Persuasive Ethical Strategies in Gubernatorial Campaign Speeches : A Comparative Study

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Abstract. *This study examines the rhetorical strategies employed by gubernatorial candidates Edy Rahmayadi and Bobby Nasution during the 2024 North Sumatra election, focusing on their use of ethos, pathos, and logos within Aristotle's rhetorical framework. The research also compares their rhetorical approaches and evaluates their alignment with ethical communication principles, including transparency, truthfulness, and accountability. Using a qualitative approach, this study analyzes five campaign speeches from each candidate to identify persuasive strategies, compare their communication styles, and assess their ethical implications. Findings reveal that while both candidates effectively employ rhetorical strategies, their approaches differ significantly. Edy Rahmayadi emphasizes his track record and regional pride, often adopting a defensive tone to address criticisms. Bobby Nasution presents a more inclusive, proactive, and solution-oriented rhetorical style, appealing to optimism and collaboration. Furthermore, Bobby's speeches align more closely with ethical communication principles through transparent, truthful, and actionable commitments, whereas Edy demonstrates partial alignment, occasionally deflecting responsibility or lacking specificity in his arguments. This research contributes to understanding political rhetoric and its ethical dimensions, offering insights into the interplay between persuasion and ethical leadership in electoral campaigns.*

Keywords: Persuasive, Ethical Strategies, Gubernatorial Campaign, Comparative Study

1. INTRODUCTION

Political campaigns are crucial in shaping public opinion and influencing voter behavior, as candidates strive to communicate their vision, policies, and values persuasively. At the core of these campaigns lies rhetoric, which, according to Aristotle, involves the strategic use of ethos (credibility), pathos (emotional appeal), and logos (logical reasoning) to craft impactful messages. These elements enable candidates to build trust, connect emotionally, and present logical arguments, all essential for swaying public opinion and securing electoral support.

Ethos establishes credibility by reflecting a leader's trustworthiness and character, directly shaping voters' perceptions of their reliability. Pathos appeals to emotions, fostering connections through shared values, fears, or aspirations. Meanwhile, logos underpins coherent and rational arguments, reinforcing the validity of a candidate's vision. Together, these rhetorical elements allow candidates to create compelling narratives that resonate with voters while shaping their public persona.

The 2024 gubernatorial election in North Sumatra provides a compelling case for analyzing rhetorical strategies in political communication. Edy Rahmayadi and Bobby Nasution, two leading candidates, employ contrasting rhetorical styles. Edy emphasizes

emotional and cultural appeals, focusing on regional identity and pride, as seen in his defense of Sumatra Utara's identity: "Saya tak rela nama Medan dipakai untuk di Maluku Utara" ("I cannot allow the name 'Medan' to be used in North Maluku"). However, his rhetoric sometimes lacks detailed policy solutions. Conversely, Bobby combines emotional resonance with logical arguments, presenting measurable achievements such as Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in Medan and critiquing fiscal mismanagement. His pragmatic approach enhances his credibility while appealing to voters' concerns about accountability and resource allocation.

These rhetorical strategies highlight not only the candidates' persuasive techniques but also the ethical dimensions of their communication. Ethical principles—transparency, truthfulness, and accountability—serve as benchmarks for evaluating the integrity of their rhetoric. Transparency involves openly sharing information without manipulation, truthfulness ensures factual accuracy, and accountability reflects a willingness to take responsibility for one's statements and actions.

This study explores how the candidates' rhetorical strategies align with these ethical principles through the lens of Aristotle's rhetorical framework and ethical communication theories. The research addresses three key questions: the strategies used to support or undermine ethical communication, the similarities and differences in their approaches, and how these align with ethical principles. By analyzing their speeches, this study contributes to understanding the interplay between persuasion and ethics in political communication.

The scope of the study focuses on publicly available campaign speeches delivered by Edy Rahmayadi and Bobby Nasution during the 2024 North Sumatra gubernatorial election. Aristotle's rhetorical framework, complemented by ethical communication principles, provides a comprehensive lens for this analysis. Cultural and contextual factors influencing the candidates' rhetorical choices are also considered.

