

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# “Shoot them dead”: Influence of the headlines and captions of online news articles towards comments on Facebook

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### ABSTRACT

The “shoot them dead” order of President Rodrigo Duterte to quarantine violators and leftist groups drew global controversy. The headlines and captions of online news articles about the statement which created polarized discourse on the comments are conceptualized as conflict frames (Han & Federico, 2017). Conflict frame is defined as a journalism technique where the coverage focuses more on a conflict in a political event (Bartholomé et al., 2017). The presence of conflict frames in news may posit an effect on partisan polarization (Han & Federico, 2017). In the online context, these conflict frames can stimulate varying reactions from the audience as manifested in the comments. This study analyzed 44 online news articles and 880 comments on Facebook. Multiple correlation analysis results showed that there is a significant association between certain tones and frames of headlines as well as captions to certain tones and frames of comments. Findings revealed that headlines are better predictors than captions, in which captions supplement more information to the headline. Results also revealed implications of journalistic intervention on political patronage among the public. This can be seen through the association of the negatively framed headlines to the comments that defend the government. This is further nuanced by the multivariate analysis of frame-to-frame relationships, wherein headlines and captions that involve clarification of Duterte’s statement led to a more critical audience. With the results of this study, journalists can curate content that can trigger a certain reaction from their audience.

**Keywords:** conflict frames, headlines, captions, Facebook comments, online discourse

To contain the further spread of COVID-19 in the Philippines, President Rodrigo Duterte placed Metro Manila under an Enhanced Community Quarantine. During this time, there had been much news of the dehumanization of quarantine violators by the police (CNN Philippines, 2020a). When the residents of Sitio San Roque in Quezon City staged a protest to amplify their call of the lack of social amelioration from the government, the police resorted to violent means to disband the rallyists, which led to the arrest of 21 residents (CNN Philippines, 2020b; Luna, 2020).

President Duterte held a late-night speech on television after the incident in Sitio San Roque. In his public address, Duterte expressed his vehement warning against the Leftist groups especially Kadamay — the urban poor group who allegedly instigated the protest. Consistent with Duterte’s strongman rhetoric, he ordered the state forces to “shoot them dead” — which ambiguously pertained either towards the Leftist groups, quarantine violators, or those who would attempt to cause chaos during the long-time quarantine. Media outlets had different emphases on whose audience the “shoot them dead” order was targeted. This resulted in a much-heated argument on social media, especially on Facebook.

Considering the rich context of Duterte’s relationship with the Left and the criticized militaristic approach of the government’s pandemic response, media outlets reported the speech in various frames. It can be noted, however, that media outlets often highlight the controversial remark of Duterte in their news frames. This is a common journalistic practice known as conflict frames, where conflict between political parties or events is emphasized to attract more attention from audiences (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000).

This study aims to determine the association of the news article posted on Facebook to its respective comments through correlation analysis. It seeks to answer, “How do the headlines and captions of the news articles posted on Facebook regarding Duterte’s ‘shoot them dead’ remark influence the framing of comments?” Specifically, it aims:

1. To determine the association of the tone of headlines and captions and the combination of tones of headline and captions (H-Ca) to the tone of comments (Co),
2. To determine the association of the tone of headlines (H) and Captions (Ca) and the combination of the tones of headlines and captions (H-Ca) to the pro-Duterte and anti-Duterte frame of comments, and
3. To determine the association of the pro-Duterte and anti-Duterte frame headlines and captions to the pro-Duterte and anti-Duterte frame of comments (Co).

### Literature Review

The prevalence of Facebook as a medium for news and its space for online discourse have interested scholars in the field of communication and media research. Headlines, which are key components of news articles, are written in a way that entices the readers to increase online engagement. The concept of conflict frames in journalism can be integrated in this phenomenon, especially when investigating audience effects in the new media. In that context, this section discussed topics regarding Facebook as a medium for news, influence of headlines on readers, and conflict framing.

### Facebook as a Medium for News

Facebook has brought significant change in the news dissemination and consumption environment (Su et al., 2018). It has become an important medium for news media organizations to gain more traffic to their news articles and websites (David et al., 2019). With Facebook's features, news on such platforms is intertwined with other various contents such as personal and entertainment. Research also shows that the public continues to show a growing reliance on Facebook for news consumption and opinion sharing (David et al., 2019).

In Facebook posts, captions can add a subjective expression to news (Welbers & Opgenhaffen, 2018). Feedback for these posts is usually accumulated through community cues such as reactions, comments, and shares (Schmidt et al., 2017). Comment sections remain widely used as it generates forms of feedback and public discourse.

As news organizations shift to build their online following on social media, online commenting becomes more concentrated on Facebook rather than on their websites (Ellis, 2015). In turn, the audience becomes involved in the observation, selection, filtering, distribution, and interpretation of events (Hermida et al., 2012; Sheller, 2015). This drastic change in media blurred the boundaries between public and private, and subsequently warranted activities among the audience to express their opinions that can influence the production of news media (Bowd, 2016). As a result, news is not only shared by traditional gatekeepers, but also by their audience, who plays a vital role in the discourse produced in online news media (Bowd, 2016).

