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Political Allusions in Philippine News Media: Framing, Rhetoric, and Democratic Discourse

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Abstract. Political allusions provide culturally and historically resonant references through which political issues and actors may be represented in news discourse. Despite their presence in Philippine political communication, their forms and rhetorical and framing functions remain insufficiently examined in local media scholarship. This study examined the types, framing functions, and rhetorical functions of political allusions in Philippine political media discourse. A qualitative Critical Discourse Analysis was conducted on 50 purposively selected political media articles published between 2024 and 2025 by ABS-CBN, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Manila Bulletin, The Philippine Star, and Rappler. The analysis classified political allusions according to their historical, mythological, religious, literary, and popular-cultural references and examined their association with hero, villain, and victim frames and with Aristotelian rhetorical appeals of ethos, pathos, and logos. Historical allusions were the most frequently identified, with 22 instances, followed by popular-cultural allusions (13), literary allusions (9), religious allusions (5), and mythological allusions (1). Villain framing was the most prevalent framing pattern (38 instances), followed by hero (7) and victim (5) frames. Pathos was the most frequently identified rhetorical function (40 instances), while ethos and logos each accounted for five. The findings indicate that political allusions in the selected articles frequently drew on historical memory, moral evaluation, and culturally familiar references to position political actors and issues within recognizable narrative and rhetorical frames. Viewed through Critical Discourse Analysis and Aristotelian rhetoric, these patterns suggest that allusions contribute to the construction of political meaning by connecting contemporary issues with established cultural, historical, and moral associations. The study highlights the value of examining political allusions as textual resources for understanding how political discourse is framed and rhetorically organized in Philippine media.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis; Media Framing; Political Allusions; Political Communication; Rhetorical Appeals

Introduction

Political communication in the Philippines is deeply intertwined with the country's history, cultural memory, and ongoing struggles with democratic consolidation. In such a context, language becomes an active medium through which journalists frame political actors, define social realities, and negotiate ideological meanings. Among the most potent linguistic devices used in this process are political allusions—references that evoke historical events, cultural symbols, religious narratives, literary motifs, or popular culture imagery to color political interpretation. As Naciscione (2023) argues, allusions draw power from shared cognitive and cultural schemas, enabling audiences to derive meaning even when references are not explicitly explained.

In the Philippines, where memories of dictatorship, people power movements, political scandals, and religious symbolism remain salient, political allusions are especially potent. They offer journalists a way to situate contemporary events within enduring historical narratives, resonating with Arugay et al.'s (2024) assertion that Philippine politics is continually interpreted through cycles of continuity and rupture. When media invoke martial law, EDSA, corruption scandals, or moral archetypes, they are not simply describing—they are interpreting and positioning political actors within broader ideological histories.

Political allusions also operate through narrative framing. As Frermann et al. (2023) and Dela Cruz and Estuar (2023) note, media often rely on hero, villain, and victim frames to construct moral landscapes that guide audience interpretation. Allusions are essential ingredients of these frames: historical and religious

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allusions frequently support villain narratives, while patriotic and reformist references uphold hero framing. Victim framing, meanwhile, draws on narratives of persecution, vulnerability, or systemic abuse.

Rhetorically, political allusions activate ethos, pathos, and logos. They position political actors within moral or immoral lineages (ethos), elicit emotional responses (pathos), and simplify complex issues through familiar metaphors (logos), consistent with Mohamad (2022) and Teneva (2021). Through these functions, allusions shape how citizens understand credibility, danger, hope, injustice, and political possibility.

Despite their prevalence, the role of political allusions in Philippine news media remains undertheorized. Existing studies tend to emphasize media bias, issue frames, or affective tone (de Guzman, 2024), leaving a gap in understanding how allusions themselves act as ideological and rhetorical tools. To respond to this gap, this study investigates; The types of political allusions used in Philippine political news; The framing strategies within which these allusions are embedded; and The rhetorical effects they enact through ethos, pathos, and logos.

Using Fairclough's critical discourse analysis and Aristotelian theory, this study reveals how political allusions function as powerful ideological mechanisms that mediate public understanding and shape democratic discourse.

