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### Case Study

## The War on Terror: Assessing Awareness and Acceptance on The Anti-Terrorism Act (Ata) of 2020 in Oriental Mindoro, Philippines

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### About Article

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### ABSTRACT

The war on terror has been a focal point of global security efforts, with various measures implemented to combat terrorism. This study investigates the awareness and acceptance of the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 among the residents of Sitio who have had cases of terrorist attacks in the Municipality of Bongabong, Oriental Mindoro. The study utilized the descriptive-correlational method to systematically describe the relationship among variables. The study reveals that respondents were unaware of the provisions of the Anti-Terrorism Act and varied on the level of acceptance of its provisions. It further shows a significant relationship between the level of awareness and acceptance and factors such as age, sex, religion, income, and educational attainment. The research recommends collaboration between local leaders, educational institutions, and other civil society organizations to implement an information dissemination plan and other educational programs for anti-terrorism awareness and establish a monitoring and evaluation mechanism to assess the impact of the awareness-raising efforts of the agencies involved.

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

For over a century, terrorism is a poisonous ideology aiming for control and change. It victimized fervent twisted people and listed a 349, 500 collateral damage worldwide between 2007 and 2022 (Statista, 2024). It ends dream before it even realizes, sever hundreds of families, and creates a lamenting symphony of grief. One of the landmark cases in the history of terrorism is the Al Qaeda Twin Towers attack. A total of 3,375 American lives were lost during that tragic day. The event triggered the commencement of the so-called “Global War on Terror”. It became an eye-opener of modern history, that even the United States which has the strongest and most advanced military in human history was attacked on its soil and brought to its knees by 19 Al Qaeda terrorists. Twenty-two (22) years later, terrorism still spreads horror in every nook and corner of the world from Taliban claiming power in Afghanistan to Hamas attacking and using Gaza strip as a shield.

In line with this, the Philippines have medium to high concentration and intensity of terrorist attacks based on the calculated number of people injured in each attack (Global Terrorism Database Heat Map, 2020). Given this, the Philippines have 8,289 incidents relating to terrorism, with 4,146 fatalities, and 3,044 injuries. The military was the primary target of the attack with 2,041 attacks, followed by the Government with 1,783 attacks, Private Citizen’s Property with 1,701 attacks, and Educational Institutions with 181 attacks (Global Terrorism Database, 2022).

In addition, one of the biggest and highest-intensity urban battles in the Philippines was the battle of Marawi on May 23, 2017, a five-month-long militia between the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Southern Militia allied with the Maute Group, both militant linked to Islamic State (IS). As residents seek safety, much of Marawi has become a ghost town and the siege left 165 casualties from the government forces; 47

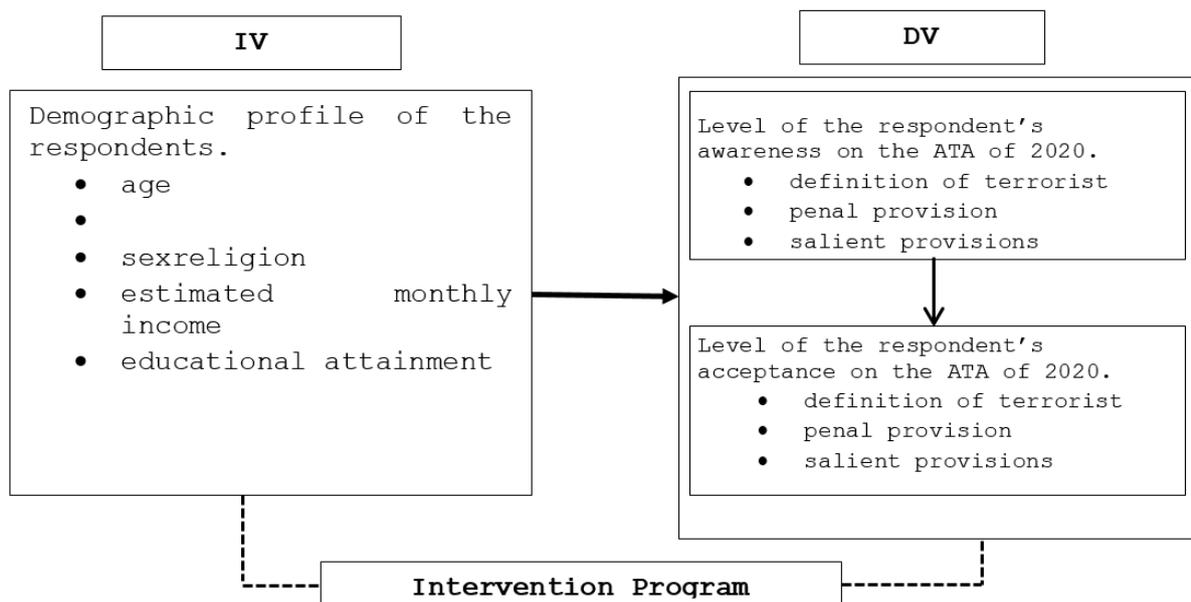
civilians casualties; 1.1 million civilians displaced; 974 militants killed; 11 militants captured; and approximately 2 billion pesos looted by militants (The ASEAN Post Team, 2018).