### Influence of Headlines on the Readers

The shift from traditional to online news is a factor in the changes of how journalists write their news headlines. Traditional headlines provided a synopsis of the news, while in the digital age, journalists put prime concern on making the headlines more intriguing to catch the attention of readers.

Correspondingly, online news agencies would get higher metrics, given that using online platforms fosters competition against other news publishers (Janét et al., 2020; Kuiken et al., 2017). This is often carried out by journalists using capitalized words or phrases, as well as quotations in online news headlines (Kim et al., 2016; Lamprinidis et al., 2018). Headline clickbaits have then emerged where various writing schemes are employed such as giving emphasis on gossip, controversial words, or other stimulating topics to cover (Blom & Hansen, 2015; Janét et al., 2020; Tandoc, 2014).

Audiences search for reports that would specifically satisfy their curiosity (Scacco & Muddiman, 2019). The quality of headlines serves as the basis for readers to decide whether to further engage with the news content or not. Headlines with insufficient information cause hesitancy in consuming the presented news content. Recent studies have reinforced this argument by disproving the idea that readers are passive media consumers; audiences nowadays are more capable of evaluating the content on media provided to them (Salaudeen & Onyechi, 2020).

### Conflict Framing

Conflict framing is an essential technique in the reportage of news with political themes (Neuman et al., as cited in Bartholomé et al., 2015). Conflict frames are materialized by political events, particularly on disputes between political actors with opposing ideologies (Bartholomé et al., 2017; Han & Federico, 2017). This way of framing political events entices readers to engage in their news and it also influences how individuals form their political stance (Kim & Zhou, 2020). As a result, conflict frames may stimulate a polarized audience perspective (Han & Federico, 2017).

Journalists go through a decision-making process in selecting relevant information that will be presented to the public (Nelson, et al., 1997 as cited in Bartholomé et al.). Bartholomé and his colleagues (2017) proposed dimensions on conflict framing which consist of journalistic interventionism and the level of substantiveness. Interventionism refers to the extent of the permissive power of media to assert their role as a watchdog in society (Semetko et al., 1990 as cited in Bartholomé et al., 2017) or the extent to which journalists take a stance, whether active or passive, in their reporting (Strömbäck & Esser 2009, as cited in Bartholomé et al., 2015). Journalists can either highlight political conflicts to make the story appealing, or continuously create more conflict frames (Bartholomé et al., 2015). On the other hand, substantiveness refers to the political policies and political ideologies that should be highlighted in a news frame.

Conflict presented in stories may provoke negative emotions; greater degree of conflict in stories may incite a higher possibility to elicit a negative

emotional response (Galais, 2018). Stories showing conflict have themes related to “demobilization, disengagement, distrust, aversion, discomfort, and polarization” (Galais, 2018, p.1). It is also suggested that the presence of conflict frames may stimulate feelings of anger which is useful in unifying the public (Galais, 2018).

Against this backdrop, this current study aims to contribute to the knowledge regarding conflict frames and their association to public opinion, particularly in the Philippine context. Studies of framing, priming, and agenda setting have largely ignored competition between communications (Bartholomé et al., 2017). However, consideration of competition is a necessary step that will help clarify the exact relationship among the dimensions concerning media effects (McCombs, 2004). Facebook, a platform used by various news media organizations, is a space where conflict frames and its corresponding response from the audience could be examined.

### Study Framework

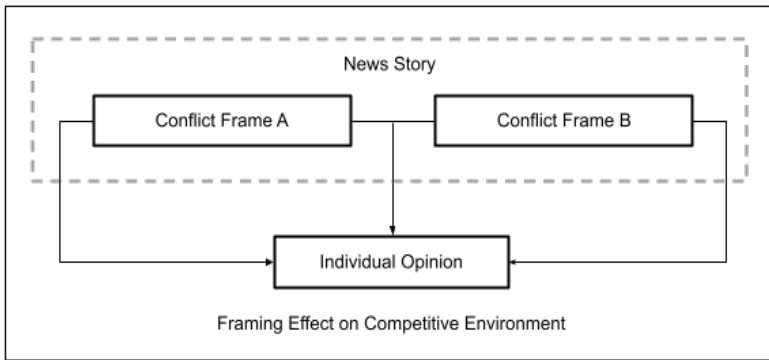
This study developed an Integrated Theoretical Model using the literature available on the concepts of conflict framing, and the Theory of Framing Effect in Competitive Environment (Chong & Druckman, 2007). The Theory of Framing Effect in Competitive Environment predicts how audiences, messages, and competitive environments interact to influence the magnitude of framing effects. It is a development from the framing theory literature, wherein a communication environment with competing sides was considered. It posits that politics is typically competitive, fought between parties or ideological factions, and issues that are debated are framed in opposing terms. In this context, individuals receive multiple frames with varying frequencies. Thus, this theory recognizes that the introduction of political competition creates problems with conventional standards of measuring the effectiveness of framing. Chong and Druckman (2007) define framing effects as the “strength or perceived persuasiveness of a given frame” (p. 105). The framing “effect” occurs when the audiences arrive at different conclusions regarding an issue depending on the priority given to various considerations (Druckman & Nelson, 2003, p. 730).

