

The digital spectator activities of Twitter users on the issue of the anti-terrorism bill in the Philippines

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Keywords: online activism Twitter data mining anti-terrorism bill digital spectator</p>	<p>Throughout history, activism has evolved with the rise of digital technologies. Individuals and groups can now conduct political activities on social media platforms. Existing studies about hashtag activism typically centered on race and gender, which are usually contextualized in the West. This study addresses the insufficient research about online activism related to policymaking in the Philippine context and focuses on online activism towards the issue of the Anti-Terrorism Bill (ATB) of 2020 that concerns potential harm to freedom of speech, expression, or of the press. This research was inspired by George and Leidner's (2019) Hierarchy of Digital Activism, notably the Digital Spectator activism. The researchers utilized data mining approach to collect data sets scraped from Twitter. The data was acquired by using TWINT and extracting Twitter's visible measure of interaction such as likes, retweets, and replies. These data were used to analyze Twitter users' online activism during the heightened discussion of ATB that showed negative views of the bill using the topmost hashtag, #junkterrorbillnow and the five dominant themes: law-making process, human security, the role of social media, dialogue, and related issues. Findings also showed a link between #junkterrorbillnow and the dominant themes, and the digital spectator activities.</p>

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Introduction

Activism is a form of political participation traditionally reported to be most common among democratic countries which include, but not exclusive to, demonstrations, street protests, mass strikes, and petitioning (Norris, 2007). With the evolution of digital media, people observed how activism expanded in the matter of communication and media all over the globe. When social media was introduced, publicizing the opinions of individuals became possible via “sharing”, “retweeting” or “commenting” referred to as “Internet activism” or “online activism” on various platforms that possess the potential in tapping global interest. In the assessment of Konnelly (2015), Twitter is considered to be among the most used social media platforms where users raise awareness and extend advocacies. Various scholars acknowledged this potential and gave attention to the platform in their works (Li et al., 2021; Lindgren, 2013; Moscato, 2016; Potts et al., 2014; Xu et al., 2014) which aided the development of Twitter activism in connection with social movement studies. Organizations, social groups, and individuals can make particular issues viral by repeatedly posting hashtags or keywords, also known as “hashtag activism” (Xiong et al., 2019).

In a democratic country such as the Philippines, where the processes of the government can be substantially influenced by its citizens, looking at the laws, rules, and regulations help in understanding the political context of digital activism. As the Filipino people continue to receive threats from local communist terrorist groups, the economy and development of the country are hampered (National Security Council, 2018). Hence, in a bid to counter terrorism, President Rodrigo Duterte signed Republic Act No. 11479 also known as “The Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020” into law last July 3,

2020. The enactment of the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 repealed the Republic Act No. 9372 or the Human Security Act of 2007 (HSA) and added new provisions that include planning, proposing, conspiring, committing threats, training, facilitating, inciting terrorism as well as recruitment and membership to a terrorist group as punishable acts. Writings, proclamations, speeches, banners, emblems, and other representations that incite terrorism to others are acts that are punishable based on the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020.

The Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 drew public flak even before it was passed into law and became the subject of controversies for having some provisions that are vague that could allegedly affect the freedom of speech. Aside from arguing that the new anti-terrorism law can be used against those who oppose the Duterte administration, critics stated that the enforcement of the new law is susceptible to the abuse of the military and other law enforcement agencies like the HSA (Supreme Court of the Philippines, 2020). Opposition and support regarding the issue circulated on various social media platforms, particularly on Twitter and Facebook.

Even though there are some researches regarding the old anti-terrorism law, the study of Lyew (2010) for instance which highlights the Human Security Act of 2007 in the Philippines, investigations on the dynamic response in the online setting pertinent to the Anti-Terrorism Bill are scant despite the massive attention that it amassed from different sectors of Philippine society. Studies about online activism are largely situated in the Western context and often tackle gender equality and racial issues (Alingasa & Ofreneo, 2021; Lee Boaz et al., 2013; Sánchez, 2015) while local researches commonly concentrate on Philippine disaster response (Soriano et al., 2016). It is within the growing concern towards the possible abridgment of the freedom of expression, of

speech, and of the press that could potentially harm the vital foundations of the Philippine democracy, as well as the few investigations regarding Twitter activism on policymaking that this research chose to study the levels of online activism of Philippine Twitter users on the issue of Anti-Terrorism Bill.

The researchers sought to determine the dynamics of the responses of Twitter users on the issue of the Anti-Terrorism Bill of 2020. It aimed to find out the dominant themes culled from the posts of Twitter users related to the Anti-Terrorism Bill. Finally, it identified how the online activism of Twitter users relates to the levels of the Digital Spectator Activism of George and Leidner (2019), particularly on clicktivism, metavoicing, and assertion.

