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Research Paper

The Power of the Mic: Investigating the Influence of Local Sportscasters' Biases on National Team Athletes' Identities

Joram Kim Corcuera¹, & Alejandro S. Bernardo²

¹Corresponding author, Department of English, Faculty of Arts and Letters, University of Santo Tomas, Manila, Philippines; jbcorcuera@ust.edu.ph

²Department of English, Graduate School, Faculty of Arts and Letters, University of Santo Tomas, Manila, Philippines; asbernardo@ust.edu.ph

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Abstract

This study explored the impact of media biases in local sportscasting on athletes' identity formation. Utilizing Berger and Thomas's (1966) social constructionism theory and Mullet's (2018) critical discourse analysis model, the research analyzed transcripts from the Philippines Men's Basketball Team's sportscasting coverage during the FIBA Basketball World Cup 2023. Corpus analysis identified media biases in Filipino sportscasting, and critical discourse analysis examined how dominant perspectives and power dynamics contribute to biased discourse. Meanwhile, interviews with five sportscasters and two linguists assessed how sportscasters' language influences sports fans' perceptions of athletes and teams. The findings indicate that local sportscasters' biases shape athletes' identities by emphasizing cultural values like resilience, patriotism, and teamwork. The study also revealed that nationalism in sports media frames national team players as symbols of national pride, and that media biases influence athletes' public image by highlighting their strengths or weaknesses. This impacts public opinion and athletes' self-perception, underscoring sports media's role in shaping societal values and norms.

Keywords: Sportscasting; Media Biases; Identity Construction; Critical Discourse Analysis.

1. Introduction

In the digital age, the accessibility of sports has undeniably expanded the number of fans and spectators, which best explains why sports have become more globally popular and widely recognized, with millions of people around the world appreciating it as a significant sociocultural activity (Coalter, 2007). Advances in technology have made social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter central to modern communication and connection (Bin Zulkifli & Bakar, 2023). Undeniably, these ongoing developments have also contributed to making sports content readily accessible to the general public across various digital formats. Similarly, the advancement of mobile wireless technologies has accelerated the integration of cutting-edge tools (Jalilifar & Mashhadi, 2013), which may be used to disseminate sports content. As a result, media consumers now expect not only instant updates from news websites and social media platforms but also actively seek out diverse digital content that caters to their evolving needs (Cavalier, 2011). Meanwhile, in the evolving landscape of educational technology, studies highlight significant benefits. Andujar and Spratt (2023) report that ChatGPT enhances class management and aids in language competency assessments in the absence of experts. Similarly, Contreras Soto et al. (2023) observed improvements in learners' oral performance through weekly flip video recordings, which impacted both linguistic and socio-affective skills. Furthermore, Arrosagaray & Urreizti (2024) found that most students experienced positive or neutral effects when taking computer-based assessments, generally finding the process satisfactory.

The media, which encompass all forms of communication that reach large audiences, including radio, TV, films, print, and the internet (Roohani & Esmaeili, 2010), also play a key role in shaping fan engagement and disseminating sports content. In addition, media are considered a key to transmitting knowledge, values, and beliefs that can shape culture and influence behavior (Smirnova & Zakirova, 2023), which is why they strive to establish themselves as trusted



sources of information to enhance credibility and boost future demands (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2006). At the end of the day, while various forms of public media exist, each with their own relationship to governments (Hallin & Mancini, 2004), their overarching mission remains consistent: to provide a public service by delivering unbiased and trustworthy content (Asano et al., 2023) because they wield considerable power over public opinion (Meyrowitz, 1986).

Unfortunately, encountering misinformation and disinformation has become increasingly common in the digital age. Consequently, concerns about media biases are increasing because of their capacity to shape how information is presented and perceived by the general public (Baron, 2006). Additionally, media biases can take various forms, such as favoritism toward specific governments, political parties, ideologies, major advertisers, owners, or audiences valued by advertisers (Puglisi & Snyder, 2015). These biases can also be evident in sports, as they are often reflected in the articles and broadcasts by sports journalists and broadcasters. These biases also occur when unfair assumptions and generalizations about a sports team or an athlete are used to understand and explain the behavior of all individuals within that group (Davis & Harris, 1998).

Building upon this understanding, it is undeniable that media biases in sportscasting not only report sports events, but also shape and construct the identities of various sports personalities. By selectively emphasizing certain aspects of an athlete, media outlets can easily reinforce stereotypes and create new perceptions that may influence how athletes are viewed by the public (Bairner, 1996; Hall, 1997). Therefore, analyzing how these media biases shape identity in the field of sports and athletics is essential to understanding the broader impact of sports media in today's society.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Media Biases

Media biases are commonly committed by various news organizations, including sports media outlets, which may be because of the notion that these biases can make the reports and commentaries more relatable and acceptable for the viewers. Given that people rely on motivated reasoning when presented with contradictory information (Taber & Lodge, 2016), news reporters, including sportscasters, may be more likely to commit biases. Moreover, sports media often use these biases to promote nationalism, a practice referred to as nationalistic positioning (Corcuera & Bernardo, 2024). Furthermore, sportscasters may show biases due to motivated reasoning (Taber & Lodge, 2016), fear of reputational harm (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2006), media ownership, funding, or ideological and audience influences (Hamborg et al., 2019).

Additionally, defining impartial news is already challenging, and this complicates efforts to address media bias. With this, instead of eliminating bias, a more practical approach being considered by many is to minimize its impact on readers. However, thorough analyses to detect bias require significant time and effort, often lagging behind the fast pace of news production. Given the unknown factors contributing to observed biases, even defining bias requires extreme care (Puglisi & Snyder, 2015). Certainly, the lack of rigorous fact-checking and editorial oversight online further allows biased content to spread unchecked. Indeed, Internet users must learn how to evaluate information sources critically, verify claims with facts, and seek multiple perspectives.

