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Paying Attention to their Planks, not our Specks

Hoon Lee / Department of Media, Kyung Hee University. hoonlz@khu.ac.kr
Jiyoung Yeon / Department of Media, Kyung Hee University. jy.yeun@khu.ac.kr

∥ Abstract

This study aims to explore whether the impacts of rumors depend on the types of frames and how the frames of political rumors (thematic and episodic) are shaped by a) the ideological leaning of media b) the partisan stance of political candidates, and finally c) the interaction between these two factors. The results revealed that media's thematic frames of political rumors triggered greater user comments and negative reactions than episodic counterparts. Also, this study found that thematic framing is likely to be employed more frequently when the ideological stances of media outlets and political candidates are discordant while episodic frames tend to be more salient when these two ideological orientations are consonant. These findings speak to the tendency of political rumor coverage in terms of framing that can be skewed by ideological stances of media and politicians who are depicted in the news while provoking the emotional reactions and comments.

Keywords: episodic-thematic framing, political rumors, media bias, partisan bias

Paying Attention to Their Planks, Not Our Specks: Biased Media Framing of Political Rumors against the Other Side

Rumors have centered around the political realms with consequences to tarnish the democratic values. Especially, with the advent of social media, unverified stories inevitably and rapidly spread even in a disguise of 'real news' (Vosoughi et al., 2018). Under this situation, the role of media has become significant since media can influence people's attitude to believe rumors as true and their intentions to share them (Huo & Cheng, 2018; Van Bavel et al., 2021). While media coverage with fact-checking can prevent the spreading of rumors (Huo & Cheng, 2018), biased coverage can further empower the rumors to be a weapon to attack the ideological opposition as well as to distort individuals' attitudes via motivated reasoning to selectively believe false rumors with negativity towards their oppositions as true and reject those attacking their sides as false even when

the rumors are confirmed as true (Garrett, 2011; Weeks & Garrett, 2014).

This study sheds lights on two facets: how media coverage of political rumors, with two types of framing, episodic and thematic framing, can affect individuals' reactions toward the rumors and how such frames are shaped by ideological stances of news outlets and targeted candidate. More precisely, framed coverage of political rumors that can be understood as a tool of negative campaigning to attack political candidates by making salient a certain aspect of rumors (Entman, 2007) can provoke individuals' responses differently depending on which type of framing is employed in the coverage (Iyengar, 1996). Furthermore, the framing of political rumors may become more prominent depending on political predispositions of a certain media outlet and a specific rumor target, given plausible impacts of the framed rumors on election outcomes especially during an election period (Weeks & Garrett, 2014). Given this influence of frame, media coverage of political rumors can be skewed by the ideological leaning of media (Hoffman, 2022; Lee et al., 2022) and the partisan stance of candidates (Asghar et al., 2019). Especially, media outlets can report the political rumors in a biased way to endorse their side and antagonize the opposing one in the forms of the frequented coverage, or biased statement and tone (D'Alessio & Allen, 2000).

Drawing on the above discussions, the present study highlights how episodic and thematic framed coverage provoke individuals' emotional reactions and comments and how such framings of political rumors are formed by media and rumor target's partisan stances. To this end, with a dataset of news articles about rumors with negativity against each presidential candidate in a 2017 Korean presidential and the users' comments on the news, we conducted a content analysis. As a result, we have demonstrated that the framed rumors can trigger greater individuals' reactions while a specific type of framing is more likely depending on ideological predispositions of media and the targeted candidates.

Political Rumors as Negative Campaign

Rumors can be simply defined as information about specific objects or events, which has not been verified, which can spread rapidly, especially in an uncertain situation (Rosnow, 1991; Vosoughi et al., 2018). Along this line of definition, political rumors are pieces of unverified information related to political issues, or politicians. Particularly, these rumors with negativity, holding the potential to tarnish the reputation of political enemies, may be also wedge-driving, or attacking rumors which spread negative stories about rumor targets to damage loyalty to them (Cha & Na, 2015; DiFonzo & Bordia, 2007) as

a part of negative campaigning during election periods (Haselmayer, 2019; Maier & Nai, 2022). Indeed, these rumors attacking a specific candidate can have an impact on voting decision for this target, ultimately influencing electoral outcomes (Weeks & Garrett, 2014). Therefore, political rumors, embracing stories to antagonize an opponent (Vosoughi et al., 2018), can be an effective way to defeat the opposition, especially under the situation in which an election outcome is unclear (Van Bavel et al., 2021). Indeed, newspapers in the US featured greater coverage of political scandals related to those candidates holding inconsistent partisan predispositions during an election (Puglisi & Snyder, 2011).

