



MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF SARA DUTERTE DURING HER OVP BUDGET HEARING: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE STUDY

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Abstract:

The ideological implications of linguistic choices in news discourse have long been a concern in news outlets, particularly in representing political actors. Despite claims of objectivity, news articles continue to exhibit subtle biases that reveal ideological stances. This study investigated the media representation of Sara Duterte during her OVP Budget Hearing across four major news outlets in the Philippines: GMA, ABS-CBN, Rappler, and Philippine Daily Inquirer. Using Halliday's Transitivity Analysis and Van Dijk's Ideological Square, the study employed critical discourse analysis on 30 news articles that were analyzed according to the ascribed process types — material, mental, verbal, relational, existential, and behavioral — and how group dynamics, which were constructed through positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. The findings revealed that linguistic choices are strategically chosen to exercise power and maintain control over political discourse. Representations are varied: GMA maintains neutrality, ABS-CBN and Rappler employ a critical stance, and the Philippine Daily Inquirer adopts a balanced approach. Duterte strategically used strategies — positive self-presentation, victimization, and populism — reinforced a dichotomy of favoring us and marginalizing them. These findings reveal linguistic choices as a medium of power in news discourse and highlight the necessity for media literacy to critically assess news representations.

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1. Introduction

The media is pivotal in informing and connecting the public to political figures (Dvir-Gvirsman *et al.*, 2022). However, the language of the media to represent politicians raises problems, which can alter the reality and perceptions of individuals of political figures (Spinde *et al.*, 2021). Through the language of media manipulating lexical items and syntactic structures (Sering, 2021), politicians can be portrayed in different lights that align with the journalist's bias, influencing how the public will perceive politicians (Verma & Jhunjhunwala, 2024). The media's use of linguistic choices extends beyond a medium of communication and information but also may shape ideologies and narratives that influence public perception of specific political figures (Carter, 2023).

There have been several studies about news media framing. In one, Sering (2021) examined how the use of language in the news discourse by media, specifically The News and Dawn in Pakistan, has implications regarding the portrayal of the Prime Minister. The study concluded that the use of lexical items and syntactic structures of these media outlets covertly propagates their organizational ideologies, creating a biased approach to the Prime Minister in the news discourse (Sering, 2021). Moreover, Santoso (2018) conducted a critical discourse analysis to examine how Susi, a female politician in Indonesia, was framed in a news discourse. The study found that Susi was negatively framed through linguistic choices made by the ideologically motivated writers, in which Susi was portrayed as an unforeseen and less qualified politician. Thus, news writers can be biased towards a politician, in which a reporter might describe a politician positively or negatively to influence their readers the way they want (Das & Alok, 2023). Furthermore, lexical choices and syntactic structures can represent political figures to achieve goals, such as influencing mass perceptions (Ghassemi & Hemmatgosha, 2019; Shah *et al.*, 2022).

In another study, Robiego and Talde (2024) studied how ABS-CBN, often entangled with accusations of biased coverage, framed Ferdinand Marcos Jr. in their report. The study revealed that language and framing techniques are utilized in news discourse that influenced and shaped public attitudes towards political figures, specifically Marcos Jr. Furthermore, Piamonte (2023) expanded how politicians are represented; she studied how Ferdinand Marcos and Leni Robredo are represented in news discourse using transitivity analysis. The study concluded that news writers' subtly inflected ideologies and language, specifically through word choices and arrangements, were a significant factor that influenced public opinion. Thus, the use of language, Bakuuro and Diedong (2020) stated, can be used in particular ways that shape and build the readers' ideology.

Although there are numerous studies about news media representation, there is a scarcity of research studying media representation and ideological leaning using

Halliday's Transitivity Analysis and Van Dijk's Ideological Square. Moreover, the examination of the four prominent outlets in the Philippines– GMA, ABS-CBN, Rappler, and Philippine Inquirer– to uncover ideological stances and how they represent political figures, particularly concerning Sara Duterte's OVP Budget Hearing, remains unexplored. Thus, this study focuses on uncovering how news media represent political figures using Halliday's Transitivity Analysis and Van Dijk's Ideological Square. This issue became a hot topic, drawing the attention of Filipino citizens, as Sara Duterte has caused a heated debate with some lawmakers in her first hearing (Villaruel, 2024). This underscores a sense of urgency in examining how news media represent Sara Duterte and influence the masses' perceptions.

