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Dissecting Deception: A Genre-Based Analysis of the Move Structure of Political Discourse on Facebook in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the move structures in deceptive political discourse on Facebook, anchored on Bhatia's (2004) Applied Genre Analysis framework. It focused on identifying how deceptive texts are linguistically constructed to persuade, mislead, and mobilise political engagement within the Filipino social media landscape. The dataset consists of 200 Facebook posts flagged as deceptive by three leading fact-checking organisations in the Philippines—VERA Files, Rappler, and Fact Check Philippines—published between 2015 and 2024. Through qualitative coding, the researchers identified three major rhetorical moves: (1) Establishing a Claim, (2) Reinforcing the Claim, and (3) Mobilising the Audience, each with distinct rhetorical steps such as vilification, emotional reinforcement, legal referencing, directive prompts, and hashtag advocacy. These moves function not only to simulate credibility but also to exploit emotional, cultural, historical, and political contexts. Furthermore, the study explores the interdiscursivity of deceptive posts, revealing how they draw upon and mimic journalistic, legal, religious, and conspiratorial genres. The findings demonstrate that deceptive political Facebook posts are not randomly structured but are also systematically designed to appeal to affective reasoning and socio-political bias. These posts employ hybrid discourse patterns that reflect the evolving genre of digital political communication. By mapping the rhetorical anatomy of deceptive political discourse in the Philippines, the research offers insights into how manipulation functions linguistically and culturally within the digital public sphere.

Keywords: deceptive texts; political discourse; Facebook; genre analysis; disinformation

INTRODUCTION

The widespread circulation of false information on social media poses serious threats to public safety, mental health, and democratic stability (Luo et al., 2021; Rocha et al., 2021). Political disinformation is often produced and amplified by influencers, vloggers, and bloggers—groups identified as major sources of fake news (Lalu, 2022). In the Philippines, where social media penetration reached 71.64% in 2020 and is projected to increase further (Statista, 2023), the potential of deceptive content to shape public opinion and political behaviour is especially pronounced. Recent studies further demonstrate that fake news spreads rapidly across social media networks, often generating fear, confusion, and mistrust, particularly in contexts where access to verified information is limited (Fatima & Bibi, 2025).

In the digital environment, political discourse has evolved into multimodal, interactive, and highly accessible forms. Among these, deceptive discourse has emerged as both rhetorically powerful and socially disruptive. Deception involves the deliberate manipulation or fabrication of information to influence beliefs and actions (Masip et al., 2004). Importantly, deceptive texts are not random; they are systematically structured using rhetorical strategies that simulate coherence and credibility, often through recognisable move structures (Bhatia, 2004). Moreover, exposure to fake news has been shown to affect not only beliefs but also psychological well-being, with frequent encounters linked to increased anxiety, misinformation sharing, and problematic online behaviour (Nguyen et al., 2025).

Facebook plays a central role in disseminating such content. Research shows that the platform frequently exposes users to unreliable information sources (Guess et al., 2018) and has been identified as a major site for the spread of misinformation. (Bellemare & Ho, 2020). In the Philippine context, Facebook has been heavily utilised during electoral periods to circulate disinformation, prompting government-led media literacy initiatives to counter its effects (Eusebio, 2022; Patag, 2023).

Despite the growing body of research on misinformation and its societal impact, limited studies have examined how deceptive political texts are linguistically and rhetorically structured, particularly in the Philippine context. Existing scholarship tends to focus on the spread, impact, or sources of disinformation rather than its discourse organisation. This creates a critical gap in understanding how deceptive messages are constructed to appear credible, persuasive, and engaging.

Specifically, there is a need to investigate the move structures of deceptive texts—how claims are established, reinforced, and mobilised—to uncover the rhetorical mechanisms that enable such texts to mislead audiences effectively. Without this structural analysis, efforts to detect and counter disinformation remain limited, especially in culturally and linguistically diverse contexts such as the Philippines.

LITERATURE REVIEW

DECEPTION IN COMMUNICATION

Deception in communication involves the deliberate presentation of false or misleading information to influence others' beliefs or behaviours, often by disrupting the expected relationship between language and reality (De Waal, 2005; Oesch, 2016; Searcy & Nowicki, 2010). Although training may enhance deception detection, empirical evidence suggests that even trained individuals struggle to accurately identify deceptive cues (Aamodt & Mitchell, 2004; Vrij, 1994). However, Frank and Feely (2003) found that deception research can enhance human ability in detecting deception by identifying reliable indicators of fraudulent behavior. This difficulty in detecting (in) accurate information highlights the complex and multifaceted nature of deception, which has been examined across disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and linguistics (Nicks et al., 1997).

DECEPTIVE TEXTS AND DISINFORMATION

Deceptive texts are strategically constructed to mislead while maintaining a credible appearance. However, the absence of a universally accepted definition complicates their classification and analysis (Asr & Taboada, 2018; Tandoc et al., 2018). Scholars emphasise the importance of distinguishing between types of false information, particularly misinformation and disinformation, and understanding how these operate within discourse. As Lazer et al. (2018) argue, the erosion of institutional gatekeeping mechanisms has heightened societal vulnerability to manipulation, making it essential to examine how deceptive texts achieve rhetorical legitimacy.

