

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Filipino resilience cannibalism: A textual analysis on the co-optation of Filipino resilience vis-a-vis neoliberalism in ABS-CBN, GMA, and Inquirer.net Facebook posts during the COVID-19 pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Filipino resilience is positively presented during crises. To address the understudied presentation in media, this study investigates how ABS-CBN, GMA, and Inquirer.net co-opt resilience vis-a-vis neoliberalism in their Facebook posts (texts and images) during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, it explores how Filipino resilience is framed, the neoliberalism concepts framed through Filipino resilience, and a critique on co-optation.

Employing the frameworks of the UP Resilience Institute and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development as the Filipino resilience framework, Framing, and Neoliberalism concepts, the researchers conducted a qualitative textual analysis of 35 Facebook posts from March-October 2020 regarding socioeconomic situations.

Findings illustrate Filipino resilience is soft news utilizing colloquial words and phrases to elevate narration. As standalone, re-shared images from viral posts lack context. News agencies fail to account for systemic root causes of problems as Filipino resilience is conservative, safe, and economic-centered. Nurturing the 'rags to riches' culture, heart-breaking but romanticized stories of survival motivated by individual economic efforts are highlighted, devoid of government accountability. Falling short of the interdisciplinary approach, this exploits poverty narratives for online engagement and maintains the pre-pandemic status quo. Fortifying the neoliberal culture, the state's power is non-existent.

Resulting in shallow reporting and misrepresentation including calls for donations; *bayanihan* [a spirit of civic unity and cooperation], is also privatized. Filipino resilience is co-opted due to neoliberal frames of human-interest stories, glorification of the self-made man, and the ability to survive. We infer co-optation is regressive and anti-poor. Propagating its sanitized and depoliticized branding and consumption, news agencies fail to challenge the notion of Filipino resilience.

Keywords: *Filipino resilience, co-optation, COVID-19, neoliberalism, Philippine news agencies*

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought negative impacts worldwide. Similar to the yearly disasters experienced, this highlights the optimistic outlook of Filipinos (Nicomedes & Avila, 2020) as evidenced by the beats in news reporting that packages stories of rehabilitation and bouncing back as Filipino resilience.

Resilience is described as a measurement of persistence and ability to undergo changes (Holling, 1973), which are not always linear, predictable, and straightforward (Gunderson & Holling, 2002). In development studies, resilience has become an evaluation and measurement of one's survival, particularly during disasters (Barrett & Consas, 2014; Norris et al., 2008; Pisano, 2012). This rings true in the Philippines as it is regularly subjected to numerous typhoons, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and tsunamis (Bankoff, 2007; Hechanova et al., 2015; Usamah et al., 2014).

It also plays a big role in the socio-cultural setting in the country. The Filipino brand of resilience is famous as rags to riches stories. However, as presented in the media, the mainstream definition of resilience has been detached from the original definition of the concept in the sciences. This normative use of resilience as a perspective made the definition of resilience deficit (Brand & Jax, 2007).

The portrayal of Filipino resilience, especially of the poor, is prevalent in the local media. It is often situated as *bayanihan* [a spirit of civic unity and cooperation among Filipinos], collective effort, and cooperation, are usually portrayed in tear-jerking stories, creating an impression of positivity despite the tragedy (Su & Mangada, 2016).

While local media in the Philippines is still dominated by traditional media, news agencies have long invested in digital platforms. Privately-owned, big media agencies operate to increase their market and be profitable in both monetary and public influence. The need to be responsive to the likes of the media consumers and cater to them to gain attention often influences the journalists to sensationalize stories, emphasizing the human-interest angle as it is what the consumers demand (Guioguo, 2015; The Media Market 2020).

The ongoing health crisis in the Philippines has created stories of resilience on how Filipinos handle their daily lives despite the drastic changes in society. The influx of these posts directed us to ask: How do select news agencies in the Philippines co-opt resilience vis-a-vis neoliberalism in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in their Facebook posts?

Specifically, it aims to:

1. Explore how ABS-CBN News, GMA, and Inquirer.net frame Filipino resilience during the COVID-19 crisis in their captions and images on Facebook;
2. Surface how neoliberalism is framed through stories of Filipino resilience; and
3. Analyze and critique how the presence of neoliberal frames co-opts stories of Filipino resilience in their Facebook posts.

This study contextualized resilience based on the ideology rooted in the Filipino culture and social system. It is significant to critique this phenomenon because the seemingly harmless framing of Filipinos' struggles and resilience continues to populate news agencies' content on Facebook. These are perceived to have a big impact on the mindset of Filipinos towards voicing out dissent and questioning accountability.

Literature Review

This section first examines the role of legacy media and the shifting media landscape, the media's role in relation to the presentation of resilience was contextualized.

The literature on neoliberalism was incorporated to establish how it affects resilience. As the study sought to uncover if Filipino resilience is co-opted, researches about co-optation were reviewed to create a comprehensive background for the researchers.

Resilience and Media Reporting

Communication is identified as one of the entities that contribute to the adaptive capacity of a community with media as one of the tools for information dissemination, sense-making, and connection that encourages community engagement and action (Houston et al., 2014)

Studies on resilience and media evident on literature are mainly focused on disaster preparedness, risk management, disaster reporting by the media (Canubas et al., 2016), health crisis (Gollust et al., 2019), and roles of media and social media in information dissemination of disaster risks and hazards (Dufty, 2012; Houston et al., 2014; Zou et al., 2018).

For years, functions of media such as surveillance of the environment, correlation of parts of the society, transmission of culture (Lasswell, 1948 as cited by Reese & Lee, 2012), and entertainment (Wright, 1986 as cited by Reese & Lee, 2012) are fulfilled by the legacy media. With the rise of new media, agencies adapted to the changing landscape to cater to the changing

consumer patterns (Estella & Löffelholz, 2019; Rajendran & Thesinghara, 2014)

In the Philippines, the media industry is dominated by media conglomerates, namely ABS-CBN and GMA. Meanwhile, in broadsheets, the Philippine Daily Inquirer contributes to 52% of daily circulation in the country (Guioguo, 2015). Capitalizing on their market dominance and brand loyalty, top news organizations remain popular even in social media (Fenton, 2011). The three news media giants are also at the forefront of digital news content production with millions of followers on social media. This shift yielded positive results in their following and revenues (Chua, 2020).

