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## Critical Discourse Analysis of Riding-in-Tandem Crimes as Online News in Region XII

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### Abstract

This qualitative study employing critical discourse analysis aimed to examine the linguistic feature, news framing, news values, identity ascribed to crime perpetrators and victims, and ideologies embedded in the presentation of the 50 riding-in-tandem cases in online news in Region XII. These crimes were published on Facebook in the year 2018 to 2022 by different news media in the Philippines. The study utilized the concepts of news values to reveal the linguistic features. The results revealed that the news values of Negativity, Eliteness, Superlativeness, Timeliness, and Personalization were present in the construction of these news. On the other hand, the news framing employed by media practitioners in the construction of the online news include Responsibility Frame, Conflict Frame, and Human-Interest frame. Moreover, in the description of perpetrators, the results showed that perpetrators' identities were portrayed as suspects, criminals, gunmen, and vigilantes while the description of victims include victims as ordinary people and undeserving victims or victims implicated in illegal drugs. Along with these were the embedded political ideologies of hegemony, authoritarian populism, penal populism, and human rights.

**Keywords:** *Riding-in-tandem online news, news values, critical discourse analysis*

### Introduction

In recent years, online news about riding-in-tandem crimes brought about by unidentified perpetrators has become the interest and a regular topic of news writers. The regularity of these crimes has resulted in dwindling media attention on the killings over time by traditional and online media platforms. However, there is a disturbing trend for victims to be portrayed negatively, while perpetrators receive less scrutiny. For instance, victims of drug-related crimes are often stigmatized and subjected to harmful stereotypes (Singer & Ziegler, 2017). They are portrayed as morally flawed individuals who willingly engage in illicit activities, perpetuating the notion that they deserve their suffering.

In Nigeria, several criminality cases involving motorcycle criminals such as armed robbery, kidnapping and murder have witnessed a pervasive rise as reported in traditional news platform (Asekhome & Oisamoje, 2013). Similarly, in Los Angeles California criminals, Marshall (2017) publicized, use motorcycle in their activities such as illegal drugs, weapon trafficking and the rise of many industrial and automotive commercial spaces of “chop shops” unnoticed by law enforcement.

In the Philippines, the National Police headquarter recorded a total of 2,487 cases across the country involving riding-in-tandem criminals. These criminal cases identified four major crimes such as shooting, drug-related murder, robbery and others (Pila, 2019). Over half of the 19,086 crimes involving motorcycle-riding suspects recorded in Manila since 2016 are still unresolved according to Philippine National Police.

Locally, the province of South Cotabato (Region XII) is not an exemption to this type of criminality – the riding-in-tandem perpetrators. The Police Regional Office (PRO)-12 recorded a total of 86 cases of murders in the region that were perpetrated by motorcycle – riding suspects, MindaNews (2018) disclosed, as the fourth highest among country’s 17 regions. This crime involved drug-related murder, shooting, and robbery.

Crucial in the presentation of these crimes in the media is the framing of victims implicated in illegal drugs. News framing, which refers to the process whereby news media highlight, emphasize, and give more prominence a specific aspect of a news story, is commonly used by media practitioners to portray this type of news (Foreman & Arteaga, 2018). The framing of victims implicated in illegal drugs, according to these authors, can have significant implications for public perception and attitudes towards these individuals. Understanding how media shape public understanding, influence public opinion, and foster informed discussions about riding-in-tandem crime enables online readers to develop media literacy skills and become more discerning consumer of news.

In the case of this present study, I have not encountered in my readings scholarly research pertaining to framing online news on riding-in-tandem cases which is the focus of this research. Hence, it is highly relevant to investigate how news constructed in online platforms interacts with consumers of news and what dominant framing patterns media practitioners present online. Further, there has been an increase in online news stories about riding-in-tandem crimes and due to the gravity of the issue, it is conceivable that the Philippine media employs frames when reporting on crimes being connected to the anti-drug campaign. To fill this gap, the current study examines the presentation of online news on riding-in-tandem cases in Region XII. As online news holds an important role in revealing the principles of certain societies, this study focuses on administering Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which is expected to identify the

linguistic features adopted by online newspaper articles in presenting the crime.

