

Discursive Constructions of Violence in Philippine News Articles on the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored how violence in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) is discursively constructed in Philippine news articles, utilizing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the primary framework. Fifty-one news articles from five major media outlets were analyzed to identify discursive strategies, linguistic features, framing strategies and how it reflects underlying ideologies, power relations, or socio-political positions. Time frame for news articles selected were between 2017-2025. Findings indicate that media in BARMM employs various discursive strategies such as nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivization, and mitigation. Linguistically, the articles predominantly used material, mental, and relational processes to portray violent events and their impact. The media employed framing strategies such as problem, cause, moral judgment, and suggesting remedy frames in shaping the understanding and perceptions of readers on the violence in BARMM. Moreover, the study revealed that these media constructions reflect dominant ideologies, legitimizing state-centered solutions to violence while marginalizing alternative narratives. The results underscore the significant role of media discourse in shaping public opinion and reinforcing socio-political power dynamics, highlighting the need for a more critical and balanced approach to reporting violence in conflict-affected regions. A critical, balanced, and context-sensitive approach to news reporting is essential to represent each side fairly and comprehensively without being subjective.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, discursive strategies, violence, Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM)

INTRODUCTION

Discursive construction according to Fairclough (1995) refers to the process by which language and discourse shape social realities, identities, and power relations. In the context of news articles, this concept is crucial in understanding how violence is linguistically represented and socially interpreted (Richardson, 2007; Wodak and Meyer, 2016). Violence, as defined by Van Breen et al. (2024) is both the physical harm and broader societal issues like systemic injustices and discrimination, including racism and marginalization of groups such as ethnic minorities, women, and the LGBTQ+ community. According to Oktira et al. (2025), media does not merely report violence but discursively construct it through linguistic choices that show how agency, actors, victims, perpetrators, and social relations are represented, and how socio-cultural ideologies are embedded in discourse. Media narratives, according to Bona (2025), have a dual responsibility: to reflect the realities of violence and to provide pathways for collective resilience and recovery. However, media bias and selective reporting are issues that distort the truth, reinforcing skewed narratives, and influencing public opinion as evident in the study of Shaver et al. (2022) who stated that news reports underreport violent incidents that results in a skewed narratives and distorts the reader's understanding of the reported violence.

Building on these studies, this study aimed to explore how violence is discursively constructed in Philippine news articles in BARMM, what linguistic features are used to represent acts, actors, and victims of violence in news reports, what framing strategies characterize media representation of violence in BARMM, and how do

these discursive constructions reflect underlying ideologies, power relations, or socio-political positions in Philippine media discourse.

The purpose of this qualitative study will critically examine how Philippine news articles discursively construct violence in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and explore the underlying ideologies embedded within these representations. Drawing on Critical Discourse Analysis, the study will answer the following questions:

1. How is violence discursively constructed in Philippine news articles in BARMM?
2. What linguistic features are used to represent acts, actors, and victims of violence in news report?
3. What framing strategies characterize media representation of violence in BARMM?
4. How do these discursive constructions reflect underlying ideologies, power relations, or socio-political positions in Philippine media discourse?

LITERATURE REVIEW

News articles in Mindanao often employ boundary-setting language that positions groups as “insiders” and “outsiders,” sustaining an us-vs-them metanarrative within the nation-state as evident in Ladrido and Ponce’s (2022) study. They found out that the discourse of violence is present when Mindanao as a place was described in news content. For example, as seen in the TV Patrol Central Mindanao, the statement, “*For now, we have not yet received a threat; however, despite the absence of any threat, we are always prepared because our place has many peculiarities compared to other provinces,*” described Cotabato City in relation to violence, meaning that even when there is no threat, the people remain alert and vigilant.

According to Carter (2013), people construct reality through relying on media as source of information about what is happening around them. Fairclough (2011) asserts that the representation of discourse in news media can be seen as an ideological process of considerable social importance. Meluzzi et al. (2021) explored that in reporting violence, newspapers frequently use linguistic constructions that background or suppress the perpetrators, which can lead audiences to attribute less responsibility to offenders, especially when passive or nominal constructions are used.

In the study of Mardikantoro et al. (2022), they examined the constructions of news about violence against women in newspapers. Based on their data, women continue to be seen negatively in the media even if they are the victims of violence. This discursive construction towards women shows the role of media in reproducing violence and marginalization (Carter, 2013), and maintain the fact that women have been unfairly represented particularly in the construction of media discourses of gender-based violence (Sutherland et al., 2019).

According to Soriano et al. (2021), media practitioners are active actor in constructing the issue of violence such as drugs and crime. Studies such as Holbert et al. (2004); Romer et al. (2003) supported the conclusion that media representations of violence are related to increased levels of fear driven by the media. Macek (2006) who studied the relationship between the media portrayals of cities as violent zones, argues that fear-based media portrayals fueled a widespread fear that rationalize punitive measures against the urban life.

Linguistic Features in the Discourse of Violence

Linguistic features are powerful tools for constructing narratives, framing violence, and influencing how different groups and events are understood. It refers to the various components of language that help structure communication, convey meaning, and express style.

Systemic Functional Linguistics. Systemic Functional Linguistics is an essential framework for describing and modelling language as a resource for constructing meaning and making choices. Chen (2023) elaborated that the role of functional grammar is crucial to reveal the complexity of meanings that are construed in a

language. Systemic Functional Linguistics presents a philosophy of language based on purpose and choice. According to Halliday (2004), SFL is a process of meaning creation. When people speak, they generate meaning, aligning with Thompson's (2004) assertion that "meaning is associated with function. Jomaa and Bidin (2019) highlighted that the goals of SFL are to investigate how people use words to communicate and show how meaning is made. These metafunctions will provide a linguistic framework that connects language choices to social meaning and ideology in this study.

The distinctive features of SFL make it applicable in various domains as evident by Schkeppegrell's (2011) study that demonstrated SFL analysis has been successfully used in wide range of contexts, like education, clinical contexts, critical discourse, literary texts, etc. According to Halliday and Hasan (1985), SFL asserts that language and other systems of meaning cannot be fully understood without analyzing the immediate context in which multilingual and multimodal communication occurs and evolves.