This technological shift has transformed news consumption by altering circulation (Carlson, 2018), influencing opinions and public sentiment (Hermida, et al., 2012; Schmidt et al., 2017). Pertierra (2012) acknowledged that social media promotes individualism as it provides the capacity to access information and entertainment privately. This paved the way for personalization (Duguay, 2018; Schmidt et al., 2017), and faster news consumption (Oeldorf-Hirsch & Sundar, 2015), and in turn has become part of journalists' news gathering routine (Paulussen & Harder, 2014). It allowed individuals to be both consumers and producers of content (Karunungan, 2020; Ritzer et al., 2012) that pushed news agencies online to battle over attention and viewership, resulting in more creative cannibalization than journalistic content. With the need to produce content fast, journalists talk less to their sources and rely on desktop work to access stories online (Fenton, 2011). Reporters are pressured to provide content in a shorter period (Fenton, 2011) and due to the cyclical structure of social media, they can source stories to feature on social media (David et al., 2019; Duguay 2018; Kalpokas, 2016). It also espoused polarization of opinion due to user preferences on what information to consume (Schmidt et al., 2017), which are mostly influenced by their social circles. This social recommendation is described by Hermida, et al. (2012) as disturbing authorial structures where family and friends take the role of news editor which filters what story is recommendable to the audience. To adapt to the changing media landscape in the Philippines, social media teams were formed. They are utilized to increase engagement, determine stories that resonate and engage with their audience, gather stories that will sell, and "market news" (David et al., 2019).

Furthermore, in news reporting, straightforward language is commonly used to retain formality and objectivity and writers follow the textbook format in reporting, however, the framing of news in social media veers away from the traditional structure of news writing. This influences how the audiences diagnose causes and make moral judgments on social issues based

on the causal interpretations depicted by the news agencies (Entman, 1993; Pan & Kosicki, 1993).

Neoliberalism and Media

The Philippine media has been dubbed as one of the freest in Asia (Perterra, 2012). Celebrating democracy, however, is synonymous with being subjected to neoliberal ideologies. Researchers that investigated the advantages of neoliberalism noted that it plays a vital role in democracy (Brown, 2003; Wolin, 2008; Soss et al., 2011; Dahl & Soss, 2014). These advantages are evident in the state's deregulation, privatization of media networks, capitalized mass media content, and promotion of consumerism.

Balod and Hameleers (2019) highlighted the four roles of the media in society in their study of the role perceptions of Filipino journalists in an era of mis- and disinformation. First, the media should be the disseminator in getting and delivering the information as fast and efficiently as possible (Cassidy, 2005). Second, the media should be a watchdog in guarding the politicians (Strömback, 2005) and the elite (Mellado & Van Dalen, 2014) and make them accountable for issues concerning the public's welfare. Third, the media has an interpretative journalistic role in using the informed and critical interpretive framing of journalists to the stories they cover (Patterson, 1993; Salgado & Strömback, 2012). Lastly, the media should stand as the populous mobilizer that assembles the public to be critical and political in the country's news and current affairs (Cassidy, 2005). Willnat et al. (2017) asserted that the goals are for the mass public to develop intellectual and cultural interests, challenge people to form opinions, provoke the people to get involved, and prompt them to point at possible opinions.

However, these points are also the focus of criticisms from the political economy and critical philosophers and researchers vis-à-vis the media and its capitalistic nature (Chakravarty & Schiller, 2010; Freedman, 2014; Phelan, 2014). Neoliberalism in the media is destroying democracy in the most invisible and creative ways (Freedman, 2014; Harvey, 2007;).

Media agencies are corporations dependent on revenues. This grabs the autonomy of journalists in reporting (Benson & Neveu, 2005; Bourdieu, 1998). The neoliberal media maximized revenue by going after the easiest and fastest stories. Journalists are preferred to be glued on their desks, cut-and-paste content, and present it as journalism (Phillips, 2010). News agencies have become more loyal to the ideology that they should give people what they want to hear and see, dominated by the profit-making priority of a few media corporations (Freedman, 2014; Herman & McChesney, 1997). With commercial interests, news agencies have the hand to filter information and reports for public consumption (Guioguo, 2015). Marxist critics

explained that they efficiently boost viewership and attract more advertisers by resorting to stupefying and depoliticizing commercial mass media (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002 as cited by Phelan, 2014). These dumbing down of stories ensure that the audiences are entertained even in listening to the news and current affairs programs (Briziarelli, 2014; Freedman, 2014; Phelan, 2014). On the issue of ownership, following major financial crises in history (Chakravartty & Schiller, 2010; Silke & Preston, 2011), many smaller media agencies were forced to either shut down or let prominent companies absorb them to survive. The larger media conglomerates can dominate when there is less competition in the news source, and the power is more concentrated on the few who own the biggest group of networks (Hope, 2012). Harper and Garland (2015), Peck (2015), and Phelan (2014) firmly posit that large media corporations are direct instruments of neoliberal ideological domination because of the power they currently hold, how they promote capitalist interests, maintain the capitalistic status quo, and individualistic approach to economic growth, within mainstream media spaces.

Co-optation in Media

Co-optation is existing and is widely explored in social movements, politics, and businesses (Allen, 1974; Gerschewski, 2013; Holdo, 2019; Serazio, 2019; Wells et al., 2016). Schmotz (2015) defined co-optation as a strategy used to hide the vulnerability of powerful groups that can be threatened by forces such as the military, organized labor, economic and financial organizations, established political parties and organizations, politicized ethnic groups, and large-estate landowners. Co-optation plays out as a means for survival and regime resilience (Buehler, 2015; Gerschewski 2013; Josua, 2016).