### Research Questions

This study's primary purpose is to understand how riding-in-tandem cases in Region XII are represented in online news. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the linguistic features present in the online news articles on riding-in-tandem cases in Region XII?
2. What are the foreboding news frames found in these online news?
3. How do media ascribe the types of identities for victims and riding-in-tandem perpetrators?
4. What ideologies are reflected in the online news by the media practitioners?

### Literature Review

#### News Values

The concept of "newsworthiness," which pertains to the evaluation made by journalists regarding the suitability of a particular topic for news coverage, has been the subject of extensive discussion and analysis in academic literature. The notion in question has gained significant ground in the academic discourse of journalism studies, dating back to the initial methodical classification of news values or "factors" by Galtung and Ruge (1965).

In recent years, discourse scholars, such as Monika Bednarek and Helen Caple, have paid increasing attention to news values. It focuses on the systematic investigation of the function of language in establishing newsworthiness; that is, "how specific events or situations are produced as newsworthy, such as by emphasizing specific news values" (Bednarek & Caple, 2014). Understanding the construction of news values in shared online news is important because social media services are becoming increasingly significant for the production, dissemination, and consumption of online news (Olmstead et al., 2011; Martin & Dwyer, 2015; & Weeks & Holbert, 2013). For this study, I focused on Bednarek and Caple's (2014; 2017) nine news values, which can help in understanding how news values are discursively constructed in order to transform a basic event into news namely: Consonance, Eliteness, Impact, Negativity, Personalization, Proximity, Superlativeness, Timeliness, and Unexpectedness.

It is important to note that news selection does not only depend on the criteria mentioned above, but is also subject to the influence of journalistic routines such as issues of access and meeting deadlines (Schultz 2007; Phillips 2015); competition for

exclusives (Allern, 2002; Schultz, 2007; Phillips, 2015); the influence of proprietors and advertisers (Caple & Bednarek, 2015); external influences including the role of public relations professionals and “spin doctors” (Brighton & Foy, 2007); the belief systems of journalists as a result of their social environment (Donsbach, 2004; Phillips 2015); and the influence of peers within the workplace.

### **News Framing**

The act of reporting events encompasses more than the mere recitation of factual information. The narratives that have been collected necessitate interpretation as they have not been observed firsthand by the reporters, but rather have been obtained from individuals who were directly implicated in the occurrence (Carter, 2013). A frame is an organizing principle that helps make sense of the relevant ideas and suggests what the issue is about. It also creates and establishes connections between concepts (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009). The inclusion or exclusion of particular words, phrases, sentences, images, or information sources also identifies a frame. It could also be the journalist's choice of terms to describe the individuals or the issue. As a result of their ability to define the issue and create a representation, Pan and Kosicky (2015) argued that the word selection and organization of a news narrative are crucial.

Earlier studies of media frames have identified five common news frames that capture the interest and attention of readers. These frames are conflict, human interest, economic consequences, morality, and responsibility. These various frames highlight particular aspects or elements of a news story. The highlighted element (phrase, statement, or image) can strongly suggest a particular meaning or interpretation (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009). It is believed that framing has effects on both individuals and society for this reason. According to De Vreese (2005), exposure to particular frameworks can alter the attitudes of individuals toward an issue. This is illustrated by a study conducted by Foreman and colleagues (2016), which demonstrated that when audiences are exposed to a scrutinizing frame, they have a more negative perception of the criminal suspect. (Foreman et al., 2016) found that audiences who were exposed to this frame tend to have more negative attitudes toward the suspect.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis**