2.2. Sportscasting and Identity Construction

Sports have become a universal phenomenon that knows no cultural or geographical bounds and engaging in it not only fosters a sense of belonging and camaraderie with different groups, but also serves as a means for individuals to express and shape their personal identity (Giossos, 2008). The term "identity" is a multifaceted construct influenced by social and personal elements that undergoes transformation through interpersonal engagements (Hecht, 2003), and defining it demands a continuous and dynamic process, which is subject to varying interpretations among different social groups. Meanwhile, collective identity refers to a sense of self that stems from belonging to a group or community (Hosseini, 2022).

Consequently, sports also function as a complex platform through which societies and individuals construct their identities, both internally and externally, and they also have the distinct ability to alter the way in which a country perceives and constructs its own nationalism and identity (Malcolm, 2009). As these identities evolve, tensions may arise when differing interpretations of nationalism come into play, which leads to conflicting perspectives within a society. This complex interplay between athletics and nationalistic sentiments may also engender an identification crisis among

members of society and this may result in varied understandings of nationalism and possible internal strife (Malcolm, 2009).

Building on these notions, media undeniably emerges as a powerful force in shaping not only nationalistic and societal identities but also individual athletic identities, as it highlights the intricate connections among sports, personal identity, and broader cultural narratives. In today's digital society, media plays a crucial and complex role in shaping identities, particularly athletic identity (Good et al., 1993; Brewer & Petipapas). Studies show that deeper involvement in sports strengthens this identity, often prioritizing it over other roles. This phenomenon occurs when athletes become so absorbed in their athletic persona that other aspects of their lives are diminished (Lamont-Mills & Christensen, 2006; Beamon, 2012).

Indeed, the sports media, particularly the sportscasters significantly shape athlete identities across diverse dimensions, including ability, professional image, social roles, cultural identity, race, and ethnicity. By selectively emphasizing or downplaying skills, accomplishments, or affiliations, they craft narratives that influence public perception (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2018) while athletes' social and cultural identities are molded by how their off-field activities, community involvement, or cultural symbols are portrayed, which can either reinforce stereotypes or promote more inclusive representations (Keating, 2016). Similarly, racial identity is affected by sportscasters' framing, often reflecting broader societal biases. For instance, black athletes are frequently portrayed with a heightened focus on physical prowess, perpetuating racial stereotypes (Harrison et al., 2011). Ethnic identity is also shaped by the language and framing used in broadcasts, emphasizing the need for sportscasters to exercise care and responsibility in their narratives to promote fair and nuanced portrayals of athletes (Hundley & Billings, 2010; Oldham, 2022).

Meanwhile, an essential component in the process of identity construction through social interactions is the utilization of linguistic choices, which entails the employment of unique voices that represent and symbolize different facets of one's identity. In addition, identity is created from one's linguistic choices (Rahimpour et al., 2018). Undeniably, language is a powerful medium for communicating identities, as it encompasses elements such as geographical, ethnic, and social affiliations (Bamberg et al., 2011). Likewise, it also helps identify, categorize, and evaluate individuals (Bamberg et al., 2011). Clearly, identities are constructed not in seclusion, but rather through the medium of discourse (Hall, 1997).

In addition to linguistic choices, the role of media in shaping and disseminating these identities cannot be overstated. Media platforms provide a stage where linguistic representations are amplified, influencing public perceptions and reinforcing social identities. In addition, media also impact the economic and sociocultural aspects of contemporary sports (Smith et al., 2015). This influence extends to how sports content is presented and consumed, altering audience engagement and perception. Furthermore, media's power, bolstered by free-to-air and live-streamed events, has fostered shared viewing experiences and national identity (Rowe, 2004; Scherer & Whitson, 2009).

There are existing studies that proved that sportscasters have a positive effect on the viewer's attitude toward sports broadcasts, specifically on continued viewing (Chen et al., 2010; Fuller, 2008; Kim, 2021). If the audience perceives sportscasters as credible and attractive, they are more likely to watch sports broadcasts consistently, as they expect accurate and insightful analysis of the events (Kim, 2021). Fans are also more likely to act on recommendations from sportscasters they trust (Rehberg Sedo, 2008). Additionally, sportscasters who are physically appealing and who have charismatic personalities are seen as more entertaining, encouraging greater fan engagement and leading to increased viewership of sports broadcasts.

On another note, it could also be argued that, within the domain of sports and athletics, athletes assume the role of symbolic entities, which personify their nation's pride and solidarity. This best explains why their performances are meticulously curated and presented by the media, with the intention of heightening emotions among the audience. Oftentimes, the narratives constructed around their performances are strategically crafted to foster national cohesion by avoiding disputable issues (Anderson, 1983). Without a doubt, the potential impact of sports media on one's identity concerns is significant and deserving of attention (MacNeill, 1996), and the language used by the sports media, specifically sportscasters, leads to the creation and formation of identities of various sports personalities, particularly the athletes.

2.3. Research Questions

The intersection between sports and linguistics remains a relatively underexplored area, which results in a significant gap in scholarly attention and discourse. In addition, the lack of focus on studying language within the context of sports and athletics also limits the public's current understanding of the subject. Moreover, there is also a notable shortage of academic research addressing media biases in sports, and their connection with identity formation. With this, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What role, if any, do biases in Filipino sportscasting play in shaping the identities attributed to Filipino athletes?
2. What potential role do biases in Filipino sportscasting have in shaping the identities ascribed to Filipino athletes?

3. Theoretical Lens

3.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a powerful tool for revealing and explicating the intricate interplay of ideologies and inequalities imprinted within language (Pozzi, 2022). It aids researchers in uncovering hidden beliefs and demonstrating how power operates, and it also provides a comprehensive analysis of how language creates and transmits meaning. Furthermore, CDA investigates written and spoken texts to identify the foundations of power, dominance, inequality, and prejudice (van Dijk, 1998) and explores the mechanisms responsible for perpetuating these discursive sources within particular social, political, and historical contexts.