In Oriental Mindoro, the GTD reported 28 incidents relating to terrorism with 19 fatalities, and 7 injuries. Targeting the attack primarily on Government Officials and Police Officers with 10 attacks each, Private Citizen’s Property with 4 attacks and Business Establishment with 3 attacks. In this regard, Municipality of Bongabong local officials are alarmed over the growing number of armed conflicts between law enforcers and detrimental groups (Philippines News Agency, 2021).

According to the Electronic Freedom of Information (eFOI), between 2010 and 2023, there were 14 terrorist attacks in the Municipality. These attacks took place in 10 different Sitio across seven (7) different Barangays, particularly in Sitio Oringon, Sitio Alyanon, and Sitio Balya all located in Barangay Lisap, Sitio Balite and Sitio Bokbok located in Barangay Hagan, Sitio Mayangis located in Barangay Malitbog, Sitio Mascong located in Barangay Hagupit, Sitio Pag-asa 1 located in Barangay Morente, Sitio Pastuhan located in Barangay Tawas, and Sitio Manambao located in Barangay Santa Cruz. In 2014, there was one (1) attack, in 2016 there were three (3) attacks, in 2018 there was one (1) attack, in 2022 there were four (4) attacks, and in 2023 there were five (5) attacks. The data presented shows that terrorist attacks have significantly increased in the Municipality of Bongabong in recent years, particularly in 2022 and 2023.

Given the danger and rise in terrorist attacks, this research endeavors to assess the public awareness and acceptance on the ATA of 2020 among the residents of the Municipality of Bongabong affected by terrorism. The Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) of 2020 otherwise known as Republic Act 11479, is a landmark piece of legislation that was introduced to bolster the country’s counterterrorism efforts, enhance national security, and align with international standards in the fight against terrorism.

**Conceptual Framework**



**Figure 1.** The hypothesized relationship between and among the variables of the study.



Figure 1 shows the hypothesized relationship of the Independent Variable (IV) and Dependent Variable (DV), and the relationship between DV. The IV contains the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, religion, estimated monthly income, and educational attainment, while the DV compose of the level of the respondent's awareness and acceptance on the ATA in terms of the definition of terrorist, penal provision, and salient provision. The one-headed arrow connecting the IV and DV as well as the two dependent variables, show that the relationships between them was tested.

### 1.1. Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to determine the level of awareness and acceptance on the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 among the residents of Sitio who have cases of terrorist attacks in the Municipality of Bongabong.

Specifically, it aims to answer the following questions:

#### 1.1.1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:

- i. age;
- ii. sex;
- iii. religion;
- iv. estimated monthly income; and
- v. educational attainment?

#### 1.1.2. What is the level of the respondents' awareness on the ATA of 2020 in terms of:

- i. definition of terrorist;
- ii. penal provision; and
- iii. salient provisions?

#### 1.1.3. What is the level of the respondents' acceptance on the ATA of 2020 in terms of:

- i. definition of terrorist;
- ii. penal provision; and
- iii. salient provisions?

1.1.4. Is there a significant relationship between the demographic profile and the level of awareness on the ATA of 2020?

1.1.5. Is there a significant relationship between the demographic profile and the level of acceptance on the ATA of 2020?

1.1.6. Is there a significant relationship between the level of the respondent's awareness and acceptance on the ATA of 2020?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Demographic profile is used to describe the distribution of characteristics in society or population in order to understand them, make policy recommendations, and to comprehend how this might affect's individual's social and civic behavior (Hayes, 2023). With this, the Philippine consist of approximately 118,420,471 inhabitants (Worldometer, 2024), and from 2012 to 2022 the age structure of the country was 30.34% of the population were 0-14 years old, 62.23% were 15-64 years old, and 5.44% were 65 years and older (O'Neill, 2024), and less than a third of the household population consist of young adults (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2022).

In this regard, age plays a significant role in shaping an individual's participation and understanding of the world

around them on which individual's actions depends on his choices in the specific stages of his life (Cherry, 2022). These changes enable the aging brain to become better at detecting relationships between diverse sources of information, capturing the big picture, and understanding the global implications of specific issues (Harvard Health Publishing, 2017).

Given this, according to Tapia (2020) youth are the nation's backbone. They are adaptive and information-hungry, evaluating various points of view while decluttering the question landscape to uncover value which terrorist group, utilize to commit and achieve their goal. The youth themselves are at the forefront of some of the initiatives to tackle the spread of violent extremism on where extremist groups' recruitments focused mainly on youth, driving young people toward violent extremism (Obonyo, 2020).

For decades the recruitment of the youth to join terrorist group was widespread from left to right, from extreme to moderate, and as a result the state security forces have been monitoring student activism to avoid any potential danger (Pamintuan, 2021). In conclusion, the Philippines' age structure presents a unique challenge. A large and impressionable young population simultaneously praised as the nation's backbone and targeted by extremist groups. While their youthful energy and adaptability offer immense potential, their developing brains and search for identity make them susceptible to manipulation. By bridging the gap between security concerns and youth empowerment, the country can ensure that its vibrant young minds become the driving force behind a peaceful and prosperous future, not the pawns of extremist agendas.

Furthermore, as of 2023, the Philippines have a population of 57.7 million females and 59.6 million males, resulting in a gap on the population with 1.9 million more males than women (Knoema, 2023). In this regard, the country still considered the most gender-equal country in Asia. Gender equality in education, health and survival was near to close parity. However, the recoveries for women low political participation are still incomplete (Abad, 2023).