This research offers both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, it contributes to the discourse on political rhetoric by examining how ethos, pathos, and logos interact with ethical principles. Practically, it provides valuable insights for political candidates, campaign strategists, and voters, emphasizing the importance of ethically sound and effective communication in shaping democratic processes. Through this analysis, the study aims to shed light on the ethical implications of rhetorical strategies, highlighting their role in shaping voter perceptions and influencing electoral outcomes.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative comparative research design to analyze the rhetorical strategies and ethical communication approaches used by gubernatorial candidates Edy Rahmayadi and Bobby Nasution during the 2024 North Sumatra election campaign. Integrating Aristotle's rhetorical framework with principles of ethical communication, the research evaluates the candidates' use of ethos, pathos, and logos and their alignment with transparency, truthfulness, and accountability. A comparative analysis approach further identifies patterns, strengths, and weaknesses in their rhetorical strategies within the socio-political context.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The analysis is grounded in two complementary frameworks:

1. **Aristotle's Rhetorical Framework**

This framework examines three modes of persuasion:

- **Ethos (Credibility):** How candidates establish trust and moral character (Bartlett, 2019).

- **Pathos (Emotional Appeal):** How candidates evoke emotions to resonate with the audience (Furley & Nehamas, 1994).

- **Logos (Logical Reasoning):** How candidates present evidence-based arguments to support their policies.

2. **Principles of Ethical Communication**

Based on Johannesen, Valde, and Whedbee (2008), the ethical evaluation focuses on:

a) **Transparency:** Open and honest sharing of relevant information.

b) **Truthfulness:** Accuracy and reliability of the content presented.

c) **Accountability:** Responsibility for statements and their implications.

Research Design

This qualitative comparative approach facilitates an in-depth exploration of the candidates' rhetoric and ethical alignment. Aristotle's framework is applied to assess persuasive strategies, while ethical principles guide the evaluation of communication integrity. Comparative analysis contextualizes these findings, highlighting the adaptability of rhetorical strategies.

Data Collection

The dataset comprises ten campaign speeches, five from each candidate, sourced from publicly available platforms such as media coverage and official transcripts. Speeches addressing governance, public welfare, and cultural identity were prioritized for their relevance to the research focus.

Data Analysis

The analysis proceeded in three stages:

1. **Transcription and Coding:**

   Speeches were transcribed and coded using Aristotle's rhetorical elements and ethical communication principles to identify patterns and thematic structures.

2. **Rhetorical and Ethical Analysis:**

   - **Rhetorical Analysis:** Examined the use of ethos, pathos, and logos to understand how candidates engaged and persuaded their audience. For example, Edy Rahmayadi emphasized pathos through cultural appeals, while Bobby Nasution highlighted logos with actionable policies.

   - **Ethical Analysis:** Evaluated adherence to transparency, truthfulness, and accountability in their rhetorical strategies.

3. **Comparative Analysis:**

   The rhetorical and ethical approaches of both candidates were systematically compared to identify similarities, differences, and effectiveness, contextualizing findings within the socio-political landscape.

   This methodology provides a comprehensive lens to analyze the interplay between rhetoric and ethics in political communication. By synthesizing Aristotle's framework, ethical principles, and comparative analysis, this study systematically evaluates how rhetoric shapes voter perceptions and reflects ethical leadership.

4. RESULTS

The analysis of Edy Rahmayadi's and Bobby Nasution's campaign speeches reveals distinct rhetorical strategies and varying adherence to ethical communication principles. Using Aristotle's rhetorical framework—ethos, pathos, and logos—combined with principles of transparency, truthfulness, and accountability, this study evaluates how each candidate employs persuasive elements and aligns with ethical standards.

Edy Rahmayadi's Rhetorical Strategies

Edy Rahmayadi relies heavily on ethos and pathos, frequently drawing from his administrative achievements and cultural appeals to establish credibility and emotional resonance. For instance, his speeches highlight his track record as governor, particularly emphasizing projects like the construction of 24 schools despite challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Statements such as, *"Saya bukan wacana, tapi kebutuhan kita,"* aim to reinforce his commitment to tangible results. However, his use of rhetorical questions, such as, *"Kenapa tak dilaporkan?"* often deflects responsibility rather than directly addressing criticisms, which can undermine his credibility.

Pathos plays a central role in Edy's rhetoric, as he appeals to voters' pride in regional identity. His statement rejecting the use of "Blok Medan" for a Maluku mining area, *"Saya tak rela nama Medan dipakai untuk di Maluku Utara,"* evokes emotional responses tied to cultural pride and unity. While these appeals resonate with voters, they often lack actionable policies or detailed solutions, weakening the logical foundation of his arguments.