Episodic and Thematic Framing of Political Rumors

Media tend to convey information to the public rather selectively by highlighting certain aspect of a topic or an issue, which is referred to as framing (Entman, 1993, 2007). Cast in this light, political rumors with a high level of negativity toward a certain political actor can be also covered in a selective manner to highlight certain facets of a rumor. Most notably, Iyengar (1991, 1996) classified framing into episodic and thematic frames depending on whether media's description about news have focused on individuals or social contexts. These types of frames have significantly affected people's perception and interpretations for the responsibilities of the issues that news covered as well as emotional reactions (Boukes, 2022; Gross, 2008; Iyengar, 1991). More specifically, episodic framing tends to focus on descriptions of specific issues, ultimately rendering people pay more attention to the individuals in the news coverage with less empathy and pity toward them (Gross, 2008; Iyengar, 1996). Conversely, thematically framed news tends to highlight societal contexts, leading people to hold societal and political factors accountable for these issues (Iyengar, 1996). Along this line of reasoning, episodically framed political rumors are likely to depict a specific event, while paying less attention to broader contexts. On the other hand, thematically framed coverage of the rumors tends to underscore societal factors surrounding rumors.

Media Bias in Framing Political Rumors by Ideological Stance of Media and Rumor Target

Despite a norm that media coverage shows an impartial attitude, media coverage can be skewed in favor of political actors who are in line with the media's ideological stance (D'Alessio & Allen, 2000; Entman, 2007). Media bias appears in the forms of gatekeeping,

frequented coverage, or biased statement and tone (D'Alessio & Allen, 2000), indicating that media outlets can report the political rumors in a biased way to endorse their side and antagonize the opposing one. More specifically, frames of political rumors can differ depending on ideological stance of media, as witnessed by several studies proposing that framing can be shaped by a certain media's partisan predisposition (Hoffman, 2022; Lee et al., 2022). For instance, Fox news reported Kenosha event caused by Shooting of Jacob Blake with a thematic frame to offer attribution of responsibility to BLM movements, while CNN employed episodic framing to focus on this particular event (Hoffman, 2022). Additionally, episodic frames of a specific issue, such as gun violence by conservative media, can prompt citizens with similar attitudes to deem this issue as unimportant (Guo et al., 2021). Thus, there is a room for media outlets to report political rumors in a biased manner. Along this line of reasoning, we put forth the following research questions:

> *RQ1*. Will there be a difference in the frequency of rumor articles between thematic and episodic frames by the ideological leaning of media?

> *RQ2*. Will there be a difference in the frequency of rumor articles between thematic and episodic frames by the partisan stance of a candidate?

As mentioned earlier, thematic frames tend to pay greater heed to on broader contexts and offer a connection between a certain event and surrounding contexts, consequently rendering people blame on political actors (Boukes, 2022; Iyengar, 1996). This suggests that thematically framed coverage of negative political rumors targeting candidates underscores the attribution of responsibility to their party affiliation rather than a simple fault of individual candidates. Given this influence of framing, partisan media may be motivated to connect negative rumors targeting candidates of inconsistent ideological preference to broader context of their political parties and institutions (Puglisi & Snyder, 2011) so as to lower their approval ratings and tip the balance of a electoral result in favor of their preferred partisan stance (DellaVigna & Kaplan, 2007). On the other hand, rumors about a candidate with similar view can be reported episodically to minimize the impacts of those rumors during election periods (Guo et al., 2021). Indeed, one study found that CNN, one of the well-known left-leaning news outlets, reported the stories about Hilary Clinton episodically and the stories related to Donald Trump thematically, while FOX news with right-leaning attitudes covered the scandals about Clinton in a thematic way and framed ones about Trump episodically (Asghar et al., 2019). This result implies that political rumors can be covered with different frames depending on the discordance or accordance between ideological predispositions of news outlets and candidates. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

H1. Political rumors are likely to be more thematically framed when ideological leaning of media and partisan stance of candidate are discordant than when two ideological stances are consonant.

