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A MEDIA FRAMING ANALYSIS OF THE FLOOD CONTROL ISSUE IN THE PHILIPPINES: CURRENT NARRATIVES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

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ABSTRACT
This study aimed to analyze media framing of the flood control issue in the Philippines, its current narratives, and implications for policy. It is based on Framing theory and Agenda-Setting theory, incorporating the four discursive dimensions of Framing theory in content analysis: problem identification, causal attribution, moral evaluation, and conclusion. This qualitative study examines how the media in the Philippines frame the issue of flood control. Data from media outlets, including print, radio, television, and online sources—both local and national—were presented as findings of this research. The results highlight the presentation of qualitative data in problem identification, causality, morality, and conclusion, as well as the dominance of political concerns. Based on these findings, the study provides policy implications for enhancing governance through collaboration with the private sector, civil society, media practitioners, and academic institutions, as well as for improving the effectiveness of media coverage in the Philippines.

Keywords:
Media Framing, Analysis, Flood Control Issue, Media Coverage, Policy Implications, Narratives, Agenda Setting, Framing

INTRODUCTION

The Philippines is recognized as one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world, mainly due to its unique geographical location (Gallman, 2021). The most common disasters are flooding and landslides, which impose a significant burden on the national economy (Sotto, 2022; Tolentino et al., 2025). Moreover, frequent disasters challenge the Philippines' sustainable development by increasing socioeconomic and humanitarian impacts. For example, recent Typhoon Tino (Kalmaegi) and Super Typhoon Uwan (Fung-Wong) left devastation across central and northern Luzon. Typhoon Tino caused 232 deaths, 100 missing persons, and affected over 4.1 million people, with 135,000 homes damaged or destroyed (Philippine News Agency, 2025). Following closely, Super Typhoon Uwan struck the country again, displacing over 1.4 million people and resulting in at least 18 deaths (Oxfam Pilipinas, 2025). This highlights the pressing need for robust governance to foster resilience against disasters.

However, the Philippines' vulnerability to disasters is not solely due to natural factors; the failure of flood control projects has also worsened disaster risk nationwide (Adekola & Lamond; Sotto, 2022; Tolentino et al., 2025). The country's vulnerability is linked to corruption and government inefficiency, highlighting allegations of misused public funds, ghost projects, and substandard infrastructure that costs more than it should (Gera, 2025; Greenpeace Philippines, 2025; OneNews.PH, 2025). This undermines the effectiveness of the country's disaster response framework (Gera, 2025).

Furthermore, the media significantly shapes public understanding and influences government policy priorities. Gallman (2021), Moncada et al. (2024), and OSOU (2013) noted that media use framing techniques to craft narratives that direct both public and government attention to viral issues (Moncada et al., 2024; Raza et al., 2025). Media coverage emphasizes casualties and government accountability during disasters, highlighting responsibility for failed flood control projects (Adekola & Lamond, 2018; Raza et al., 2025). Additionally, the media discusses tensions among government agencies, the private sector, and civil society regarding corruption

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in flood control initiatives (Adekola & Lamond, 2018; Vladissavljevic, 2015). This narrative fuels public outrage and calls for accountability and good governance (Adekola & Lamond, 2018; Tolentino et al., 2025).
On the other hand, the media's role highlights the convergence of governance and policy change through stories centered on justice, transparency, and sustainability. This makes the press a key part of the national discussion about flood control projects in the Philippines. Therefore, despite the recognized importance of media in promoting government accountability and shaping disaster narratives—and although existing research has extensively documented how disasters are framed (Gallman, 2021; Moncada et al., 2024) and analyzed systemic governance failures (Atienza & Hipolito, 2010; Gera, 2025)—there are few comprehensive, in-depth analyses specifically focusing on media framing of the flood control issue in the Philippines, its current narratives, and their policy implications. This study aims to fill this gap by analyzing media coverage of the flood control problem, identifying the dominant narratives that shape public perceptions, and examining their effects on government policies.