The theory of Framing Effect in a Competitive Environment is crucial in understanding the opinion formation of an individual when presented with alternative interpretations of an issue manifested by the varying frames. This phenomenon is closely related to the recent development in conflict framing literature which recognizes the implications of journalistic intervention to the audience’s polarized opinion (Bartolomé et al., 2017; Han & Federico, 2017). Finally, the concept of competing frames is subsumed by the idea that there is one reality being reported. Thus, the audience is exposed to multiple

news frames of a single event. This premise is held especially true in the context of an online environment.

As illustrated in Figure 1, Conflict Frames A and B are the independent variables affecting individual opinions and sentiments. The broken line surrounding the Conflict Frames A and B represents the similar reality or event being reported. The concept of competing frames, wherein audiences make sense of the reality either as a single frame or as multiple frames, is depicted by the line connecting Conflict Frames A and B. These frames can then affect the opinions of the individuals reading the news story in a competitive environment (See Figure 1).

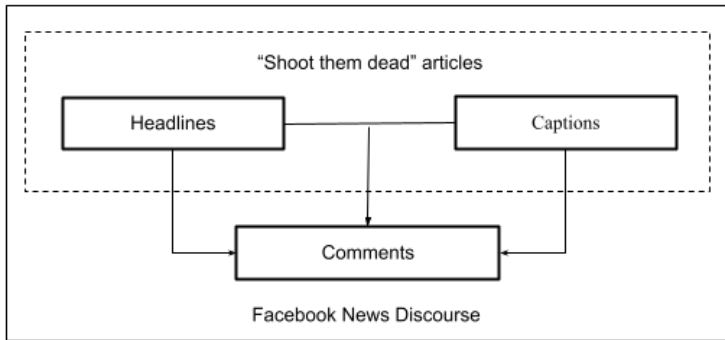
Figure 1  
*Integrated Theoretical framework*



Facebook is a communicative and competitive place, where interactions and discourses between users take place (Valtysson, 2012). Various frames may arise from the different published posts, and consequently, various frames of comments as well. The media's coverage of an event may emphasize the conflict between various political actors which is manifested through the headlines and captions. These conflict frames can be characterized, and their tones can be discerned either as positive, negative, or unclear. The reportage of a similar political event, i.e., the shoot-them-dead remark of President Duterte, leads to the emergence of various frames. The audience, therefore, are exposed to a particular media coverage which is conceptualized as the competing frames.

Headlines and captions affect the public's first impression of the news and determine the possible engagement or disengagement of the newsreaders. The reader's opinions are often manifested via Facebook features where users can share their commentary through the comment section. The tones and frames of the comments are the audience's outputs or engagements regarding the specific issue (See Figure 2).

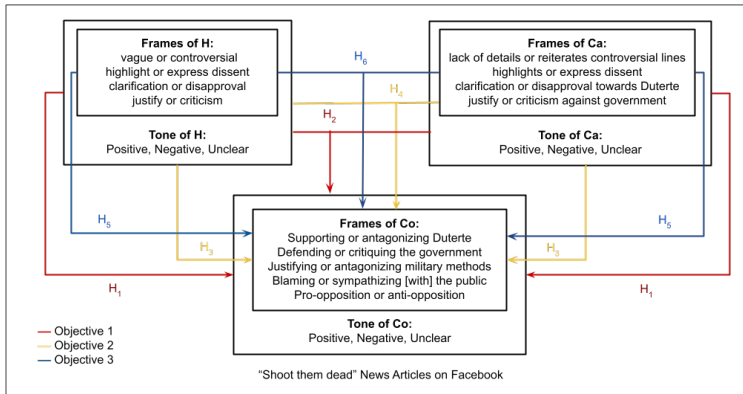
Figure 2  
Conceptual Framework



The types of frames were articulated with the word “or” as it manifests the nature of conflict frames, wherein an interpretation of a certain frame is not limited to one; hence, the choice between two contrasting descriptive styles. These are subsumed by the overall tone, which is determined a posteriori through the cumulative number of frames that were coded either positive or negative. If the number of negative and positive frames were equal, then the tone was coded as unclear.

At the analytical level, the color-coded lines depict the hypothesized relationships of the independent variables (headline and caption) towards the dependent variable (comment) in terms of tones and frames. The lines that connect the headlines and captions indicate recognition of the inevitable relationship of headlines and captions towards the meaning-making of the audience. Thus, the combination of headlines and captions was also warranted. It must be noted, however, that the arrows depict correlation and not causation. The lines of hypotheses 1, 3, and 5 represent bivariate analysis while the merged lines of hypotheses 2, 4, and 6 represent multivariate analysis (See Figure 3).

Figure 3  
Analytical Framework



## Methodology

Following the positivist paradigm, a one-shot content analysis was employed to capture the framing of the headlines, captions and comments as indicated in the coding guide. This study used a Lambda test for the bivariate analysis and a multiple regression test for the multivariate analysis. The tones and frames of online news articles' headlines and captions were identified as the independent variables, while the positive, negative, and unclear tones and frames in the commentary sections were identified as the dependent variables.

Census sampling was employed for the study as it is commonly used for highly specific types of content about a specific issue or phenomena that are not published regularly or daily. All news articles by local media outlets for the month of April 2020 were collected and analyzed for the study. A top-down approach was used in collecting the data, particularly by searching the keywords "shoot them dead" or "shoot to kill," on the Facebook search tool. A total of 44 Facebook posts were collated alongside the first 20 comments of each article, with a total of 880 comments. Table 1 below presents the variables and measures analyzed for this study.