With this, gender stereotypes are also persistent factors in counter-terrorism measures. Norton's (2022) discussed that almost every counter-terrorism policy men were exclusively conceptualizes as terrorist; and women are viewed as the victims of violence and not as its perpetrator (Banks, 2019). Hence, men are often seen as demographic group most at risk of violent extremism, and the stereotypes of masculinity and femininity have shaped states responses in counter-terrorism measures (Dier & Baldwin, 2022).

Moreover, in terms of religion, the Philippines are unique among its neighbors in the South East Asian region in that the majority of Filipinos identify as Christian. More specifically, Catholicism is the most dominant in the country, followed by religious minority, orderly mentioned based on the highest to lowest population, namely Evangelical Christian, Iglesia ni Kristo with some other Christian denomination, Muslim, and atheist. The Catholic Church and state were also officially separated in the 1990s, yet Catholicism still plays a prominent role in political and societal affairs (Scroope, 2017).

According to Office of International Religious Freedom (2022), the Philippines face challenges in ensuring equal rights and



protection for all religious groups. While a legal framework exists, implementation is hampered by ongoing conflicts, discrimination, and restrictive measures. The diverse religious belief and historical marginalization of other religion can potentially give birth to an extremist idealist who promises opportunity and inclusivity (Casey, 2018). Some terrorist groups utilize religion for recruitment, inspired by defensive motives; others seek to ensure the predominance of their faith while others are motivated by an aggressive combination of these tendencies (Henne, 2019).

In conclusion, the Philippines' unique religious landscape, while shaping social structure and identity, presents potential vulnerabilities to extremist propaganda. Uneven representation, historical marginalization, and lingering intolerance create fertile ground for exploiting faith narratives for violent agendas. By promoting understanding and inclusivity, the Philippines can harness the positive power of religion for community development and navigate its complex religious landscape towards a more peaceful and equitable future.

While the Philippines celebrate progress in poverty reduction, the persistence of a vast income gap paints a sobering picture. Millions of Filipinos remain trapped in low-paying jobs, struggling to meet basic needs even as inflation escalates. This economic disparity leaves deep scars, shaping identities, social behavior, and perceptions of the environment. Furthermore, the education system in the Philippines is facing numerous challenges from the issues of inadequate funding, teacher shortages, outdated curriculum, corruption, and to lack of vocational training. Making it difficult to teachers to ensure that every Filipino student receives the quality education they deserved (Bustamante, 2023).

Given this, statistics show that a significant portion of families (60% in 2016 and 50% in 2017) had at least one member who didn't complete basic education, highlighting a widespread deprivation in educational access. Further compounding this issue, dropout and attrition rates in higher education remain substantial between 2016 and 2022 (Bersales, 2018; Cruz, 2023). Generally, Philippine education system was plagued by incomplete basic education, high dropout rates, and declining higher education enrollment, particularly among poorer families. Revealing a system failing to equip its youth with the knowledge and skills they need to thrive.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (2023) stated that terrorism is the most direct asymmetric threat to the security of the citizens, and to international stability and prosperity. It indicated that counter-terrorism shall focuses on improving awareness of the threat, developing capabilities to prepare and respond the act of terrorism. Moreover, Schmid (2023) described a terrorist as a person who is involved in terrorist crimes such as promoting and advocating the use of terrorism and assisting terrorists in the collection of information and the distribution of propaganda. This aligns with the R. A. 11479 also known as Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 section 4 that defines terrorism as any act committed with the intent to cause harm to people or property, or to disrupt public order, for the purpose of intimidating or influencing the government or the international organization, or to create a serious risk to public safety. The law specifically excludes advocacy, protest,

and other forms of civil disobedience from the definition of terrorism. Nonetheless, Mendoza *et al.* (2021) pointed out that the R. A. 11479 section 4 provides for an ambiguous and overbroad definition of what qualifies as terrorism making it susceptible to various interpretations; and the non-unanimity on what kind of violence amount to an act of terrorism makes it hard to ordinary citizens to determine what terrorism is (Martin & Prager, 2019).

Given this, the Philippines are actively tackling terrorism through various initiatives. The National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA) conducts forums on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) to address the root causes of radicalization. Additionally, NICA and the Philippine National Police collaborate on the Community Anti-Terrorism Awareness (CATA) program, which aims to educate and empower local communities to identify and report suspicious activity, bolstering vigilance and cooperation in the fight against terrorism (United Nations Office of Legal Affairs, 2020). In this regard, one of the biggest concerns raised on the R.A. 11479 is the vagueness and over breadth of the concept of terrorism. In the case *Benavides v. Peru* (2000), the court stated that in defining the crimes, it is necessary to keep a clear definition of the illegal conduct, which sets forth its elements and makes it possible to distinguish it from non-punishable behaviour or illegal activities punishable with non-criminal measures. In line with this, Kaye (2015) discussed that the definition of terrorist offenses and provisions relating to the criminalization of acts of 'incitement and glorification' or 'justification' of terrorism' are too broad and vague. A vague law impermissibly delegates basic policy matters to policemen, judges, and juries for resolution on ad hoc and subjective basis, and vague standards result in erratic and arbitrary application based on individual impressions and personal predilections (Caguioa, 2021).