POLITICAL DISINFORMATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The proliferation of disinformation has been intensified by the rise of social media platforms, particularly Facebook, which facilitates rapid and widespread dissemination of content (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Damstra et al., 2021; Guess et al., 2018). In the Philippine context, Facebook has become a dominant space for political communication, where disinformation has been used strategically during electoral processes to shape public opinion (Bradshaw & Howard, 2017; Ong & Cabañes, 2018). Recent research further highlights that emotionally charged content plays a significant role in how users perceive and engage with fake news, with affective responses influencing both belief formation and the likelihood of sharing misleading information (Ali Adeeb & Mirhoseini, 2023).

In addition, emerging evidence suggests that interventions such as media literacy programs are more effective than fact-checking alone in helping users critically evaluate information on social media. This is because they promote transferable skills that extend beyond specific instances of misinformation (Berger et al., 2025). Despite increased attention to the spread and impact of political disinformation, less emphasis has been placed on the linguistic and rhetorical structures that underpin these texts.

FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

From a discourse perspective, deceptive texts can be understood as structured communicative acts that follow recognisable patterns. Genre analysis provides a useful framework for examining these patterns, particularly by identifying moves and steps that fulfil specific communicative purposes. As Bhatia (2004) explains, texts often draw on established rhetorical strategies—such as emotional appeal, repetition, and selective framing—to simulate credibility and coherence. These strategies often mimic legitimate discourse practices, making deceptive content more difficult to detect.

Moreover, digital political discourse has evolved into hybrid genres characterised by brevity, informality, and multimodality (Ekström & Tolson, 2017; Enli & Moe, 2015). Social media posts combine elements of personal expression, political commentary, and persuasive communication, allowing deceptive narratives to circulate widely while maintaining an appearance of authenticity.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

This study aims to examine the move structures employed in deceptive texts in political discourse and analyse their communicative functions. It seeks to: 1) identify the major rhetorical moves present in deceptive political texts on Facebook; 2) describe the linguistic realisations of these

moves through their corresponding steps and rhetorical strategies; and 3) examine the persuasive functions of these moves in shaping audience perception, reinforcing claims, and mobilising engagement.

METHODS

DATA COLLECTION

This study employed a descriptive-qualitative design to analyse the rhetorical and structural organisation of deceptive political texts on Facebook. This approach allows for an in-depth examination of linguistic patterns and discursive strategies used to manipulate public opinion, making it suitable for genre-based analysis where meaning is shaped by context and communicative purpose.

The researchers analysed a corpus of 200 Facebook posts verified as deceptive by three Philippine fact-checking organisations: VERA Files, Rappler, and Fact Check Philippines. These posts were collected from 2015 to 2024, covering key political periods such as the 2016 and 2022 elections, when online disinformation was particularly prevalent (Eusebio, 2022; Mina, 2022; Sampang, 2025; Strangio, 2022). As inclusion criteria, the researcher ensured that the posts: 1) consist of at least three sentences; 2) have received over 500 reactions, 250 comments, and 1,000 views; 3) were posted by pages with at least 3,000 followers; and 4) were shared more than 100 times. In addition to the criteria, only visual posts with substantial embedded texts were included. Each excerpt was labelled as DTXX, where "DT" refers to "deceptive text" and "XX" indicates its numerical identifier.

The dataset analysed in this study was characterised by the interplay of English and Filipino, reflecting the bilingual nature of public and political discourse in the Philippines. Since both English and Filipino are widely used in digital communication, deceptive texts are often written in a hybrid manner, with speakers shifting between the two languages or blending them within a single message. This practice of translanguaging and/or code-switching not only mirrors the linguistic reality of Philippine society but also reveals how language choice can be strategically employed to deceive people.

All Filipino quotes from the dataset were translated into English by the researchers. These translations, provided in parentheses, reflected the original meaning and tone as accurately as possible. However, it is important to note that the use of Filipino in these texts is not incidental. Filipino expressions often carry cultural nuances, rhetorical weight, or affective force that English alone may not capture. Conversely, the use of English lends authority, formality, or credibility to deceptive claims.

The bilingual nature of the data situates the study firmly within English Language Studies by showing how English interacts with Filipino in the construction of deceptive discourse. The analysis, therefore, goes beyond simple translation by examining how linguistic hybridity functions as a rhetorical resource in deception. Furthermore, language choice in multilingual contexts is rarely neutral; it indexes identity, power, and intent. In this case, the use of both English and Filipino underscores how deception in Philippine sociopolitical discourse is shaped by the coexistence and interaction of the two languages.

DATA ANALYSIS

The study employed Bhatia's (2004) Applied Genre Analysis framework for identifying moves and steps in textual communication. A move is a functional segment that fulfils a communicative purpose, while a step is a smaller unit within a move that provides specific rhetorical functions. This method is applicable in analysing how deceptive texts are structured to achieve persuasion and misdirection. The framework is also concerned with the broader context in which genres operate and includes the examination of four core dimensions: 1) Purposes, 2) Products, 3) Practices, and 4) Players. In the context of this study, *purposes* refer to the manipulation of public opinion; *products* are the deceptive texts themselves; *practices* include rhetorical and linguistic strategies such as emotional appeals and selective framing; and *players* include content creators, distributors (bots, influencers), and the audiences who consume and share the posts.