Method

The study consisted of 1,887 Tweets from Philippine Twitter users for analysis out of the 200,870 Tweets culled from the Twitter data scrape of June 1-30, 2020. The analyzed tweet sentiments were discussions and opinions surrounding the “Anti-Terrorism Bill of 2020.” The criteria for the omission of tweet data were set by the researchers to adhere to concerns on the subject’s privacy and identity (National Privacy Commission, 2012) to avoid trolls, bots, or any suspicious user accounts. For the set parameters for tweets, there were eight (8) criteria for omission which include tweets that: 1) contained other hashtags aside from #junkterrorbillnow; 2) only had #junkterrorbillnow as tweet content; 3) used other languages as detected by TWINT software; 4) had incomprehensible symbols that Microsoft Excel did not recognize; 5) mentioned inappropriate words; 6) tagged other usernames; 7) did not have a GMT+08 time zone (Philippine Standard Time) available on the tweet, and 8) Tweets that did not at least have one (1) Twitter retweet that demonstrated metavoicing; one (1) Twitter

like that demonstrated clicktivism, and one (1) Twitter reply, which show visible online interactions on Twitter.

Since the bill was introduced last July 2019 (Philippine 18th Congress, 2019), the researchers have set that user profiles of tweets must have an uploaded Twitter avatar at the time of data gathering and a Twitter join date after June 2019. These were considered to automatically refrain discussions from possible fraudulent local troll accounts or Twitter bots that pose unreasonable behavior on Twitter. This is a measure to avoid newly created bot and burn accounts that only resurface on Twitter when an issue is popular or trending on the platform (Martini et al., 2021).

Among the tweet parameters set by the researchers, Philippine Twitter users have the tendency to engage in code-switching or interchange languages between English and Filipino on social media. This is evident by the fact that there is a large variety of languages and groups in the country. The languages mostly used in Philippine social media largely consist of Bisaya, Ilocano, Cebuano, and Tagalog among others. Due to the limitations of TWINT in determining the Filipino languages and the researchers lacking the ability to speak and understand Bisaya, Ilocano, and Cebuano, the study only considered those tweets in English [en] and Tagalog [tl]. Only the tweets that are in pure English or pure Tagalog or in Taglish (a combination of Tagalog and English) are covered in this study. The webscraped Twitter data was gathered in June 2020, one year after the heightened engagement on the issue of the Anti-Terrorism Bill by the Philippine Twitter users was observed.

For the data gathering, this study used Twitter data mining, particularly by means of web scraping or scraping on Twitter. The researchers decided on such a method because easily accessible user data is available on social media sites, and it is practical to use

it for gathering research data and analysis for in-depth study (Jain & Katkar, 2015). The availability of large-scale and unique data-enabled present researchers to correlate, investigate, and organize, various data points by applying scientific and analytical comprehension through the methods and analyses in data mining (Gutierrez & Milan, 2017; Lin & Ryaboy, 2013; Sánchez, 2015).

It involved obtaining large-scale data from the platform, Twitter through an external scraping tool TWINT - Twitter Intelligence Tool from GitHub, which is an advanced Twitter data scraper and open-source intelligence (OSINT) tool written in Python. The tool is similar to other Twitter scraper software that acquires data from the Twitter platform, like the Organization, Information, and Learning Science (OILS) Twitter Scraper from the University of Mexico (Flor, 2014).

TWINT easily allows the extraction of Twitter tweets even without utilizing the Application Programming Interface (API) of Twitter. To enable Tweet scraping from specific hashtags, phrases, users, trends, and topics, TWINT freely utilizes search index operators. It allows its users to extract raw Twitter data and turn it into a readable Microsoft Excel file (.csv). This tool made it possible to extract raw data from hashtags

and tweets that were in public last June 2020 concerning the Anti-Terrorism Bill.

Twitter has set an API limitation. To obtain all tweets needed in the study, the researchers employed the use of this code-based method. The Git repository has been under the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) License and under the ownership of Cody Zacharias since 2018 (Zacharias & Poldi, n.d.).

The researchers utilized a four-phase method commonly found in data science processes which involve obtaining, cleaning, exploring, modeling, and interpreting data (Kimball et al., 2008). Among these processes, the researchers have utilized TWINT, Python frequency count, and Microsoft Excel.

Phase 1: initial tweet scrapes to determine used hashtags

Tweets were initially scraped using TWINT with the search string “anti-terrorism bill” and “anti-terrorism law” separately to determine the set of hashtags used in the discussion of the bill on Twitter from June 1-30, 2020. Table 1 shows the specific code used to scrape the tweets with the indicated search query on TWINT for Phase 1 of the procedure.

