



Ethos, Pathos, and Logos in Digital Political Communication: A Rhetorical Analysis of Alexander Nanta Linggi's Facebook Posts

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ABSTRACT

Social media has become an important arena for political leaders to construct credibility, legitimacy, and public engagement through everyday discourse. This study examines how Alexander Nanta Linggi, Malaysia's Minister of Works and Member of Parliament for Kapit, employs Aristotle's rhetorical appeals of ethos, pathos, and logos in Facebook posts to construct political leadership and communicate government policy. Using qualitative rhetorical analysis, purposively selected posts published between May and July 2026 were analysed deductively using an Aristotelian framework. The findings reveal that ethos was constructed through institutional authority, site inspections, and accountability statements; pathos through communal address, cultural symbolism, pantun, and expressions of empathy; and logos through budget figures, project statistics, and data-based justification. These rhetorical appeals frequently operated together within individual posts, demonstrating an integrated rhetorical strategy rather than isolated persuasive techniques. The study concludes that Facebook functions as a hybrid platform for political leadership communication, combining bureaucratic accountability with affective and culturally resonant appeals. By examining a Malaysian state–federal political context, the study extends the application of Aristotelian rhetoric to contemporary digital political communication in Southeast Asia.

Keywords: Aristotelian rhetoric, digital political communication, ethos pathos logos, Facebook, political leadership communication

INTRODUCTION

The migration of political communication from broadcast and print media to social networking platforms has reconfigured the way political leaders build relationships with citizens. Facebook remains the dominant social media platform among Malaysian politicians for disseminating policy updates, project reports, and personal reflections, functioning simultaneously as a press release channel, a constituency service log, and an informal diary of leadership. Unlike televised speeches or parliamentary Hansard records, Facebook posts are short, frequent, multimodal, and interactive, allowing a minister to move between the register of a technocrat announcing budget allocations and the register of a community elder offering festive greetings within the same week, sometimes within the same post.

Political rhetoric on social media has attracted growing scholarly attention because it collapses the traditional distance between leaders and citizens while retaining many of the persuasive functions Aristotle identified in oratory more than two millennia ago (Al-pares, 2025). Digital platforms compress the rhetorical situation: an audience that was once physically present at a convention or a parliamentary sitting is now dispersed, asynchronous, and able to comment, share, and react in ways that amplify or contest a leader's persuasive claims (Indiyati et al., 2025). This reconfiguration does not, however, render classical rhetorical theory obsolete; rather, ethos, pathos, and logos continue to operate as the underlying grammar of persuasion, only now expressed through captions, hyperlinks, photographs, hashtags, and algorithmically curated newsfeeds (Boginskaya, 2023).

Aristotle's rhetorical triangle, comprising ethos (the credibility of the speaker), pathos (the emotional disposition aroused in the audience), and logos (the logical substance of the argument), has been applied extensively to Malaysian and regional political discourse, from Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's speeches (Alkhirbash, 2010; Ting



et al., 2022; Nik Fauzi & Ting, 2025) to the parliamentary rhetoric of subsequent prime ministers (Abdul Rahman et al., 2022) and to Indonesian presidential debates and public dialogues (Isa, 2024; Manik et al., 2024; Hapsari et al., 2025; Novianti et al., 2022). These studies confirm that the three appeals are neither mutually exclusive nor evenly distributed; leaders habitually favour one appeal over another depending on the exigency of the moment, and pathos in particular tends to dominate in politically charged or humanitarian contexts (Nik Fauzi & Ting, 2025; Abdul Rahman et al., 2022). What remains comparatively underexplored is how these appeals manifest in the routinised, non-campaign discourse of a sitting minister operating within a state-federal political structure such as that of Sarawak and the Malaysian federation, where a leader must simultaneously speak as a federal cabinet minister, a Sarawak-based party official, and a member of parliament answerable to a specific constituency.

The research problem this study addresses is twofold. First, while Aristotelian analysis of political speeches and formal addresses is well established (Boginskaya, 2023; Abdul Rahman et al., 2022; Krishnan et al., 2021), the analysis of ministerial Facebook posts, a genre that blends bureaucratic reporting, constituency service, and personal narrative, has received far less systematic attention within Malaysian political communication scholarship. Second, existing Malaysian rhetorical studies concentrate heavily on the federal prime ministerial level (Alkhirbash, 2010; Nik Fauzi & Ting, 2025; Ting et al., 2022; Abdul Rahman et al., 2022), leaving state-federal figures such as Sarawak-based cabinet ministers largely absent from the empirical record, despite Sarawak's distinctive political culture, its cultural pluralism, and its evolving relationship with the federal government under the Malaysia Agreement 1963 framework. This creates both a theoretical gap, concerning how the rhetorical triangle operates in hybrid governance-and-community discourse, and an empirical gap, concerning the underrepresentation of Bornean political leadership in Malaysian rhetorical scholarship.

This study is significant for three reasons. Theoretically, it extends Aristotelian rhetorical analysis beyond formal speeches and campaign oratory into the everyday genre of ministerial social media posts, a text type whose brevity, frequency, and multimodality pose distinct analytical demands. Practically, it offers political communication practitioners and public relations officers in government ministries an evidence-based understanding of how credibility, emotional resonance, and logical justification can be balanced in routine digital communication. Socially, it contributes to a more geographically and culturally representative understanding of Malaysian political rhetoric by centring a Sarawak-based, Dayak Iban political leader whose communicative style has not previously been the subject of academic rhetorical analysis.