Furthermore, Gogoi (2019) states that awareness of ones' rights and means of securing those rights are powerful instruments for bringing about social and economic progress. Absence of legal awareness is a root cause of deception, exploitation and deprivation of rights and benefits of the masses. Legal literacy and legal awareness go hand in hand. Thus, as for the population to access justice, they must understand their rights and the means for claiming them. Legal awareness helps counter this misunderstanding and promote access to justice (Haikal, 2022). The ATA has been met with significant controversy and criticism from various groups and individuals, questioning its constitutionality and possible harmful effects in civil rights. In this regard, Bequelin (2020), states that the overly broad definition of terrorism in the ATA can be potentially used to target critics and human rights defenders, and to grant excessive and unchecked power to government, potentially leading to human rights abuses. Regarding this, Gunatilleke (2021) explained that the freedom of expression is vital to our ability to convey opinions, convictions, and beliefs, and to meaningfully participate in democracy. The state may, however, 'limit' the freedom of expression on certain grounds, such as national security, public order, public health, and public morals. The 1987 Philippine Constitution Bill of Rights stipulates that the freedom of speech, of expression, or of the press, or



the right of the people peaceably to assemble and petition the government for redress of grievances is an individual constitutional right. Nevertheless, Global Expression Report (2023) described that the Philippines are among countries listed as having “restricted” expression. To this, Committee Report No. 186 (2021), pointed out that the stipulation under the 1987 Philippine Constitution specifically the clause of freedom of expression is not absolute, for it may be regulated if it will be injurious to the equal enjoyment of others having equal rights, or injurious to the rights of the community or society. Moreover, R. A. 11479 Sec. 36 states that the government has the power to freeze the bank account and other assets of funds of any person or persons in relation to whom there is probable cause to believe that such person or persons are committing or attempting or conspiring to commit or participating in or facilitating the financing of the act of terrorism. Nos *et al.* (2021), states that Section 36 violates separation of powers (judicial), as well as the constitutional right to due process, and right against unreasonable searches and seizures.

In addition, Borgmann (2009) point out that purely procedural concern should not serve as pretext for the court to evade its function in the system of check and balances. When fundamental right other than freedom of speech is violated by a law, the court has the duty to hold the legislature accountable. Hence, the right to privacy as a constitutional right was recognized and the invasion should be justified by a compelling state interest (City of Manila v. Laguio, Jr., 2005).

On another note, R.A. 11479, Sec. 29 state the law empowers the ATC to authorize in writing the police or military personnel to arrest without a corresponding warrant (warrantless arrest) any person suspected of being a terrorist or terrorist supporter defined in this law, without incurring any criminal liability for delay; and detained the suspected person without charge for fourteen (14) days, and if necessary on behalf of the investigation and reasonable reason it may be extended by another ten (10) days. Given this, the 1987 Philippine Constitution Article 3, Section 2 state that people shall have the right to be secure in their persons and effects against unreasonable searches and seizures of whatever nature and for any purpose shall be inviolable, and no search warrant or warrant of arrest shall issue except upon probable cause to be determined personally by the judge. In addition, the Revised Penal Code Article 125 states that delay in the delivery of detained persons to the proper judicial authorities shall be penalized. Failure to exercise such provision will constitute to arbitrary detention. Additionally, Tan (2022) states that ATA may be used to further extend the dangerous practice of red-tagging patently violate international human rights law and standards. Hence, as far as legal system is concerned, in ordered to be considered legitimate, law should be accessible, recognizable, and understandable to people (Horak *et al.*, 2020).

Overall, these criticisms raise serious concerns about the potential negative impacts of the ATA on fundamental rights and the rule of law in the Philippines, raising questions about its future application and level of acceptance within the Philippines.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a descriptive-method. It was used to analyze the descriptive relationship between the demographic profile and the level of awareness and acceptance on ATA of 2020. It was also used to find if there is a significant relationship between the level of awareness and the level of acceptance of the respondents on ATA of 2020. Purposive sampling was used in the study in identifying and selecting the respondents. Privacy and confidentiality of the information gathered were assured throughout the study.

The study was conducted in the selected Sitios in the Municipality of Bongabong with cases of consummated rebellion or insurrection and terrorist attacks in the years 2010-2023. According to the data gathered, there are ten (10) Sitios with reported terrorist insurgency which are located in seven (7) different Barangays such as; Sitio Oringon, Sitio Alyanon, and Sitio Balya all located in Barangay Lisap, Sitio Balite and Sitio Bokbok located in Barangay Hagan, Sitio Mayangis located in Barangay Malitbog, Sitio Mascong located in Barangay Hagupit, Sitio Pag-asa 1 located in Barangay Morente, Sitio Pastuhan located in Barangay Tawas, and Sitio Manambao located in Barangay Santa Cruz.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1.** Demographic Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
16-35 years old	88	40
36-55 years old	81	37
56-75 years old	49	22
76-95 years old	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>100</b>

It shows that 88 or 40% of the respondents age range are 16-35 years old, 81 or 37% are 36-55 years old, 49 or 22% are 56-75 years old, and two (2) or one (1%) of the respondents are 76-95 years old. The results revealed that in the Sitio with cases of terrorists attack, the majority of the respondents were aged 16-35 years old.

The results align with the Philippine Statistics Authority (2022) report that youth accounts for less than a third of the household population; and age plays a significant role in shaping an individual’s participation and understanding of the world around them on which individual’s actions depends on his choices in the specific stages of his life (Cherry, 2022).