OBJECTIVES

This study aims to analyze the Philippine media coverage of flood control issues in the Philippines, its current narratives, and the policy implications to analyze how flood control issues are framed by the Philippine media, to analyze the presentation of the narratives of the flood control issue, and to identify the implications of media coverage for government policy.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This paper follows a qualitative content analysis methodological approach to analyze how the Philippine media framed the flood control issue in the country. According to O'Connor & Jsoffe (2020), content analysis, based on textual and visual data, aims to analyze the data by examining its meanings, patterns, and themes. Content Analysis allows the researcher to analyze narratives of how flood control issues are constructed through words and images published by news outlets. As the study deals with framing and agenda-setting, Content Analysis is systematic enough to analyze explicit content, underlying meanings, and biases of the presented articles. The conclusion of this study will be presented through the framing theory of Entman (1993) and the agenda-setting theory of McCombs & Shaw (1972), which served as the basis for the data interpretation and coding framework.

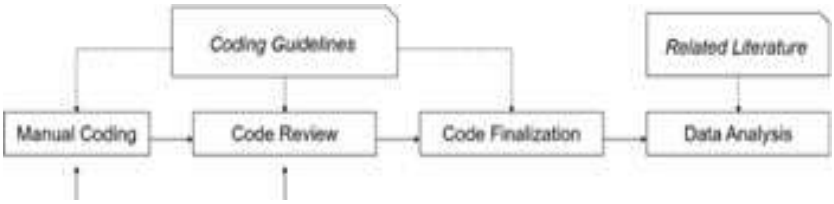

Figure 1. Process of Content Analysis in this Study

Sources of Data

Published articles were collected and analyzed to prevent duplication and ensure their relevance to the research issue. Since the main aim of this study is to examine how the media frames the flood control problem in the Philippines, articles like editorials that reflect the media outlet's perspective were excluded. Therefore, the researcher primarily focused on published articles that include direct quotes from individuals involved in the flood control issue. To narrow down the data, the researcher analyzed content from six major Philippine media outlets—comprising newspapers, television, digital media, and radio—to capture the diversity of audience reach and language used intentionally:

1. GMA Integrated News, including GMA Regional TV (English, Tagalog, Cebuano, privately owned, fair reporting, leading TV channel)
2. ABS-CBN, including regional branches (English, Tagalog, Cebuano, privately owned, fair reporting)
3. Philippine Daily Inquirer (English, Tagalog, privately owned, one of the longest-running newspapers)
4. Sunstar Davao (English, Tagalog, Cebuano, mass circulation, leading digital media outlet in Davao City with over 1 million followers)
5. PTV News National and Mindanao (government-owned television network)
6. DZRH Radio Station (Tagalog, privately owned, second-oldest radio station in the Philippines)

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Sampling Technique

The researcher employed the purposive sampling technique in analyzing media framing on the flood control issue in the Philippines. According to Raza et al. (2025), purposive sampling will balance the scope and complexity of the data gathered, ensuring a comparative analysis across all national and local media outlets in the country. Specific media texts were retrieved from search engines and websites, including those related to flood control issues, flood control, ghost projects, substandard infrastructure, flooding, Typhoon Uwan, Typhoon Tino, and Flooding 2025, which were involved in a flood control scandal. A total of 100 news stories will be collected.

Procedure of the Study

The study was conducted through a comprehensive review of related literature to analyze the media framing of flood control issues in the Philippines, their current narratives, and policy implications. This is crucial for establishing supporting literature for the statement of the problem, as it highlights the importance of analyzing media framing.

Data Gathering Instrument

The researcher employed a coding framework in content analysis based on Entman's (1993) four central discursive dimensions in typology, which is anchored in framing theory. The framework used in this study to analyze the media framing of the flood control issue is a coding scheme derived from a traditional deductive framing method based on the emergent patterns in the data during the coding process.