Material Process. Based on the work of Nwanko (2023), material processes are actions or occurrences. They express the notion that some entity does something- which may be done to some other entity. According to Eggins (2004), material processes are the process of doing or it talks about actions that are usually concrete or tangible. Material has two participants, the actor and goal. The actor is the entity that performs or initiates the action while goal is the entity to which the process is extended or directed. For example, the man (actor) washes (material process) the car (goal).

Scholars have applied it to various aspects like news reports as seen in Ebeling (2021) and literature works by Nguyen (2018). Feng & Hong (2022) performed a transitivity study of China-related news headlines in the New York Times to better understand the publication's stance towards China. Rathore et al. (2025) revealed that in terms of news reporting, transitivity analysis has proven exceptionally useful in uncovering how violent events are framed. Rathore et al. (2025) conducted transitivity analysis of Pakistani English news report to explore how gender-based violence is linguistically represented. The findings of their study revealed that the violence is framed as a systemic crisis rather than an individual crime, with focus on institutional responses. Material and relational processes were dominant on their analysis that highlights actions by institutions and presenting the issue as a severe objective problem.

In the Philippines, Reyes (2015) revealed that Muslim identity was often linked to violence through material process verbs. This reinforces stereotypes of Moro groups as aggressors. Similarly, Fauzan (2022) demonstrated how SFL can be applied to CDA of news reports. His study identified the linguistic strategies used in news articles through transitivity analysis to reveal how media constructs meaning, frame actors, and reflect ideology. Material processes were the most frequently used process types in the reports to foreground violent actions, assign perpetrators, and construct ideological meanings around guilt. Using specific verbs and sentence construction helps construct a narrative that guides the readers in understanding the roles of different actors in violent events.

Mental Process. Gerot and Wignell (1994) stated that mental process is used to express the process of feeling, thinking, and perceiving. Semantically, a mental process involve sense, which is inside the human or conscious being that is realized in words. In mental process, the participants are senser and phenomenon. Gerot and Wignell (1994) identified the three types of mental process: affection, cognition, and perception. Affection as mental process refers to the verbs of feelings which may be recognized using verbs of liking or fearing. Cognition refers to the verb of thinking which may include the verbs of knowing, thinking, and understanding. Lastly, perception as a mental process refers to the verbs of senses. Halliday (1994) says that senser is the conscious being that is feeling, thinking, or seeing. Phenomenon may also be a thing, fact, and thought that is represented by nouns, noun groups, or clause. In a mental process, the doer is referred to as the senser, who thinks, feels, and perceives (through transitive verbs) the event or phenomenon. For example, I (senser) do not understand (mental process) the story (phenomenon).

Relational Process. On the other hand, Rathore et al. (2025) defined relational process as a linguistic structure that uses the verbs of being and having that serve to classify and identify phenomena. They function in two ways: attributive and identifying. Attributive is a process that gives characteristic or quality to something that already exists, while identifying is a process that links one thing to another, defining or

equating them. These processes in language can frame subjects in specific ways, making it as if they are objective truths. It influences how we view and understand issues that often reflect underlying ideologies and power structures.

Verbal Process. These are the process of saying. According to Rathore et al. (2025), in this process, it involves a sayer (the one speaking), a verbiage (what is said), and receiver (the one to whom the verbiage is addressed). Gerot and Wignell (1994) stated that the participant in this process has different meaning and function. The Sayer oversees the verbal process of encoding a message. It doesn't always have to be a conscious participant, but it usually is, and it can mean anything that sends a signal. The receiver is the one who the verbal process is meant for or directed at while verbiage is the noun form of the verbal process. It describes a verbal behavior, like a statement, answer, question, or story. In news discourse, the choice of sayer is critical as it determines whose voice is given authority.

In the study of Obaidullah and Shaikh (2024), they analyzed and compared the linguistic tools and discursive strategies used by three media outlets in their coverage of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. They focused on how the lexical choices and discursive techniques in news reporting—for example, how words like "war" and "invasion" are used or avoided, the labeling of actors, the portrayal of victims and aggressors, and how language reflects underlying narratives and ideologies. The findings of the study revealed that Sputnik aligned with the Russian narratives by using terms like "special military operation" to legitimize Russian's actions and make it seem like a defensive play, while downplaying aggression and victimization. BBC represented Ukraine as a victim and Russia as aggressor, while Foxnews emphasized leadership dynamics and geopolitical consequences. The differences in the linguistic features used by these media outlets reinforces ideological positions and influences public interpretation of violence.

Framing Strategies in Media Representation of Violence

Media refers to numerous mediums or channels used in an organized manner to communicate information to groups of people as a service to the public (Aster et al., 1999). It is composed of mass communication transmitted through a channel that simultaneously reaches a large number of people (Wimmer & Dominick, 2013).

The way media presents violence can significantly influence the public's understanding and interpretation of concepts. It can be achieved through the use of specific narratives, framing techniques, and the selective presentation of information. As stated by (Janković & Čehajić-Clancy, 2021), media tends to portray out-group members in a negative light as evident in post-conflict societies such as Bosnia and Herzegovina. Altheide (2006) discussed how the narratives of the media construct violence by framing it as an inevitable or justified response to certain conditions. In Bangsamoro region, some media representations often emphasize the violence of the insurgent groups while downplaying the socio-political and historical factors driving the conflict. Conversely, media representations of peace often emphasize state-led resolutions, potentially obscuring grassroots peace-building initiatives.

The study of language and conflict has increased over the years as conflicts and wars have also heightened. A study by (Evans et al., 2019) have applied discourse approaches to violent protests, conflictual activisms, and political conflicts.

Ideologies in the Discourse of Violence

Wang's (2017) study intends to reveal the power dimensions and ideological positions embedded in dominant media discourses. The results show that violent actions are framed as a binary between "self" and "other," with Palestinians depicted as either undeserving victims or violent aggressors, while Israelis are portrayed more positively, reflecting British societal values and foreign policy.