Critical discourse analysis or CDA (language use in speech and writing) is seen as a form of social practice and describing discourse as social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s), which frame it (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). For



this particular study, the type of discourse analyzed is the discourse of online news in riding-in-tandem cases. By critically studying discourse, it emphasizes the way in which language is implicated in issues such as power and ideology that determine how language is used, what effect it has, and how it reflects, serves, and furthers the interests, positions, perspectives, and values of those who are in power. From this point of view, discourse perpetuates social patterns like domination, discrimination, exploitation, dehumanization, naturalization, and (ideologically driven) ‘common sense’—unless it’s usually hidden effects are exposed so that awareness, resistance, emancipation and social action can bring about social change and social justice.

According to Van Dijk (2009) ideologies are a system of beliefs that define the social identity of a group, controlling and organizing its actions, aims, norms and values. Journalists, for instance, as stated from Deuze (2005) form a social and professional group, they recognize themselves as members of this group, and they share an occupational ideology that serves as the foundation for journalistic values like immediacy, objectivity, independence, and legitimacy. For instance, in the study of Briones (2017), two online articles reporting on MILF’s submission of its findings on the “Mamasapano Incident” were examined including the internal discourse features and the external social practices and structures in which the texts were produced. The results show that although the texts maintain institutional identities as news reports, they also reveal some evaluative stance as exemplified by the adjectival phrases that the writers employed. The researcher concluded that how the texts were written seems to portray power relations that exist between the Philippine government and MILF.

The analysis of how people speak or write about crime is interesting because, by describing the verbal construction of perpetrators, the discourse of wrongdoing can be deciphered, and insight can be gained into the conception of the world held by speaker or writer.

## Methodology

This study employed a descriptive-qualitative research design through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as its method in order to identify linguistic features and news framing that media practitioners employs in the construction of online news on riding-in-tandem cases; and examine the types of identities ascribed to victims and perpetrators of the crime including the existence of ideologies embedded in these news.

According to Rubing and Sandaran (2023), CDA views discourse as a social activity, analyses and interprets the linguistic features of discourse and its cultural, social and historical contexts from a critical perspective, investigates the ideology underlying

discourse via the representational features of linguistic structures, thereby revealing the multiple relationships between language, society, power, and ideology.

Furthermore, this approach was best fitted for the present study's research questions for Fairclough (1989) purported that CDA studies inequality between the use of language and power and clarifies the intrinsic relationship between language and society. He further argues that language permeates power and serves the struggle for power, and that language plays a subtle role in the process of socialization.

## Research Material

The corpora utilized in this study were the online news on riding-in-tandem cases in Region XII. Criteria in selecting the online news included date of delivery, and credibility of the news media, and the topic of these news articles. It went to denote that online news subjected to random sampling were only those which had been posted in Facebook during the year 2018-2022; and those which were from the five different news media in Region XII: TV Patrol South Central Mindanao, Brigada News Gensan, Bombo Radyo Koronadal, Bombo Radyo Gensan, and 95.7 Brigada News FM Koronadal.

## Data Collection

The process of collecting the data for the study was readily available because the data were all posted on Facebook which is a public domain. However, translation of these posts was needed as the languages used in the online news media are Cebuano and Ilonggo. After the selection, a code was assigned to each online news. The code for the news was based on the abbreviation of the news media and the number of the news article. For the online news publication sources, TPS stands for TV Patrol South Central Mindanao, BNG for Brigada News Gensan, BRK for Bombo Radyo Koronadal, BRG for Bombo Radyo Gensan, and BNF for 95.7 Brigada News FM Koronadal. For example, TPS-01 as a code means TV Patrol South Central Mindanao, news no. 1.