Social media is susceptible to co-optation by autocratic regimes through counter mobilization, discourse framing, preference divulgence, and elite coordination (Gunitsky, 2015). In journalism, Serazio (2019) specifically pointed out co-optation through branded news production heavily influenced by the critical political economy, neoliberal market pressures, and advertising. This is supported by the paradigmatic image of co-optation when frames extend for periods of time. In social media, Kalpokas (2016) acknowledged that these networks empower users but disempower the people at the same time when authoritarian regimes have co-opted it by strategies highlighted by Gunitsky (2015). It should be noted that during the Duterte administration, the Philippines has been subjected to authoritarian leadership which led to the attack on press freedom, suppression of the right to dissent, and the propagation of a culture of fear and incivility. De

Jesus (2021) provides further discussion on the political landscape under President Duterte.

Co-optation, although not explicitly mentioned in other studies, can also be categorically linked to concepts such as (1) ‘poverty porn’ or the exploitation of the poor’s narrative to gain sympathy from the audience (Beresford & Russo, 2016; Hamilton et al., 2014); (2) “crisis of representation in the mediation of suffering” (Ong, 2015); (3) ‘romanticization’ of the poor (Karnani, 2007); and (4) ‘sensationalism,’ as an editorial tactic to provoke emotions in news reporting (Vettehen et al., 2008; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020).

In such media (mis)representations, poverty, hardships, and struggles of ordinary citizens are often glorified and turned into stories of hope and inspiration without excavating their systematic causes. This downplays the portrayal of complex issues into “easy-to-understand interpretative packages” constructed with the considerations of journalists’ societal norms and cultural values (Kim et al., 2010). Therefore, distant suffering is produced by these presentations (Kyriakidou, 2015; Ong, 2015). Since resilience has no universal definition and is a concept that is difficult to communicate (Gunderson & Folke, 2011; Morehouse & Sonnett, 2010), news agencies may tend to portray their own interpretation of resilience that may blur its progressive and cultural underpinnings.

Framework of the Study

This study is guided by the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of the Framing Theory, resilience models, and neoliberal framework.

Framing is “the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation” Entman, 2007, p. 164). Based on the four functions of framing (problem definition, causal analysis, moral judgment, and remedy promotion), how the news agencies defined the problem and interpreted the forces behind it were identified. The study also investigated how they presented the impact of the causal agent and the promotion of solutions.

To argue how resilience should be presented in the media, the researchers adapted the resilience framework developed by the Department for International Development (DFID) in the United Kingdom (UK) (2011), which resonates with the definition of resilience in the context of this study, and the University of the Philippines Resilience Institute (UPRI) Resilience Framework. DFID (2011) posits that resilience is a “vital component” to help conflict-affected and fragile communities prepare, respond, withstand, and survive disasters. Meanwhile, the UPRI Resilience Framework established that multidisciplinary actions are required to achieve resilience.

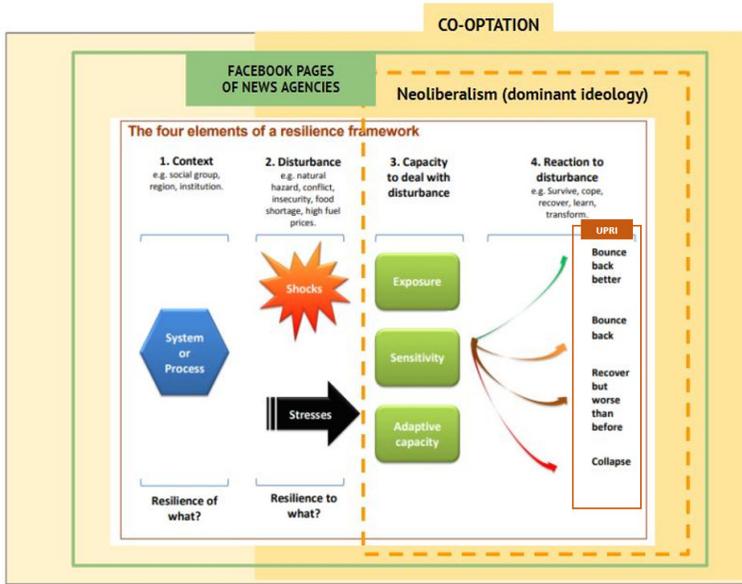
The DFID (2011) framework comprises four elements, namely context, disturbance, capacity, and reaction. In this study, the “context” is operationalized as the resilience of Filipinos during the COVID-19 pandemic. We positioned the health crisis as the “disturbance” affecting the Filipinos, in which “shock” was brought by the lockdown and the “stresses” were socio-economic problems. Meanwhile, the people’s capacity to deal with disturbances was categorized as their degree of stress, its effects, and their ability to adjust. Furthermore, the Filipinos’ reaction or resilience to the disturbances were pictured by examining if people’s lives transformed for the better or “bouncing back better”; retained its quality pre-disturbance or “bouncing back”; still functioning but compromised or “recovering but worse than before,” or unable to function altogether or “collapse.”

On the other hand, UPRI described resilience as a natural, holistic, and multidisciplinary approach towards a sustainable recovery from past and future adversities, as well as continuous improvement made possible through proactive leadership, management, and *bayanihan* among citizens (UPRI, 2020). In Filipino, it translates as the “*katibayan at katatagan sa mahirap na sitwasyon at ang kakayahang bumangon muli*” (UPRI, 2020). Individuals may find ways to manage with disturbances but they will still suffer as “the leadership and management is not working so well” (UPRI, 2020) as most attention is focused after the disturbance occurred, and those who have more resources or privileges will be “more resilient than those who have not” (UPRI, 2020). Although the definition is yet fragmented, this lens was utilized to present how Filipinos should construe resilience.

Integrating the frameworks of the Framing Theory, Resilience, and the concept of neoliberalism as a dominant ideology, this study looked into how news agencies framed stories of resilience, identified neoliberal concepts in these stories, and criticized how it leads to the co-optation of Filipino resilience.

The first level of analysis examined resilience stories to understand the people’s capacity to deal with stress vis-a-vis the degree of stress, its effects, and their ability to adjust. The last level of analysis was focused on how news agencies framed the stories by utilizing neoliberalism indicators. If the news agencies’ framing indicates individualism (self-supporting angles and micro-level solutions), market-based solutions to economic problems (entrepreneurial mindset), “symbolic glue to maintain social order for the interest of the dominant group (positivity and passivity of government and people),” then the stories of resilience were co-opted as their presentations maintain the dominant ideology of capitalism.