Research Questions

This study examines the use of political allusions in selected Philippine media discourse from 2024 to 2025. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What types of political allusions are identified in the selected Philippine political media articles in terms of:
   1.1. historical allusions;
   1.2. mythological allusions;
   1.3. religious allusions;
   1.4. literary allusions; and
   1.5. popular-cultural allusions?
2. How are political allusions embedded within framing strategies in terms of:
   2.1. hero framing;
   2.2. villain framing; and
   2.3. victim framing?
3. What rhetorical functions are associated with the identified political allusions in terms of:
   3.1. ethos;
   3.2. pathos; and
   3.3. logos?

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study focused on 50 political media articles published between 2024 and 2025 by five Philippine media organizations: ABS-CBN News, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Manila Bulletin, The Philippine Star, and Rappler. It examined political allusions according to five categories—historical, mythological, religious, literary, and popular-cultural—and analyzed their association with hero, villain, and victim framing and their rhetorical functions in terms of ethos, pathos, and logos using Critical Discourse Analysis and Aristotelian rhetorical theory. The study was limited to the textual and discursive characteristics of the selected media articles and did not measure audience responses, public opinion, political behavior, institutional trust, or the effects of political allusions on audiences. It was also delimited to publicly accessible political media articles from the five selected outlets during the 2024–2025 period; social media posts, audience comments, broadcast materials, and political communication outside the selected corpus were excluded. Thus, the findings describe patterns within the selected corpus and are not intended to represent the entire Philippine media landscape.

Literature Review

Political Allusion as a Discursive and Intertextual Device

Political discourse rarely depends on literal statements alone. Speakers and writers often draw on historical events, cultural symbols, literary works, religious narratives, popular culture, and recognizable public figures to communicate meanings that extend beyond the immediate text. In this regard, allusion functions as a form of intertextual reference in which an expression evokes knowledge or associations from another text, event, person, or cultural context. Naciscione (2022) describes allusion as a stylistic and cognitive phenomenon whose interpretation depends on the relationship between the textual expression and the knowledge activated by the reader. Her analysis of allusion in media, political speeches, debates, and other

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forms of public discourse demonstrates that allusive expressions acquire meaning through their interaction with particular contexts rather than through their literal wording alone.

The communicative value of allusion is particularly relevant to political discourse because it allows complex political meanings to be compressed into culturally recognizable references. Aduda et al. (2023), for example, examined allusion as a discourse strategy in gubernatorial campaign speeches and found that political speakers use culturally meaningful references as part of their rhetorical construction. Similarly, research on the classification of allusions identifies historical, mythological, religious, literary, and popular-cultural references as distinct forms through which writers establish connections between a present text and previously known cultural material.

These perspectives suggest that political allusions should not be treated simply as decorative linguistic devices. Their significance lies in their capacity to activate shared cultural knowledge and establish associations between contemporary political issues and previously meaningful narratives. In a media environment where political events can be complex, contested, or difficult to interpret, allusive language may therefore provide readers with familiar symbolic frames through which political actors and events can be understood.

Political Allusions and Rhetorical Meaning

The rhetorical dimension of allusion is closely related to its ability to evoke meanings that are not explicitly stated. Rather than explaining an entire historical or cultural narrative, a writer can invoke a recognizable reference and allow readers to supply the associated meanings. This characteristic makes allusion particularly relevant to rhetorical analysis because the reference can simultaneously establish moral associations, evoke emotions, or support an interpretation of a political issue. Aduda et al. (2023) demonstrate this relationship by treating allusion as a discourse strategy in political rhetoric rather than simply as a stylistic feature.

The rhetorical functions of political language can also be examined through Aristotle's classical appeals of ethos, pathos, and logos. Ethos concerns credibility, character, and values; pathos concerns emotional engagement; and logos concerns reasoning and evidentiary or explanatory appeal. Contemporary rhetorical studies continue to apply these categories to political communication and media texts. For example, Quijano and Bulusan's analysis of Philippine presidential State of the Nation Addresses examined how ethos, pathos, and logos operate as rhetorical appeals in political discourse. More recent studies likewise demonstrate that rhetorical appeals can be systematically examined in political speeches and media communication, although the prominence of each appeal varies according to the communicative situation and genre.

