

An Analysis of Media Coverage, Judicial Sentencing, and Law Enforcement Perceptions of Drug Trafficking Cases in the Philippines: Implications for Fairness, Effectiveness, and Public Discourse

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Abstract:

Biased media coverage of crime entails more negative public perceptions toward crime and the offenders. In the Philippines, this dilemma is rampant; the Philippine media and news tend to portray criminality with exaggeration, often insinuating that criminals and all crimes, regardless of intensity, deserve the stigma. Grounded in the Framing Theory, this study investigated the media coverage of drug trafficking cases in the Philippines from 2019 to 2023. Additionally, the research examined sentencing outcomes in drug-related cases, as determined by the Supreme Court, and covered them in the same timeline. Furthermore, the research explored law enforcers' perceptions of the fairness and effectiveness of these sentencing outcomes. Diverse results were presented by several studies in relation to the three variables. Using descriptive study design and total enumeration, the study analyzed data from 200 news articles, 308 Supreme Court decisions, and 271 law enforcement respondents through content and moderation analyses to identify correlations between media representation, judicial decisions, and perceptions of fairness in drug trafficking cases. The current study of drug trafficking cases in the Philippines (2019-2023) showed fluctuating media attention, procedural lapses affecting judicial outcomes, and a call for reforms from law enforcers, with weak to moderate correlations between media coverage, sentencing outcomes, and crime factors, notably influenced by Supreme Court rulings. As such, this study suggests improved media reporting, stricter chain of custody protocols, and addressing socioeconomic factors to enhance the handling of drug trafficking cases and reduce vulnerabilities in high-risk areas.

Keywords: Framing Theory, Media Coverage, Judicial Sentencing Outcomes, Law Enforcers, Supreme Court, Philippine Daily Inquirer

Introduction

The Philippine judicial system imposes penalties on offenders for committing crimes based on several factors, including the constitution of the crime, mitigating and aggravating factors, and antecedents of the offender, among others, all following relevant legislation. The Philippines has also participated in ratifying

the "Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR-OP2)," whose primary goal is for capital punishment to be terminated (World Coalition, 2022). Thus, former President Arroyo signed into law Republic Act 9346, which prohibited the death penalty in 2006 (Pangalangan, 2022). This executive move paved the way for more humane impositions of penalties in our justice system. However, other factors may influence the sentencing outcomes of the judiciary, one of which is the influence of public opinion on highly publicized cases as well as the perceptions of stakeholders. This problem is what the study aimed to answer, along with exploring several variables.

Existing studies have shown that media portrayals of crime can influence public opinion, potentially affecting the severity and duration of court sentences (Ravid, 2019). Research by Hayes and Luther (2018) highlighted how pretrial publicity could bias jurors, while Baranauskas (2020) found that media often distorts crime reports to elicit sympathetic responses from the audience. This supports Baranauskas and Drakulich's (2018) assertion that the media shapes public understanding of crime and justice. Additionally, negative news coverage can fuel public fear of victimization (Velásquez et al., 2020). The media's framing of crime, especially high-casualty incidents or crimes involving juvenile or foreign perpetrators, can significantly influence public perceptions (Silva & Capellan, 2019; Collins, 2022). Szczepan (2024) further explored how sensationalized coverage of drug trafficking shapes public fear and racial stereotypes, reinforcing biases against law enforcement. Additionally, del Pozo (2021) noted that law enforcers' perceptions of treatment options and their focus on community trust play a key role in decision-making for drug-related offenses. These findings underscore the importance of understanding the relationship between media coverage, judicial sentencing outcomes, and law enforcement perceptions. The study, guided by Ervin Goffman's Framing Theory, emphasizes the need for accurate crime reporting and the impartiality of the justice system, suggesting that media can serve both as a tool for judicial education and an influence on public attitudes towards sentencing.

Research Questions

This research examined the correlation between media coverage of drug trafficking cases, judicial sentencing outcomes, and law enforcers' perceptions of the fairness and effectiveness of these outcomes in the Philippines from 2019 to 2023, focusing on factors such as media intensity, sentencing details, and police operations.

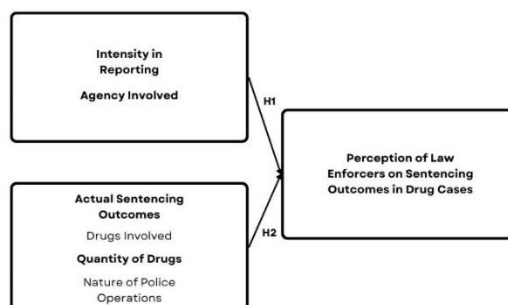
Notably, the current study sought to address the following inquiries:

- 1. What is the media coverage of drug trafficking cases from 2019 to 2023 reported in newspaper dailies in the Philippines, as measured by:**
 - a. Publication Date
 - b. Agency Involved
 - c. Crime Type
 - d. Intensity of Coverage
 - e. Tone of Reporting
 - f. Page Placement
 - g. Mention of Presiding Judge
 - h. Frequency of Reporting

2. **What are the sentencing details and outcomes from 2019 to 2023 based on Supreme Court decisions on drug cases, as to:**
 - a. Date of sentence imposed by the Regional Trial Court
 - b. Nature of remedy sought by the petitioners
 - c. Designation of the offense
 - d. Acts committed constituting the violation of law
 - e. Time of commission
 - f. Place of commission
 - g. Aggravating circumstances
 - h. Other offenses, if any
 - i. Reasons for case dismissal
 - j. Offender social status
 - k. Ponente of the case
 - l. Issues of the case
 - m. The doctrine of the case
 - n. Law enforcement agencies involved
 - o. Sentence rendered by the Regional Trial Court
 - p. Sentence rendered by the Court of Appeals
 - q. Sentence rendered by the Supreme Court
 - r. Duration of sentence
 - s. Drugs involved
 - t. Quantity of drugs confiscated
 - u. Nature of police operation
 - v. Disposition of the case
3. **What is the perception of law enforcers regarding the fairness and effectiveness of sentencing outcomes in drug cases?**
4. **Is there a significant correlation between the perception of law enforcers regarding the fairness and effectiveness of sentencing outcomes in drug cases and the intensity in reporting of drug cases and the agencies involved?**
5. **Is there a significant correlation between the perception of law enforcers regarding the fairness and effectiveness of sentencing outcomes in drug cases and actual sentencing outcomes, drugs involved, quantity of drugs, and nature of police operations?**

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

FIGURE 1. PARADIGM OF THE STUDY



The study was grounded in the Framing Theory by Ervin Goffman, which suggests that the way information is presented, or "framed," influences how audiences perceive and interpret it, shaping opinions, attitudes, and behaviors. In this context, the theory connects media coverage of drug trafficking cases to judicial sentencing outcomes and law enforcers' perceptions of sentencing fairness and effectiveness. The study examined the correlation between these variables, focusing on factors like the intensity of media reporting, the agency involved, and case details such as drugs and quantity. The conceptual framework outlines the relationships between media coverage, sentencing outcomes, and law enforcers' perceptions, testing two hypotheses: (1) no significant correlation between law enforcers' perceptions and the intensity of media coverage or the agency involved, and (2) no significant correlation between perceptions and the actual sentencing outcomes, drugs involved, quantity, or nature of police operations.