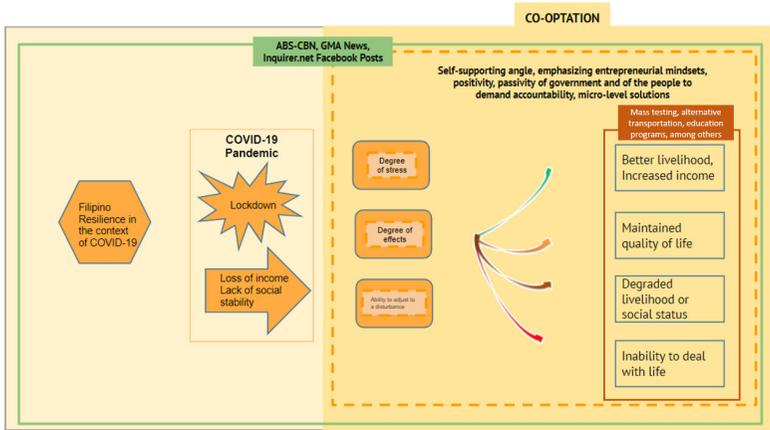
Figure 1.
Integrated Theoretical Framework



To illustrate how news agencies can co-opt Filipino resilience, the researchers integrated the frameworks of framing theory, resilience, and the concept of neoliberalism as the dominant ideology. In this study, the framing of news agencies of stories of resilience, as indicated by the four elements of the resilience framework and characteristics of resilience as defined by experts of UPRI were looked into. Secondly, using the framing framework, the neoliberal undertones within stories of resilience surfaced which led to further critique on the co-optation of Filipino resilience.

The various forms of Filipino resilience or reaction to disturbances were indicated as “better livelihood and increased income,” “maintained quality of life,” “degraded livelihood or social status,” and the “inability to deal with life” under the presence of proactive management and sustainable solutions. The researchers posits that Filipino resilience is co-opted if neoliberal undertones can be drawn from the stories of news agencies which are indicated by the self-supporting angle, the importance of entrepreneurial mindset, positivity, passivity (government and people), and micro-level solutions.

Figure 2.
Operational Framework



Research Methodology

A qualitative research design guided by the assumptions of exploratory research was utilized leading to a textual analysis of 35 Facebook posts (14 ABS-CBN News, 13 GMA News, and 8 Inquirer.net). Captions and photos were the units of analysis. The highest Facebook followers as of October 2020 were the main criterion for selecting the news agencies.

Concepts and indicators were drawn from the theories and concepts used in the study's integrated operational framework. The visible characteristics of the photo and captions were studied leading to the masked language and meaning while relating these to society. Utilizing the resilience framework, the salient frames in Facebook posts surfaced. To fulfill the second objective, the neoliberalism frames using the dormant ideology were examined. These frames were used to critique the co-optation of Filipino resilience.

Data scraping through the data software extraction Python was initially conducted to obtain all the posts from the three news agencies within the study's timeline from March 15, 2020, the beginning of the lockdown, until October 15, 2020. To obtain a comprehensive list, manual data scraping by reverting to Facebook's former layout using an online extension allowing posts to be filtered by month, keywords, and source (e.g., August, COVID19 *suliranin*, Inquirer.net) was conducted. The collected data were filtered to ensure these met the study's criteria: the topics must be in line with the ten basic needs identified by the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) (2019) and depict the Filipinos' living conditions during the pandemic. Maximum variation was employed as a sampling method to obtain the top

45 posts. Further reducing the study's dataset to 35 posts, intensity sampling to ensure the variety and richness of the final dataset were conducted.

The researchers only focused on Facebook posts, specifically texts and photos only as the units of analysis since this content was widely consumed, evidenced by the number of engagements on social media. Although it is acknowledged that some of the social issues are tackled critically in straight news and editorials, these articles are still outnumbered by these kinds of posts which are also more accessible to the public. It is also important to consider that 63% of Filipinos relied on Facebook as this was their primary platform for political news (David et al., 2019). With this, the researchers underscore that this content is sufficient enough to fulfill the objectives of the study.

A textual analysis guide divided into the four levels of visual framing (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011) in photos and the resilience indicators for the captions composed of the research instrument. In the captions, four news discourse structures and framing devices (Pan & Kosicki, 1993), namely syntactic, rhetorical, script, and thematic, were examined. Guide questions were employed to systematically thematize and analyze the resilience frames. Using the textual analysis guide, multiple rounds of coding were conducted. The researchers found it effective to analyze photos first before the captions to obtain a less influenced gaze. The big ambivalence from the captions stimulated the questioning, analysis, and critique of how these stories are framed.

Results and Discussions

Findings discuss how the select media agencies frame Filipino resilience and present prominent neoliberal frames as the guiding principle on Filipino resilience's presentation. As former media practitioners, the researchers have firsthand accounts of the decision-making processes inside the newsroom and how powerful the media is, as the fourth estate when it comes to influencing audiences through the content generated. They are also well aware of the strategy these news agencies employ for profit, which leads to compromising a story's critical points for marketability.

Meanwhile, this study also stemmed from observations of how news agencies present 'Filipino resilience' on social media during the pandemic. At first, these Facebook posts were helpful to ignite the spirit of *bayanihan*; however, upon further scrutiny, they questioned how this content dislocates Filipinos' capacity to demand government accountability. Given their experience in development work and participatory communication practices, they understand how such messages could further augment power relations imbalance and detachment on social issues. With this, the

researchers position themselves as critics of neoliberalism as the propellant of news agencies' co-optation of resilience in their Facebook posts.

A Different Point of View: Framing Filipino resilience through news writing technicalities

ABS-CBN News, GMA News, and Inquirer.net Facebook pages elevated the narration, employed the soft news style, and veered away from the textbook format of reporting to elicit a favorable spin in their news stories. These contributed to amplifying the content salability.