The study of the use of language in media representations of political figures is vital, specifically in a digital age where there is easy access to media where people may learn ideologies and influence public perception (Sambuno, 2023). Integrating this study into the curriculum will help hone the media and digital literacy of the students in navigating the digital landscape and developing the ability to critically analyze and evaluate content across various media platforms (McNulty, 2024). Moreover, teachers can raise awareness for students to read between the lines and analyze the content through a critical lens, promoting competency in consuming information and proactive reading (Shamboul, 2022). Furthermore, it highlights the profound impact of language use in media representation as an influential tool that shapes and represents individuals' perception of a subject, particularly politicians (Aithor, 2024). Consequently, it allows students, who will be future journalists, to note the importance of careful choices in lexical items and syntactic structures in constructing a story, ensuring alignment with ethical standards and following objectivity.

This study aims to determine Sara Duterte's representation in news discourse, what types of processes she performs, and in what context or circumstances these processes are carried out in articles. Furthermore, to determine positive self-representations and negative representations of Sara Duterte are determined in the 2025 Budget Hearing is considered, considering the portrayal of 'us' and 'them' or in-group and out-group in news articles. Moreover, this study also contributed to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16–Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions– highlighting the importance of transparent and accountable institutions, particularly the media.

2. Methods

This section focuses on the study's methodology, which includes the research data, research design, and data analysis throughout the research process.

2.1 Research Data

The data that were collected from the top four news media outlets of the Philippines – GMA News Online, ABS-CBN News Online, Philippines Daily Inquirer Online, and

Rappler—which were chosen due to the percentage of trust, credibility, and reliability, and the top four most consumed news by the public (Pablo *et al.*, 2022; Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2024), specifically Sara Duterte's OVP Budget Hearing 2025. The articles collected include media articles during the OVP Budget Hearing, exclusively from August and September 2024. This time frame encompasses the duration of Sara's OVP Budget Hearing. The selection of articles was limited to 30 pieces from the news media outlets mentioned above. The total number of pieces needed is enough, following the data collection of Robiego and Talde (2024). The selection criteria of articles include: (a) they could only be news articles; opinion pieces or feature stories are not allowed; (b) they were published by well-known national news organizations known for their credibility, reliability, and online engagement; and (c) they explicitly mentioned the center of the study's investigation—Sara Duterte's OVP Budget Hearing. A total of thirty (30) news articles were collected and analyzed for this study. These articles came from four major Philippine news media outlets: ABS-CBN, GMA, Rappler, and the Philippine Daily Inquirer (PDI). All articles focused on the coverage of the Office of the Vice President (OVP) Budget Hearing and were published exclusively within August and September 2024. The collected articles vary in length, ranging from brief reports to in-depth pieces, with word counts spanning from just over 100 words to more than 2,500 words. This diverse corpus provided a comprehensive view of how different media organizations reported on the OVP budget deliberations during the specified time frame.

2.2 Research Design

This study is a Critical Discourse Study (CDS) that focuses on how language reinforces power relations and ideologies in the media (Fairclough, 1989). The study aimed to examine media representation and ideological leanings, which require multifaceted frameworks for analysis. Hence, this utilized Transitivity based on Systemic Functional Grammar by Halliday (1994) and Ideological Square by Van Dijk (1998) as theoretical and methodological frameworks that examined media representations of selected Philippine News Outlets of Sara Duterte.

2.3 Data Analysis

The extraction of data for transitivity analysis followed the framework of Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, particularly focusing on how processes, participants, and circumstances were realized in the clauses where Sara Duterte was present. The selected news articles were first organized into clauses. Each clause was examined to identify the process type—whether it was material, mental, verbal, relational, behavioral, or existential. Then, we identified Sara Duterte's role in each process, such as an actor in material, sayer in verbal, or senser in the mental processes. Next, we noted the circumstances in each clause to analyze the contexts in which the processes occurred. The extracted data was tabulated according to its process type across all articles, showing patterns in the representation of Sara Duterte.

The extraction of data using Van Dijk's Ideological Square was guided by its four-fold structure, emphasizing our good actions and their bad actions while downplaying our bad and their good. The data extraction is mainly grounded in the lens of Sara Duterte, as reflected in her direct statements quoted in news articles. We focus on Duterte's language to determine how she constructed the dichotomy of us vs. them during the OVP Budget Hearing. Her statements were closely examined, and then we isolated sentences that reflected the us and them narrative. 41 statements reflect the polarization of us and them, but we chose three statements each that strongly represent the positive self-presentation and negative other presentations.

To address the research questions, we conducted an interpretative analysis of the extracted transitivity and ideological square data. For research question 1, all identified clauses involving Sara Duterte were analyzed to determine the process types, the roles she occupied (e.g., actor, sayer, sensor), and the circumstances surrounding these processes. These results were then synthesized to uncover dominant patterns in her representation— such as whether she was often portrayed as active, reactive, authoritative, or defensive. Meanwhile, to answer Research Question 2, the ideologically marked statements were grouped according to the type of representation (positive-self or negative-other) and further analyzed to understand how Duterte and her critics were discursively constructed. This included identifying lexical patterns, evaluative language, and implied biases. By triangulating the findings from the transitivity system and the ideological square, we were able to capture both the grammatical structure and the ideological function of the language used, thus providing a comprehensive understanding of how Sara Duterte was represented during the 2025 OVP Budget Hearing throughout media outlets.