Moreover, CDA is also a methodological approach that delves deeply into the meanings of words when describing and explaining language across various contexts, including sportscasting. Additionally, according to Mullet (2018), this profound understanding of discourse significantly shapes the narrative surrounding sporting events and impacts public perceptions and interactions. Since CDA involves an in-depth analysis of the language, tone, and style employed in communication, it can be used to unearth hidden meanings, media biases, and power dynamics that may be embedded within the discourse. CDA has served as one of the frameworks in this study because of its applicability in identifying how media bias within the dynamic realm of sports journalism contributes to identify formation of national athletes, where linguistic nuances and power dynamics play a prominent role.

Using CDA in analyzing the language of sports media can help reveal how media biases influence how athletes' identities are constructed. In addition, CDA also enabled the researcher to examine how dominant perspectives may frame sporting events and personalities in a way that reinforces existing power structures or perpetuates stereotypes. Meanwhile, in the context of media biases, CDA revealed how language, as a dynamic social and cultural practice, actively shapes public perceptions and interactions (Mullet, 2018), directly influencing the Filipino athletes' identity formation within the sports discourse. To sum up, CDA would enable individuals to engage critically with the narratives presented by sports media and foster a deeper understanding of the various forces that shape their perception of sporting events, particularly identities of athletes, as it provides a critical perspective for analyzing sports commentary, thereby facilitating an understanding of power dynamics and their influence on underrepresented voices in the domain of sports and athletics.

3.2. Social Constructionism

Social constructionism was founded by socialists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) in their book titled "The Social Construction of Reality" where they highlighted that reality is socially constructed and defined. According to social constructionism, cultural and social realities, such as values and significant actions, emerge from collectively performed and widely accepted social practices (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) considering that social action and knowledge are interconnected. These social practices, which includes conversation, continue to shape and reshape subjective reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Additionally, they also discovered that a shared body of knowledge influences behavior in a variety of situations in everyday life, and this objective and subjective knowledge is socially distributed, indicating who possesses relevant information and influencing norms of behavior. In addition, they also shared that interactions shape objective reality, which result in the formation of ingrained routines and patterns that produce a body of shared knowledge.

To delve further, according to social constructionism, there are three main steps in constructing reality, and this is viewed as a dynamic process involving externalization, objectivation, and internalization (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Externalization, which is essential for individuals to share their thoughts and ideas, begins with the individual sharing interpretations of the world and contributing to collective social reality. In this step, they are focused on expressing social constructs, which are then objectivated to become perceived objective realities within society. This process establishes societal constructs as natural and immutable elements of reality. Meanwhile, internalization is the process by which these constructed realities become an integral part of an individual's subjective worldview. This procedure is essential for the formation and maintenance of social realities and for individuals to become functional members of society by involving primary and secondary socialization, as well as maintaining and transforming their subjective reality.

With all these things in mind, the theory of social constructionism would be relevant in this study since it can help with understanding how media biases, particularly those committed by sportscasters, contribute to shaping and creating the identities of the national athletes and teams. Indeed, by framing athletes within culturally influenced narratives, social constructionism explains how sportscasters' biases shape public perceptions, either reinforcing or challenging stereotypes. Certainly, this theory helps explain how sportscasters' biases influence the identities of athletes and teams by embedding them in narratives shaped by cultural values.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design

This study employed a multimethod qualitative approach, as the researcher used corpus analysis and interviews as the data collection methods. This approach was chosen to focus solely on qualitative methods to recognize the importance of nuanced exploration and interpretation in capturing the subject's complexities. In addition, the multimethod qualitative approach was utilized to provide a comprehensive understanding of how sportscasting biases contributed to the construction of Filipino athletes' identity.

Given that the data in this study came from the transcription of the sportscasts and interviews, the qualitative methods that were utilized in this study included corpus analysis and critical discourse analysis. Corpus analysis was chosen to facilitate a detailed examination of qualitative data, emphasizing linguistic and contextual aspects in sportscast transcripts. Meanwhile, critical discourse analysis was utilized to explore power dynamics, ideologies, and social constructs within sports broadcasting. By using this research design, the study produced a holistic analytical approach that transcended the limitations of singular methodologies, yielding not only comprehensive results but also greater insights.

4.2. Study Corpus

In this study, the selected corpus consisted of recorded sportscasting coverage of the games played by the Philippines Men's Basketball Team, known as Gilas Pilipinas, during the FIBA World Cup 2023. This league was chosen due to its prominence in the field of sports and athletics and its significance as it was hosted by the Philippines, which may potentially heighten the local sportscasters' tendency to exhibit more biases toward their home team. Specifically, transcripts of five Gilas Pilipinas games served as the study corpus. Listed below are the details of each game:

Table 1. *OneSports+ Coverage of Gilas Pilipinas Games during the FIBA World Cup 2023*

Competing Teams	Date of Sports Event	Duration
Dominican Republic VS Philippines	August 25, 2023	2 hours and 32 minutes
Philippines VS Angola	August 27, 2023	2 hours and 36 minutes
Philippines VS Italy	August 29, 2023	2 hours and 7 minutes
South Sudan VS Philippines	August 31, 2023	1 hour and 41 minutes
Philippines VS China	September 2, 2023	2 hours and 12 minutes

Moreover, the sportscasting coverages that were transcribed and analyzed in this study were those produced and broadcasted by One Sports+, the official partner of the International Basketball Federation (FIBA) in the Philippines. These recordings were accessed through the "Pilipinas Live" application, which is known for serving sports content to the Filipinos.