Table 1. Python code to determine Tweets that contain hashtags

Figure 1. Python code for search string “anti -terrorism law”	Figure 2. Python code for search string “anti -terrorism bill”
<pre>import twint import nest_asyncio import pandas as pd nest_asyncio.apply() # Configure c = twint.Config() c.Search="anti terrorism law" c.Since = "2020-06-01" c.Until = "2020-06-30" c.Pandas = True # Run twint.run.Search(c) # Export data df = twint.storage.panda.Tweets_df df.to_csv('~\Desktop\ATL.csv')</pre>	<pre>import twint import nest_asyncio import pandas as pd nest_asyncio.apply() # Configure c = twint.Config() c.Search="anti terrorism bill" c.Since = "2020-06-01" c.Until = "2020-06-30" c.Pandas = True # Run twint.run.Search(c) # Export data df = twint.storage.panda.Tweets_df df.to_csv('~\Desktop\ATB.csv')</pre>

Phase 2: identifying the topmost hashtag

TWINT extracts the hashtag used among the scraped tweets into a readable .csv file which was tabulated and ranked from largest to smallest frequency. It involved the use of item frequency count using Python. Using this method, the researchers determined the total frequency count of hashtags tweeted in June 2020 on Philippine Twitter. Those tweets contain the phrase “Anti-Terrorism Bill” or “Anti-Terrorism Law.” There was a total of 39,123 tweets that contain the phrase “Anti-Terrorism Bill” based on the tweets scraped. Out of those, 9,023 tweets have hashtags. On the other hand, 4,777 tweets that were collected have the phrase “Anti-Terrorism Law” and those that contain hashtags are 1,118.

Using the data sets and the number of tweets recorded, the researchers used an item

frequency count on the hashtags extracted and determined the top-most used hashtags from tweets posted from June 1-30, 2020. Then, the researchers added both the total number count of the extracted hashtags from the tweets in the phrases “anti-terrorism bill” and “anti-terrorism law” separately, and carefully organized and arranged the extracted data. It was identified that the topmost hashtag from June 1-30, 2020, is #junkterrorbillnow.

Phase 3: mining public tweets that contain #junkterrorbillnow

In performing the other set of Twitter scraping using the hashtag, #junkterrorbillnow, the codes are shown in Figure 4 were used to gather data.

The Python code identified above has scraped the following information from those tweets which contain the

Figure 3. Python code to determine hashtag frequency

```
# In[1]:
Text="""
# Paste entire tweet
hashtag column from the
.csv file scrape from the
initial data scrape """
# In[3]:
print(Text)
# In[4]:
# split merged word
text from previous
In[3] output
word_list = Text.split()
# In[5]:
print(word_list)
# In[6]:
# Initialize Python
Dictionary
d = {}
# counting the number of
times each word comes up in
list of words (in
dictionary)
for word in word_list:
    d[word] =
d.get(word, 0) + 1
# In[7]:
d

# In[8]:
word_freq = []
for key, value in d.items():
word_freq.append((value,
key))
word_freq
# In[9]:
word_freq.sort(reverse=True)
print(word_freq)
# Sorted word frequency list
(highest to lowest number of
frequency)
# In[10]:
# Turn code into readable
table data
import pandas as pd
# In[11]:
# Store pandas into data
frames
store = pd.HDFStore('df')
# In[12]:
# Prepare data frames for
.csv
df = pd.DataFrame(word_freq)
# In[13]:
# Export data frames into
.csv
df.to_csv(~/Desktop/item.csv)
```

```

import twint
import nest_asyncio
import pandas as pd
    nest_asyncio.apply()
# Configure
c = twint.Config()
c.Search =
"#junkterrorbillnow"
c.Since = "2020-06-01"
c.Until = "2020-06-30"
c.Pandas = True
# Run
twint.run.Search(c)
# Export data
df =
twint.storage.panda.Tweets_df
df.to_csv('~\Desktop\TW_scrape
final.csv')

```

hashtag #junkterrorbillnow respectively: conversation id, user id of the tweet author, published date of the tweet, complete textual tweet content, published tweet time zone, available tweet hashtags, coded tweet language, username, user display name at the time of the data gathering, available tweet content link, published time of the tweet, URL attachments, photo attachments, video attachments, and embedded video thumbnail.

The number of replies, likes, retweets, quoted retweet URLs, and number of Twitter replies--those variables with visible measures of interaction were also web

scraped with the TWINT. These variables enabled the researchers to determine the broad dynamics of the responses gathered from the set of tweets from the Twitter users which comprise the hashtags that include discussions, opinions, and insights toward the issue of the Anti-Terrorism Bill.

Figure 5 below displays a portion of the .csv file output culled from TWINT in Microsoft Excel. The extracted CSV output comprises texts and minimal information found among the Philippine Twitter users were tweets and visible Twitter interaction from the #junkterrorbillnow.