For decades, the recruitment of the youth to join terrorist group was widespread from left to right, from extreme to moderate, and as a result the state security forces have been monitoring student activism to avoid any potential danger (Pamintuan, 2021). Bridging the gap between the vulnerable age population and security concerns are necessary for the country to ensure that its vibrant young minds become the driving force behind a peaceful and prosperous future, not the pawns of extremist agendas.



**Table 2.** Demographic Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	88	40
Female	132	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>100</b>

The results showed that 132 or 60% of the respondents are females while 88 or 40% are male. The data shows a higher participation rate among women compared to men. Contrary to the results, Knoema (2023) reported that there are 1.9 million more males than women. Moreover, supporting the conclusion, according to Azka (2023) gender stereotypes still present significant barriers to individual and group participation in social change; women are still associated with domestic roles, while men are expected to be strong leaders and work outside the home.

**Table 3.** Demographic Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Religion

Religion	Frequency	Percentage
Roman Catholic	113	51
Evangelical Presbyterian	33	15
Born Again	14	7
Church of God	13	6
Adventist	8	4
Assembly of God	6	3
Good News	5	2
Back to Christ	5	2
Jesus the Anointed One	5	2
Jehova’s Witness	3	1
Foursquare	3	1
Others	5	2
Non-religious	7	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>100</b>

Out of 220 respondents, 113 or 51% of the respondents are Roman Catholic; 33 or 15% are Evangelical Presbyterian, 14 or 7% are Born Again, 13 or 6% are Church of God, 8 or 4% are Adventist, 6 or 3% are Assembly of God, 5 or 2% are Good News, 5 or 2% are Back to Christ, 5 or 2% are Jesus the Anointed One, 3

or 1% are Jehova’s Witness, 3 or 1% are Foursquare, 5 or 2% are others, and 7 or 4% are Non-religious.

**Table 4.** Demographic Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Estimated Monthly Income

Estimated Monthly Income	Frequency	Percentage
Below 5,000	176	80
5,001-10,000	30	14
10,001-15,000	6	3
15,001-20,000	3	1
20,001 and above	5	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>100</b>

Out of 220 respondents, 176 or 80% of the monthly income of the respondents falls in the margin of below 5,000; 30 or 14% falls in the 5,001-10,000; 6 or 3% falls in the 10,001-15,000; 3 or 1% falls in the 15,001-20,000; and 5 or 2% falls in 20,001 and above.

**Table 5.** Demographic Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment	Frequency	Percentage
Elementary Undergraduate (Kinder-Grade 5)	55	25
Elementary Graduate	26	12
High School Undergraduate (Grade 7-11)	47	21
High School Graduate	35	16
College Undergraduate	11	5
College Graduate	6	3
TESDA Graduate	4	2
ALS Graduate	2	1
Unschoolled	34	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>100</b>

As illustrated out of 220 respondents, 55 or 25% of the respondents are elementary undergraduate; 26 or 12% are elementary graduate; 47 or 21% are high school undergraduate; 35 or 16% are high school graduate; 11 or 5% are college undergraduate; 6 or 3% are college graduate; 4 or 2% are TESDA graduate; 2 or 1% are ALS graduate; and 34 or 15% are unschooled.

**Table 6.** Mean Level of Awareness of the Respondents on the ATA of 2020 in Terms of Definition of Terrorist

Items	WM	R	VI
An individual is a terrorist if he engages in activities aimed at causing the death or serious bodily injury of any individual in which this activity is based on the objectives mentioned in question 5(R.A. 11479, section 4, par. a).	2.19	5	U
An individual is a terrorist if he engages in activities aimed at causing widespread damage or destruction to government or public facilities or places, or private property where this activity is directed according to the objectives mentioned in the question 5(R.A. 11479, section 4, par. b).	2.22	1.5	U



Items	WM	R	VI
An individual is a terrorist if he engages in activities aimed at causing widespread interference, damage or destruction to critical infrastructure that provides services and maintains the harmony of the community in which this activity is carried out according to the objectives mentioned in question 5 (R.A. 11479, section 4, par. c).	2.20	4	U
An individual is a terrorist if he manufactures, owns, acquires, transports, supplies or uses any types of weapons with the intention of using them to carry out the purposes mentioned in question 5 (R.A. 11479, section4, par. d).	2.21	3	U
An individual is considered a terrorist if he commits acts mentioned in question 1,2,3,4 and has the intention of giving or spreading a message of fear to the public, to influence the government or any organization, or seriously destroy or undermine the fundamental political, economic or social structure of the country (R.A. 11479, section 4).	2.22	1.5	U
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>2.21</b>	<b>---</b>	<b>U</b>

*Legend: WM –Weighted Mean; R- Rank; VI-Verbal Interpretation; VMA- Very Much Aware; A- Aware; U- Unaware; VU- Very Unaware*

Items no. 2 and 5 got the highest weighted mean of 2.22. Even though it still fall in the verbal interpretation of “unaware”, the results suggest that the respondents are unaware that an individual is a terrorist if he engages in activities aimed at causing widespread damage or destruction to government or public facilities or places, or private property, and they are also more unaware that a person/s is a terrorist if he has an intention on giving or spreading a message of fear to the public, to influence the government or any organization, or seriously destroy or undermine the fundamental political, economic or

social structure of the country.

