KOLANO: Journal of Multi-Disciplinary Sciences
Vol 7, Issue 1, September 2026, Page. 14-23
ISSN: 2723-4312 (Media Online)
Available at: https://ejournal.sangadjimediapublishing.id/index.php/kolano

Political Communication and Persuasive Rhetoric: An Analysis of Ethos, Pathos, and Logos in Prabowo Subianto's Presidential Discourse

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Abstract. Political communication plays a crucial role in shaping presidential credibility, public engagement, and democratic legitimacy. However, the increasing circulation of political statements through digital media creates challenges in maintaining consistency between intended messages and public interpretations. This study examines Prabowo Subianto's presidential discourse through Aristotle's rhetorical framework of ethos, pathos, and logos, focusing on how these dimensions construct political messages and shape presidential communication. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the study applies rhetorical analysis to selected presidential speeches, public statements, media reports, and commentaries published during his administration. Data were collected through documentation and analyzed by identifying rhetorical expressions associated with credibility, emotional appeals, and rational argumentation. The findings reveal that Prabowo's political communication combines institutional authority and national development narratives with assertive language and emotional expression. However, controversies surrounding his responses to criticism illustrate potential tensions between presidential credibility, emotional intensity, and evidence-based argumentation. The study identifies rhetorical imbalance as a central challenge in presidential communication, particularly when emotional expressions overshadow substantive policy explanations. Theoretically, this research extends the application of Aristotelian rhetoric to contemporary presidential political communication. Practically, it highlights the importance of credible leadership, emotional sensitivity, consistent messaging, and rational responses to public criticism in strengthening democratic communication and government accountability.

Keywords: Political Communication; Presidential Discourse; Aristotelian Rhetoric; Persuasive Communication.

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1. Introduction

Political communication plays a fundamental role in contemporary democratic governance, particularly in shaping public perceptions, articulating government priorities, establishing political legitimacy, and maintaining relationships between political leaders and citizens. In democratic societies, communication is not merely a mechanism for transmitting political information but also a strategic process through which political actors construct meanings, negotiate public support, and influence interpretations of government policies. Political leaders therefore rely on communication strategies to explain political decisions, articulate national visions, respond to public expectations, and establish their positions within broader political and institutional environments [1]. The significance of political communication has become increasingly pronounced alongside the transformation of the media landscape, where traditional mass media, digital platforms, and social networks have created interconnected spaces for political discourse and public engagement. Chadwick [2] describes this transformation through the concept of the hybrid media system, in which political communication operates through interactions between established media institutions and emerging digital communication platforms.

Consequently, presidential communication has evolved beyond formal speeches and official statements into a continuous process of political meaning-making involving multiple audiences and communication channels [3], [4].

Within this context, presidential political communication represents a particularly important dimension of political leadership because presidents occupy a central position in articulating government policies, defining national priorities, and communicating the direction of the state. Presidential discourse does not simply convey administrative information; it also performs symbolic and persuasive functions by constructing leadership identities, reinforcing political narratives, and communicating relationships between the government and society. Through speeches, public statements, policy announcements, and official addresses, presidents seek to establish credibility, communicate political commitments, and generate public understanding of government initiatives. The effectiveness of these communication practices depends not only on the substantive content of political messages but also on the rhetorical strategies employed to present arguments and engage audiences. In this regard, political rhetoric provides an analytical perspective for understanding how presidential messages are constructed to achieve persuasive and communicative objectives.

One of the foundational theoretical approaches to understanding persuasive political communication is Aristotle's theory of rhetoric, which identifies three principal modes of persuasion: ethos, pathos, and logos. These rhetorical dimensions explain how speakers establish credibility, appeal to audience emotions, and construct rational arguments to support their messages [5]. Ethos refers to the credibility and perceived character of the speaker, which influence the extent to which audiences consider a message trustworthy. Pathos concerns the emotional dimensions of communication, particularly the speaker's ability to evoke feelings, establish emotional connections, and relate political messages to the experiences and values of audiences. Meanwhile, logos refers to the logical structure of arguments, including the use of evidence, reasoning, factual information, and coherent explanations to support political claims. These three dimensions constitute complementary mechanisms of persuasion rather than independent rhetorical elements. Their interaction enables political leaders to construct messages that appeal simultaneously to the perceived credibility of the speaker, the emotional dispositions of audiences, and their capacity for rational judgment.