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Table 1. *Variables and Measures*

Positive	Negative
<b>Frame of Headlines</b>	
<b>Vague</b> - showed a vague description of contents of Duterte's speech <b>Highlight</b> - highlighted other response of the government <b>Clarify</b> - clarified Duterte's shoot-them-dead remark <b>Justify</b> - justified the government for their actions	<b>Controversy</b> - directly quoted a controversial line from Duterte's speech <b>Express dissent</b> - expressed dissent against Duterte and his allies <b>Disapproval</b> - mentioned public figures and their disapproval towards Duterte's shoot-them-dead statement and military methods <b>Criticism</b> - expressed criticism against the government
<b>Frame of Captions</b>	
<b>Support</b> - showed explicit support of Duterte <b>Defend</b> - defended the actions of Duterte and his allies <b>Justify military methods</b> - suggested or agreed with militarization <b>Public blaming</b> - blamed the public rather than systemic incompetence <b>Anti-opposition</b> - criticized the vice president or members of the opposition, or the media	<b>Anti-Duterte</b> - showed explicit anti-Duterte sentiments <b>Critiquing government</b> - expressed criticisms and dissent of the actions of Duterte and his allies <b>Anti-military methods</b> - disagreed with the military methods <b>Sympathize with public</b> - justified the action of the public <b>Pro-opposition</b> - showed support for the opposition, vice president
<b>Tone of Headlines, Captions, and Comments</b>	
Aggregated number of positive and negative frames: <b>Positive</b> - No. of positive > no. of negative frames <b>Negative</b> - No. of positive < no. of negative frames <b>Unclear</b> - No. of positive = no. negative frames	

## Results and Discussion

This section discusses the results of the bivariate and multivariate analysis among the frames and tones of the headlines, captions, and comments.

Among the 44 articles analyzed, negative frames had the highest recurrence in both the headlines and captions. Previous studies argue that journalists prefer negative or controversial frames to enhance audience engagement (Kahneman, 2011; Prier, 2017). More controversial headlines often attract a wider reach because of their ability to be retained in the audience's memory (Prier, 2017). The comments, on the contrary, contained mostly positive frames.

Positive headlines frequently contained frames that clarified Duterte's shoot-them-dead remark. This frame involves statements of political actors

that attempt to clarify and downplay the President’s controversial remark. An example is GMA News’ headline that stated, “*Cayetano: Duterte’s remark should not be taken literally*” (Magsino, 2020). In relation, captions that clarify were also recurrent among the positive captions. An example is from an article by PTV with the caption, “*House Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano believes President Rodrigo Duterte wants to do everything to protect the citizens despite his shoot-to-kill statement*” (PTV, 2020).

The most common variable in the frame of negative headlines is the one that uses the shoot-them-dead remark in an active voice. Respectively, frames that reiterate the same controversial remark were also often found in the captions. These frames emphasize and highlight Duterte’s controversial remark through the restatement in the headlines and captions.

Further, frames that showed anti-opposition sentiments were revealed to be the most frequent variable in positive frames of comments. Anti-opposition frames antagonize or berate the opposition groups, the Vice President, and the media. Anti-media sentiments were also considered anti-opposition because the comments usually associated the role of media as biased to the opposition groups, who are known to be critical of the government. A comment, for example, stated “*Rappler doing their tremendous job to ruin the image of [the] Duterte administration. This type of media group [needs] to [be demolished] ASAP.*” On the other hand, negatively framed comments often contained frames that critiqued the government (See Table 2).

Table 2. *Mode of Headlines, Captions, and Comments*

Variables	Mode	f
Tone of headline (H)	Negative	23
Tone of caption (Ca)	Negative	24
Tone of comments (Co)	Positive	529
Frame of positive headlines	Clarification	14
Frame of negative headlines	Controversy	22
Frame of positive captions	Clarification	17
Frame of negative captions	Reiteration	26
Frame of positive comments	Anti-opposition	297
Frame of negative comments	Critiquing the government	201

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant association between the tone of headlines (H) and tone of caption (Ca) to the tone of comments (Co).

The Lambda test shows that specific types of headlines and captions exhibit correlation to specific types of comments. Negative headlines ( $\lambda = .52, p = .032$ ) have strong significant association while positive headlines ( $\lambda = .35, p = .025$ ) exhibit moderate and significant association with positive comments. Headlines that are in the negative tone ( $\lambda = .57, p = .008$ ) also exhibit a strong

and significant association with comments in the negative tone. Captions in the positive tone ( $\lambda = .571, p = .008$ ) have a strong and significant association with negative comments while negatively toned captions ( $\lambda = .450, p = .030$ ) show a moderate and significant association with negative comments. Weak and significant association is seen in the correlation of unclear comments and positive captions ( $\lambda = .24, p = .036$ ) (See Table 3).

