Legislative Effectiveness:
The legislative performance of house representatives of the 16th Philippine Congress

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A B S T R A C T

Policymakers' legislative performances guide constituents for informed electoral choices. However, the lack of empirical inquiry on the legislative effectiveness of the members of the House of Representatives in the Philippines subjected constituents to rely on 'self-legislative' reporting among incumbents seeking re-election. This study aims to determine the legislative effectiveness of the House members of the 16th Congress using their primary authored bills. Utilizing the Legislative Effectiveness Model (LEM), the sponsored bills are weighted and computed to become the individual member's Legislative Effectiveness Score (LES). The study further investigated variables that affect the legislative effectiveness of House representatives. Results revealed that during the 16th Congress, House members filed an average of 24 bills within the three-year term. Additionally, each member's legislative effectiveness is improved by chairmanship to legislative committees, either standing or special. The study concluded that the 16th Congress House of Representatives comprises policymakers who are averagely effective in pushing for policy preferences into the legislative process and to laws.

R E S U M O

O desempenho legislativo dos formuladores de políticas orienta os eleitores para escolhas eleitorais informadas. No entanto, a falta de investigação empírica sobre a eficácia legislativa dos membros da Câmara dos Representantes nas Filipinas sujeitou os eleitores a dependerem de relatórios 'auto-legislativos' entre os incumbentes que buscam a reeleição. Este estudo tem como objetivo determinar a eficácia legislativa dos membros da Câmara do 16º Congresso usando seus projetos de lei de autoria primária. Utilizando o Modelo de Eficácia Legislativa (MEL), os projetos de lei patrocinados são ponderados e calculados para se tornarem o Escore de Eficácia Legislativa (EEL) individual de cada membro. O estudo investigou ainda variáveis que afetam a eficácia legislativa dos representantes da Câmara. Os resultados revelaram que durante o 16º Congresso, os membros da Câmara apresentaram uma média de 24 projetos de lei durante o mandato de três anos. Além disso, a eficácia legislativa de cada membro é melhorada pela presidência de comitês legislativos, seja permanentes ou especiais. O estudo concluiu que a Câmara dos Representantes do 16º Congresso é composta por formuladores de políticas que são, em média, eficazes em promover preferências políticas no processo legislativo e em leis.

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Introduction

One of the primary functions of the legislative branch is to formulate and enact laws that address pressing societal issues. Legislators introduce bills, conduct hearings, and engage in debates to deliberate on policy proposals (Jones & Davis, 2021). The Legislature is the political institution empowered to shape any nation's policy landscape to impact the citizens' lives. In the Philippines, the lower house is one of the chambers of Congress responsible for crafting and enacting laws that profoundly affect the country's socio-political and economic landscape. Understanding the legislative effectiveness of individual House Representatives is integral to providing constituents with valuable insights into how well their elected officials represent their interests and deliver on campaign promises (Ramirez & Patel, 2022), as well as promotes transparency in governance by shedding light on the activities and contributions of elected officials (Garcia & Lee, 2024).

The 16th Philippine Congress, convening from 2013 to 2016, grappled with many pressing issues, including economic reforms, infrastructure development, law enforcement, and national security challenges. However, there needs to be an empirical inquiry that looks at political representation in terms of the expected output for the elected position, in the case of the House of Representatives, their bills of sponsorships. Looking at the individual bills of primary authorship of each House Representative will provide the citizens with a comprehensive assessment of their elected officials (Binder & Smith, 2020) and prevent them from falling prey to the tendencies of incumbent re-electionists for 'self-legislative reporting.'

This study examines the legislative effectiveness of the individual lawmakers in the House of Representatives during the 16th Congress. It analyzes the quality and quantity of bills filed by each lawmaker, including how many have successfully moved across the legislative mill and become law. The study is built around the assumption that legislative effectiveness is a function of a lawmaker's innate abilities, cultivated skill sets, and institutional positioning in the legislature. This paper considers the terms served, membership to the majority party, and chairmanship to the different committees as the factors that can significantly improve a lawmaker's chances of legislative success. Ultimately, this study intends to provide an empirical and comprehensive perspective on the lawmaking power across the legislative process of the members of Congress (Jones & Rodriguez, 2019) in the Philippines to help the Filipino voting public objectively decide on their next electoral choice.