The collected Facebook posts were subjected to manual move-step coding, with each unit of analysis segmented, labelled, and categorised based on recurring rhetorical functions. For instance, a post claiming that a political leader would impose a "total lockdown" was segmented into discrete rhetorical units, including the main claim, the cited or implied source of information, and the directive that urges readers to prepare or share the post. Each segment was then assigned a functional label based on its rhetorical purpose, such as claim-making, authority attribution, or audience mobilisation, before being compared with similar segments across the corpus. The goal was to identify a pattern of structural moves commonly found in deceptive political discourse. The coding results were interpreted thematically to reveal how deceptive texts were constructed not only to misinform but to persuade, provoke, and mobilise political action.

Three coders (one intercoder and the researchers) aimed at building shared understanding during the inter-coding process. The team held a series of coding meetings with guided examples drawn from a small pilot set (about 30% of the corpus). During these meetings, the team agreed on boundary cases and tie-break rules. In instances where two coders favoured one interpretation, and the other two favoured another, the team applied a pre-established adjudication procedure. Following the consensus-building practices described by MacQueen et al. (1998) and Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2019), the lead researcher—serving as the designated adjudicator—independently re-examined the disputed unit blind to prior labels and rendered the final decision.

Finally, in the macrostructural analysis, moves were identified, and their functions in the texts were examined. Accordingly, the steps and their functions within the major moves were analysed. Finally, they were then classified into obligatory and non-obligatory following Kanoksilapatham's (2005) definition of obligatory moves. These moves become obligatory based on a 60% cut-off in occurrence as a measure of move stability. The identified moves and steps are presented hereon as extracts in original and unedited versions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To address the research objective, this section analyses the move structures of deceptive political texts using Bhatia's (2004) Applied Genre Analysis framework. The researchers identified recurring rhetorical moves that underpin deceptive Facebook posts and examined how these moves are realised through specific steps. Each move serves a communicative purpose—such as establishing a claim, reinforcing it, or mobilising the audience—while the steps represent the rhetorical strategies used in achieving these purposes (e.g., emotional provocation, moral framing,

or legal referencing). This approach provides a clear understanding of how deceptive texts are organised to persuade and mislead.

While all three major moves were present across the dataset, the steps within each move were not always obligatory. Instead, they function as optional strategies shaped by the author's intent, target audience, and context. For example, some posts rely heavily on emotional appeals, while others emphasise legal or collective framing. This variability reflects the flexibility of the genre and supports Bhatia's (2004) view that moves are essential structural components, whereas steps may vary depending on rhetorical goals.

Table 1 summarises the findings, showing the identified moves and steps and highlighting key linguistic patterns observed in the corpus.

TABLE 1. Move Structure of Deceptive Texts in Facebook Posts

Move	Step	Function
Move 1: Establishing a Claim	Step 1a: Direct Vilification	Targets a political figure or opponent with strong negative judgment
	Step 1b: Derogatory Labelling	Uses name-calling or slurs to discredit the subject
	Step 1c: Emotional Provocation	Triggers outrage, fear, or pity to gain sympathy or anger
Move 2: Reinforcing the Claim	Step 2a: Emotional Reinforcement	Repeats emotionally charged narratives to increase believability
	Step 2b: Stated Certainty	Asserts that claims are obviously or undeniably true
	Step 2c: Legal Referencing	Cites laws or legal terms to appear authoritative and justified
Move 3: Mobilising the Audience	Step 3a: Directive Prompt	Instructs audience to act ("Share this!", "Don't be fooled!")
	Step 3b: Moral Framing	Appeals to values or ethics ("If you care about the country...")
	Step 3c: Collective Alignment	Uses inclusive language ("We Filipinos need to...")
	Step 3d: Hashtag Advocacy	Use of hashtags or trending slogans to mobilise

MOVE 1: ESTABLISHING A CLAIM

Move 1: Establishing a Claim functions as the foundational rhetorical strategy in deceptive political Facebook posts, introducing the central accusation that shapes audience perception. This move captures attention through emotionally charged and ideologically loaded language that appeals to existing biases and fears (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Damstra et al., 2021). The claim is expressed through direct accusations, insinuations, or satirical remarks and serves as the thematic anchor of the discourse. To enhance credibility, it is often presented with an authoritative tone or visual cues (Asr & Taboada, 2018; Tandoc et al., 2018). As Bhatia (2004) argues, deceptive texts exploit genre conventions to present misleading information as rhetorically legitimate.

STEP 1A: DIRECT VILIFICATION

This step involves explicit attacks on individuals or groups, portraying them as corrupt, evil, or dangerous. The language is confrontational and aggressive, and it frequently uses strong negative judgments. Its purpose is to demonise the subject, delegitimising them in the eyes of the audience without presenting verifiable evidence.

DT15: "Congrats, President Duterte! Philippines President Rodrigo Roa Duterte was recognised by the US Department of State as one of its 12 international Anti-Corruption Champions..."
DT38: "Leni: Economics Degree? Law Degree?... PERO DI PARIN NAMIN IBOBOTO SI LENI! BAKIT? Only got famous on her husband" (Leni: Economics Degree? Law Degree? ... BUT WE STILL WON'T VOTE FOR LENI! WHY? She only got famous because of her husband)
DT3: "Naghire ako ng libo-libong troll army." (I hired thousands of troll armies.)

