

Examining Biases in ABS-CBN Online News: A Framing Analysis of Reporting about President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

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ABSTRACT

ABS-CBN, a leading media entity in the Philippines, has often found itself embroiled in controversies surrounding accusations of bias, particularly in its coverage of President Ferdinand "Bong-Bong" Marcos Jr., commonly known as BBM. Various entities have often criticized the media for exaggeration, framing, and misinformation, whereas others have praised the media for fulfilling an informative and educational function for the public. To address this dilemma, this study specifically examined its linguistic devices and language bias to discern patterns of news framing. This was done using the Linguistic Devices Analytical Framework, the Epistemological and Framing Bias Tool, and Goffman's Theory of Framing. Findings reveal the exclusion of the inclusive language 'we,' and language bias reveals linguistic devices, such as factive verbs, entailments, assertive verbs, subjective intensifiers, and one-sided terms. With the interplay of these outcomes, ABS-CBN headlines exhibit a combination of positive, negative, and neutral news coverage, which aligns with the norms of balanced reporting, essential for audiences to understand the story from various perspectives. Generally, findings reveal an impartial framing of news headlines. Future research may conduct a longitudinal study with a comprehensive dataset of news headlines to explore the media's intentions revealed through framing strategies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Various academic fields, including linguistics, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, journalism, and experimental psychology, have investigated news headlines (Muir, Roberts, & Sheridan, 2021; Schreiber, Scherrer, & Breetz, 2023; Sheerin & Garavan, 2022; Shen, 2023) with the common problem associated with framing and politics. In the modern era, there are many allegations about media framing bias and how journalists use catchy headlines to attract the attention of news consumers (Amundsen, 2022; Montejo & Adriano, 2018). Also, in an era of fast-paced information dissemination through digital media and

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social platforms, the impact of media framing, especially on country leaders, has become even more pronounced (Macaraig & Hameleers, 2022). Misinformation, disinformation, and selective presentation of facts can further complicate the picture and lead to polarized opinions about leaders and their policies.

ABS-CBN faced public backlash from the supporters of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. (also known as BBM, which stands for his nickname “Bong-Bong” and his family name Marcos), who accused the network of political bias in its headlines (Pertierra, 2021; Rulloda et al., 2021). ABS-CBN has been accused of portraying BBM unfavorably in its news coverage (Huang, 2023) and of publishing critical content regarding him, particularly in its headlines (Teehankee, 2023). Consequently, the network has been criticized as one of the least reliable sources of news in the Philippines (Molek-Kozakowska, 2013; Montejo & Adriano, 2018). As a result, in 2020, the National Telecommunications Commission ordered ABS-CBN to cease its operations amidst allegations of tax evasion. Despite this setback, ABS-CBN continues to disseminate news exclusively through online platforms and social media, maintaining accessibility via its news website, *news.abs-cbn.com*. Given this consideration, examining whether ABS-CBN employs media framing bias in its news reports becomes crucial. To scrutinize these negative allegations about ABS-CBN, its news headlines related to BBM were studied to logically reveal how ABS-CBN frames its news concerning BBM and eventually uncover the true nature of its reporting.

There have been several studies about news media framing. Rulloda et al. (2021) examined how ABS-CBN reported on Duterte's COVID-19 pandemic response during their franchise renewal challenges through Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, integrated with Carvalho's CDA framework for media texts (2008). The study found that ABS-CBN's media coverage, while potentially providing an opportunity to take a biased stance, maintained an objective portrayal of Duterte's COVID-19 speeches. The study highlighted the public's role as an invisible political actor influencing ABS-CBN's journalism and shaping the public's understanding of the government's COVID-19 response. Also, Montejo & Adriano (2018) used CDA through the use of discursive or sensationalizing devices characterized by Molek-Kozakowska (2013) in analyzing the headlines from the major online news portals in the Philippines: ABS-CBN, CNN Philippines, GMA, Interasksyon, and Rappler. The qualitative study identified ten discursive devices media practitioners employ to attract readers' attention and convey their ideologies. Additionally, the study found that writers or editors presented headlines with varying levels of objectivity, subjectivity, bias, or misinformation, indicating the news practitioners' political inclinations and deliberate efforts to create sensational feelings among readers.

Moreover, Xie and Ding (2016) conducted a comparative discourse analysis and content analysis to examine how the consumption of iPhones by mainlanders in Hong Kong was framed by two local newspapers, China Daily and the South China Morning Post (SCMP). It shows that China Daily has fewer derogatory remarks and negative comments to its mainlanders, while SCMP reflects animosity towards mainlanders from its Hong Kong locals. The study revealed that China Daily exhibited fewer negative comments and derogatory remarks towards mainlanders, while SCMP emphasized animosity towards mainlanders from the perspective of Hong Kong locals. Furthermore, Recasens, Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil, and Jurafsky (2013) discovered that epistemological biases can assist with automatically detecting injustices in text.