The study of Meltzer (2023) revealed clear patterns of selective emphasis in how violence against women is covered in German print newspapers. Overreporting on stranger violence versus underreporting intimate partner violence (IPV) reflects a bias towards a sensational, episodic stories that fit conventional news values.

This type of selective reporting distorts the understanding of the public and conceals the structural nature of gender-based violence. By minimizing the reporting of intimate partner violence (IPV) and failing to frame it as a systemic issue, media unintentionally reinforces patriarchal structures that normalize domestic violence.

Hart (2013) presented an analysis of the alternative conceptualizations of violence invoked in online reports from *The Telegraph* versus *The Guardian* of two political protests. The study found out that although nominalization does not act as a psychological process, different grammatical constructions shape the reader's understanding of events by triggering mental representations. These representations influence how violence and protests are viewed that often reinforce certain ideological perspectives, both convergence and divergence in the conceptualizations of violence invoked by online reports of political protests.

One way of constructing ideologies in news discourse through language is passive agent deletion according to Tejada (2021). In Tejada's (2021) study of the discursive nature of reportage in the news in leading Philippine broadsheets, he investigated how purposive linguistic choices lead to biases that shape ideology. The findings revealed how the purposive use of words could forward specific ideologies and present biases, especially visibility bias, which can be positive or negative. The examples provided on the study demonstrated how specific verbs can be used to frame certain personalities, highlighting the importance of teaching this concept in language class. In analyzing the language dimensions of news articles, the readers must question why a particular headline is passivized and identify the actors who are foregrounded or backgrounded. Readers must identify reasons behind the selection of a particular adjective or modifier to describe an event or individual and assess whether this lexical choice increases the emotional impact of the news.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study utilized a qualitative research design employing Critical Discourse Analysis as the primary analytical framework. Qualitative research is a methodology used to understand people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behavior, and interactions, and it generates non-numerical data (Pathak et al., 2013). Critical Discourse Analysis is a powerful tool for examining how news articles on violence in the Bangsamoro region construct and reinforce ideologies. It will employ Fairclough's three-dimensional model as a research method. According to Vaara (2015), Critical Discourse Analysis is a methodological approach that examines the constitutive role that discourse plays in contemporary society. Meaning, language not only reflects reality but is also the very means of constructing and reproducing the world as we experience it. Fairclough (2003) pointed out the three interconnected stages in the analysis—the textual analysis, discursive practice analysis, and the social practice analysis. According to Fairclough (1995), a text is analyzed in three stages. First is the text; it talks about the words and how they build meanings, and it is the core of the model. It could be a speech, writing, images, or a combination of the three. The second is the discursive practice; it is an analysis of how texts are produced and consumed. The last phase would be the social practice; it deals with the relationship between production, interpretation, and social conditioning. Critical discourse analysis combines an "internal" study of language with the "external" study of its context—the influence of social behaviors and relationships on the text (Cheng, 2009). Internal focuses on the textual linguistic attributes, including grammar, lexicon, and syntactic structure. It examines how these elements shape the message and meaning within the text. External looks at the larger social, cultural, and political context in which the text is produced and interpreted, examining how social relationships, historical influences, and power dynamics shape or reflect the text. Its goal is to uncover how language is used to maintain or challenge social structures, ideologies, and power relations (Cheng, 2009). By combining both the internal and external perspectives, CDA will provide the structural foundation in analyzing how news articles construct violence in the region and how they may reinforce social norms and ideologies.

Research Materials

The primary data for this study were news articles about violence in the Bangsamoro region. News articles were drawn from national and regional media with a reputable standing in journalism. The inclusion criteria of the research materials included news articles that talked about the violence in the Bangsamoro region. News

articles were sourced out from recognized national and regional media outlets to ensure the credibility of the source. These will be from Philippine Daily Inquirer, Manila Bulletin, Philippine Star, Minda News, and Philippine News Agency. These materials were publicly available online; thus, these data are public documents. These media outlets were selected because they have wide readership and are publicly accessible through their official websites, making the process of data collection seamless. These news articles were posted between 2017 and 2025 to allow varieties of violent discourse to be analyzed in this research. All the materials were downloaded and saved from online sources.

Data Collection & Analysis

Upon obtaining the required approvals from the graduate school and ethics board, the data collection process began. Selection of news articles about the violence in the BARMM was based on the 5 media outlets in the Philippines. 3 news outlets from the national and 2 from regional outlets, with a total of 5 news outlets, will be used in collecting news articles. Since 51 news articles were analyzed, 10 news articles from each news outlet were designated to maintain fairness and represent each outlet equally in the data analysis. The timeline of the news articles on violence in the BARMM ranged from 2017 to 2025 to allow richness of context in the discourse of violence. Since news articles are public domain and publicly accessible and available for consumption, authorization or permission letters were not necessary in the data collection process. In collecting and handling news articles, it observed the provisions of Republic Act 8293 (Intellectual Property Code of the Philippines) as a complementary safeguard to ensure that the materials were used strictly for academic and research purposes only, without reproducing full texts beyond what would be necessary for analysis.

Analysis of the data proceeded in three interconnected stages as stipulated in Fairclough's three-dimensional model, addressing specific research questions and employing a distinct theoretical lens. It began by analyzing how violence is discursively constructed in Philippine news articles through Wodak and Reisigl's (2017) five discursive strategies as analytical tools—nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivization, and mitigation. Secondly, Halliday's (1985) systemic functional linguistics, specifically transitivity analysis, was used to examine the linguistic features that are used to represent acts, actors, and victims of violence in news reports. It focused only on the four transitivity process types: material, mental, relational, and verbal. It analyzed the process types in the news articles, the verbs, or verbal groups that represent different kinds of actions, events, or states that shape how violence is portrayed. Thirdly, framing theory by Entman (1993) was used to analyze how framing strategies characterize media representation of violence. The last stage of analysis utilized Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis as the primary framework that connects micro-textual features to macro-level ideologies and power, which was complemented by Gramsci's (1971) Theory of Hegemony to interpret how Philippine news articles on violence in BARMM reflect and reproduce dominant ideologies. It specifically looked at how language was manipulated to construct, sustain, and disrupt the power dynamics or ideologies presented in the discourse. It also revealed how ideologies and power dynamics were embedded in Philippine news articles of violence in BARMM.

