

# Crafting Influence, Shaping opinions a Critical Discourse Analysis of Persuasion in Philippine Political Campaign Materials

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## ABSTRACT

Words possess the capacity to cause changes in thought, emotion and heart. This research aimed to investigate the persuasive techniques employed by the top three Filipino senators in their campaign materials and its impact to the decision-making process of Filipino voters through a critical discourse analysis. The researcher gathered data by transcribing, and translating the interview and the downloaded advertisements and campaign materials from the internet. The analysis involved coding, categorizing, organizing, and interpreting the persuasive techniques and their implications, guided by Aristotle's modes of appeal: ethos, logos, and pathos. The findings reveal that ethos, the appeal to trust, was the most frequently applied strategy and the most influential method of persuasion among the senators. This indicates that shaping a positive public image, establishing personal credibility, and embodying the values that matters to a broader populace are crucial factors that significantly impact the decision-making process of Filipino voters during elections.

**Keywords:** Critical Discourse Analysis, Language of persuasion, Political discourse, Ethos, Pathos, Logos

## INTRODUCTION

A man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language. What we are getting at becomes plain: mastery of language affords remarkable power (Fanon, 2008). Language is not just a mere method of communication, but a tool of persuasion. Language is more than capable of disseminating any and every concept through a range of nuances. This linguistic power is exploited most frequently during political discourse, particularly the use of rhetoric. Politicians have long since acquired the necessary knowledge to use such power to turn the tables in their favor. Words alone possess the capacity to cause changes in thought, emotion, and heart.

According to Halmari and Virtanen (2005), persuasive language is a process where people aim to change or affect their audience's opinions or beliefs. Anyone seeking to persuade an audience should develop their argument using logic (logos), appeal to emotion (pathos), and demonstrate their apparent moral standing (ethos). The utilization of ethos constitutes a highly efficient means of persuasion within the speaker's rhetorical repertoire. If the speaker fails to establish a favorable connection with the audience, their credibility may be undermined, resulting in a lack of attention or even dismissal. Effective oration involves the presentation of well-crafted arguments or the use of emotional appeals to sway an audience. However, the success of such efforts is contingent upon the orator's level of trust and likability. The utilization of ethos is a crucially significant rhetorical device that serves as the basis for all other proofs (Browse, 2018). This study operates within the framework of constructivist epistemology, which posits that knowledge and meaning are actively constructed through social interactions and cultural contexts. This perspective recognizes language as not merely a medium of communication but a powerful tool in shaping perceptions, identities, and social realities. In a democratic country, public opinions have a significant impact on the success or failure of electoral campaign. As such, employing various persuasive strategies and materials would aid the electorate in gaining the trust and votes of the masses.

The use of political campaign materials can be traced as far back as the 1800's. From political rhetoric and propaganda, to social movements and awareness-raising campaigns, their usage has overcome historical

periods, cultural barriers, ethnic affiliation, political systems, party allegiance or personal taste. Arguably more than any other linguistic ‘device’, slogans deliver a clearly recognizable message with as little complexity as possible (Sardoč & Prebilič, 2022). The innate power a slogan hold does not rely simply on its intrinsic aesthetic appeal. These short set of words and expressions are capable of encapsulating the political candidate’s message, program, and values.

Furthermore, the most important function of a slogan is the simplification of complex social and political ideology. The public will seldom tolerate lengthy explanations or justifications of political attitudes and world views. The public tends to reduce its opinions to the lowest common denominator and react in terms of abstractions and stereotypes (Denton, 1988). In Hussein and Abttan (2018) study, it was also concluded that the persuasive discourse of political slogan corresponds with the simplicity characteristic of slogans in general. This is due to the fact that the simple structure of slogan contributes a lot to its conviction force. The implicit message, the meaning beyond the text is what attracts the audience’s attention. They are composed of meaningful, persuasive messages that move the audience on the basis of emotion, reason, and credibility. A slogan that is comprised of these elements may illicit action from its audience and shapes the mindset of those who adopt it (Newsome, 2002). Aligned with constructivist principles, this research investigates how political campaign materials construct reality, shape public perceptions, and influence voters through the language of persuasion. Constructivism emphasizes the role of discourse in the co-construction of knowledge, acknowledging that meanings are not fixed but are negotiated within specific sociopolitical contexts. Therefore, a critical analysis on text and discourse is important in order to be able to explain the relationship between language, ideology and identity. Fairclough (1989) argues that critical study in text and discourse can help in uncovering the unseen agenda which may be hidden from people.