In another study, Mutua & Ong'ong'a (2020) conducted a content analysis to investigate how the media framed the initial two months of the COVID-19 pandemic in

coverage by four international news outlets: BBC, CNN, Al-Jazeera, and the People's Daily. The results unveiled that the dominant themes shaping the perspectives of these news media organizations were geopolitics, international relations, sinophobia, crime, misinformation, and fake news. The study suggests that there is a need for further efforts to prevent the recurring use of themes and narratives that contribute to the discrimination and stigmatization of individuals affected by disease outbreaks. Furthermore, Li and Gao (2023) expanded the knowledge of news discourse during COVID-19 by examining semantic and sentimental aspects in news coverage across countries. They observed contrasting attitudes of mainstream media in China and the United States towards the same economic situation in China.

Although the studies mentioned earlier have explored news framing, there remains a scarcity of research delving into news framing, especially employed by ABS-CBN, a prominent media outlet in the Philippines. Furthermore, whether they exhibit bias in their reporting, particularly concerning BBM, remains largely unexplored. This issue has gained prominence among Filipino citizens, particularly as political matters overshadow BBM and his administration (Pertierra, 2021).

Hence, this study seeks to address a notable gap in existing research by conducting a descriptive content analysis focused specifically on the linguistic devices and language bias utilized in news headlines. Given the extensive examination of news framing, particularly through the lens of Goffman's framing theory, news headlines have emerged as pivotal points of analysis in prior studies (Chuey et al., 2023; Molek-Kozakowska, 2013; Liu et al., 2019; Peterlicean & Berariu, 2020). Recognizing the inherent significance of headlines in conveying framing and emphasis on particular issues, this investigation aims to shed light on the media's intentions toward BBM by scrutinizing linguistic devices, language bias, and framing evident in ABS-CBN news headlines.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

With content analysis, this study used a descriptive qualitative method to analyze linguistic devices and language bias in ABS-CBN News headlines. The selected headlines for this investigation formed a corpus encompassing news published before, during, and after the Philippine election and BBM's presidential proclamation. Porter et al. (2022) expressed that the qualitative descriptive design offers a comprehensive portrayal of events through the everyday language used in those occurrences. Additionally, Daniel (2016) stressed the significance of uncovering participants' subjective meanings, behaviors, ideologies, and social circumstances in ensuring the success of a qualitative study.

2.2 Data Collection

The news headlines collected exclusively pertain to May, June, and July 2022. This encompasses the period preceding, concurrent with, and after the Philippine elections and the month of BBM's presidential inauguration. Notably, this period witnessed a pronounced escalation in disseminating fervent news coverage about BBM, with ABS-CBN being a prominent source. All these headlines were also extracted from the National Story segment of ABS-CBN News, a major media entity covering the aforementioned political events (Montejo & Adriano, 2018; Rulloda, 2021). It is worth noting that some social media users

raised concerns about the network's potential political bias in its news production (Rulloda et al., 2021; Teehankee, 2023), which provided compelling reasons to investigate ABS-CBN news headlines further.

Initially, 80 news headlines were purposively chosen based on specific inclusion criteria: a) they were published between May and July 2022, covering the period before, during, and after the Philippine elections and BBM's presidential inauguration; b) they included the name of BBM; c) they focused solely on political matters; and d) they were published in English. Following the purposive selection, a simple random sampling method was employed to choose 30 sample headlines randomly. This sample size becomes sufficient for qualitative research, especially in content analysis (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022; Porter et al., 2022) like this study, which focuses on the depth rather than the breadth and aims to gain insights into the nuances and complexities of the phenomenon rather than generalizing findings to a larger population. This selection was achieved through a roulette lottery, ensuring a fair and unbiased representation. The chosen headlines were uniformly political, thus facilitating an impartial assessment of the parameters (Singh & Masuku, 2014).

2.3 Data Analysis

The data collected were subjected to several tools. The linguistic devices used in the headlines were identified using Bednarek and Caple's (2012) Linguistic Devices Analytical Framework. Then, to reveal language bias, the study employed the Epistemological and Framing Bias Tool proposed by Recasens et al. (2013), which examines lexical categories such as factive verbs, entailment, assertive verbs, and hedges for epistemological bias, as well as subjective intensifiers and one-sided terms for framing bias. Lastly, Erving Goffman's Theory of Framing was used to assess news headline framing. This theory posits that individuals engage in impression management by presenting themselves in ways that align with societal norms and expectations (Muir et al., 2021). It also suggests that people strategically construct "frames" or interpretations of situations to shape how others perceive them (Sheerin & Garavan, 2022). By controlling these frames, individuals can influence the impressions others form of them and manage their social interactions effectively (Zhou & Qin, 2020).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Linguistic Devices

Table 1 presents the linguistic techniques utilized in the headlines, strategically employed to captivate news consumers' attention, ultimately enticing them to read the entire news report. Furthermore, each linguistic device is exemplified through sample words and phrases extracted from the news headlines, providing elaboration and context. Using Bednarek and Caple's (2012) Linguistic Devices Analytical Framework to analyze the linguistic devices, the *reference to elite individuals*, *immediacy*, *role labels*, *evaluative language*, *intensification*, *negative vocabulary*, *reference to nationalities and nations*, and *reference to groups* are found to be prominent, unlike others which were only seldomly used.