Instead of using straightforward language in news writing, most of the stories are aggrandized through colloquial words. One caption described a family as “*nabubuhay ngayon sa dilim*, [living in the dark]” while another described the condition of an old woman selling on the street through, “*tirik man ang araw o malakas ang buhos ng ulan*, [whether when the sun is at its height or when the rain unceasingly pours].” Through the intricacy and tonality of these descriptions, the text seems to maneuver how the audience should feel or even act towards the subject. Those keywords help “provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments” (Entman, 1993, p. 52) to situate several contributed stories in the resilience narrative.

Meanwhile, resilience may not be surfaced by looking at the images only. Some photos might appear simple and straightforward, however, the heavily dramatized narration links this to resilience. Even candid photos may intentionally show the pitiful situations or inspiring actions of the subjects on social media to gain traction.

News agencies can influence the audience's opinion on a news story by making certain attributes salient (McCombs & Shaw, 2014). In relation to this, some captions have already suggested how the audience should react by emphasizing a certain angle. By opening the story of a certain *taho* [a Filipino snack made of silken tofu] vendor with “*Umantig sa puso ng netizens* [touched the hearts of the netizens],” GMA News implies the audience should feel sympathetic towards the subject, like other internet users who already did. Meanwhile, “*hitting two birds with one stone*,” is how Inquirer.net described the endeavors of a taxi driver, which evokes inspiration that individuals can do more than their current jobs to make ends meet. Emotional arousal using sensational language can be attributed to how news agencies try to soften the news to make it more marketable (Grabe, et al., 2003; Kleemans & Hendricks Vettehen, 2009; Vettehen, et al., 2008).

These stories also deviate from the textbook news format or the inverted pyramid structure. However, it seems more effective for news agencies to use attention-grabbing lead phrases instead. One may argue that these stories are not written as straight news but merely as Facebook captions.

Pan and Kosicki (1993) explain that the organization of words and details in the story are not “trivial” as they “hold great power” in “providing the basic tools to discuss the issues at hand” thus framing can affect how the reader understands the circumstances of the situation presented. Furthermore, Entman (1993, p. 56) argues that dominant framing hinders the audience from “making a balanced assessment of the situation”. Despite breaking away from the typical news format and exhibiting such freedom to beautify the story, how come the news agencies remain neutral about societal issues and stay positive about the situation instead of disturbed?

Frames in news help the audience diagnose causes and make moral judgments (Entman, 1993). It also establishes a “vivid image or a concrete case and gradually leads to a point that logically functions like an empirical generalization” (Pan & Kosicki, 1993, p. 61). Causal interpretations can also be depicted by “simply presenting actions in a context in which one may be seen as an antecedent and another as a consequence” (Pan & Kosicki, 1993, p. 61).

The resilience news stories published are presented to stem from one primary trigger— the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it is noteworthy that the systemic cause of the problems has been disregarded in the posts. As a result, it seems that “*dahil tigil-pasada* [due to the halt in public transportation services]” is the sole reason for a family to live in a “*nakaparadang jeep* [parked jeepney]” and not the inherent economic vulnerability of most jeepney drivers. Inquirer.net’s story, “losing his job as a laborer” was simply the cause of living in a “1x2 pushcart” and not due to housing issues in the country, especially in urban poor areas. In news discourse, “causal reasoning is often present, including causal attributions of the roots of a problem” as well as “inferences about the responsibility for treatment of the problem” (Pan & Kosicki, 1993, p. 64); thus, it can be inferred that the news agencies provided weak causal interpretations and failed to offer critical analysis on the issues they covered in their Facebook posts. Furthermore, despite the platform’s affordances, the news agencies deliberately dismissed the opportunity to supplement these posts with follow-up stories to further discuss the root causes of the problems and exhibit a more investigative manner of reporting.

Diskarteng Pinoy: Resilience is Finding a Way Out. Faced with the most unfavorable situation, Filipinos will always find a way to survive. This is how *diskarte* [strategy] and *pagiging mapamaraan* [being resourceful] are used as themes of most of the Filipino resilience stories. Creativity, innovativeness, craftsmanship, and improvisation skills are evident in narratives of bouncing back from the wreckage caused by the pandemic.

Consistently, captions such as “*Look!*” and “*Tingnan*” are used to demand attention to and praise the “*galing ng Pinoy* [ability of the Filipino]” for the

creations of the subjects. This is complemented by the photos with angles and positions that captured the subject's craftsmanship and *diskarte*. These are evident in the stories with the headline, "No classroom, no problem," by GMA News on August 31, 2020, which emphasizes the student's ability to creatively improvise and comply. Stories highlighting innovations and craftsmanship are coupled by photos weaving the narrative to detail how the creative solution is accomplished, such as in ABS-CBN's photo of Teacher Rona and her co-teachers painting rocks in exchange for bond papers published on August 17, 2020.

This focus on the ability to achieve something despite the situation implies that craftsmanship is a coping mechanism. Photos created a story within a story that guides viewers on how to devise a *madiskarteng* [strategic] solution to their problem. Conveying practical and creative mechanisms is the default solution, this highlights the Filipino's ability to rise beyond the problems they face in contrast to DFID's (2011) resilience as the ability to manage adversity by maintaining or changing the living standards despite the challenges. Furthermore, DFID (2011) asserts that long-term prospects should not be compromised, however, these are already compromised due to the multiple socio-economic hindrances caused by the pandemic.

Resilience and Neoliberal Frames

Findings in the study show that the Facebook posts of the select news agencies about resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic in the country have been heavily branded with the neoliberal frames. Compliant with neoliberalism's best-selling features, the Facebook posts of the select news agencies nurture the culture of temporary solutions, individualistic approach, and optimism as a lifestyle. Moreover, the Facebook posts magnifies economic progress, while veering away from the politics in the pandemic.

Daily Consumption Only: The Reliance on Unsustainable Acts for Continuity and Survival. The Filipino brand of resilience is manifested through daily deeds, visible in small, concentrated acts of an individual to pacify the problem. These are unsustainable. GMA News captions, "*Sa Kabila ng COVID-19* [Despite the COVID-19]" to imply survival despite the effects of the disturbance. While Inquirer.net writes, "Ailwilson uses his grandmother's mobile phone for school and is reliant on prepaid load for his internet connection that usually runs out even before the classes end." On the other hand, continuing life is evident in dire situations such as full-capacity hospitals and a family forced to live in their jeep. The day-to-day survival tactics and temporary measures are "advertised" despite the likelihood that the need for them will prolong in the pandemic's context.