The Effect of Episodic Framing and Thematic Framing of Political Rumors on Individuals' Emotional Reactions

The gaps between episodic and thematic framing can translate into distinct emotional reactions toward framed news. Several researchers have pointed out that episodic framing can provoke more intense emotions than thematic framing (Ciuk & Rottman, 2021; Gross, 2008), but thematic framing of political news coverage, especially terrorism, can link a specific event to broader contexts, insinuating that certain groups can be a future threat, thereby justifying the action to defeat them with more fears toward them (Powell, 2011). Furthermore, thematically framed news increased the tendency to attribute issues to broader contexts such as blaming political actors or institutions for the issues while episodic framing decreased such attribution (Boukes, 2022). In this regard, although emotional responses may be triggered more frequently by episodic framing, thematically framed rumors targeting a presidential candidate are likely to be more influential in provoking individuals' negative reactions by blaming the candidate and his affiliated party for the rumors. We therefore hypothesized:

H2a. People will show greater negative emotions toward rumor stories with thematic framing than episodic framing.

H2b. People will post greater comments on news articles with thematic framing than episodic framing.

Method

Data Collection

We conducted a quantitative content analysis on the online news articles covered from five major daily newspapers (*The Chosun Ilbo, Joonang Ilbo, The Dong-A Ilbo, The Hankyoreh, and The Kyunghyang Shinmun*), four general programming channels (*TV Chosun, JTBC, Channel A, MBN*), three terrestrial TV channels (*KBS, MBC, SBS*) in South Korea. To begin with, we picked out 87 topics from the rumors on the Seoul National University FactCheck site (https://factcheck.snu.ac.kr) during the 19th

presidential election from January 3, when the fact-checking began, to May 9, 2017, the election day. Table 1 shows the whole topics of the rumors. These topics were organized into three to four keywords to search the news articles via *Naver* (https://www.naver.com), the most influential portal site in South Korea. We collected in-link news stories that showed the news body in the portal interface, except for *The Chosun Ilbo* and *Joonang Ilbo* that did not provide in-link services on *Naver* during this time. Thus, we piled up the news article searched through each media site using the same keywords. After eliminating duplicate articles and links, a total of 1,578 online news stories were used as data.

Table 1 Issues Updated in the SNU Fact Check during the 19th Presidential Election

ID	Issue	ID	Issue
1	"SSULZON" Moon Jae-in	45	Fake fasting
2	U.S. military garrison budget	46	Controversy over the bereaved families of the South Korean warship Cheonan.
3	Fake news dissemination	47	Daegu's Last City Remarks
4	Semo Group Bankruptcy Management	48	Cigarette price cuts are withdrawn
5	South Korea needs to ratify the THAAD deployment by the National Assembly.	49	Daepyeong Bay Dam Oil Pipeline
6	Task Promotion Cost Problem	50	Korea Employers Federation's vote blocked
7	Japanese military sexual slavery annulment by availability.	51	Controversy over the absence of the reserve forces.
8	Ferry Sewol Controversy over compensation for bereaved families	52	Controversy over North Korea's main enemy
9	Official Job Commitment	53	Controversy over the abolition of the National Security Law.
10	Moon Jae-in son	54	Unfaithful parliamentary activities
11	Retirement from the trick	55	Controversy over the Civil Service Election Act.
12	Ahn Cheol-soo allegations.	56	National Intelligence Service chief forced to resign.
13	Controversy over his inability to serve as president.	57	Song Min-soon Memoir
14	A violation of election law	58	Hong Joon-pyo, Roh Moo-hyun a $ 6.4 million fee
15	The cost of living for soldiers	59	Amnesty for Participatory Government
16	Ahn Cheol-soo daughter the disclosure of assets.	60	Controversy over the Kaesong Industrial Complex
17	Controversy over 3D job criticism	61	200 members of the National Assembly.