On the other hand, item no. 1 got the lowest weighted mean of 2.19, which shows that the respondents are less unaware that an individual is a terrorist if he engages in activities aimed at causing the death or serious bodily injury of any individual in which this activity is based on the objectives mentioned in question 5. Overall, the respondents have a lack awareness of the definition of terrorist, as indicated by an overall weighted mean of 2.21.

**Table 7.** Mean Level of Awareness of the Respondents on the ATA of 2020 in Terms of Penal Provisions

Items	WM	R	VI
Any person declared by the court to be a terrorist shall be punished by life imprisonment without the benefit of parole and R.A. 10592 (R.A. 11479, section 4).	2.01	1	U
Any person declared by the court to have participated in the planning, training, preparation and facilitation of the commission of terrorism shall be punished by life imprisonment without the benefit of parole and R.A. 10592 (R.A. 11479, section 6).	1.93	2	U
Any person declared by the court to have conspired to commit terrorism as defined and punished under the definition of terrorist shall be punished by life imprisonment without the benefit of parole (R.A. 11479, section 7).	1.90	3	U
Any person, who is proven by the court that encourages, or supports the execution of any of the activities specified in the definition of terrorist, through speeches, proclamations, letters, or other representations related to the same purpose, shall be punished with imprisonment of twelve (12) years (R.A. 11479, section 9).	1.87	5	U
Any person who can be proven by the court to have knowledge of the commission of any of the crimes defined and punished under the definition of terrorist, despite his knowledge assisted in the commission of the crime shall be liable as an accomplice and shall be punished with imprisonment of twelve (12) year. No person, regardless of relationship or affinity, shall be exempt from liability under this section (R.A. 11479, section 14).	1.89	4	U
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>1.92</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>U</b>

*Legend: WM –Weighted Mean; R- Rank; VI-Verbal Interpretation; VMA- Very Much Aware; A- Aware; U- Unaware; VU- Very Unaware*

Item no. 1 got the highest weighted mean of 2.01. This indicates that the respondents are more unaware that any person declared by the court to be a terrorist shall be punished by life imprisonment without the benefit of parole and R. A. 10592.

On the other hand, 1.87 is the lowest weighted mean which shows that respondents are less unaware that any person, who is proven by the court that encourages, or supports the execution of any of the activities specified in the definition of



terrorist, through speeches, proclamations, letters, or other representations related to the same purpose, shall be punished with imprisonment of twelve (12) years. Thereafter, the overall weighted mean of 1.92 indicates that the respondent is unaware on the penal provision of the Anti-terrorism Act.

**Table 8.** Mean Level of Awareness of the Respondents on ATA of 2020 in Terms of Salient Provisions

Items	WM	R	VI
Advocacy, protest, dissent, work stoppages, industrial or mass action, and other similar exercises of civil and political rights are not considered terrorism, if they are not intended to cause death or serious injury to a person, or create a serious risk to public safety (R.A. 11479, section 4).	2.30	1	U
By written order of the Court of Appeals, authorities are authorized to conduct surveillance activities on those declared by the court to be terrorists or suspected terrorists. This includes the interception and recording of communications, wiretapping or collection of private communications, data, and information of the said individual (R.A. 11479, section 16).	2.05	2	U
The Anti-terrorism Council (ATC) may designate the names of suspected terrorists (domestic) based on reasonable grounds of suspicion that an individual or group has committed, attempted to commit or conspired to commit an act mentioned in the definition of terrorist and in the penal provision, subject for approval of the Court of Appeals (R.A. 11479, section 26).	1.85	3	U
The law empowers the ATC to authorize in writing the police or military personnel to arrest without a corresponding warrant (warrantless arrest) any person suspected of being a terrorist or terrorist supporter defined in this law, without incurring any criminal liability for delay; and detained the suspected person without charge for fourteen (14) days, and if necessary on behalf of the investigation and reasonable reason it may be extended by another ten (10) days (R.A. 11479, section 29).	1.81	4	U
Upon the issuance by the court, the ATC has the power to request on the Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC) to issue an ex parte order to freeze without delay the bank accounts and other assets of funds of any person or persons in relation to whom there is probable cause to believe that such person or persons are committing or attempting or conspiring to commit, or participating in or facilitating the financing of the act of terrorism (R.A. 11479, section 36).	1.76	5	U
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>1.95</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>U</b>

*Legend: WM –Weighted Mean; R- Rank; VI-Verbal Interpretation; VMA- Very Much Aware; A- Aware; U- Unaware; VU- Very Unaware*

Item no. 1 shows the highest weighted mean with 2.30 which means that the respondents are more unaware that the advocacy, protest, and other similar exercises of civil and political rights are not considered terrorism, if they are not intended to cause death or serious injury to a person or create a serious risk to public safety. While conducting the surveys, it is notable to mention that most of the respondents are still confused on the differences of activism and terrorism, and some have a hard time to grasp the concept and mistakenly conflating the two. Given this item no. 5 showed the lowest weighted mean with 1.76. In general, the results show that the respondents are unaware on the salient provision of ATA with overall weighted mean of 1.95.