Review of Literature

Parliamentary politics and policymaking are an interesting inquiry these days. Lawmaking is the most crucial job of an elected member of Congress, whereby he is expected to translate into the formal policy process the views, needs, and interests of his constituents through legislation. Furthermore, how each fulfills that constitutionally mandated power can

strengthen vertical accountability in all democracies. The 16th Congress House of Representatives in the Philippines has 296 lawmakers, with 57 party-list representatives from the 49 winning party-list groups. It has a total of 73 committees. Congressman Feliciano 'Sonny' Belmonte of the Liberal Party was the House Speaker.

The majority floor leader was Congressman Neptali Gonzales of Nacionalista Party while the minority floor leader was Ronaldo Zamora of Nacionalista Party, Magdiwang faction. The winning political parties in the 16th Congress are as follow: Liberal, Kusog Agusanon, National Unity Party (NUP), Nacionalista, Nationalist People's Coalition (NPC), Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipno (LDP), Lakas, United Nationalist Alliance (UNA), Aksyon Demokratiko, Kilusan ng Bagong Lipunan (KBL), Unang Sigaw, Centrist Democratic Party of the Philippines (CDP), and Partido Demokratiko ng Pilipino- Lakas ng Bayan (PDP-Laban). The political parties were in a coalition forming the majority bloc except for PDP- Laban and KBL with Imee Marcos. Liberal party is 37.7% of the 16th Congress making it the ruling party in the House of Representatives.

Expectedly, not all lawmakers are equal at lawmaking; some excel while others lag. The reality, however, informs us that lawmakers must navigate the perilous legislative terrain to see their policy preferences signed into law. These include procedural and institutional challenges across the legislative process's stages, including bill drafting, committee hearings, amendments, and passage. Additionally, lawmakers must grapple with voluminous bills, data, and expert analyses, making it challenging to fully comprehend the implications of proposed legislation and effectively represent their constituents (Bonica et al., 2020). The lawmaker's experience, institutional position, and ability must be in place for his policy preferences to be successfully enacted.

Factors like membership to the majority party, seniority, and the chairmanship to the committee are the variables that affect legislative performance. Political parties in the House, majority parties at that, are often called a species of "legislative cartel" (Cox & McCubbins, 1993; Cox, 2020). The possession of the majority party of these rule-making powers resulted in two consequences: chairmanship to the committee system is rewarded in favor of loyal majority party members and the majority party's legislative agenda becomes the legislative agenda of the party members themselves resulting in greater chances of successful legislation. However, this view is contradicted by Feigenbaum, et.al (2015) arguing that there is little or no short-run majority-party advantage and no pronounced long-run minority-party disadvantage. He further noted that the cause of the disadvantages stems partly from the pattern of inter-temporal partisan balancing by voters. Nevertheless, majority-party influence over lawmaking is largely demonstrated with greater ideological polarization and majority-party cohesion, and where there is greater electoral competition for chamber control (Buchianeri, et.al, 2024).

Aside from parties, committees also influence decision-making in the legislative process, affecting the legislative success of every bill filed. Committees exist to harness their advantageous access to information in trading favors and securing distributive benefits for their districts and constituencies. Further, they are created by political parties as leverage for policy control by rewarding committee assignments and leadership to loyal party members. There is, nonetheless, little evidence to support that a seat on an important committee makes a member of Congress more powerful (Berry & Fowler, 2018). However, the same study noted that members experience a significant increase in power when they become chair of a committee.

Lawmakers also receive substantial "boosts" in their legislative effectiveness as committee chairs (Lewallen, 2020). This makes lawmakers with committee leadership, whether standing or special, better at the job than those who are not. This is because as Schickler & Pearson (2021) claim, committee chairs and ranking members wield considerable influence in determining which bills receive consideration, expediting the passage of priority legislation. But contrary to these, in recent findings by Wiseman and Craig (2021) of the US Senate, it was found that the lawmaking effectiveness of committee chairs, who used to be considered power brokers, continued a downward slide due to reforms that seized powers away from the committee to a consolidated majority party leadership.

Another factor that may determine how effective the legislator is is her innate ability and the acquisition of a critical skill set (Volden & Wiseman, 2009; Volden & Wiseman, 2020). Members with more innate abilities manifest themselves inside or outside Congress regardless of political experience. Although some narrow types of experiences may help lawmakers be more effective in office, general experiences in government and politics do not consistently appear to be associated with any advantage in lawmaking (Hansen & Treul, 2024). On the other hand, a critical skill set, measured through the number of terms served in the legislature, is developed over time.