Data Analysis

The researcher employed qualitative content analysis as the primary method for analyzing the media framing of the flood control issue in the Philippines, its current narratives, and the policy implications, coding frames deductively. According to O'Connor and Joffe (2020), content analysis, based on textual and visual data, aims to analyze the data by examining its meanings, patterns, and themes. Content Analysis allows the researcher to analyze narratives of how flood control issues are constructed through words and images published by news outlets. Published articles were reviewed thoroughly using a coding framework based on Entman's (1993) four central dimensions: definition of the problem, causal attribution, moral evaluation, and conclusions.

Ethical Considerations

This study does not require human consent or approval, as it will only utilize public news articles published by media outlets. However, the following ethical sensitivity will be observed in the treatment of this human-interest study: when quoting stories of those affected by media framing of flood control issues, identifying the factors that are subject to protecting someone's privacy and security.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the study outlines the media framing analysis of flood control issues in the Philippines, including its current narratives and policy implications. The framework suggests that the media can influence what the public and policymakers consider important, as well as how events are perceived through the process of framing. This adapts the framework of Entman (1993), incorporating McCombs & Shaw (1972), which includes four discursive dimensions. The framework serves as a lens through which the study examines how the media identify narratives vital to the state and civil society, shaping perceptions and consumption of events. This paper follows a conceptual framework that analyzes the media framing of the flood control issue in the Philippines, drawing on the insights of Entman's (1993) Framing Theory and McCombs & Shaw's (1972) Agenda-Setting Theory. The framework presents a comprehensive set of dimensions, referred to as frames, which comprise values, beliefs, perspectives, and points of view considered in narratives (Moncada et al., 2024). The deliberate use of frames in ideas is known as framing in communication. According to Vladisavljevic (2015), framing influences how flood control issues are presented in the news and the manner in which they are reported. Framing exposes hidden assumptions in media coverage by shaping a story that thoroughly narrates a situation affecting community sectors (Vladisavljevic, 2015).

At the core of the framework, Raza et al. (2025) emphasized that the prominence of issues shaped by the news media aligns with what civil society considers essential and necessary. The media can serve multiple roles in framing stories by presenting the reality of flood control issues in the Philippines, thus influencing policy outcomes (Ali & Gill, 2022). This underscores the concept of agenda-setting theory, which suggests that certain conditions are established (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). In contrast, framing theory examines the issue through

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Entman's (1993) four discursive dimensions: problem definition, causal attribution, moral evaluation, and conclusion. This framework not only guides theoretical data collection and analysis but also serves as a tool to examine how the media frames the flood control issue in the Philippines, informing research and policy development, and ultimately aiding in the creation of specific, practical recommendations to address these gaps. A diagram below illustrates these relationships.

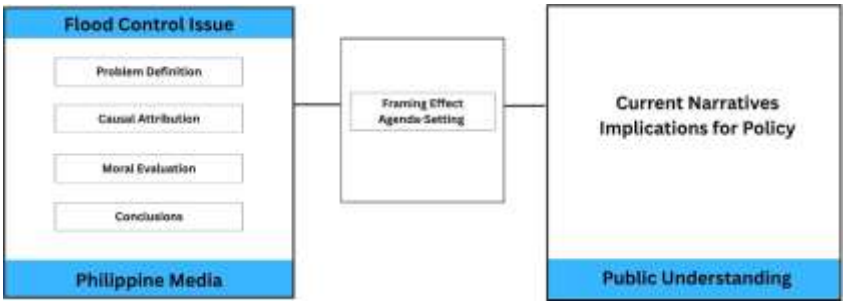

Figure 2. The theoretical framework of the research was adapted from the Framing Theory and modified with the agenda-Setting Theory

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the analysis of 100 media texts, consistent but nuanced patterns were evident and analyzed in how the Philippine media frames the flood control issue. The findings are presented in the following manner, based on Entman's (1993) four discursive dimensions as major sections: (1) Problem Identification, (2) Causal Attribution, (3) Moral Evaluation, and (4) Conclusions; and subsections showing the relevance of the themes presented.