Although there is an increasing amount of literature on persuasion in political discourse, previous studies have primarily put their focused on presidential speeches. There has been a scarcity of information regarding the persuasive strategies used by Filipino senators in political campaign materials in particular. Thus, this research aims to examine how these political campaign materials used by the senators shape public opinion and influence the political landscape of the Philippines.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This study aims to analyze the persuasive strategies used by the top 3 elected senators in their political campaign materials during the Philippine national election of 2022.

Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the dominant themes and persuasive strategies used in Philippine political campaign materials?
2. How impactful are the rhetorical devices used in the campaign materials in crafting influence and shaping the voter’s opinion?
3. What are the implications of these persuasive strategies in terms of democratic participation and citizen engagement in political election process?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study utilized a qualitative method, more specifically the used of critical discourse analysis to attain an in-depth understanding of the political, and power dynamics that are present in Philippine national election. Moreover, this method of analysis was used to analyze the interviews and the language of persuasion present in the campaign materials of the three senators who dominated the 2022 national election in the Philippines.

### **Participants of the Study**

The participants of the study were determined through purposive sampling and the data collection is done once the researcher obtained data saturation. The criteria of selection of the study participants include the following;

(a) identified as a student of Isabela State University Main Campus (b) must be a registered voter of the Philippines during the 2022 national election, (b) must have voted for the three senators who amasses the highest vote among the population (i.e. Robin Padilla, Loren Legarda, and Raffy Tulfo). The inclusion of these senators was based on their significant appeal to the Filipino electorate, as evidenced by their record-breaking vote counts. The study involved a sample of 10 participants who will served as the subjects of the research.

### **Ethical Consideration**

1. Prior to participation, the study's purpose, methods, potential risks, and benefits will be conveyed to the participants, and their consent will be obtained.
2. The researcher will also place a significant importance on the participants' autonomy, permitting them to make an informed and voluntary decision regarding their participation. They have the right to discontinue their involvement at any given moment without incurring negative repercussion.
3. Furthermore, the researcher will prioritize the privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality of the participants. The data collected will be protected by using pseudonyms and implementing secure data storage.

### **Research Instruments**

In order to obtain the data needed for the research, a structured interview question guide will be utilized. The interview guide was developed using a priori code to ensure alignment with the objectives of the study. Audio-recording will be used as an instrument in gathering the data. This study also utilized the political campaign materials of the top three senators mentioned in the study. More specifically tag lines, slogans, flyers, campaign song and campaign advertisement.

The said campaign materials include the overview of the candidate's profile, credentials, stance on policies, commitments made during the campaign and the themes that makes a clear distinction between them and their opponents. The researcher however, will not investigate any visual aspect of the campaign materials as the sole focus of the study resides on the language used. The campaign materials were aired through radio broadcasting network, played on national television, uploaded in SoundCloud, posted by the senators themselves on their social media platforms, and used in some of their campaign parade. With this context, the data that will be used in this study were from February, 2022 to May 2022 during the campaign period.

### **Data Gathering Procedure**

The procedures of gathering the data collected were as follows: first, a formal letter was written and addressed to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, with a copy provided to the department chair of the Languages and Literature Department. The purpose of this letter is to seek permission for the conduct of the study. Second, once granted an approval, the researcher coordinated and looked for the participants of the study. Third, the researcher, in an act of academic propriety, introduced herself and stated the purpose and objectives of the study to the participants of the interview. Each participant underwent in an in-person interview conducted within a setting that ensures their comfort and security. Fourth, before starting the actual interview, the researcher asked the participants to accomplish an informed consent form. The completion of this form serves to confirm the participants' volunteer agreement to participate, that the information they provided is true and accurate, and that the researcher may use their data in accordance with this consent. Fifth, an orientation was given for the participants on how to answer the interview questions. Sixth, the researcher took an audio recording of what the participants have said on the entire interview process. In addition, all the selected campaign materials of Robin Padilla, Loren Legarda, and Raffy Tulfo were collected by conducting a manual search on the internet, the data was downloaded afterwards. The researcher then analyzed the data one by one and look for the persuasive strategies used by the three senators based on the three modes of appeal. The results are comprised of the answers to the questions raised by the study, and the conclusions that was taken from them arrived at after doing an in-depth analysis of the data that was provided.