Importantly, rhetorical appeals should not be understood as mutually exclusive features of language. A single expression may establish credibility while simultaneously evoking emotion or supporting an argument. Consequently, their application to political allusions requires attention to the dominant function of an expression within its textual context, rather than assuming that a particular linguistic form automatically corresponds to one rhetorical appeal. This contextual approach is particularly appropriate for the present study because the analysis concerns the rhetorical function of allusive expressions within political media texts.

Media Framing and Narrative Construction

Political allusions also intersect with media framing because the selection and presentation of particular references can position political actors and issues within recognizable narratives. Framing research emphasizes that media texts do not simply present events but select, emphasize, and organize aspects of reality in ways that make particular interpretations more salient. In Philippine online news, Dela Cruz and Estuar (2023) found variation in the use of policy issue frames across media outlets, demonstrating that the presentation of political issues can differ according to the framing practices of individual news organizations.

Narrative approaches to framing further extend this perspective by examining how political actors are positioned within stories. Frermann et al. (2023) conceptualize narrative media framing in terms of characters and conflicts, including the representation of key entities as heroes, victims, or villains. Their framework recognizes that framing operates not only through topics but also through the narrative roles assigned to actors within a broader story structure.

The hero–villain–victim perspective is particularly useful for examining political allusions because culturally familiar references can implicitly assign moral roles to political actors. A historical reference associated with authoritarianism, for instance, may position a contemporary actor within a villainous narrative, while an allusion associated with reform or sacrifice may contribute to a heroic representation. Similarly, references to persecution, suffering, or historical injustice may construct political actors or groups as victims. Such relationships demonstrate that allusions and frames can operate together: the allusion provides the cultural reference, while the frame organizes the political meaning attached to that reference.

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Political Media Framing in the Philippine Context

The Philippine media environment provides a particularly relevant context for examining political allusion because contemporary political discourse frequently intersects with historical memory, political personalities, religion, corruption, authoritarianism, and democratic contestation. Existing Philippine media studies demonstrate that political journalism is not merely a neutral channel for political information but can function as a site where competing political meanings are constructed.

Ragragio (2022), for example, examined editorials from four major Philippine news organizations and identified different framing patterns in their treatment of the Duterte administration. The study showed that Philippine news editorials can simultaneously perform watchdog functions and reproduce frames that provide particular readings of political leadership.

Similarly, Chua's (2023) study of 336 editorials from four Philippine broadsheets during the 2022 campaign period found that the publications used different frames across political issues, with attribution of responsibility particularly prominent in coverage of elections, the economy, and health. The study also found differences between publications in the frames used, demonstrating that framing is influenced by the institutional and editorial contexts of news organizations.

More recent work reinforces the importance of examining how Philippine media construct political narratives. Ragragio's (2024) analysis of media coverage of politics and religion in the Philippines found that news narratives organized political and religious conflict through competing representations, including portrayals of the church, political actors, and alternative voices. These findings indicate that political reporting can organize complex political relationships through recurring narratives and discursive positions.

Taken together, Philippine media scholarship establishes a strong basis for examining framing and political representation. However, much of this literature focuses on frames, themes, editorial practices, or representations of political actors, rather than on the specific linguistic resources through which such frames are constructed. Political allusions provide one potentially important but comparatively underexamined mechanism through which historical and cultural associations become embedded in political media discourse.

Political Allusions, Framing, and Rhetorical Functions: Synthesis of the Literature

The literature reviewed suggests that political allusions occupy an important intersection between language, culture, framing, and rhetoric. Studies of allusion demonstrate that such expressions activate meanings beyond their literal wording by drawing on shared cultural and historical knowledge (Naciscione, 2022; Aduda et al., 2023). Framing research shows that political communication organizes events and actors into interpretive structures, including narrative roles such as heroes, victims, and villains (Dela Cruz & Estuar, 2023; Frermann et al., 2023). Research on rhetorical appeals further indicates that political language can establish credibility, evoke emotions, and construct logical or explanatory relationships through ethos, pathos, and logos.

