although the percentages of those killed

by unidentified assailants under the two administrations are almost the same, twenty-nine (51 percent) out of the fifty-seven victims killed by this type of assailant under then President Aquino were actually targeted in a span of two months, from May to June of 2016, following Duterte's presidential win. A large part of these unidentified assailants were motorcycle-riding gunmen, with their victims comprising twenty-four out of the fifty-seven individuals killed under Aquino and 329 out of the 652 killed under Duterte. A number of individuals were also killed by nonstate agents, with about 8 percent killed under Aquino and less than 2 percent killed under Duterte.

The most commonly reported manner of killing was shooting, with 86 percent of victims under Aquino and 91 percent of victims under Duterte being shot to death. This result somewhat reflects the common police narrative that arose during this antidrug campaign of victims "retaliating" or "resisting arrest" (*nanlaban*), thereby instigating "shootouts" with law enforcers. The rest of the means of killing recorded comprised less than 1 percent of the incidents. In some cases, however, the victims were simply reported as "killed" without identifying the specific means (Aquino, 12 percent; Duterte, 8 percent).

ITEMS FOUND WITH VICTIMS

For both administrations, arms, specifically guns, were mostly found with victims killed by state agents (table 6). Arms are often cited by the police as evidence that the alleged drug personality resisted arrest. Some of the victims of unidentified assailants were found with ammunition and placards during the Aquino administration. Ammunition, such as loose bullets and grenades, were mostly found with victims of unidentified assailants during the Duterte administration. Victims of unknown assailants were mostly found with ammunition and other items during the Aquino administration, while under the Duterte administration, they were mostly found with placards. Victims with placards accusing them of ties to the illegal drug trade, often of drug pushing, and other crimes increased once Duterte was elected. There was even one anomalous case of a victim allegedly killed by the police but was found with a placard, leading that person's family to believe that he was summarily executed.

How Are the Killings Related to Illegal drugs?

DRUG INVOLVEMENT

During the Aquino administration, 191 were reportedly involved in the illegal drug trade, where 60 percent were alleged drug pushers, 33 percent were ambiguously linked to drugs, 4 percent were alleged high-profile targets, and 3 percent were alleged drug users. In contrast, 2,333 victims were reportedly involved in the illegal drug trade during the Duterte administration, where 53 percent were alleged drug pushers, 35 percent were ambiguously linked to drugs, 7 percent were high-profile targets, and 6 percent were alleged drug users. There was a slight increase in the percentage of victims simply labeled as “drug suspects,” without any clear description of the nature of their involvement in the illegal drug trade. Even with Duterte’s emphasis that he will catch the “big fish” of illegal drugs in the country, most victims are small-scale drug pushers, runners and couriers, and a large number who are only ambiguously linked to drugs, similar to the trend of those killed during the Aquino administration.

In the Aquino administration, majority of those reportedly involved in the drug trade had information linking them to illegal drugs prior to their deaths, where 122 were reportedly under investigation for illegal drug-related activities or were killed during antidrug operations, or both. Twelve of those with drug involvement had previously been arrested, convicted, or had surrendered for drug-related charges. Seven were reported to law enforcement agents by informants. Twenty-one appeared in some form of drug watchlist or wanted list for drug-related offenses. Nineteen were tagged as “drug suspects” or accused to be such without naming specific sources.

During the Duterte administration, majority of those reportedly involved in the drug trade had information linking them to illegal drugs prior to their deaths, in which 1,464 victims were reportedly under investigation for illegal drug-related activities or were killed during antidrug operations, or both. Those previously been arrested, convicted, or had surrendered for drug-related charges numbered 229. Eighty-six were reported to law enforcement agents by informants, 482 appeared in some form of drug watchlist or wanted list for drug-related offenses, and 151 were tagged as “drug suspects” or accused to be such without naming specific sources.