The first step under Move 1, Direct Vilification, involves explicitly attacking individuals or groups with morally charged, aggressive language. This is often achieved through fabricated quotes, exaggerated criticism, or selective misrepresentation, all of which portray the target as corrupt or untrustworthy. As Masip et al., (2004) explain, deception frequently manipulates factual or emotional content to promote beliefs that serve ideological goals. In political discourse, such vilification is used to delegitimise public figures and shape audience perceptions through repeated and emotionally charged claims (Bhatia, 2004; Damstra et al., 2021).

A clear example appears in **DT15,** which praises President Rodrigo Duterte as an international anti-corruption champion. While seemingly positive, the post indirectly vilifies his critics by implying their accusations are unfounded. Similarly, **DT38** lists Vice President Leni Robredo's credentials only to dismiss them sarcastically: *"Pero di pa rin namin iboboto si Leni! Bakit?"* (But we're still not going to vote for Leni! Why?), undermining her legitimacy. In **DT3,** a fabricated claim that President Bongbong Marcos Jr. hired *"libo-libong troll army"* (thousands of troll armies) portrays him as deceitful. These examples show how direct vilification erodes trust by prioritising accusation over evidence (Asr & Taboada, 2018; Bhatia, 2004).

STEP 1B: DEROGATORY LABELLING

Step 1B employs insults, slurs, or name-calling as rhetorical devices. Unlike Step 1A, direct vilification, which focuses on wrongdoing, derogatory labelling uses simplistic, often dehumanising terms to reduce the credibility or dignity of the target. These labels often tap into cultural, gendered, or religious stereotypes.

DT4: "O ayan bumaba na ang nagpapako sa krus, nabuwang na talaga mga Kristiyano. 'Tang ina gago lang ang naniniwala dito." ("There, the one who crucifies himself has come down—Christians have really gone crazy. Son of a b*tch, only idiots believe in this.")
DT5: "Mabuti pa ang KABIT, pumapapel bilang Unang Ginang, samantalang ang ating Bise Presidente, pilit tinatanggalang ng papel." ("Even the MISTRESS gets to act as First Lady, while our Vice President is being forcibly stripped of her role.")
DT170: "Suportado nya yung Halimaw ng Davao at buong giting pa na inindorso ang tinaguriang Reyna ng DDS pagdating sa Fake News na si Mocha Uson." ("She supports the Monster of Davao and even proudly endorsed the so-called Queen of DDS when it comes to fake news—Mocha Uson.")

The second step under Move 1, Derogatory Labelling, involves using insults, ridicule, or culturally loaded terms to reduce political figures to demeaning caricatures. Unlike direct vilification, which relies on explicit accusations, Derogatory Labelling uses informal or symbolic language to attack identity, social roles, or moral standing. Such strategies exploit cultural norms and cognitive biases, allowing authors to discredit targets without providing evidence (Asr & Taboada, 2018; Damstra et al., 2021).

For example, **DT4** states, *"nabuwang na talaga mga Kristiyano"* (Christians have gone crazy), followed by *"Tang ina gago lang ang naniniwala dito"* (Goddammit, only idiots believe in this). Rather than presenting an argument, the post attacks a religious group by portraying them as irrational, thereby provoking emotional rejection. Similarly, **DT5** labels a female public figure

as a *"kabit"* (mistress), a culturally loaded insult that undermines her legitimacy through moral shaming. In **DT170**, the terms *"Halimaw ng Davao"* (Monster of Davao) and *"Reyna ng DDS"* (Queen of DDS) were used to associate political figures with extremism and fake news, stripping them of credibility and reinforcing ideological bias (Tandoc et al., 2018).

These examples show that derogatory labelling functions as a strategic rhetorical device that simplifies complex political realities into emotionally charged identities. By invoking ridicule and cultural stigma, it reinforces polarisation and discourages critical evaluation.

STEP 1C: EMOTIONAL PROVOCATION

Step 1C incites strong emotional responses such as anger, disgust, or sadness. Unlike the previous steps that target individuals, this step aims to trigger the audience's emotional bias to heighten receptiveness to the claim. It is often achieved through hyperbole, sarcasm, or moral outrage.

> DT4: "O ayan bumaba na ang nagpapako sa krus, nabuwang na talaga mga Kristiyano. 'Tang ina gago lang ang naniniwala dito." ("There, the one who crucifies himself has come down—Christians have really gone crazy. Goddammit, only idiots believe in this.")

Move 1- Step 1C, Emotional Provocation, aims to trigger strong emotions such as anger, disgust, or offence to increase persuasive impact. These emotional responses reduce critical evaluation, making readers more likely to accept the claim (Damstra et al., 2021). By appealing to fear, outrage, or resentment, deceptive texts bypass rational processing and align audiences with the author's stance.

An example of Move 1- Step 1C is found in **DT4:** *"'Tang ina gago lang ang naniniwala dito"* (Goddammit, only idiots believe in this). This aggressive and vulgar statement is designed to provoke strong reactions, particularly among religious audiences. Rather than presenting evidence, it ridicules belief systems and frames them as irrational, creating an "us versus them" divide (Masip et al., 2004; Tandoc et al., 2018). Such emotionally charged language encourages immediate rejection rather than critical reflection.