Peer debriefing was employed to validate the analysis of the study. Experts in linguistics and CDA also examined and verified the findings of the study.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher was dedicated in maintaining the highest ethical standards throughout the course of this study. Before beginning, the research protocol was submitted to the University of the Immaculate Conception – Research Ethics Committee (UIC-REC) for approval, ensuring alignment with both institutional and national ethical guidelines set forth by them.

Packed with trainings and experience in basic education, the researcher worked closely with the research adviser and the dissertation panel to maintain methodological rigor, intercoder reliability, and ethical integrity throughout the study. To ensure that adequate support was provided, access to university resources – such as the UIC library, RemoteSX digital platforms, WDL, and other facilities will be utilized to guarantee that the study was conducted responsibly, and references were cited appropriately.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Table 1. Realizations of Discursive Construction of Violence in Philippine News Articles

Type of Violence	Sample Excerpt	Discursive Strategy	Discursive Feature	Interpretation
Terrorism and Extremism	<p>the split within the factions of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is widening (MB-1)</p> <p>BARMM has moved far beyond its former image of conflict (MN-4)</p> <p>X, an employee of the BARMM, was killed on the spot. (PNA-4)</p>	<p>Predication</p> <p>Predication</p> <p>Nomination</p>	<p>Passive voice, metaphors</p> <p>nominalization, present perfect tense</p> <p>present perfect passive voice</p>	<p>Philippine news articles discursively construct violence in BARMM through the combined use of predication and nomination strategies. This position certain actors and actions as source of conflict in the region. Nomination strategy establish a opposition between the factions of MILF, the government, and other groups. It positions the factions of MILF as the agent of conflict while the government and other agencies are seen as defensive actors that maintains order. Predicative words like widening, threatening, and ambushed are used to describe internal conflict in the factions of MILF. Predication strategy emphasizes the dangers of the conflict.</p>
Election-related Violence	<p>these two provinces are always perceived to be full of gun-slinging toughies and outlaws (MB-2)</p> <p>Datu Odin Sinsuat town in Maguindanao del Norte is also under Comelec control due to the ambush of its municipal election officer last month. (PI-9)</p> <p>Garcia cited the attack on Vice Mayor of Datu Piang may compel election officials to place the municipality under the control of the</p>	<p>Predication</p> <p>Argumentation</p> <p>Argumentation</p>	<p>lexical choice, passive voice, stereotypical imagery</p> <p>causal link, topical premise, topos of authority</p> <p>modal verb, causal link, topos of danger</p>	<p>Philippine news articles discursively construct violence in BARMM through the combined use of predication, and argumentation. Predicative choices like ‘gun-slinging toughies’ and ‘outlaws’ identifies the people in the region as violent which emphasizes a stereotyped image. Perspectivization frames the election-related violence as stemming from local political rivalry rather than external factors. Argumentation strategies construct violence as pervasive and threatening with words like ‘multiple red areas’ and ‘due to the ambush’ that necessitates and justifies a proactive measure from the government. Collectively, these strategies construct the violence in BARMM as politically motivated, with state actors such as AFP, PNP, and COMELEC seen as the legitimate force that can control and prevent it.</p>

	Comelec. (PS-4)			
Land Disputes & Clan Conflicts (Rido)	<p>Fighting broke out anew between two families (PI-3)</p> <p>The Army launched air and ground assaults on the BIFF gunmen to rescue the relief workers. (PI-7)</p> <p>Military and provincial authorities confirmed that the clashes were unrelated to the MILF and had instead erupted between rival local groups. (PS-7)</p>	<p>Predication</p> <p>Predication</p> <p>Predication</p>	<p>lexical intensifier, actional and relational predicates</p> <p>actional predicate, circumstantial predicate, functional predicate</p> <p>actional predicates, evaluative attributions, functional predication</p>	<p>Predicative words such as broke out, has been blocking, and ambushed sees violence in BARMM as a persistent and disruptive phenomenon that calls for an immediate state intervention. By using these strategy, violence in BARMM is constructed as an embedded phenomenon with historical causes and involves multiple actors.</p>
Government & Military Responses	<p>This recent development could bring uncertainty on the gains of the peace process in the Bangsamoro region (MB-4)</p> <p>Maj. Gen. Donald Gumiran, 6ID commander, said the firearms were recovered through relentless military and law enforcement operations in the provinces of Maguindanao del Norte, Maguindanao del Sur, Sultan Kudarat (PI-8)</p> <p>X, CEO of Save the Children Philippines, said war and armed</p>	<p>Mitigation</p> <p>Perspectivization</p> <p>Argumentation</p>	<p>modalization, euphemism, hedged predication</p> <p>attribution, reporting frame, passive voice</p> <p>topos of threat, topos of consequences, causal conjunction, harm framing</p>	<p>Philippine news articles discursively construct violence in BARMM through the combined use of mitigation, argumentation, and perspectivization strategies. Mitigation strategy highlights the fragility of the peace process in the region with the ‘recent development’ that happened. This shows the uncertainty of the future of the peace process while avoiding a definitive tone. The repeated use of argumentation constructs violence in BARMM as escalating and requires urgent remedy. Repeated calls for military action, such as the ‘intensification of law enforcement’ and the military’s involvement in recovery efforts, show that they are vital in responding to the threat posed by militant groups. This is further supported by the perspectivization strategy wherein it shows that the military has the legitimate authority in restoring order and the militant groups are positioned as a threat to the public. Collectively, these strategies construct violence in BARMM as an escalating issue</p>

	<p>conflict either disrupt or end childhood as children can die in gun battles, be displaced from home, miss out on schools or suffer hunger and sickness. (PS-9)</p>			<p>that necessitates state intervention to maintain order. This highlights the role of the military as protector of the state and portrays insurgent groups as threat.</p>
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The news articles which were categorized into four groups, employed various discursive strategies in reporting violence in BARMM. This is similar to the findings of Muwafiq’s et al. (2019) on the discursive strategies of violence in Facebook comments and how the users exploited these strategies. This also agree on the findings of Obaidullah and Shaikh (2024) who stated that passivation and nominalization in news articles downplays who is responsible and instead emphasizes only the consequences of the actions. These strategies include nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivization, and mitigation.