From a logos perspective, Edy's speeches present limited structured arguments and data. While he references a 0.68% increase in educational funding, his arguments lack depth and actionable follow-through, focusing more on justifying past actions rather than proposing forward-looking policies.

Edy's alignment with ethical communication principles is inconsistent. While he attempts to project transparency by sharing measurable achievements, his rhetorical deflections and symbolic appeals limit the overall openness of his communication. Similarly, his adherence to truthfulness is partial, as factual claims like school construction lack sufficient context for verification. Accountability, while present in acknowledging challenges, is undermined by his tendency to attribute delays or failures to external factors.

Table 1 : Edy Rahmayadi's Rhetorical Strategies

Speech	Ethos (Credibility)	Pathos (Emotional Appeal)	Logos (Logical Reasoning)	Ethical Principles Alignment
1	Highlights administrative achievements, such as building 24 schools, to project credibility as a responsible leader.	Appeals to shared hardships by referencing challenges posed by COVID-19.	Mentions a 0.68% budget increase for education but lacks detailed explanations or actionable plans.	**Transparency:** Provides quantifiable data but uses rhetorical questions that deflect responsibility. **Truthfulness:** Partially factual but lacks comprehensive context. **Accountability:** Limited acknowledgment of unmet targets.
2	Positions himself as a protector of Sumatra Utara's identity by rejecting the term "Blok Medan" for a Maluku mining area.	Evokes regional pride by defending Sumatra Utara's reputation and cultural identity.	References legal processes and media reports to substantiate claims but lacks a concrete action plan.	**Transparency:** Calls for clarification but provides limited evidence. **Truthfulness:** Relies on hearsay, introducing ambiguity.

				Accountability: Symbolic rather than practical accountability.
3	Emphasizes his alliance with PDI Perjuangan to bolster credibility as a democratic advocate.	Appeals to empathy for the struggling populace by stating, "rakyat kita lapar" ("our people are hungry").	Lacks specific policies or data, focusing instead on broad aspirational statements about democracy and welfare.	**Transparency:** Focuses on political alignment rather than actionable policies. **Truthfulness:** Vague references to societal issues diminish factual reliability. **Accountability:** Lacks clear commitments or measurable goals.
4	Projects fairness by advocating for free and democratic elections and asserting his legitimacy in the campaign process.	Evokes solidarity by emphasizing shared ownership of Sumatra Utara: "Sumatera Utara ini adalah milik kita" ("Sumatra Utara belongs to us").	Provides no structured arguments or specific data to substantiate the fairness of his campaign.	**Transparency:** Advocates for democratic values but provides no actionable details. **Truthfulness:** Statements are generalized and unverifiable. **Accountability:** Lacks specifics on how to uphold fairness.
5	Frames himself as an empathetic leader by engaging directly with citizens during campaign events.	Appeals to voter camaraderie by positioning the election as a democratic celebration rather than a source of division.	Lacks logical or evidence-based arguments, focusing instead on fostering emotional connections.	**Transparency:** Avoids direct policy discussions. **Truthfulness:** Statements remain generic. **Accountability:** Emphasizes symbolic gestures over actionable outcomes.

This table condenses Edy Rahmayadi's rhetorical strategies into key elements, providing a clear overview of how he employs ethos, pathos, and logos in his speeches and aligns (or fails to align) with ethical principles. Let me know if further details or refinements are needed!

Bobby Nasution's Rhetorical Strategies

Bobby Nasution adopts a more balanced approach, effectively integrating ethos, pathos, and logos to establish himself as a forward-thinking, inclusive leader. His ethos is grounded in his accomplishments as Mayor of Medan, with references to successful programs like Universal Health Coverage (UHC). Statements such as, *"KTP Medan sudah bisa berobat gratis di seluruh Indonesia,"* underscore his credibility and position him as a pragmatic leader capable of delivering measurable results.

Pathos in Bobby's speeches emphasizes unity and optimism. His appeal to community pride, particularly through collaborative initiatives like youth-led tourism campaigns, fosters a sense of shared purpose. For example, his proposal to involve youth in promoting Sumatra Utara's tourism, *"Kita reading keliling ke tempat-tempat wisata,"* inspires collective action and emotional engagement with his vision for regional progress.