The relevance of Aristotelian rhetoric in political communication lies in its ability to explain how political messages acquire persuasive meaning within specific social and political contexts. Political credibility, for instance, cannot be understood solely through a leader's formal institutional position but also through the ways in which leadership character, experience, and political commitments are represented in public discourse [6], [7]. Similarly, emotional appeals are not necessarily expressed through explicitly emotional language; they may also be constructed through national symbols, collective identities, historical narratives, and references to shared social experiences. Rational persuasion, meanwhile, involves the presentation of policy arguments, explanations of political decisions, and the articulation of relationships between national problems and proposed solutions. Stucki and Sager [8] demonstrate the analytical relevance of Aristotelian rhetorical appeals in examining how evidence and argumentative structures are incorporated into political and policy framing. Thus, the ethos, pathos, and logos framework provides a useful theoretical foundation for investigating the persuasive dimensions of presidential political communication.

In Indonesia, the political communication of President Prabowo Subianto provides an important context for examining the relationship between presidential discourse and persuasive rhetoric. As the eighth President of the Republic of Indonesia, Prabowo's public communication constitutes an important subject for understanding how presidential leadership is articulated through political messages, national narratives, and policy-related discourse. His communication practices can be examined through different settings, including presidential addresses, government policy announcements, national speeches, and international diplomatic engagements. These communication settings involve different audiences and institutional expectations, requiring political messages to be adapted to particular communicative purposes. Consequently, examining Prabowo's presidential discourse through an Aristotelian framework offers an opportunity to understand how political credibility, emotional engagement, and rational argumentation are constructed across different dimensions of presidential communication.

Previous studies have begun to investigate Prabowo Subianto's rhetorical strategies using Aristotle's framework. Isa [9], for example, examined Prabowo's rhetoric in the first presidential debate of the 2024 election, focusing on the use of ethos, pathos, and logos in electoral communication. The study connected rhetorical

strategies with the broader context of political persuasion during the presidential campaign. Another study by Dama et al. examined Prabowo's 2024 presidential inauguration speech and identified the presence of credibility-building, emotional appeals, and rational arguments in the construction of presidential messages. More recently, Trisnaningtyas et al. [10] investigated four presidential speeches delivered between February and May 2025, highlighting the use of rhetorical strategies in constructing political narratives and leadership images. These studies demonstrate the continuing relevance of Aristotelian rhetoric for understanding Prabowo's political communication across electoral and presidential contexts.

Nevertheless, the existing literature also indicates an opportunity to extend the analysis beyond individual speeches or specific political events. Studies focusing on presidential debates primarily examine electoral persuasion, while research on inauguration speeches emphasizes the symbolic articulation of presidential commitments. Similarly, studies examining selected post-inauguration speeches provide insights into rhetorical strategies within particular communication settings. However, a broader political communication perspective is necessary to understand how ethos, pathos, and logos operate in relation to one another across presidential discourse, particularly when political messages address different audiences, institutional contexts, and communication objectives. The analytical challenge is therefore not merely to identify the occurrence of rhetorical elements but to explain how these persuasive appeals interact in constructing presidential credibility, communicating political priorities, and shaping the meaning of government discourse.

Against this background, the present study examines political communication and persuasive rhetoric in Prabowo Subianto's presidential discourse through Aristotle's framework of ethos, pathos, and logos. Specifically, it investigates how presidential credibility is constructed through ethos, how emotional engagement and collective identification are developed through pathos, and how political positions and government-related messages are supported through logos. Furthermore, the study explores the interaction among these rhetorical dimensions in communicating presidential priorities and constructing persuasive political messages. By situating Aristotelian rhetorical analysis within the broader field of political communication, this research seeks to contribute to the understanding of presidential discourse, political persuasion, and the communicative construction of leadership in contemporary Indonesian democracy.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative research approach using Aristotelian rhetorical analysis to examine political communication and persuasive rhetoric in Prabowo Subianto’s presidential discourse. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the study focuses on interpreting the meanings, rhetorical strategies, and persuasive mechanisms embedded in presidential political messages rather than measuring communication effects statistically. The analysis is grounded in Aristotle’s rhetorical framework, which identifies three fundamental modes of persuasion: *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. These dimensions provide an analytical foundation for understanding how presidential discourse constructs political credibility, generates emotional engagement, and develops rational arguments to communicate political positions and government-related messages.