Although less frequent, emotional provocation plays a key role in deception by shaping the audience's emotional state. It prepares readers to accept subsequent claims or calls to action with reduced scepticism. As Bhatia (2004) suggests, this affective framing strengthens the persuasive power of the discourse by making it appear coherent and compelling.

Overall, Move 1: Establishing a Claim functions as the foundation of deceptive political discourse. It constructs emotionally charged narratives that influence perception and limit critical engagement through vilification, labelling, and emotional provocation. These strategies reveal how deceptive texts rely on manipulation rather than evidence, using emotionally resonant language to advance ideological agendas.

MOVE 2: REINFORCING THE CLAIM

In deceptive texts, next to the introduction of its core allegation through Move 1: Establishing a Claim is Move 2: Reinforcing the Claim—a strategic effort to legitimise, emphasise, or emotionally validate the initial assertion. This move consolidates belief by reducing doubt and increasing emotional and cognitive resonance with the reader. As Bhatia (2004) explains, genres are often constructed through their primary communicative goals and strategic layering of rhetorical elements to enhance credibility. In deceptive texts, reinforcement is achieved through

three recurring strategies or steps: emotional reinforcement, stated certainty, and legal referencing. These steps act as rhetorical mechanisms that disguise manipulation as clarification, echoing the findings of Masip et al., (2004) that deception frequently involves the deliberate concealment or exaggeration of emotional or factual content.

STEP 2A: EMOTIONAL REINFORCEMENT

Emotional Reinforcement refers to using emotionally loaded commentary to reiterate or intensify a claim, thereby making the audience feel the veracity of the message rather than think it through. This step typically appears as frustration, indignation, or sarcasm directed at the subject of the claim. According to Damstra et al. (2021), deceptive texts often use negative emotional valence, such as anger or disappointment, to engage users and reduce critical assessment. Rather than introducing new facts, this step appeals to shared disillusionment or outrage to validate the original accusation.

> DT8: "Another reason why I will not vote for leni: This picture was taken during a forum on the local govts effort to curb the drug problem.. We were there.. We talked to a staff of the OVP to offer a programme..."
> DT169: "Mga utu-uto ba kami para hindi namin makita ang ginagawa mo SV?" ("Do you think we're fools that we can't see what you're doing, SV?")
> DT8: "Pera pera lang madamme?? Watever happened to your efforts??" ("Is it all just about money now, madam? Whatever happened to your efforts?")

A clear example of Move 2 - Step 2A is in **DT8**, where the post reads, "Another reason why I will not vote for Leni: This picture was taken during a forum on the local government's effort to curb the drug problem... We were there... We talked to a staff of the OVP..." The post's tone conveys personal betrayal, intensified by the personal anecdote. Later in the same DT, the statement *"Pera pera lang madamme??* (It's all about money now, madam?) Whatever happened to your efforts??" reinforces that disappointment with a dismissive, cynical tone. These remarks do not simply convey criticism—they frame the subject as a personal failure, leveraging disillusionment to intensify the claim's impact.

Similarly, **DT169** includes the line, *"Mga utu-uto ba kami para hindi namin makita ang ginagawa mo SV?"* ("Do you think we're fools that we can't see what you're doing, SV?"). The use of the phrase *"utu-uto"* (gullible or stupid) emphasises a growing collective anger towards the subject, echoing what Tandoc et al. (2018) describe as emotionally manipulative discourse designed to appeal to the reader's sense of being wronged or deceived. This pattern reflects broader observations in political discourse, as Malah et al. (2025) emphasise that appeals to emotions function as a key (de)legitimation strategy, wherein speakers mobilise affective responses such as anger, distrust, and frustration to predispose audiences towards accepting or rejecting political actors and their actions. Move 2 - Step 2A does not argue logically but asserts emotionally that the claim must be true because it feels true.

STEP 2B: STATED CERTAINTY

Move 2 - Step 2B, Stated Certainty involves strong declarative language to present the claim as undeniable, often using modal verbs, emphatic syntax, or speculative logic framed as fact. As Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) note, deceptive political content often employs such certainty to override scepticism and frame its position as common sense. This step plays on readers' desire for clarity amid complex political discourse.

DT99**:** "Robredo being anxious, saying there will be chaos if she ever deceived and defeated the elections. *"SIGURADO NA ANG PANALO NAMIN NI KIKO, PAG NATALO KAMI, IBIG SABIHIN NADAYA TAYO, PAG NADAYA TAYO MAGKAKAGULO"* ("It is certain that Kiko and I will win. If we lose, that means we were cheated on. If we were cheated on, there will be chaos.")
DT137**:** *"Kabayan - Ayon sa mga opisyal malubha na ang sakit na cancer ng Pangulo. Nagpatingin na ng patago ang Pangulo sa ilang ospital sa Metro Manila at sa Tsina, at magpapatingin sana muli siya sa Russia ng..."* ("Fellow citizens – According to officials, the President's cancer is now severe. The President has secretly sought medical consultation at several hospitals in Metro Manila and in China, and was supposed to seek further consultation in Russia...")
DT17**:** *"PARA MANALO SI BBM SI LENI ANG IBOTO"* ("To make BBM win, vote for Leni.")