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## Treatment of Data

The data collected from the interview was transcribed by the researcher. As a result, the present transcription underwent a discourse analysis, incorporating the three modes of appeal that determined the influenced and the implications of these persuasive strategies in terms of democratic participation and citizen engagement in political election process.

Moreover, the chosen political campaign materials of the three senators were also analyzed using the three modes of appeal. The modes of appeal serve as a fundamental yet substantial instruments that facilitate the assessment of the persuasive attributes of messages crafted by others, as well as the creation of more effective messages. Logos, also known as appeal to logic, rest on rational mode of thinking. Pathos-based rhetorical strategies, on the other hand, refer to any techniques used to evoke an emotional response from the audience, allowing them to become more receptive to the topic, argument, or speaker. Lastly, Ethos is the classification given to an author's use of values that are important to the audience in order to justify or support their argument. The initial aspect of ethos pertains to the values of the audience. The various modes of appeal encompass distinct techniques, specifically logos, pathos, and ethos. The researcher intends to conduct a meticulous examination of the data, scrutinizing each element individually, with the aim of identifying the various persuasive strategies employed by the three senators using the three modes of appeal and their corresponding elements. The collected data was then classified based on the modes they classified in. This resulted in a reduction and simplification of the collected data.

Subsequently, the researcher proceeded to analyze the collected data, which was arranged systematically by initially interpreting its use of persuasive language.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### **The dominant themes and persuasive strategies used in the campaign materials of the top three senators.**

The Rhetorical appeals were the results of Gagich and Zickel's collaboration that function as a manual for authors to be rhetorically effective. The three (3) modes of appeal were based on the classical Greek terms, dating back to Aristotle.

First, is Logos. This mode of appeal relies on the use of logic, careful structure, and objective evidence to persuade the audience that the speaker's arguments are rational. Logical appeals stem from rational modes of thinking and reasoning. One technique that falls under this theme is Inductive Reasoning. In the process of induction, a person draws a generalized conclusion based on specific information. However, it is not certain whether the conclusion made was correct nor incorrect as all the previous premises was an observation made from the past. Hence, it could be labeled as a novel prediction but not an absolute truth.

Among the three senators, only Robin Padilla uses this technique to make broader claims. He capitalizes on several economic issues, such as inflation and monopoly, that many Filipinos strives to solve to propose a policy that addresses these reoccurring problems. He emphasizes themes like federalism, cooperatives, and people empowerment, painting himself as a competent leader that aims for a fair and efficient governance. Padilla frequently cite anecdotes and testimonials that are interconnected before arriving at a conclusion. In one of his press interviews, he stated "Imagine, that you've committed a crime. The person will be brought to "New Bilibid Prison". That person will leave their family behind. When they got there, how will a person change for the better if their families were too far away. That's the truth. In federalism, it should be people empowerment."

The extensive usage of this technique stems from its ability to cater to a wide range of electorate with varying beliefs. By making the supporting evidences correspond to the average case or by becoming a representative of the larger whole, Padilla can make the audience more receptive to the persuasion at the end without them noticing that the coming conclusion may counter what they previously stand for. This way, Padilla can leverage the logical impact of his campaign messages.

Another technique is Cause/Effect Thinking. Arguments that belong to this category depicts that a certain phenomenon (the cause) will lead into the creation of another phenomenon (the effect). A typical example of this is, if all corrupt politicians in the government were to be uprooted and stripped of their authority, the people will have a better quality of life in terms of justice and opportunities.

Here, only Robin Padilla utilized Cause/Effect Thinking. His statement “If we have a federal state, we will have local supreme courts” entails that the possible establishment of local supreme courts is a direct consequence of reforming the present unitary government of the country into a federal state. Several examples were also presented before arriving at such connection between the cause and its possible effect to enhance the soundness of his claim (Martene, 2020). This appeal was targeted towards people who have concerns over the authority of the centralized power, which is the Imperial Manila. He also appeases the local authorities by tapping into their sentiments regarding local autonomy.

Next is Exemplification. This technique requires the author or the speaker to provide relevant examples or a range of evidences to support a larger point. Moreover, exemplification allows the audience to freely understand complex political concept.