The research focuses on Prabowo Subianto’s presidential discourse during his administration, beginning in October 2024. The primary data consist of presidential speeches, official statements, policy-related addresses, inauguration speeches, and other publicly available presidential communications. These materials are obtained from official government websites, presidential communication channels, and credible media publications that provide relevant transcripts or documentation of presidential statements. Secondary data are collected from academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and relevant scholarly publications concerning political communication, presidential discourse, persuasive rhetoric, and Aristotle’s rhetorical theory. The use of multiple documentary sources enables the study to examine presidential communication within its broader political, institutional, and sociocultural context.

Data selection is conducted through purposive sampling, whereby documents are selected based on their relevance to the research objectives. The selection criteria include: (1) the documents contain direct statements or speeches delivered by Prabowo Subianto in his capacity as President of the Republic of Indonesia; (2) the content addresses political issues, government policies, national priorities, leadership, or public affairs; (3) the documents contain identifiable rhetorical elements relevant to *ethos*, *pathos*, or *logos*; and (4) the sources provide sufficient contextual information to support systematic interpretation. Documents that are incomplete, lack verifiable sources, or do not directly relate to presidential political communication are excluded from the analysis.

Data collection is conducted through documentation and literature review techniques. The documentation process involves identifying, retrieving, organizing, and reviewing relevant presidential speeches and public statements. Each selected document is examined to identify significant expressions, arguments, narratives, and communicative strategies. Relevant textual segments are subsequently organized into an analytical corpus and classified according to the three rhetorical dimensions. Contextual information, including the communication setting, intended audience, political issue, and purpose of the message, is also recorded to ensure that rhetorical expressions are interpreted in relation to the circumstances in which they were delivered.

Data analysis follows a systematic process involving data familiarization, identification of rhetorical elements, thematic categorization, contextual interpretation, and conclusion development. First, the selected documents are reviewed repeatedly to obtain an overall understanding of their content and communicative context. Second, relevant textual segments are identified and classified into three analytical categories. *Ethos* is examined through expressions and communication strategies that construct presidential credibility, leadership identity, authority, competence, and trustworthiness. *Pathos* is analyzed through emotional appeals, national identity narratives, expressions of solidarity, shared values, and language intended to generate emotional connections with audiences. *Logos* is examined through the use of factual information, evidence, logical reasoning, causal explanations, and arguments supporting political positions or government policies. These categories are applied to identify not only the presence of rhetorical elements but also how they function within broader presidential messages.

The analysis further considers the interaction among *ethos, pathos,* and *logos* in constructing persuasive political communication. Rather than treating the three rhetorical dimensions as isolated categories, the study examines how credibility, emotional appeals, and rational argumentation complement or reinforce one another within specific presidential discourses. Particular attention is given to the relationship between rhetorical strategies, communication objectives, political contexts, and intended audiences. This analytical process makes it possible to explain how presidential messages are constructed to communicate political priorities, establish public credibility, and articulate government positions.

To enhance data credibility and analytical rigor, the study employs source triangulation by comparing presidential statements across different documentary sources and verifying their contextual consistency. Primary statements are prioritized when available, while secondary media reports are used to provide additional contextual information rather than replace original presidential communications. The analytical interpretations are also grounded in established concepts of Aristotelian rhetoric and relevant political communication literature. Finally, the findings are presented descriptively and interpretively, supported by selected excerpts from presidential discourse and their corresponding theoretical interpretations. Through this procedure, the study seeks to provide a systematic understanding of how *ethos, pathos,* and *logos* operate as persuasive rhetorical strategies in Prabowo Subianto's presidential political communication.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Political Communication Context and the Emergence of Rhetorical Controversy

The analysis identifies three interrelated dimensions of political communication in Prabowo Subianto's presidential discourse: the construction of presidential credibility (ethos), the mobilization of emotional responses (pathos), and the presentation of rational arguments (logos). The documentary materials reveal a recurring tension between the government's substantive policy messages and the public interpretation of its communication style. This tension is particularly visible in the controversy surrounding Prabowo's statement at the 28th anniversary of the National Mandate Party (PAN) on September 18, 2026, when he referred to critics and experts using the expression, "The smarter they are, the more foolish they become"[11]. The statement emerged within a broader discussion of Indonesia's development aspirations, child nutrition, stunting, education, and the capacity of future generations to compete internationally.