ID	Issue	ID	Issue
18	Controversy over the declaration of support for the heads of local governments	62	Excluding government comedians.
19	Controversy over the Democratic primary invalidity vote.	63	Controversy over the strong aristocratic union.
20	Controversy over the merger of electoral subsidies.	34	AnLab Management
21	Moon Jae-in personnel camp	65	Ahn Cheol-soo violating election law
22	Sim Sang-jung Finnish' dilemma type of jobs.	66	Homosexual remarks
23	Controversy over poll distortions	67	Top Google trends
24	Deleting May 18 Democratic Movement, Ahn Cheol-soo party platform	68	OECD statistics authenticity
25	Controversy over responsibility for POSCO's stock price crash	69	National Pension Service Income Replacement Rate Agreements
26	TK approval rating	70	Automatic involvement the Treaty of the United States.
27	Fake news about North Korea's bombing in April	71	Government's Gini coefficient worst
28	Kindergarten attached to the Ahn Cheol-soo.	72	Ahn Cheol-soo public for a fund-raising measure.
29	Controversy over THAAD's stance change	73	South Korea-U.S. FTA
30	Parole	74	The United Progressive Party's redundancy law enacted.
31	Controversy over remittance to North Korea	75	Controversy over rigging presidential votes
32	Ahn Hee-jung Declaration of Support	76	Moon Jae-in communication policy.
33	Controversy over 800 billion won in domestic conglomerates	77	Controversy over the cause of green algae in the four major rivers
34	Debt cancellation controversy	78	Minister for Gender Equality and Family
35	Smog Free Tower 60% air purification	79	Conservative government economic performance
36	Presidential election subsidies	80	Hong Joon-pyo approval rating
37	Conservative Government statutory working hours.	81	Battle of Yeonpyeong landslide victory
38	Controversy over tuition fees.	82	Minimum wage
39	Undersecretary's Cabinet meeting	83	Moon Jae-in college entrance test
40	Preferential treatment for separated families	84	Schroeder remarks

ID	Issue	ID	Issue
41	Abolition of NIS and legalization of KTU.	85	U.S. stance on THAAD
42	Controversy over Ahn's Lab product during the 19th presidential election	86	Shim Sang-jung controversial tax increase in pledges.
43	Cancel kindergarten commitment	87	Suspected cover-up of drunk driving.
44	Hong Joon-pyo composition of the three	-	-

Variable Coding

Ideological stance of media. We classified the ideological tendency of media firms, referring to the previous study (Kim & Cheong, 2018) that explored the characteristics of media companies by analyzing articles reported in the 19th presidential election. More specifically, the previous study found that while *Chosun Ilbo, JoongAng Ilbo, Donga Ilbo, TV Chosun, Channel A, MBN, MBC* showed conservative tendencies, the *Hankyoreh, Kyunghyang Shinmun, JTBC, KBS,* and *SBS* were left-leaning during the 19th presidential election (Kim & Cheong, 2018). According to this classification, a total of seven media outlets were coded as conservative media, and five media firms were coded as liberal media.

Ideological stance of rumor target candidate. To explore the media bias in covering the negative rumors against the politically opposite candidate, we identified the ideological stance of each rumor target candidate. The political rumors covered in this study targeted five major candidates in the 19th presidential election in South Korea. Considering the political inclinations of a party to which each candidate belonged, Moon Jae-in from The Minju Party of Korea and Sim Sang-jung from Justice Party were liberal candidates. Hong Joon-pyo from the Liberty Korea Party, Ahn Cheol-su from People's Party, and Yoo Seung-min from Bareun Party were considered conservative candidates. The news articles that directly targeted a specific candidate or contained unverified information about conservative or liberal positions without any direct reference to a candidate were classified as political rumors targeting a relevant candidate. However, some news stories also covered political rumors unrelated to a particular candidate (e.g., North Korea bombing in April) or contained unverified information about multiple candidates simultaneously (e.g., Unclear positions of candidate Moon and Ahn on tax increase). We identified these news articles as neutral rumors with no specific target. Ultimately, 714 news articles were coded as rumors targeting liberal candidates, and 638 news articles were coded as rumors targeting conservative ones, while 266 were coded as neutral rumors.