In spite of that, none of the senators except Robin Padilla applied such technique in their campaign materials. He uses various examples to explain his point and to boost the audiences’ interest to his main argument. Examples can be used to effectively persuade people from thinking that their words made sense and is worth considering. A well-selected examples can support an otherwise unconvincing statement (Kirszner & Mandell, 1980). An excerpt from his interview is presented as follows: ‘In fact, if we have a federal state, we will have local supreme courts. For example, Cebu will have a faster justice system. It no longer needs to go through Manila...’ Under this technique, Padilla’s use of exemplification aligns with the theme of regional justice reform as evidenced by frequent references to the establishment of local supreme courts under a federal system. It is also worth noting that all of his logical appeal were presented using simple language to elucidate political concepts and issues to the common people. In the study of Bischof and Senninger (2018), it was revealed that the style of speech (sophisticated or simple language) can be used strategically to notify the people which social class are the politician trying to represent.

Another technique under logical appeal is Elaboration. The act of elaborating does not merely intend to present a fact, but also to further provide details that highlights the significance of what was being mentioned.

Similar to the previous case, only the campaign materials of Robin Padilla contained Elaboration. The fact that was mentioned addresses one of his greatest controversies. Since he first started as an actor, people frequently express their skepticism towards his ability in writing a bill and making a law. In his video advertisement, he said “Even before I run for senatorial race, I already created a law.” He then proceeded to add more information on how it was made and what contribution it offers to the people. This move showcases his competency to perform legislative matters and an attempt to counters the doubt of undecided voters. Although the strategic used of controversial topics does not have the ability to drive change in perception alone, it can be exploited to support change (Kuan, 2018).

To complete the list, the last two strategy were Deductive Reasoning and Coherent Thought. In contrast to inductive reasoning, deductive reasoning starts out with a general idea and then end with a specific conclusion while Coherent Thought refers to the process of maintaining the flow of reasoning in an organized manner. Regrettably, the senators failed to take advantage of these two techniques in their campaign materials.

Moving on, the second appeal is Pathos. Here, a politician entices their audience with an argument that elicit emotional responses such as excitement, compassion, sympathy, gratitude, or indignation towards the candidate’s other competitors.

Emotions can make people open-up and there are several techniques an author or a speaker can use to exploit such vulnerability. First, we have Emotion-laden Vocabulary. This technique relies on words to immerse the target audience into a particular emotional frame of mind. The author may not necessarily used specific terms such as angry, happy, or sad but instead will rely on the weight of a word (e.g. loneliness, hope, comfort) to

create an atmosphere that will suit their agenda. The slogan “Let me serve as the voice of ordinary Filipino in the senate” of Robin Padilla primarily seeks to establish connections with the audience by positioning himself as a representation of the common people who understood and valued the voter’s needs and concerns. Here, the connection was made through the execution of right emotions between the candidate’s message and his target audience to gain a positive impression (UNC Kenan Flagler, n.d.). Moreover, Robin also aims to create a sense of belongingness, making the audience feel as if they were appreciated and included. The same could be said to Raffy Tulfo and Loren Legarda’s statements. All of the three senators advocate for the betterment of the people, fostering a sense of security and emphasizing their dedication to serve the public.

The senators’ preference for this method were attributed to the fact that emotion-laden vocabulary is capable of triggering an implicit alteration of knowledge and system of values of the addressee as long as the lexicon choice touches the community’s expectations and collective unconscious. Next is Personal Stories. Sharing personal stories can capture more attention compared to reading dry facts and data. Here, the author or the speaker presents a narrative that the audience can relate, sympathize, or empathize. This allows politicians to connect to their audience in a personal level rather than being seen as a detached elite.

In Raffy Tulfo’s campaign advertisement, the narrator habitually brought up their shared experiences with the senator before associating it to a grander perspective. The statement “Raffy Tulfo doesn’t discriminate when it comes to fighting our oppressor” portrays him as a fearless leader who disregard social class when it comes to injustice. Furthermore, the phrase “we’ve seen him do that several times in his program” validates this representation by implying that Raffy’s actions were consistent and visible to the public. It aims to draw out the feeling of admiration for his bravery from people who feel marginalized. Through these affective narratives, there’s a high chance that shift in attitude of the audience are almost immediate (Hamelin et al., 2020). On the other hand, Robin and Loren neglected to utilize this technique in their campaign materials.