Methods

Study Design

This study employed a descriptive approach with both quantitative and qualitative methods to address its research questions. The qualitative aspect involved content analysis of media coverage of drug trafficking cases in the Philippine Daily Inquirer and Supreme Court decisions from 2019 to 2023, focusing on factors such as crime type, intensity, tone, and judicial details. The quantitative aspect included a survey of police officers in Angeles City to assess their perceptions of the fairness and effectiveness of sentencing in drug cases and correlation analysis to explore links between these perceptions and factors such as media coverage, judicial outcomes, and characteristics of the cases.

Study Participants and Sample Size

This study used total enumeration, including all units in the population, to eliminate sampling bias and ensure complete coverage, as the target populations were small and accessible. The sample sizes were based on available data from 2019 to 2023, with 200 newspaper articles and 308 drug trafficking cases included for content analysis. A survey of 271 police officers was conducted to assess perceptions of sentencing fairness and effectiveness, with the sample size determined using G Power for statistical reliability, based on a 0.10 effect size, 0.5 alpha, and 0.95 power.

Research Instrument

The Content Analysis Checklist for Media Coverage of Crime systematically evaluated how crime is reported in the media, considering factors such as crime type, tone, framing, and the legal stage covered. It also assessed the use of sources, visual elements, and the broader social context of the reporting. The tool was validated through expert evaluations in media analysis, criminology, and qualitative research, confirming its face, content, and construct validity. Reliability testing, including pilot studies and a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.89, showed strong internal consistency, confirming its effectiveness in measuring crime reporting dimensions. Similarly, the Content Analysis Checklist for Judicial Sentencing Outcomes evaluates judicial decisions, considering case details, sentencing factors, legal representation, and public reactions. It demonstrated strong validity and reliability through expert reviews and testing, ensuring its comprehensive capture of judicial sentencing aspects. The research questionnaire used in the study to assess police perceptions of drug sentencing outcomes was a 5-point Likert scale. It was validated through a three-phase process: face validity, construct validity with intersectionality theory, and content

validity with expert review. The reliability of the survey was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, with pilot testing ensuring internal consistency. The rigorous validation process ensured the survey's methodological soundness and alignment with the study's theoretical framework.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Media coverage of drug trafficking cases from 2019 to 2023 reported in newspaper dailies in the Philippines as to Publication Date

	Frequency	Percent
2019	58	29.0
2020	81	40.5
2021	29	14.5
2022	21	10.5
2023	11	5.5
Total	200	100.0

Media coverage of drug trafficking in the Philippines from 2019 to 2023 saw significant fluctuations, peaking in 2020 with 81 articles due to intensified anti-drug campaigns, then sharply declining to only 11 articles in 2023, due to a shift in media priorities and reduced public interest. The escalation of the government's "drug war" during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 highlighted human rights concerns, while 2023 saw a rise in drug rehabilitation admissions, reflecting a shift toward treatment and advocacy efforts. This suggests that media attention is closely tied to government actions and societal changes (Human Rights Watch, 2021; Dangerous Drugs Board, 2023).

Table 2: Media coverage of drug trafficking cases from 2019 to 2023 reported in newspaper dailies in the Philippines as to Agency Involved

	Frequency	Percent
PNP	78	39.0
DOJ	101	50.5
PDEA	21	10.5
Total	200	100.0

The data shows that the Department of Justice (DOJ) is the most frequently mentioned agency in drug trafficking news articles, appearing in 101 articles (50.5%), highlighting its role in legal processes, investigations, and prosecutions. The Philippine National Police (PNP) follows with 78 mentions (39%), while the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) is mentioned the least in only 21 articles (10.5%). This indicates that while the PDEA plays a critical role in enforcing drug laws, its media presence is less prominent compared to the DOJ and PNP. The DOJ's commitment to strengthening inter-agency collaboration for community safety and PDEA's focus on enforcing drug laws and chemicals underscores the importance of a coordinated, multi-agency approach in addressing drug trafficking (Department of Justice, 2024).

Table 3: Media coverage of drug trafficking cases from 2019 to 2023 reported in newspaper dailies in the Philippines as to Crime Type

	Frequency	Percent
Anti-drug crimes	46	23.0
Drugs with other offenses	84	42.0
Drug trafficking	36	18.0
Illegal drug campaign	20	10.0
Extra-judicial killing	14	7.0
Total	200	100.0

The data reveals that the most frequently reported drug-related crime in news articles is "Drugs with other offenses," appearing in 84 articles (42%), highlighting the common overlap of drug trafficking with other criminal activities. "Anti-drug crimes" follow with 46 articles (23%), reflecting a significant focus on drug enforcement efforts. The least mentioned category is "Extra-judicial killing," which appears in only 14 articles (7%), suggesting less emphasis on this issue compared to other drug-related crimes. The prominence of "Drugs with other offenses" aligns with the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2017), which notes that drug offenses often involve violence or theft, while the limited coverage of extra-judicial killings reflects a focus on political issues, particularly under the Duterte administration (Human Rights Watch, 2024). This indicates that media coverage tends to prioritize the criminal and enforcement aspects of drug-related issues over human rights concerns.

Table 4: Media coverage of drug trafficking cases from 2019 to 2023 reported in newspaper dailies in the Philippines as to the Intensity of Coverage

	Frequency	Percent
High	120	60.0
Moderate	80	40.0
Total	200	100.0

The data reveals that the majority of news articles on drug trafficking were given "High" intensity coverage, with 120 articles (60%) reflecting the issue's significant public concern during the period. Meanwhile, 80 articles (40%) received "Moderate" coverage, indicating notable but less frequent attention. This supports Orsini's (2017) study, which highlights how media has historically framed illegal drug use as deviant behavior, shaping public perceptions and contributing to the heightened media focus on drug-related issues. The findings suggest that media coverage has reinforced societal concerns about drug trafficking as a critical issue.