The ABS-CBN's post, dated August 17, 2020, showed how Raymond, a street vendor, could not continue selling *balut* [fertilized duck egg] and chose to clean canals in exchange for daily needs acknowledged the pandemic's impacts; however, resilience is framed episodic, reactive, and reliant on individual efforts. Diprose (2015) asserted that the demand for collective change is postponed as the responsibility to live decently amidst problems is transferred to the individuals' ability to survive (individual resilience), contradicting how communities must be prepared to face the incoming adversities in their environment and withstand challenges together.

Glorifying the ability of Filipinos to endure struggles despite inadequate capital, sustenance is an autonomous responsibility anchored on the principle that life is an enterprise making one accountable to maintain resources (Walch, 2018). This glorification highlights how an individual can and will survive despite inadequate resources. However, such framing of individual *diskarte* reinforces unsustainable efforts, which cannot address the cyclical, systematic, and institutional problems.

Individual Dominance: The Individual's Power and Self-Liberalization from Struggles. The individual is the guiding force that will liberate the self and family from struggles. Evidently, individual resilience in livelihood stories is characterized not only by personal characteristics, but also by family cohesion, and external support systems (Masten & Garmezy, 1985). This is apparent as the analyzed reports present individual struggles and resilience are always for the family. An expression of innate capability, grit, perseverance, *tatag at tibay ng loob* [endurance and fortitude], and *diskarte* of the subjects, the Filipino must possess these values to live. According to Diprose (2015), this may result in the romanticization of resilience. It instills inequality by presenting the ideal Filipino on a pedestal that the masses need to emulate, disregarding social class and the context of suffering.

Individualism has two faces: the netizen's viral posts and the subject. For the contributor, accountability is self-imposed. This is the urgency to participate in the subject's hardships. While the action is passive, the burden is collective, allowing the netizen to become a hero when the posts achieve virality. Help is received as described in an ABS-CBN News post dated September 16, 2020, "*Nag-viral sa social media ang ibinahaging larawan ni Bontia, dahilan para dumagsa ang tulong sa matanda* [A photo shared by Bontia went viral on social media, which led to the outpouring help sent to the elderly]." In some cases, netizens also become subjects as news agencies focus on their deeds. A selfie of a netizen and an old male street vendor, whose goods hang over his clothes, became viral and attracted donations. This individual frame of resilience may touch the emotions of privileged individuals to extend temporary help.

The second face of individualism emphasized the subject who is accomplished, self-sufficient, and *matatag* [steadfast]. Diprose (2015) noted the ideal citizen can undergo different stresses through self-discipline as a test of character. As the invisible hand in society, individualism overcomes problems regardless of scale and scope. Self-dependent, Filipinos are consumers of individual accountability to liberalize themselves from problems. Individual actions become the standardized route as adaptation is not an option, but simply rising above the situation. The self-made man is praised along with the autonomy to redirect his life.

The Capital of the Mind: Optimism for Transcendence. An optimistic mindset is also a tool of the trade to live with the pandemic as stories of Filipino resilience become an inspiration. Best depicted by Ranier, a GMA News contributor, “*Tulungan natin sarili natin... Lahat tayo ay may magagawa sa laban na ‘to* [Let’s help ourselves... We can work together in this battle]. *WE WILL WIN THIS WAR TOGETHER.*” Despite the sight of frontliners exhausted and slumped over a swabbing booth, the GMA News highlights the optimism on the September 3, 2020 post. Inquirer.net’s post demonstrates how the disturbance is also a welcomed addition in the subject’s life, “*LOOK: A taxi driver tries to hit two birds with one stone by putting up a mobile sari-sari store in his car’s compartment.*” These posts demonstrate the harsh effects of the pandemic but are positively depicted as there is strength in numbers, an occasion to champion advocacy, and the ability to make the most of the situation.

In photographs, this is exemplified when the camera captures the admiration of innovation, the subject proudly smiling (ABS-CBN’s Facebook photo of Monika dated July 14, 2020 showing the former beauty queen selling on the street), attention to human goodness (strangers assisting a family traveling in a *kariton* [wagon] from Bulacan to Samar in GMA News’s post, dated September 21, 2020), and the unexpected opportunities brought by the pandemic (GMA’s story on former real estate agent Julie dated July 06, 2020 proudly smiling with the trunk of her car open as a rolling store). Presenting the situation’s comforting aspects derails the gravity of the problem. The crisis is now a mere roadblock as it posits these problems are new despite being existent in society.

As Filipinos are looking for hope amid this crisis, the media can emphasize certain parts of the issue to connect and serve the interest of its viewers (Feldman et al., 2016). Despite depicting reality, these are framed to imply that the problem is bearable. There are reasons to survive or bounce back better at most.

Transforming into inspirations to move forward by praising sacrifices and coping efforts, these are angled into Filipino values such as *para sa pamilya* [for the family], *bayanihan*, perseverance, and being happy. However,

these stories are often accused of being sensationalized (Coronel, 2003), tabloidized (Reese and Lee, 2012), entertainment-centered, isolationist reporting (Fenton, 2011) that lack the investigative nature of news reports. Conditioning the individual's mindset to find the silver lining as a means for survival becomes the selling point. However, this might lead to toxic positivity.

The Self-Governing Filipino: Reduction of the State's Accountability and Responsibility. The guiding force of neoliberalism is extremely evident in how ABS-CBN News, GMA News, and Inquirer.net position government accountability. Most of these simply mention the government's action, such as Inquirer.net's on the "*Hatid Tulong* [Transportation Assistance] Program", ABS-CBN News' story simply cited Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) Rules to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, and GMA News simply linking an article to the Luzon-wide enhanced community quarantine. Despite this, the government's role in the COVID-19 response was disregarded as these posts did not expound on the actions and criticize deficiencies.