## Data Analysis

In this present study, the selected 50 online news were sorted out in tables on a word document and then labeled. After the coding, each of the corpora was subjected to close reading and CDA by analyzing the linguistic features through the news values of Bednarek and Caple (2017) to answer the first research question, and news framing of Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) for the second research question. The interpretation of these would answer the third research question of identifying the types of identities ascribed to victims and perpetrators, and the fourth research question of interpreting the

embedded ideologies in the construction of these news. Analysis on linguistic features considered the nine news values. The online news were then analyzed by the presence and absence of certain words to identify which news were endowed with newsworthiness by the news media and which aspects of the event were emphasized. The outcomes of the analysis on newsworthiness and news framing were the basis in the identification of the types of identities ascribed to victims and perpetrators, and ideologies manifested in these news.

### **Ethical Considerations**

According to Denzin & Lincoln (2005), ethics is essential when it comes to guidelines and standards for approval from academic bodies. To ensure that this research will follow the necessary rules in conducting a research, ethical standards are established so that any research inquiry is guided to ensure that social value, researcher qualification, facility adequacy, and community involvement are heavily considered. To conform to Republic Act No. 10173 also known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012, a coding system was used in referring to the online news media used as the data source to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

### **Results**

This section presents the findings on the analysis of online news on riding-in-tandem cases in Region XII. The presentation of results follows the order of the research questions which starts with the linguistic features employed in the presentation of these crimes during the year 2018-2022, the foreboding news frames emphasized, the identities ascribed by the media practitioners to the victims and perpetrators, and the ideologies reflected in the online news.

### **Linguistic Features Employed in the Portrayal of Online News on Riding-in-Tandem Cases**

The analysis of 50 online news articles about riding-in-tandem incidents in Region XII revealed that the newsworthiness of these articles was strengthened by the discursive construction of the following news values: Negativity, Eliteness, Superlativeness, Timeliness, and Personalization.

**Negativity.** Negativity was by far the most frequently constructed news value in the corpora of online riding-in-tandem news examined for this study. There were instances of verbs with negative connotations (BNG-03: shot; TPS-01: killed) causal



verbs followed by nouns with negative connotations (BRG-01: sustained multiple gunshot wounds), adjectives with negative implications (TPS-06: bloody, dirty), and nouns with negative connotations (BRK-08: suspects, crime, BRK-05: murder, homicide). This news value was also evident in the description of negative emotional behavior of the people through lexis (BNG-03: condemned, TPS-06: criticized), referring to their expected behavior (TPS-01: angry, outraged, BRG-04: cry for justice), and negative terms associated with crime / criminal activities (TPS-08: illegal drugs, BRK-01: illegal possession of firearms) and weapons (TPS-01: gunshot, gunmen). The repetition of the same negative lexis, negative evaluative language, and negative statements is a strong indicator of foregrounding and builds up the construction of Negativity as news values in the online news.

**Eliteness.** Eliteness is one of the most frequently constructed news values in the corpus next to Negativity. Eliteness in the online news is signaled by references to powerful and prominent figures in Region XII such as then-Mayor Ronel Rivera (BNG-03), City Councilor Gacal (BRK-05), and House Deputy Minority Leader and Bayan Muna Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate (TPS-01). This news value is also exemplified in using the police (TPS-07) or government officials (TPS-01) as the official sources on riding-in-tandem cases which indicates that journalists most frequently cite police and court sources (government institutions) in all categories of crime, drug, and policy news because they deem them to be official and trustworthy sources.

**Superlativeness.** Some news articles utilized quantifiers, intensified lexis, and lexical intensifiers to produce the news value of Superlativeness. The use of comparative adjective (more than 80 shooting incidents) was evident in BRG-02 in addition to the superlative adjective (most number of gun-related killings) in BRK-05. The numbers used in excerpts of BRG-02 (reaching 56) and BNG-06 (32nd shooting) help establish the amplitude of the scale of riding-intandem cases and indicates the growth rate of these cases in Region XII. Further, Superlativeness coupled with Negativity is also evident in this analysis. TPS-01 (growing number of unresolved cases) and BRK-05 (rising murder cases) excerpts illustrate the construction of the magnitude of Negativity in the online news.