Within the Philippine context, existing research has documented the use of political frames, moralized narratives, and rhetorical strategies in news reports, editorials, and political speeches. However, the reviewed literature provides comparatively limited attention to political allusions as the linguistic point of connection between these processes. In particular, less attention has been given to how specific historical, mythological, religious, literary, and popular-cultural references are embedded in Philippine political media and how these references correspond with hero, villain, and victim frames and with rhetorical functions.

This gap provides the basis for the present study. Rather than examining political framing or rhetorical appeals independently, the study examines political allusions as textual resources through which framing and rhetorical functions can be observed in selected Philippine media discourse. It therefore focuses on three related dimensions: the types of political allusions used, the framing strategies in which they are embedded, and their dominant rhetorical functions in terms of ethos, pathos, and logos.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

The study examines the rhetorical and discursive effects of political allusions in Philippine news media, focusing on public perception influence, political identity construction, and emotions. It employs framing strategies guided by the Hero–Villain–Victim Model by Fermann et al. (2023) and rhetorical analysis based on Aristotelian Rhetorical Theory, adapted from Mohamad (2022). Furthermore, the identification and classification of political allusions are guided by Xoshimova and Maxmudjonova (2023).

This conceptual framework maps how political allusions in Philippine news media are identified and interpreted using the classification approach of Koshimova and Maxmudjonova (2023). These allusions then interact with framing strategies informed by Freimann et al.'s (2023) Hero–Villain–Victim model. Rhetorical analysis follows, guided by Aristotelian rhetorical theory and adapted from Mohamad (2022). Together, these layers explain how news discourse shapes public perception, political identity, and emotional responses.

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Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), drawing specifically from Fairclough's three-dimensional model (as cited in Sunitko, Park, & Villareal, 2025). CDA was selected because it allows for an examination of how linguistic choices—such as political allusions—construct ideological meanings, reproduce power relations, and influence sociopolitical interpretation. By analyzing texts at the textual, discursive, and sociocultural levels, this framework was well-suited to unpacking the symbolic functions and rhetorical consequences of allusions in political journalism. To complement CDA, the study incorporated Aristotelian rhetorical theory (Mohamad, 2022), particularly the appeals of ethos, pathos, and logos, to explain how allusions function as persuasive devices. The dual-theoretical design enabled a multidimensional analysis that addressed not only what political allusions were present but also how they shaped credibility, emotion, narrative framing, and public meaning.

Research Locale

The study was situated within the Philippine digital news-media environment, focusing on political media content published by five selected national media organizations: ABS-CBN News, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Manila Bulletin, The Philippine Star, and Rappler. These outlets provide publicly accessible online news and political content and represent established sources through which Filipinos encounter current political issues and events. The study specifically examined publicly accessible political media articles published by these outlets from 2024 to 2025. The Philippine media environment is particularly relevant to the study because online platforms have become an important source of political news, with 65% of Filipinos surveyed in early 2024 reporting the Internet as their main source of news. Accordingly, the selected media environment provides an appropriate textual setting for examining how political allusions are used to frame and rhetorically organize contemporary political discourse.

Research Participants

This study did not involve human participants. Instead, the primary sources of data were 50 publicly accessible political media articles published between 2024 and 2025 by five selected Philippine media organizations: ABS-CBN News, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Manila Bulletin, The Philippine Star, and Rappler. The articles constituted the textual corpus subjected to Critical Discourse Analysis and rhetorical analysis. Documentary and textual sources can serve as qualitative research data when the study is designed around analysis of existing texts rather than participant-generated accounts. No interviews, surveys, focus groups, or direct interactions with journalists, political actors, or media audiences were conducted. Accordingly, the study makes no claims about participants' perceptions, attitudes, or responses to political allusions. Its findings are limited to the patterns and meanings observable within the selected textual corpus.