2.3.1 Transitivity Analysis

The study employed Systemic Functional Grammar, mainly the transitivity analysis, which examined how news media outlets represented Sara Duterte during her OVP Budget Hearing 2025. According to Halliday (1973), Transitivity is a way for the writer to cipher his experience of the processes, both external and internal, including the participant roles and circumstances. Moreover, it is used to analyze the structure of clauses occurring in different process types, their participants, and circumstances (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), and to examine how actions and agents are represented. The transitivity consists of 3 main components: Process, participant, and circumstances. However, circumstances were optional; process and participant roles were inherent in a clause. A verbal group realizes processes. Then, participants were recruited by a nominal group. Lastly, circumstances were realized by an adverbial or prepositional phrase. Additionally, Sara Duterte's classification of the participant role she engaged in, the process type she exhibited, and the additional context or circumstance revealed how she is represented.

2.3.2 Ideological Square

This study employed Van Dijk's (1998) semantic macro strategies to analyze how the media texts emphasize attribution of group dynamics, the in-group or "us," and the out-group as "them." It examined the group dynamics, such as the positive attributes of the in-group, where Duterte and her supporters are depicted positively as "Us." At the same time, her critics as out-groups are characterized negatively as "Them," illustrating a clear distinction between in-groups and out-groups. The ideological square emphasized the contrast of the media representation of the in-group and out-group, identifying the Positive Self-Presentation of Duterte's favorable qualities and downplaying her shortcomings and the Negative Other-Presentation that highlighted the negative traits of her critics while minimizing their positives. Through various news media sources, the study aimed to uncover potential biases in the coverage of Duterte's role in the budget hearing, ultimately revealing ideological leanings in media representations.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

The transitivity analysis revealed that Sara Duterte was predominantly represented through verbal and material processes, positioning her as a highly vocal and active political actor during the 2025 OVP Budget Hearing. As a Sayer, she frequently performed acts of speaking, defending, and accusing, portraying her as combative and assertive. As an Actor, her material processes, such as refusing, submitting, and engaging, framed her as resistant and occasionally cooperative, suggesting a contested public role. Relational processes presented her as disengaged or controversial, while mental processes humanized her by showing her emotional responses to scrutiny. Behavioral processes, though rare, emphasized her dismissal of criticism. These patterns, when analyzed alongside Van Dijk's ideological square, reveal a strategic discourse: Duterte is framed through positive self-representation, emphasizing integrity, service, and transparency, while her critics are cast in negative-other representation, often depicted as politically motivated actors using the hearing as a tool for discreditation. Collectively, the linguistic choices across the articles contribute to a polarized representation of Duterte as a resilient yet embattled political persona.

3.1.1 Transitivity Analysis of Sara Duterte's Media Representation

Transitivity is a main concept in Systemic Functional Grammar that focuses on how language represents actions, events, and thoughts. It focused on processes, participants, and circumstances within clauses, showing how an actor is constructed through language. In media discourse, transitivity aimed at uncovering the stance of the writer by showing which participants are given agency, which are affected, and how the events are framed. Transitivity is crucial in understanding how political actors are framed, particularly in uncovering how Sara Duterte is represented in the media during the OVP Budget Hearing.

3.1.1.1 Material Processes

Material processes, which represented actions and activities, were most frequently ascribed to Sara Duterte. These involve an actor(doer) that does something, which may be done to someone(goal)—the material processes ascribed to Duterte in framing her focused-on refusal, communication, and confrontation.