These frames mirror real-life experiences during the pandemic. Filipinos have become self-governing through implementing unsustainable solutions, reliance on the self, and fostering a positive mindset. Calls for help, demands for accountability, and questions directed regarding the response of the government are non-existent (Su & Mangada, 2016).

The neoliberal culture is fortified as the state's power, resources, and responsibility is diminished. The government's role to create a comprehensive response to the pandemic is not framed as a problem. On Facebook, the media does not cultivate an aware, responsive, and active citizenry as it feeds passive information only.

Maximum Capital: The Prioritization of Economic Progress. Economic progress is the ability and determination of a society and its members to produce goods and services that are highly valued using an equal amount of resources (Solow, 1968). This is highly linked to productivity in labor and capital, power of ideas, efficient use of resources and entrepreneurial mindset (Ayres, 1944; Young, 1928). These components are championed in a neoliberal society by promoting deregulation and enhancing the entrepreneurial mindset of individuals and corporations in a free market environment.

Contextually, the news agencies framed Filipino resilience as associated with productivity and entrepreneurship by showcasing productivity despite health risks. GMA News expressed this through Lola Leonila who had to endure the sun and rain to continue supporting her family by selling. Posted

on September 16, 2020, the senior citizen is seen broadly smiling while peddling her goods and kneeling on the ground.

Even a grade 12 student strives to study harder to provide for her family in the future, reported by ABS-CBN News, “*Desidido si Jennylyn na makapagtapos ng pag-aaral para mabigyan ng magandang buhay ang pamilya lalo na ang kanyang lolo Tino, [Jennylyn has resolved her goal to graduate and provide a good life for her family, especially for her grandpa Tino].*” She exhibited the visionary entrepreneurial spirit in the context of improving one’s skills, commitment, and overcoming challenges in the most adverse situations.

Drawing from the examples above, we infer that the news agencies manifest neoliberalism in the Filipino resilience frames by upholding the culture of free-market capitalism and lauding the entrepreneurial initiatives and desire for economic progress.

Neoliberalism, as the dominant global ideology, has its roots in the presentation and construction of Filipino resilience. Principles such as continuity, individualism, belief in human capital, diffusion of the state’s role, and economic advancement are the most prominent neoliberalism frames. Harper and Garland (2015), Peck (2015), and Phelan (2014) firmly posited large media corporations are direct instruments of neoliberal ideological domination due to their power, promotion of capitalist interests, maintenance of the capitalistic status quo, and individualistic approach to economic growth within mainstream media spaces. This supports the findings of the study that establish how neoliberalism deeply influenced the captions of the ABS-CBN News, GMA News, and Inquirer.net and how it has influenced how Filipinos live.

The Co-optation of Filipino Resilience

Based on the findings, the researchers assert that these stories are co-opted due to the heavy influence of neoliberalism which diminishes the qualities of Filipino resilience such as interdisciplinary, proactive, holistic, and sustainable characterized by the UPRI Framework (2020) and NDRRMC (2010).

Gatekeeping: A Journalism Practice of the Past. Part of the legacy of ABS-CBN, GMA, and Inquirer is to gatekeep content for audience consumption. They have the power to determine what the audience should know and keep the integrity and accuracy of news through editing. However, to maintain relevance, news agencies depend on viral stories on social media which are already considered sold before they are even made into proper content.

For instance, the researchers, through the analysis of the visual language, infer that the post about a teacher delivering the modules to his students is staged. The teacher swims across a deep river holding with one hand the modules that are not protected. Furthermore, every step of the subject's journey was documented by a designated photographer. Still, ABS-CBN News reported it as an innocent human-interest story.

The teacher's dedication is not in question, but the lack of gatekeeping on ABS-CBN News' fact-checking before sharing it to their followers. Instead of presenting an in-depth analysis and investigation, ABS-CBN News has succumbed to the "viral" phenomenon to secure online engagement. Indeed, gatekeeping was sacrificed to keep up with the current demand.

Out with the Old, in with the New: Content Cannibalism as the New Trend in News Making. In social media, online engagements are currency. Select media agencies keep up with this by using contextually catchy word phrasing in their captions, "*Lalaking nais makauwi sa Samar, bumyahe mula Bulacan gamit ang pedicab* [Man aims to go home to Samar, travelled from Bulacan by pedicab]." They also incite interactions by using colloquially intriguing word choices, "*Rumarampa..., pero hindi para sa pageant* [Struts..., but not for a pageant]." Moreover, they were contextualized further with equally suggestive photos.

It is also evident how the photos have been immensely isolated from the caption, but somehow together, these were capable of stirring emotions and stimulating online discussions. For instance, GMA News's post on April 21, 2020, was used to overemphasize suffering as a FoodPanda rider works despite being differently-abled.

These posts were consciously and strategically made more dramatic, heartbreaking, and inspiring to increase engagement. This act is dangerous because, for revenue, the individualistic mindset, excessive focus on financial wealth, the powerlessness of the state, deregulation, and toxic positivity are promoted. This may be the in-demand content, but as one of the most influential news pages on Facebook, these agencies have a responsibility to do better.

Featuring these stories exploit the lived experiences of Filipinos framed as resilience. Particularly in photographs, the subjects are reduced into mere attraction. Repeatedly shared on Facebook, these stories memorialize Filipinos' suffering.

Filipino Resilience for Sale: Romanticization at its Finest. Most of the Facebook posts analyzed for this study highlight the idealized citizen's branding to spark inspiration. The news agencies romanticize resilience to highlight the high-quality individual who can flexibly adapt to adversities.

This is the stark attention to the Filipino experience of poverty and struggle, but in the end, still, fight to live another day.

Posted by ABS-CBN News on September 9, 2020, Tino despite his old age and scant resources created an improvised learning area in the trees for his grandchild's online class. On August 12, 2020, *Inquirer.net* depicted Rommel as a father bartering fighting roosters for a mobile phone for online classes. The romanticization of individual remedy, grit, and resilience to the point of tolerating inequality undermines the reality that not all Filipinos undergo equal struggles and privileges during the pandemic. By creating a role model of an ideal citizen, the marginalized are mostly shoved aside such as the anonymous individual "Macoy" who resorted to selling his kidney during the earlier phase of the pandemic in a GMA News post on August 23, 2020. Compared to the ideal citizen, "Macoy" does not have the ability to improvise or barter resources but instantly undertakes dire actions.