Next, we have Expressive Descriptions and Vivid Imagery to complete the list. In Expressive Description, the author or the speaker uses the four sensory details (touch, sound, smell, taste) to describe something which help the audience/reader to experience and feel what was being depicted. It could be people, place, or events. For example, “With unwavering devotion to his homeland, he will once again lay upon this barren nation a blanket of warmth. Similarly, Vivid Imagery also uses words that connects to the reader’s sense of sight. It aids the audience in visualizing things, people, place and events. For example, “The green lush grass in the park was engulfed by a crimson fire in an instant.” However, none of the senators employed this technique in their campaign messages.

The result of the analysis shows that the three senators were focus on public inclusion and emotional resonance. These themes underline the candidates’ strategic use of language and narrative to influence public attitudes and build a positive relationship with their constituents.

Finally, the last mode of appeal is Ethos. This approach focuses on establishing the audiences’ trust toward the politician and potentially altering the audiences’ perceptions or belief in their persona.

There are three ways in which a speaker or an author can establish trust to his target audience. First, appealing to the Value/s people hold such as transparency, fairness, freedom, integrity, etc. Value encompasses a person’s belief s, principles, and worldview thus, when a politician tailored their arguments to fit the values of their audience, they will perceive the message as morally right. The campaign materials of the three senators demonstrate a clear preference for utilizing value-based appeals as their primary persuasive strategy. They constantly center on values such as justice, human rights, equality, and religion. Values-based arguments may resonate to those who had similar ideology. However, such arguments are potentially less effective to those with a differing belief (Feinberg & Willer, 2015). Nevertheless, most of the value associated with the campaign materials of the three senators are widely accepted ethical standards meaning, they can gain a widespread support by appealing to the values shared by the majority. Robin in particular, uses words such as “servant of the Almighty” to describe himself in one of his campaign materials. Furthermore, he specifically expresses his gratitude to the current executive minister of Iglesia in Cristo for his endorsement, a religion that was reported by Philippine Statistic Authority to have placed third in terms of household population among the diverse religious affiliations existing in the country. This church is also known for encouraging bloc voting to their

chosen candidates. Thus, mentioning an influential figure, such as Eduardo Manalo, brought a solid backing for Robin Padilla considering that this individual has the authority to influence a large base of loyal followers (Liaw, Moiden & Yacob, 2022). Second, Credibility. The perception of the audience towards the credibility of the speaker plays an important role on how they view the validity of the arguments or statements being made. The author's credibility refers to their knowledge and experience in the subject at hand. A candidate proposing new policies can state that they have a law degree and they will receive a better response from the audience compared to candidates who couldn't finish their education.

Loren Legarda have been a public servant for more than two decades. Her campaign materials often accentuate the bills she passed, the projects she made, and the benefits it brings to the Filipino people. She reassures voters that she is competent and effective by showcasing the accomplishments she made throughout her past services. Robin Padilla also demonstrates his competency by listing a few awards he received and the activities he participated in. In the case of Raffy, his program has already made a notable impact to the public by assisting people resolve their problems both legally and personally. There are times were a speaker no longer needs to establish credibility as the recipient of their message are already aware of their ability (Gagich & Zickel, 2017). Lastly, Character. A person can be credible yet still fail the election because they lack character. Character pertains to the author's personal history and personality trait. A persona that caters to what the audience want and what they need can create long-term influence. People tend to listen to candidates that they admire rather than those that they harbor negative emotion.

As observed, the three senators adorned their character with terminologies such as "ally," "defender," "comrade," and "model of courage", an identity tailored to resonate to the general aspirations of the common folks. They portrayed themselves as the sole representation of the "ordinary man," someone who are capable of recognizing and understanding the struggles these group of people face. Moreover, in messages that conveys protection and security, there is always a need to marked the lower class rather than addressing the whole nation (i.e. the oppressed, the abused, the Filipino farmer, the Filipino youth, etc.) in a way that indicates that these groups are weak and requires someone else to fight for their own, which is the speaker of such messages. This type of persuasion triggers biases that people are not conscious of as it has been engraved in their culture and society. As stated by Puchkov (2018), these subconscious biases people harbors are the non-legal influence that change the directory of rational thinking.