Figure 5. A portion of the 200,870 data from the .csv output from TWINT

date	tweet	lang	hashtags	link	urls	pho	vide	thumb	retweet	nlikes	nreplies	nretweets
6/30/20 23:55	Ok b4 leaving my stan acc, I just want to say #JunkTerrorBill	en	['junkterrorbillnow', 'fr	https://twitter.com/eu	[]	[]	0	FALSE	0	0	0	0
6/30/20 23:52	we are really doing our part here. sana kayong mga nakaupo tl	tl	['junkterrorbillnow']	https://twitter.com/mi	[]	[]	0	FALSE	1	0	0	0
6/30/20 23:52	#JUNKTERRORBILLNOW #IBALIKANGABSCBN #NoToABSCBN und	und	['junkterrorbillnow', 'it	https://twitter.com/ky	[]	[]	0	FALSE	24	1	13	0
6/30/20 23:50	#JunkTerrorBillNow	und	['junkterrorbillnow']	https://twitter.com/ia	[]	[]	0	FALSE	1	0	0	0
6/30/20 23:50	#JUNKTERRORBILLNOW	und	['junkterrorbillnow']	https://twitter.com/66	[]	[]	0	FALSE	0	0	0	0
6/30/20 23:49	ANONG KINALAMAN NI BONG	tl	['junkterrorbillnow', 'v	https://twitter.com/sir	[]	[]	0	FALSE	0	0	0	0
6/30/20 23:48	#JunkTerrorBillnow #JunkTerrorBillNow #JunkTerrorBillNow und	und	['junkterrobillnow', 'ju	https://twitter.com/la	[]	[]	0	FALSE	4	0	0	0
6/30/20 23:45	Baka sinadya nilang paabutin sa ganito. 'Yung pakiramdam ni tl	tl	['junkterrorbillnow', 'j	https://twitter.com/ka	[]	[]	0	FALSE	1	0	0	0
6/30/20 23:44	i can't explain it any further but just so i know, how fucked up en	en	['junkterrorbillnow', 'o	https://twitter.com/go	[]	[]	0	FALSE	1	0	0	0
6/30/20 23:44	#OUSTDUTERTENOW #JunkTerrorBillNow	und	['oustduterthenow', 'jur	https://twitter.com/an	[]	[]	0	FALSE	2	0	0	0
6/30/20 23:43	Álf no action on Bill within 30 days after receipt, Bill lapses i tl	tl	['junkterrorbillnow', 'j	https://twitter.com/ka	[]	[]	0	FALSE	2	1	2	2
6/30/20 23:42	JULY NA MAMAYA TAPOS 'YUNG ANTI-TERROR BILL... #JUNKtl	tl	['junkterrorbillnow']	https://twitter.com/zy	[]	[]	0	FALSE	0	1	0	0
6/30/20 23:40	Walang galang sa oras ng ibang tao eh. Minsan na nga lang tl	tl	['junkterrorbillnow']	https://twitter.com/_h	[]	[]	0	FALSE	0	0	0	0
6/30/20 23:35	#JunkTerrorBillNow	und	['junkterrorbillnow']	https://twitter.com/sp	[]	[]	0	FALSE	1	0	0	0
6/30/20 23:35	MAKIBAKA #JunkTerrorBillNow	tl	['junkterrorbillnow']	https://twitter.com/ril	[]	[]	0	FALSE	0	0	0	0
6/30/20 23:33	9 days and the full blown terror by the fascist Duterte regime en	en	['junkterrorbillnow']	https://twitter.com/JLI	[]	[]	0	FALSE	3	0	0	0
6/30/20 23:17	Ngayon pa ba kami matatakot sa paniniil? Lalaban kami! Kar tl	tl	['abscbnfranchise', 'ab	https://twitter.com/bc	[]	[]	0	FALSE	3	1	1	1
6/30/20 23:29	#JunkTerrorBillNow #MassTestingNowPH #DefendPressFreec und	und	['junkterrorbillnow', 'r	https://twitter.com/mi	[]	[]	0	FALSE	1	0	1	1
6/30/20 23:28	hoy #JUNKTERRORBILLNOW	und	['junkterrorbillnow']	https://twitter.com/ja	[]	[]	0	FALSE	0	0	0	0
6/30/20 23:24	#JUNKTERRORBILLNOW	und	['junkterrorbillnow']	https://twitter.com/rir	[]	[]	0	FALSE	0	0	0	0
6/30/20 23:23	#VetoTheBill #JunkTerrorBillNow	und	['vetothebill', 'junkt	https://twitter.com/ch	[]	[]	0	FALSE	1	0	0	0
6/30/20 23:23	aaaaah nakakastress #JunkTerrorBillNOW	tl	['junkterrorbillnow']	https://twitter.com/ch	[]	[]	0	FALSE	0	0	0	0
6/30/20 23:22	Gaano kabusisi ang ginawa ng @HouseofRepsPH sa Anti-Terr tl	tl	['abscbnfranchise', 'jur	https://twitter.com/mi	[]	[]	0	FALSE	6	0	3	3
6/30/20 23:17	In 9 days we might be on the same boat #JUNKTERRORBILL en	en	['junkterrorbillnow']	https://twitter.com/mi	[]	[]	0	FALSE	0	0	1	1
6/30/20 23:14	KAHOL TUTA KAHOL #BalikPasada #NoToJeepneyPhaseout # tl	tl	['balikpasada', 'notoj	https://twitter.com/na	[]	[]	0	FALSE	0	0	0	0
6/30/20 23:12	#JunkTerrorBillNow #BuildMarawiNow	und	['junkterrorbillnow', 'b	https://twitter.com/DI	[]	[]	0	FALSE	2	0	0	0
6/30/20 23:08	taena #JunkTerrorBillNow	tl	['junkterrorbillnow']	https://twitter.com/D	[]	[]	0	FALSE	1	0	0	0
6/30/20 23:06	#JUNKTERRORBILLNOW	und	['junkterrorbillnow']	https://twitter.com/ali	[]	[]	0	FALSE	0	0	0	0
6/30/20 23:03	#JunkTerrorBillNow #ActivistsNotTerrorists	und	['junkterrorbillnow', 'a	https://twitter.com/ha	[]	[]	0	FALSE	0	0	0	0

Phase 4: filtering and organization of data for analysis

TWINT gathered 200,870 tweets with #junkterrorbillnow during its heightened discussion in the period of June 1-30, 2020. The guidelines for tweet omission must follow the criteria set by the researchers to be aligned with the theory and acquire unique discussion points surrounding the Anti-Terrorism Bill of 2020.