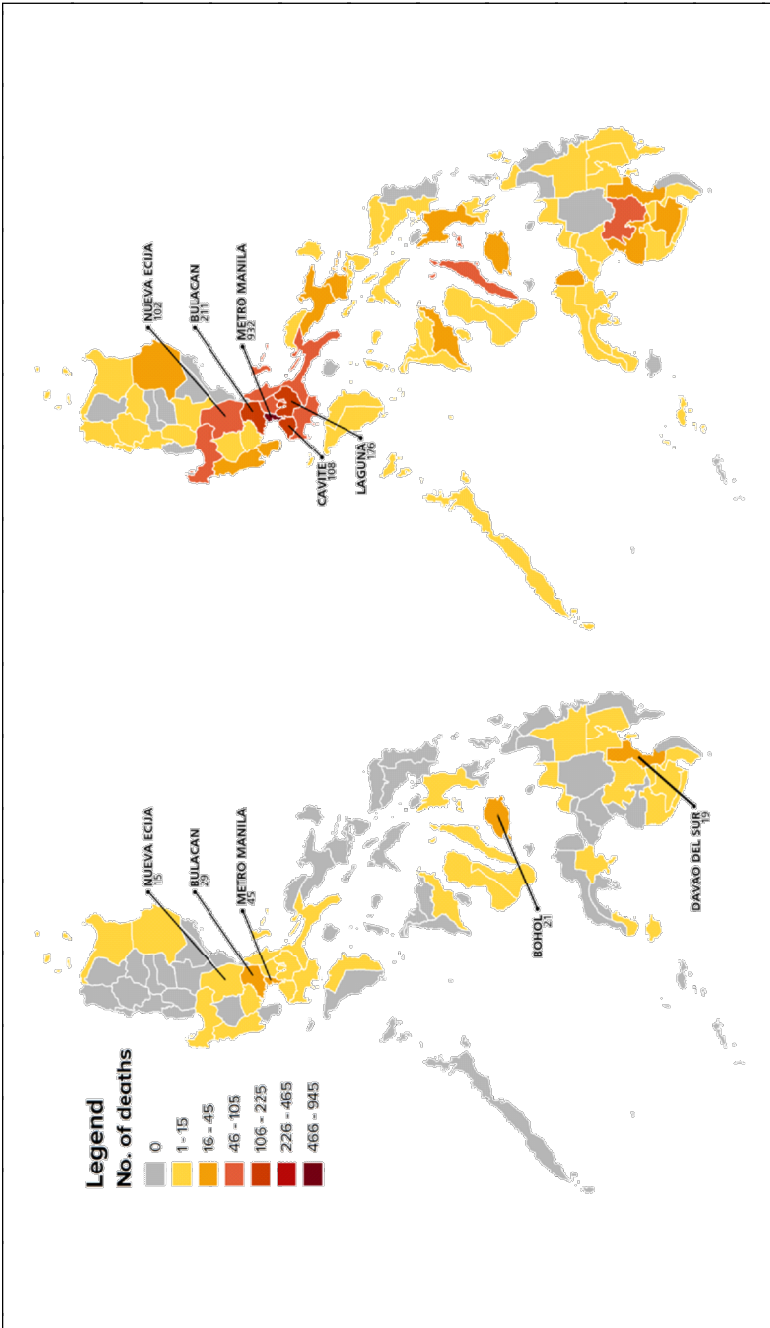


FIGURE 3. Heat maps of drug-related deaths in the Philippines during the Aquino (left) and Duterte (right) administrations. Maps by Ralph Chester D. Retamal.