Predication strategy in news articles helps in shaping the perception of violence in the region by attributing specific traits, actions, or qualities to different events, groups, or individuals. Ascribed actions like “split”, “two storms brewing”, “moved far beyond”, and “victim” constrict a narrative of violence that emphasizes inevitability, unpredictability, and instability. This positions violence in BARMM as something that can be transformed or reduced as evident in “has moved far beyond its former image of conflict”, but never fully eliminated, reinforcing the region’s identity as instable and unpredictable. The choice of aggressive predicates such as widening of the split can be analyzed as a form of aggression within the MILF factions, meaning, this may automatically trigger and escalate violence. This implies that the more factions in MILF, the more the region becomes prone to violence and disorder, foregrounding them as a destabilizing force. Muwafiq et al. (2017) also utilized predication strategy to user comments responding to news about Paris attacks. It was revealed on their study that predication strategy is dominantly employed by users to construct “Others” as violent and dangerous by using attributes and predicative verbs to ascribe violent traits to Muslims.

Nomination strategy is used by news articles to identify who is the victim, the perpetrator and who has authority that shapes the public’s perception of violence in BARMM. This further reinforces their actions, even negative, is seen as a security operation, instead of crimes. Using negative labels nominates the illegitimate actors and creates an “us vs. them” binary. This is similar to the findings of Igwebuike (2018) with Nigerians being associated with violence and perpetrates the act of violence in their place.

Argumentation strategy constructs violence in BARMM as uncertain and illegitimate, as seen in the following excerpts, “The motive and identities of the attackers remain unknown, but police are pursuing several persons of interest”, “The victim, a native of Trento, Agusan del Sur, was walking towards the school in Barangay Narra, Balabagan, when a lone gunman shot him at about 8 a.m.”, and “The CHR noted that it strongly condemns these acts of violence against the BARMM officials”. By identifying the motive and identities as unknown, it may suggest that violence is random as it positions the act as unjustifiable and delegitimizes the acts of perpetrators. The state’s intervention through police investigation and condemnation of CHR is viewed as legitimate and necessary to restore order and justice. Muwafiq et al. (2017) revealed that argumentation strategy is used by users to create justifications for discriminations and threats. This portrays that their actions are seen as a justified response to violence.

Perspectivization is highlighted by framing military authority’s perspective on violence, therefore influencing the public’s interpretation of it. In the analyzed news articles, quoting the perspective of the general creates credibility and legitimacy. This positions the military as legitimate actor in addressing violence. The use of evaluative adjective constructs the military’s effort as determined, highlighting their commitment to combat

violence. Similarly, Said & Almamoory (2025) investigated the discursive strategies in the French media about the Ukraine process, it revealed that perspectivization frame is used to shape the audience’s view of the situation by using terms like recruiter ghosting and Potemkinization of the military. These terms provide a judgmental and evaluative perspective.

Mitigation strategy is used to soften the violence in the region by introducing doubt through linguistic choices used by news writers. It also reduces direct accusations made on individuals or groups because of unverified claims. This can be realized through linguistic choices such as hedging, use of quotation marks, and source attribution. In the analyzed corpora, the use of verb “allegedly” functions as a hedge, implying that the relationship between armed elements and MILF is unverified. By employing these hedges, the media prevents making definitive claims or accusations, and this shows effective news writing because it avoids the potential for libel or misinformation on issues like violence that are sensitive in nature. The use also of quotation marks may introduce a sensationalized report, as the source of it is unverified, and by quoting this in the articles, the media distances their self on it as it may weaken the credibility of their work. This is similar to Hassan & Said (2020) on their pragmatic study of hedges in American political editorials. It revealed that hedges lower the writer’s commitment to a proposition by using adverb such as reportedly, allegedly, and appears, and they present events or phenomenon as uncertain or unverified, which protects them against error and legal exposure. Similarly, Sedova (2022) revealed that mitigation strategy functions as a speech insurance, allowing the reporters to stay away from claims that are being disputed, put the blame on sources, and show doubt or a lack of proof in news reporting.

Table 2. Linguistic Features Used to Represent Acts, Actors, and Victims of Violence in News Articles

Linguistic Features (Transitivity Process)	Sample Corpora
Material Process	<p>Armed group and police operatives engaged in a firefight early Wednesday morning, resulting in eight deaths and six injuries. (PNA-11)</p> <p>Police have launched an intensive manhunt against six heavily armed men responsible for killing four persons and wounding three others (MB-9)</p> <p>The violence began on March 1 when X and XX were killed, and XXX was wounded in a late-night shooting. (MN-8)</p>
Mental	<p>The young armed men who ambushed them are believed to be new recruits of the Dawlah Islamiyah-Maute Group. (MN-2)</p> <p>Police are looking at a personal grudge or ‘rido’ (family feud) as a possible motive in the ambush. (PNA-2)</p> <p>The spate of deadly attacks rocking Mindanao would not deter the people in the region from casting their votes in the second plebiscite on Feb. 6. (PS-10)</p>
Verbal	<p>Probers said the gunmen arrived in the village and fired shots at houses. (PS-1)</p> <p>X said the assailants approached their vehicle, finished his comrades, and pulled them out to the river. (MN-2)</p> <p>X said witness accounts indicated that six armed men arrived in an unlicensed minivan. (MB-9)</p>
Relational	<p>X was wanted for frustrated murder while XX was facing robbery with homicide charges. (PNA-11)</p> <p>The second threat is the quiet but steady resurgence of violent extremism. (MB-1)</p> <p>X was the 87th Teduray tribal leader killed brutally. (PS-3)</p>

Upon the analysis of the news articles on violence in BARMM, the result revealed that only material, mental, verbal, and relational processes were utilized by news writers to represent the acts, actors, and victims of violence. This is similar to Rathore et al. (2025) who only found the same four processes on the gender-based violence in Pakistani English News Reports. Material process is focused on the action-based nature of violence as they depict who is doing what to whom and where. News articles strategically assign roles to the actors, goals, and circumstances to highlight ideological reality. In representing the acts of violence, material process turns abstract conflict into tangible events. These tangible events highlight the violence itself. The result is in conjunction with Rathore et al. (2025) that revealed that material process is dominantly observed in the gender-based violence in Pakistani reports as it represents actions and events. Institutional actors such as security forces, troops, PNP, and AFP are framed as legitimate actors whose goal is peace and order. For the illegitimate actors, describing them negatively presents the actor as active agents of violence. Nominalization of the actor masks the person responsible for the conflict.