From the 200,870 raw data from TWINT, the researchers were able to gather 1,887 tweets that became the basis for analysis and determining the tweet content lexicometry and grouping of co-occurring words. These co-occurring words were thematized to systematically determine the dominant themes in the user tweet content. Only 330 tweets from the 1,887 tweets underwent content analysis to find out the relation between the use of the topmost used hashtag and dominant themes to clicktivism, metavoicing, and assertion. These treatments include linear correlation coefficient, Eta-correlation, and Chi-square test depending on the most suitable treatment for the values culled from the extracted tweets. The 330 tweets also went through rigorous content analysis to find coherence in the dominant themes embedded in the user tweet content.

Results and Discussion

This research has utilized and centered its discussion of results on the digital activism theory of George and Leidner (2019), which was an adopted theory from Lester Milbrath about the hierarchy of political participation. It encompassed the evolution of social movements in the digital world, provided the limitations brought upon by the COVID-19 pandemic on acquiring data and doing fieldwork. The theory is a result of merging concepts from social movements and digital activism namely: the digital

gladiatorial activities, digital transitional activities, and digital spectator activities (George & Leidner, 2019). Due to the nature of Twitter's platform and quantifiable data present among tweets, the study only utilized digital spectator activities which are clicktivism, metavoicing, and assertion.

Clicktivism on Twitter is determined by tapping the "like" button on the tweet, asserting that one upvotes the idea or endorses the existing narrative of the tweet. Metavoicing refers to sharing or reposting a specific content originally created by another author. On Twitter, such action is equivalent to "retweeting" which reinforces an idea to a user's followers. Lastly, the assertion is in the form of content creation which aims to inform followers through certain media attachments such as images, audio, and videos. The platform's interface and the Twitter scraper used only allowed acquiring tweets with the available photo or video attachments.

Dominant hashtags culled from the tweets of Philippine Twitter users

The hashtags that are dominant in Twitter posts about the Anti-Terrorism Bill from June 1-30, 2020, according to the item frequency count using Python Programming Language, were #junkterrorbillnow (4,224), #junkterrorbill (3,072), #antiterrorismbill (1,311), #junkterrobillnow [sic] (311), and #yestoantiterrorbill (291). Explicitly, these dominant hashtags curate both positive and negative effects on the likes, retweets, replies, photos, videos, and URLs culled from the tweets of Twitter users as exhibited by the item frequency count of the garnered dominant hashtags.

The #junkterrorbillnow, which provides a negative concept of the anti-terrorism bill, was the topmost used hashtag, then, the content of the Twitter users' tweets containing this hashtag was gathered and

Table 2. Dominant Themes

Themes	Frequency	Subthemes	Frequency
Law making process	43	Criticisms	43
Human Security	52	Potential Threat	33
		Existent Threat	19
Role of Social Media	45	Information dissemination	45
Dialogue	169	Opposition	40
		Expression	86
		Call to action	43
Related Issues	3	(pandemic, June, independence day)	3
Uncategorized	18		18
Total	N = 330		330

utilized by the researchers. This gave the researchers more information and leverage to create depth in the study because the hashtag explicitly showed a negative perception of the anti-terrorism bill. In addition, the user tweet content predominantly provided texts that are, by nature, unfavorable to the aforementioned bill. Furthermore, the content analysis revealed that the tweet content of the Twitter users in this study was heavily influenced by the topmost used hashtag the #junkterrorbillnow.

Dominant themes pertinent to the discussion of anti-terrorism bill

The researchers grouped 232 unique words that were collected and grouped from filtered tweets that valued 1,887. Through this method, themes were systematically generated from the unique words. Five dominant themes arose (see Table 2) including the law-making process (43 tweets), human security (52 tweets), the role of social media (45 tweets), dialogue (169 tweets), and related issues (3 tweets).

First, law-making process theme involves criticism of Philippine Twitter users to the government and its branches. The priorities and actions of the Philippine government during the COVID-19 pandemic were the subject of disappointment of some

users who expressed it through tweeting. Bashir et al. (2021) acknowledge that aside from allowing the expression of views and information dissemination of users, Twitter also provides a platform for the people where they can demonstrate their “support or criticism towards individual/government.” Specifically, the Philippine Twitter users posted tweets that question the efforts of the government in creating a law that allegedly seeks to silence dissent from the people instead of giving more attention to the pandemic response of the government, particularly in conducting mass testing to the citizens which they deemed to be much needed.