Frames of rumors. Framing types were categorized either into episodic or thematic frames drawing on Iyengar (1991)'s widely-cited study. While episodically framed news reports on issues by describing individual events or examples, thematic framing of news portrays political issues in broader social and political contexts. According to this definition, we coded a story as an episodic frame when it described political rumors as an individual event or specific stories of a targeted politician (e.g., reporting a rumor of recruitment irregularity about candidate Moon Jae-in's son in the form of a simple straight article). Meanwhile, when reporting on political rumors from a broader perspective in connection with political structure or social context (e.g., reporting rumors about the employment corruption of Moon Jae-in's son as a corruption scandal that is deeply rooted in the liberals), the article was coded as thematic frame.

Number of user comments and Negative reaction to rumors. Those who have read in-link news articles through Naver could respond to the articles by leaving a comment or expressing their emotions by clicking the emotional buttons such as Like, Heartwarming, or Upset. In this study, user reactions were measured by collecting (1) the number of comments on each news article, and (2) the number of clicks on negative emotional expressions (sad, angry) about the article.

Inter-coder Reliability

Four graduate students who were trained performed the trial coding was performed on 100 articles that were randomly selected from 1,578 links. As a result of the first trail coding, it was found that the level of inter-coder agreement was adequate (Krippendorff's alpha = .892). The inter-coder reliability from the second trial coding of additional 100 articles was also appropriate (Krippendorff's alpha = .932). After that, the coding was conducted on the entire news links from August 1, 2018, to August 16, 2018. The final coding also ensured that the coders made the same coding decisions at an adequate level (Krippendorff's alpha = .928). When three or more of the four coders gave the same value, that value was used in the analysis. If half of the coders coded with the same value, we determined to use the value coded by one coder closest to the average value for each variable.

Results

To begin with, this study ran chi-square tests to explicate whether there is a bias in framing reports on political rumors according to the ideological orientation of the media (RQ1). The results shows that the difference in framing was marginally

significant according to the ideological tendency of the press (M =3.348, df = 1, p < .1.). Both conservative and liberal media emphasized rumors in light of thematic framing rather than episodic framing. The frequency of thematically framed news was higher than episodic framed ones, but when compared in proportion between the ideological tendencies of media, the ratio of episodic framing was slightly higher in the conservative media (43.4%) than the liberal media (38.7%) (see Table 2).

Table 2 Crosstabulation of frequency of rumor reports by ideological stance of media and type of framee

Type of frame	Ideological stance of media		Total
	Conservative	Liberal	
Episodic	401(43.4%)	253 (38.7%)	654 (41.4%)
Thematic	524 (56.6%)	400 (61.3%)	924 (58.6%)
Total	925 (100.0%)	653 (100.0%)	1578 (100.0%)

Note. χ^2 =3.348, *df* = 1, *p* < .1.

We also advanced a research question asking whether the frequency of framing reports diverged regarding the ideological disposition of the targeted candidate (RQ2). The result of crosstabulation shown in Table 3 indicated that the difference in the framing report was significant according to the ideological tendency of the targeted candidate (χ^2 = 16.102, df = 2, p < .001). More specifically, when the rumor target was a conservative candidate, the frequency of thematic framing reports (53.4%) was higher than that of episodic framing (46.6%) of the rumor reporting. Meanwhile, when the rumor targeted liberal candidates, the thematic framing reports (60.1%) were higher than the episodic framing reports (39.9%). In the case of the neutral rumors that did not comment on a specific candidate, the frequency of thematic framing (68.1%) was higher than that of episodic framing (31.9%). Although the ratio of thematic framing reports was generally higher, it is interesting to note that there was a more notable variation between the episodic framing and thematic framing in the case of rumors targeting liberal candidates and neutral ones without specific targets than conservative candidates (see Table 3).