The longer the member has been in her legislative career, the more skilled he gets in getting things done and manoeuvring her policy agenda, regardless of the institutional dynamics. As legislators gain experience and familiarity with the legislative process, their effectiveness increases (Arnold, 2021). Over time, lawmakers develop a deeper understanding of institutional rules, procedures, and norms, allowing them to navigate the legislative terrain more effectively and strategically. This increase in effective policymaking is due to learning by doing. Effectiveness rises sharply with tenure, all things being equal, and never declines as far as up to nine terms (Miquel & Snyder, 2006). Nonetheless, it is also equally possible that lawmakers in very safe seats may produce lesser legislative output. They may introduce fewer bills and tally lower scores on the index than their first and second terms.

Although, Schmidt & Young (2017) argued that lawmakers respond to electoral incentives in their elected duties indicating the power of elections to hold them accountable to voters for their productivity, the downside, however, is that effectiveness drops off sharply as soon lawmakers feel electorally safe from challengers (Schmidt & Young, 2017 p. 135). Tellingly, the most effective lawmakers are representatives in moderately safe seats – neither too hotly contested to turn their attention away from lawmaking nor too safe as to make the representative feel complacent about doing little lawmaking (Volden & Wiseman, 2014).

This study contributes to the ongoing discourse on good governance and citizen engagement in an era characterized by heightened public interest in governance, accountability, and transparency (Grönlund & Østerlund, 2019). The findings will help evaluate individual legislators' performance to guide policymakers, researchers, and citizens in their interests to understand how well-represented the constituents in the Philippine legislature are.

Methodology

The study is designed to be quantitative, both descriptive and correlational. The study uses a Legislative Effectiveness Model (LEM) developed by Volden and Wiseman in 2009. The model combines 15 indicators to become the Legislative Effectiveness Scorecard for the House Representatives of the 16th Congress. These 15 indicators are the three classifications of bills and the five steps in the legislative process that each bill can reach.

This paper replicates the study conducted by Volden and Wiseman, employing the same indicators due to their general applicability to the Philippine Congress. These 15 indicators have been validated for both content and construct validity, effectively capturing a Representative's ability to advance their legislative agenda through the policymaking process and into law. However, unlike the original study, this paper analyses only one set of panel data making it impossible to compare legislative effectiveness across Congresses for the same group of lawmakers.

The paper examines specific variables of effectiveness, including freshman Legislative Effectiveness Scores (LES) to assess innate abilities, majority party membership and committee chairmanship to evaluate the influence of institutional positioning, and seniority as well as the number of terms served in Congress to gauge the impact of cultivated skills on overall legislative effectiveness. All these variables are collectively considered as factors influencing legislative effectiveness. Additionally, the paper establishes the significant relationship of each variable to individual legislative effectiveness.

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Figure 1.
Legislative Effectiveness Model
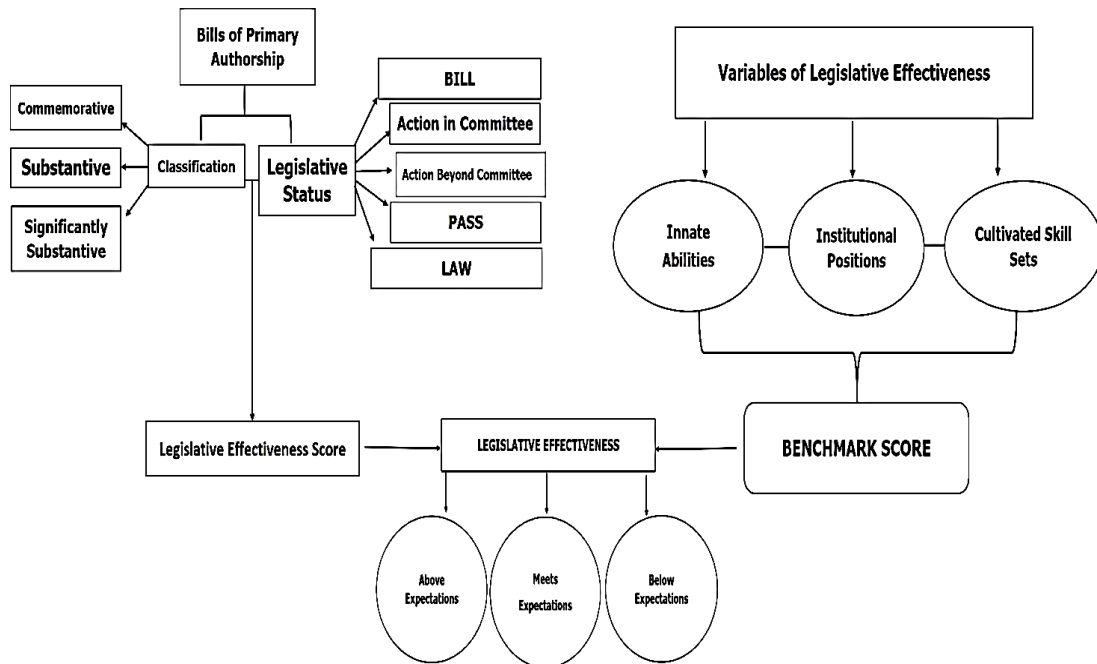
Data Collection