Although the broader speech addressed important national development priorities, the controversial expression attracted particular attention because it could be interpreted as a personal attack against individuals who questioned government policies. This illustrates a central paradox in presidential political communication: a leader may intend to emphasize policy achievements or challenge critical perspectives, yet a particular expression can redirect public attention from the substantive message toward the controversy surrounding the speaker's language. The documentary materials also indicate that concerns about government communication were not limited to this particular speech. Media reports and public commentary published during 2025 and 2026 described

several instances of ambiguous, contradictory, or controversial statements by government officials. These accounts raised questions about the consistency of public messaging, the coordination of government communication, and the ability of political leaders to explain policies clearly. An April 2025 report by Akbar, for example, discussed Prabowo's acknowledgment of shortcomings in government communication, while Grehenson's September 2025 report highlighted calls for improvements in public communication. Tempo's April 2025 commentary similarly addressed problems in the communication practices of the Prabowo administration.

Taken together, these materials suggest that presidential communication should not be evaluated solely through the content of individual policy statements. It should also be examined through the consistency, clarity, tone, and argumentative quality of messages delivered by political leaders and government institutions. In this context, Aristotle's rhetorical framework provides an analytical basis for examining how presidential authority, emotional expression, and rational justification interact in the construction of political messages.

3.2 Ethos: Presidential Authority, Credibility, and the Management of Public Trust

Ethos refers to the credibility and character of a speaker as perceived through communication. In presidential discourse, ethos is particularly significant because the speaker does not communicate merely as a private individual but as a political leader who represents the government and occupies a position of institutional authority. The analysis identifies two contrasting dimensions of ethos in Prabowo's presidential communication: the authority derived from presidential leadership and the credibility shaped by the manner in which that authority is communicated.

First, Prabowo's position as President provides an institutional foundation for his rhetorical authority. His statements concerning national development, child nutrition, stunting, education, and Indonesia's international competitiveness reflect an attempt to establish a leadership identity associated with national ambition and strategic transformation. By addressing issues related to human development and the country's future, the president positions himself as a leader concerned with long-term national progress. These themes potentially reinforce an ethos of responsibility, national commitment, and executive leadership. However, institutional authority does not automatically guarantee communicative credibility. The controversy surrounding his reference to critical experts illustrates how the choice of language can complicate the construction of presidential ethos. Rather than directly addressing the substance of the criticism, the expression may be interpreted as questioning the intellectual capacity or credibility of those expressing disagreement. Such a rhetorical approach risks shifting the discussion from the validity of competing arguments to the personal characteristics of the individuals presenting them.

From the perspective of ethos, this distinction is important. A credible political leader is not necessarily one who avoids disagreement, but one who demonstrates the ability to respond to disagreement through reasoned explanation, consistency, and respect for alternative perspectives. Presidential authority can strengthen a message, but it can also increase the consequences of inappropriate language because statements delivered by the head of state carry institutional and symbolic significance. This finding is consistent with Aristotle's understanding of ethos, in which the persuasive power of a speaker is closely associated with the character demonstrated through discourse. It also corresponds with Maxwell's (1998) argument that leadership influence extends beyond formal authority and depends on the ability to establish trust and meaningful relationships. In this regard, presidential credibility is not constructed exclusively through policy achievements or official status; it is also shaped by how the president treats individuals and groups who express different opinions.

The broader concerns about government communication further demonstrate that ethos operates at both individual and institutional levels. Reports of contradictory or ambiguous public statements suggest that the credibility of presidential communication may also depend on the coherence of messages delivered by the government as a whole. When communication among political leaders and government officials appears inconsistent, the public may encounter difficulties in identifying the government's actual policy position. The findings therefore indicate that Prabowo's presidential ethos contains a tension between the authority associated with his leadership position and the credibility that must be continuously reinforced through communicative conduct. This tension does not necessarily establish that public trust has declined because of a particular statement. Rather, it demonstrates how controversial language and inconsistent messaging can create challenges for the maintenance of presidential credibility.