4.3. Research Participants and Sampling Technique

In selecting the participants for this study, purposeful sampling, also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling, was utilized. Purposeful sampling is a strategy that involves the judicious application of informed judgment by researchers in selecting study participants from the larger population. Following this sampling technique, five local sportscasters, preferably those who covered the games during the FIBA Basketball World Cup 2023, along with two linguists, were interviewed for this study. Specifically, these One Sports+ sportscasters were known for their skills in creating a dynamic interplay between entertainment and information dissemination and in providing avid sports fans with a comprehensive viewing experience. Local sportscasters were selected as respondents for this study because of their heightened likelihood of offering praise and focused attention to the Philippines Men's Basketball Team.

Additionally, two linguists were selected as respondents since their expertise was essential in language analysis (Cambier-Langeveld, 2010). Their expert skills enabled them to identify and recognize media biases employed in various sports coverage. Moreover, these linguists could scrutinize sportscasters' language and reveal biases in their discourse. In selecting the linguists who participated in this study, the researcher required that they at least hold advanced degrees in linguistics: they could be Ph.D. degree holders or Ph.D. students who had at least completed all academic courses and requirements to ensure that they demonstrated a high level of skill and understanding in the scientific study of language and guaranteed that their insights and contributions were instrumental in identifying linguistic cues indicative of bias in sports media coverage.

4.4. Data Collection

In this study, data were collected using multiple methods. The corpus, consisting of transcribed sportscasts of the Philippines Men's Basketball Team during the FIBA Basketball World Cup 2023, was prepared and transcribed for analysis with the goal to identify the identities ascribed to Filipino athletes shaped by biases in Filipino sportscasting. Transcripts were then checked for accuracy before conducting a manual corpus analysis to uncover media biases in local sportscasting.

Additionally, qualitative data were gathered through interviews with five local sportscasters and two linguists to validate the study's findings and explore the participants' perspectives on the impact of media bias on the identity of national team players. Before the interviews, an ethics clearance was secured from the University of Santo Tomas - Ethics Review Committee. Then, each participant was approached to provide a recruitment letter, informed consent form, and an explanation of their role in the study. Participants were then asked to sign the consent forms to confirm their agreement to participate.

Moreover, the interviews were conducted preferably in person to foster meaningful conversations and gain deeper insights. All interviews were audio recorded and fully transcribed, with participants free to make off-the-record remarks and end the interview at any time. During the interview, the participants were asked about media biases in sportscasting and their impact on sports personalities' identities. Specifically, the participants were invited to share if their cultural background, language, and nuanced perspectives affected the way they deliver commentaries during live broadcasts. This investigation also examined their viewpoints regarding the intricate interplay between the pervasive influence of media biases in the sports industry, as well as their personal thoughts and experiences. To validate the data instrument of the study, the researchers consulted three experts, each with a Ph.D. in their respective fields. This panel included two linguists and a communication scholar, and all the suggestions and recommendations from the validators were carefully incorporated into the study's data instrument.

4.5. Data Analysis

In this study, the data collected were analyzed using two types of analysis: corpus analysis and critical discourse analysis. Corpus analysis and Mullet's (2018) general analytical CDA model were utilized to examine the sportscasting transcripts.

To identify media biases in Filipino sportscasting, corpus analysis was conducted after the transcription of all sportscasts to pinpoint instances of bias within the study corpus. Mullet's (2018) general CDA analytical framework was also followed in this study, which consists of seven stages: selecting the discourse, locating and preparing data sources,

exploring the background of each text, coding text and identifying overarching themes, analyzing internal relations in the texts (interdiscursivity), analyzing external relations in the texts, and interpreting the data.

Mullet's (2018) general analytical CDA framework was specifically employed in this study by identifying relevant societal discourse, with focus on media biases as contributing factors to the athletes' identity construction. The researcher then selected existing texts for analysis, considering their social and historical context, including genre and audience. Overarching themes were also identified through coding, with descriptive explanations and representative quotations provided. Interactions between discourses were analyzed and ideological positions, power relations, and social context within the study corpus were examined. Personal insights and perspectives influencing the analysis were also recorded.

5. Study Results

After an in-depth analysis of transcribed sportscasting coverage of the Philippines Men's Basketball Team during the FIBA World Cup 2023, alongside interviews with local sportscasters and linguists, all examined through the lens of critical discourse analysis and social constructionism theory, the study developed four themes. Posted below are the themes, along with their short descriptions.

Table 2. *Major Themes and Descriptions*

Major Themes	Description
Honoring power and dominance	This theme explores how the sportscasters' language portrays certain athletes and teams as dominant, which reinforces power dynamics within their commentary.
Elevating emotional intensity	This theme investigates how the sportscasters craft dramatic narratives that enhance emotional connection and shape viewer perceptions.
Promoting resilience and never-say-die spirit	This theme focuses on how the sportscasters' narratives depict athletes or teams as resilient and determined by emphasizing their ability to overcome adversity.
Reinforcing national solidarity and support	This theme looks into how the sportscasters' commentaries foster national unity and pride by rallying support and celebrating the successes of their national team athletes. These narratives influence the athletes' identities by portraying them as symbols of national pride and connecting their achievements to the nation's collective identity.

5.1. Honoring Power and Dominance

In this theme, the study examines how sportscasters analyze power dynamics and physical dominance in sports by highlighting how attributes like height and size can influence competition. It also explores how authority, control, as well as the role of awards and recognitions can help reinforce power structures and hierarchies within the field of sports and athletics. In addition, this theme also focuses on the recognition and awards given to athletes and teams for their exceptional performance and achievements on and off the court. It also highlights how accolades and honors of various sports personalities contribute to making an athlete or a team more dominant compared to others. In simpler words, this theme examines how such recognitions reinforce power structures and hierarchies within the sports world. As observed below, local sportscasters who covered the first game of Gilas Pilipinas during the FIBA World Cup use language that can make a player look to be more powerful and dominant.