**Timeliness.** Some articles exhibited Timeliness through references to weekdays. In excerpt BNG-09, the event was constructed as recent in relation to the time of publication (Wednesday), with the explicit time reference, (9 am). There were also many cases where words such as this morning, this afternoon, this evening, and recent were used to frame the event as recent. It can be observed that the news was constructed based on recency and that most of the online news was written on the day of the event.

**Personalization.** This news value is about “giving a ‘human’ face to the news through references to ‘ordinary’ people, their emotions, views, and experiences – rather than focusing on abstract issues and processes. Personalization as a news value in the corpora is discursively constructed by using pointers that provide human factors in the online news (BNG-06: a father who had dreams for his children BRG-08: helpful to his parents, kind and does housework... no vices).

## **News Frames Employed by Media Practitioners in the Online News**

**Responsibility Frame.** In analyzing the occurrence of the responsibility frame in these news articles, the emphasis was placed on the presentation of government, community, and/or social institution responsibilities regarding the implementation and consequences of these offenses involving riding-in-tandem crimes. The majority of the online news identified riding-in-tandem criminals / motorcycle-riding suspects, who are yet to be identified, as responsible in these offenses (BRK-06: shot dead by a riding-in-tandem; BRG-04: shot by a motorcycle-riding suspect). There are also a few occurrences of the administration and the government as having a certain responsibility for the riding-in-tandem crimes (TPS-01: oppressed under the Duterte administration’s bloody reign; TPS-06: red-tagged by government agents). Furthermore, the police and authorities were also mentioned numerous times for being responsible on the unresolved crimes perpetrated by riding-in-tandem criminals (BRK-05: the city police has not been doing enough; BNF-10: the police allegedly failed to act). This suggest that the police force has the ability to alleviate the recent spate of killings, most of which remain unresolved due to its failure to investigate the crime. Accordingly, the news frequently cites various government officials urging the president and the police chief to take action against the allegedly widespread crimes. The verbs urged (TPS-02) and appealed (BNF-10) have been used in these excerpts suggesting that the problem requires urgent intervention and mobilization of peace mechanism.

**Conflict Frame.** This news value concentrates on disagreements between government officials or between the government and churches/interest groups. For this frame, the media practitioners illustrate the disagreement and contention between government officials and interest groups over the offenses. The media portrayed the government and citizens’ discordance in relation to anti-drugs campaign and attacks “against activists and lawyers who resist tyranny and defend human rights (TPS-01).” In excerpt TPS-01, the president was accused of defending “his allies and cronies” in the said climate of impunity. The term climate of impunity further insinuated this accusation towards police authorities. Numerous instances also occur in which victims are described negatively. Many of the descriptors characterize the victim as a former

offender, which shows conflict with the authority, majority of these is involvement in the illegal drug trade (TPS-04: implicated in the illegal drug trade; TPS-08: previously imprisoned in 2018 for being involved in illegal drugs; BNG-02: drug surrenders).

**Human-Interest Frame.** This incorporates a person's narrative or an emotional angle into the presentation of an event, issue, or problem. Journalists commonly use quotes to achieve the human-interest angle, and the analyzed articles also featured emotionally charged language such as "we are outraged" (TPS-01) and "we are angry" (TPS-01) to elicit an emotional response. In some articles, the families of the victims recount their personal narrative (TPS-03: According to the mother of the victim, her son is innocent; BRG-08: the victim is said to be of no vices). Based on these excerpts, the human-interest frame influences emotional responses significantly, as it appears that individuals who read a story framed in terms of human interest experience more empathy, sadness, and sorrow in relation to the situation.

### **Types of Identities of Victims Ascribed by Media Practitioners**

Based on the analysis of the corpora, two distinct identities were identified namely: victims as "everyman" and victims implicated in illegal drugs.