In representing the acts of violence, mental process function to transform acts of violence into a social phenomenon. Causal attribution shifts the narrative of violence from a systemic security failure to a personal psychological motive. As a result, it individualizes crime rather than seeing it as an act of brutality. Legitimization of peace process is also seen through the cognitive validation of political acts that represents the peace process as a success, not just a legislative event. Mental process serves as a linguistic tool for imposing ideological labels onto the actors of violence. Using anonymous mental process in reporting the actor of violence creates an associative link to criminality without requiring material evidence. This is a case of preemptive labeling wherein it shifts actor's identity into a terrorist based only on the perceiver's suspicion. By assigning blame to a specific group, this frames them as agents of violence and harm. This sense of judgment reinforces a negative portrayal of the group and their actions. This is evident in Gallardo et al. (2025) where media networks like ABS-CBN and CNN Philippines use mental process to foreground the mental or emotional stance of individuals and groups.

The news articles utilized verbal process to highlight the voice of institutional authorities and their stance about violence in the region. Since they have the institutional authority and functions as sayer in the process, their speech serves as a ground for truth. The actors of violence are identified as instigators of violence like armed men, gunmen, and assailants. Their actions are framed as deliberate and aggressive. The repeated emphasis on the official sayers construct the state and its representatives as attentive, trustworthy, and morally justified reporters of the violence. This corroborates the findings of Gallardo et al. (2025) that news articles utilize verbal process to emphasize institutional voices and stated that these clauses do not just convey a reported speech but also legitimizes state actions and shape the public's perception. Hallim and Singh (2023) on their study of crime reporting highlighted that verbal process creates a link between the event and the reader. The attribution of information to witnesses, or other authoritative figures shows the credibility of reporter by detaching their self from the narrative of violence.

Relational process effectively creates a framework for understanding the violence in BARMM by attributing qualities to the participants (victims, perpetrators, or institutions). By assigning the participants as carriers, news articles highlight characteristics that reflect their roles in the acts of violence. This may either emphasize or downplay the severity of the situation, depending on how it is framed. Lihan (2020) on the news report of Li Wenliang incident revealed that the third most employed process in her analysis is the relational process as it mainly reflects the tension between small social components and reflects the opposition attitude of BBC report. News articles also use relational process to provide personal accounts and attributes to the victims of violence. These attributive clauses humanize the victim, and it elicits sympathy and empathy from the readers. Akinmusuyi (2023) revealed that relational process is used to define the character of the problem in the gender-based violence in Nigeria. Although it presents a sympathetic framing, it also freezes victims in passive roles, clearly backgrounding perpetrator's agency that is evident in material clauses.

Table 3. Framing Strategies that Characterize Media Representation of Violence

Framing Strategies	Media Representation	Sample Corpora
Problem Frame	Focuses on violence that	24-year-old teacher in Lanao del Sur was

	<p>happened. It frames the violence as a significant security problem.</p>	<p>shot dead by an unidentified gunman on Monday morning,(MB-10) The armed men burned 13 houses of indigenous peoples (IPs) in the village of Itaw." (PI-7) Eight persons died while six others were injured after a firefight erupted early Wednesday morning between an armed group and police operatives in Maguindanao province. s(PNA-11)</p>
<p>Cause Frame</p>	<p>The framing strategy highlighted the factors that leads to violence and shapes the way the readers to understand the cause of violence in BARMM.</p>	<p>Garcia said he is puzzled why the Bangsamoro people are so passionate that they resort to violence.(PS-5) With the impasse on the decommissioning process, CCAA and IAG warned that the accompanying development programs in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) are facing the risk of failure." (MB-4) According to Caang, the violence stems from a recurring conflict over a contested piece of land (MN-7)</p>
<p>Moral Judgment Frame</p>	<p>The framing strategy depicts violence in the region as unjust by condemning the violence and calls for justice for the affected victims.</p>	<p>The ambush was highly condemnable since the soldiers who were killed were not part of a combat unit nor were taking part in combat operations. (MN-3) The initiative underscores a unified effort to protect and rehabilitate children affected by armed conflict, viewing them as victims in need of care and reintegration rather than as offenders." (PS-2) X's co-workers condemned the attack and called on police to bring the perpetrators to justice. (PNA-4)</p>
<p>Suggesting Remedies Frame</p>	<p>The framing strategy presented solutions to the violence through efforts, security operations, and institutional coordination. The media highlighted the proactive measures and interventions made to prevent or reduce violence in the region.</p>	<p>The warring parties signed an agreement to end the hatred and further bloodshed during ceremonies at the municipal hall in the presence of town officials, and officers of the Army and the Philippine National Police." (MN-1) The firearms were recovered through relentless military and law enforcement operations in the provinces of Maguindanao del Norte, Maguindanao del Sur, Sultan Kudarat, and South Cotabato, and in parts of Cotabato and Sarangani provinces." (PI-8) The AFP's primary role is to provide support to the Philippine National Police</p>

		(PNP), which is the lead agency in securing the polls, under the supervision of the Commission on Elections (Comelec), military spokesperson X said on Monday. (MB-3)
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The framing strategies of news articles identified 4 frames using Entman’s Theory that characterize media representation. These are problem, cause, moral judgment, and suggesting remedy frames. The findings indicate that the media representation of violence in BARMM rely heavily on problem framing strategy as it emphasizes the risks imposed by violence. This means that media highlights these issues on violence as significant thereby piquing the interest of the readers. The cause framing strategy highlights the factors that contributes to violence and how it shapes the understanding of the public. In this strategy, the media shows that violence are caused by historical conflicts, territorial disputes, and systemic issues in the region. in moral judgment framing, the media represents the violence as unjust and calls justice for the victims. It invokes moral condemnation for the violent acts that are present in the region. Lastly, suggesting remedy frame strategy highlights the solutions as effective measures in addressing violence and preventing further escalation. The use of these framing strategies in the context of violence in BARMM shows how media shapes the understanding and perception of the readers about violence.