Table 1
Linguistic Devices from the ABS-CBN News Headlines

No.	Linguistic Devices	Words/Phrases from the Headlines
1.	Reference to Elite Individuals	<i>Duterte; Migz Zubiri; Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida; Second Gentleman Douglas Emhoff; Singapore leader; US Ofc'l; Japan's Kishida; lawmaker; incoming BIR Chief; Kabataan solon; top legal officials; business groups.</i>
2.	Immediacy	<i>claims; invites; vow; pay courtesy; raises; wants; seeks; urges; asks; delivers; vows; disagrees; says; wants; defends; meets.</i>
3.	Role Labels	<i>Presidential bet; Singaporean leader; US, Japan, South Korea, India envoys; Philippines' next leader; lawmaker; US ofc'l; Congress; Supreme Court; Teacher's group; incoming BIR chief; Second Gentleman; 17th Philippine President; activists; analysts; top legal officials; business groups.</i>
4.	Evaluative Language	<i>presidential bet; biggest Facebook footprint, ill-gotten wealth, palace defends non-mention of the drug war, Marcos must find a new source of funds, Marcos 'disagrees' with 6.1 percent inflation.</i>
5.	Intensification	<i>biggest Facebook footprint; must find new source of fund; 'need to redefine; 'asserting claim'; urges; spent P623 million... reports no personal funds used; 'significant' pay hike; 'role model' taxpayer; many transport issues; ultimate Marcos redemption; more than 20,000 troops; big plans; top legal officials.</i>
6.	Reference to Events	<i>state visit; courtesy visit; meeting with US ofc'l; Halalan 2022; Marcos inauguration; SONA.</i>
7.	Negative Vocabulary	<i>'spoiled weak'; ill-gotten wealth; wrong; leakages; junk COC cancellation petition; transport issues; disagrees; reject; not like your father; lacked strategic focus; corruption.</i>
8.	Reference to Nationalities and Nations	<i>Singaporean leader; Japan's Kishida; US, Japan, South Korea, India envoys; US ofc'l; South Korea; China; Second Gentleman Douglas Emhoff; US delegation; Filipinos.</i>
9.	Reference to Institutionalized Agencies	<i>Congress; customs, BIR; supreme court; teacher's group; LTRFB; Marcos admin; LEDAC; ICC.</i>
10.	Reference to Groups	<i>envoys; critics; congress; teacher's group; Filipinos; troops; Marcos admin; activists; analysts; top legal officials.</i>
11.	Quantification	<i>spent P623 million; 6.1 % inflation; 20,000 troops.</i>
12.	References to Time	<i>since 2016; during Marcos SONA.</i>
13.	Reference to Place	<i>South Korea; China; West Philippine Sea.</i>
14.	Comparison	<i>prove that you're not like your father'; make legislation more efficient.</i>
15.	Quotes from Government Officials	<i>'spoiled, weak' - Duterte; to be a 'role model' taxpayer – BIR Chief; many transport issues to be decided by next admin - LTRFB; 'go beyond' unity message – Kabataan solon.</i>
16.	Reference to Emotion	<i>'Prove that you're not like your father' – analysts; prove us wrong on issues – critics; Duterte war on drugs.</i>
17.	Quotes from Ordinary Citizens	<i>'Prove that you're not like your father' – activists.</i>
18.	Inclusive "we"	<i>[none]</i>

Table 1 comprehensively summarizes the various linguistic devices used to catch news consumers' attention. The **reference to elite individuals** is expressed by mentioning several influential individuals. Most of them are national leaders and lawmakers. With this, readers' interest is aroused (Harcup & O'Neill, 2017), prioritizing the perspectives and actions of powerful figures (Chadwick et al., 2018) to emphasize BBM's associations. Also, **immediacy** is utilized through present tense and other words that express urgency (Montejo & Adriano, 2018). The use of the verbs presented in Table 2 entices readers by presenting news as fresh and novel, implying that the information is time-sensitive and demands immediate attention. This appeals to readers seeking the latest news to stay current on current events (Bednarek, Caple, & Hyland, 2012). Besides, **a role label** is also evident by indicating titles and positions to establish superior figures in the headlines (Makki, 2019). Most of the role labels associated with Marcos are related to prominent positions in the country and the world. This implies that ABS-CBN News attempts to create power dynamics and marginalize certain groups. Moreover, **evaluative language** is also evident in news headlines because it expresses a judgment or opinion about something (Bednarek & Caple, 2012). Based on the analysis, *evaluative language* communicates an assessment or perspective rather than simply conveying factual information. This was expressed through the phrases "presidential bet," "biggest Facebook footprint," "ill-gotten wealth," "palace defends non-mention of drug war," "Marcos must find a new source," and Marcos 'disagrees' with 6.1 percent inflation. As this outcome adds a layer of subjectivity, it is inferred that ABS-CBN News uses opinionated language to influence the interpretation of the news.