Table 3 Crosstabulation of frequency of rumor reports by ideological stance of rumor target and type of frame

Type of frame	Ideological stance of rumor target			Total
	Conservative	Neutral	Liberal	
Episodic	297 (46.6%)	72 (31.9%)	285 (39.9%)	654 (41.4%)
Thematic	341 (53.4%)	154 (68.1%)	429 (60.1%)	924 (58.6%)
Total	638 (100%)	226 (100%)	714 (100%)	1578 (100%)

Note. $\chi^2 = 16.102, df = 2, p < .001$

Furthermore, we hypothesized that when the media's political orientation and the ideological orientation of the rumor target are inconsistent, thematic framing reports would be higher than episodic framing reports (H1). To verify this, we checked the frequency of frames by the ideological orientation of the rumor target. The result demonstrated that when ideological orientations of the media and the rumor target were unmatched, thematic framing was more prevalent than episodic framing. More specifically, when the conservative media covered political rumors targeting conservative candidates, the ratio of episodic framing (52.9%) was higher than thematic framing (47.1%). However, the conservative media framed the liberal targeted rumors thematically (62.7%) rather than episodically (37.3%) (χ^2=22.313, df = 2, p < .001). Similarly, the liberal media also showed a significant difference in the frequency of framing reports by the ideological orientation of the rumor target (χ^2 = 9.441, df = 2, p < .01). Thematically framed news (61.9%) was more pronounced than episodic framed ones (38.1%) when liberal media covered rumors about conservative candidates. Even when left-leaning media reported the rumors about like-minded candidates, the frequency of thematic framing reports (55.5%) was higher than that of episodic framing (44.5%). However, the disparity in the percentage was more evident in the rumor reports of conservative candidates rather than liberal candidates (see Table 4). These results partially supported H1.

Table 4 Crosstabulation of frequency of rumor reports by ideological stance of rumor target and type of frame for right- and left-leaning media

Ideological stance of media	Conservative				Liberal			
Type of frame	Ideological stance of rumor target			Total	Ideological stance of rumor target			Total
	Conservative	Neutral	Liberal		Conservative	Neutral	Liberal	
Episodic	193(52.9%)	37(36.3%)	171(37.3%)	401(43.4%)	104(38.1%)	35(28.2%)	114(44.5%)	253(38.7%)
Thematic	172(47.1%)	65(63.7%)	287(62.7%)	524(56.6%)	169(61.9%)	89(71.8%)	142(55.5%)	400(61.3%)
Total	365(100%)	102(100%)	458(100%)	925(100%)	273(100%)	124(100%)	256(100%)	653(100%)
Chi square	$\chi^2 = 22.313, df = 2, p < .001$				$\chi^2 = 9.441, df = 2, p < .01$			

Lastly, we conducted t-test to determine whether negative responses to rumor articles (H2a) and the number of comments (H2b) varied depending on framing types. As shown in Table 5, the result indicated that rumor articles with thematic framing (M = 274.21, SD = 1119.06, n = 924) received more comments than rumor articles with episodic framing (M = 102.26, SD = 368.85, n = 654) (t(523.393) = -2.839). , p = .005). Negative responses to articles were also found to be greater in thematically framed news (M = 83.00, SD = 238.47) than in episodically framed news (M = 31.44, SD = 103.19) (t(588.540) = -3.798, p = .000). These results endorsed both hypotheses, H2a and H2b.

Table 5. Independent Samples *t*-test Results Comparing episodic framing and thematic framing on number of comments and negative reaction to rumors

	episodic framing (n = 654)		thematic framing (n = 924)				
Variable	M	SD	M	SD	t	df	p-value
Number of comments	102.26	368.85	274.21	1119.06	-2.839	523.393	.005
Negative reaction to rumors	31.44	103.19	83.00	238.47	-3.798	588.540	.000

Discussion

This study aims to explore the effect of framed coverage of rumors on individuals' reactions and how these types of framing can be formed by ideological stances of media outlets and rumor targets. Results demonstrated that thematically framed coverage of political rumors is likely to provoke greater negative reactions and user comments than

episodically framed news, suggesting that thematically framed coverage of negative rumors can evoke more notable reactions toward these rumors when those rumors attacked the politicians. This also implies that the impact of political rumors can be amplified with thematically framed coverage of media, pointing to possible attribution of responsibility to broader political organizations that may be engaged in elections.