Research Instrument

The study used a researcher-developed coding matrix and coding guide as its primary research instrument. The coding matrix was designed to systematically record and classify political allusions identified in the selected media articles according to type of allusion, framing strategy, and rhetorical function. Allusions were classified as historical, mythological, religious, literary, or popular-cultural, while framing strategies were categorized as hero, villain, or victim. Rhetorical functions were analyzed using the Aristotelian appeals of ethos, pathos, and logos. The coding guide provided operational criteria for identifying political allusions and distinguishing them from ordinary political references, conventional metaphors, idiomatic expressions, and literal descriptions. For rhetorical classification, the dominant function of an allusion within its immediate textual context was considered, recognizing that an expression may potentially serve more than one rhetorical purpose. The completed coding matrix served as the basis for the frequency distributions and qualitative interpretation presented in the study..

Data Gathering Procedure

Each article was downloaded, catalogued, and encoded into a qualitative data matrix. A preliminary reading was conducted to familiarize oneself with the content and to identify segments containing explicit or implicit allusions. To ensure methodological rigor, the following steps were taken: Each item included the headline, publication date, author or agency, outlet, article type, and thematic classification. Articles were broken into analytical units (paragraphs or sentences) where allusion markers were present. Only words, phrases, or symbolic references that met Xoshimova and Maxmudjonova's (2023) criteria for allusion—requiring shared cultural knowledge—were coded. Similar allusions across different stories were cross-checked to determine whether they were individualized expressions or broader discursive patterns. The analytical

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process began with the identification and classification of allusions using the typology of Xoshimova and Maxmudjonova (2023), which categorizes allusive expressions into historical, mythological, religious, literary, and popular culture references. Allusions drawn from the corpus—such as "reign of terror," "dictator's lineage," "bloodbath election," "balimbing," "man of honor," "Lady Justice blindfolded," and "Filipino is worth dying for"—served as coding anchors. Each allusion was coded according to its linguistic form, symbolic referent, cultural or historical source, rhetorical effect, narrative positioning, and the political actor or event it indexed. Following this, a framing analysis was conducted using the hero–villain–victim model by Frermann et al. (2023) to examine how allusions contributed to moral and narrative structuring in political discourse. Allusions that emphasized integrity, courage, or patriotism were treated as activating hero frames; those that highlighted threat, corruption, abuse, or immorality were classified as villain frames; and those that foregrounded persecution, harm, or systemic vulnerability were labeled as victim frames. These patterns were compared across ABS-CBN, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Manila Bulletin, The Philippine Star, and Rappler to identify tendencies toward moralizing or dramatizing narratives. To assess persuasive functions, each allusion was further examined through Aristotelian rhetorical appeals: ethos for credibility and character, pathos for emotional activation, and logos for logical simplification or explanatory metaphors. Expressions such as "cancer of corruption," "bloodbath elections," and "made of sterner stuff" exemplified logos-, pathos-, and ethos-based allusions, respectively, illustrating how such language shapes audience interpretation through moral and emotional cues. Finally, allusions were interpreted on Fairclough's sociocultural plane (CDA Level 3) by connecting textual choices to broader issues such as authoritarian memory (Arugay et al., 2024; Teehankee, 2023), corruption discourse, partisan identity formation, religious moral reasoning (Bondoc, 2025; Keum, 2024), and the affective dimensions of media polarization (de Guzman, 2024; Wirz & Wirth, 2024). Trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation across the five outlets, constant comparison of coded allusions, analytic cross-checking resembling peer debriefing, thick description for interpretive transparency, and reflexive analysis to mitigate researcher bias. Collectively, these procedures reflect the qualitative rigor.

Results and Discussions

Research Question 1: What types of political allusions are identified in the selected Philippine political media articles in terms of historical allusions; mythological allusions; religious allusions; literary allusions; and popular-cultural allusions?