Accordingly, this study is guided by the following research questions: (1) How does Alexander Nanta Linggi construct ethos in his Facebook posts to establish credibility, leadership, and accountability? (2) How does he mobilise pathos to engage citizens emotionally and foster a sense of community and shared identity? (3) How does he employ logos to communicate government policies and infrastructure initiatives through evidence and data? (4) How do the three rhetorical appeals interact within individual posts to construct an integrated leadership persona in digital political communication?

LITERATURE REVIEW

This review synthesises scholarship across five interrelated strands: digital political communication and the social media public sphere; Facebook as a specific site of political meaning-making; Aristotle's rhetorical theory and its three constituent appeals; political leadership communication and persuasion more broadly; and empirical applications of the rhetorical triangle in Malaysian and comparative settings. Read together, these strands establish both the theoretical scaffolding for the present study and the empirical gap it addresses.

Digital Political Communication and the Social Media Public Sphere

Digital political communication refers to the strategic use of internet-based platforms by political actors to inform, persuade, and mobilise citizens outside the constraints of traditional broadcast scheduling and editorial gatekeeping (Al-pares, 2025). Compared with print or television, social media affords politicians direct, unmediated access to constituents, collapses the temporal gap between an event and its public reporting, and invites forms of audience participation, such as comments, shares, and reactions, that were largely unavailable in earlier eras of political communication. Al-pares (2025) situates this shift within a broader post-truth

condition, arguing that digital rhetoric increasingly privileges affective resonance and algorithmic virality alongside, and sometimes above, strict logical coherence. Indiyati et al. (2025) similarly demonstrate, through a comparative study of Indonesian, Malaysian, and Singaporean government crisis communication during the COVID-19 pandemic, that governments strategically foreground different rhetorical appeals depending on national political culture: the Malaysian government's pandemic messaging relied heavily on ethos and pathos to build a frame of responsibility and collective action, whereas Singapore's messaging privileged logos and ethos to construct a frame of technocratic competence. This finding is instructive for the present study because it suggests that Malaysian political actors have an established rhetorical habit of pairing credibility appeals with emotional appeals, a pattern this study revisits at the level of an individual minister's routine social media discourse rather than a single crisis episode.

Facebook as a Site of Political Meaning-Making

Facebook occupies a distinctive position within the broader digital political communication landscape because it supports long-form text, embedded links, photographs, and video within a single post, enabling a hybrid register that can move fluidly between formal policy reporting and informal, first-person narration. Unlike platforms optimised for brevity, Facebook allows a political leader to publish a multi-paragraph account of a site visit, complete with statistics, quotations from officials, and a closing appeal to shared values, all within one contiguous text. Rakedzon and Hazzan (2025), writing on STEM communication pedagogy, note that digital and hybrid communication environments increasingly require communicators to integrate pathos and ethos more deliberately than logos alone can achieve, because audiences scrolling through a crowded newsfeed respond first to relational and emotional cues before engaging with technical substance. Voci (2022) extends this observation to corporate and institutional communication, arguing that organisations, including by extension government ministries, must now demonstrate a form of rhetorical accountability, or what might be termed ethos-in-action, whereby claims of competence and sustainability are substantiated through visible, reportable activity rather than assertion alone. Applied to a government minister's Facebook page, this suggests that ethos is not simply claimed through titles or formal credentials but performed through the visible labour of site inspections, meetings, and monitoring activities that are then textualised as social media content.

Aristotle's Rhetorical Theory: Ethos, Pathos, and Logos

Aristotle's Rhetoric identifies three artistic proofs, or *pisteis*, through which a speaker persuades an audience: ethos, the perceived character and credibility of the speaker; pathos, the emotional state induced in the audience; and logos, the logical substance of the argument itself, whether through evidence, reasoning, or demonstrable fact. Contemporary rhetorical scholarship treats these three appeals not as discrete, mutually exclusive categories but as an interdependent triangle in which the effectiveness of one appeal is frequently contingent on the presence of the others (Sichach, 2024). Küpers and Mnisri (2024) argue for an embodied reading of the triad within organisational ethics, contending that ethos, pathos, and logos are lived and enacted through practice rather than merely stated in text, a perspective directly relevant to a political leader whose Facebook posts routinely narrate physical presence at project sites as evidence of character. Lontas (2025) similarly demonstrates the pervasiveness of the triad beyond formal oratory, extending it to idiomatic language use, while Runjić-Stoilova (2025) applies it to poetic discourse, underscoring the triad's applicability across genres far removed from the courtroom and assembly settings in which Aristotle originally theorised it.

Ethos in Political Discourse

Ethos, understood as the audience's perception of a speaker's competence, integrity, and goodwill, is frequently constructed in political discourse through the display of qualifications, institutional titles, and demonstrable accountability. Krishnan et al. (2021), analysing graduate job interviews, found that successful candidates relied predominantly on ethos, at 75 per cent of coded rhetorical instances, suggesting that credibility-signalling remains the primary currency of persuasion in evaluative communicative contexts. In political settings, ethos is often reinforced through the citation of official rank, direct quotation of other credible figures, and narrated participation in formal proceedings (Abdul Rahman et al., 2022). Hamzah et al. (2023) similarly find that leadership communication grounded in cultural literary works constructs ethos through demonstrated wisdom and moral authority rather than through explicit self-praise, a subtlety that political communicators increasingly



emulate in social media contexts where overt self-promotion risks alienating audiences accustomed to a more conversational register.