**Victims as "everyman".** 26 out 50 news articles portrayed victims as everyman which means a person who is very typical and ordinary, innocent, commonplace, and vulnerable with similar experiences or qualities to most people. The following excerpts promote compassion for victims as "people just like us": had dinner at Harry's Kitchenette along with some friends (TPS-04); waiting for a tricycle (BNF-06). Another theme that emerges in the description of the victims is putting them in the family context: a helpful son, kind (BRG-08; according to the mother of the victim, her son is innocent (TPS-03); driving home to have lunch with her children (BRK-04). By choosing a name other than the victim's given name or familial name, various aspects are emphasized, such as their membership in a social system (wife, son, husband) or their victim status.

**Victims Implicated in Illegal Drugs.** Victims in this category include persons in the drug watchlist, drug surrenderers, and narco politicians. It is not typical to portray the victim negatively, but it happens frequently in the analysis of these online news. Most of the descriptions reveal that the victims were previously linked to drug-related crimes: implicated in the illegal drug trade (TPS-04); victims were drug surrenderers (BNG-02); his nephew was a drug surrenderer (BRK-03). Despite the great number of people involved in this crime by riding-in-tandem, description of victims focusing on its involvement in illegal drugs were prioritized in the articles. This alone demonstrates that journalists are not merely reporting the events objectively but are meticulously

selecting and framing those aspects that are most likely to capture the attention of readers. Furthermore, in the analysis of online news, the news reporter's sources were the police: Police Lt. Reynaldo Sotelo, chief investigator of the Koronadal City PNP added that the victims were drug surrenderers (BNG-02); PCpt. Abdulsalam Mamalinta, the precinct chief, said Tago was reportedly on level 1 of the drugs watch-list (TPS-07). The description of the victims as drug surrenderers by the police in the above statements not only provides credibility to the alleged involvement of the victims in the illegal drugs, but also label these individuals as undeserving victims.

### **Types of Identities Perpetrators Ascribed by Media Practitioners**

**Perpetrator/s as Suspects.** The media practitioners used the word suspect which implicitly suggests that authorities are still not sure of who is the perpetrator of the crime. It is the most used term to describe the perpetrator. This is exemplified in the sample excerpts: no one saw the suspect in the crime (TPS-09); shot dead on the spot by riding-in-tandem suspects (BRG-03); unidentified suspects shot Police Master Sergeant Emmanuel Coronado (BRG-06).

**Perpetrator/s as Criminals.** The noun “criminal” carries negative connotations because it refers to illegal, frequently destructive actions that injure others or their property, in this case, the killing of individuals. It signifies something negative, immoral, to be avoided at all costs, lawbreaking, and devaluation as seen in these excerpts: ambushed by riding-in-tandem criminals. (BNG-07); shot in the head by riding in tandem criminals at around 10am (TPS-07).

**Perpetrator/s as Gunmen.** Gunman/gunmen were also used to describe the perpetrators. The use of these terms connotes to the weapon used in committing the crime. Here, negativity is constructed by the compound noun gunman, a negative category label that describes the perpetrator of the crime. The main news values constructed through the use of gunman is Negativity represented by lexis related to the attack: shot by a gunman (TPS-03); was killed by an unknown gunman (BNG-05); after being shot by the gunman along with another victim (BRG-02).

**Perpetrator/s as Vigilantes.** Also, perpetrators of riding-in-tandem cases are framed as individuals who embody impunity, although this is rarely seen in the online news. It has been mentioned in the that these unidentified criminals are part of the police force and even termed as vigilantes. By killing people allegedly part of the government's watchlist or individuals involved in the illegal drugs, these unidentified criminals are seen as people who work for the government in the so-called war of drugs. This is seen

in these excerpts: purportedly perpetrated by police and unidentified vigilantes (BNF-10); these vigilantes and the legal profession have not been spared (TPS-01). In many instances, perpetrators are only described pertaining to the motorcycle they used and the clothes they wear since there's no other way to confirm their identity. To hide their identities, a helmet or a cap with a facemask are worn by the perpetrators.