Table 1. Frequency of Political Allusions across Five News Outlets (2024-2025)

Type of Allusion	ABS-CBN	Inquirer	Manila Bulletin	Phil. Star	Rappler	Total
1. Historical	4	5	5	0	8	22
2. Mythological	0	0	1	0	0	1
3. Religious	0	1	2	2	0	5
4. Literary	0	0	4	3	2	9
5. Popular Culture	0	2	5	2	4	13
Total	**4**	**8**	**17**	**7**	**14**	**50**

The analysis identified 50 political allusion instances across the five selected Philippine media outlets. Historical allusions were the most frequently identified category, with 22 instances (44%), followed by popular-cultural allusions with 13 (26%), literary allusions with 9 (18%), religious allusions with 5 (10%), and mythological allusions with 1 (2%). Historical allusions occurred in ABS-CBN (4), Philippine Daily Inquirer (5), Manila Bulletin (5), and Rappler (8), while no historical allusion was recorded for The Philippine Star. Popular-cultural allusions were identified in the Philippine Daily Inquirer (2), Manila Bulletin (5), The Philippine Star (2), and Rappler (4). Literary allusions appeared in Manila Bulletin (4), The Philippine Star (3), and Rappler (2). Religious allusions were identified in the Philippine Daily Inquirer (1), Manila Bulletin (2), and The Philippine Star (2), while the single mythological allusion occurred in Manila Bulletin.

The predominance of historical allusions indicates that political references to the past were the most frequently observed form of allusive language in the corpus. Expressions such as "reign of terror," "dictator's lineage," and "plundered past" connected contemporary political issues with recognizable narratives of dictatorship, political violence, corruption, and contested political legacies. This pattern is consistent with Naciscione's (2023) view that allusions derive their communicative force from shared cultural and cognitive knowledge. In the Philippine context, historical references can provide a textual connection between contemporary political events and established narratives of political continuity and rupture (Arugay et al., 2024).

The relatively high occurrence of popular-cultural and literary allusions further suggests that political media discourse draws not only from formal political history but also from familiar cultural expressions.

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References such as “balimbing,” “Leni Magic,” “political circus,” and “love bus” invoke recognizable cultural associations that allow political situations to be expressed through familiar imagery. Literary references such as “man of honor” and “made of sterner stuff” similarly associate political actors with established ideas of character, courage, and virtue. In this sense, allusions function as forms of cultural shorthand: rather than explaining an entire narrative, a writer can invoke a familiar reference and allow its associated meanings to enter the political text.

The distribution also reveals differences in the occurrence of allusion types across the selected outlets. Manila Bulletin recorded the highest total number of coded allusion instances (17), followed by Rappler (14), Philippine Daily Inquirer (8), The Philippine Star (7), and ABS-CBN (4). These differences should be understood as characteristics of the selected corpus rather than as evidence that one outlet generally uses more allusions than another, since the study was not designed to measure overall publication volume or editorial frequency.

Research Question 2: How are political allusions embedded within framing strategies in terms of hero framing; villain framing; and victim framing?

Table 2. Framing Strategies of Political Allusions across News Outlets

News Outlet	Hero Frames	Villain Frames	Victim Frames	Total Frames
1. ABS-CBN	0	3	1	4
2. Philippine Daily Inquirer	2	6	0	8
3. Manila Bulletin	2	15	0	17
4. Philippine Star	0	3	4	7
5. Rappler	3	11	0	14
Total	**7**	**38**	**5**	**50**

The analysis next examined how political allusions were embedded within hero, villain, and victim frames. Villain framing accounted for 38 of the 50 coded instances (76%), making it the dominant framing strategy. Hero framing accounted for 7 instances (14%), while victim framing accounted for 5 instances (10%). Villain frames occurred across all five outlets, with 3 instances in ABS-CBN, 6 in the Philippine Daily Inquirer, 15 in Manila Bulletin, 3 in The Philippine Star, and 11 in Rappler. Hero frames were identified in the Philippine Daily Inquirer (2), Manila Bulletin (2), and Rappler (3), while victim frames appeared in ABS-CBN (1) and The Philippine Star (4).

The strong concentration of villain framing indicates that the coded allusions were more frequently associated with representations of misconduct, threat, corruption, abuse, and political danger than with representations of heroism or victimhood. Expressions such as “drug lord of drug lords,” “ghost projects,” “big fish escaping accountability,” and “dictator’s lineage” position political actors or political conditions within narratives of wrongdoing. Within Frermann et al.’s (2023) hero–villain–victim framework, such expressions can be understood as linguistic resources that contribute to the construction of antagonistic political roles.