Table 5: Media coverage of drug trafficking cases from 2019 to 2023 reported in newspaper dailies in the Philippines as to Tone of Reporting

	Frequency	Percent
Neutral	109	54.5
Critical	63	31.5
Negative	11	5.5

	Informative	17	8.5
	Total	200	100.0

The data shows that the majority of news articles on drug trafficking have a "Neutral" tone, with 109 articles (54.5%) indicating a factual and balanced approach without strong opinions. "Negative" and "Informative" tones were less common, appearing in 11 (5.5%) and 17 articles (8.5%), respectively. This aligns with Geçer and Mahinay's (2018) findings that media coverage of drug-related issues, particularly during the Duterte administration, was generally neutral, with minimal bias or manipulation. The data suggests that drug trafficking stories are primarily presented objectively, with limited use of harmful or purely informative tones.

Table 6: Media coverage of drug trafficking cases from 2019 to 2023 reported in newspaper dailies in the Philippines as to Page Placement

		Frequency	Percent
	Frontpage	55	27.5
	Not specified	145	72.5
	Total	200	100.0

The data reveals that 27.5% of drug trafficking articles appeared on the front page, highlighting the issue as a high-priority topic for media attention. However, 72.5% of the articles did not specify their page placement, suggesting they were likely featured on internal pages. This aligns with Kim and Chung's (2017) study, which notes that when a media outlet perceives a story as less engaging to the audience, it may move it to internal pages. This suggests that while drug trafficking was once a prominent issue, its media coverage shifted to less prominent placements over time.

Table 7: Media coverage of drug trafficking cases from 2019 to 2023 reported in newspaper dailies in the Philippines as to Mention of the Presiding Judge

		Frequency	Percent
	Mentioned	73	36.5
	Not mentioned	127	63.5
	Total	200	100.0

The data shows that 36.5% of drug trafficking articles mention the presiding judge, while 63.5% do not, suggesting that media coverage primarily focuses on broader aspects of drug cases rather than individual judges. This aligns with Panganiban's (2023) observation that presiding judges are often under public scrutiny in high-profile cases. However, their role is less emphasized in drug-related coverage, potentially diminishing accountability for judicial decisions.

Table 8: Media coverage of drug trafficking cases from 2019 to 2023 reported in newspaper dailies in the Philippines as to Frequency of Reporting

	Frequency	Percent
Regular updates	82	41.0
Moderate	71	35.5
Single instance	34	17.0
Multiple instances	13	6.5
Total	200	100.0

The data shows that 41% of articles provided regular updates on drug trafficking, indicating ongoing coverage, while only 6.5% reported on multiple instances, reflecting a focus on individual cases rather than broader trends. Regular updates are crucial for keeping the public informed, often driven by sensational elements like conflict or human interest, which may attract attention but could also limit more in-depth reporting (University of Nebraska Omaha, 2024).

Table 9: Sentencing details and outcomes from 2019 to 2023 based on Supreme Court decisions on drug cases as to Date of Sentence by the Regional Trial Court (Year)

	Frequency	Percent
2011	9	2.9
2012	15	4.9
2013	20	6.5
2014	35	11.4
2015	45	14.6
2016	69	22.4
2017	91	29.5
2018	22	7.1
2019	2	.6
Total	308	100.0

The data shows that the highest frequency of drug trafficking cases sentenced by the Regional Trial Court occurred in 2017, with 91 cases (29.5%), while the lowest was in 2019, with only 2 cases (0.6%). This drop likely reflects changes in law enforcement priorities or judicial efficiency following the peak of the Duterte administration's war on drugs in 2016, which led to a surge in arrests and related cases (Simbulan et al., 2019).

Table 10: Sentencing details and outcomes from 2019 to 2023 based on Supreme Court decisions on drug cases as to Date of Sentence by Regional Trial Court (Month)

	Frequency	Percent
January	40	13.0
February	36	11.7
March	37	12.0
April	28	9.1
May	36	11.7

	June	18	5.8
	July	20	6.5
	August	26	8.4
	September	16	5.2
	October	29	9.4
	November	15	4.9
	December	7	2.3
	Total	308	100.0

The data shows that the highest frequency of drug trafficking cases sentenced by the Regional Trial Court occurred in January, with 40 cases (13.0%), while the lowest was in December, with only 7 cases (2.3%). Judicial workload, holiday-related delays, or fewer case filings in December could influence this pattern. The Presidential Communications Office (2023) reported surges in drug seizures in January, which aligns with the observed peak in drug cases, suggesting heightened drug-related activity at the start of the year.

Table 11: Sentencing details and outcomes from 2019 to 2023 based on Supreme Court decisions on drug cases as to the Nature of Remedy Sought by the Petitioners

	Frequency	Percent
Appeal	255	82.8
Petition for review on certiorari	53	17.2
Total	308	100.0

The data shows that in drug trafficking cases, the most common remedy sought by offenders is an "Appeal," with 255 cases (82.8%). In comparison, "Petition for review on certiorari" was sought in only 53 cases (17.2%). The high number of appeals reflects offenders' tendency to challenge their convictions. In contrast, the lower number of petitions for review suggests these are reserved for specific legal issues or are less familiar to offenders. The serious consequences of a drug conviction, such as criminal records, job loss, and possible deportation, emphasize the importance of consulting skilled attorneys to navigate the appeal process and mitigate long-term impacts (Conviction Solutions, 2024).

Table 12: Sentencing details and outcomes from 2019 to 2023 based on Supreme Court decisions on drug cases as to the Designation of the Offense

	Frequency	Percent
Section 5, Article 2 of RA 9165	238	77.3
Section 11, Article 2 of RA 9165	67	21.8
Section 12, Article 2 of RA 9165	3	1.0
Total	308	100.0

The data shows that in drug trafficking cases under the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002

(Republic Act 9165), the most common offense is Section 5, Article 2, which covers the sale or distribution of illegal drugs, accounting for 77.3% of cases. The least common offense is Section 12, Article 2, relating to the use or possession of drug paraphernalia, representing only 1.0% of cases. Section 11, Article 2, which involves the possession of dangerous drugs, accounts for 21.8% of the cases. This distribution highlights the significant focus on drug trafficking and distribution. Research indicates that drug selling is often a response to economic necessity, particularly for people who inject drugs, suggesting that addressing underlying issues of drug dependence could reduce involvement in drug sales (Kolla & Strike, 2020).