The data on the primarily authored bills by each House Representative were gathered using the Legislative Information System (LEGIS) of the Congress of the Philippines. The search-based system allows researchers to access, retrieve, or save structured bill information and status (https://congress.gov.ph/). The data on the number of terms each House Representative has served is gathered by checking each Congress for the presence of the names of elected House Representatives of the 16th Congress. At the same time, data on committee membership of the 16th Congress were gathered at the Library of Congress in Quezon City, Batasang Pambansa.

The data collection process was not without its challenges. The lack of a centralized database to organize the necessary legislative information significantly complicates data gathering. For the Philippine Congress, data on committee chairmanship is accessible online only while the Congress is in session. Once a new Congress is convened, all information related to the committee system is archived and can only be retrieved at the Library of Congress in Quezon City. Categorizing the quality of bills and tracking their progress through the legislative process posed additional difficulties. Multiple validations were required to accurately identify each bill's steps in the legislative process, including cross-checking whether a similar bill had been transmitted to the Senate under the same authorship.

Data Analysis

The Legislative Effectiveness Score (LES) is computed using the LES formula identified in the Legislative Effectiveness Model (LEM). In the formula, each indicator is given an

equivalent value. Each bill classification is weighted with a commemorative bill ($\alpha=1$), substantive ($\beta=5$), and significantly substantive ($\gamma=10$), respectively. Meanwhile, the scores for each legislative step are as follows: BILL (1 point), receiving action in committee (2 points), action beyond committee (3 points), pass in the House of Representatives (4 points), and signed into law (5 points).

The LEM formula is the summation of the fifteen indicators of the framework. There are five terms in the equation representing the member's fraction of bills: (1) introduced, (2) receiving action in committee, (3) receiving action beyond committee, (4) passing the House, and (5) becoming law, relative to all N legislator. Within these five terms, commemorative bills are weighted by α, substantive bills by β, and substantively significant by γ. The overall weighting of N/5 normalizes the average LES to take a value of 1 in each Congress (Center for Effective Lawmaking, 2024).

Further, using ordinary least squares, the benchmark score was computed. The variables identified in the study to have affected the LES of the lawmakers were subjected to regression analysis, resulting in the generation of the benchmark score of the individual Congressman. The study variables included membership to the liberal party as the majority party, committee chairmanship, and seniority. The first two are dummy variables coded with 1 for committee chairmanship or majority party membership and 0 for those without committee chairmanship and non-liberal party members of Congress.

The ratio between LES and benchmark score determines the legislative effectiveness of each lawmaker in the 16th Congress of the House of Representatives. For a lawmaker to have a Legislative Effectiveness of "Above Expectations," LES is to benchmark score>1.50; for Legislative Effectiveness "Below Expectations," LES is to benchmark score<.50; and for Legislative Effectiveness that "Meets Expectation," the ratio of the LES to the benchmark score is between .50 and 1.50.

Results

From the data presented in Table 1, a lawmaker files an average of 24 bills, most of which are substantive in classification. These kinds of bills are neither commemorative, such as declaring public holidays and renaming of buildings, nor are these bills significantly substantive like those included in the year-end write-up of the House of Representatives accomplishment report. Of this average, the survival rate of bills declines as it moves along the legislative process. So, from 2013-2016, out of the 15 bills receiving action in committee, only 5 or 33% moved out and were subjected to floor readings. Those bills that did not make it out of committee were either not urgent or were referred further to executive departments for additional study and consideration. This declining number of bills moving along the different stages of lawmaking implies the difficulty of the process and the decision-making power

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committees hold. This supports the analysis that committees have an influential decision-making power over the legislative process that can spell out the successful navigation of bills into law.