The results show that the relationship of negative headlines and positive captions to negative comments exhibit the highest correlation and level of significance. This finding reveals implications regarding the public’s reception of conflict frames. When they are presented with news that have conflict frames, negative comments are expected to emerge. Conflict frames have been associated with a number of negative outcomes on citizens (Bartholomé et al., 2017) such as the public’s increasing political distrust (Mutz & Reeves, 2005). In this regard, the public’s exposure to conflict frames may evoke negative comments such as those that contain explicit anti-Duterte sentiments, those that criticize the government, those that disagree with the military methods, those that justify the public, and those that support opposition groups and the media.

**Table 3.** *Bivariate Analysis of Tone of Headlines and Captions and Tone of Comments*

Tone of Comments	Positive Headline	Negative Headline	Positive Caption	Negative Caption
Positive	$\lambda = .35^*$	$\lambda = .52^*$	-	-
Negative	-	$\lambda = .57^{**}$	$\lambda = .57^{**}$	$\lambda = .45^*$
Unclear	-	-	-	$\lambda = .24^*$

\* $p < 0.05$

\*\* $p < 0.01$

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$

**H<sub>2</sub>:** There is a significant correlation between the combination of tones of the headlines and captions (H-Ca) and the tone of comments (Co).

The multivariate analysis results show that only negative comments exhibit a relationship to the tone of headlines and captions. The results showed that Model 4, Negative-Positive Headline-Caption combination ( $R^2 = 0.32, Adj. R^2 = 0.28, p = 0.000$ ), is the best model to predict lesser negative comments, with the negative tone of headline as the best predictor ( $\beta = -0.65$ ). The values of Model 2 ( $R^2 = 0.30, Adj. R^2 = 0.27$ ) are similar to the values of Model 4. Both models indicate that negative headlines are inversely related to the presence of negative comments.

The findings reveal that headlines have higher predicting power than captions; thus, headlines play an important role in the framing effect while the captions supplement it. Models 2 and 4 show the contrasting correlation

of positive and negative captions to the negative comments. While both negative headlines and negative captions ( $\beta = -0.21$ ) are inversely related to negative comments, positive captions ( $\beta = 0.16$ ) indicate direct correlation to negative comments. Hence, captions still play a crucial part in the emergence of negative comments. Though negative headlines predict lesser negative comments, the results showed that more positive comments did not necessarily emerge as seen in the results of Model 1 ( $R^2 = 0.03$ ,  $Adj. R^2 = -0.02$ ) and Model 3 ( $R^2 = 0.03$ ,  $Adj. R^2 = -0.02$ ).

The values are consistent that negative headlines and positive captions exhibit highest correlation to negative comments. However, there is a seeming irregularity between the bivariate and multivariate analyses in terms of the direction of correlation (See Table 4).

**Table 4.** Correlation of Tones of Headlines (H) and Captions (Ca) to Negative Comments (Co)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Tone of H (Positive)	$\beta = 0.11$	-	$\beta = 0.10$	-
Tone of H (Negative)	-	$\beta = -0.61^{***}$	-	$\beta = -0.65^{***}$
Tone of Ca (Positive)	$\beta = 0.09$	-	-	$\beta = -0.21$
Tone of Ca (Negative)	-	$\beta = 0.16$	$\beta = -0.09$	-
$R^2$	0.03	0.30	0.03	0.32
Adj. $R^2$	-0.02	<b>0.27<sup>***</sup></b>	-0.02	<b>0.28<sup>***</sup></b>

\* $p < 0.05$

\*\* $p < 0.01$

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$

Negative headlines are characterized by frames such as those that express dissent, report the shoot-them-dead remark in an active voice, and those that criticize the government (Garganera et al., 2021). The most prominent variable in all articles is the headlines coded as controversy (46.81%), these include posts that used the shoot-them-dead remark in an active voice (See Table 5).

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**Table 5. Frame of Negative Headlines**

Negative H	<i>f</i>	%
Controversy	22	46.81
Express Dissent	9	19.15
Disapproval	11	23.40
Criticism	5	10.64
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100.00</b>

H<sub>3</sub>: There is a significant association between the tone of headlines (H) and the tone of captions (Ca) to the frame of comments (Co).

Results of the Lambda test ( $\lambda$ ) show that there is a strong association between the tone of headlines and frame of comments that are anti-opposition ( $\lambda = 0.52, p = 0.006$ ); moderate association with comments that are critiquing the government ( $\lambda = 0.38, p = 0.014$ ); and weak association with comments that contain anti-Duterte sentiments ( $\lambda = 0.24, p = 0.018$ ). Results, therefore, support the hypothesis that there is a significant association between tone of headlines and frames of comments, specifically those that are anti-opposition, critical of the government, and anti-Duterte (See Table 6).

**Table 6. Bivariate Analysis of the Tone of Headlines and Frame of Comments**

Positive				
Support Duterte	Defend government	Justify military methods	Anti-opposition	Public blaming
$\lambda = 0.10$	$\lambda = 0.19$	$\lambda = 0.10$	$\lambda = 0.52^{**}$	$\lambda = 0.10$
Negative				
Anti-Duterte	Critique government	Anti-military methods	Pro-opposition	Sympathize with public
$\lambda = 0.248$	$\lambda = 0.38^*$	$\lambda = 0.19$	$\lambda = 0.00$	$\lambda = 0.05$

\* $p < 0.05$

\*\* $p < 0.01$

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$

There is strong association between the tone of caption and frame of comments that contain anti-opposition sentiments ( $\lambda = 0.55, p = 0.015$ ). On the other hand, frames of comments that are pro-opposition have no relationship with the tone of captions ( $\lambda = 0.00, p$  cannot be computed). The  $p$ -value cannot be computed because there were insufficient coded pro-opposition comments to indicate an association. Results support the hypothesis that

there is a significant association between the tone of caption, but only to the frames of comments that contain anti-opposition sentiments (See Table 7).