Moreover, **intensification** was emphasized through the use of the superlative "biggest" and other intensifying words and expressions like "spent P623 million... reports no personal funds used", "many," "ultimate," "more than," "big," and "top." In other words, ABS-CBN attempts to promote engagement by using more expressive and vivid language, which agrees with the outcomes of the studies of Peterlicean and Berariu (2020) and Oliveira et al. (2021). Also, **references to events** were made by mentioning national visits, meetings, elections, and the inauguration. According to Zhou and Qin (2020) and Cabaniss and Cameron (2017), news outlets often selectively highlight certain aspects of an event to make it more newsworthy. Besides, negative vocabulary was also observed with negative adjectives like "spoiled, weak," "wrong," "ill-gotten," and "lacked."; negative verbs like "junk," "disagrees," and "reject,;" as well as negative nouns like "leakages," "issues," and "corruption." This amplifies issues, eventually captivating the readership (Bednarek & Caple, 2012). Aside from that, a **reference to nationalities and nations** was shown to evoke a sense of nationalism, such as the mention of Asian leaders and US officials, which entails partnerships made by the Philippines through Marcos. Also, **reference to institutionalized agencies** was noted by mentioning the agencies with issues and concerns vis-à-vis Marcos' leadership. Through this, the news outlet tries to critique power structures without singling out individuals (Fairclough, 2013).

Additionally, **reference to groups** who expressed doubts about Marcos and those with whom Marcos had significant interactions also contributes to forming social identities and social constructs among readers (Bednarek & Caple, 2012). Also, **quantification** was noticed with the statement of a sum of money that Marcos allegedly spent without anything coming from his own pockets, as well as the inflation rate and the number of troops sent during his inauguration. This implies that ABS-CBN conveys urgency and relevance of news by stressing the scale of a problem. Moreover, **reference to time** was exhibited by the

mention of the year 2016 and the time of SONA, and the **reference to place** was mentioned by "South Korea" and "China." This helps create a sense of immediacy and familiarity – one-way news consumers are captivated. Furthermore, a comparison was noticed by comparing Marcos to his father – a long-time deemed dictator since his reign – and by challenging Marcos to be more efficient in his legislation. This creates a sense of competition to influence perception among readers (Bednarek et al., 2012).

Furthermore, there are also **quotes from government officials** like "Duterte," "BIR," "chief," "LTFRB," and "Kabataan solon," which help diversify the voices and perspectives in the news. Furthermore, **reference to emotion** was detected by appealing to the readers' anger. This was achieved by quoting statements that demanded Marcos to prove something they believed he could hardly demonstrate. Besides, there are **quotes from ordinary citizens**, such as activists. They may appear to be sensational stories, but they could be misleading and inaccurate (Chadwick et al., 2017). However, the **inclusive "we"** was not used. Its absence implies a more distant or detached tone in the headlines, focusing more on presenting information rather than engaging the readers as active participants (Makki, 2019). Though it is thought to promote a more diverse and inclusive perspective and build trust and credibility, ABS-CBN may have refrained from its usage to provide informed and intelligent reportage of their news (Ilagan & Soriano, 2019) and convey a sense of authority and exclusivity that could add to the appeal and uniqueness of their news coverage (Kabigting, 2020).

3.2 Language Bias

Moreover, Table 2 presents headlines that contain linguistic features that suggest language bias. Language bias influences the way information is perceived and interpreted by the audience. It could either be epistemological bias or framing bias. Epistemological bias includes *factive verbs* (verbs that imply truth or certainty), *entailment* (implying logical consequence), *assertive verbs* (expressing strong certainty), and *hedges* (words that soften the strength of a statement). These linguistic choices may influence their beliefs about the truthfulness or reliability of the news. On the other hand, framing bias consists of *subjective intensifiers* (words that convey strong opinions or emotions) and *one-sided terms* (terms that present a biased perspective or favor one side of an issue). This may shape attitudes or opinions about the subject matter (Recasens et al., 2013).