Table 1.
Bill classification and status, 16th Congress

Classification	Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Maximum	Total	%
Commemorative	2	15	465	7
Substantive	19	436	5750	82
Substantively Significant	3	47	772	11
				Bill Survival Rate*
Status of Bills				
BILL	24	498	6987	100%
Action in Committee (AIC)	15	383	4392	63% of 6987
Action Beyond Committee (ABC)	5	66	1346	31% of 4392
PASS	2	28	722	54% of 1346
LAW	2	21	526	73% of 722

Note: Different denominators are considered in the computation of the survival rate of bills across each step in the legislative process so as not to fault bills that did not make it.

Additionally, based on the data above, one House Representative filed a total of 498 bills, 21 of which were successfully turned into laws. Congressman Rufus Rodriquez of the 2nd district of Cagayan de Oro was ranked number 1 with an LES of 17.96, making him the most effective lawmaker in the House of Representatives during the 16th Congress.

Table 2.
House Representatives' Seniority and Institutional Profile

Note: The total number of House Representatives in the 16th Congress is 296
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Terms Served	Frequency	
	No. of Lawmakers	%
One	93	31.42%
Two	99	33.45%
Three	69	23.31%
Four	16	5.40%
Five	9	3.04%
Six	9	3.04%
Seven	1	0.34%

Institutional Positions		
Majority Party Members	108	36%
Committee Chairs	73	25%
Liberal Party Members and Committee Chairs	39 of 108	36%
No Institutional Positions	55/296	19%

Note: The total number of House Representatives in the 16th Congress is 296

Meanwhile, regarding seniority, the 16th Congress was a young one composed chiefly of lawmakers in their first and second terms. The data also presented 35 Congressmen serving Congress in their second round of the not more than three consecutive term limitations. For this Congress, Honourable Raul del Mar of the 2nd district of Cebu City served his seventh term, rendering himself in the lawmaking institution for 21 years. He ranked 32nd among his colleagues with an LES of 2.11. He authored 37 bills, 18 of which received action in committees while 9 of them underwent floor readings; 7 of those read bills communicated to the Senate, but only three were enacted into law.

Three of the laws authored by Rep. Del Mar are Republic Acts (RA) 10770, 10742, and 10687. RA 10770 is local legislation enacted increasing the bed capacity of the Vicente Sotto Memorial Medical Center, while RA10742 and RA 10687 are national legislations. The former is called the Sangguniang Kabataan Reform Act of 2013, while the latter is the Unified Scholarship and Grant-Aid Act for students in Technical-Vocational and Tertiary Education. In the 17th Congress, a resolution was adopted to commend Hon. Raul del Mar's perfect attendance records since the 8th Congress. The resolution's author cited Del Mar as "Cebu's Father of Legislative Infrastructure." His perfect attendance is matched with a representation above expectations in the 16th Congress compared to other House Members from Cebu.

Concerning institutional positions, the study considered membership to the liberal party as the majority party membership. Hence, there are only 108 Congressmen with majority party membership, while 188 are non-majority party members. In terms of committee chairmanship, as determined by the rules and procedures of the House of Representatives, 59 standing committees and 14 special committees were created, each with one chair. Surprisingly, out of the 108 liberal party members, only 36% were appointed as committee chairs. This implies that 64% of the committee chairs were from the different political parties in coalition with the liberals to form a supermajority in the House of Representatives during the 16th Congress. These political parties are Nacioalista Party (NP), National People's Coalition (NPC) Party, National Unity Party (NUP), Lakas-Christian-Muslim-Democrats (Lakas-CMD), and Union Nationalist Alliance (UNA) Party, among others.

The theory of the majority party cartel postulated that committees are rewarded to the most loyal party members. The study is, however, uncertain whether those 39 liberal party lawmakers awarded with committee leadership are the most loyal liberal party members given the norm of party switching in the Philippines. The phenomena of party switching and party coalition are commonplace in democratic systems characterized by a weak party system. Higher occurrence of these political party coalitions in Congress often takes place when the political party of the incumbent President fails to win majority seats in either of the two chambers. In the Philippines, political parties are described as "temporary political alliances"

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(Aceron, 2009). Party coalitions are short-term and not cohesive (Kawanaka, 2010). Most politicians see this party coalition as a source of political machinery for their next electoral bid instead of capitalizing on it to improve their legislative performance.

However, 55 or 19% of House Members were not part of the majority party and had no committee chairmanship to the standing or the special committees. One poorly positioned during the 16th Congress is Representative Diosdado Macapagal-Arroyo of the 2nd District of Camarines Sur. He is the son of former President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. It is not surprising that he was not given any leadership nor membership to powerful committees in the House of Representatives under the Aquino regime. His parents and then President Benigno Aquino were political rivals. Nevertheless, his political experiences during the 14th and 15th Congresses have equipped him with the necessary legislative skills. Even without institutional positions in the 16th Congress, he authored 171 bills, ranking him as the 3rd most effective lawmaker among his colleagues with an LES of 5.77.