Second, human security consisted of two sub-themes which are the potential threat and existent threat. The context and message of the human security theme seem to relate to the view of the petitioners in G.R. No. 252578 where it has been pointed out that some provisions of the Anti-Terrorism bill are vague (Supreme Court of the Philippines, 2020), and a common concern for the safety and freedom of the citizens arose. In fact, Guevarra and Arcilla (2020) reported that an arrest took place during a pride rally last June 26, 2020, where LGBTQ activists were arrested after demonstrating dissent in the streets towards the anti-terrorism bill.

Third, the role of social media theme specifically pertains to Twitter which was utilized by Philippine Twitter users as their platform for disseminating information related to the bill. The commonly recurring words from the tweets are the common words “know,” “educate,” “information,” as well as “vigilant” that only support the claims of Karamat and Farooq (2020) and Anderson (2019) that online networking in Twitter is the most effective way to access information and this is important in terms of empowerment of social groups as well as in the information gathering of online users to aggregate activity. This theme is further supported by the fourth theme.

Fourth, the theme dialogue broadly encompassed the three sub-themes namely opposition, expression, and call to action. In accord with this, Konnelly (2015) considers the potential of Twitter as transformative when it comes to the advocacies of social groups and stresses the function of Twitter that enables users to engage in dialogue on specific subjects of social justice, which in the case of this study, zeroes in on the issue of the Anti-Terrorism bill of 2020. (1) Expression includes tweets that contain opinions but did not explicitly show opposition against the bill. It may come in the form of story narration, provocative questions, and humor, which may not appear to be incomprehensible at first glance. (2) Opposition consists of explicit objection toward the issue with the words “dissent”, “condemn”, and “against” among others. Lastly, (3) call to action invoked the desire to speak up, sign e-petitions, and join mass protests on the streets. The researchers observed that the dialogue between the Twitter users revolved around the concept that “activism is not terrorism,” suggesting that the passing of the bill has the potential to allegedly mistake activism as an act of terrorism.

The theme of related issues includes events and contexts that may also be

factored in the online activism of Philippine Twitter users about the Anti-Terrorism Bill. This encompasses Philippine Independence Day and the pressing concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic. The concerns of the people over the pandemic fueled the criticism towards the government in view of the dissatisfaction of people with its pandemic response. Its treatment of the pandemic as a safety concern also garnered negative judgments. This can be evidenced by the increased presence of military and police personnel during the pandemic. Meanwhile, the Philippine Independence Day is a national holiday that supposedly celebrates freedom which was perceived as the opposite of the potential threats to human rights which the Anti-Terrorism Bill can potentially engender. Haßler et al. (2021) observe that social movement organizations (SMOs) shifted their engagements online when street protests became undoable because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Similar to this research, the study of Haßler et al. (2021) centered on a particular policy, with Twitter as its research locale, and observed how SMOs continued their engagement on Twitter. The work of Haßler et al. (2021) also considered the role of hashtags in information dissemination and mobilization. Thus, the claim that the ongoing pandemic affected the activism of SMOs and individuals is only strengthened.

Relation of the topmost used hashtag and dominant themes to digital spectator tier activities

By using a framework that exhibits the negative and positive relationship between the dependent and independent variables of this research, the researchers found out that there is a substantial relationship or a moderate correlation between the dominant themes culled from the tweets of the Philippine Twitter users on the issue

of the Anti-Terrorism Bill of 2020 and the digital spectator activity clicktivism. The link between the dominant themes and the digital spectator activity metavoicing revealed a very low correlation. The correlations yielded in this study coincide with the adopted framework, Hierarchy of Digital Activism, as it shows a non-linear relationship between the online activism activities of the Philippine Twitter and the Digital Spectator Activism of George and Leidner (2019).

Relation of the use of the topmost used hashtag and dominant themes

Results showed that #junkterrorbillnow was predominantly utilized by the Philippine Twitter users to express their negative perception of the issue of the Anti-Terrorism Bill. Looking at the composition of the hashtag #junkterrorbillnow, which are “junk”, “terror”, “bill”, and “now” respectively, meaning that conveys the opposition to making the Anti-Terrorism Bill into law can be understood.

Moreover, the tweets of Philippine Twitter users with #junkterrorbillnow point to the theme dialogue. Here, the users exhibited the sub-themes of opposition (40 tweets), expression (86 tweets) of their feelings,

thoughts, and emotions, and encouraged a call to action (43 tweets). Criticism towards the government was also evident in the theme of the law-making process while the theme of human security evinced concerns on freedom of expression and human rights. Information dissemination regarding the issue was also evident under the theme role of social media. Lastly, the theme of related issues overlaps criticism toward the government but falls under the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, Philippine Twitter users notably oppose the passage of the Anti-Terrorism Bill due to its potential to infringe the freedom of expression and other human rights.

Relation between clicktivism, metavoicing, and assertion

According to George and Leidner (2019) engaging in other digital activism activities is possible while participating in other activities or levels of digital activism regardless of the level they belong to. To check this claim, this study analyzed the relation between the digital spectator activities clicktivism, metavoicing, and assertion.