Bobby's use of logos is particularly strong, as he frequently presents structured arguments and concrete plans. His proposals for expanding vocational training centers (BLKs) and prioritizing infrastructure development address regional disparities with actionable

solutions. By linking his past achievements to future policies, Bobby demonstrates logical consistency and reinforces his credibility as a problem-solver.

In terms of ethical communication, Bobby aligns closely with transparency, truthfulness, and accountability. His detailed plans and references to verifiable achievements ensure clarity and factual reliability. For instance, his acknowledgment of existing UHC policies as a foundation for broader healthcare reforms exemplifies transparency and truthfulness. Additionally, his commitment to expanding infrastructure and economic inclusivity reflects accountability, as he links promises to actionable and measurable outcomes.

Table 2 : Bobby Nasution's Rhetorical Strategies

Speech	Ethos (Credibility)	Pathos (Emotional Appeal)	Logos (Logical Reasoning)	Ethical Principles Alignment
1	Establishes credibility as a youth advocate by referring to young people as the "next generation" and promoting youth involvement.	Inspires collective pride and optimism by encouraging tourism-related activities and fostering unity against social issues like drug abuse.	Proposes actionable initiatives, such as youth-led tourism campaigns and anti-drug drives, to support regional development.	**Transparency:** Outlines specific plans, though without detailed implementation timelines. **Truthfulness:** Grounded in realistic community goals. **Accountability:** Encourages direct participation of community organizations.
2	Demonstrates leadership by committing to equitable infrastructure development, particularly in underserved areas.	Appeals to the aspirations of marginalized communities by addressing job creation and economic inclusivity.	Provides structured plans, such as expanding vocational training centers (BLKs) and prioritizing regional development projects.	**Transparency:** Clearly outlines plans for infrastructure and economic development. **Truthfulness:** Refers to existing programs and verifiable achievements. **Accountability:** Links promises to actionable and measurable outcomes.
3	Positions himself as a collaborative leader, emphasizing coordination with local and national governments.	Promotes inclusivity and collective responsibility by addressing shared challenges such as drug abuse and online gambling.	Discusses the integration of protective measures for gig workers and monitoring systems for illegal activities, presenting practical governance strategies.	**Transparency:** Acknowledges dependencies on national-level coordination. **Truthfulness:** Highlights actionable plans based on observable societal issues. **Accountability:** Emphasizes collaborative governance approaches.
4	Reinforces credibility by showcasing achievements as Medan's Mayor, such as implementing Universal Health Coverage (UHC).	Appeals to voters' concerns about welfare by emphasizing free healthcare benefits accessible nationwide with a Medan KTP.	Uses measurable and verifiable outcomes (e.g., UHC statistics) to demonstrate the feasibility of expanding these programs across the province.	**Transparency:** Transparently links past successes to future promises. **Truthfulness:** Verifiable claims about healthcare programs.

				Accountability: Demonstrates responsibility by extending proven initiatives to provincial levels.
5	Highlights a commitment to ethical politics by rejecting divisive rhetoric and emphasizing "politeness in politics."	Evokes unity and community spirit by framing politics as a tool for societal improvement rather than conflict.	Focuses on building trust and aligning campaign objectives with public expectations rather than presenting specific policies.	**Transparency:** Avoids detailed policy discussion but promotes a vision of inclusive governance. **Truthfulness:** Highlights general principles rather than measurable specifics. **Accountability:** Reinforces alignment with public concerns.

This table provides a concise yet detailed analysis of Bobby Nasution's rhetorical strategies, focusing on his use of ethos, pathos, and logos, and their alignment with ethical principles. Let me know if adjustments or further elaboration are needed!

Comparative Insights

The comparative analysis reveals key differences in the rhetorical styles and ethical communication of the two candidates. Edy leans on past achievements and cultural pride to build emotional connections, but his rhetoric often lacks logical structure and actionable plans that appeal to undecided voters. In contrast, Bobby adopts a forward-looking, solution-oriented approach, combining emotional resonance with detailed proposals to address regional issues. While both candidates effectively use emotional appeals (pathos), Edy focuses on defensive pride and shared struggles, whereas Bobby emphasizes unity, optimism, and progress. Regarding credibility (ethos), Bobby's reliance on measurable achievements and pragmatic governance strengthens his ethical alignment, compared to Edy's focus on symbolic gestures and rhetorical deflections. Bobby also demonstrates stronger adherence to ethical communication principles by emphasizing transparency, truthfulness, and accountability. In contrast, Edy's reliance on symbolic rhetoric and deflective strategies undermines the ethical integrity of his message.