Table 3.
Legislative Effectiveness Score, 16th Congress

Descriptive Statistics of LES of House Representatives	
Mean	1.002826832
Standard Error	0.082892164
Median	0.639679391
Mode	0.021720955
Standard Deviation	1.426130721
Sample Variance	2.033848833
Kurtosis	68.8232312
Skewness	6.56828823
Range	17.9692584
Minimum	0
Maximum	17.9692584
Sum	296.8367423
Count	296

The total number of Representatives of the 16th Congress is 296. The study did not discriminate between party-list and district representatives. Instead, 296 are understood as House Members regardless of whether they provide jurisdictional-based or sectoral-based representations. An average effective house member scores an LES of 1.0, while the median lawmaker scores a legislative effectiveness of 0.64. Most of the LES were spread within 0.71 standard deviations on each side of the mean.

Additionally, the distribution of the LES is positively skewed, where the mean was higher than the median value. This positive skewness in the distribution of LES scores affirms

the difficulty experienced by the lawmakers of the 16th Congress in successfully passing their legislation. This means that in the 16th Congress, lawmakers scored lower legislative effectiveness than 0.64, and very few scored higher legislative effectiveness than the averagely effective LES of 1.0.

The data above also indicated that eight lawmakers got an LES of 0.0. This signifies that from 2013 to 2106, there were Congressmen who could not file bills of primary authorship. Notwithstanding, the highest LES was 17.97 by Representative Rufus Rodriquez of the 2nd District of Cagayan de Oro City. He was the most effective lawmaker of the 16th Congress. His filed bills included RA 10687, the act that created the national comprehensive loan program for college education appropriating fund thereof; RA 10647, or the act strengthening the Ladderized Interface between technical-vocational education and higher education; RA 10863, or the Customs and Tariff Modernization Act of 2010 among others.

Hon. Rufus Rodriquez was the Chair of the Centrist Democratic Party. He was a Vice Governor of Misamis Oriental for two years (1984-1986) and became the Dean of the College of Law of San Sebastian College in 1990. In 1998, he became the head of the Bureau of Immigration of the Estrada administration until 2001. He authored the most significant number of bills and resolutions since the 15th Congress. Even though he was not part of the liberal party, he was awarded Committee Leadership for the special committee, Ad Hoc Committee on the Bangsamoro Basic Law, to review, evaluate, and propose legislation relative to the comprehensive agreement on the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL).

His professional experiences as a legal scholar, executive experiences as Vice Governor and Cabinet Secretary, and legislative experiences of three terms in the House, including his institutional advantage during the 16th Congress, contributed to his effectiveness as a House Member. It was no wonder that Rep. Rufus' nickname among his supporters is "Mr. Performance" of the Philippine Congress.

Table 4.
Freshman LES and Legislative Effectiveness

LES ($\bar{x}$=0.63)	Frequency	%
Above Median	46	49.46
Below Median	47	50.54

Three factors were investigated in the study that have possible significant effects on a lawmaker's legislative effectiveness. These were innate abilities, cultivated skill sets, and institutional positions.

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The innate abilities hypothesized that the same members will be effective regardless of their legislative experience and earlier political careers. However, this study was only able to investigate a single Congress. Instead of correlating the members' LES from the previous Congresses, the analysis of innate ability in this study was done using the LES of the freshmen lawmakers as innate ability in its rawest form can also possibly be detected in a member's freshman LES (Volden & Wisemann, 2009).

The table above presents how many of those freshman members have scored above or below the median. Among the freshman lawmakers, the Representatives who were in the top 96 percentile relative to other first termers in the lower house of Congress were Honourable Evelina Escudero (5.74, fourth), Alfredo Vargas III (4.19, eighth), Tan, Angelina Helen (3.92, 10th), and Eric Olivarez (3.29, 14th).

These lawmakers who were above the freshman median LES, regardless of being well-positioned or not in the 16th Congress, will become better at passing bills as they gain more legislative experience regardless of what institutional positions they might have in their succeeding terms. Similarly, those members who were below the freshman median LES, regardless of whether they were well-positioned during the 16th Congress or not, will more likely stay below the median when they move into their succeeding terms. These results indicated that, while there were opportunities for growth and improvement, legislators came to the chamber with a particular set of skills, and those that were successful early on continued to be successful. At the same time, ineffective lawmakers tend to remain relatively ineffective in future terms (Volden & Wiseman, 2009). Nevertheless, a follow-up study is needed to confirm these implications.