Table 4. Underlying Ideologies, Power Relations, or Socio-Political Positions in Philippine Media Discourse

Type of Violence	Excerpt	Dominant Feature	Ideologies/ Power Relations/ Socio-Political Position	Interpretation
Terrorism and Extremism	<p>BARMM has moved far beyond its former image of conflict (MN-4)</p> <p>the split within the factions of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is widening (MB-1)</p> <p>X, an employee of the BARMM), was killed on the spot. (PNA-4)</p>	<p>Ideological Dominance</p> <p>War of Position</p> <p>Manufacturing Consent</p>	<p>Reflects an ideology that prioritizes peace building and regional stability. The media reinforces the legitimacy of the Philippine government and its effort in conflict resolution.</p> <p>It underscores the internal division within MILF, illustrating a power imbalance between the state and its opposition. The emphasis on MILF’s division portrays the group as weak and disorganizes, reinforcing that the state is a more stable force in the region</p>	<p>It highlights the BARMM’s positive transformation.</p> <p>The media influences the public’s understanding of the group’s lack of unity which made them less convincing. It presents an ideological struggle wherein a strong, unified state is preferable to the divided factions of MILF.</p> <p>Frames the killing as a justification for state action and military intervention, with state as the victim and the insurgents as aggressors.</p>

			Views state security measures as necessary to protect personnel and ensure stability.	
Election-related Violence	<p>these two provinces are always perceived to be full of gun-slinging toughies and outlaws (MB-2)</p> <p>Westmincom is focused on Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao del Norte and Maguindanao del Sur due to the presence of “multiple red areas” (PI-9)</p> <p>the PNP is intensifying security preparations for the conduct of the first parliamentary election in the BARMM (PS-4)</p>	<p>Manufacturing Consent</p> <p>Manufacturing Consent</p> <p>Manufacturing Consent</p>	<p>It reflects an ideology of law and order and social control.</p> <p>Reflects a state-focused, security-driven socio-political position that prioritizes military perspective by framing the provinces in terms of its risks instead of social or civilian perspectives.</p> <p>Reflects an ideology of securitized democracy where orderly elections are linked to strong state preparation and control. BARMM elections are positioned as events that require intensive oversight</p>	<p>Public consent is gained by presenting the state as protector of peace. The portrayal of these provinces as dangerous can lead the public to accept state violence or militarized peace building as a solution.</p> <p>Frames the provinces as risk zones, normalizing a state security perspective and justifying military presence while promoting public support for securitized governance.</p> <p>The intensive security measures build public acceptance of the state intervention as necessary to maintain order. This shifts the police presence from a coercive force to a protective entity.</p>
Land Disputes & Clan Conflicts (Rido)	Fighting broke out anew between two families (PI-3)	Ideological Dominance	Depicts violence as a localized feud, downplaying broader causes. Reinforces state-	The public is likely to perceive family feuds as unresolvable, reinforcing stereotypes of communities as violent. It also legitimizes

	<p>The BIFF has been blocking the flow of humanitarian relief items into the villages by harassing disaster relief workers (PI-7)</p> <p>military and provincial authorities confirmed that the clashes were unrelated to the MILF and had instead erupted between rival local groups. (PS-7)</p>	<p>Manufacturing Consent</p> <p>Manufacturing Consent</p>	<p>centric narratives of control and warring families are positioned as destabilizing actors.</p> <p>Reflects power relations between the state, BIFF, and vulnerable civilians. The state (through its humanitarian effort) seeks to maintain control and legitimacy, while BIFF tries to undermine it by disrupting aid.</p> <p>Reflects an ideology of state authority and control. The dominant groups (military and provincial authorities) influence the public's perception by presenting narrative that aligns with their interests. It ensures that the views of the state are accepted as the norm. It downplays the role of MILF in the violence and assures that the conflict is isolated and manageable to reduce fear of escalation involving insurgent groups.</p>	<p>state intervention and stigmatizes kinship network as sources of instability.</p> <p>The news article presents BIFF as coercive and anti-humanitarian, highlighting its power over civilians while legitimizing state intervention for protection.</p> <p>The narrative from the military and provincial authorities legitimates the state's role. By depoliticizing the conflict, it normalizes violence and reframes it as a local and isolated case. This diverts the public from viewing the case in a larger scale.</p>
<p>Government & Military</p>	<p>This recent development could</p>	<p>War of Position</p>	<p>It reflects an ideology of</p>	<p>Emphasizes uncertainty, subtly shifting the positive</p>

<p>Responses</p>	<p>bring uncertainty on the gains of the peace process in the Bangsamoro region (MB-4)</p> <p>The top Philippine Army official has directed the 6th Infantry Division (6ID) to intensify law enforcement operations against loose firearms in its area of responsibility, noting that more are still in the hands of unauthorized people. (PI-8)</p> <p>He also called on rebels and government forces to ensure children in conflict areas are safe from abduction, detention and displacement and their rights are respected. (PS-9)</p>	<p>Manufacturing Consent</p> <p>Manufacturing Consent</p>	<p>stability and fragility of peace by suggesting peace is not guaranteed in the region. This reflects an ideological belief that peace processes are vulnerable to disruption by internal and external factors.</p> <p>News articles reflect underlying ideology by reinforcing that military is crucial for upholding public order and safety. Their intervention is justified and necessary for the greater good. It also shows power dynamics wherein military are granted permission by the state to use force if necessary. News articles reflect an ideology of human rights by highlighting that the protection of children is a moral and social responsibility of both rebels and government forces.</p>	<p>framing of peace to a vulnerable process.</p> <p>This functions as a discourse of hegemonic legitimation by reinforcing the idea that state has the power to regulate violence.</p> <p>The public is likely to perceive child protection as a universal moral imperative that justifies monitoring and intervention.</p>
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The analysis of news articles revealed the ways on how Philippine media reflect underlying ideologies, power relations, and socio-political positions through Gramsci’s ideological dominance, manufacturing consent, and war of positions. These features of hegemony are expressed through linguistic choices, framing and discursive strategies that normalize state authority, delegitimize insurgent groups, and shape public perception of violence in the context of BARMM. The findings suggest that these discursive constructions reflect underlying ideologies of state legitimacy and security, reinforce power relations that position the state as the central authority, and maintain socio-political positions that normalize militarized governance as a solution to the