Historical allusions were particularly compatible with villain framing because references to authoritarianism, corruption, and political abuse provide recognizable associations through which contemporary political controversies can be situated. For example, the expression “dictator’s lineage” connects a contemporary political actor with an established historical narrative. Its significance therefore extends beyond the literal reference to family lineage and invokes broader associations with the political legacy of dictatorship. Similarly, expressions such as “cancer of governance” and “ghost projects” represent political problems through images of systemic deterioration, concealment, or threat.

Hero framing appeared considerably less frequently, with seven instances. References such as “Leni Magic,” “man of honor,” “made of sterner stuff,” and “Filipino is worth dying for” associate political figures with qualities such as courage, integrity, sacrifice, or reform. These expressions provide a contrasting narrative position in which political actors are represented through positive moral or patriotic associations. Victim framing, although also less frequent, foregrounded vulnerability and harm through expressions such as “red-tagged,” “designated survivor,” and “perennial sufferers of history.”

The distribution therefore suggests that the allusions in the selected corpus frequently participated in a moralized narrative structure, particularly through villain framing. This finding is consistent with Philippine media studies showing that political discourse can employ moral and affective frames in representing political actors and issues (Chua, 2024; Dela Cruz & Estuar, 2023). However, the findings demonstrate how these narrative positions are represented within the texts; they do not establish that readers consequently adopted the same evaluations.

Research Question 3: What rhetorical functions are associated with the identified political allusions in terms of: ethos; pathos; and logos?

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Table 3. Intended Rhetorical Appeals of Political Allusions

News Outlet	Ethos	Pathos	Logos	Total
1. ABS-CBN	0	3	1	4
2. Philippine Daily Inquirer	1	7	0	8
3. Manila Bulletin	1	16	0	17
4. Philippine Star	0	3	4	7
5. Rappler	3	11	0	14
Total	**5**	**40**	**5**	**50**

The third stage of analysis examined the dominant rhetorical function of each coded political allusion through the Aristotelian categories of ethos, pathos, and logos. Pathos accounted for 40 of the 50 instances (80%), while ethos and logos each accounted for 5 instances (10%). Pathos occurred across all five outlets, with 3 instances in ABS-CBN, 7 in the Philippine Daily Inquirer, 16 in Manila Bulletin, 3 in The Philippine Star, and 11 in Rappler. Ethos appeared in the Philippine Daily Inquirer (1), Manila Bulletin (1), and Rappler (3), while logos occurred in ABS-CBN (1) and The Philippine Star (4).

The predominance of pathos indicates that the political allusions in the corpus were most frequently associated with emotional meanings. Expressions such as “bloodbath elections” and “held hostage by corruption” evoke fear, danger, conflict, and vulnerability. Similarly, references to suffering, persecution, and political struggle activate emotional associations that can make political issues more affectively salient within the text. This finding is consistent with scholarship emphasizing the role of emotional and moral language in political communication (Mohamad, 2022).

Ethos-based allusions, although less frequent, were associated with representations of character, credibility, morality, and political integrity. Expressions such as “man of honor” and “made of sterner stuff” position political actors through qualities associated with strength and moral character. Logos-oriented expressions, meanwhile, used familiar associations to provide conceptual or explanatory shorthand. References such as “cancer of corruption” conceptualize corruption through the image of a malignant and invasive condition, thereby presenting a complex political problem through a familiar conceptual structure.

The findings also demonstrate that rhetorical functions cannot necessarily be treated as mutually exclusive. An allusion may simultaneously evoke emotion, establish character, and provide an analogy. For this study, however, each coded instance was assigned according to its dominant rhetorical function within its immediate textual context. Thus, the categories represent the primary rhetorical role identified during analysis rather than an assertion that each allusion possesses only one possible meaning.

Ethical Considerations

All data were sourced from publicly available news reports, meaning no direct human participation was involved. Ethical safeguards were followed in accordance with Bell and Bryman’s (2007) principles regarding respect for intellectual property, accurate representation of sources, and analytical integrity. The study also adhered to the Philippine Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173) and maintained fidelity to the original contexts of all quoted texts.