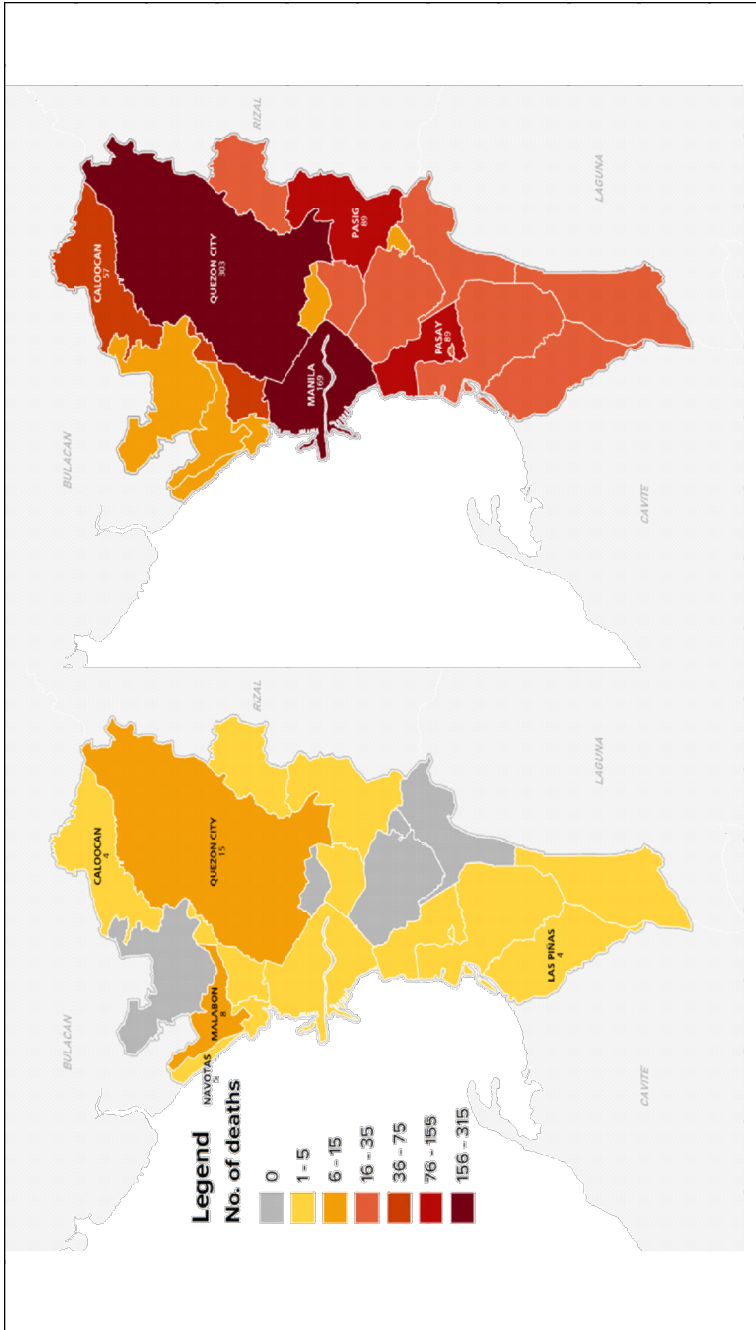


FIGURE 4. Heat maps of drug-related deaths in Metro Manila during the Aquino (left) and Duterte (right) administrations. Maps by Ralph Chester D. Retamal.

TABLE 7. Number of deaths across the Philippine regions (2014–2018)

Region	2014 ^a	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
National Capital Region (NCR)	7	11	580	239	137	974
Region I (Ilocos)			47	9	5	61
Region II (Cagayan Valley)			13	33	8	54
Region III (Central Luzon)	4	14	169	116	124	427
Region IV-A (Calabarzon)	1	4	177	72	313	567
Region IV-B (Mimaropa)		3	1	2	8	14
Region V (Bicol)			41	10	10	61
Region VI (Western Visayas)		1	32	13	10	56
Region VII (Central Visayas)	2	6	87	16	53	164
Region VIII (Eastern Visayas)			24	13	7	44
Region IX (Zamboanga Peninsula)			7	6	4	17
Region X (Northern Mindanao)	1		6	18	4	29
Region XI (Davao Region)	5	20	19	20	19	83
Region XII (Soccksargen)		7	49	5	60	121
Region XIII (Caraga)			3	1		4
Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR)			12	2		14
Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM)			3	18	11	32
Total	20	66	1,270	593	773	2,722

Note: Fifteen entries were excluded for inexact or unreported dates and locations.