A strong illustration of Move 2 - Step 2B is **DT99**, which asserts: *"SIGURADO NA ANG PANALO NAMIN NI KIKO, PAG NATALO KAMI, IBIG SABIHIN NADAYA TAYO..."* ("It is certain that Kiko and I will win. If we lose, that means we were cheated."). The absolute certainty in tone denies any alternative outcome and presents election fraud as an inevitable explanation for any loss. Lazer et al. (2018) noted that such certainty creates informational closure, discouraging further inquiry or dissent.

In **DT137**, another example is provided, stating: "Ayon sa mga opisyal, malubha na ang sakit na cancer ng Pangulo…*"* (According to some officials, the President's cancer is now severe.) By introducing the statement with *"ayon sa mga opisyal"* (according to some officials), the post attempts to cloak speculation in the veneer of authority, a pattern commonly observed in disinformation tactics (Tandoc et al., 2018). The speculative claim is presented with linguistic confidence, pushing the audience towards a particular conclusion without verifiable support.

Finally, **DT17** reinforces certainty through declarative logic disguised as sarcasm: *"Para manalo si BBM, si Leni ang iboto."* ("To make BBM win, vote for Leni.") The sentence implies that electoral corruption is so entrenched that voting for the opponent guarantees victory for the other—a rhetorical paradox that further embeds distrust in the electoral process.

STEP 2C: LEGAL REFERENCING

Legal Referencing attempts to provide pseudo-legitimacy by invoking laws, legal terms, or institutional processes. This step operates by appropriating the language of law and justice to validate the claim and simulate impartiality or factuality. As Bhatia (2004) emphasises, genre mixing—particularly between news, legal discourse, and political propaganda—is a powerful technique in deceptive texts that borrow one genre's credibility to mask another's manipulative intent.

DT33:*"Inaresto ng Makati PNP ang former DILG Secretary na si Mar Roxas sa isinagawang raid sa isang hotel sa Makati City. Source: https://bit.ly/QtP2t"* **(**"The Makati PNP arrested former DILG Secretary Mar Roxas during a raid conducted at a hotel in Makati City. Source: *https://bit.ly/QtP2t*")
DT43: *"The House impeached VP Inday Sara Duterte on the same day the complaint was filed. That's unconstitutional and legally void from the start. Why? After my extensive review of constitutional law and jury..."*
DT79**:** *"May corruption at ginawang ilegal daw pag may Notice of Disallowance So kurap si Leni? Payag ba kayo niyan mga kakampink? Sige nga mga kakampink explain niyo sa mga BBM supporters at sa mga kasama niya..."* ("There is Notice of Disallowance if there is corruption and something illegal. So does that mean Leni is corrupt? Are you okay with that, Kakampinks? Come on, Kakampinks, explain this to BBM supporters and his allies...")
DT43: *"This impeachment is a legal disaster, BLATANT DISREGARD FOR THE LAW."*

An example of this is **DT33**, which claims: *"Inaresto ng Makati PNP ang former DILG Secretary na si Mar Roxas..."* ("The Makati PNP arrested former DILG Secretary Mar Roxas"). The post includes a link and invokes the authority of a law enforcement body, creating the impression of an official record even though the event is fabricated. The use of a hyperlink reinforces the illusion of authenticity, a tactic highlighted by Asr and Taboada (2018) in their work on structural deception.

DT43 provides two relevant excerpts. One states, "The House impeached VP Inday Sara Duterte... That's unconstitutional and legally void..." while the other reads, "This impeachment is a legal disaster—BLATANT DISREGARD FOR THE LAW." Both invoke legal terminology to suggest procedural irregularities. The phrases "unconstitutional" and "void" are performative legal judgments that mimic the tone of formal legal analysis, contributing to the post's perceived legitimacy.

Similarly, **DT79** uses institutional jargon to accuse Vice President Leni Robredo of corruption: *"May corruption at ginawang ilegal daw pag may Notice of Disallowance..."* ("There's corruption and something illegal once there is a Notice of Disallowance.) By referencing a real Philippine legal process (Notice of Disallowance), the post grafts its deception onto actual legal language, a technique used to obfuscate truth with procedural familiarity (Mahyoob et al., 2020).

Move 2: Reinforcing the Claim strengthens the initial accusation by embedding it more deeply in the audience's perception. Rather than presenting new evidence, it relies on repetition, emotional appeal, and simulated authority. Its products—emphatic statements, emotional language, and pseudo-legal claims—are designed for social media environments where verification is minimal. For instance, DT99 and DT137 project certainty to appear factual, while DT79 and DT43 use legal language to suggest legitimacy. These strategies reflect what Bhatia (2004) describes as genre colonisation, where elements from other discourses are borrowed to enhance credibility. The players behind this move—such as influencers or partisan actors—use repetition and emotional reinforcement to reduce critical thinking and strengthen belief (Bhatia, 2004; Damstra et al., 2021).

MOVE 3: MOBILISING THE AUDIENCE

The third rhetorical move, Move 3: Mobilising the Audience, activates readers to take ideological or behavioural action after a claim is established (Move 1) and reinforced (Move 2). Through directives, moral appeals, and emotional language, it turns passive belief into active participation, such as liking, sharing, or aligning with political groups. As Bhatia (2004) suggests, genres reflect both structure and social intention; in this data, the goal was to promote engagement and message spread. This move consists of four steps: Directive Prompt, Moral Framing, Collective Alignment, and Hashtag Advocacy, each encouraging participation in different ways.