3.3 **Pathos: Emotional Appeals, Political Assertiveness, and Audience Reception**

Pathos concerns the use of emotional appeals to influence how audiences understand and respond to political messages. The documentary materials reveal that emotional expression constitutes an important feature of the communication style attributed to Prabowo. His public speaking is frequently described in the selected commentary as spontaneous, assertive, energetic, and emotionally expressive. Such characteristics can contribute to a strong political persona and create a sense of direct engagement between the leader and the audience. The contrast between Prabowo's earlier public image as a firm and military-oriented political figure and his later campaign image as a more relaxed and approachable personality illustrates the strategic importance of emotional representation in political communication. The transformation of public imagery, including the use of informal gestures and entertaining campaign performances, demonstrates how political leaders may employ different emotional registers to establish proximity with diverse audiences. These representations suggest that pathos is not confined to spoken language; it can also be constructed through gestures, performance, tone, and symbolic presentation.

Nevertheless, emotional expression can generate different interpretations depending on the context in which it is delivered. In the PAN anniversary speech, the controversial reference to critical experts illustrates how assertive language may be interpreted as an expression of frustration or political confrontation. Although such language may be intended to reinforce determination or challenge criticism, it may also generate negative emotional responses among audiences who perceive it as dismissive or disrespectful. This situation reveals the dual character of pathos in presidential communication. On the one hand, emotionally charged expressions can strengthen audience engagement, reinforce leadership identity, and communicate a sense of urgency regarding national priorities. On the other hand, excessive emotional intensity may overshadow the substantive arguments being presented. When the emotional dimension becomes dominant, the audience may focus more on the tone and personal implications of a statement than on the policy issue that the speaker intends to address.

The role of digital media further intensifies this dynamic. In contemporary political communication, short segments of speeches can circulate independently of their original context. A controversial expression may consequently receive greater visibility than the broader message concerning national development, education, or public welfare. This process can produce a discrepancy between the speaker's intended meaning and the audience's interpretation of the message. Austin's [12] theory of speech acts provides an additional perspective for understanding this phenomenon. Language does not merely transmit information; it also performs social actions. A presidential statement may function simultaneously as an expression of disagreement, a demonstration of authority, and a symbolic positioning of the government toward its critics. Therefore, the interpretation of presidential rhetoric should consider not only what the speaker intends to communicate but also the social meanings and potential consequences generated by the utterance. The findings suggest that pathos is an important but potentially problematic dimension of Prabowo's political communication. Emotional assertiveness may strengthen the visibility and distinctiveness of presidential leadership. However, when emotional expression is not balanced with sensitivity to audience diversity and the institutional responsibilities of the presidency, it may increase the possibility of misunderstanding and public controversy. The effectiveness of pathos therefore depends not simply on the intensity of emotional expression but on its appropriateness to the political context and the audience being addressed.

3.4 **Logos: Rational Argumentation, Policy Justification, and Responses to Criticism**

Logos refers to the use of reasoning, evidence, and logical argumentation to establish the validity of a political message. In presidential communication, logos is essential because policy decisions require explanations that enable citizens to understand the problems being addressed, the rationale behind government actions, and the expected consequences of proposed solutions. The selected materials reveal that Prabowo's public discourse frequently addresses substantive national issues, including child nutrition, stunting, education, human development, and Indonesia's ambition to become a developed country. These themes provide an important foundation for policy-oriented argumentation. They indicate that presidential communication is not exclusively concerned with political image or emotional mobilization but also seeks to establish the government's development agenda.

However, the controversy surrounding the president's statement about critical experts raises questions about the extent to which disagreement is addressed through rational argumentation. The central issue is not whether government leaders must accept every criticism presented by academics, experts, or civil society. Rather, the issue

concerns the argumentative process through which competing claims are evaluated. When a leader challenges the competence or intelligence of critics without directly examining the substance of their arguments, the discussion risks moving away from logos toward personal confrontation. This tendency can be examined through the concept of the ad hominem fallacy. Copi et al. [13] explain that ad hominem reasoning directs attention toward the characteristics of the person presenting an argument rather than evaluating the argument itself. In the context of presidential discourse, a statement that appears to discredit critics personally does not, by itself, demonstrate that their policy assessments or empirical evidence are incorrect. The validity of an argument must be evaluated through the quality of its evidence, reasoning, and supporting assumptions.