The researchers argue that Filipino resilience's romanticization in the most adverse environments is an attack on the marginalized. News agencies' framing of success stories without the context of the bigger societal problem is regressive since the problems are recognized, but positioned in a neutral manner, targeting private individuals for help, and lack government-level intervention. Resulting in the unceasing suffering of the average Filipino, it is important to dwell on this romanticization as the constant reinforcement of the "ideal citizen" conveys that the country's current state of living is still acceptable. If other people can cope with the situation, this should be the standard for all.

It is What it is: The Philippine Brand of the Vicious Cycle of Poverty. With the advent of social media, especially Facebook, the media landscape has changed significantly, particularly the type of stories. Most Facebook posts depict how Filipinos can still function by having the will to endure suffering and disturbances. This framing is part of the neoliberalism mindset's creative maintenance that this is the reality, and that there is an invisible hand that controls the economy and society, and if people must survive, they must go with the flow.

However, the researchers argue that this narrative is an out-of-touch reality created and reinforced by the invisible hand. The news agencies paint a blanket of passivity and faux normalcy on each Facebook post that they clung to objectivity and *positive vibes*.

The news agencies present these stories in a neutral manner, without progressive calls for sustainable change and development, and resort to the viral unpolitical stories. It is the propagation of the Philippine society, whereas the citizens have no power over the government, dissent is seen as

terrorism, the poor bowing down to the rich, and the extremely widened economic gap due to the pandemic's impact.

Furthermore, when people are bombarded by Facebook posts that manifest this mindset, which maintains the status quo, they may tend to have lesser expectations and lowered standards in the quality of life vis-à-vis the government's accountability, the reimagination of the system, and the society shaped by the people.

Child-friendly: Filipino Resilience Depoliticization Scheme. News agencies' branding on Filipino resilience contradicts the UPRI (2020) Filipino resilience definition as a collective, multidisciplinary approach. They have simplified it to the point of blandness and neutrality so anyone can get a grasp of it without insinuating any political stance and make it sellable.

To keep up with the demand for content and entertainment from the consumers, Filipino resilience is presented as a fast emotion-trigger commodity. They are a source of hope and faith in line with the perspective that everything will work out, sans the multidisciplinary approach that will provide a better life quality in a sustainable manner.

Thus, the researchers criticize the news agencies for sanitizing Filipino resilience in their Facebook posts. As their compliance to the neoliberal society's investments on the foundation of a highly materialistic mindset, citizens are pitted against each other by pedestalling those who focus on acquiring material wealth. This depoliticization scheme that targets all tries to ensure that citizens will no longer have time to politicize their resilience as they are too occupied being resilient on their own and entertained watching others do the same.

Dismantling the Status Quo: Bayanihan Privatized. Resilience is coupled with *bayanihan* as presented on the Facebook captions through calls for donations and the rise of the Filipinos' collectivism. However, the presentation of *bayanihan* must be scrutinized as its essence has been tainted. On August 23, 2020, Inquirer.net presented *bayanihan* as a call for donation through posting former teacher Eloisa's viral story while suggesting netizens to send help. Transferring the burden to private citizens, it becomes a private entity that serves as the end-all solution. This, in turn, widens the gap between the government and its constituents. Neoliberalism is deeply intertwined in the newsroom. Media agencies become the primary advocate of the prevalent notions of resilience, which is very personalized, small scale, and temporary. With this, the power of the media to alter existing notions and bring a new meaning of resilience into the public sphere drifts away.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the select news media agencies co-opt the concept of Filipino resilience by presenting romanticized stories of Filipino struggles and highlighting the positive disposition, individual ability to survive, and cope with challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Backed by the findings, the researchers emphasize this co-optation is anti-poor and regressive as it widens the gap between the poor and the rich amidst the current health crisis. With these findings, it is evident that news media agencies failed to challenge the common notion of Filipino resilience, and instead, propagated a sanitized and depoliticized branding and consumption of it.

The romanticization of Filipinos' struggles during adversities may lead to desensitization. It may also propagate a hegemonic ideology that the citizens who live safely and comfortably despite adversity are the rewards of championing early in life without highlighting the privileges capitalized on. Even worse, people on the verge of collapsing are solely to blame due to improper planning and lack of hard work, while deliberately masking oppression, inequality, and under service.

Therefore, the co-optation of Filipino resilience in the Facebook posts of ABS-CBN, GMA, and Inquirer on their official pages is firmly inferred. Directly and indirectly, this enables oppression and inequality by mobilizing the neoliberal ideology to dominate Philippine society.

Implications and Recommendations

A more comprehensive framework that institutions should implement from UPRI's resilience must be established. As it is a hazy concept; it is high time that the true meaning of Filipino resilience is harnessed through the collaboration of different disciplines. Furthermore, discussions on Filipino resilience must tackle class struggle, communication, and human rights to encompass society.

Resilience must be understood appropriately. One's ability to cope is not representative of the population. The essence of resilience must be contextualized and innovation and resourcefulness, though laudable, should not be the only behavior for survivorship. The masses have been robbed since time immemorial, and now, in the definition of resilience. The researchers implore netizens to be critical of the content consumed as they also contribute to the romanticization of resilience.

The media must reclaim their responsibility as the state's watchdog. Filipinos' struggles must not be framed and packaged as a marketable commodity but rather presented with thorough analysis and unbiased causal interpretation. Their stories must rattle the administration's incompetence,

bring consciousness to desensitized citizens, liberate the masses from the corrupted notion of *bayanihan* and Filipino values, which are monopolized by the privileged to continuously submerge the oppressed in a culture of silence.

Future studies may include media theories applicable to digital communication to further scrutinize these messages, the structure of news agencies and conglomerates to obtain a clearer view of the newsroom under a capitalistic and neoliberal business model. It is also recommended to diversify the platform and dissect situations exhibiting resilience.

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