STEP 3A: DIRECTIVE PROMPT

This step uses explicit imperatives or instructions to prompt the reader to act, whether by watching a video, sharing content, attending a rally, or rejecting a candidate. These posts often feature verbs in the imperative mood or suggest urgency. Tandoc et al. (2018) observed that directive prompts in deceptive texts seek to bypass deliberation and incite reactive behaviour.

DT18**:** *"kailangan ninyong mapanood ito at tapusin nyo po hanggang dulo"* ("You need to watch this and finish it until the end.")
DT112: *"LET YOUR FRIENDS KNOW THIS INFORMATION."*
DT141: *"Magkikita kita tayo muli sa EDSA para patalsikin ang mga magnanakaw at sinungaling na niluklok ng 31M disinformed na Pilipino"* ("We will meet again at EDSA to oust the thieves and liars installed by 31 million misinformed Filipinos.")

In **DT18**, the statement *"kailangan ninyong mapanood ito at tapusin nyo po hanggang dulo"* (you need to watch this and finish it until the end) clearly instructs the audience to engage with the linked content fully. Using *"kailangan"* (need) establishes an authoritative tone, indicating that watching the video is not optional but a civic or moral obligation. This type of engagement drives algorithmic amplification and builds emotional investment in the deceptive message (Damstra et al., 2021).

Similarly, **DT112** reads, *"LET YOUR FRIENDS KNOW THIS INFORMATION."* The capitalised directive suggests urgency and creates a sense of communal duty. The absence of context makes the command more flexible, designed to be applied to whatever narrative the post delivers. Masip et al., (2004) believe such vague yet strong appeals are effective because they encourage emotional validation and social dissemination.

A more explicitly political example is found in **DT141**, which declares, *"Magkikita kita tayo muli sa EDSA para patalsikin ang mga magnanakaw at sinungaling na niluklok ng 31M disinformed na Pilipino."* ("We will meet again at EDSA to oust the thieves and liars installed by 31 million misinformed Filipinos.") This post calls for mass mobilisation, invoking the historical memory of the EDSA revolution while labelling those elected by 31 million voters as "misinformed." The call to protest is framed as a restoration of justice, leveraging historical nostalgia and civic urgency—an archetypal use of this step.

STEP 3B: MORAL FRAMING

Moral Framing appeals to the reader's sense of right and wrong by placing political actions within ethical binaries. These posts often frame political issues such as corruption, justice, and cultural values, encouraging action through moral indignation. Damstra et al. (2021) noted that such content intensifies persuasion by evoking outrage or moral panic.

DT138: *"Pera ng bayan ang pinangbayad. Nakakasuka. Ginusto nyo ito, dba?"* ("Public funds were used to pay for this. Disgusting. You wanted this, didn't you?")
DT79**:** *"May corruption at ginawang ilegal daw pag may Notice of Disallowance So kurap si Leni? Payag ba kayo niyan mga kakampink? Sige nga mga kakampink explain niyo sa mga BBM supporters at sa mga kasama niya..."* ("There's corruption and something illegal once there is a Notice of Disallowance. So, does that mean Leni is corrupt? Are you okay with that, Kakampinks? Come on, Kakampinks, explain this to BBM supporters and his allies...")
DT27: *"You will teach four-year-olds how to masturbate? ... This is ridiculous,"*

In **DT138**, the post reads, *"Pera ng bayan ang pinangbayad. Nakakasuka. Ginusto nyo ito, diba?"* ("Public funds were used to pay for this. Disgusting. You wanted this, didn't you?") The rhetorical structure builds moral disgust, accusing the reader or society of complicity in corruption. The phrase "pera ng bayan" (public funds) invokes a collective betrayal narrative, thus grounding political deception in ethical violation.

DT79 similarly asks, *"May corruption at ginawang ilegal daw pag may Notice of Disallowance. So kurap si Leni? Payag ba kayo niyan mga kakampink?"* ("There's corruption and something illegal once there is a Notice of Disallowance. So, does that mean Leni is corrupt? Are you okay with that, Kakampinks?") This post leverages legal language to construct a moral

dilemma. The final rhetorical question challenges the audience's integrity by suggesting that tolerating the subject amounts to an ethical failure.

In **DT27**, a highly provocative line is used: *"You will teach four-year-olds how to masturbate? This is ridiculous."* Though clearly misinformation, it frames the issue in terms of moral horror, appealing to parental fear and cultural conservatism. As Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) claim, such posts bypass factual debate and manipulate emotional reflexes, particularly those tied to child protection and traditional values.

STEP 3C: COLLECTIVE ALIGNMENT

Collective Alignment uses inclusive language, group identifiers, or nationalistic themes to align the audience with a broader political or ideological group. These posts foster communal identity, reinforcing beliefs through group solidarity and emotional resonance (Bhatia, 2004).