^aThe figures under 2014 represent recorded deaths from July 1, 2014 to December 31, 2014 only.

DRUG POSSESSION

During the Aquino administration, 112 of those reportedly involved in the drug trade were reportedly in possession of illegal drugs when they were killed. There were seventy-one unique entries involving drug possession, but only forty-one (58 percent) of those had complete details reported (i.e., type, amount, and value of illegal drugs). Sixty out of the seventy-one entries involved “shabu” or methamphetamine. In contrast, 1,108 of those reportedly involved in the drug trade were reportedly in possession of illegal drugs when they were killed during the Aquino administration. There were 836 unique entries involving drug possession, but only 618 (26 percent) of those had complete details reported; 736 out of the 836 entries involved “shabu” or methamphetamine.

Of those reportedly involved in the drug trade, 1,108 (47.49 percent) were reportedly in possession of illegal drugs when they were killed during the Duterte administration. There were 836 unique entries involving drug possession, but only 618 (26 percent) of those had complete details reported. Out of the 836 entries, 736 involved “shabu” or methamphetamine.

For both administrations, shabu was the most common drug involved, followed by marijuana, mostly packed in small sachets. From the type and amount of drugs found, the targets of the assailants are not big time drug lords or drug den owners; most are just small-time pushers. High-end drugs such as cocaine, heroin, and ecstasy were never found in any incident.

When and Where Did These Killings Happen?

Significant events during the “highs” and “lows” of drug-related killings were plotted together. Whenever Duterte has a pronouncement encouraging state forces to continue the war against drugs, the number of deaths increase. In contrast to the “highs,” the number of deaths has a tendency to drop when a controversial case (e.g., Kian Loyd delos Santos and Carl Arnaiz) is brought out to the public.

DAY OF THE WEEK

In the Aquino administration, the highest number of killings occurred on Thursdays. However, fourteen cases were excluded in this day-of-the-week analysis because their exact dates were not reported. During the Duterte administration, most of the killings happened on

TABLE 8. Victim categories for the Aquino and Duterte administrations

Category	Aquino (N=226)		Duterte (N=2,511)	
	Count	% out of the total no. of deaths	Count	% out of the total no. of deaths
Armed accomplice	2	0.88	17	0.68
Body Dump	19	8.41	116	4.62
Collateral damage	4	1.77	67	2.67
Contested account	1	0.44	125	4.98
Highly publicized case	5	2.21	77	3.07
Mistaken identity			11	0.44
Officer killed in action	9	3.98	21	0.84
Victims of drug suspects	8	3.54	47	1.87

Wednesdays. However, forty-seven cases were excluded in this day-of-the-week analysis because their exact dates were not reported.

TIME OF INCIDENT

For the Aquino administration, 77 percent of the incidents included time indicators. Seventy-two were killed during the day, and 102 were killed during the night. In comparison, 87 percent of the incidents during the Duterte administration included time indicators. Those killed during the day numbered 628, and 1,543 were killed during the night. Killings had the tendency to peak mid-week (Tuesdays to Thursdays) and taper off during the weekend.

LOCATION OF THE INCIDENT

In both administrations, Metro Manila had the highest number of drug-related deaths (table 7), followed by Bulacan (figure 3). In Metro Manila, Quezon City (fifteen) had the highest number of killings, followed by Malabon (eight), Navotas (five), and Caloocan (four), during the Aquino administration (figure 4). For the Duterte administration, Quezon City (303) had the highest number of killings, followed by Manila (169), Pasay (eighty-nine), and Pasig City (eighty-nine), in Metro Manila (figure 4). The Manila-centric distribution of deaths is also a result of *Inquirer's* geographic bias.