A further look at the background of these effective lawmakers supported the innate abilities hypothesis of the framework. This was the case of Hon. Evelina Escudero. Before her legislative career, she was appointed by President Benigno Aquino III as a member of the UP Board of Regents (Rappler.com, 2013). Hon. Vargas was elected City Councilor of the 2nd district of Quezon City in 2010, while Hon. Tan was a doctor. Meanwhile, Hon. Olivarez was a professor at De La Salle University for almost two decades before his election in office. The cases of these lawmakers presented the fact that effective lawmakers do not come to Congress with zero knowledge about legislation. Their professional experiences and, for some, their earlier political career in the lower offices have helped them navigate the perilous terrain of policymaking toward successful legislation of their legislative agenda.

Meanwhile, the first termers in the lower house can use their legislative effectiveness as a pre-condition for aspiring to "higher office" (Mayhew, 1974; Volden & Wisemann, 2009, p. 19) like a Senate seat, Governorship, Presidency, or Vice Presidency, or a city mayor.

Alternatively, it may be interesting to know if members with less innate ability at the beginning of their legislative career were more likely to retire voluntarily. This study, however, did not explore this analysis but recommends it for future explorations.

Nevertheless, the limited freshman LES snapshots of the House Members of the 16th Congress hinted that innate ability and initial effectiveness were crucial in understanding which members of Congress successfully lobbied the policy preferences of their constituents in the legislative mill. Their LES can sufficiently provide an overview of information to Filipino voters on whether to support these first-time lawmakers in their next electoral bid.

Table 5.
Seniority and Legislative Effectiveness

Seniority	Mean
Freshman	0.91743
Sophomore	1.01562
Three Terms	1.15439
Four Terms and Above	0.88799

As for cultivated skill sets, cross-sectional analysis to check variations in the legislative effectiveness build-up of lawmakers who were incumbents to the 16th Congress was impossible as the study looked at only one set of panel data. Instead, the study compared the average legislative effectiveness of different lawmakers based on their legislative terms to grasp some degree of growth in the average member's skill over time.

As indicated in Table 5, lawmakers serving their third term in the House have the highest average LES of 1.15. The growth in effectiveness over time indicated that members cultivated the crucial skill sets necessary to get things done in Congress. From the comparison of the average LES based on seniority, Filipino house members of the 16th Congress reached the peak of their legislative performance during their third term. This finding lends credence to the conclusion of earlier studies that effectiveness increases significantly with increased legislative experience, at least for the first few years.

Conversely, a closer look at the average LES of those who are in their fourth terms and above indicated different implications: (1) as incumbents' electoral security increases, they cease to invest in vote-counting activities such as legislation and/or (2) the more well-entrenched legislators have become, the more likely they will produce quality laws in the long run giving away (Panao, 2017; Panao, 2018; Panao, 2019), thus leaving quantity of bills behind. Unfortunately, there is no way of deepening such findings since the framework of this study measured effectiveness in terms of the number of bills in the legislative process without

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factoring in the content of the bills each lawmaker authors. The study cannot establish whether lawmakers in the 16th Congress assumed the role of a lawmaker, fiscalizer, or patron.

Table 6.

*Ordinary Least Square (OLS) Regression Analysis*

Regression Statistics		Values
Multiple R		0.251851952
R Square		0.063429406
Adjusted R Square		0.047281637
Standard Error		1.387231929
Observations		296
* Significance F (ANOVA)		0.001840328
	Coefficients	*P-value*
Intercept (â)	0.92376719	3.67E-06
βˆSeniority	-0.058658351	0.400181103
βˆMajority Party	-0.219416574	0.216157789
**βˆCommittee Chair	0.847180214	0.0000327

Note: *$p<0.01$ confidence level, the overall model is fit to determine the variables that affect the LES of lawmakers; **At 0.05 confidence level, the individual variable is significant

The regression results above showed that the most valuable institutional position considered in the study is Committee Chairmanship. It can significantly affect the legislative effectiveness of a House Member. Nevertheless, collectively, the variables significantly improved, at $p<0.01$, the legislative effectiveness of those lawmakers who are endowed institutionally.