Table 1: Material Processes in Sara Duterte’s Media Representation

Process Type	Participant-Theme	Process Verbs	Participant-Rheme	Circumstances
Material	Sara Duterte (Actor)	Rejected, Requested, Has not confirmed, Attended, Refused, Tried, Requested, Sent, Wrote, Released, Released, Engaged, Wrote, Snubbed, did not show up, made stops, Sent, Left, Avoided, Scrutinizing, Refused, Refused, Requested, Vowed, Skipped, refused, has yet to attend, faced, refused, Made, continue/do, did not identify, dodged, Skipped, Submitted, Dodged, Attempted, Skipped, Accused, Alleged, Deferred, Refused, Accused, Questioned, did not answer, Accused, Withheld, Refused, Claimed, Accused, Told, Interrupted, Suggested, Disallowed, asked to confirm, Requested, Confirmed, Flagged, Must return, Are pending, refused, interrupted,	That she is a “spoiled brat”, Replacement of Rep. Quimbo, Attendance at next hearing, OVP budget probe, Being placed under oath, Interrupting Quimbo, Replacing the presiding officer, Schedule of OVP deliberation, Talking to the public, Budget letter, Use of OVP funds, Confrontation with lawmakers, During hearing, Oath-taking, Investigating fund use, Due to lack of substance, Continuing to serve, Plenary debates, Answering lawmakers’ questions, GAA debates, Attending House hearing, The remark made, What’s needed for people, Budget comparisons, Questions on OVP’s P2B proposal, Second deliberation, Letter to committee, Past confidential funds, Officer replacement, Deliberations on 2025 budget, Answering lawmakers, Impeachment plotting, Conf. funds for 2022 & 2023, Past expenses, COA’s P73M disallowance, Snide comment, Disallowance notice, Non-submission of	Media interview, House of Representatives, During an exchange with House lawmakers, During the budget deliberations, earlier this month, On September 11, 2024, Hours before the agency’s scheduled budget deliberations, During the budget hearing on August 27, September 10, for the 2025 budget deliberation, amid talks, repeatedly, At the House of Representative, On September 10, 2024, To the House Committee, During the first round of budget hearings, During a heated exchange in the House budget deliberations, At the In a recorded interview, After the budget hearing, In a press release, During her House appearance, Following her House appearance, In the 2022 budget of the OVP, In a notice of disallowance, Before the Supreme Court, Constantly, On August 27, To their face, At the House appropriations committee hearing, To Speaker Romualdez and

		engaged, entered, prepared, addressed, accused, has resigned, accused, Did not show up, sent, submitted, sees, heard, can work, we will continue to do, released, did not show up, sent, appeared, could firm up, prioritize, was spotted, was leaving, had submitted, is leaving, forgoes, refused, refused, objected, attended, skipped	intelligence, Confidential fund petitions, Questions about OVP budget, Quimbo quarrel, Presence at Nograles Hall, Going on the offensive, Her impeachment, Cabinet departure, Lawmaker plot, Explanation letter, All required documents, Coordinated attack, Budget defunding threat, People's needs, Video message, House recommendation, Beach outing, Proposal deliberation, Budget fate, Opportunity to defend OVP budget, Several questions, Senate deliberations, House OVP deliberations	Rep. Co, To the appropriation committee, For the people, At the budget hearing of her office, During the hearing, On Calagua Island, Up to the House, Especially about confidential funds, To the opening of the floor for interpellations, Personally
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The results revealed that Sara Duterte was generally positioned as an Actor, performing actions such as "refused", "avoided", "submitted", "engaged", and "snubbed". These verbs portray her as resisting and evading scrutiny, particularly during budget deliberations. Verbs such as "sent", "submitted", and "wrote" implied moments of compliance but were outweighed by verbs signaling resistance and avoidance. The circumstances that followed these processes emphasized the political context in which these actions took place, framing Sara Duterte as evasive in institutional scrutiny against lawmakers.

3.1.1.2 Verbal Processes

Verbal Processes conveyed acts of saying, commanding, asking, and offering. These processes involved a speaker (sayer), what is said (verbiage), and possibly a receiver or target of the verbiage. In political discourse, verbal processes were used to foreground Sara Duterte's statements, denials, and accusations, revealing how she managed accountability, persuasion, and counter-narratives through language.

Table 2: Verbal Processes in Sara Duterte’s Media Representation

Process Type	Participant-Theme	Process Verbs	Participant-Rheme	Circumstances
Verbal	Sara Duterte (Sayer)	Claimed, Stating, Questioned, Accused, Reiterated, Stated, Insisted, Explained, Claimed, Asserted, Said, Tell, Claimed, Urged, Told, Stated, Accused, Replied, Said, Stated, Replied, Said, Asked, Reiterated, Asked, Said, Claimed, Accused, Claimed, Declared, Accused, said, Denied, stated, Said, had submitted, are making, denied, maintained, said, said, said, said, claimed, said, said, insisted, said, said, said, underscored, said, added, said, didn’t answer, said, added, responded, said, said said, said, said, maintained, said, said, told, added, added, said, said, added, said, Claimed, Accused, said, replied, claimed, asserted, said, Said, maintained,said, said, alleged, asked, insisted, said, asked, asked, told, warned, said, claimed, said, thanked, said, added, reasoned, said.	Insinuations, She didn’t abuse power, “Convicted of child abuse,” “Crucifying”, Did not want to engage, Hearing had bias, Budget controlled by few, She’d act as resource person, No fund misuse, Attacks are coordinated, Ending inquiry, “Try to destroy me”, Inquiry not about misuse, Impeachment attempt, Hearing is for 2025 budget, Will cooperate fully, Forgoes defense opportunity, Info she received, OVP leaving deliberation, Request to leave, Won’t submit to hearing, Inquiry is political, “Don’t vote for Sara”, No fund misuse, House plotting impeachment, Congressmen delayed, Office submitted docs, Budget allocations, Required docs, Impeachment claims, Misuse allegations, House politically attacking, Will not cave in, OVP programs helped 2M, OVP can operate, Still able to work, Defunding is part of attacks, Makabayan-Romualdez conspiracy, Budget control, OVP readiness, “Where are funds?”, Recorded conversations, Limit topic to her, Issue with SC, She had recorded conversations, Topic	From House lawmakers, Media interview, House of Representatives, During the budget hearing, Deliberations for political attacks, In response to Rep. France Castro’s remarks, Past budget issues, Addressing concerns on confidential funds, Defending OVP’s stance on budget scrutiny, In response to House members’ criticisms, Senate finance committee hearing, House Committee on Appropriations hearing, In a recorded of using the budget hearing for her office for politicking, Tuesday, categorically, In her letter earlier, In a recorded interview released on September 11, 2024., In a pre-recorded interview, in a recorded interview released on September 11, 2024, In Filipino in the video message released on Wednesday, Merely, The budget deliberation, By saying she forgoes the opportunity, As presider of the jarring, To the discussion on the 2025 budget, Clarifying her request, About the topic discussion, During the hearing, Regarding defending the OVP budget, Referring to Rep. France Castro, For accommodating and