Conclusion

This study explored how political allusions function within Philippine news media and found that they serve as powerful linguistic devices that shape political meaning, ideological positioning, and public interpretation. Guided by Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis (as cited in Sunitko et al., 2025) and Aristotelian rhetorical theory (Mohamad, 2022), the analysis of fifty political articles published from 2024 to 2025 demonstrates that political allusions operate across textual, discursive, and sociopolitical dimensions of news reporting. The predominance of historical allusions—particularly those referencing Martial Law, dictatorship, people power, and landmark political controversies—highlights the enduring role of collective memory in political sense-making. As Arugay et al. (2024) emphasize, Philippine politics is frequently interpreted through narratives of continuity and rupture, with current leaders viewed in relation to historical legacies. These allusions thus function as interpretive anchors that guide audiences toward particular political readings, supporting Naciscione’s (2023) argument that allusions rely on shared cultural and cognitive patterns to create meaning. The integration of these allusions within hero, villain, and victim frames further illustrates how journalists construct moral and ideological landscapes. Villain narratives—such as those depicting abusive leadership, corruption scandals, or authoritarian tendencies—align with findings by Chua (2024) and Dela Cruz and Estuar (2023), who argue that Philippine media frequently use moralized frames to position political actors. Hero frames, on the other hand, elevate reformist figures through symbolic or historical associations, while victim frames highlight systemic injustice and public vulnerability. These patterns confirm Frermann et al.’s (2023) model that news discourse often relies on narrative conflict and moral positioning to structure political stories. Rhetorically, political allusions

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performed distinct persuasive functions through ethos, pathos, and logos, validating the relevance of Aristotelian appeals in contemporary political communication. Ethos-based allusions positioned leaders within moral or immoral historical lineages, shaping credibility and trust (Teneva, 2021). Pathos-driven allusions—such as those invoking fear, outrage, sympathy, or hope—mobilized emotional engagement consistent with observations by Bondoc (2025) and Keum (2024) about the moral character of Philippine political discourse. Logos-oriented allusions used metaphors and familiar cultural references to simplify complex political controversies, echoing Xoshimova and Maxmudjonova's (2023) claim that allusions enhance cognitive accessibility. Taken together, these findings reveal that political allusions function as an ideological technology within Philippine journalism—one that structures public memory, frames political identity, and mediates emotional and logical responses to political events. They demonstrate that news media do not merely report facts but actively shape political consciousness through symbolic, historical, and rhetorical cues. This supports de Guzman's (2024) observation that Philippine media framing often operates through affective and cultural narratives rather than purely informational ones. Ultimately, this study concludes that political allusions are central to the communicative and ideological work of news media in the Philippines. They bridge the past and present, mobilize moral emotions, and provide narrative coherence to complex political realities. Understanding these allusions enriches media literacy, strengthens critical citizenship, and offers scholars deeper insight into how language shapes democratic discourse. As political climates continue to shift and historical revisionism intensifies, critically examining the rhetorical and ideological functions of allusions becomes increasingly essential for safeguarding informed public engagement.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed. First, journalists and media practitioners may use political allusions with greater contextual clarity and awareness of their framing and rhetorical implications. Because historical and emotionally charged allusions were prominent in the corpus, providing sufficient context may help readers distinguish between factual information, cultural references, and interpretive language. Second, media and communication educators may incorporate political allusions, framing, and rhetorical appeals into media literacy instruction to help learners critically examine how historical, cultural, and emotional references contribute to the representation of political actors and issues. Such instruction may encourage readers to recognize symbolic language and evaluate political narratives beyond their immediate emotional appeal. Third, future researchers may expand the corpus to include a larger number of media organizations, longer publication periods, and different forms of political communication, including broadcast media, social media, and Filipino-language or regional-language content. Comparative studies may also examine news, opinion, and editorial genres separately to determine whether the use and function of political allusions vary across genres. Finally, audience-based or mixed-methods research may complement the present textual analysis by examining how readers actually interpret and respond to political allusions. This would provide evidence beyond textual representation and allow future studies to investigate whether and how the patterns identified in this study relate to audience perceptions, political attitudes, or media interpretation.

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