It is, therefore, a natural strategy for representatives to request committee chairmanship either in the special or standing committees because findings suggest that committee leadership increases the chance for successful legislation in the House of Representatives. The average LES of a committee chair is 1.56, while the average LES of lawmakers with no committee chairmanship is 0.82.

The difference in the mean is highly significant (p-value <0.01). The above-presented data affirm earlier findings of Volden & Wisemann (2009; 2014) that aside from acquired legislative skills and innate abilities, effective policymakers in the House of Representatives in the Philippines successfully navigated the perilous legislative terrain by capitalizing on their institutional positions.

Figure 2.

Overall Legislative Effectiveness, 16th Congress
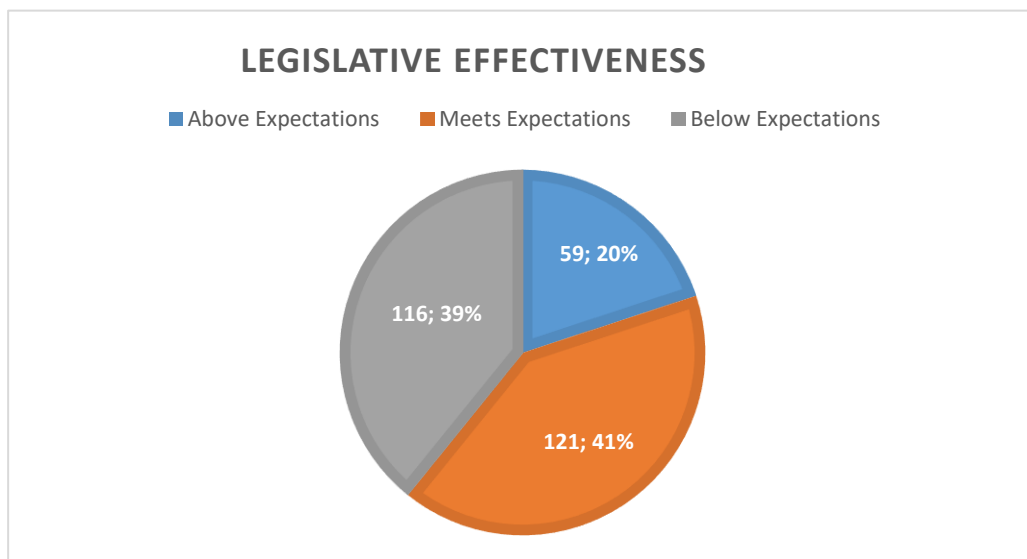
Finally, looking at the ratio between the LES and the benchmark scores, the figure above shows that lawmakers had positions but showed poor lawmaking performances. The 16th Congress has 41% (121 out of 296) House Members whose legislative effectiveness meets expectations, 39% (116 out of 296) with legislative effectiveness that is below expectations, and only 20% (59 out of 296) of them who have legislative effectiveness that was above expectations. The overall legislative effectiveness of the 16th Congress provides a picture of the representation a constituent receives from their respective district and party-list representatives in Congress vis-à-vis their policymaking experiences, innate abilities, and legislative positions.

Conclusions

The 16th Congress of the Philippines was predominantly composed of lawmakers who were either averagely effective or poorly effective. Among the variables considered in measuring legislative effectiveness, only committee chairmanship emerged as a significant factor. This is not surprising given the historical context of the country's "indistinct two-party system" and its transition to the current multi-party system. In the Philippine setting where political parties typically secure only a plurality of seats in the House of Representatives, the formation of a majority coalition becomes necessary. While the party winning the plurality of seats leads the majority coalition, it does not wield exclusive control over the legislative agenda. This lack of monopoly diminishes any significant legislative advantage for its loyal party members.

Instead, individual lawmakers within the majority coalition must compete for committee chairmanships to gain leverage in advancing their legislative priorities. In a political

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system characterized by weak political parties, policymakers are compelled to be resourceful and innovative in navigating the policymaking landscape. Despite institutional disadvantages, some members of the 16th Congress demonstrated greater effectiveness than their institutionally privileged counterparts. These lawmakers entered Congress armed with skills and expertise gained from their earlier political careers, which they effectively utilized to achieve legislative success.

Given the relative weakness of the Philippine legislative institutions in providing structural advantages, lawmakers in positions of power must also possess critical skills and innate abilities to push their policy preferences through the legislative process. The legislative effectiveness of Filipino policymakers is collectively enhanced by factors such as majority party membership, committee leadership, and prior legislative experience. However, only those who can fully harness these advantages can ensure effective representation of the Filipino electorate.

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