Pathos in Political Discourse

Pathos operates through appeals to shared emotion, values, and identity, and empirical studies consistently find it to be the most dominant appeal in politically charged and humanitarian discourse. Nik Fauzi and Ting (2025), analysing Dr Mahathir Mohamad's humanitarian-themed speeches, report that pathos accounted for 61.81 per cent of coded rhetorical instances, substantially exceeding logos at 27.45 per cent and ethos at 10.74 per cent, indicating a strategic prioritisation of emotional mobilisation over logical demonstration when addressing issues of global solidarity and justice. Similarly, Abdul Rahman et al. (2022) found pathos to be the most dominant rhetorical characteristic in the launching speech of Malaysia's Keluarga Malaysia programme, followed by logos, with ethos the least applied. Wornyo (2023) and Boginskaya (2023) find comparable patterns in editorial and presidential discourse respectively, where pathos frequently functions to unify a national audience around a shared sense of crisis, gratitude, or aspiration. In the Malaysian context specifically, ethnic and cultural markers, festive greetings, and traditional literary forms such as the pantun (a Malay quatrain) serve as culturally resonant vehicles for pathos, a pattern not yet examined in the specific context of Sarawakian political communication.

Logos in Political Discourse

Logos, the logical or evidentiary appeal, is typically operationalised in political and public health discourse through statistics, factual claims, and causal reasoning. Ting et al. (2020) found an over-reliance on logos, at 96.73 per cent, in Malaysian cancer awareness pamphlets, with pathos and ethos rarely used, a pattern the authors caution may reduce the perceived urgency of health messaging by neglecting emotional engagement. Mohamad (2022) similarly identifies logos as the dominant appeal in academic research abstracts, reflecting the genre-specific expectation of evidentiary rigour. In infrastructure and public works communication specifically, logos manifests through budget figures, project completion percentages, and references to standardised data systems, a rhetorical strategy that lends technocratic legitimacy to claims of government performance and is of direct relevance to a Minister of Works whose Facebook communication routinely reports project statistics.

Political Leadership Communication and Persuasion

Beyond appeal-specific studies, a substantial body of literature applies the rhetorical triangle holistically to political leadership communication. Studies of Indonesian presidential candidates and debates (Isa, 2024; Manik et al., 2024; Hapsari et al., 2025; Novianti et al., 2022; Hendri & Faizah, 2025) consistently find that leaders deploy the three appeals adaptively according to audience and context, with debate settings favouring logos-heavy argumentation and ceremonial or diplomatic settings favouring pathos and ethos. Zair (2024) and Suhendar et al. (2024) extend this line of inquiry to the relationship between rhetoric and effective leadership more broadly, arguing that leaders who successfully balance the three appeals are perceived as both competent and relatable. Systematic reviews of ethos, pathos, and logos in public communication (Aisyah, 2022; Pramudita et al., 2025) confirm that the triad remains the dominant analytical framework across communication studies published in the past five years, spanning contexts as varied as cryptocurrency scam persuasion (Hamid et al., 2023), corporate strategic communication (Alkaraan et al., 2023), tourism guidebooks (Skendo, 2024), and philanthropic content creation (Hanum et al., 2024), underscoring the framework's versatility across both benign and manipulative persuasive contexts.

Theoretical and Empirical Gaps

Taken together, this body of literature confirms the continued analytical relevance of Aristotle's rhetorical triangle across genres, languages, and political systems. However, three gaps remain. First, the overwhelming majority of Malaysian and Indonesian rhetorical studies analyse formal, single-event speeches, debates, or published texts (Alkhirbash, 2010; Abdul Rahman et al., 2022; Isa, 2024; Hapsari et al., 2025), rather than the cumulative, serialised discourse of routine social media posting, which follows different generic conventions of brevity, frequency, and multimodality. Second, existing Malaysian rhetorical scholarship centres almost exclusively on federal, Peninsular-based political figures, leaving Sarawak-based and Bornean political



leadership entirely absent from the empirical record despite Sarawak's distinctive political and cultural position within the Malaysian federation. Third, few studies examine how ethos, pathos, and logos interact within a single hybrid text that combines bureaucratic reporting with personal and cultural narrative, a combination distinctive to the ministerial Facebook genre. This study addresses these gaps by applying Aristotelian rhetorical analysis to a purposively assembled corpus of Facebook posts published by Alexander Nanta Linggi, Malaysia's Minister of Works and a Sarawak-based Dayak Iban political leader, between May and July 2026.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design using rhetorical analysis as its principal analytical method. Rhetorical analysis is well suited to research questions concerned with how persuasive appeals are constructed within a text, as it privileges close, interpretive reading over quantification while remaining systematic and replicable through an explicit coding framework (Sichach, 2024; Boginskaya, 2023). The qualitative approach was selected over a purely quantitative content analysis because the research questions concern not only the frequency of rhetorical appeals but also the interpretive and contextual work each appeal performs within a specific post, consistent with prior qualitative applications of Aristotle's framework to political and public discourse (Abdul Rahman et al., 2022; Nik Fauzi & Ting, 2025).