S2: That's why they call him the flamethrower, he gets buckets in a hurry.

S1: That's what KAT wants to do.

The given utterance shows how the local sportscasters praised a player's scoring ability, which helped emphasize his dominance in the game. The use of a metaphor, "flamethrower" goes beyond simple praise, as it vividly conveys the idea that this player is not just proficient at scoring, but is an unstoppable and explosive force on the court. This choice of language creates a powerful image of the player and reinforces his role as a dominant and powerful player. Through this language, the sportscasters showed bias that can influence how the viewers perceive the player.

Meanwhile, the second utterance below underscores a player's extensive experience and versatility, which marks him as a significant threat. As seen in S8's utterance below during the South Sudan VS Philippines' game, the reference to the player's NBA background positions him as an authority in the sport, while the acknowledgment of his difficult matchup for other players highlights the power imbalance he creates on the court.

S8: He is an NBA vet, six teams in the NBA. He's the guy we're gonna have problems with because he's their main center and he operates from the outside going in. He's a hard matchup for June Mar and Kai.

On another note, in the exchange of statements below between S9 and S10 during the Philippine-based team match against China, it is noticeable that the sportscasters emphasize the physical dominance of the Chinese team by highlighting their size. By focusing on their size, the commentary draws attention to the power imbalance based on physical attributes, as it suggests that being tall provides a significant advantage in basketball.

S10: Just looking at China also, they're massive ah?

S9: They are. Yes!

S10: They got advantage on us.

Similarly, this theme was also evident in the interviews with linguists and sportscasters. During the interviews, the participants discussed how their local sportscasters reinforce power dynamics and hierarchies in the field of sports and athletics. Specifically, they highlighted that the sportscasters' analysis frequently reflects physical attributes that contribute to the perceived dominance of certain athletes and teams. Additionally, the interviewees also noted that language used in sportscasting can enhance and improve the images of the athletes by mentioning their accolades and honors to further solidify their dominating status in the society, reinforcing power structures within the sports world.

As presented in the utterance below from local sportscaster 4 (LS4), in one of the interviews, one of the sportscasters admitted that he usually expresses bias toward the winning team. This acknowledgment highlights how success prompts more praise and reinforces the winning team's perceived dominance. It demonstrates how sportscasters exhibit perceived superiority bias by showing that the success of one team can lead to commentary that skews in favor of that team.

LS4: I will say more good things about the winning team due to the simple fact that they won, right? It cannot be an exact 50-50 for each team. I will always pay attention to good things, to positive things for both teams, but one team wins, right? So I will always sound biased for the winner.

Meanwhile, in another interview with LS5 underscores how exceptional physical traits are linked to power and success. By emphasizing Wembanyama's remarkable height and skills, the sportscaster illustrates how these attributes contribute to a player's standout status. This emphasis on physical features reinforces the connection between extraordinary traits and dominance and shapes how the audience views the player's influence and performance.

LS5: There are athletes who really stand out in terms of height. For example, in the NBA, Wembanyama is always mentioned, right? How he's generational, how he's a one-of-a-kind player who will not come around for many years, it's not unusual, so you can't help but always say, oh, he's so tall and he can do all these things.

Indeed, the theme of honoring power and dominance is demonstrated in both the sportscasters' commentaries and the interviews with linguists and sportscasters. In the commentary, sportscasters use an expressive language to emphasize the players' dominance, such as describing their exceptional scoring ability or emphasizing physical attributes like the players' height and size to suggest a competitive advantage. Likewise, the interviews reveal how local sportscasting often reinforces power dynamics, with the sportscasters acknowledging their bias toward winning teams and emphasizing exceptional physical traits to highlight dominance. This focus on physical attributes and accolades shows how both language and recognition help solidify power structures and hierarchies in the realm of sports.

5.2. Elevating Emotional Intensity

Another theme found in this study is elevating emotional intensity, which emphasizes the passion and intensity present in local sportscasting and illustrates how the sportscasters captivate sports fans and spectators through vivid storytelling and insightful analysis of the game. Moreover, it also delves into the sportscasters' use of biased expressions and emotive language to not only highlight players' exceptional abilities and physical attributes, but also reinforce existing power dynamics in the field of sports and athletics.

In addition, this theme also explores how sportscasters use emotions to heighten viewer engagement and foster a deeper connection with the audience. For instance, in the utterance of S2 below during Gilas Pilipinas' game against Dominican Republic, the phrase "Oh my goodness" serves as a clear expression of excitement, praise and bias toward the

player, since it undeniably elevates the significance of the said player on the court and his contribution to his team. Furthermore, this expression also contributed to heightening the emotions of the viewers.

S2: Oh my goodness! Kiefer keeps on delivering and providing what Gilas needs play after play.

Meanwhile, during the game of the Philippines against Italy, it can be observed in S5's statement below that the sportscaster's contagious excitement following his team's impressive run that narrowed the score gap undeniably draws the audience into the intensity of the moment. Hence, the sportscaster's choice of words not only underscores the game's intensity and the crowd's reaction but also subtly reveals his bias toward Gilas Pilipinas.

S5: It's 90-81, Philippines on a torrid 13-3 run, which got the crowd energized at the Smart Araneta Coliseum.

Then, in the utterance between S7 and S8 below during the game between Philippines and South Sudan, the sportscaster's vivid language helps viewers visualize the scene and makes them feel as though they are present at the venue witnessing the game. Additionally, the dramatic and emotional language of the sportscasters also allows them to facilitate a deeper connection with their viewers by heightening and intensifying the emotional impact of the game. Furthermore, the expression "*sakit* [painful]" showed their bias toward the home team, as this choice of words conveys a sense of shared pain and disappointment after seeing a player from the opponents' team dominate the game.

S7: Ohhh, ho-ho-ho, that's Kuany with a pen straight into our hearts.

S8: Loved the way you said that.