Victim Categories

While encoding, we noticed themes and trends in some of the cases, which represent narratives used in debates for or against Duterte's campaign against illegal drugs. Aside from counting the number of deaths, we decided to add a descriptive aspect in the methodology, which is also reflected in the additional notes section. These themes were categorized as shown in table 8. Although each of these cases make up 5 percent and below of the total number of deaths, there is almost a 100 percent increase per category from the Aquino to the Duterte administration.

One of the most talked about consequences of the Duterte administration's antidrug campaign are the collateral damage victims, who are mostly minors, aged eighteen and below. The Duterte administration calls those caught between the crossfire during antidrug operations as "collateral damage," treating these individuals as an unavoidable by product of the campaign to clean the country of illegal drugs. But a number of those who were considered as "collateral damage" were accidentally there during the incident, and instead of not taking responsibility for their deaths, the agents could still have avoided their accidental deaths (Coady 2008). Labeling them simply as collateral damage implies that these deaths are unavoidable consequences which are often seen as "a very small part of a big picture" (Coady 2008, 133), making it seem "to palliate the suffering related to it, and makes one forget that what it actually refers to are humans, mostly innocents, who are being harmed or even killed in an armed conflict" (Schwenkenbecher 2014, 94). When Duterte's antidrug campaign reached international attention, he himself stated that civilians caught in the war on drugs are collateral damage (Al-Jazeera 2016). In the interview, President Duterte likened the situation to

civilians killed during the Vietnam and Afghan war, where he said that collateral damage is not a criminal liability and cannot be avoided, since the state agents need to protect themselves (Al-Jazeera 2016). There were a total of twenty-one officers killed in action, which is only a third of collateral damage deaths.

Aside from the increase of collateral damage deaths, mistaken identity cases were only reported during the Duterte administration. It is similar to collateral damage in a way where both of them are not the actual targets. Mistaken identity cases are those who were targeted because they were initially labeled as some other drug suspect. Collateral damage and mistaken identity cases are often (but not mutually exclusive) contested accounts. As we encoded, there were 157 reported cases with contestations from relatives and witnesses. This does not include contested accounts which were not reported in the news article.

Victims of unknown assailants, which are mostly body dumps, increased during the Duterte administration as well, even before he has stepped into office. His pronouncements, which gives a “license” for anyone to kill alleged drug personalities, has given rise to unknown and unidentified assailants. Placards, mostly found with the bodies during the early parts of the antidrug campaign, accuse the victims of being a pusher, along with other crimes associated with drug use. These people, confirmed drug suspect or not, did not even go through a buy-bust operation, or an investigation, which respects their basic human rights.

Beyond the total tally of deaths, what caught people’s attention are the highly publicized cases featuring controversial and contested deaths. The nature of these publicized deaths range from high-profile targets to deaths of minors who were wrongly accused. Jee Ick Joo’s death in the first year of Duterte’s term created so much attention, the President halted drug-related operations of the PNP. Another case is Kian delos Santos’s death which circulated in the news for many months. Different groups have questioned the testimony given by the police, and eventually finding out that delos Santos was set up by the police through a CCTV footage. The Parojinog massacre, which almost wiped out an entire family, is an example of a highly publicized case of big-time personalities involved in the illegal drug trade. These events led to a drop in the number of deaths in the succeeding months after being publicized, and after the outcry died down, it eventually rose again.

This administration has used the reason that drug suspects cause a lot of crime to justify their method of eradicating illegal drugs in the country. We encoded reported cases of victims of drug suspects to compare it against the deaths of the war against drugs. The number of deaths related to the antidrug campaign outnumbers those who died in the hands of drug suspects. This is not to belittle or to discredit the deaths of these victims, which were often violently killed. Even those included in the number of deaths of alleged drug suspects are not confirmed to be involved in the illegal drug trade.

Duterte's war on drugs, along with the outcry from those left behind and their supporters, reached international attention, bringing the Philippines to international investigation. Although the investigation is still ongoing, several factors have been hindering its progress, including the Philippines' withdrawal from the International Criminal Court last March 2019, the administration's counterattack against those who question them, and the strong support of many Filipinos to Duterte despite the staggering number of killings.