Research Data

The research data comprise 143 Facebook posts published on the official public Facebook page of Alexander Nanta Linggi, Malaysia's Minister of Works and Member of Parliament for Kapit, Sarawak. The corpus was compiled by the researcher from posts published across May, June, and July 2026 and supplied for analysis in a single compiled document. No posts were invented, paraphrased in advance, or drawn from any source other than the minister's own public Facebook page; all quotations analysed in the Results and Discussion section are reproduced, in translation where necessary, directly from this corpus. Because the material analysed consists of content that is already publicly accessible on an open social media page maintained by a public office holder in his official capacity, the study relies on document analysis of publicly available text rather than on any interaction with, or data collected from, private individuals.

Sampling and Unit of Analysis

Purposive sampling was used to select posts for detailed rhetorical analysis. The unit of analysis was the individual Facebook post, defined as a single, self-contained textual entry authored under the minister's name, inclusive of any embedded quotation, statistic, or poetic form (such as a pantun) contained within it. From the full corpus, posts were retained for detailed analysis if they contained substantive discursive content beyond a bare caption or hyperlink, following the convention in prior rhetorical studies of excluding purely promotional or non-textual posts from close reading (Ting et al., 2020). The corpus spanned several thematic clusters: party and convention discourse, road safety and infrastructure reporting, cultural and commemorative greetings, ministerial accountability statements, and personal encounters in the course of official duties. Representative posts from each cluster were selected for in-depth quotation and interpretation in the Results and Discussion section.

Coding Procedures

Data analysis followed a deductive coding procedure grounded in Aristotle's rhetorical triangle. A coding framework was first developed from the theoretical literature, operationalising ethos as textual markers of credibility, leadership, integrity, authority, expertise, and accountability; pathos as textual markers of empathy, gratitude, unity, hope, communal identity, and emotional address; and logos as textual markers of statistics, budget figures, factual policy detail, and causal or data-referenced justification (Sichach, 2024; Ting et al., 2020; Nik Fauzi & Ting, 2025). Each post selected for rhetorical analysis was read in full and segmented into rhetorically meaningful units, typically corresponding to a sentence or short cluster of sentences, and each unit was assigned to one or more of the three appeal categories, consistent with the Aristotelian recognition that a



single textual moment can simultaneously perform more than one persuasive function (Sichach, 2024). Coding was conducted manually against the framework summarised in Tables 1 to 3, with each code cross-checked against the surrounding co-text to confirm that the assigned appeal reflected the unit's function within the post as a whole rather than an isolated lexical cue.

Analytical Procedures

Following coding, an interpretive analytical procedure was applied in which each coded excerpt was situated within its institutional and cultural context, translated into English where the original was in Bahasa Malaysia, and interpreted with reference to Aristotle's theoretical account of the corresponding appeal. Where relevant, the interpretation was related to comparable findings in the empirical literature reviewed above, allowing the analysis to move beyond description toward a critical synthesis of how the present case corroborates, extends, or departs from prior findings on political rhetoric in Malaysia and the wider region (Abdul Rahman et al., 2022; Nik Fauzi & Ting, 2025; Ting et al., 2022). A summary table (Table 4) was then constructed to map the patterns of rhetorical appeals across the analysed post clusters, providing a structured overview that complements the close textual interpretation without reducing the analysis to bare frequency counts.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was addressed through several procedures consistent with qualitative research standards. Credibility was supported by grounding every coded excerpt in verbatim source material and by cross-checking coding decisions against the full context of each post rather than isolated phrases. Dependability was supported by applying a single, consistently defined coding framework across the analysed posts and by documenting the coding categories transparently in Tables 1 to 3, allowing another researcher to apply the same framework to the same corpus. Confirmability was supported by anchoring every interpretive claim in the Results and Discussion section to a specific, quoted excerpt, and by explicitly relating each interpretation to established theoretical and empirical literature rather than to unsupported researcher inference. Transferability is necessarily limited, as is characteristic of single-case qualitative rhetorical analysis, but the study offers sufficient contextual and procedural detail to allow readers to judge the applicability of its findings to comparable cases of ministerial or state-level political communication.

Ethical Considerations

Because the research data consist entirely of content that Alexander Nanta Linggi published on his own public, openly accessible Facebook page in his capacity as a Malaysian cabinet minister and elected Member of Parliament, and because the analysis involves no interviews, surveys, or interaction with the subject or any private individual, the study falls within the category of public-document analysis that is generally exempt from formal human-participants ethical review under standard institutional research ethics frameworks. No private, non-public, or personally identifying information beyond what the minister voluntarily published in his official public communication was accessed or analysed. The study nonetheless observes standard scholarly ethics of accurate quotation, careful translation, and non-fabrication of data, consistent with the principle that public figures' publicly disseminated political communication constitutes legitimate data for rhetorical and discourse-analytic research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following sections present the findings organised around the three Aristotelian appeals, followed by an integrative discussion of how ethos, pathos, and logos interact within Alexander Nanta Linggi's Facebook discourse. Original Malay-language excerpts are presented in italics followed by an English translation in square brackets; posts originally written in English are quoted directly. Tables 1 to 3 summarise the coding framework applied to each appeal, and Table 4 synthesises the patterns of rhetorical appeals across the analysed post clusters.



Ethos: Constructing Credibility and Accountable Leadership

Ethos, the constructed credibility of the speaker, emerges as a prominent appeal across the analysed posts, typically performed through the narration of physical presence at project sites, the citation of institutional office, and explicit statements of accountability. This pattern corroborates prior findings that ethos in political discourse is rarely asserted directly through self-praise but is instead performed through demonstrable action and institutional positioning (Hamzah et al., 2023; Küpers & Mnisri, 2024).