First, findings reveal that the link between clicktivism and metavoicing can be described as a moderate relationship. The

Table 3. Linear Correlation Coefficient of the variable likes, replies, and retweets

		Likes	Verbal Interpretation
Replies	Pearson Correlation	0.652**	Moderate Correlation
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	There is a significant relationship between the likes and the replies.
Retweets	Pearson Correlation	0.954**	Very High Correlation
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	There is a significant relationship between the likes and the retweets.
		Replies	Verbal Interpretation
Retweets	Pearson Correlation	0.561**	Moderate Correlation
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	There is a significant relationship between the replies and the retweets.
N		1887	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

replies show a substantial relationship with likes based on the value of 0.652. Further, results suggest that retweets has a very high correlation with likes based on the value of 0.954.

Second, Table 3 shows that the metavoicing function replies has a substantial or moderate correlation with the metavoicing function based on the value of 0.561. Both utilized the Linear Correlation Coefficient as a statistical instrument and applied Pearson Correlation to measure the relationship between the variables.

Third, clicktivism and assertion yielded results that indicated the following: (1) photo attachments in the tweets have a very low correlation with the number of likes, (2) video attachments have a very low correlation with the number of likes, and finally, (3) the use of URL attachments in tweets has no correlation with the number of likes. Fourth, metavoicing and assertion delivered results that indicate the following. Findings suggest that replies have a very low correlation with the attachment of photos, videos, and URLs respectively. Further, findings showed that retweets have a very low correlation with the attachment of photos and videos respectively. Meanwhile, results regarding the correlation between URLs and retweets

revealed that there is no correlation between the two.

Therefore, the claim of George and Leidner (2019) applies to the relationship between clicktivism and metavoicing as evinced by the moderate relationship generated by the findings of this study. However, the same claim does not apply to the relationship between clicktivism and assertion and the link between metavoicing and assertion based on very low to no correlation that was revealed in this study.

Relation of dominant themes to clicktivism

Individuals may engage in clicktivism remotely using technology; therefore, clicktivism is deemed as the lowest level of online activism (George & Leidner, 2019). It is impersonal and noncommittal. Data showed that there was an average value of 1,414 engagement of likes on June 26, 2020, which was significantly higher than other digital spectator activities. Thus, the researchers conclude that clicktivism earned the most engagement from the Philippine Twitter users among the three digital spectator activities.

Table 4. ETA Correlation between assertion, clicktivism, and metavoicing

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	ETA Coefficient	ETA Squared	Verbal Interpretation
Likes	Photo attachment	0.010633	0.000113	Very low correlation
Replies	Photo attachment	0.009887	9.78E-05	Very low correlation
Retweets	Photo attachment	0.017052	0.000291	Very low correlation
Likes	Video attachment	0.041178	0.001696	Very low correlation
Replies	Video attachment	0.057217	0.003274	Very low correlation
Retweets	Video attachment	0.038967	0.001518	Very low correlation
Likes	URL attachment	0.005895	3.48E-05	No correlation
Replies	URL attachment	0.031953	0.001021	Very low correlation
Retweets	URL attachment	0.001506	2.27E-06	No Correlation
N				1887

Table 5. ETA Correlation between the dominant themes and clicktivism

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	ETA Coefficient	ETA Squared	Interpretation
Likes	Themes	0.087	0.00756	Moderate correlation (substantial relationship)
N				330

Table 5 shows that the ETA Correlation value of 0.087 indicates that the dominant themes have a moderate correlation with the number of likes which represents the digital spectator activity clicktivism. In relation to the claim of George and Leidner (2019) that clicktivism is the lowest level of digital spectator tier activity, findings revealed that clicktivism substantially established a relationship with the dominant themes culled from the tweets of Philippine Twitter users. This means that in most tweets that contained the dominant themes pertinent to the discussion of the Anti-Terrorism Bill, the Philippine Twitter users tend to engage in clicktivism.

Relation of dominant themes to metavoicing

The online terrain is influenced by metavoicing by way of creating responses to the tweets of others. Findings of this study recorded that the highest average number of replies is nine (9) replies per tweet last June 24, 2020. Meanwhile, the record for the highest number of retweets is 753 last June 26, 2020.

Hence, metavoicing is the second most utilized form of online activism activity of the Philippine Twitter users about the issue

of the Anti-Terrorism Bill. Findings revealed that the dominant themes have a very low correlation with metavoicing. As shown in Table 6, there is an ETA coefficient value of 0.086 between replies and the dominant themes while there is a 0.078 ETA coefficient value between retweets and the dominant themes.

George and Leidner (2019) claimed that as digital activists move upward in the hierarchy, the number of engagements will be less. In accordance with this, the relation between clicktivism and the dominant themes was moderate but the relation between metavoicing and the dominant themes only yielded a very low correlation. It follows that the users engaged less by means of replies and retweets with the tweets that contained the dominant themes about the Anti-Terrorism Bill.