violence in the BARMM. As revealed in the findings, the most observed hegemonic feature in the news articles on violence in BARMM is manufacturing consent. This plays a crucial role on how the Philippine media constructs the role of state in addressing violence and instability in BARMM. In the analyzed corpora, it is evident through the repeated portrayal of the state, military, and law enforcement as the rightful protectors of peace, public order, and democratic processes in the region. A strategic discursive mechanism applied by news writer in this process is the use of security-oriented language. Terms such as “multiple red areas”, “intensifying law enforcement”, and “security preparations” are not neutral descriptors. It categorizes certain areas and situations as dangerous and prone to violence, thereby legitimizing stronger state intervention. These lexical choices frame the violence in BARMM as a security problem instead of a broader historical or political issue. Therefore, the state intervention is justified because of these issues. It is similar to the findings of Maslog et al. (2015) on the framing of news stories on GPH-CNN peace process, it revealed that the media’s emphasis on conflict and reliance on official sources construct a narrative that legitimizes state security roles and marginalize alternative roles. Similarly, Ladrado & Ponce (2022) revealed that local and national TV news constructs Mindanao as neglected and violent by using boundary-setting language. It legitimizes state neglect while implying need for intervention.

Ideological dominance is evident in how the media frames violence in the region and its causes. The strategic representations of family feud, rebel activity, and factional violence, personalizes and localizes violence by attributing it to individual or familial conflict rather than a broader factors. This strategic choice made by the media reflects an underlying ideology of state control and security governance, where violence is seen as an issue that can be managed and resolved by local authorities or even security forces, rather than needing a systemic change or a cultural reform. This ideological framework assumes the state’s presence, through military and law enforcement, is the natural solution to resolving conflict. It also normalizes the view that the state should have monopolistic control over the use of force to restore order. This ideological stance does not just frame violence, but also the solutions, and in this case, the military is consistently portrayed as the solution to violence. This shows that the state remains the central authority in managing conflict and peace in the region by delegitimizing local resistance and downplaying structural causes of violence. This finding is similar Glazzard & Reed (2021) wherein dominant actors seek narrative control in conflict reporting, reinforcing hegemonic perspectives. The findings on Viboonchart & Gampper’s (2014) study revealed that ideologies are transmitted through lexical choices. The New York Times frames the protesters’ actions as justified by focusing on the positive parts of their movement while concealing their negative acts through lexical choices. On the other hand, Thailand newspaper views the protest on a neutral tone without highlighting the democratic aspect of the protest. They emphasized the government’s efforts to maintain peace and aligns with the government rather than the protester. Through Viboonchart & Gampper’s (2014) study, they implied that news writers will unconsciously convey their beliefs and attitudes when reporting, hence, lexical choices and sentence structures must be carefully examined before putting it out in the open.

The hegemony of war of position is realized in this finding as it highlights the strategic ideological struggle between the state and the oppositions. War of position in Gramsci’s theory refers to the long-term struggle for ideological dominance in civil society, particularly through media, culture, and education. This is seen as a strategic, indirect battle for influence and control over public consciousness. News articles about the internal divisions within MILF and uncertainty in peace process shows an ideological battle for legitimacy. By highlighting the MILF’s fragmentation, the news writers undermine its ability to lead peace efforts, thereby positioning the state as much stable and credible. The framing of uncertainty in the peace process shifts the discourse from a positive framing of peace to a vulnerable process. This narrative may diminish public trust in non-violent solutions and boost support for militarized interventions as a method of ensuring peace. News articles reflect underlying ideologies, power relations, and socio-political positions by shaping the struggle over who viewed as legitimate and credible in the context of violence in BARMM. Instead of presenting these incidents of violence as a neutral event, the news articles stressed the divisions, weaknesses, and destabilizing actions of insurgents or non-state actors, while viewing the state as the much organized and credible authority. Through this strategic approach, the media does not only describe the conflict, but they also participate in an ideological contest over leadership and public support. By foregrounding splits within MILF, threats to peace, and attacks that are disruptive or harmful, it constructs these groups as disorganized and incapable of maintaining order. In contrast, state institutions are represented by actors committed to the stability of the

region. This shows socio-political position wherein the government is the rightful authority in the region, and rival actors are seen as a threat to the stability of the region. Through this process, the media becomes a site of war position where the state's leadership is normalized and competing political forces are symbolically undermined. This is somehow similar to the findings of Pratama (2025) on Indonesian Broadcasting Companies, he revealed that the media often function to maintain the state's control and it uses its discursive authority to discipline media outlets and shape narratives in concordance with state interest.

CONCLUSION

Every strategy and lexical choice embedded in the articles is fundamental in the creation of an idea that could paint the other side positively and the other negatively. These ideologies expressed in news articles by writers are considered legitimate and credible sources of information that hold a significant influence on the readers. If an individual is not meticulous and analytical in what they read and absorb every day, the media can take part in controlling what we see and understand, thereby affecting how we interpret issues in the way that favors them. The findings of this study highlighted the responsibility of media in producing truthful news coverage of issues without bias that readers and the public may rely on.

Ultimately, I recognize the big role of educators in guiding their learners to comprehend critically the information that they absorb from all kinds of media. It is crucial for everyone to remain critical and be careful of the sources of information that we consume daily. By being meticulous and knowledgeable, we can be an active and responsible absorber of information, rather than just being passive readers.

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