Table 7. Bivariate Analysis of the Tone of Caption and Frame of Comments

Positive				
Support Duterte	Defend government	Justify military methods	Anti-opposition	Public blaming
$\lambda = 0.10$	$\lambda = 0.25$	$\lambda = 0.15$	$\lambda = \mathbf{0.55^*}$	$\lambda = 0.25$
Negative				
Anti-Duterte	Critique government	Anti-military methods	Pro-opposition	Sympathize with public
$\lambda = 0.20$	$\lambda = 0.25$	$\lambda = 0.20$	$\lambda = 0.00$	$\lambda = 0.10$

\* $p < 0.05$

\*\* $p < 0.01$

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$

In this study, the shoot-them-dead remark is moderately associated with negative comments that criticize the government and antagonize Duterte. Negatively framed comments are likely to surface when exposed to news that have conflict frames. This claim is consistent with the findings that exposure to conflict in media leads to the decline of public approval (Forgette & Morris, 2006). Conflict frames involve personal attacks from and towards political actors and visibility of diverging political views (Bartholomé et al., 2017). This means that commenters, when exposed to conflict frames, may be influenced to engage in media discourse based on their political stance. These comments based on political stances are manifested by the frames that critique the government, are anti-opposition and anti-Duterte in nature.

**H<sub>4</sub>: There is a significant association between the combination of tone of headlines and the tone of captions (H-Ca) to the frame of comments (Co).**

Multivariate analysis results show that only the comment frames that are anti-opposition exhibit significant association with respect to the tone of headlines and captions. Results show that Model 2, negatively toned headlines and captions ( $R^2 = 0.17$ ; adjusted  $R^2 = 0.13$ ,  $p = 0.025$ ), and Model 4, negatively toned headlines and positively toned captions ( $R^2 = 0.17$ ; adjusted  $R^2 = 0.13$ ,  $p = 0.021$ ), are the best models among the four models for correlation of Tones of Headlines and Captions to Anti-opposition to comments. Table 8 also shows that Tone of H (Negative) is the only significant predictor of

association to comments showing anti-opposition sentiments ( $\beta = 0.41, p = 0.017; \beta = 0.36, p = 0.043$ ) with 13% prediction probability as shown in Model 2 and 4 and moderate association, respectively (See Table 8).

**Table 8.** *Correlation of Tones of Headlines (H) and Captions (Ca) to Anti-Opposition Comments (Co)*

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 4</b>
Tone of H (Positive)	$\beta = 0.08$	-	$\beta = -0.00$	-
Tone of H (Negative)	-	$\beta = 0.41^*$	-	$\beta = 0.36^*$
Tone of Ca (Positive)	$\beta = -0.33$	-	-	$\beta = -0.09$
Tone of Ca (Negative)	-	$\beta = -0.01$	$\beta = 0.20$	-
R <sup>2</sup>	0.09	0.17	0.04	0.17
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.04	<b>0.13*</b>	-0.01	<b>0.13*</b>

\*p < 0.05

\*\*p < 0.01

\*\*\*p < 0.001

The comments coded as anti-opposition were also usually characterized by anti-media sentiments as observed by the researchers. Out of 297 anti-opposition comments, 196 were noted to be anti-media. Some examples of these kinds of comments include, “*This headline is completely taken out of context...I expected better from what’s supposed to be the provider of ‘news you can trust’*,” and “*... puro kabobohan lng ibinalita nyo [your reports are full of stupidity]!!!*” These are evidence on the acknowledgement of the public to journalistic intervention, which is articulated by Bartholomé et al. (2017) as a dimension of conflict frames.

There is a prevalence of anti-opposition frames in the comments under Facebook news article posts with negative tones. Patronage politics, the support that the public gives certain individuals or agencies (Kenny & O’Donohue, 2020), validates this finding. Philippine politics is characterized by a patronage-based democracy, wherein the public’s loyalty towards Duterte manifests itself in the comments section of posts with this theme as seen in Table 8.

H<sub>5</sub>: There is a significant association between the frame of headlines (H) and the frame of captions (Ca) to the frame of comments (Co).

Three kinds of frames of headlines (clarification, controversy, and disapproval) exhibited significant relationships towards certain frames of comments. The headlines that directly quoted Duterte’s controversial remark showed a strong and significant association with the comments that defend Duterte ( $\lambda = 0.55, p = 0.002$ ). The headlines that clarify Duterte’s shoot-them-dead remark also have a moderate and significant association ( $\lambda = 0.50, p = 0.013$ ) to comments that defend the government. Meanwhile, the controversial headlines exhibited moderate and significant relationship to both comments that are anti-opposition ( $\lambda = 0.50, p = 0.002$ ) and that are critical of the government ( $\lambda = 0.50, p = 0.015$ ). Lastly, the headlines that mentioned public figures’ disapproval towards Duterte’s shoot-them-dead statement and military methods exhibit moderate and significant relationship ( $\lambda = 0.36, p = 0.036$ ) towards the comments that criticize the vice president, antagonize the opposition groups, and the media.