### **Ideologies Reflected in the Online News by Media Practitioners**

**Hegemony.** Hegemony is when a governing elite controls the information flow in a society. In the case of this study, the state actors as source, all contribute to the hegemonic project. In the analysis of Eliteness as a news value, riding-in-tandem cases is communicated through the viewpoint of the police force, who serve as the primary purveyors of such information. This is also supplemented by speeches and statements from high-ranking officials. As previously mentioned, journalists relied heavily on police and local government officials as sources, as evidenced by the following excerpts: According to PMajor Brent Ian Salazar, chief of the San Isidro Police Station (BNG-07); Police Lt. Reynaldo Sotelo, chief investigator of the Koronadal City PNP added (BNG-02). As a result, much of the coverage of these killings is interpreted only through the lens of the state actors. In the reports about vigilante-style killings (or homicides committed by unknown assailants on motorcycles), following the description of the killings is a discussion of the victim's ties to drugs and other past criminal activity (Sotelo added that the victims were drug surrenderers (BNG-02); the victim was a former drug surrenderer in Koronadal City (BRG-05). **Authoritarian Populism.** This involves the imposition of a new regime of social discipline and leadership from above in a society increasingly experienced as rudderless and out of control. According to an analysis of online news sources, the "war on drugs" exacerbates health and criminal problems associated with drug use, rather than addressing drug abuse and addiction. The excerpts show how journalists through the state actors (police and local officials) as the main source, portray the identities of the victims in the riding-in-tandem crimes: Okoren (Pcapt) added that the victim was previously imprisoned in 2018 for being involved in illegal drugs. (TPS-08).

**Penal Populism.** Penal populism refers to an understanding of justice in which criminal and antisocial or deviant activity should be harshly punished. In this study, drug addicts and criminals fall outside the community of people. Most of the descriptions reveal that the victims were previously linked to drug related crimes, which is one of the motives police are considering in the investigation of the crime as seen in this sample excerpt: Tago was reportedly on level 1 of the drugs watch-list and was one of the motives being followed by the police in the investigation (TPS-07).



**Human Rights.** This ideology was characterized in the online news by pointing out that extrajudicial killings must be addressed by the people. Human rights ideology is seen through people calling out the state actors to do something about the unresolved crimes. It also emphasized the role of the police force to solve the crime and identify the suspects thus ensuring accountability and justice. The denouncement of terrorism and violent extremism was also accentuated in the online news by appealing to Presidential Adviser and Philippine National Police Chief (BNF-10) to mobilize peace and protection mechanisms. Further, the ideology is also accentuated by calling the attention of international community to denounce the attack on individuals emphasizing the justice system and the rule of law: While we abhor terrorism and equally denounce violent extremism, there is no legal and moral justification to kill any human beings without due process of law, especially innocent civilians (BNF-10). The analysis of the online news identified five news values namely; Negativity, Eliteness, Superlativeness, Timeliness, and Personalization. Further, the news frames utilized by media practitioners were Responsibility Frame, Conflict Frame, and HumanInterest Frame. Based on these results the following ideologies were identified to be reflected in the online news on riding-in-tandem cases in Region XII: Hegemony, Authoritarian Populism, Penal Populism, Pluralism, and Human Rights. It can be deduced from this analysis that through the use of language members of a group (media practitioners / journalists), and therefore bearers of particular system of beliefs, produce and consume specific discourses (crime news), in specific contexts (online), and through these create and interpret versions of reality or representations.

## Discussion

This study's primary purpose is to understand how riding-in-tandem cases in Region XII are represented in online news. Thus, this analysis used the critical discourse analysis approach to identify the linguistic features employed by media practitioners, types of identities ascribed to the victims and perpetrators, and the ideologies reflected in these news. The analysis of 50 online news on riding-in-tandem cases in Region XII indicated that the newsworthiness of these articles was reinforced through the discursive construction of the following news values: Negativity, Eliteness, Superlativeness, Timeliness, and Personalization.