Table 13: Sentencing details and outcomes from 2019 to 2023 based on Supreme Court decisions on drug cases as to Acts Committed

		Frequency	Percent
	Sale	231	75.0
	Possession	74	24.0
	Use	2	.6
	Transportation	1	.3
	Total	308	100.0

The data categorizes drug trafficking cases by the acts committed, with the highest frequency being for Sale, which accounts for 75.0% of the cases. This indicates that the majority of drug trafficking offenses involve the sale of illegal substances. Possession follows with 24.0%, while Transportation (0.3%) and Use (0.6%) are much less common offenses. The data highlights that the predominant activity in drug trafficking cases is the sale of drugs, with transportation and use being rare occurrences. Research shows that drug selling, particularly in urban areas, is often a survival strategy for individuals facing economic hardship and limited opportunities (Amaro et al., 2021). This suggests that drug trafficking is sometimes driven by necessity, where illegal activities become a means of financial support in impoverished communities.

Table 14: Sentencing details and outcomes from 2019 to 2023 based on Supreme Court decisions on drug cases as to Time of the Commission

		Frequency	Percent
	1 AM	22	7.1
	2 AM	13	4.2
	3 AM	13	4.2
	4 AM	8	2.6
	5 AM	12	3.9
	6 AM	10	3.2
	7 AM	14	4.5
	8 AM	8	2.6
	9 AM	2	.6
	10 AM	4	1.3
	11 AM	8	2.6
	12 PM	9	2.9

1 PM	31	10.1
2 PM	24	7.8
3 PM	32	10.4
4 PM	20	6.5
5 PM	18	5.8
6 PM	10	3.2
7 PM	11	3.6
8 PM	11	3.6
9 PM	16	5.2
10 PM	7	2.3
11 PM	3	1.0
12 AM	2	.6
Total	308	100.0

The data shows the distribution of drug trafficking offenses by time, with the highest frequency occurring in the afternoon, mainly between 1 PM and 3 PM, where 31 cases were recorded at 1 PM (10.1%) and 32 cases at 3 PM (10.4%). This suggests that drug trafficking activities peak during these hours. Conversely, the lowest values were recorded at midnight (12 AM) and 9 AM, each with only 2 cases (0.6%), indicating these times are less associated with drug trafficking. The data reflects a clear peak in offenses during the afternoon, with a sharp decline in the early morning and late morning. This is supported by an article reporting that a buy-bust operation conducted on a Saturday afternoon led to the seizure of P836, 400 worth of shabu, highlighting the commonality of drug-related operations during afternoon hours (Sararaña, 2023).

Table 15: Sentencing details and outcomes from 2019 to 2023 based on Supreme Court decisions on drug cases as to the Place of the Commission

	Frequency	Percent
Caloocan City	20	6.5
Taguig City	11	3.6
Quezon City	42	13.6
Pasig City	17	5.5
Parañaque City	17	5.5
Cebu City	23	7.5
Baguio City	14	4.5
Dagupan City	28	9.1
Cagayan de Oro City	25	8.1
Makati City	22	7.1
San Fernando City, La Union	24	7.8
Manila City	25	8.1
Bacolod City	12	3.9
Zamboanga City	11	3.6

	Muntinlupa City	17	5.5
	Total	308	100.0

The data shows the distribution of drug trafficking offenses by city, with Quezon City recording the highest frequency, accounting for 13.6% of the cases (42 offenses), indicating it is a significant hotspot for drug trafficking. The lowest frequency is tied between Taguig City and Zamboanga City, each with 11 cases (3.6%), suggesting these cities have fewer drug trafficking incidents. The data reflects a varied spread of drug trafficking cases, with Quezon City leading, likely due to factors such as its large population, urban poverty, and strategic location for trafficking. Over 27,000 drug surrenderers have been recorded in the QC database in 2018, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions and more muscular community support systems (Raymundo, Jr., 2018).

Table 16: Sentencing details and outcomes from 2019 to 2023 based on Supreme Court decisions on drug cases as to Aggravating Circumstances

	Frequency	Percent	
Any phase of the manufacturing process was conducted in the presence or with the help of minor/s	151	49.0	
Manufacturing process established within one hundred (100) meters of a residential, business, church or school premises	105	34.1	
Any clandestine laboratory was secured or protected with booby traps	29	9.4	
Any clandestine laboratory was concealed with legitimate business operations	19	6.2	
Any employment of a practitioner, chemical engineer, public official, or foreigner	4	1.3	
Total	308	100.0	

The data categorizes aggravating circumstances in drug trafficking cases, with the highest value being the involvement of minors in the manufacturing process, accounting for 49.0% of the cases (151 instances). This suggests that minors play a significant role in drug manufacturing. The lowest value is for the involvement of high-level professionals such as practitioners, chemical engineers, public officials, or foreigners, which accounts for only 1.3% of cases (4 instances), indicating their rare involvement in aggravating circumstances. The prominence of minors' involvement reflects a concerning trend, similar to the situation in Brazil, where youth are referred to as “child soldiers” due to their exposure to violent drug conflicts (Diniz & McBrien, 2022). This underscores the need for targeted interventions and international support for at-risk youth.

Table 17: Sentencing details and outcomes from 2019 to 2023 based on Supreme Court decisions on drug cases as to other offenses committed in conjunction with the principal crime

	Frequency	Percent
No other offense was committed in conjunction with the principal crime	241	78.2
Illegal use of dangerous drugs in a separate case	32	10.4
Illegal possession of drug paraphernalia in separate case	9	2.9
Illegal possession of firearms/explosives	14	4.5
Illegal possession of dangerous drugs in a separate case	12	3.9
Total	308	100.0

The data reveals that 78.2% of drug trafficking cases are not linked to other offenses, indicating that drug trafficking is often a standalone crime. Less frequently, offenses like illegal drug use (10.4%) and possession of firearms (4.5%) are involved. The illegal possession of drug paraphernalia is particularly rare, appearing in only 2.9% of cases. According to the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (2024), drug offenders typically engage in drug-related crimes without committing other types of crime, suggesting that targeted interventions focused on drug trafficking and use could be more effective in addressing these offenses.

Table 18: Sentencing details and outcomes from 2019 to 2023 based on Supreme Court decisions on drug cases as to Reasons for Case Dismissal

	Frequency	Percent
First offense	5	4.46
Improper procedure in buy-bust operation	32	28.57
Procedural lapse in the chain of custody	54	48.21
Lack of sufficient proof	21	18.75
Total	112	100.0

The data shows that 48.21% of drug trafficking cases are dismissed due to a "procedural lapse in the chain of custody," highlighting the importance of following proper legal procedures. Only 4.46% of cases are dismissed for being a "first offense," which is rarely a reason for dismissal, as first-time offenders are often referred to rehabilitation. A total of 196 cases had no reason for dismissal, indicating convictions. According to Evidence Management Institute (2024), improper handling of evidence is a key factor in case dismissals, underscoring the need for strict adherence to procedural standards to ensure the integrity of legal proceedings.