			should stay on her, Issue now with Supreme Court, OVP ready to work, Public should know fund status, People should understand, Some solons misunderstood, OVP's P2B proposal, No more PNP in OVP, Hearing is for 2025 budget, "Madam Chair..." (reprimanding tone), Reminder to refrain from remarks, Called Castro's attention, Castro's presence questioned, Doesn't understand the accusations, She would forgo Q&A, Critics won't like her answers, She is still responding, Committee has discretion, Docs submitted to House, Position already stated, Articulated her view, Not acting bratty, Appeared before Congress, Did nothing wrong, Refused to take oath, Attack is coordinated, Inquiry not about misuse, Attempt to impeach, Graphic metaphor of persecution, Conspiracy to strip funds, House controls budget, Office ready to work, "Where are the funds?", She had recordings, Focus should stay on OVP, Issue is with SC, Presentation already given, Responded to all queries, Doesn't mind defunding, Budget control by Romualdez, Response to Adiong's	acting on the OVP budget, Under the reduced budget
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			request, Left to House discretion, Reiterated budget hearing points, Quimbo mentioned, Castro's questions off-topic, "I did not move", "I requested", Chair should preside, Snide comment by Castro, Doesn't get why child abuse convict is in House, Senate mentioned, Job losses feared, Satellite office staff affected, Wanted to deny critics a chance, Opponents will repeat irrelevant questions	
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Sara Duterte was heavily attributed to verbal processes such as "claimed", "said", "accused", and "asserted". These verbs portrayed her as a highly vocal participant, responding to criticisms and defending herself using counter-narratives. The frequency of verbs like "claimed" and "accused" suggested a combative rhetorical stance, portraying her as a polarizing figure in the hearing. Many of her verbal actions were defensive, with verbiage focused on accusations of political attacks, impeachment attempts, and denials of wrongdoing. The circumstances attached to these processes reinforced the public nature of her verbal actions.

3.1.1.3 Relational Processes

Relational processes establish identities, characteristics, and roles through verbs like "is", "was", etc. These processes typically involved a Carrier and an Attribute or an Identified and an Identifier, and were crucial in representing Sara Duterte's status or being. These processes were used to describe Sara Duterte in a way that shapes public perception.

Table 3: Relational Processes in Sara Duterte's Media Representation

Process Type	Participant-Theme	Process Verbs	Participant-Rheme	Circumstances
Relational	Sara Duterte (Actor)	Was, Appeared, Ran, Is, Was, Enjoyed	Supposedly on a beach, A preparation for her possible impeachment, contrary to her mandate, just a resource person and not a witness, A no-show.	While the OVP's proposed 2025 budget was scheduled for plenary deliberations, House of Representatives, at the resumption of the House appropriations panel's deliberation for the proposed 2025 budget

Sara Duterte was represented in relational processes through verbs like "was", "is", and "appeared" that portrayed her as a "no show", "just a resource person", or "on a beach". These clauses highlighted her absence, marginal role, or personal conduct during budget hearings. The usage of these verbs portrayed her as negligent or disengaged during budget hearings, which emphasized her alleged failure to fulfill her political role.

3.1.1.4 Mental Processes

Mental processes reflect inner states—thinking, perceiving, knowing, and feeling. This involved the experiencer (senser) and the object of thought or emotion (phenomenon). These processes showed insight into Sara Duterte's perspectives and emotional reactions, especially during budget hearings.