Additionally, this study revealed that both right-leaning and left-leaning news outlets featured more thematically framed political rumors more than episodically framed counterparts. It might reflect the atmosphere in South Korea at the time when the news about election should be fact-checked since the election would be held immediately after the impeachment of President Park Gun-Hye. In other words, it may refer to the intention to report reliable news by reporting more contextualized articles when reporting unverified information about candidates. However, there are slight differences in framed coverage between ideological stances of candidates, suggesting that negative rumors about conservative candidates tended to be episodically framed while ones about liberal candidates were covered with emphasis on thematic framing.

Furthermore, this study showed that episodically framed coverage of negative rumors about candidates tends to be more greatly employed by news outlets when their ideological stances are consonant. Conversely, when media covered rumors about candidates with inconsistent views, they reported these unverified stories rather thematically. That is, right-leaning new outlets portrayed negative rumors about liberal candidates in more depth linking those to the context of the liberal parties, and left-leaning news outlets covered the rumors attacking conservative candidates more extensively, highlighting media bias in framed coverage of political rumors (Entman, 2007; Lee et al., 2022). This result also aligns well with previous studies indicating that framed coverage can vary by ideological stances of media and the rumor targets (Asghar et al., 2019).

This study is not without limitations. Firstly, it remains questionable whether the types of news channels (e.g., television news and newspapers) can impact the formation of framed coverage of rumors. In addition to it, although this study revealed the impact of framed coverage of rumors on public opinion, it remains unsolved that frames can affect individuals, ultimately leading to their attitude changes and intention to share these framed rumors with others. Future study should focus on this mechanism which factors in the coverage can provoke a specific emotion of people and reinforce the effect of political rumors. In addition, some data are missing due to the limited access to news providers that do not offer in-link services via portal sites, despite the fact that this study attempts to analyze the influence of framed coverage by examining the frequency of emotional reactions and comments on news pieces. Since the news stories published by

JoongAng Ilbo and Chosun Ilbo cannot be accessed through Naver's search engines, we are unable to view the comments and reactions to these articles. Lastly, despite the intention to investigate how framed coverages of political rumors are formed, this study only shed light on episodic and thematic framing, which is a weakness that might be pointed out. It is possible to report political rumors in a variety of ways, including by emphasizing the refutation of rumors by individual candidates or parties, by emphasizing rumors relating to the personal lives of candidates or their families, and by recounting political rumors that circulated decades before. In this regard, follow-up research must concentrate on a range of content frames with an eye on how these frames can be influenced by the media or the political attitude of the rumor's target, and how this affects people's reactions.

Findings of the present study speak to the tendency of political rumor coverage in terms of framing that can be skewed by ideological stances of media and politicians who are depicted in the news. More specifically, we strive to examine the impact of framing on the public opinion, and the mechanism that news outlets with partisan preference can cover the negative rumors about candidates of inconsistent views as a part of negative campaigning to have an impact on election outcomes. Media outlets, reporting negative rumors about their political enemies, can induce people to perceive that the rumors are so serious that it is doubtful for the candidates to win the election by attributing to the entire groups, or parties that are ideological affiliated with the candidates (Boukes, 2022). Conversely, they can intend to turn electorates' gaze from negative rumors toward like-minded candidates by describing these rumors as a trivial event, or unimportant (Guo et al., 2021). This study reveals such biased trends in media coverage, which pose a threat to the values of democracy due to the repercussions of invoking the biased attitudes of individuals, bolstering political polarization, and altering election results. With theoretical implications for extending the episodic-thematic framing to media coverage of political rumor, we emphasize the media bias' ability to muddle the voices of individual voters and the electoral system itself.

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