A recurring ethos strategy is the minister's insistence on first-hand verification rather than reliance on written reports. In reporting an inspection of the Pan Borneo Highway Sabah project, he writes: "Kemajuan sesebuah projek tidak boleh hanya dinilai di atas kertas laporan. Ia perlu dilihat sendiri di lapangan" [The progress of a project cannot be judged from a report alone. It must be seen for oneself on the ground]. This statement performs ethos through what Aristotle would recognise as *phronesis*, or practical wisdom: the speaker positions himself as a leader whose authority derives from direct engagement rather than delegated administration. The same post continues with precise project statistics (a project valued at RM167.48 million, 61.76 per cent physical progress, and a 32-day delay), illustrating how ethos and logos are co-constructed within a single post, a pattern consistent with Aristotle's original conception of the rhetorical triangle as interdependent rather than modular (Sichach, 2024).

A second ethos strategy is the assertion of firm, uncompromising accountability. Following an unannounced inspection of a delayed bridge replacement project, the minister states: "Saya tidak akan berkompromi dengan sebarang kelewatan yang berpunca daripada kelemahan pelaksanaan" [I will not compromise on any delay caused by implementation weaknesses]. This declarative, first-person stance constructs ethos through demonstrated resolve and institutional oversight, echoing Krishnan et al.'s (2021) finding that assertive, authoritative language is a primary vehicle for credibility-signalling in evaluative communication contexts. Similarly, in a post responding to a post-Cabinet meeting, the minister asserts, "Suara rakyat mesti sentiasa diberi perhatian" [The voice of the people must always be given attention], before detailing his directive for a comprehensive report into recurring project delays, an example of ethos constructed through responsiveness to public feedback rather than through hierarchical distance.

Ethos is also constructed through formal institutional signalling, most explicitly in a media statement issued to clarify confusion between the Sarawak-Sabah Link Road and three coastal bridge projects. The statement methodically distinguishes the two categories of infrastructure, cites the official administrative record of the Federal Government, and closes with the formal signature "DATO SRI ALEXANDER NANTA LINGGI, MENTERI KERJA RAYA" [Minister of Works]. The deployment of full formal titulature at the close of a corrective statement exemplifies what Boginskaya (2023) terms institutional ethos, whereby the credibility of an utterance is anchored not in the speaker's personal character alone but in the formal authority of the office held. This finding aligns with Abdul Rahman et al.'s (2022) observation that ethos in Malaysian ministerial rhetoric is frequently the least dominant appeal relative to pathos and logos, appearing instead as a structural anchor, such as a title or signature, rather than as an extensively elaborated argument.

Collectively, these examples show that ethos in this corpus performs a dual function of personal and institutional legitimation: personal, through the narrated labour of inspection and direct engagement with citizens' concerns; and institutional, through titles, formal signatures, and references to official administrative processes. This dual construction extends Hamzah et al.'s (2023) finding that leadership ethos is built through demonstrated wisdom rather than assertion, showing that in the digital political sphere, wisdom is demonstrated specifically through visible, reportable physical presence at the sites of governance.

Table 1. Coding Framework for Ethos

Category	Operational Indicator	Illustrative Textual Marker
Credibility through presence	Narrated first-hand site inspection	"Ia perlu dilihat sendiri di lapangan" [It must be seen for oneself on the ground]



Institutional authority	Reference to official title/role	"Menteri Kerja Raya" [Minister of Works]; "Pengerusi Jawatankuasa Penganjuran" [Chairman of the Organising Committee]
Accountability	Directive for corrective action	"Saya telah mengarahkan supaya satu laporan menyeluruh disediakan" [I have directed that a comprehensive report be prepared]
Integrity/resolve	Firm, uncompromising stance	"Saya tidak akan berkompromi dengan sebarang kelewatan" [I will not compromise on any delay]
Transparency	Formal signature/official record citation	"DATO SRI ALEXANDER NANTA LINGGI, MENTERI KERJA RAYA"

Pathos: Emotional Engagement and Communal Identity

Pathos in the corpus is mobilised primarily through three devices: traditional poetic form, appeals to regional and cultural identity, and narrated moments of personal compassion. Consistent with Nik Fauzi and Ting's (2025) finding that pathos dominates humanitarian and identity-related political discourse, the most emotionally resonant posts in this corpus cluster around cultural commemoration and moments of human vulnerability rather than routine project reporting.

The minister repeatedly opens or closes posts with a *pantun*, a traditional Malay quatrain characterised by rhyme and indirect metaphorical framing, before transitioning into the substantive policy content. In a post addressing party unity at a PBB convention, he opens: "Kalau ada sumur di ladang, Bolehlah kita menumpang mandi; Kalau kita berkumpul seorang-seorang, Mana mungkin kemenangan dapat kita raih nanti" [If there is a well in the field, we may bathe there together; if we gather one by one, how can we ever achieve victory], before stating directly: "Bapa, Wanita, Pemuda dan Belia - empat sayap, tetapi hanya satu pasukan dan satu matlamat" [Fathers, Women, Youth and Belia - four wings, but only one team and one goal]. The *pantun* performs pathos through a culturally embedded appeal to collective memory and communal wisdom before the argument for party unity is made explicitly, illustrating how indigenous literary form is repurposed as a persuasive device in digital political communication, a strategy not previously documented in Malaysian rhetorical scholarship focused on prime ministerial or Peninsular political discourse.