These results are consistent with a previous study that argued that polarization in the comments is a manifestation of the political antagonism that is present between the political parties (Mathe & Caldwell, 2017). The conflicting views are evident in the types of comments produced by the controversial headline. This polarization is also a result of the reader’s understanding of political issues, which is influenced by their political disposition (Mathe & Caldwell, 2017). Findings are congruent with this claim because the audience’s interpretation of political issues validates their need to defend their political idol and their motivations to defame the contrasting political party as seen in the comments produced by headlines that clarify Duterte’s remark and headlines that show disapproval (See Table 9).

Table 9. Bivariate Analysis of the Frame of Headline and Frame of Comments

Frame of comments	Frame of Headlines		
	Clarification (P)	Controversy (N)	Disapproval (N)
Defend government	$\lambda = 0.50^*$	$\lambda = 0.55^{**}$	$\lambda = 0.18$
Anti-opposition	$\lambda = 0.29$	$\lambda = 0.50^{**}$	$\lambda = 0.36^*$
Critical of government	$\lambda = 0.29$	$\lambda = 0.50^*$	$\lambda = 0.09$

\* $p < 0.05$

\*\* $p < 0.01$

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$



Furthermore, some variables yielded a significant association between the frame of captions and the frame of comments. Caption frames that clarify Duterte’s shoot-them-dead remark also have a significantly strong association to comment frames that are anti-opposition ( $\lambda = 0.59, p = 0.007$ ). The same caption frame has a significantly moderate association to the comments that criticize the government ( $\lambda = 0.35, p = 0.008$ ). Meanwhile, caption frames that justify military methods are moderately associated with comment frames that are critical of the government ( $\lambda = .50, p = .036$ ). Caption frames that reiterate the controversial line show a strong association with comment frames that are critical of the government ( $\lambda = 0.61, p = 0.006$ ) and a moderate association with comments that blame the public ( $\lambda = 0.44, p = 0.014$ ). Both the captions that show disapproval towards Duterte ( $\lambda = .46, p = .008$ ) and captions that criticize the government ( $\lambda = .44, p = .036$ ) have moderate and significant relationships to the frame of comments that are anti-opposition. Lastly, as for the association between caption frames and comment frames that criticize the government, there is no level of significance due to the lack of comments of this frame to suffice an indication of relationships ( $\lambda = 0.00, p$  cannot be computed).

The bivariate analysis results show that captions made by the news outlets may also bring forth the political stance of the audience through their comments. The association between captions and comments, however, cannot be analyzed without isolating the presence of the headlines. Therefore, the association of captions and comments may be influenced by headlines as well (See Table 10).

Table 10. Bivariate Analysis of the Frame of Captions and Frame of Comments

Frame of comments	Frame of Captions				
	Clarification (P)	Justify (P)	Reiterates controversial line (N)	Disapproval towards Duterte (N)	Criticism against the government (N)
Anti-opposition	$\lambda = 0.59^{**}$	$\lambda = 0.13, p = 0.312$	$\lambda = 0.33$	$\lambda = 0.46^{**}$	$\lambda = 0.44^*$
Public blaming	$\lambda = 0.18$	$\lambda = 0.25$	$\lambda = 0.44^*$	$\lambda = 0.08$	$\lambda = 0.11$
Critical of government	$\lambda = .35^{**}$	$\lambda = 0.50^*$	$\lambda = 0.61^{**}$	$\lambda = 0.08$	$\lambda = 0.00, p$ cannot be computed

\* $p < 0.05$

\*\* $p < 0.01$

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$

Positively framed headlines, such as those that used the controversial remark in an active voice, and negatively framed headlines, such as those that involve clarification from other political actors, both provoked comment frames that defend the government. The level of journalistic intervention differs between these two kinds of frames, because the active voice headline frame resonates with a descriptive style. This kind of reporting offers a detached and factual description of events (Bartholomé et al., 2017). In contrast, the clarification headline frame is focused on meaning of events that goes beyond facts and statements of sources (Falasca, 2014), but of journalistic explanations and analysis (Salgado & Strömbäck, 2011). Nevertheless, both exhibit a significant association towards comments that defends the government. A comment in an article, for example, states, “*We will support President Duterte all the way!*” The finding reveals that when the public is exposed to conflicting frames, political patronage is still manifested.

Consistent with earlier findings, negative frames of headlines that emphasize the shoot-them-dead remark and those that express dissent against Duterte predicted anti-opposition comment frames. Meanwhile, only headlines that highlight Duterte’s controversial remark produced comment frames that are critical of the government. This is consistent with a past study that argues that more controversial statements may provoke predominantly negatively framed comments, because they contain more issue information compared to positive frames (Stevens, 2012).