Table 4: Mental Processes in Sara Duterte's Media Representation

Process Type	Participant-Theme	Process Verbs	Participant-Rheme	Circumstances
Mental	Sara Duterte (Senser)	Acknowledge, Insisted, Insisted, was lamenting, did not appreciate, Knows, heard, sees, know, question, hoped.	Congress' power to scrutinize, her repeated responses are not non-answers, That questions should only be about her proposed 2025 budget, possible death of her legacy projects, the line of questioning, That lawmakers did not like her replies, that there will be defunding, it as part of an alleged coordinated attack against her, that's part of the attack, its relevance, to persuade senators to restore the nearly P1.3-billion cut	During the budget deliberations, five sentences into her opening statement, Regarding the focus on the 2025 budget.

Sara Duterte was portrayed as a senser using verbs like "acknowledge," "insisted", and "knows". These verbs, along with the phenomenon, constructed her as someone deeply aware of and emotionally affected by the criticisms against her. For instance, she lamented the nature of the questioning and "insisted" her responses were valid. This framing evokes a sense of victimhood, showing that she is engaged and responsive, rather than evasive.

3.1.1.5 Behavioral Process

Behavioral processes are processes of physiological and psychological behavior, bridging mental and material actions, such as dreaming, snoring, watching, and pondering. This only includes one participant who is behaving: that is, the human who is typically a conscious being. It is less common but conveys the subjective reaction of Sara Duterte.

Table 5: Transitivity in the Representation of Sara Duterte in Behavioral Process

Process Type	Participant-Theme	Process Verbs	Participant-Rheme	Circumstances
Behavioral	Sara Duterte	Brushed off	Being called brat.	

Only one behavioral process was evident: "brushed off". This emphasized Duterte's dismissal of derogatory labeling, portraying her as unfazed by criticism and reinforcing her as resistant.

3.1.2 Ideological Square

The analysis showed that Sara Duterte herself had positive self-presentations and negative other presentations, particularly to lawmakers who were against her or what were labeled as her "critics." Positive self-presentations constructed ideological representations that emphasized the good actions and mitigated the bad actions of Sara Duterte to reinforce positive self-representation. Here, it was revealed that Sara Duterte emphasized her good actions while mitigating her bad actions. On the other hand, in negative other-presentations, Duterte constructed an ideological representation that highlighted the bad and mitigated the good actions of her critics to emphasize the negative other-presentation. Sara Duterte portrayed herself as emphasizing her good actions and mitigation of bad. Meanwhile, people who were against her or her "critics" were portrayed by Duterte as bad, and their good actions were mitigated.

3.1.2.1 Positive Self-Presentation of Sara Duterte

The analysis showed that Sara Duterte herself had positive self-presentations and negative other presentations, particularly to lawmakers who were against her or who were labeled as her "critics." Positive self-presentations constructed ideological representations that emphasized the good actions and mitigated the bad actions of Sara Duterte to reinforce positive self-representation. Here, it was revealed that Sara Duterte emphasized her good actions while mitigating her bad actions. On the other hand, in negative other-presentations, Duterte constructed an ideological representation that highlighted the bad and mitigated the good actions of her critics to emphasize the negative other-presentation. Sara Duterte portrayed herself as emphasizing her good actions and mitigation of bad. Meanwhile, people who were against her or her "critics" were portrayed by Duterte as bad, and their good actions were mitigated.

(1) *"There is no misuse of funds. If there are audit findings, we will gladly respond to them before the Commission on Audit."* (A3-GMA)

(2) *"You know Inday Sara; she doesn't care about the money. She'll work regardless of the budget. She understands that government funds are limited, so she'll get the job done."* Duterte reiterated. (A2Rappler)

(3) *"The people know that I do not abuse my power and my authority in all the offices I have held. The whole country can testify that I am not a spoiled brat."* (A5GMA)

These statements constructed a positive image of Sara Duterte, primarily as selfless, a public servant, and principled. In the first statement, Duterte was positioned as compliant, instead of resisting. This highlights her willingness to comply with the Commission on Audit, framing her as accountable rather than evasive. Next, the second statement reinforced this positive representation through third-party validation. Duterte's reference to her colleague's remarks functioned as a testament to how good a leader she is. This created a narrative where Duterte is a leader who will perform any duties regardless of any circumstances. Lastly, statement three used the public perception of Duterte. Using social consensus strengthened her credibility as a leader while delegitimizing her as an elite, highlighting her as humble despite coming from a political lineage. Overall, these statements highlighted the construction of a positive narrative, primarily highlighting Duterte's credibility, transparency, and commitment to service.