Table 19: Sentencing details and outcomes from 2019 to 2023 based on Supreme Court decisions on drug cases as to Offender Social Status

	Frequency	Percent
Unemployed	288	93.5
Employed	11	3.6
Indigent	9	2.9
Total	308	100.0

The data shows that 93.5% of drug trafficking offenders are unemployed, with 3.6% employed and 2.9% classified as indigent. The majority of offenders are unemployed, suggesting a link between unemployment and involvement in drug trafficking. The lower percentage of indigent offenders indicates that fewer are classified as economically disadvantaged. Unemployment is a known risk factor for substance-use disorders (SUDs), with stress and social isolation contributing to drug use (Nolte-Troha et al., 2023). This emphasizes the need to address social and economic factors that contribute to substance abuse.

Table 20: Sentencing details and outcomes from 2019 to 2023 based on Supreme Court decisions on drug cases as to Ponente of the Case

	Frequency	Percent
Justice Perlas-Bernabe	43	14.0
Justice Del Castillo	39	12.7
Justice Carpio	21	6.8
Justice Peralta	17	5.5
Justice Gesmundo	6	1.9
Justice Caguioa	52	16.9
Justice Bersamin	1	.3
Justice Leonen	17	5.5
Justice Reyes Jr.	22	7.1
Justice Lazaro-Javier	14	4.5
Justice Carandang	20	6.5
Justice Hernando	10	3.2
Justice Zalameda	7	2.3
Justice Inting	11	3.6
Justice Jardeleza	16	5.2
Justice Sereno	12	3.9
Total	308	100.0

The data shows that Justice Caguioa handled the highest number of drug trafficking cases, with 16.9% (52 cases), while Justice Bersamin had the least involvement, managing only 0.3% (1 case). Other justices, such as Justice Perlas-Bernabe (14.0%) and Justice Del Castillo (12.7%), also handled significant numbers of cases, indicating a relatively even distribution of cases among justices, except for Justice Bersamin. Justice Caguioa's appointment in January 2016, coinciding with the start of the war on drugs, highlights

his pivotal role in shaping legal outcomes for drug-related cases during this period (Supreme Court of the Philippines, 2024).

Table 21: Sentencing details and outcomes from 2019 to 2023 based on Supreme Court decisions on drug cases as to the Issues of the Case

	Frequency	Percent
Whether plain view doctrine applies	12	3.9
Whether evidence is inadmissible/chain of custody	149	48.4
Whether proper procedures were observed in the buy-bust operation	34	11.0
Whether there were witnesses during the inventory of evidence	19	6.2
Whether the accused is proven guilty beyond reasonable doubt	71	23.1
Whether the warrantless arrest is valid	23	7.5
Total	308	100.0

The data shows that the most common issue raised in drug trafficking cases is the admissibility of evidence and chain of custody, accounting for 48.4% (149 cases). This suggests that challenges related to evidence handling are the primary concern in these cases. The least common issue is the application of the plain view doctrine, with only 3.9% (12 cases). Other issues include whether the accused is proven guilty beyond reasonable doubt (23.1%) and whether proper procedures were followed in buy-bust operations (11.0%), highlighting the focus on procedural and evidentiary integrity. The importance of chain of custody in maintaining the integrity of evidence is critical for ensuring accurate convictions, particularly in drug cases (Just Criminal Law, 2020).

Table 22: Sentencing details and outcomes from 2019 to 2023 based on Supreme Court decisions on drug cases as to Doctrine of the Case

	Frequency	Percent
Plain view doctrine	25	8.1
Proof of identity of the seller/buyer/drugs	47	15.3
Strict compliance with procedural requirements (chain of custody/buy-bust operation)	208	67.5
Validity of the arrest	28	9.1
Total	308	100.0

The data shows that the most frequently cited doctrine in drug trafficking cases is "Strict compliance with procedural requirements (chain of custody/buy-bust operation)," which appears in 67.5% (208 cases) of cases, highlighting the importance of adhering to proper legal procedures. The least contested doctrine is the "Plain view doctrine," appearing in only 8.1% (25 cases). Other significant doctrines include "Proof of identity of the seller/buyer/drugs" (15.3%) and "Validity of the arrest" (9.1%). The strict process of

chain of custody ensures the integrity of drug evidence, which is crucial for upholding the fairness and accuracy of trials (Respicio & Co., 2024).

Table 23: Sentencing details and outcomes from 2019 to 2023 based on Supreme Court decisions on drug cases as to the Law Enforcement Agencies Involved

	Frequency	Percent
PNP Drug Enforcement Unit	191	62.0
PDEA	76	24.7
NBI	20	6.5
PNP Anti-Drug Task Group	21	6.8
Total	308	100.0

The data shows that the Philippine National Police (PNP) is the most active agency in handling drug trafficking cases, and it is involved in 62.0% (191 cases) of the cases. The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) plays a secondary but significant role, with involvement in 24.7% (76 cases). The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) has a minor role, handling only 6.5% (20 cases), while the Anti-Drug Task Group is involved in 6.8% (21 cases). This data reflects the dominant role of the PNP, with PDEA also playing an important part. A report by the PNP highlights their significant efforts, with 56,495 arrests during over 44,000 operations and the establishment of community-based rehabilitation programs in 23 provinces and 43 cities (Presidential Communications Office, 2023).

Table 24: Sentencing details and outcomes from 2019 to 2023 based on Supreme Court decisions on drug cases as to Sentence Rendered by Regional Trial Court

Frequency	Percent	
Life imprisonment and a fine	244	79.2
Less than 20 years imprisonment and a fine	63	20.5
Drug rehabilitation	1	.3
Total	308	100.0

The data shows that the majority of drug trafficking offenders are sentenced to "Life imprisonment and a fine," accounting for 79.2% (244 cases), reflecting the severity of penalties for drug trafficking offenses. A smaller proportion, 20.5% (63 cases), receive "Less than 20 years imprisonment and a fine," while only 0.3% (1 case) are sentenced to "Drug rehabilitation." This highlights the focus on harsh penalties, particularly life sentences, for those convicted of drug trafficking. Similarly, in Brazil, life imprisonment and fines are common for drug trafficking due to the serious nature of the crime and its connections to organized crime (Machado et al., 2019).