S7: *Sakit eh* [It hurts].

S8: *Ganon* [Yeah].

Likewise, the interview data also supports the idea that local sportscasting significantly elevates emotional intensity. In fact, L2, one of the linguists interviewed in this study emphasized that the passion and effort displayed by sports teams, especially Gilas Pilipinas, can inspire and uplift the spirits of sports fans and spectators beyond the game. Additionally, this emotional impact can also influence viewers' attitudes and motivations in their daily lives, as illustrated in the statement below.

L2: When we watch sports, for example, Gilas Pilipinas in basketball, it feels like when you come in the next day, even if it's hot or you're having a bad day with your colleagues, you're inspired to work because Gilas did their best to win.

Conversely, LS5 elaborated during the interview on how they harness expressive language and focus on human emotions to amplify viewer excitement and engagement. He further explained that by vividly and dramatically describing the highs and lows of the game, local sportscasters can create a more immersive experience for viewers.

LS5: Normally, when your team is losing, you're up against the commentator, but what they don't realize, as professionals and sportscasters, is that our job is to really ride the momentum. Of course, it's hard to be happy or excited for a team that's down by 10 points in volleyball or down by 30 in basketball. That's just normal. You start building them up when they're catching up, but for the team that's winning, that's where you really put all your energy, a lot of your information, and your colorful words.

Certainly, the theme of elevating emotional intensity underscores how local sportscasters captivate audiences through vivid storytelling and insightful analysis. This theme not only highlights players' exceptional abilities and reinforces power dynamics in the realm of sports but also deepens viewer engagement through the use of emotional and biased language. For instance, sportscasters would use expressive statements and dramatic descriptions to intensify sports events and enhance its overall impact. Indeed, doing this allows the sportscasters to make sports moments more memorable and engaging for their viewers.

5.3. Promoting Resilience and Never-say-die Spirit

In this study, this theme explores how the language and narratives of local sportscasters frame athletes and their teams as resilient and determined when facing challenges. It is focused on how the commentaries build and highlight qualities like endurance and perseverance, which may influence how the public views and values these traits. Furthermore,

it also examines how various sports personalities are portrayed as having a never-say-die spirit, and how these biased portrayals affect public perceptions.

Additionally, sportscasters' enthusiasm promotes optimism and solidarity. For instance, in S5 and S6's utterance below which happened during the third game of the Philippine team, which was against Italy, the conversation between the sportscasters highlighted hope despite claiming that they are already praying for a miracle. Moreover, the repetition of "prayers" also reflects the never-say-die attitude of the sportscasters despite difficult circumstances. Their biased language revealed a strong desire for the Philippine team to win, as they chose to emphasize their faith in the perseverance and resilience of the national team players.

S5: Prayers still being.

S6: Prayers, yeah.

S5: Of course, offered and said for a miracle here. Never lose hope.

S6: Yeah.

S5: We gotta keep fighting.

Meanwhile, in the second and third statements below by S6 and S7, respectively, encouragement is given by the local sportscasters to their national players to concentrate on the game and hopefully start a huge comeback despite a large deficit. These utterances, which also happened during the game between the Philippines and Italy, also reflect the sportscasters' unwavering support and belief in their players' ability to overcome challenges, as well as their never-say-die spirit with the hope of inspiring both the players and the audience to remain hopeful and determined.

S6: Possession by possession. Let's see. It's hard. It's super hard down by 16, but if we can get a stop and really zone in and then on the offense, the same thing. Don't look at the score.

S7: Breathing some life into this, hopefully comeback of Gilas Pilipinas.

Indeed, these utterances also show the significance of small progress while maintaining hope in the realm of sports even when the odds are against them. Similarly, the interview data also generated the same theme. In fact, L2 emphasized how the sportscasters highlight resilience in their commentaries by asserting that intelligence and passion can make up for physical disadvantages, often experienced by Filipino players compared to their taller counterparts as seen below.

L2: Although many say that basketball is for the giants or for the tall players, it's not just about heart in basketball. Filipinos are smart. We can compete despite not having the size. We have the brains and the passion to play the sport.

This viewpoint also suggests that while basketball is typically associated with height, Filipinos can still be competitive because of their love and dedication to the game, emphasizing that mental and emotional attributes can neutralize or even overcome physical limitations. On another note, in another interview, one of the local sportscasters, LS2, underscored the value of hope and perseverance, even when the likelihood of a comeback seems slim. He shared that as sportscasters, maintaining hope and the desire to keep the possibility of a comeback alive for fans is important despite the recognition that such comebacks are extremely rare.

LS2: There's no way you can come back from a 12-point deficit in 30 seconds, but again, they really want to keep the small hope alive for the fans, which is useless because they will never come back. There is no 12-point play in basketball, but yes, it really happens, and I have heard that a couple of times.

To sum up, this theme explores how local sportscasters frame various sports personalities, particularly athletes, to embody resilience and a never-say-die spirit especially in difficult times. Indeed, the sportscasters' language often reflects their bias in the form of their strong support for the team and encourages maintaining hope, even in tough situations and circumstances. The interviews further reveal that sportscasters highlight how intelligence and passion can overcome physical disadvantages, particularly for Gilas Pilipinas, reinforcing a persistent belief in perseverance and hope despite the odds.

5.4. Reinforcing National Solidarity and Support

The final theme discovered in this study focuses on how the language used in local sportscasting can strengthen national solidarity and support. It explores how the discourse of sportscasters foster unity, pride, and collective identity, and it investigates how the biases in the commentaries of the sports media can be utilized to celebrate national achievements and communal efforts and cultivate a shared sense of belongingness.