Problem Identification

Among all the patterns presented, problem identification has emerged as the most prevalent frame. The emphasis on the flood control issue is evident among all media outlets, comprising print, television, radio, and online media. However, Moncada et al. (2024) emphasized that they focused on harm rather than risk, presenting crisis communication rather than risk communication. This is grounded in the agenda-setting theory of McCombs and Shaw (1972), as discussed by Zain (2014), which posits that the mass media play a significant role in shaping the public agenda, particularly in relation to civil society, and hence, framing the flood control issue as an urgent matter. Nevertheless, as the media acts as a gatekeeper of the government, the framing of the flood control issue is further investigated.

Causal Attribution

The presentation of narratives is inherently persuasive and contributes to the social psychology of media coverage. The flood control issue became a dual proposition of causal attribution. The findings in this study about causality are limited. However, the media framing of the flood control issue maximized the public understanding of its narratives and implications for government policy. According to Vladisavljević (2015), media framing focuses public attention on issues to a more refined level, rather than others. Moreover, McCombs and Shaw (1972) highlight causality by focusing on a specific issue, such as flood control, while omitting other aspects of the problem.

Moral Evaluation

Accountability, or 'pananagutan,' often emerged as a moral evaluation in the media's framing of the flood control issue in the Philippines. For instance, articles are written in the following manner. Moral values also influence the actions of people and their individual characteristics. According to Moncada et al. (2024), moral evaluation in framing flood control issues in the Philippines is evident by the existence of firm moral values in the country. Some of the stories published focused on accountability or 'pananagutan.' According to Isaac (2021), the word 'pananagutan' is derived from 'sagot', which is translated to 'answer' in English. This also translates to the concept of accountability, or the obligation to face the consequences of one's actions. It has a significant influence on creating a culture of accountability, where people in government positions are held accountable for their actions.

Discussion

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The current study reaffirms that framing effects in Philippine media coverage can influence what is viewed as important by the public and policymakers, as well as how events are perceived through the framing of the flood control issue. Additionally, the more framing aligns with the reporting agenda, the greater the media's influence on civil society and how it perceives the issue based on the narratives. A key aspect that needs analysis is how the media frames the flood control issue in the Philippines, shaped by current narratives and their implications for policy, with the potential to set the agenda.

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CONCLUSION

This study concludes that media framing is a vital and context-sensitive strategy for addressing current narratives and policy implications related to the flood control issue in the Philippines. Through media framing, people can gain a deeper understanding of the country's critical issues. The findings enhance and expand Framing Theory and Agenda-Setting Theory by demonstrating how media framing of the flood control issue serves as a vehicle for problem recognition, causal attribution, moral judgment, and conclusion. This emphasizes the importance of media in broader societal discussions. Moreover, based on the analysis in this study, the framing effect is evident, as the media's selection, emphasis, and dramatic language have created a perceived reality in which solutions focus on improving governance, enforcing transparency, and punishing corrupt officials, thereby providing clear policy directions for the government. The narratives presented by the media are essential for shaping the nation's policy agenda and empowering civil society and development efforts. Thus, the study concludes that the Philippine media acts not just as a mirror reflecting reality but as a key, influential player in the flood control issue. By strategically applying the four discursive dimensions of framing, the media elevated the issue of a major government crisis, effectively setting the national agenda.

In the context of Development Communication, this mechanism functions as a policy advocacy tool. The dramatic and morally charged narratives urge the government to respond with investigations and prosecutions, while also empowering civil society to demand better governance. Therefore, the media plays a role in filling gaps in institutional governance by pushing the issue to the forefront of national policy discussions.

Policy Recommendations

1. **The State**. Ensure accountable governance through transparent project oversight and responsive policy adjustments.
2. **The Civil Society.** Drive accountability by sustaining organized advocacy and independent monitoring of governance.
3. **The Private Sector.** Execute infrastructure projects with integrity, ensuring high-quality construction and ethical standards.
4. **The Media Practitioners:** Practice development-oriented journalism that provides in-depth, ethical reporting on systemic issues and solutions.
5. **The Academic Institutions.** Foster informed research students by critically evaluating news and demanding fact-based governance.

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