> DT157: *"Ayaw kong magpaka-hipokrito ha, aminin natin nung time ni FPRRD, karamihan ng adik nagbagong buhay, karamihan sa kriminal nag-uunahang sumuko, dahil sa takot kay Duterte. Confident kayong lumabas sa gabi dahil alam niyong yung mga kriminal at masasaang loob nabawasan na. "* ("I don't want to be a hypocrite, let's admit it—during FPRRD's time, most addicts changed their ways, and most criminals rushed to surrender out of fear of Duterte. You were confident walking in the streets at night because you knew that the criminals or those with evil intentions were lessened.")
> DT114: *"Let's make our nation Great Again"*
> DT20: *"Walang kumalaban sa Iglesia Ni Cristo ang napabuti"* ("No one who went against the Iglesia Ni Cristo ended up well.")

DT157 reads, *"Aminin natin nung time ni FPRRD, karamihan ng adik nagbagong buhay... dahil sa takot kay Duterte."* ("Let's admit it—during FPRRD's time, most addicts changed their ways, and most criminals rushed to surrender out of fear of Duterte.") This nostalgic framing links the audience to a shared experience of discipline and control. The line "aminin natin" (let's admit) presupposes agreement and frames compliance as a collective truth.

DT114 is more symbolic: *"Let's make our nation Great Again."* The phrase, modelled after a globally known slogan, invokes national pride and urgency, aligning the audience with a movement rather than an argument. It is aspirational, vague, and identity-driven, broadly applicable and is easily mobilised.

In **DT20**, the post states, *"Walang kumalaban sa Iglesia Ni Cristo ang napabuti."* ("No one who went against the Iglesia Ni Cristo ended up well.") This claim universalises religious loyalty by implying negative consequences for opposition. The audience is thus encouraged to align with religious identity as a marker of political allegiance—an example of interdiscursive mobilisation that blends faith and political narrative (Tandoc et al., 2018).

STEP 3D: HASHTAG ADVOCACY

Hashtag Advocacy is a uniquely digital step that uses hashtags as condensed ideological symbols. These function as slogans and sorting mechanisms that anchor political identity and enable visibility through digital platforms (Ong & Cabañes, 2018). Hashtags promote instant group affiliation and can act as rallying cries.

> **DT118**: #SOLIDBBMSARAUNITEAM
> **DT113**: #MabuhayKingdomOfGod (*#LongLiveKingdomOfGod)*
> **DT80**: #LeniNPA
> **DT55**: #TatakDuterte *(#DuterteMark)*

In **DT118**, the hashtag *#SOLIDBBMSARAUNITEAM* declares unwavering support, merging two political figures into a singular ideological brand. The term "solid" suggests inflexibility and loyalty, common traits used to dichotomise supporters from dissenters.

DT113 presents *#MabuhayKingdomOfGod*, (#LongLiveKingdomOfGod) linking national identity with religious fervour. This hashtag reinforces spiritual-political unity, a tactic that mirrors how emotional and cultural symbols are often used to legitimise political narratives (Mahyoob et al., 2023).

On the other hand, **DT80** features *#LeniNPA*, falsely associating a candidate with insurgency. This is an act of rhetorical branding, intended to instil fear and delegitimise through association. Finally, **DT55** uses *#TatakDuterte* as a personal brand. *"Tatak"* (mark) implies enduring legacy or ownership, reinforcing political loyalty as identity.

Move 3: Mobilising the Audience represents the activation phase of deceptive discourse, shifting from persuasion to action, such as sharing content, expressing outrage, or endorsing political positions. Its purpose is to convert agreement into engagement. Its products—directive prompts (e.g., DT18) and hashtags (e.g., DT118)—amplify emotion, signal group identity, and promote message circulation. This move draws on practices from social media activism and populist rhetoric. For example, DT141 invokes historical narratives to create urgency, while DT138 uses moral framing to reinforce in-group and out-group divisions. Both content creators and audiences act as players, with users becoming active participants through likes, shares, and comments. As Bhatia (2004) and Tandoc et al. (2018) suggest, deceptive texts gain power not only by persuading but by mobilising audiences into collective digital action.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that deceptive political Facebook posts in the Philippines follow a strategic move structure that mirrors established rhetorical patterns in legitimate political discourse. By combining genre-based moves—Establishing a Claim, Reinforcing the Claim, and Mobilising the Audience—with hybrid interdiscursive elements, these texts simulate credibility and exploit contextual factors to manipulate public opinion. Through strategies such as direct vilification, legal referencing, and hashtag-driven advocacy, deceptive posts construct persuasive narratives grounded in emotional resonance and cultural familiarity. These findings demonstrate that deceptive content is not randomly produced but is linguistically engineered to persuade, provoke, and polarise. Moreover, this study addresses a gap in local scholarship on deceptive speech by examining the structural organisation of disinformation rather than focusing solely on its spread, thereby contributing to a more nuanced understanding of political deception in digital discourse.

Beyond its theoretical contributions, the study offers practical implications for media literacy, policy, and technological intervention. The identified move structures may inform the development of programmes that can educate the public and train individuals to recognise rhetorical manipulation in online content. Likewise, digital platforms may use these findings to design more effective detection tools that go beyond surface-level content analysis and consider discourse patterns. Finally, future research may extend this work by examining multimodal forms of deception, cross-platform variations, or audience reception to further understand how deceptive discourse evolves and influences public engagement.

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