Undeniably, sportscasters have the power to create narratives that can help reinforce national pride and mobilize national loyalty. Whenever they highlight the success and victories of their national team players, it would surely enhance the connection between the team and their supporters, and it could also make the sports fans feel that they are part of a larger national endeavor. The first statement from S6, who covered the game between the Philippines and Italy men's national basketball teams, which is cited below illustrates this when the local sportscaster rallied for support for the national team, motivating players, and building unity among their fans.

S6: Clarkson, extend and finish this in transition. Gotta see more of that. Let's go, Gilas.

The subsequent exchange of lines from S5 and S6 below during the same game also highlight shared goals and enthusiasm to reinforce collective support and optimism despite the other team leading the game. Specifically, their choice of words, such as "night to let it fly" and "love the way," reflects their strong support for the Philippine delegation. These phrases not only convey their enthusiasm, but also encourage viewers to observe the same behavior. In addition, their decision to focus on team performance and positive reinforcement also facilitates a sense of national pride and unity.

S5: This is the night to let it fly, and hopefully, we hit a lot of these threes. We're two for one, coach!

S6: I love the way you're saying it, we need it, we need it. and it's so nice to see them do that. We got to play defense.

S5: Yes, we do.

On another note, during the second game of Gilas Pilipinas, where they went up against Angola, the utterances from the assigned sportscasters during that game, specifically from S3 and S4, highlight not only the need for a pivotal play but also underscores the importance of collective effort and having faith in the team's potential to shift the game's momentum and secure a victory. This call to action enhances the optimism among the viewers and reinforces national solidarity.

S3: Boy, we need an explosion right here, right now.

S4: It starts with you. You have to stay positive. Believe that we can still win this. We just need a strong run.

Indeed, the sportscasters' language is pivotal in reinforcing national solidarity and support. Their use of motivational and enthusiastic language among sportscasters undoubtedly fosters oneness among supporters, a sentiment echoed by local sportscasters and linguists during the interviews. This alignment of views in the interviews underscores how language can be used to call for unity.

For instance, one of the linguists, L1, who was interviewed in this study noted how sportscasters' reverent portrayal and positive representation of the athletes enhances and boosts the call for national pride and unity. In addition, he also shared that such commentaries not only discourage negative criticism but also reinforce support by fostering a more favorable and loyal audience.

L1: I would say that because of the way local sportscasters talk about this particular team, it seems as if it's something sacred that you cannot talk or say something negative about the Philippine team. The way they talk about it makes the team appear as something sacred that you're not supposed to say something negative about. It also exaggerates their skills, their accomplishments, and diminishes their setbacks. That's the way I see it.

To add to that, another interview highlighted the impact of emotional connection and enthusiastic cheers of local sportscasters toward their national teams. Specifically, LS5 admitted that they are being biased to their local players to bolster and get national support from their viewers. This insight clearly demonstrates how sportscasters' language effectively champions national solidarity and strengthens collective support.

LS5: If you're covering for your country, then obviously, you have a connection to the team you're covering. Also in the NBA, and I think this mostly happens in the West, since they're a big league—NBA, NFL, Major League

Baseball—they have local broadcasts. For example, with the Charlotte Hornets in the NBA, their local broadcast really shows how much they cheer for their team. It's obvious they favor one team.

Indeed, this theme shows how local media biases present in sportscasting can enhance national unity and support through narratives. Sportscasters can undeniably build a strong connection among the players and their fans through their positive portrayals and emotional bias that discourage negative criticism against the players.

6. Discussion

This study focuses on identifying the impact of local sportscasters' language, particularly their biases, on the identity formation of athletes, particularly the national team players, during the local coverage of the Gilas Pilipinas games in the FIBA World Cup 2023. The investigation delves into how the local sportscasters construct their narratives and commentaries, which play a crucial role in shaping how athletes are perceived and seen by the general public.

Results of the study showed that sportscasters significantly shape athletes' identities through their biased language and linguistic choices. By emphasizing athletes' physical attributes, achievements, and accolades, local sportscasters reinforce their status and influence public perceptions of their athletic capabilities. This portrayal affects not only how they are viewed, but also how they see themselves. Additionally, the study also revealed that through dramatic and emotive language, sportscasters can frame athletes' performances as either heroic triumphs or significant disappointments, reflecting a biased interpretation of their achievements and struggles.

Furthermore, results of the study also emphasized athletes' perseverance and ability to overcome challenges, which reinforced the notion that resilience is a key attribute for success, shaping both public expectations and athletes' self-perception. In addition, the study demonstrated that the local sportscasters' focus on tactical mastery and national pride further influences athletes' identities. Their selective and biased commentaries focused on the team's strategic decisions would also impact how the players are perceived in terms of their competence and effectiveness as athletes.

In this context, the study results suggest that media biases may be redefined as the deliberate or unconscious ways sportscasters use language through their commentaries and narratives to shape how athletes are seen by the public. These biases certainly influence how athletes are positioned and categorized socially, which may affect their overall identity in the society. Additionally, in this study, media biases are often viewed positively, as they include the highlighting of favorable traits or the construction of supportive narratives. These biases can undeniably elevate athletes by enhancing their public image and reinforcing positive stereotypes. For instance, athletes especially those from the national team could be viewed as more capable, hardworking, or morally exemplary, and this can lead to a halo effect where positive impressions in one area result in favorable assumptions in others.

These findings align with the concept of positivity bias, as described by Hoorens (2014), where individuals lean toward positive information. This psychological tendency underpins media practices in sports, which suggests that both the narrative strategies and inherent biases of sportscasters significantly shape athletes' identities. Building on these observations, the study makes a significant contribution to the field by analyzing the impact of positive biases in sports commentary. It specifically examines how these positive biases, particularly those observed in local sportscasting, shape athletes' narratives and influence their public identities and societal image.