**Table 9.** Mean Level of Acceptance of the Respondents on Anti-terrorism Act in Terms of Definition of Terrorist

Items	WM	R	VI
I accept that an individual is a terrorist if he engages in activities aimed at causing the death or serious bodily injury of any individual in which this activity is based on the objectives mentioned in question 5(R.A. 11479, section 4, par. a).	3.08	2	A
I accept that an individual is a terrorist if he engages in activities aimed at causing widespread damage or destruction to government or public facilities or places, or private property where this activity is directed according to the objectives mentioned in the question 5(R.A. 11479, section 4, par. b).	3.05	4	A
I accept that an individual is a terrorist if he engages in activities aimed at causing widespread interference, damage or destruction to critical infrastructure that provides services and maintains the harmony of the community in which this activity is carried out according to the objectives mentioned in question 5 (R.A. 11479, section 4, par. c).	3.06	3	A



I accept that an individual is a terrorist if he manufactures, owns, acquires, transports, supplies or uses any types of weapons with the intention of using them to carry out the purposes mentioned in question 5 (R.A. 11479, section4, par. d).	3.00	5	A
I accept that an individual is considered a terrorist if he acts with the intention of giving or spreading a message of fear to the public, to influence the government or any organization, or seriously destroy or undermine the fundamental political, economic or social structure of the country (R.A. 11479, section 4).	3.10	1	A
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.06</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>A</b>

Legend: WM –Weighted Mean; R- Rank; VMA - Very Much Acceptable; A- Acceptable; U-Unacceptable; VU- Very Unacceptable

Item no. 5 got the highest weighted mean score of 3.10 and described as “acceptable”. It indicates that the respondents have higher acceptance on the objectives behind a terrorist action than the specific act of terrorism. On the other hand, item no. 4 got the lowest weighted mean of 3.00; it shows that out of all 5 questions, item no. 4 was the least accepted by the respondents. Indicating that some respondents are ambivalent whether an individual is a terrorist if he manufactures, owns, acquires, transports, supplies or uses any types of weapons with the intention of using them to carry out terrorist acts defined by the law. While the respondents generally accepted the definition of terrorist stipulated in R.A. 11479 sections 4, it fails to align to the human rights concerns to the ambiguous and overbroad definition of what qualifies as terrorism; raises additional concerns about possible misinterpretations and governmental overreach, especially when safeguards are reduced (Mendoza *et al.*, 2021).

**Table 10.** Mean Level of Acceptance of the Respondents on Anti-terrorism Act in Terms of Penal Provision

Items	WM	R	VI
I accept that any person declared by the court to be a terrorist shall be punished by life imprisonment without the benefit of parole and R.A. 10592 (R.A. 11479, section 4).	2.80	3	A
I accept that any person declared by the court to have participated in the planning, training, preparation and facilitation of the commission of terrorism shall be punished by life imprisonment without the benefit of parole and R.A. 10592 (R.A. 11479, section 6).	2.61	4.5	A
I accept that any person declared by the court to have conspired to commit terrorism as defined and punished under the definition of terrorist shall be punished by life imprisonment without the benefit of parole (R.A. 11479, section 7).	2.61	4.5	A
I accept that any person who is proven by the court that encourages, or supports the execution of any of the activities specified in the definition of terrorist, through speeches, proclamations, letters, or other representations related to the same purpose, shall be punished with imprisonment of twelve (12) years (R.A. 11479, section 9).	2.87	1	A
Any person who can be proven by the court to have knowledge of the commission of any of the crimes defined and punished under the definition of terrorist, despite his knowledge assisted in the commission of the crime shall be liable as an accomplice and shall be punished with imprisonment of twelve (12) year. No person, regardless of relationship or affinity, shall be exempt from liability under this section (R.A. 11479, section 14).	2.81	2	A
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>2.74</b>	<b>---</b>	<b>A</b>

Legend: WM –Weighted Mean; R- Rank; VMA - Very Much Acceptable; A- Acceptable; U-Unacceptable; VU- Very Unacceptable

Item no. 4 shows the highest weighted mean of 2.87 among other items. It indicates that the respondents have high acceptance to punished or imprison for twelve (12) years any person who is proven by the court that encourages, or supports the execution of any of the activities specified in the definition of terrorist, through speeches, proclamations, letters, or other representations related to the same purpose.

**Table 11.** Mean Level of Acceptance of the Respondents on Anti-terrorism Act in Terms of Salient Provision

Items	WM	R	VI
I accept that advocacy, protest, dissent, work stoppages, industrial or mass action, and other similar exercises of civil and political rights are not considered terrorism, if they are not intended to cause death or serious injury to a person or create a serious risk to public safety (R.A. 11479, section 4).	3.18	1	A



By written order of the Court of Appeals, authorities are authorized to conduct surveillance activities on those declared by the court to be terrorists or suspected terrorists. This includes the interception and recording of communications, wiretapping or collection of private communications, data, and information of the said individual (R.A. 11479, section 16).	2.57	2	A
The Anti-terrorism Council (ATC) may designate the names of suspected terrorists (domestic) based on reasonable grounds of suspicion that an individual or group has committed, attempted to commit or conspired to commit an act mentioned in the definition of terrorist and in the penal provision, subject for approval of the Court of Appeals (R.A. 11479, section 26).	2.47	3	U
The law empowers the ATC to authorize in writing the police or military personnel to arrest without a corresponding warrant (warrantless arrest) any person suspected of being a terrorist or terrorist supporter defined in this law, without incurring any criminal liability for delay; and detained the suspected person without charge for fourteen (14) days, and if necessary on behalf of the investigation and reasonable reason it may be extended by another ten (10) days (R.A. 11479, section 29).	1.84	5	U
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>2.42</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>U</b>

Legend: WM –Weighted Mean; R- Rank; VMA - Very Much Acceptable; A- Acceptable; U-Unacceptable; VU- Very Unacceptable

Item no. 1 shows the highest mean score of 3.18. This indicates that the respondents have a high level of acceptance that the advocacy, protest, dissent, work stoppages, industrial or mass action, and other similar exercises of civil and political rights are not considered terrorism, if they are not intended to cause death or serious injury to a person, or create a serious risk to public safety.