All of the persuasive strategies discussed above are the techniques used in the campaign materials of the three senators who dominated the Philippine senatorial race in 2022.

### **The impact of the rhetorical devices used in the campaign materials in crafting influence and shaping voter's opinions.**

Political campaign materials consist of varying mediums such as posters, radio and television ads, flyers, jingles, and social media posts. These materials play a significant role in shaping perceptions, mobilizing support, and influencing the behavior of the voters. The three senators, during the electoral campaign period, achieved more political influence through the strategic application of different persuasive devices (i.e. ethos, pathos, logos).

#### **Logos**

Logos refers to the way in which a candidate attempts to persuade their audience to believe a particular viewpoint by presenting a message that are logical, rational, and contains objective evidences. However, the effectiveness of logos is purely reliant on the interest of the audience and their ability to follow through the process of the speaker's rational reasoning (Varpio, 2018). Some of the participants indicate that excessive application of logical data and rational reasoning may cause a decline in interests in the campaign messages.

P8: "For those who lay out their proposed laws, it should be backed by data for us to know if it is feasible. Of course, in their flyers or the materials that was being distributed to the public, if it only contains numbers or logical data, it will become too formal. It may fail to catch the attention of other people."

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P10: ...but of course this is not the sole reason why I voted them. It's just an additional point when they put facts and logic in their campaign materials.”

In the participants' case, the previous analysis indicates that they are more reliant on emotion and their perceived trustworthiness of the senators in guiding their decision-making process rather than pure rationality. This corresponds to the concept of inductive reasoning, which emerges as the most dominant theme in the campaign materials of Padilla under logical appeal. By employing such strategy, the senator capitalizes on relatable, context-specific examples to resonate with his audience's sense of possibility and belief. Both P8 and P10 statements however, shows that logical data only serves as one of the possible pieces of evidence that can measure whether the candidate plans and future policies are feasible or not. Logos then is not a signifier of what is true but rather, a determinant of what is possible or not. This implies that although the used of logical appeal is welcome, it is not the sole factor that drives the participants' behavior to believe and support a candidate. This is in line with the study of Hornik et. al. (2017), who reveals that among the hierarchy of persuasion, rational arguments are less impactful and tends to be outshined by appeals related to trust and emotion.

### **Pathos**

Pathos is another rhetorical device that operates by purposely evoking emotional responses from the audience so as to establish influence. Emotionally charged language intensifies the impact or weight of ideas, subjects, concepts, and attitudes indicated within a certain discourse. A key strategy frequently employed by the three senators is the use of emotion-laden vocabulary. The lexical choice in their political messages were imbued with emotional significance that resonates deeply with the audience's sentiments.

Drawing from the statements of the participants, emotions allow them to foster a sense of connection and inclusivity. In the statement of P7, when the campaign messages of political candidates deliberately incorporate themes and narratives that the participants can relate into, they will resonate to the text more deeply. Messages that generate such feelings made them feel valued and understood hence, they immediately presumed that the speaker's intention is purely for the sake of the people because it mirrors and validates their concerns or problems. This shows that although the use of emotional appeal is not inherently unethical, it connotes the distortion of rational evaluation. The audience affected by what was being conveyed can disregard the logical constraints present in the politician's message (Freedon, 2013). This assertion is also reflected from the following statements:

P4: We can't avoid being bias especially when it comes to voting. If you have emotional connections with them, you feel more inclined to vote them. And, sometimes your decisions will become clouded.

P10: ... you know, when you always see positivity in their messages, it sorts of like inspire me to view life the same way. That there are possible solutions to problems. (positive) Emotion fuel my motivation to do something for a certain candidate, because I don't think I'll vote for someone that I hate.

The statement of P10 suggests that people who already established a positive emotional connection to a certain candidate have a lower chance of opposing that candidate's arguments compared to those who they harbor negative emotions with. In the previous section, the analysis revealed that messages conveyed by the three senators primarily seeks to activate emotions such as enthusiasm, hope, fulfillment, and inspiration. These techniques are proven to be effective as the participants have the tendency to be moved or get inspired by messages that does not connotes negative things. This implies that appeal that evokes positive emotion are more effective at stimulating changes in behavior and thus increasing voter's motivation to take action (e.g. participating in rallies, promoting a candidate in social media, volunteering, etc.) if they already harbor an existing preference for that specific candidate. This is supported by the findings of Gruning and Schubert's (2022) study regarding emotional campaigning in politics. It was revealed that an individual is more susceptible at being influenced by emotion if the pollical advertisement are made by the party they align with. The influence extends to both direct actions such as casting a vote, and indirect actions like displaying campaign paraphernalia in their home or vehicles.