3.1.2.2 Negative Other Presentation of Sara Duterte

The negative other presentation was made by Sara Duterte herself, highlighting the "other" as people who were against Sara Duterte, mostly lawmakers, the House of Representatives, and the speakers. In her statements, Duterte portrayed the "other" in a negative light, centering on politically motivated assaults, unfair treatment, and impeachment plots.

(4) *"In fact, you are not after the budget here because you can easily take that away. What you are trying to do is make a case for impeachment."* (A1-GMA)

(5) *"What we are witnessing now is no ordinary legislative inquiry. This exercise is a well-funded and coordinated political attack, evident from the very words of the privileged speech that prompted this inquiry."* (A3-GMA)

(6) *"It is clear to me that this inquiry is not about misused funds, accountability, or governance. Instead, it is solely aimed at discrediting my name and my office to prevent future political contests."* (A3-GMA)

These statements constructed a negative-other representation of Duterte's critics, generally framing them as self-motivated politicians rather than professional ones. In statement 4, the use of 'you' directly accused the critics of using the budget hearing as a tool for impeachment rather than a legitimate investigation. This implies that the budget hearing is a way for the hidden agenda of impeachment, which highlights the critics' political sabotage. This is further supported by statement 5, where it escalated to accusing the critics of construing a well-coordinated political attack, implying orchestration and manipulation. Duterte is delegitimizing the process and framing the critics' words as

biased and malicious. Lastly, in statement 6, Duterte once more delegitimized the purpose of the inquiry, which focused more on discrediting her political reputation. This presented her critics, who were motivated by fear of Duterte's political potential, instead of focusing on the budget inquiry. This framed her opponents as power-hungry and self-motivated.

3.2 Discussion

In analyzing the transitivity and the ideological square, particularly the positive self and negative other presentations, the study found how Sara Duterte was represented in the news discourse. The findings explained the ideations of Duterte around the OVP Budget Hearing, that the news outlets influenced their audience. These representations are discussed in the news discourse on the Budget Hearing and its relevant literature.

Transitivity, a main concept in Systemic Functional Grammar, construes experiences into different process types that build meaning and participant roles (Salvaleon, 2019). In the media representation of Sara Duterte, verbal processes were most frequently used in her representations. As a speaker, she was presented as actively engaging in political discourse, constantly defending, reframing narratives, and making accusations. This shows her as an active figure who primarily shapes the political discourse. This aligns with the study of Gochuico (2020), who stated that it is common in Philippine news discourse to represent politicians as defensive, defiant, doubtful, and confrontational. This suggests that Duterte is not a passive participant but rather someone who takes control of the narrative, appealing to the emotion of the audience (Darmastuti *et al.*, 2019; Salvaleon, 2019). Material processes dominate next in frequency, in which she is held accountable for her actions, showing her resistance. This suggests a representation of Duterte as evasive, passive, or combative, emphasizing less cooperation and more resistance.

Mental, relational, and behavioral processes were more frequent. Mental processes showed her internal reasoning and emotional state, portraying Duterte as an emotionally aware individual who felt unfairly scrutinized. As Ashraf *et al.* (2022) state, mental processes humanize political leaders by eliciting their internal thoughts and emotions, which, in this case, helps justify their material resistance. Relational processes framed her identity, focusing on her absence, judging her political legitimacy. This is supported by the findings of Ashraf *et al.* (2022) that relational clauses are employed to highlight negative traits. Finally, the behavioral process, although rare, portrayed her as emotionally composed despite criticism. This linguistic construction shows how news media, through well-controlled choices in transitivity, do not merely report issues or events but also shape perceptions. As Suparto (2018) explains, participants in news discourse can be framed from certain perspectives by the media. These transitivity choices are carefully selected and reflect how the Philippine media often aims to discredit opposition parties (Ashraf *et al.*, 2022; Imperial, 2021).

The ideological discourse surrounding Sara Duterte's OVP budget hearing reflected Van Dijk's ideological square, which conceptualizes how political actors

strategically polarize discourse, using the four-fold structure of emphasizing our good and their bad while de-emphasizing our bad and their good (Van Dijk, 2011). In her positive self-presentation, she portrayed the in-group identity mainly by integrity, accountability, and public commitment, projecting herself as a responsible leader despite controversy. These discursive moves align with Van Dijk's semantic strategies, such as predication of positive traits, implications of moral behavior, and collective endorsements, all of which are carefully tailored to appeal to public values like accountability and humility (Van Dijk, 2011). Such strategic self-presentation reflects Duterte's political knowledge and ideological positioning (Van Dijk, 2006). This corresponds with studies of Abdullai (2025), Alaa and Hamdan (2019), Kauthsar and Hamzah (2024), Makarova and Shakoury (2024), and Qaiwer (2020), in which politicians often use positive self-presentation in political discourse that shows their ideologies, power, and interest, presenting themselves as strong, honorable, and credible to gain the trust and support of the mass.