Relation of dominant themes to assertion

Assertion is identified as the highest form of digital spectator activity with the least engagements (George & Leidner, 2019). There is a lesser portion of individuals who allot time to generate content such as photos and videos.

Table 6. ETA Correlation between the dominant themes and metavoicing

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	ETA Coefficient	ETA Squared	Interpretation
Replies	Themes	0.086	0.0074	Very low correlation
Retweets	Themes	0.078	0.00611	Very low correlation
N				330

Table 7. Chi-square tests between themes vs. photo, video, and URL attachment

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Value	Interpretation	Fisher's Test Approx. Sig.	Interpretation
Photo	Themes	0.195	Weak Correlation	0.023	There is a significant relationship
Video	Themes	0.199	Weak Correlation	0.012	There is no significant relationship
URL	Themes	0.179	Weak Correlation	0.051	There is a significant relationship
N					330

Since the Chi-square tests yielded results of weak correlation, it is now probable to use the approximate significance culled from Fisher's exact test as an alternate hypothesis. Thus, the relationship between the digital spectator activity of assertion of Philippine Twitter users and the culled dominant themes may be portrayed in three ways: 1) the dominant themes have no significant association with the video attachments, 2) the dominant themes have a significant association with photo attachments, and 3) the dominating themes have a significant association with URL attachments. Meaning to say, while the URL and photo attachments are not independent of the dominant themes, the video attachment is independent of the dominant themes gathered from Philippine Twitter users' tweets about the Anti-Terrorism Bill.

Following George and Leidner (2019) theory, findings agreed that (1) as one initiates upward mobility in the hierarchy, the number of individuals who participate in such activity/tier gradually decreases; and (2) individuals who place themselves in the higher-level political activity still relatively show engagement in the lower-level political activities.

Conclusion

Although studies about activism on Twitter have gained traction over the years, there is still much data available for future studies due to the ever-increasing information that users generate and share.

Studies on Twitter activism encompass cross-cultural and international movements like the studies on #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo movement. However, exploring topics within the Twitter cyberspace of a particular country or region is also important in order to have a closer look at the contexts of the discussions of the users just like what this study has attempted to do by investigating how Twitter users utilize the platform to engage in clicktivism, metavoicing, and assertion about issue of the Anti-Terrorism Bill of 2020 in the Philippines. This kind of study is especially useful in examining the concerns and perceptions of the governed towards the policy-making of the government, which studies on this field barely scratched.

The enactment and ratification of the Anti-Terrorism Bill of 2020 received opposed and negative responses online. Results of this study show that due to some vague provisions of the Anti-Terrorism Bill that could be potential threats to activists and citizens, the Philippine Twitter users expressed opposition to its passage. Results also suggest that Philippine Twitter users believe that if the bill was passed into law, it has the tendency to be instrumentalized to silence the notorious critics of the administration. The massive response of the top-most used hashtag #junkterrorbillnow garnered 200,870 tweets in June 2020. This only shows that (1) the online activism of Philippine Twitter users relates to the law-making process of the bill, (2) the creation of the bill relates to stifling dissent, and (3)

abrupt efforts surrounding the enactment of the bill amidst the pandemic imply great concerns towards human security.

Anchoring on the framework of George and Leidner (2019) with ETA Correlation as the statistical tool, the results state that clicktivism is the digital spectator activity that the Philippine Twitter users tend to engage with. They express agreement with a tweet sentiment by liking the tweet as evinced by the substantial relationship found between the culled themes and the number of likes. The link between the dominant themes and metavoicing referring to retweets and replies exhibits an almost negligible relationship or a very low correlation. With regard to the creation of content or assertion, tweets containing photo attachments and URLs yielded a link indicating a significant relationship with the dominant themes using the Chi-square correlation. Interestingly, there is no link between tweets that contain video attachments and the themes. In other words, the photo attachments and URL showed relevance in terms of amplifying discourses and narratives that surround the #junkterrorbillnow.

Researchers of this study found that the narratives of Twitter users in the digital sphere provide insights into the temporal dynamics of public opinion on social change and critical issues pertinent to the law-making priorities of the government. There are also attempts to elevate the concerns about human security that are pertinent to the Anti-Terrorism Bill. With that, this study recommends the following. First, policymakers should learn to navigate social media platforms to be aware of how online users perceive the anti-terrorism bill which will help them make necessary amendments and reconsider its implementation. Second, future researchers could seek other ways to test and analyze the link between the themes culled from the Tweets and the nominal data which are photo attachments, videos,

and URLs. Third, the co-occurring words collected from the user tweet contents may be contextualized by future researchers for a more in-depth analysis. Comparing the similarities and differences in the contexts and usage of the words is much recommended. Lastly, the other levels in the Hierarchy of Digital Activism by George and Leidner (2019) namely the Digital Transitional and Digital Gladiatorial could be investigated by future studies since this study only focused on the Digital Spectator Activism which is the lowest level.

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Declaration of Ownership

This article is our original work.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest to declare in this article.

Ethical Clearance

This study was approved by the institution.

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