A second pathos device is the invocation of Sarawakian regional identity, most explicitly in a Hari Sarawak (Sarawak Day) post: "Sebagai anak jati Sarawak, Hari Sarawak sentiasa membawa makna yang cukup istimewa buat saya" [As a true son of Sarawak, Sarawak Day always carries a very special meaning for me], closing with the affective slogans "Sarawakku Sayang" [My Beloved Sarawak] and "Sarawak Maju Makmur" [Sarawak, Advanced and Prosperous]. This appeal to sub-national identity extends existing findings on pathos as a vehicle for national solidarity (Wornyo, 2023; Boginskaya, 2023) into the comparatively underexamined register of sub-national, regional political identity, reflecting Sarawak's distinctive position within the Malaysian federation and the political salience of Sarawakian identity for a leader who must simultaneously represent state and federal constituencies.

The most affectively charged post in the corpus narrates an unplanned encounter with a road accident: "Selepas selesai tinjauan di Selangau hari ini, terserempak dengan satu kemalangan jalan raya di laluan berdekatan. Saya bersama pasukan segera berhenti untuk melihat keadaan mangsa dan memastikan bantuan yang diperlukan dapat diberikan dengan segera" [After completing an inspection in Selangau today, we came across a road accident along a nearby route. My team and I immediately stopped to check on the victims and ensure that the assistance needed could be provided promptly]. Unlike the other posts, which report planned official activity, this post narrates an unscripted moment of compassion, closing with a general safety reminder to other road users. This excerpt exemplifies what Aristotle terms pathos through witnessed suffering, and it corroborates Wornyo's (2023) observation that pathos is most persuasively deployed not through abstract appeal but through the narration of concrete, particular human experience. Notably, this pathos-laden narrative also performs ethos, as



the minister's spontaneous response to the accident implicitly demonstrates personal character and civic responsibility beyond the requirements of his formal office.

Pathos also appears in hybrid form, fused with logos, in posts announcing health infrastructure. Reporting on the Sarawak Cancer Centre, the minister writes: "Bagi rakyat Sarawak, kewujudan Pusat Kanser Sarawak ini membawa makna yang besar - khususnya kepada pesakit dan keluarga yang memerlukan akses kepada rawatan kanser yang lebih dekat, bersepadu dan berkualiti" [For the people of Sarawak, the existence of this Cancer Centre carries great meaning - especially for patients and families who need access to closer, integrated, and quality cancer treatment], before detailing the facility's 310-bed capacity and range of clinical services. This pairing of emotional appeal (hope for patients and families) with factual specification (bed capacity, clinical scope) illustrates the integrated rhetorical triangle in practice, consistent with Sichach's (2024) theoretical claim that persuasive writing is most effective when the three appeals operate jointly rather than in isolation.

Table 2. Coding Framework for Pathos

Category	Operational Indicator	Illustrative Textual Marker
Cultural resonance	Use of pantun (traditional quatrain)	"Kalau ada sumur di ladang..." [If there is a well in the field...]
Regional/communal identity	Appeal to Sarawakian identity	"Sebagai anak jati Sarawak...Sarawakku Sayang" [As a true son of Sarawak...My Beloved Sarawak]
Empathy/compassion	Narration of witnessed hardship	"Saya bersama pasukan segera berhenti untuk melihat keadaan mangsa" [My team and I immediately stopped to check on the victims]
Hope/aspiration	Framing of future benefit for citizens	"membawa harapan baharu kepada rakyat" [bringing new hope to the people]
Unity/solidarity	Collective pronouns and shared goals	"empat sayap, tetapi hanya satu pasukan dan satu matlamat" [four wings, but only one team and one goal]

Logos: Data, Evidence, and Technocratic Justification

Logos in the analysed posts is constructed primarily through quantified evidence, including budget allocations, project completion percentages, engineering specifications, and references to formal data systems. This finding is consistent with Ting et al.'s (2020) and Mohamad's (2022) observation that logos tends to dominate genres oriented toward technical accountability, a pattern that extends naturally to the communication style of a Minister of Works, whose portfolio is inherently infrastructural and quantifiable.

The clearest example of data-referenced logos appears in a post on road safety blackspot upgrades: "Sejak tahun 2021 hingga 2025, 342 lokasi kerap berlaku kemalangan (Blackspot) telah berjaya dinaik taraf dengan peruntukan RM118.5 juta, manakala 154 lokasi Lintasan Pejalan Kaki Searas Berlampu Isyarat (LPKSI) telah dibina sejak 2018 melibatkan peruntukan RM39.79 juta" [Since 2021 to 2025, 342 accident blackspot locations have been successfully upgraded with an allocation of RM118.5 million, while 154 signalised pedestrian crossing locations have been built since 2018 involving an allocation of RM39.79 million]. The post further justifies the selection of intervention sites through reference to the Road Accident Management System (RAMS), stating that "setiap lokasi dipilih berdasarkan analisis data" [every location is selected based on data analysis]. This explicit citation of a named data infrastructure exemplifies what Aristotle terms the inartistic proof, evidence external to the speaker's own construction, lent additional legitimacy precisely because it originates outside the speaker's subjective claim. This mirrors Alkaraan et al.'s (2023) finding that strategic organisational communication gains persuasive force when logos is anchored in externally verifiable systems rather than assertion alone.