Table 2
Language Bias in the News Headlines

No.	Language Bias	Words/Phrases
1.	Factive Verbs	<i>claims, raises, wants, asserting</i>
2.	Entailments	<i>claims Marcos has no ill-gotten wealth; 'asserting' claim in West PH Sea; urge Marcos to be a 'role model' taxpayer; Back in power, Here comes the son, ultimate Marcos redemption, 'go beyond unity message', Prove you're not like your father; ...but lacked strategic focus: analysts</i>
3.	Assertive Verbs	<i>wants, asserting, prove, urges, vows, deliver</i>
4.	Hedges	<i>must; 'significant'; lacked strategic focus: analysts</i>
5.	Subjective intensifiers	<i>biggest Facebook footprint; ultimate Marcos redemption; laid out big plans but lacked strategic focus</i>
6.	One-sided terms	<i>West PH Sea; back in power; here comes the son; ultimate Marcos redemption</i>

Table 2 presents the different indicators of language bias found in news headlines. The analysis is based on the Epistemological and Framing Bias Tool (Recasens et al., 2013).

3.2.1 Factive Verbs

A family of verbs known as 'factives' implies that the events or conditions communicated by their sentential complements are true (Peterlicean & Berariu, 2020). In entirety, the employment of factive verbs can trigger language bias when they are employed to convey specific statements as generally regarded facts without considering the possibility of differing viewpoints or interpretations (Liu et al., 2019). For instance, the headlines (a), (b), and (c) reflect the use of the factive verb "claims."

(a) *After calling him 'spoiled, weak,' Duterte **claims** Marcos has no ill-gotten wealth*

In Cambridge Dictionary definitions, "claim" is asserting something to be true or a fact despite lacking evidence and the possibility of disbelief. This verb presupposes the speaker's acceptance of the statement's truth, which, in this case, involves Duterte, a former president of the Philippines and, hence, a respected figure. Consequently, this could influence the audience's perception as this implies that a ground truth exists, signaling to listeners that their content is more objective (Chuey, Luo, & Markman, 2023). Additionally, the factive verb "claims" in the headline suggests that Duterte's statement about Marcos having no ill-gotten wealth is presented as a known or proven fact since this verb presupposes a fact (Abu Salem et al., 2021). However, the existence or absence of Marcos' ill-gotten wealth is a subject of ongoing debate and investigation (Aguilar Jr, 2019; Destrooper, 2023), which makes Duterte's claim potentially inaccurate. This implies bias in favor of Duterte's statement and conveys a sense of unquestioned validity or accuracy, which may not be warranted.

(b) *Marcos **raises** 'need to redefine' Visiting Forces Agreement in meeting with US ofc'l*

The factive verb "raises" in the headline suggests a bias (Abu Salem et al., 2021) towards Marcos and his advocacy for a change in the Visiting Forces Agreement, potentially indicating support for his position. Also, quotation marks around "need to redefine" might imply skepticism or questioning of Marcos' statement, indicating the writer's uncertainty about the genuine need for redefining the agreement and potential underlying motives.

(c) *Marcos **wants** 'bilateral cooperation with China' while '**asserting**' claim in West PH Sea*

The word "wants" implies that Marcos's desire for "bilateral cooperation with China" is more of a wish than a reality. Likewise, "asserting" suggests that Marcos's claim in the West Philippine Sea may not be fully legitimate or recognized and could even be considered provocative (Al-Zubeiry, 2020). Consequently, the headlines imply uncertainty or potential issues with Marcos's goals, which may be perceived as biased against him.

3.2.2 Entailment

Entailment may generate language bias when the association between propositions promotes specific assumptions or discriminatory views (Recasens et al., 2013). The following headlines with this feature are expressed in (d), (e), (f), (g), (h), (i), and (j).

(d) *After calling him 'spoiled, weak,' Duterte **claims** Marcos has no ill-gotten wealth.*

The use of the verb "claims" is an entailment (Muir et al., 2021), implying that there is a possibility that Marcos may have ill-gotten wealth. The headline suggests that Duterte defends Marcos against such accusations even after calling him "spoiled" and "weak."

(e) *Marcos wants 'bilateral cooperation with China while **'asserting' claim** in West PH Sea*

Using the word "asserting," the headline suggests that the proposition is true (Anderson et al., 2022). This language choice portrays Marcos as confrontational towards China, despite the statement's intention of desiring cooperation. The inclusion of quotation marks around "bilateral cooperation with China" further indicates possible skepticism or criticism of this stance, potentially influencing the reader's perception of Marcos and his actions. As a result, the headline may contain language bias that could shape the reader's interpretation of the situation based on the Epistemological and Framing Bias Tool of Recasens et al. (2013).

(f) *Incoming BIR chief to **urge** Marcos to be a 'role model' taxpayer*

This headline has potential entailment as it implies that Marcos is not a role model taxpayer, which could be seen as a form of bias (Sheerin & Garavan, 2022). The word "urging" suggests that the incoming Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) chief believes there is room for improvement in Marcos' tax-paying behavior.

(g) ***Back in power:** Marcos Jr. sworn in as 17th Philippine president*

The phrase "Back in power" implies that Marcos, who had lost power, has regained it. Its use entails a reference to Marcos Jr.'s father. This evokes memories of the Marcos Sr. regime, which many Filipinos claimed to have human rights abuses, corruption, and economic instability (Huang, 2023). This could lead to a negative connotation or bias towards Marcos Jr. as people may associate him with his father's regime.

