

# How Legacy Media Set the Tone? Assessing Negativity Bias and Agenda-Setting in Honduran Front Pages

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## Background

Some critics have raised concerns about the risks associated with the historically concentrated power in Honduras' legacy mass media. The 2009 coup d'état marked a turning point, prompting audiences to increasingly turn to social media and alternative news sources for information. These critics have emphasized how legacy media shape the public sphere. However, there is limited scholarly evidence examining negativity bias and agenda-setting in Honduras' media ecosystem.

## Objective

- 1 To what extent does negativity bias influence the front pages in Honduran legacy media?
- 2 How do Honduran legacy media prioritize the headlines' position on their front pages?
- 3 What is the predominant editorial tone of legacy media front pages' headlines?

## Methodology

- Quantitative Content Analysis
- 166 front pages: 1<sup>st</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> Jan-2024
- 4 categories coding book
- Krippendorff's Alpha  $\alpha = 0.89$

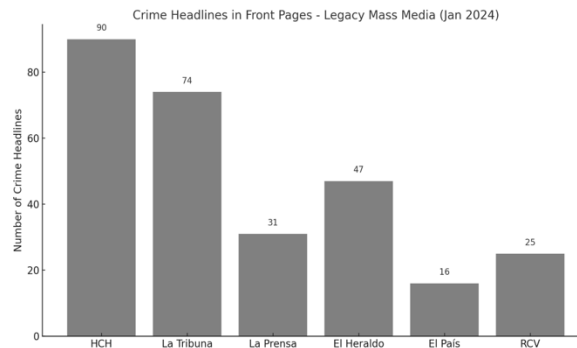


Figure 1. Number of crime headlines on front pages

## Results

- RQ1**  
1,121 headlines analyzed  
3% (n=32) positive news  
25% (n=283) negative  
20% (n=210) political
- RQ2**  
From 166 main headlines, 44.6% (n=74) were political  
Crime second place
- RQ3**  
7 out of 10 headlines used a neutral tone  
Neutral tone **still shapes** the public opinion

## Conclusions/ Recomendations

- Negativity bias **dominates** editorial decisions regarding content definition and **prioritization**, as 25% of headlines are related to crime (negative). Meanwhile, political news remains highly prominent on Honduran front pages, often framed as a prevailing issue in main headlines
- The neutral tone (70%) is not the same as impartiality or balance. Media can still **shape public opinion** in a very subtle way. This study offers a snapshot of the Honduras mass media ecosystem, providing theoretical and practical implications for the **Global South**.

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Conflict of interest: none