The results show that the respondents accepts the fact that the individuals right for freedom of speech, of expression, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and

petition the government for redress of grievances has limitation. Furthermore, based on the responses, out of three (3) questions that verbally interpreted “unacceptable”, item no. 4 shows the lowest weighted mean of 1.84. It indicates that the respondents strongly oppose the provision allowing warrantless arrests and detentions of suspected terrorists for up to 24 days without charge. Moreover, the non-acceptance of the respondents stems from concerns about potential misuse of authority, violation of due process, police cynicism, and red tagging.

**Table 12.** Relationship between the Demographic Profile and the Level of Awareness on the Antiterrorism Act of 2020

Respondents Demographic Profile	Level of Awareness on the Anti-terrorism Act of 2020					
	Definition of Terrorist		Penal Provision		Salient Provision	
	r-value	Result	r-value	Result	r-value	Result
Age	-0.220	S	-0.141	S	0.118	NS
Sex	0.037	NS	0.015	NS	0.008	NS
Religion	0.022	NS	0.037	NS	0.044	NS
Estimated Monthly Income	0.076	NS	0.000	NS	0.038	NS
Educational Attainment	0.055	NS	0.039	NS	0.076	NS

Critical r – value: 0.138, Degrees of freedom: 218, Level of significance: 0.05 S- Significant, NS- Not Significant

Age shows a negatively significant relationship on the respondent level of awareness on the ATA in terms of penal provision with the r-value of -0.141, exceeding the critical r-value of 0.138, thus again the null hypothesis have been rejected. The results suggest that as the age increases the level of awareness of the respondent on the ATA in terms of definition of terrorist and penal provision decreases.

This suggests that as the income of the respondent increases, level of acceptance on the ATA salient provision also increases. In this regards, low income individuals exhibit legal cynicism, making them less supportive of measures perceived as diverting

resources and prone to corruption.

People with lower estimated monthly income are more likely to have had negative experiences with the legal system and these experiences may lead to a lack of trust in the law and the legal system. Additionally, educational attainment shows a negatively significant relationship on the respondent level of acceptance on the ATA in terms of definition of terrorist with the r-value of -0.144, exceeding the critical r-value of 0.138, thus again the null hypothesis has been rejected. This indicates that as the educational attainment increases, the level of acceptance on the definition of terrorist decreases.



**Table 13.** Relationship between the Demographic Profile and the Level of Acceptance on the Anti-terrorism Act of 2020

Respondents Demographic Profile	Level of Awareness on the Anti-terrorism Act of 2020					
	Definition of Terrorist		Penal Provision		Salient Provision	
	r-value	Result	r-value	Result	r-value	Result
Age	-0.037	NS	-0.026	NS	-0.086	NS
Sex	-0.050	NS	0.026	NS	-0.001	NS
Religion	-0.075	NS	-0.058	NS	-0.024	NS
Estimated Monthly Income	-0.032	NS	0.065	NS	0.156	S
Educational Attainment	-0.144	S	-0.064	NS	-0.118	NS

Critical  $r$  – value: 0.138, Degrees of freedom: 218, Level of significance: 0.05 S- Significant, NS- Not Significant

**Table 14.** Relationship between Respondents Level of Awareness and Acceptance on the Anti-terrorism Act of 2020

Level of Awareness on the Anti-terrorism Act of 2020	Level of Acceptance on the Anti-terrorism Act of 2020					
	Definition of Terrorist		Penal Provision		Salient Provision	
	r-value	Result	r-value	Result	r-value	Result
Definition of Terrorist	0.284	S	0.164	S	0.290	S
Penal Provision	0.365	S	0.366	S	0.199	S
Salient Provision	0.382	S	0.295	S	0.348	S

Critical  $r$  – value: 0.138, Degrees of freedom: 218, Level of significance: 0.05; S- Significant, NS- Not Significant

There is a correlational analysis between the respondent's level of awareness and level of acceptance on the ATA. This conveys that there are significant relationship between the respondent's level of awareness and level of acceptance with r-value per indicator exceeding the critical r-value of 0.138. Thus, the null hypothesis has been rejected.

In this note, the research results show that the respondents are "unaware" on the ATA. Hence, this indicates that as the "unawareness" increases the level of acceptance also increases. This means as individual become less aware of the official definition of a terrorist, they tend to be more accepting of alternative definitions, potentially inaccurate or biased.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The demographic profile of the respondents such as age, sex, religion, income and educational attainment exhibits vulnerability of the population on terrorism propaganda. A varied landscape of awareness and acceptance among the residents reflect on the varied levels of understanding and concerns regarding the Anti-Terrorism Act's implications for civil liberties and security. While some respondents demonstrate support for the Act, others express apprehension about its potential impact on human rights and freedom. This highlights the importance of engaging with the community through targeted educational initiatives and inclusive dialogue to address misconceptions and build trust.

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