(h) ***Here comes the son:** Bongbong delivers **ultimate Marcos** redemption*

The phrases "Here comes the son" and "ultimate Marcos redemption" imply a need for redemption for the Marcos family, possibly referencing the controversial regime of the late Marcos Sr. This language choice could be perceived as biased, as it assumes a widespread negative perception of the Marcos family (Recasens et al., 2013; Sheerin & Garavan, 2022).

(i) *Activists on Marcos' 1st SONA: **'Prove that you're not like your father'***

The headline implies skepticism or doubt among the activists regarding whether or not Marcos is different from his father, who was a controversial figure in Philippine politics

and history (Pertierra, 2021; Teehankee, 2023). The use of the phrase "Prove that you're not like your father" suggests that there is a negative expectation about Marcos based on his family background, implying that there is a possibility that Marcos Jr. may carry on his father's legacy (Teehankee, 2023).

(j) *Marcos' SONA laid out big plans **but** lacked strategic focus: **analysts***

This headline has potential entailment as it implies that despite big plans, the lack of strategic focus is a significant flaw or weakness. It suggests that the analysts who made this statement believe that the State of the Nation Address (SONA) needed to be more effective (Spinde et al., 2021) in communicating a clear and focused agenda, even if it presented several proposals or initiatives.

3.2.3 Assertive Verbs

Assertive verbs express strong and determined statements, denoting certainty. This can alter the reader's impression of the information offered since they are more inclined to trust anything said assertively, even if it is not factual or accurate (Recasens et al., 2013). Assertive verbs are discussed in the news headlines presented in (k), (l), (m), and (n).

(k) *Marcos **wants** 'bilateral cooperation with China' while '**asserting**' claim in West PH Sea*

The assertive verb "asserting" could potentially create a language bias in this headline, implying that Marcos is actively claiming the West Philippine Sea. The word "asserting" suggests a certain level of aggression or forcefulness, which some readers could see as a negative connotation (Lorino, Mourey, & Schmidt, 2017).

(l) *Critics to Marcos: **Prove** us wrong on issues*

Using the word "prove" as an assertive verb implies that the critics' claims are considered firm and true, creating bias by assuming their claims are valid (Mutua & Ong'ong'a, 2020) unless Marcos himself disproves them.

(m) *As he ascends to power, Marcos **vows** to deliver on promises to Filipinos*

Using the verb "vows" in this headline introduces a subtle form of language bias. It implies a strong commitment or promise that readers could view positively or negatively (Spinde et al., 2021). It suggests that Marcos is making a solemn and unbreakable commitment, which might be considered reassuring or untrustworthy, depending on individual perspectives.

(n) *Business groups keen to see Marcos **deliver** on infras, agri, MSMEs, other SONA vows*

The use of the verb "deliver" can be perceived as assertive, implying an expectation that Marcos will fulfill his promises. This may introduce a subtle form of language bias (Recasens et al., 2013) by assuming that Marcos will successfully deliver without considering potential challenges. However, the headline mainly reports the expectations of business groups, maintaining a degree of objectivity from the writer's standpoint.

3.2.4 Hedges

Hedges may also be viewed as language bias because they convey doubt or ambiguity, which can lessen the force of a claim or imply a lack of assurance ((Magnifico & Defrancq, 2020). In the context of news headlines, hedges can induce language bias by downplaying or softening the gravity of a news event or remark (Recasens et al., 2013). The hedges in the news headlines are presented in (o) and (p).

(o) *Marcos **must** find new source of funds for economic stimulus: lawmaker*

The word "must" is a hedging word because it suggests a certain amount of need or obligation while simultaneously leaving the potential of failing to fulfill the obligation (Magnifico & Defrancq, 2017). In other words, it implies that locating a new funding source is a possibility and a must for economic stimulation.

(p) *Teachers' group asks Marcos for '**significant**' pay hike*

The headline's word "significant" can be interpreted as a hedging strategy, suggesting that the requested salary should be reasonable enough for acceptance but expressed with some subtlety. This use of language serves as a hedging technique, implying the idea without being overtly explicit.

3.2.5 Subjective Intensifiers

Recasens et al. (2013) define subjective intensifiers as adjectives or adverbs that lend subjective power to a statement or proposition to emphasize its meaning further.

News headlines with subjective intensifiers can introduce language bias, influencing readers' perspectives and potentially distorting their understanding of facts. This underscores the importance for journalists to be mindful of this influence and strive for neutral language to present information objectively (Baumer et al., 2015). The following headlines in (q), (r), and (s) reflect this feature.

(q) *Marcos is presidential bet with **biggest** Facebook footprint since 2016*

The word "biggest" is subjective, implying that Marcos' Facebook footprint surpasses that of other presidential candidates, potentially influencing voters to perceive him as a leader with widespread trust. This subjective assessment suggests that a large *Facebook* following is crucial to being the most influential presidential candidate on social media.