A second cluster of logos appears in technical infrastructure reporting, such as the description of the upgraded Malaysian Public Works Materials Laboratory (MKRM) in Sabah: "Diiktiraf di bawah piawaian antarabangsa MS ISO/IEC 17025:2017 dan ILAC-MRA" [Recognised under the international standards MS ISO/IEC 17025:2017 and ILAC-MRA], with the post further reporting that more than 1,400 construction material tests had been conducted at the facility. The citation of specific international accreditation standards functions as a logos device that substitutes technical precision for narrative elaboration, a strategy that lends the post an air of technocratic authority congruent with Boginskaya's (2023) observation that logos in government communication frequently operates through the citation of standards and benchmarks rather than extended causal argumentation.

Logos is also deployed to communicate project accountability transparently, including instances where progress falls short of target. Reporting on the Kubang Kerian road upgrading project, the minister states that "Daripada 865 projek yang sedang dilaksanakan, 50 projek atau 5.78% kini berstatus projek sakit" [Of 865 projects currently being implemented, 50 projects, or 5.78 per cent, are currently classified as 'sick' projects], before specifying that seven of Kelantan's 104 projects, or 6.7 per cent, fall into this category. The willingness to publish an unfavourable statistic alongside favourable ones is notable: it constructs a form of logos-based ethos, whereby the transparent disclosure of underperformance is itself deployed as evidence of institutional credibility and accountability, a rhetorical move that aligns with Voci's (2022) concept of ethos-in-action, in which claims of competence are substantiated through visible, auditable reporting rather than uniformly positive messaging.

Finally, logos frequently incorporates precise technical measurement, as in the report on the Donggongan to Simpang Papar road upgrade: "Dengan panjang keseluruhan 27.5 kilometer, projek ini telah meningkatkan tahap keselesaan, keselamatan dan kelancaran perjalanan" [With a total length of 27.5 kilometres, this project has improved the level of comfort, safety, and smoothness of travel], and in the report on the Ipoh-Gopeng highway upgrade, which cites specific Level of Service (LOS) traffic classifications to justify departmental decisions on congestion management. This granular, engineering-inflected register of logos is distinctive to the portfolio of a Minister of Works and represents a genre-specific elaboration of logos not extensively documented in prior Malaysian rhetorical scholarship, which has focused predominantly on speeches concerning humanitarian, electoral, or constitutional themes (Nik Fauzi & Ting, 2025; Abdul Rahman et al., 2022) rather than infrastructural governance.

Table 3. Coding Framework for Logos

Category	Operational Indicator	Illustrative Textual Marker
Budgetary evidence	Specific monetary allocation	"peruntukan RM118.5 juta" [an allocation of RM118.5 million]
Statistical progress	Percentage/quantified completion	"kemajuan fizikal projek telah mencapai 61.76%" [physical progress of the project has reached 61.76%]
Technical standards	Citation of certification/system	"MS ISO/IEC 17025:2017 dan ILAC-MRA"; "Road Accident Management System (RAMS)"
Engineering specification	Measurable physical detail	"panjang keseluruhan 27.5 kilometer" [total length of 27.5 kilometres]
Transparent disclosure	Disclosure of shortfall/underperformance	"50 projek atau 5.78% kini berstatus projek sakit" [50 projects, or 5.78%, are classified as 'sick' projects]

Integrating Ethos, Pathos, and Logos: The Rhetorical Triangle in Practice

Read across the corpus, the three appeals rarely operate in isolation. Rather than three separable strategies, they function as Aristotle originally conceived them: a triangle in which each vertex reinforces the others. Site-inspection posts typically open with an ethos-establishing statement of personal presence, proceed through logos-based project statistics, and frequently close with a pathos-oriented appeal to the wellbeing of 'rakyat' (the people). This layered structure is consistent with Sichach's (2024) theoretical claim that persuasive writing is



strongest when logical, emotional, and credibility appeals are woven together, and it extends this claim empirically to the specific genre of ministerial social media communication.

The interaction of appeals also reveals a distinctive feature of this case relative to prior Malaysian rhetorical scholarship: whereas earlier studies of prime ministerial rhetoric report pathos as clearly dominant (Nik Fauzi & Ting, 2025; Abdul Rahman et al., 2022), the present corpus suggests a more balanced qualitative presence of the three appeals across the analysed post clusters, reflecting the dual demands of the minister's role as both a technocratic portfolio holder accountable for infrastructure delivery and a Sarawak-based community leader embedded in cultural and party networks. Table 4 summarises these rhetorical patterns across the analysed post clusters, showing that infrastructure-reporting posts privilege logos and ethos jointly, cultural and commemorative posts privilege pathos, and accountability or clarification statements privilege ethos most strongly.

These findings carry implications for digital political communication more broadly. First, they suggest that the hybrid genre of the ministerial Facebook post functions as a distinctive rhetorical form that blends bureaucratic reporting with relational appeal, a blend that classical rhetorical theory anticipates but which prior empirical scholarship has examined mainly in the context of single-event speeches rather than serialised, routine digital text (Al-pares, 2025; Indiyati et al., 2025). Second, the prominence of first-hand, site-level ethos, in which the leader narrates physical presence rather than merely asserting authority, suggests that digital political communication in an infrastructure-focused portfolio favours what might be termed performative accountability: credibility built through the visible labour of inspection and monitoring rather than through appeals to formal qualification alone. Third, the culturally specific deployment of pantun and regional identity markers demonstrates that Aristotle's transhistorical rhetorical categories remain flexible enough to accommodate indigenous and localised persuasive forms, extending the geographic and cultural range of existing rhetorical scholarship, which has concentrated heavily on Peninsular Malaysian and Indonesian political discourse (Isa, 2024; Manik et al., 2024; Zahara et al., 2025).