Anti-opposition comments can be predicted by captions that clarify the controversial remark, however headlines of the same frame cannot. The clarification captions could have supplemented the headlines which significantly predict anti-opposition comments, such as those that were coded as controversial. Both the headlines and captions that express disapproval of Duterte’s remark are associated with the anti-opposition comments. A headline of an article from Rappler, for example, stated, “*Rights groups slam Duterte’s ‘shoot to kill’ order: Prioritize lives, not violence*” (Gavilan, 2020). The headline may trigger comments that contradict the statements of the political actors involved. The same can be said with captions that criticize the government as most of them expressed disapproval towards Duterte.

The association between caption frames that justify the government’s reasoning and comment frames that criticize the government is telling on the public’s evaluation of the frames. In that regard, there is an assessment of the frames reported and then are communicated through criticism of the government, in which the audience rejects the idea presented to them. Meanwhile, conflict between the two contrasting political stances may arise upon the presence of caption frames that reiterate controversial lines and comment frames that blame the public and critical of the government.

The comments that blame the public show that the people are trying to rationalize Duterte’s controversial remark. On the other hand, the criticism of the government comments shows a contrast between the former because it points out government incompetence.

**H<sub>6</sub>:** There is a significant association between the combination of the frame of headlines and captions (H-Ca) to the frame of comments (Co).

The multiple regression analysis revealed the association between certain combinations of frames of headlines and captions to the amount of coded comment frames through beta ( $\beta$ ) coefficients. As illustrated below, Model 2 ( $R^2 = 0.24$ ; adjusted  $R^2 = 0.21$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ) accumulated the significantly highest probability score of 21%. The results indicated that captions that clarify Duterte’s shoot-them-dead remark is the best predictor for the comments that are critical of the government. Findings also reveal that caption frames that clarify Duterte’s shoot-them-dead statement exhibit a statistically significant and a strong correlation with the comments ( $\beta = 0.60$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ). There is then an implication that this result can be generalizable to other articles (See Table II).

**Table II.** Correlation of Frames of Headlines (H) and Captions (Ca) to Critical of Government Comments (Co)

Frames of H and Ca	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Frame of H: Clarified Duterte’s shoot-them-dead remark	-0.16	-0.20	-	0.10	-
Frame of H: Directly quoted a controversial line from Duterte’s speech	-0.05	-	-0.15	-	-0.06
Frame of H: Disapproval towards Duterte	-0.17	-	-0.16	-	-0.14
Frame of Ca: Clarified Duterte’s shoot-them-dead statement	0.49*	0.60**	-	-	0.40*
Frame of Ca: Reiterated a controversial line from Duterte’s speech	0.13	-	0.17	0.15	-
Frame of Ca: Disapproval towards Duterte	0.00	-	-0.15	-0.27	-
R <sup>2</sup>	0.28*	0.24**	0.16	0.38	0.24*
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.17	0.21	0.08	0.08	0.19

\* $p < 0.05$

\*\* $p < 0.01$

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$

Both headline and caption frames that clarify Duterte's remark predict comment frames that are critical of the government. The downplaying of the shoot-them-dead remark through clarification of his allies is likely to create a more critical audience. For example, a comment from an article replied on the post saying, "*So when it's coming from him, his utterances are exceptions but when an ordinary citizen [says] the same, the jail opens.*" Similar to earlier findings, there is a decline in public trust towards political actors (Mutz & Reeves, 2005), which in this case, would be Duterte and his government.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

This study sought to answer how the headlines and captions of the news articles posted on Facebook regarding Duterte's shoot-them-dead remark influence the framing of comments. There is a recurrence of an association between the headlines and captions with the negatively framed comments. Headlines that clarify and captions that criticize the government are the best predictors. Respectively, headlines have a higher predicting power than captions. Headlines are one of the most manipulated news features (Kuiken et al., 2017), while captions are usually used for information recall (Pipps et al., 2009).

Results also showed that negatively framed headlines produced anti-opposition comments that usually include anti-media sentiments. Comments that defend the government, on the other hand, are associated with headlines that actively used the controversial remark and headlines that involved clarification from other political actors. This reveals an implication on varying levels of journalistic intervention to political patronage. When the public is exposed to conflicting frames, political patronage is still manifested as evidenced by its association to comments that defend the government. This finding is further nuanced by the multivariate analysis of frame-to-frame relationships, wherein headlines and captions that involve clarification of Duterte's statement have led to a more critical audience. This study also reveals that anti-media sentiments are prevalent in media coverages, which validate how journalistic interventionism is an essential dimension of conflict frames (Bartholomé et al., 2017).

Philippine politics is characterized by patronage-based and clientelistic democracy (Kenny & O'Donohue, 2020). Accordingly, the associations of headlines and captions towards the comments reveal how the public subscribe to a political stance and/or support a political actor when exposed to a certain type of conflict frame. This study adds to the understanding on how conflict frames influence the reception of the audience towards polarizing content. Appropriately, the study surfaced patterns that give

important insights about political attitudes of Filipinos as manifested in social media.

The audience has the power to set the agenda through the kinds of comments produced in online media platforms (Kammer, 2013). With the results of this study, journalists can therefore curate content that can trigger a certain reaction from their audience. In this era where public opinion on social media is critical to policy making and campaigns, the insights of this study can be extended to further research. The researchers suggest looking at the influence of the magnitude of framing effects as posited by the theory of Framing Effect in Competitive Environment. The researchers also advise future studies to examine the types of media institutions and the dimensions of conflict frames—substantiveness and interventionism.

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