## Ethos

Ethos is a means in which a speaker attempts to prove to their prospective supporters that they are a trustworthy source of information and therefore it is safe to believe in their arguments or messages. Trust reduces vigilance thus, making an individual more receptive to the orator's claims as the audience do not expect to be lied or exploited (Meza et. al., 2010). When appealing to get the audience trust, a political candidate might tap the values people hold, create a persona that fit the audience's preferences, and showcase their achievements. Within this context, the candidate's materials indirectly served as a solid support to their claims and policies. This further strengthened the perceived competency of the participants towards the candidates as shown in the following extract.

P6: "...when I read or saw their materials, I become more determine to vote them because the contents of it include their values and beliefs. Just like in the case of Raffy Tulfo, the actions he had performed perfectly aligned with his words, he really shows that you can rely on him. People often approach him when they have problem."

P7: "If you have values and previous accomplishments, you have the ability to fulfill your duties once you are elected."

P8: "When they highlighted their experience as a public servant including their values and credentials, of course, I'll believe more in their ability to lead"

P9: "...their qualifications, values, and previous accomplishments that were indicated in their campaign materials informed me of what they are. You'll think that they deserve your vote. You know that they are deserving of that position because you read what they are as a person."

From the abovementioned statements, it is evident that participants show a more positive view to a candidate who had a prior experience related to public service and accomplishments related to uplifting the lives of the people. According to the statement of both P7 and P8, credentials, experiences and values are a reflection of the candidate's capacity to rule. This perception of competency fosters trusts and confidence as the participants believe that a person who are capable of achieving something from the past are more likely to achieve greater feats in the future, whether through legislative accomplishments or policy making. Credentials and experiences then serve as tangible evidence that enhances the validity of the candidates' claims and promises.

In addition, as observed in the previous section, most of the identified materials containing ethical appeal shares an almost similar narratives that relates to a vast majority. The messages were shaped to fit the demands of several marginalized groups (e.g. women, children, elders, farmers, students, small business owner, OFW workers, members of religious group, etc.), addresses the concerns they have, and presents a solution that benefits these people's quality of life. The participants pay more attention to this type of arguments as the campaign messages were framed in a way that reflects their experiences. The words that convey a shared values between the candidate and the participants have greater weights since it is perceived to be more personally relevant (Pett & Cacioppo, 1990).

This implies that when a candidate advocate for their own credibility, the participants will generate a more favorable attitude towards their arguments if it fits their own preferences. The People's level of trust signifies the degree of closeness between the ideological preferences of the politicians and the voters. (Okolikj et al., 2022). Trust then is a great indicator of compatibility between the senator's agenda and the voter's demands and standards of governance. This is in line with the findings of Okolokj's (2022) study where they discovered that a voter who had a higher level of trust towards a certain political party is more motivated and willing to engage in ideologically congruent voting. The more a candidate construct a message that embodies the preferences of their constituency, the more they established an image that portrays what the voter think of as the "ideal leadership".

## **The implications of the persuasive strategies used in political campaign materials in terms of democratic participation and citizen engagement in political election process.**

The result of the analysis shows that appeal to trust emerges as the most compelling persuasion employed by the senators in their campaign materials. The presentation of credibility, values, and character of Robin, Raffy, and Loren were perceived by the participants as a great indicator of a politician's capacity to an effective leadership. This shows that the participant's perceive trustworthiness of the candidates play a significant role in increasing their interest and convincing them to express their support towards these three political actors. This also implies that political campaign in the Philippines, often prioritize personal branding and authenticity over detailed policy discussions.