CONCLUSION

We have presented a methodology of recording drug-related deaths that can easily be replicated to create a more encompassing dataset, hopefully including those localities outside of Metro Manila. The database's priority is not the total number of deaths alone, but as well as the details surrounding the deaths, which can be used to further explain what is happening in the country right now. Although it has a more conservative total number of deaths than other databases, it still reflects the trends seen in the Drug Archive and in other antidrug campaign databases, where there are thousands of lives being killed and labeled as drug personalities without due process.

Unlike other databases which only record current drug-related deaths, the comparison of trends between the Aquino and the Duterte administration clearly shows the exponential increase of drug-related killings in the present government. Supporters of the administration have been justifying the drug war by claiming that it has been going on even in the past administrations while not even looking at the fact that the number of deaths has increased in exponential numbers, proving that this is more than just a continuation of the government's action against the illegal drug trade. Although the police has been the main assailant of drug-related deaths for both administrations, the dramatic

increase of deaths under police operations can be observed during the Duterte administration, where they are ordered by the president to eradicate drug suspects. In the articles, the common reason why the policemen kill the suspects is because of self-defense, saying that the drug suspect “retaliated” or “engaged the police in a shootout.” Aside from policemen, the second major assailant type are the unidentified assailants, who are dominantly motorcycle-riding gunmen. Unidentified assailants also existed during the past administration, but also increased exponentially during the Duterte administration. With Duterte encouraging people to get rid of drug suspects, a number of people took the task into their own hands, since it was the president who gave the “license” to kill.

Through this exercise of counting the deaths using news accounts, we also observed how poorly drug-related deaths were being reported. Confusion in encoding mostly stems from misspelled names of people and barangays, to different versions of what exactly happened in the incident. Aside from typographical errors, a lot of articles only state the victim’s name and their manner of death, from accounts mostly coming from the perspective of the police officers in charge of the cases. That is why counting them matters. If their deaths are not part of a count, it would appear from journalistic reports that their deaths, though newsworthy enough, are no different from those hit by a truck or struck by a lightning. The sense of injustice conveyed by the violence of their demise is often left out of the news article. There are only a few cases where the article cites the side of the family of the victim or other witnesses to the incident, which are often written in great detail.

Limitations

Even as we try to be inclusive, there are details that the database has yet to capture. For one, we have only utilized one news publication as our source of information, which most likely does not, or cannot, report all deaths, especially those which happened in the fringes of the countryside. Aside from its geographic bias, some follow-up articles report different details from initial reports. Aside from different details, some articles report misspelled names and locations.

Since the database focuses on the dead victims, information on drug personalities who are still alive are not recorded. Incidences where there are no dead victims but report confiscated drugs and arrested drug personalities were also not included.

Human error, as mentioned in the earlier section, is one of the challenges in making the database. In evaluating what options should be chosen per variable, the encoders still use their own judgement, which sometimes leads to confusion. This is remedied by making sure the encoders discuss these confusing information with one another to arrive at a consensus. Even though we tried to be inclusive, there are still details that cannot be encompassed by the options in the database.

Recommendations

The intention of the project is to be able to provide a methodology in counting drug-related deaths in the Philippines, which is why we recommend for other institutions to adopt this method. We hope that the data encoded will be more inclusive as other institutions or research centers will take on the methodology. For example, universities in the provinces can encode deaths not mentioned in national dailies.

For now, we get information from newspapers, but the database can also be utilized for police records, interviews, news reports, among others. ❀

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Devising the method for the database and putting it together was a work of many, namely of Christian Victor Masangkay, Jamaica Jian Gacoscosim, and Nixcharl Noriega, our fellow project research associates; the student assistants Kryza Cabeguín, Jewel Mae Regnim, Ralph Retamal, and Jag San Mateo; and the interns Marianne Davis and Zachariah Williams.

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