Table 25: Sentencing details and outcomes from 2019 to 2023 based on Supreme Court decisions on drug cases as to Sentence Rendered by the Court of Appeals

	Frequency	Percent
Affirmation of RTC decision	288	93.5
Modified sentence	20	6.5

	Total	308	100.0
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The data shows that the Court of Appeals primarily affirms regional trial court decisions in drug trafficking cases, with 93.5% (288 cases) of decisions being upheld. Only 6.5% (20 cases) result in a "Modified sentence," indicating that changes to the original sentences are uncommon. This reflects a strong trend of appellate courts supporting lower court rulings, particularly when the RTC has thoroughly examined the evidence. The Court of Appeals, with its exclusive appellate jurisdiction, generally respects RTC findings unless there is clear evidence of error or abuse of discretion (Hernandez & Gatmaitan, 2019).

Table 26: Sentencing details and outcomes from 2019 to 2023 based on Supreme Court decisions on drug cases as to Sentence Rendered by Supreme Court

	Frequency	Percent
Acquittal	222	72.1
Pending Appeal/Review	31	10.1
Affirmed CA ruling	55	17.9
Total	308	100.0

The data shows that in drug trafficking cases, the Supreme Court most often renders an "Acquittal," accounting for 72.1% (222 cases). Only 10.1% (31 cases) remain "Pending Appeal/Review," and 17.9% (55 cases) result in the "Affirmation of the Court of Appeals ruling." This highlights that acquittals are the most frequent outcome at the Supreme Court level. Factors contributing to acquittals include mishandling of evidence by law enforcement or unlawful arrests, leading to evidence being ruled inadmissible. Therefore, an acquittal may not imply innocence but a failure to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt due to compromised evidence or weak prosecution (Jimenez, 2023).

Table 27: Sentencing details and outcomes from 2019 to 2023 based on Supreme Court decisions on drug cases as to Duration of Sentence

	Frequency	Percent
Life imprisonment	64	20.8
Less than 20 years imprisonment	19	6.2
Six months rehabilitation	1	.3
Acquitted	224	72.7
Total	308	100.0

The data shows that in drug trafficking cases, the majority result in "Acquitted" outcomes, accounting for 72.7% (224 cases), meaning no sentence is imposed. The following most common sentence is "Life imprisonment," applied in 20.8% (64 cases), reflecting severe penalties. "Six months rehabilitation" is rarely given, accounting for only 0.3% (1 case), while "Less than 20 years imprisonment" applies in 6.2% (19 cases). This suggests that acquittals and life sentences dominate, with rehabilitation being a rare sentence. Jimenez (2023) explains that acquittals often occur due to mishandling of evidence or unlawful procedures, making it impossible to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

Table 28: Sentencing details and outcomes from 2019 to 2023 based on Supreme Court decisions on drug cases as to Drugs Involved

		Frequency	Percent
	Marijuana	38	12.3
	Methamphetamine hydrochloride (shabu)	260	84.4
	Diazepam	10	3.2
	Total	308	100.0

The data shows that methamphetamine hydrochloride (shabu) is the most commonly trafficked drug, accounting for 84.4% (260 cases), followed by marijuana at 12.3% (38 cases), and diazepam at 3.2% (10 cases), which is less frequently involved. This highlights the dominance of shabu in drug trafficking offenses. The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) reports that East and Southeast Asia are the largest consumers of shabu, with it being especially prevalent in low-income communities in the Philippines, where it is often referred to as the "poor man's cocaine" (Petit-Rodriguez, 2024). This underscores the need for interventions targeting both substance abuse and socioeconomic factors driving its use.

Table 29: Sentencing details and outcomes from 2019 to 2023 based on Supreme Court decisions on drug cases as to Quantity of Drugs Confiscated (in grams)

		Frequency	Percent
	.01	6	1.95
	.02	23	7.47
	.03	36	11.69
	.04	14	4.55
	.05	10	3.25
	.06	6	1.95
	.07	9	2.92
	.08	10	3.25
	.09	11	3.57
	.10	12	3.87
	.12	11	3.57
	.15	17	5.51
	.16	3	0.97
	.19	3	0.97
	.20	2	0.65
	.29	2	0.65
	.30	4	1.30
	.32	3	0.97
	.41	3	0.65
	.42	4	1.30
	.48	3	0.32
	.50	2	0.65

.60	4	0.97
.75	1	0.97
1.02	2	1.95
1.23	3	0.32
1.54	3	0.97
2.30	6	0.97
2.34	1	1.30
2.45	3	1.62
2.47	3	2.60
3.00	2	0.32
3.02	3	0.97
3.20	3	0.97
3.92	4	0.32
4.75	5	0.97
5.00	8	0.65
5.01	1	0.65
5.39	3	0.97
5.67	3	0.65
5.89	1	1.30
5.90	3	0.97
5.96	2	0.97
6.00	2	0.97
6.70	3	0.65
7.00	2	0.65
7.69	4	0.97
8.56	3	0.32
8.74	3	0.97
9.13	3	0.97
9.32	2	0.65
9.98	2	0.65
10.03	3	0.32
10.32	3	0.65
13.00	2	0.32
13.06	3	0.32
13.60	1	0.32
15.00	3	0.97
43.34	3	0.97
172.90	2	0.65
390.00	2	0.65
500.28	1	0.32
918.17	2	0.65
1400.00	1	0.32

	Total	308	100.0
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The data reveals that the majority of drug trafficking cases involve small quantities of drugs, with confiscations as low as 0.01 grams (1.95% of cases) and slightly larger amounts like 0.02 grams (7.47%) and 0.03 grams (11.69%). However, there are occasional large-scale trafficking cases, such as those involving 918.17 grams (0.65% of cases) or 1400.00 grams (0.32% of cases) of methamphetamine hydrochloride (shabu). These larger quantities reflect more significant confiscations, typically seized in large-scale operations. At the same time, smaller amounts are more commonly found in routine law enforcement actions like street-level arrests or raids targeting drug peddlers (Lena, 2024).

Table 30: Sentencing details and outcomes from 2019 to 2023 based on Supreme Court decisions on drug cases as to Nature of Police Operation

		Frequency	Percent
	Arrest	36	11.7
	Buy-bust operation	231	75.0
	Oplan "Sita"	8	2.6
	Search and seizure	21	6.8
	Confidential informant	12	3.9
	Total	308	100.0

The data shows that buy-bust operations are the most common method for drug trafficking arrests, accounting for 75.0% (231 cases), reflecting their effectiveness in narcotics enforcement. The least frequent method is reliance on confidential informants, contributing only 3.9% (12 cases). Other methods, like arrests (11.7%), search and seizure (6.8%), and Oplan 'Sita' (2.6%), make up smaller portions of the total. Buy-bust operations, often coordinated with agencies like the PDEA, are responsible for significant drug seizures, sometimes amounting to millions of pesos in confiscated substances (Pulta, 2018).