Consequently, media practitioners commonly used three news frames: attribution of responsibility, conflict, and human-interest frames. These frames are expected given the nature of these crimes. However, the impact of these frames extends beyond influencing social decision-making. They can also influence political ideologies and principles, as well as collective social behaviors. The media's portrayal of these crimes

can shape public support for government crime prevention policies and set ethical and moral standards for society. It can also provoke public rejection and protest certain governmental measures.

Two distinct identities ascribed to victims were identified namely: victims as “everyman” and victims implicated in illegal drugs. In victims as everyman, victims are portrayed as commonplace, innocent, and vulnerable. This method of framing persuades the readers to legitimize the situation, and it gives victims the opportunity to assert that they meet the criteria for perfect victims (van Dijk, 2014).

Victims implicated in illegal drugs is another identity that was sufficiently established in the online news. Targeted victims were civilians suspected of being connected to illegal drug activities, such as persons on drug watch lists, persons who had been publicly identified as drug personalities, and those who had previously surrendered to authorities. These representations of victims contrast with victims who are killed in the commission of an offense. In the identification of the victims as involved in illegal drugs, a division quickly becomes apparent between ‘us’ – decent, respectable, and moral – and ‘them’ – deviant, undesirable outsiders.

In another aspect, the result of the analysis shows how the stories commonly use specific nouns to refer to perpetrators, which is a way of presenting them in a certain way. To construct the image of the perpetrator, the stories employ linguistic tools such as noun phrases or nominal references, sometimes with modifiers. From the analysis of the online news, perpetrators were defined as suspects, criminals, gunman, and vigilantes. It is significant to note that information on the perpetrators of the riding-in-tandem crimes were only limited as they’re unidentified by the police and no witnesses could confirm their identities. In the analysis, the terms “unidentified” and “unknown” were commonly used as adjectives to describe the perpetrators, indicating that their identities are not yet known. The identity of the perpetrators is often difficult to confirm, and in many cases, they are described based on the motorcycle they used and the clothes they wore.

With these abovementioned findings, ideologies embedded in these news were identified. The following are the ideologies identified in the online news of riding-in-tandem cases: hegemony, authoritarian populism, penal populism, and human rights.

It can be deduced from this study that journalists cannot cover all aspects of event with equal priority. Some aspects get highlighted, and some get ignored. The concept of framing involves both inclusion (emphasizing) and exclusion (deemphasizing) and media practitioners’ news output can prioritize some aspects over others, therefore intentionally or unconsciously promoting one particular interpretation of events.

## Conclusion

The common theme in this study information flows from the top down, with the media representing the perspectives of political leaders, military leaders, police chiefs, judges, prominent intellectuals, advertisers and large business, newspaper owners, and outspoken opinion leaders. Simultaneously, they relegate the viewer, reader, or listener to the character of a passive recipient, obscuring his or her opinions, concerns, and beliefs. Thus, a credibility hierarchy is established in which the opinions and definitions of powerful members of society are privileged, while the 'ordinary' viewer or reader is prevented from engaging in critical or comparative thinking due to a paucity of comparative material. This structured relationship between the media and its 'powerful' sources has significant ramifications for the portrayal of crime, criminals, and criminal justice, especially in regard to those whose lifestyle or behavior deviates from the norms established by the privileged élite.

Lastly, the construction of riding-in-tandem crime and narcotics by the online news media can shape and alter public perceptions and influence public acceptance of government responses. In this way, the media, through their selection of sources and formulation of narratives, serve as significant agents of social control, whether directly or indirectly employed by state actors. Thus, despite frequently being referred to as a 'window on the world' or a mirror reflecting 'real life,' it may be more accurate to view the media as a prism that imperceptibly bends and distorts the view of the world it projects.

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