(r) *Here comes the son: Bongbong delivers **ultimate Marcos redemption**.*

The phrase "ultimate Marcos redemption" uses "ultimate," a subjective intensifier. This intensifier suggests that the redemption of Marcos is the most important or complete redemption possible, implying a strongly positive view of the event. This language can be seen as biased because it presents a one-sided and overly positive perspective on the event, ignoring any possible negative implications or criticisms.

(s) *Marcos' SONA **laid out** big plans but lacked strategic focus: analysts*

The word "big" in the phrase "big plans" serves as a subjective intensifier that can create either a positive or negative connotation (Schreiber et al., 2023) based on the reader's perspective. It implies that the plans mentioned in the SONA are substantial or grand in scale without providing specific details about their nature or scope.

3.2.6 One-Sided Terms

In the study of Recasens et al. (2013), one-sided terms are defined as words that represent only one side of a debated topic. They frequently pertain to contentious subjects (e.g., religion, terrorism, etc.) in which the same event can be viewed from two or more viewpoints. The succeeding discussion presents an analysis of headlines that employ one-sided terms that generate epistemological language bias, as shown in (t), (u), and (v).

(t) *Marcos wants 'bilateral cooperation with China' while 'asserting' claim in West PH Sea*

The Philippines and China are in a prolonged sea dispute. The Philippines call it the West Philippine Sea, while China names it the South China Sea. Hence, the term "West PH Sea" is one-sided as it suggests a biased perspective (Baumer et al., 2015) that the country has ownership over such an area when it is still a matter of ongoing dispute.

(u) **Back in power:** *Marcos Jr. sworn in as 17th Philippine president*

The phrase "Back in power" is a one-sided term that implies Marcos Jr. has returned to a position of authority, which has something to do with his father's reign, that could be viewed positively or negatively depending on the person's perspective (Schreiber et al., 2023).

(v) **Here comes the son:** *Bongbong delivers ultimate Marcos redemption*

The headline's use of "Here comes the son" might be seen as a one-sided term, focusing on Bongbong Marcos' familial connections rather than his qualifications or platform as a candidate. This could be considered language bias (Recasens et al., 2013), assuming that Bongbong Marcos is a viable candidate solely based on his family background. Similarly, the term "ultimate Marcos redemption" may also be perceived as one-sided, suggesting that Marcos' ascent to power represents a form of redemption, implying the existence of something to be redeemed from in the first place. This assumption reflects a particular narrative about the Marcos family's history and role in Philippine politics. These one-sided terms eventually influence readers' decisions by the way the information is presented (Baumer et al., 2015).

While the headlines discussed may exhibit elements of language bias, this does not necessarily imply automatic negative framing (Sheerin & Garavan, 2022) of BBM. Drawing from Goffman's theory, indicators of language bias can still portray the subject positively, contingent upon the construction of the news headline, the textual content and the context therein (Mutua & Ong'ong'a, 2020; Recasens et al., 2013).

3.3 Framing in the News Headlines

Table 3 showcases the framing of BBM in ABS-CBN News headlines. The analysis used the Epistemological and Framing Bias Tool to examine linguistic devices and language

bias evident in the headlines. According to the theory, language bias can still be present in the headlines, even in neutral framing. However, it is essential to consider other factors, such as the context in which the headlines are presented, as language bias may not be inherently biased (Hill, 2014). This is why headlines with no observed framing are separated into different columns to expose disparity.

Table 3

Framing Analysis of BBM in the ABS-CBN News Headlines

Headlines with Observed Framing			Headlines with No Observed Framing
Positive	Neutral	Negative	
H1, H20	H6, H7, H9, H12, H14, H30	H2, H10, H15, H18, H19, H24, H25, H27	H3, H4, H5, H8, H16, H11, H13, H17, H21, H22, H23, H26, H28, H29

See appendix for the headlines

Table 3 illustrates the framing of BBM based on linguistic devices and language bias in news headlines. Positive framing is evident in H1 and H20. H1 emphasizes Marcos's significant *Facebook* presence since 2016, portraying him as a leading presidential candidate. H20 highlights his commitment to fulfilling promises to Filipinos as he assumes power. Moreover, neutral framing is observed in H6, H7, H9, H12, H14, and H30, presenting factual information without bias. Then, negative framing is seen in H2, H10, H15, H18, H19, H24, H25, and H27, where evaluative language and implications cast BBM in a negative light. Some headlines lack framing, providing impartial information about BBM's activities and statements. These headlines present an unbiased account of events without favoring or opposing viewpoints.