Taken together, the analysis suggests that political leadership and credibility are rhetorically constructed cumulatively across a body of routine, non-campaign posts rather than through any single dramatic rhetorical performance. This has a practical implication for political communication practice: sustained and frequent posting that integrates multiple rhetorical appeals may contribute to the consistent communication of political ethos over time. While existing scholarship has largely examined rhetorical appeals in single speeches or debates (Boginskaya, 2023; Manik et al., 2024), whether such cumulative rhetorical patterns shape audience perceptions of political credibility warrants further investigation through reception-based research.

Table 4. Summary of Rhetorical Appeals across Analysed Facebook Post Clusters

Post Cluster	Dominant Appeal(s)	Representative Theme
Party/convention discourse	Pathos, Ethos	Unity, discipline, leadership role at PBB convention
Site inspection reports	Ethos, Logos	First-hand verification paired with project statistics
Road safety/blackspot programmes	Logos, Pathos	Data-justified interventions framed around citizen safety
Cultural/commemorative greetings	Pathos	Sarawak Day, tribute to community elder
Accountability/clarification statements	Ethos, Logos	Formal rebuttal citing official administrative record
Personal encounters during official duty	Pathos, Ethos	Roadside accident response
Health/social infrastructure announcements	Pathos, Logos	Sarawak Cancer Centre capacity and community benefit



CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine how Alexander Nanta Linggi, Malaysia's Minister of Works, employs Aristotle's rhetorical appeals of ethos, pathos, and logos in his Facebook posts to construct political leadership, credibility, emotional engagement, and policy communication. The analysis found that ethos is constructed primarily through narrated site presence, institutional titling, and explicit accountability statements; pathos is mobilised through culturally specific poetic form, regional identity, and narrated moments of personal compassion; and logos is advanced through budgetary figures, project statistics, and citation of formal data and standards systems. Rather than operating as three discrete strategies, the three appeals were found to interact within individual posts, consistent with Aristotle's original conception of an integrated rhetorical triangle.

Theoretically, the study contributes to Aristotelian rhetorical scholarship by extending the analytical framework beyond formal speeches and campaign oratory into the routinised, hybrid genre of ministerial social media communication, and by centring a Sarawak-based, Dayak Iban political leader whose communicative practice has not previously been examined within Malaysian rhetorical scholarship. In doing so, it demonstrates that classical rhetorical categories remain analytically productive when applied to indigenous and regionally specific persuasive forms, such as the pantun, and to genre-specific technocratic registers, such as infrastructure statistics, that differ markedly from the humanitarian and electoral speeches that have dominated prior Malaysian rhetorical research (Nik Fauzi & Ting, 2025; Abdul Rahman et al., 2022).

Practically, the findings suggest that government communication practitioners seeking to communicate political leadership and credibility effectively on social media may benefit from deliberately balancing the three appeals within routine posts rather than relying predominantly on any single appeal: pairing evidentiary claims with visible, first-hand accountability, and situating both within culturally resonant framing that connects policy communication to shared community identity and values.

This study is subject to several limitations. First, as a single-case qualitative rhetorical analysis, its findings are not statistically generalisable to other political leaders, portfolios, or platforms, although the detailed procedural transparency offered here supports transferability to comparable cases. Second, the corpus is bounded to a three-month period (May to July 2026), which, while sufficient to identify recurring rhetorical patterns, cannot capture longer-term variation across electoral cycles or differing political contexts. Third, translation from Bahasa Malaysia to English, while conducted carefully, inevitably involves some loss of cultural and poetic nuance, particularly in the case of the pantun, whose rhythmic and connotative qualities are not fully recoverable in translation. Future research could extend this study in several directions: a comparative rhetorical analysis across multiple Sarawak-based or East Malaysian political leaders to establish whether the patterns identified here are idiosyncratic or reflect a broader regional communicative style; a longitudinal analysis spanning an electoral cycle to examine how the balance of ethos, pathos, and logos shifts between campaign and non-campaign periods; and a reception study examining how citizens' comments and engagement metrics respond to posts dominated by different rhetorical appeals, which would extend the present text-centred analysis into the domain of audience response that Aristotle's original theory presupposes but that text-only rhetorical analysis cannot directly measure.

Ethical Approval

This study analysed only content that Alexander Nanta Linggi published on his own public, openly accessible Facebook page in his official capacity as a Malaysian cabinet minister and elected Member of Parliament. As the research involved no interviews, surveys, or interaction with the subject or with any private individual and relied exclusively on the analysis of publicly available political communication, formal ethical approval from an institutional review board was not sought, consistent with standard practice for public-document and discourse-analytic research involving public figures acting in their official capacity.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest. This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors, and the authors have no personal, professional, or financial



relationship with Alexander Nanta Linggi or with any political party referenced in this study.

Data Availability Statement

The Facebook posts analysed in this study are publicly available on Alexander Nanta Linggi's official Facebook page. The compiled corpus and coding records used for this analysis are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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