The portrayal of Duterte's critics used the other function of ideological square—negative other presentation. Her statements portrayed the 'other' as politically motivated, manipulative, and unjust, utilizing rhetorical strategies that delegitimize. This agrees with the outline of Van Dijk (2011) on how ideological discourse construes group-based antagonisms by emphasizing negative agency and opponents' moral failings. By victimizing herself as unjustly targeted by the out-group, her discourse used the strategy of victimization. The use of a strategy of victimization, portraying herself as unfairly targeted by politically motivated opponents, in which Van Dijk (2005) affirms that victimization is a powerful tool to portray the 'us' as a victim of unjust treatment by the 'others.' This manipulation of discourse supports the findings of Abdullai (2025), in which such narrative often presents biased representations that strategically condemn the other to consolidate support.

The overall findings from both the transitivity and ideological square analyses suggest that Sara Duterte is predominantly represented as an assertive, verbal, and reactive political actor, especially during moments of tension in the 2025 OVP Budget Hearing. The frequency of verbal processes, where she functions as the Sayer, highlights her positioning as a spokesperson defending herself and her office against perceived political attacks. This linguistic positioning, supported by Halliday's theory (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), reflects how discourse can construct agency not only through physical action but also through the act of speaking. These representations align with Robiego and Talde (2024), who noted that political figures often utilize verbal and mental processes to shape public perception in media texts. Moreover, the relational processes, in which Duterte carried specific traits or positions, further reinforce her self-presentation as a principled, targeted, and committed to institutional integrity. This agrees with how media discourse can utilize grammatical structures to emphasize the agency and identity of public officials depending on the context (Fairclough, 2015).

These linguistic representations strongly align with the ideological strategies in Duterte's statements. As shown in the ideological square analysis, Duterte consistently

used discursive strategies of positive self-representation and negative other-representation that emphasized a clear dichotomy between Duterte and her critics. Her rhetoric highlighted her role as a leader performing her duties while portraying lawmakers as self-motivated. This aligns with the assertion of Van Dijk (1998) that ideology in discourse often operates through constructions of dichotomy that serve to legitimize the in-group and delegitimize the out-group. Similarly, Aguilar *et al.* (2021) also stated that politicians often rely on emotional language and evaluative framing to influence people, especially during conflicts. In this paper, Duterte's linguistic choices served as a defensive rhetorical shield, whose purpose is to protect and preserve her public image while questioning the legitimacy of her critics. Thus, both the grammatical structure and transitivity aim to present Duterte as assertive amidst a difficult political landscape.

5. Conclusions

This study revealed how Sara Duterte is represented in the news discourse during the OVP budget hearing. Through transitivity analysis, Sara Duterte was frequently represented in the news discourse through verbal, material, and relational processes. Duterte was portrayed most often as a Sayer and Actor, often issuing statements in defense of her office and actions and engaging in verbal confrontations with lawmakers. The circumstances surrounding these processes position her within a defensive and politically contentious environment. The findings on transitivity analysis affirmed Halliday's (1994) claim that linguistic structures—particularly process types and participant roles—construct the representation of social actors. This representation implies that media discourse often reinforces the image of authority and agency through linguistic choices, especially in political contexts. Thus, language structures in news texts do not merely report political behavior—they actively shape public understanding of political identity and agency.

Alongside this, the use of the ideological model by Van Dijk (1998) shows that Duterte's quoted statements consistently reflected a strong "us vs. them" narrative. Through her own words, she emphasized her dedication to public service, framed herself as unjustly criticized, and depicted lawmakers and critics as politically motivated. The media coverage, while seemingly objective in quoting her directly, enabled Duterte's ideological framing to reach the audience. This implies that media discourse, particularly through direct quotations, serves not just as a vehicle for reporting but also as a platform for political actors to perform ideological work and shape public perception.

The study also offers useful implications for both education and future research. For educators and readers alike, this highlights the importance of developing critical discourse literacy, especially when analyzing how political figures are portrayed not just by what they do, but by how their actions are linguistically framed. Understanding how language structures are used in news discourse can help young readers become media literate. For researchers, this calls for sustained attention on linguistic choices used by the

media, even when filtered through journalistic reporting, in constructing narratives of political figures that serve as a vehicle for ideological framing.

In conclusion, this study underscores the interplay between language and ideology in shaping public perceptions of political figures. The integration of transitivity and ideological square frameworks offered a layered understanding of how Sara Duterte was constructed in media discourse—not just through what was said about her, but how her own language was framed and circulated. The key takeaway is that political representation in the media is never purely neutral or descriptive; it is shaped by grammatical structures, ideological functions, and strategic discourse. Thus, critical discourse analysis remains an essential tool for unpacking hidden layers of meaning in public texts, especially in politically sensitive contexts.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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