These findings align with Shen's (2023) study on Chinese news headlines, indicating the presence of different frames. Nevertheless, news headlines still adhere to essential standards for information dissemination, such as impartiality, fairness, truthfulness, and credibility, without favoring any particular side. The same is also true of the study of Lindgren et al., (2022), wherein results from a survey experiment confirm the presence of negativity bias in truth perceptions, but negativity is found to be a crucial mechanism for explaining perceived truth in facts. This resonates with Goffman's idea that frames should not be actively biased in favor of any particular side. Therefore, the diversity of frames in news headlines contributes to a more balanced representation of various perspectives and issues, as emphasized by (Liu et al., 2019), aligning with Goffman's framing theory (Lorino et al., 2017). In other words, ABS-CBN does not employ media framing bias in its news headlines but only provides a balanced perspective on various issues, particularly those involving BBM.

This outcome enlightens an understanding that the mixture of positive and negative frames in news coverage holds profound implications for society and media discourse. This recognition promotes nuanced and balanced reporting, fostering informed public discourse and critical thinking among audiences. Moreover, mixed framing allows for a more comprehensive understanding of issues by presenting diverse viewpoints and interpretations. Media outlets must adopt ethical reporting practices to provide accurate, balanced, and contextually rich information, thus contributing to a more informed and engaged citizenry and strengthening democratic societies.

6. CONCLUSION

The research findings indicate a blend of positive, negative, and neutral framing within ABS-CBN's news headlines of BBM, which aligns with the norms and standards of balanced reporting, ensuring that readers gain a comprehensive understanding of the story from various perspectives. ABS-CBN prioritizes presenting news based on factual information and concrete evidence rather than succumbing to subjective claims or a one-sided approach. This outcome is significant as it offers a real-world case study to analyze language and framing techniques in online news media. It demonstrates the influence of language on news perception and public opinion, contributing to research on the media's role in shaping public attitudes toward political figures. Nonetheless, it is essential to note that this research exclusively examined ABS-CBN's news headlines about BBM. To provide a more comprehensive understanding of news framing in ABS-CBN's reporting, it is recommended that future studies encompass a wider array of topics and individuals. This broader scope would allow for a more thorough and nuanced analysis of how ABS-CBN frames news across different subjects and contexts.

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Jeanard Anthony M. Robiego collected the data and helped in the data analysis. Danna Karyl Jane C. Talde performed the analysis, wrote, proofread, and revised the manuscript multiple times for publication.

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APPENDIX**The ABS-CBN News Headlines**

- H1: *Marcos is presidential bet with biggest Facebook footprint since 2016*
- H2: *After calling him 'spoiled, weak,' Duterte claims Marcos has no ill-gotten wealth*
- H3: *Singaporean leader invites Marcos for a state visit*
- H4: *Japan's Kishida, Philippines' next leader Marcos vow to beef up ties*
- H5: *US, Japan, South Korea, India envoys pay courtesy visit to Marcos*
- H6: *Marcos must find new source of funds for economic stimulus: lawmaker*
- H7: *Marcos raises 'need to redefine' Visiting Forces Agreement in meeting with US ofc'l*
- H8: *Marcos reviewing South Korea recommendations on nuclear plant revival*
- H9: *Marcos wants 'bilateral cooperation with China' while 'asserting' claim in West PH Sea*
- H10: *Critics to Marcos: Prove us wrong on issues*
- H11: *Marcos seeks Congress help to 'plug leakages' in Customs, BIR: Zubiri*
- H12: *Marcos Jr. urges Supreme Court to junk COC cancellation petition*
- H13: *Marcos spent P623 million for Halalan 2022, reports no personal funds used*
- H14: *Teachers' group asks Marcos for 'significant' pay hike*
- H15: *Incoming BIR chief to urge Marcos to be a 'role model' taxpayer*
- H16: *Second Gentleman Douglas Emhoff to head US delegation for Marcos inauguration*
- H17: *LTFRB: Many transport issues to be decided by next admin [Marcos Admin]*
- H18: *Back in power: Marcos Jr. Sworn in as 17th Philippine president*
- H19: *Here comes the son: Bongbong delivers ultimate Marcos redemption*
- H20: *As he ascends to power, Marcos vows to deliver on promises to Filipinos*
- H21: *Marcos 'disagrees' with 6.1 percent inflation, says inflation largely 'imported*
- H22: *More than 20,000 troops to be deployed during Marcos SONA*
- H23: *Group wants Marcos admin to reject Duterte war on drugs*
- H24: *SONA 2022: Kabataan solon wants Marcos to 'go beyond' unity message*
- H25: *Activists on Marcos' 1st SONA: 'Prove that you're not like your father'*
- H26: *Marcos urged to use LEDAC to make legislation more efficient*
- H27: *Marcos' SONA laid out big plans but lacked strategic focus: analysts*
- H28: *Palace defends non-mention of drug war, corruption in Marcos' first SONA*
- H29: *Marcos meets with top legal officials on ICC probe,*
- H30: *Business groups keen to see Marcos deliver on infras, agri, MSMEs, other SONA vows*