Moreover, it was also identified that pathos was the second most favored appeal by the participants. With the three senators' strategic dissemination of emotion-laden vocabulary and personal stories in their campaign materials, participants stated that they feel like Robin, Raffy, and Loren were "sincere," "more approachable," "has more presence," and "more interesting" as they were able to relate and connect to their messages. Such messages motivate and inspire the participants to engage in political activities and discussions, particularly on the internet. The prominence of pathos indicates a growing tendency to capitalize on affective responses to strengthen voter engagement. This, in turn, poses a risk of undermining the quality of democracy, where voters may be swayed by superficial emotional cues rather than rational deliberation. Furthermore, the appeal to logic was the least favored appeal among the three rhetorical devices used. The relative marginalization of this appeal suggests a weakening of fact-based political discourse where emotional narratives dominate, and complex discussions are sidelined. In the perceptions of the participants, logical appeal is not an essential factor that can change the course of their decision when it comes to voting but rather, it is regarded as mere supplementary evidence in assessing whether a candidate's proposed policy and projects are feasible.

This research shows that for a portion of Filipino voters, emotional connections and trust takes precedence over logical appeal when it comes to deciding the candidate that they will vote. These findings could be seen as a double-edge sword. While they are effective in increasing voter engagement, the heavy reliance to ethos and pathos made them a viable victim of misinformation and worst, manipulation to the extent that voter's choices no longer reflect the autonomous, independent decision essential in legitimate democracy. Ultimately, a political landscape dominated by such appeals hinders rational choice as logic-based arguments, based on the data, were viewed as inferior thus, preventing the people in making an informed judgement. As VanBergen et.al (2021) note, decision is more rational if a person put more importance in reasoning (vs. feeling.) In the study of Comber (2004), emotion or affective language interferes rather than assists the participants from rational thinking. The result is a form of political participation that is less reflective and more rooted in personal identification with a candidate. This leads into a less meaningful democratic participation as votes are cast based on existing loyalties and biases rather than objective evaluation.

## **CONCLUSION**

In the grounds of politics, the only acceptable currency for politicians to purchase the support of people is language. Every information spoken and the methods used for its presentation determines the value of the politician's offer. The higher the value, the more desirable it becomes for the voters. In a more practical sense, the content of the message and the ways in which it was delivered through various methods of persuasion mediate the influence it has to the interlocutor of the discourse.

The findings of this study shows that among the three modes of appeal, ethos emerged as the most influential method of persuasion for the participants followed by pathos. This implies that shaping a public image, establishing personal credibility, embodying the values that matters to a broader populace and emotional resonance are the leading factors that affect the decision-making process of the voters during election. Furthermore, despite the lesser prominence of logos, it still held a significant value when paired alongside ethos and pathos. It serves as a basis for the participants when assessing the feasibility of the candidate's proposed policies and promises. This further implies that a statement that contains a balance application of the three rhetorical devices increases the strength of its persuasiveness. This assertion is proven upon looking at the results of the senatorial election in 2022. Among the three senators, Robin Padilla was the only one that

took advantage of the benefits of the three appeals. He placed first in the senatorial race garnering a total of 27, 027, 235 million votes. The conclusion made in this study does not diminish the importance of logical appeal but rather, it emphasizes the place of both emotional connection and the candidate's perceived trustworthiness in shaping the political discourse of the Philippines.

To end, the researcher also concluded that there are other influential factors aside from the mentioned rhetorical appeals that prompt the Filipino voters to cast their support to certain political candidate. Factors such as existing loyalties that stems from familial or group affiliation and personal biases that was formed due to popularity and familiarity with the actor's on-screen persona plays a role on why some individual favors the words of a certain politician. Filipino voters should learn how to exercise a keen sense of perceptiveness upon consuming texts that are inherently political and should make use of the information regarding the language of persuasion presented in this study to better understand and analyze the underlying meaning and purposes of the messages crafted by political candidates.

## RECOMMENDATION

In light of the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made: The analysis revealed that a balance between emotion, trust, and logic are an essential factor in guiding the audience's behavior and attitude. On this basis, the researcher suggests that students should study the three modes of appeal and apply its principles to debates, speeches, proposals, and presentation to potentially boost academic performance. Second, the researcher also suggests to the general public to be more critical at absorbing any information presented by political candidates and leaders. Look further beyond the surface-level of appeal to emotion and trust when assessing the substance and content of campaign messages to promote informed judgement. Lastly, future researcher could further examine the different impact of persuasive strategies by taking into consideration the perspective of different demographic groups as it may shed light to traditional stereotypes.

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