However, it must be acknowledged that while positive biases can improve how athletes are perceived by the public, they also come with drawbacks. They can set unrealistic expectations, increase pressure on athletes to live up to idealized images, and reinforce limiting stereotypes. This can lead to favoritism toward some athletes while marginalizing others and perpetuating inequality in the sports community. Moreover, as Eastman and Billings (2001) noted, stereotypes like labeling Black players as "naturally athletic" and White players as "hard working" not only limit how the general public see individual athletes but also oversimplify their success and reinforce social divides in sports.

With this, it is tenable to say that the way athletes are framed in sports broadcasts plays a crucial role in constructing their public identities. How athletes are remembered and celebrated within the cultural and sports communities is certainly impacted by the language of sports media, particularly sportscasting. Without a doubt, these biases shape not only the immediate perception of athletes but also their long-term legacy within the broader cultural and sports landscapes. These results also concur with the findings of Rowe (2004) and Scherer and Whitson (2009), who highlight the role of media in shaping national identity through sports broadcasting. The study's findings highlight how

sportscasters, by using biased language and focusing on specific athlete attributes, play a role in shaping national identity by bolstering athletes' status and influencing public perception.

Likewise, the study also reflects the findings of Bamberg et al. (2011) in recognizing language's role in conveying identities and agrees with Mahboob and Paltridge's (2013) study on the influence of dominant groups in sports broadcasting over marginalized voices given that media biases in sportscasting often highlight traits and narratives that reinforce existing power structures, sometimes marginalizing other voices within the sports community.

Additionally, these findings also support the principles of CDA which asserts that language is a powerful tool in reinforcing social realities (van Dijk, 1998), and this is evident in how sportscasters frame athletes through their performances and characteristics. Moreover, this discursive practice of sportscasters further illustrates how language serves not merely as a vehicle for reporting but as an active agent in constructing identities. Thus, the study demonstrates that sportscasting language, through its strategic framing and emphasis, is crucial in both reflecting and influencing athletes' self-perceptions, affirming CDA's assertion that discourse is central to social power.

Similarly, the study's findings are also consistent with the theory of social constructionism, as local sportscasters influence both public perceptions and athletes' self-perception by emphasizing particular attributes and framing athletes' performances in specific ways. This aligns with Berger and Luckmann's (1966) concepts of externalization, objectivation, and internalization, illustrating how media practices are instrumental in forming and reinforcing social realities and identities. Indeed, local sportscasters significantly impact how athletes are viewed by the general public and how they see themselves. Without a doubt, the narratives and commentaries sportscasters craft and create are not just reflections of athletic performances, but are also crucial elements in the continuous development and evolution of athletes' identities.

7. Conclusion

The relationship between sportscasting and identity formation is a dynamic process where language reflects societal values and simultaneously shapes athletes' identities. Through their narratives, sportscasting both mirrors existing cultural norms and actively molds the status of athletes in the society. Moreover, these local sportscasters, through their commentary, do not merely reflect the events of the game but also construct stories that carry cultural and nationalistic significance. Oftentimes, these narratives emphasize certain values that are common for Filipinos such as resilience, perseverance, teamwork, and patriotism. Highlighting these traits during live broadcasts is also another way of reinforcing them as societal norms and setting them as benchmarks for expected behavior in the broader community.

Moreover, it must be acknowledged that nationalism also plays a key role in local sportscasting by framing national team players as symbols of national pride and resilience. Sportscasters use patriotic language to reflect athletes as embodiments of the nation's values and achievements. On another note, it is essential to recognize how athletes are perceived is heavily influenced by media biases in sportscasting. These biases shape athletes' identities by focusing on their particular strengths or weaknesses. Positive biases can help an athlete's reputation by highlighting their abilities and adherence to national values, which can make them symbols of excellence. Negative biases, on the other hand, can hurt their public image by emphasizing their weaknesses or preconceptions.

In addition, media biases in local sportscasting impact how athletes' identities are portrayed. For example, focusing on power and dominance may frame athletes as strong and heroic, while highlighting struggles can depict them as resilient. Emotional commentary can make athletes more relatable but may also lead to stereotypes, whereas praising tactical skills underscores their strategic abilities. Additionally, portraying athletes as symbols of national pride can increase support but also add pressure. Undoubtedly, these biases shape how athletes are celebrated and remembered.

Furthermore, when athletes are repeatedly framed within these narratives, they may also begin to internalize these portrayals, which influences how they view themselves and their role in society. This can lead to the notion that athletes have a dual identity: one shaped by personal experiences and another influenced by the sports media. For example, athletes are often seen as models of the nation's collective values. This perception can lead them to internalize these traits and make them key aspects of their personal identity. Over time, this external construction can be internalized and can potentially overshadow the athletes' individual identities, eventually leading them to conform to these imposed expectations.

Additionally, it must also be noted that the impact of this process extends beyond the broader sports culture. As athletes embody these constructed identities, they, in turn, influence the expectations and behavior of upcoming generations of athletes. This creates a feedback loop where media portrayals reinforce and perpetuate certain norms and values within the field of sports and athletics. Indeed, sportscasting is not merely about delivering information or entertainment; it is a powerful tool in the identity formation not only of athletes, but also of other sports figures. The narratives crafted by the sportscasters contribute to a collective understanding of what it means to be in the field of sports and athletics. These commentaries undeniably affect how various sports personalities, particularly athletes, see themselves and how they navigate their careers.

Certainly, the media biases present in sportscasting have a significant role in shaping both the personal and professional aspects of athletes' lives, and this highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of the media's role in the realm of sports, with the recognition that the language used in sportscasting has far-reaching implications in shaping athletic identities. To conclude, this study highlights the need for sportscasters to be mindful of their language broadcasted through their microphones and underscores the importance of responsible commentary that offers a balanced perspective on athletes and their teams to foster a positive and thriving sports culture.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Ethics Board Approval Statement

The study has been approved by the UST Graduate School Research Ethics Committee with protocol number: GS2024-002. The ethical clearance, which was granted to this study, is valid until March 16, 2025.

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