Table 31: Sentencing details and outcomes from 2019 to 2023 based on Supreme Court decisions on drug cases as to Disposition of the Case

		Frequency	Percent
	Acquittal	222	72.1
	Conviction	86	27.9
	Total	308	100.0

The data shows that the majority of drug trafficking cases result in acquittals, accounting for 72.1% (222 cases), suggesting that insufficient evidence or procedural issues often prevent convictions. In contrast, only 27.9% (86 cases) lead to convictions. This indicates challenges in securing guilty verdicts despite the seriousness of the charges. According to Jimenez (2023), the high acquittal rate is often due to mishandling of evidence or illegal arrests, searches, or seizures, making the seized drugs inadmissible. Thus, an acquittal reflects the failure of the prosecution to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt, not necessarily the innocence of the accused.

Table 32: The perception of law enforcers regarding the fairness and effectiveness of sentencing outcomes in drug cases as to Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Interpretation	Std. Deviation	Variance
How would you rate the fairness of sentencing outcomes in drug cases in your jurisdiction?	3.58	Agree	1.44	2.08
Do you believe that sentencing outcomes in drug cases are consistent across similar cases?	3.18	Neutral	1.31	1.72
In your opinion, are the current sentencing guidelines for drug cases effective in deterring drug-related offenses?	3.75	Agree	1.43	2.04
To what extent do you think court sentencing in drug cases reflects the severity of the offense?	3.74	Agree	1.52	2.32
Do you believe that the length of sentences in drug cases is appropriate for the nature of the crimes committed?	3.89	Agree	1.42	2.03
How would you assess the impact of sentencing outcomes in drug cases on the rehabilitation of offenders?	3.74	Agree	1.47	2.15
In your experience, how often do you see disparity in sentencing outcomes between first-time and repeat offenders in drug cases?	3.82	Agree	1.49	2.21
Do you believe that socioeconomic factors influence sentencing outcomes in drug cases?	3.51	Agree	1.50	2.24
How would you rate the role of plea bargaining in drug-related sentencing outcomes?	3.72	Agree	1.45	2.11
What type of improvement do you think should be made to sentencing practices in drug cases?	3.61	Agree	1.48	2.20
What do you believe is the most influential factor in sentencing decisions in drug cases?	2.43	Disagree	1.49	2.22

What is the biggest challenge you encounter related to sentencing in drug cases?	2.49	Disagree	1.47	2.16
Do you believe that current sentencing outcomes in drug cases achieve justice for the community?	3.57	Agree	1.51	2.28
Do you believe that current sentencing outcomes in drug cases achieve justice for offenders?	3.76	Agree	1.42	2.03
Do you support reforms to improve the sentencing outcomes in drug-related cases?	4.12	Agree	1.31	1.72
Average	3.53	Agree		

The survey data on sentencing outcomes in drug trafficking cases reveals varying opinions on factors like fairness, consistency, and the impact of socioeconomic factors. The highest mean score is for support of reforms to improve sentencing outcomes (4.12), indicating substantial agreement for change. The lowest mean score (2.43) reflects disagreement with the idea that a single factor dominates sentencing decisions. Most responses suggest that while the system is viewed as generally fair (mean values around 3.5 to 3.9), there is room for improvement. Standard deviations indicate moderate variation in opinions, highlighting some divisiveness. A similar study by Kirby & Jacobson (2013) found public concern focused more on the harm of drug offenses than on offender culpability, with the public being more accepting of lighter sentences for less involved offenders, like drug mules.

Table 33: The perception of law enforcers regarding the fairness and effectiveness of sentencing outcomes in drug cases as to Age

		Frequency	Percent
	21-30	103	38.0
	31-40	73	26.9
	41-50	69	25.5
	51 and above	26	9.6
	Total	271	100.0

The survey data reveals that the largest group of law enforcers responding to the survey is in the 21-30 age range, comprising 38.0% (103 respondents), followed by the 31-40 age group (26.9%) and the 41-50 range (25.5%). The smallest group is 51 years and above, with 9.6% (26 respondents). This suggests that younger and middle-aged officers are more likely to engage in surveys due to their greater availability. Young police officers are often tasked with handling drug cases due to the demanding nature of these issues, including threats to personal safety and rising drug-related crime. As highlighted by Fuentes et al. (2023), younger officers are critical in addressing these challenges, often taking on roles in surveillance and intelligence gathering.

Table 34: The perception of law enforcers regarding the fairness and effectiveness of sentencing outcomes in drug cases as to Gender

		Frequency	Percent
	Male	139	51.3
	Female	106	39.1
	Prefer not to say	26	9.6
	Total	271	100.0

The survey data shows that the majority of law enforcer respondents are male (51.3%), with female respondents accounting for 39.1% and 9.6% preferring not to disclose their gender. This reflects the higher male representation in law enforcement. The greater involvement of men in drug-related offenses is linked to higher rates of illicit drug use and alcohol dependence, which increases their engagement in drug trafficking and related legal issues (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2020). Despite this, women also contribute significantly to law enforcement efforts in combating drug crimes.

Table 35: The perception of law enforcers regarding the fairness and effectiveness of sentencing outcomes in drug cases as to Years of Experience in Criminal Justice Practice

		Frequency	Percent
	1-5 years	101	37.3
	6-10 years	48	17.7
	11-15 years	63	23.2
	16 years and above	59	21.8
	Total	271	100.0

The data reveals the distribution of law enforcers' years of experience, with the largest group having 1-5 years of experience (37.3%), followed by those with 11-15 years (23.2%) and 16 years and above (21.8%). The smallest group consists of those with 6-10 years of experience (17.7%). This indicates a mix of early-career officers and those with extensive experience in criminal justice. Studies, such as one by Kruijs, Donohue, and Choi (2023), highlight those perceptions of police effectiveness and fairness influence community cooperation, suggesting that improving police legitimacy can enhance trust and collaboration between law enforcement and communities.

Table 36: The perception of law enforcers regarding the fairness and effectiveness of sentencing outcomes in drug cases as to Current Role

		Frequency	Percent
	Law Enforcement Officer (Philippine National Police)	271	100.0

The data shows that all 271 respondents (100%) are law enforcement officers from the Philippine National Police (PNP), which indicates a uniform respondent group. The PNP has reported significant progress in its anti-illegal drug efforts, collaborating with various government agencies to review and improve the campaign. PNP Chief Gen. Guillermo Eleazar emphasized this ongoing initiative following President

Duterte's directive to review anti-drug operations, as stated in his speech at the United Nations General Assembly (Caliwan, 2021).