Discussion

The study reveals significant differences in the rhetorical strategies and ethical communication approaches of Edy Rahmayadi and Bobby Nasution during the 2024 North Sumatra gubernatorial campaign. By applying Aristotle's rhetorical framework—ethos, pathos, and logos—and principles of ethical communication such as transparency, truthfulness, and accountability, the analysis demonstrates contrasting levels of effectiveness and ethical alignment between the two candidates.

Edy Rahmayadi leans heavily on ethos and pathos, emphasizing his administrative achievements and invoking regional pride to establish credibility and emotional connection with voters. For instance, his statement, "Saya tak rela nama Medan dipakai untuk di Maluku Utara," appeals to the emotional pride of his audience, fostering a sense of shared identity and loyalty. However, this rhetorical style is often weakened by the limited use of logos. By focusing on defending past actions rather than presenting future-oriented solutions, his rhetoric lacks the logical structure and actionable content necessary to persuade undecided voters or those seeking a clear vision for the future.

In contrast, Bobby Nasution adopts a more balanced approach by effectively integrating ethos, pathos, and logos in his rhetoric. His credibility is rooted in verifiable achievements, such as the implementation of Universal Health Coverage in Medan, which demonstrates his ability to deliver results. His emotional appeals emphasize unity and optimism, resonating with a broader audience by fostering hope and collective progress. Moreover, his use of logos is particularly strong, with detailed and actionable plans for infrastructure and economic development providing a clear roadmap for addressing pressing regional issues. This balanced strategy positions him as a forward-thinking leader capable of meeting diverse voter expectations.

The ethical communication practices of the two candidates also highlight key differences. Bobby Nasution consistently adheres to ethical principles, demonstrating transparency by outlining detailed proposals, truthfulness by referencing measurable achievements, and accountability by linking his commitments to past successes. These practices build trust and reinforce his credibility. On the other hand, Edy Rahmayadi, while occasionally transparent and accountable, often resorts to symbolic rhetoric and deflective strategies that undermine the clarity and factual foundation of his communication. This limits his alignment with ethical communication standards and reduces the persuasive power of his message.

Overall, Edy Rahmayadi's rhetorical approach appeals to voters who value stability and cultural pride but fails to address the forward-looking concerns of a broader electorate. Conversely, Bobby Nasution's ability to combine emotional resonance with actionable and ethically sound solutions makes him a more inclusive and credible candidate. His pragmatic and future-oriented rhetoric positions him as a leader capable of addressing complex challenges while maintaining voter trust. These findings underscore the importance of integrating persuasive strategies with ethical communication principles in political campaigns,

demonstrating that effective rhetoric is not only about appealing to emotions but also about providing tangible, verifiable solutions that inspire confidence in leadership.

5. CONCLUSION

This study analyzed the rhetorical strategies and ethical communication approaches of Bobby Nasution and Edy Rahmayadi during the 2024 North Sumatra gubernatorial campaign, utilizing Aristotle's rhetorical framework—ethos, pathos, and logos—and principles of ethical communication such as transparency, truthfulness, and accountability. The findings reveal notable differences in their rhetorical styles and effectiveness. While both candidates effectively employ rhetorical strategies, their approaches differ significantly: Edy Rahmayadi relies on past achievements and regional pride to establish credibility and emotional resonance, whereas Bobby Nasution focuses on inclusive, forward-looking policies and actionable plans, appealing to a broader audience. Bobby's rhetoric demonstrates a more proactive and collaborative style, aligning closely with ethical communication principles through detailed, verifiable, and transparent proposals. Conversely, Edy's rhetoric, while resonating with voters prioritizing stability and cultural pride, often lacks specificity and shifts responsibility, undermining its ethical alignment. These findings underscore Bobby Nasution's stronger effectiveness as a communicator and his adherence to ethical standards, setting him apart as a leader capable of addressing diverse voter concerns with clarity and accountability.

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