Table 37: Relationship between perception of law enforcers on sentencing outcomes, intensity in reporting, and agency involved

		Sentencing Outcomes	Intensity of Coverage	Agency Involved	Crime Type	Frequency of Reporting
Sentencing Outcomes	Pearson Correlation	1	.396	-.116	-.103	.189
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.144	.682	.716	.499
	N	15	15	15	15	15
Intensity of Coverage	Pearson Correlation	.396	1	.029	-.043	-.137
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.144		.688	.547	.053
	N	15	200	200	200	200
Agency Involved	Pearson Correlation	-.116	.029	1	.024	-.002
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.682	.688		.737	.974
	N	15	200	200	200	200
Crime Type	Pearson Correlation	-.103	-.043	.024	1	.052
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.716	.547	.737		.461
	N	15	200	200	200	200
Frequency of Reporting	Pearson Correlation	.189	-.137	-.002	.052	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.499	.053	.974	.461	
	N	15	200	200	200	200

The data reveals weak correlations between law enforcers' perceptions of sentencing outcomes and factors such as agency involvement, crime type, and frequency of reporting, with most relationships being statistically insignificant. However, there is a positive correlation between the perception of sentencing outcomes and the intensity of media coverage (0.396), suggesting that greater media attention may influence law enforcers' views on sentencing outcomes. This aligns with Szczepan (2024), who highlights the role of media in shaping public attitudes toward crime. Conversely, factors like agency involvement and crime type show little to no significant influence, contradicting Schaible, Gant, and Ames (2020), who suggest that law enforcers favor diversion programs to avoid punitive sentences for drug offenders.

Table 38: Relationship between perception of law enforcers regarding the fairness and effectiveness of sentencing outcomes in drug cases and actual sentencing outcomes, drug involved, quantity of drugs, and nature of police operations

		Sentencing Outcomes	Duration of Sentence	Drugs Involved	Quantity of Drugs	Nature of Police Operation	Disposition	Sentence Rendered by SC	Sentence Rendered by RTC	Sentence Rendered by CA
Sentencing Outcomes	Pearson Correlation	1	-.006	.073	.193	-.077	.006	.006	. ^a	. ^a
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.984	.822	.549	.813	.984	.984	0.000	0.000
	N	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12
Duration of Sentence	Pearson Correlation	-.006	1	-.007	.000	.107	-.931**	-.853**	.055	-.074
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.984		.906	.998	.060	.000	.000	.338	.196
	N	12	308	308	308	308	308	308	308	308
Drugs Involved	Pearson Correlation	.073	-.007	1	-.055	.025	.034	.031	.039	-.041
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.822	.906		.334	.662	.549	.593	.498	.478
	N	12	308	308	308	308	308	308	308	308
Quantity of Drugs	Pearson Correlation	.193	.000	-.055	1	.022	-.010	-.021	.022	-.040
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.549	.998	.334		.707	.861	.712	.702	.485
	N	12	308	308	308	308	308	308	308	308
Nature of Police Operation	Pearson Correlation	-.077	.107	.025	.022	1	-.016	-.004	.213**	.042
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.813	.060	.662	.707		.773	.940	.000	.461
	N	12	308	308	308	308	308	308	308	308
Disposition	Pearson Correlation	.006	-.931**	.034	-.010	-.016	1	.945**	.119*	.188**

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.984	.000	.549	.861	.773		.000	.037	.001
	N	12	308	308	308	308	308	308	308	308
Sentence Rendered by SC	Pearson Correlation	.006	-.853**	.031	-.021	-.004	.945**	1	.163**	.218**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.984	.000	.593	.712	.940	.000		.004	.000
	N	12	308	308	308	308	308	308	308	308
Sentence Rendered by RTC	Pearson Correlation	. ^a	.055	.039	.022	.213**	.119*	.163**	1	.183**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	.338	.498	.702	.000	.037	.004		.001
	N	12	308	308	308	308	308	308	308	308
Sentence Rendered by CA	Pearson Correlation	. ^a	-.074	-.041	-.040	.042	.188**	.218**	.183**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	.196	.478	.485	.461	.001	.000	.001	
	N	12	308	308	308	308	308	308	308	308

The data reveals weak to moderate correlations between sentencing outcomes and various case factors such as the duration of sentence, drugs involved, quantity of drugs, nature of police operation, and case disposition. Notably, there is a significant negative correlation between disposition and duration of sentence (-.931) and a strong positive correlation between the Supreme Court's sentence and case disposition (.945), highlighting the strong influence of case disposition on Supreme Court sentencing. Correlations between drug type, quantity of drugs, and sentencing outcomes are weak, suggesting these factors have a limited impact on sentencing decisions. These findings contrast with Mustafa (2019), who found that Supreme Court judges favor rehabilitative measures, and Hamilton (2021), who argued for individualized sentencing based on drug type. Additionally, the data disagrees with Greberman & Berryessa (2024), which links drug quantity with penalties, suggesting that law enforcers' perceptions of sentencing outcomes are not significantly shaped by drug type or quantity but are more influenced by procedural factors.

Conclusion

The study on media coverage and legal outcomes in drug trafficking cases in the Philippines from 2019 to 2023 found that media attention peaked in 2020 due to intensified anti-drug campaigns, with the DOJ most frequently mentioned, followed by the PNP and PDEA. Coverage focused on drug trafficking and other crimes, maintaining a neutral tone but losing prominence over time. Judicial outcomes highlighted procedural lapses, particularly in the chain of custody, as key reasons for acquittals, underscoring the need for strict legal adherence. Quezon City was a major hotspot, and socioeconomic factors like unemployment were linked to drug offenses. Law enforcers generally agreed on the fairness of the

sentencing system but called for reforms to improve consistency and address broader social factors. Correlation analysis revealed weak relationships between law enforcers' perceptions of sentencing and factors like agency involvement and media coverage. However, a positive correlation (0.396) suggested that greater media attention may influence perceptions. Sentencing outcomes showed weak to moderate correlations with variables like sentence duration, drugs involved, and police operations, with a strong negative correlation between case disposition and sentence duration and a positive correlation between case disposition and Supreme Court sentences. Drug type and quantity had a limited impact on sentencing outcomes, indicating minimal influence on law enforcers' perceptions.

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