From this perspective, a more effective form of presidential argumentation would involve presenting counterevidence, clarifying methodological disagreements, explaining policy considerations, and demonstrating how government decisions respond to the problems identified by critics. Such a response would enable the public to assess competing positions based on their substantive merits rather than the institutional status or personal characteristics of the individuals involved. The broader concerns about government communication also indicate that logos requires consistency and clarity across official messages. Ambiguous or contradictory statements may weaken the public's ability to understand policy objectives and distinguish between official government positions and individual interpretations. When different officials communicate inconsistent explanations, the logical coherence of government messaging becomes difficult to maintain.

Habermas's [14] conception of deliberative democracy is relevant to this finding. Public decisions gain communicative legitimacy when they can be discussed and evaluated through the exchange of reasons. From this perspective, political communication should provide opportunities for citizens and other stakeholders to question policy decisions, examine evidence, and participate in public reasoning. The government's responsibility is therefore not limited to announcing decisions; it also includes explaining the reasons that justify them. The findings indicate that logos represents an important area for strengthening Prabowo's presidential communication. Although the selected speech addressed substantive development priorities, the controversy surrounding the statement about experts illustrates how a confrontational expression can divert attention from the rational justification of public policy. Consequently, the persuasive effectiveness of presidential discourse depends on the capacity to connect policy objectives with clear evidence, coherent reasoning, and substantive responses to criticism.

3.5 **The Interaction of Ethos, Pathos, and Logos in Presidential Political Communication**

The analysis demonstrates that ethos, pathos, and logos should not be understood as isolated rhetorical elements. Rather, their persuasive effectiveness depends on how they interact within a particular political and communication context. The selected materials reveal that Prabowo's presidential discourse combines institutional authority, emotionally assertive expression, and references to national development priorities. However, the interaction among these elements does not always produce a consistent persuasive message. In terms of ethos, presidential authority provides the institutional basis for communicating national priorities. In terms of pathos, assertive and emotionally expressive language contributes to a recognizable leadership style and may strengthen audience engagement. In terms of logos, references to nutrition, education, stunting, and national development provide substantive issues through which government policies can be explained and justified. These dimensions collectively form the rhetorical structure of presidential communication.

Nevertheless, the controversy surrounding the statement about critical experts illustrates how an imbalance among the three dimensions may undermine the overall message. When emotional expression dominates the response to criticism, the credibility of the speaker may become a subject of public debate, while the rational examination of policy arguments receives less attention. In this situation, the potential persuasive contribution of logos is weakened by the prominence of emotional confrontation. This interaction can also be understood through the distinction between the intention of the speaker and the interpretation of the audience. A president may intend to demonstrate determination, challenge what he considers inaccurate criticism, or defend government policies. However, audiences may interpret the same expression as dismissive, confrontational, or insufficiently responsive to alternative viewpoints. Political communication therefore involves not only the construction of messages but also the negotiation of meaning between political leaders and their audiences.

The problem becomes more significant in the digital media environment, where political statements are frequently circulated in short, decontextualized segments. The visibility of controversial expressions can exceed

that of the policy explanations contained in the original speech. Consequently, the communication process may produce a paradox in which the president's broader policy agenda receives less attention than the rhetorical controversy generated by a particular statement. This phenomenon highlights the interconnectedness of ethos, pathos, and logos in shaping the effectiveness of presidential political communication. The extent to which these rhetorical dimensions reinforce or undermine one another influences how political messages are constructed, interpreted, and evaluated by the public. To provide a clearer overview of these relationships, Table 1 summarizes the key rhetorical dimensions identified in the selected materials, their corresponding evidence, and their implications for presidential political communication.

Table 1. Summary of Aristotelian Rhetorical Dimensions and Their Implications for Presidential Political Communication

Rhetorical dimension	Evidence in the selected materials	Communication implication
Ethos	Presidential authority, national development commitments, and responses to critical experts	Presidential credibility depends on both institutional authority and respectful engagement with disagreement.
Pathos	Assertive language, emotional expression, and changing public leadership imagery	Emotional appeals can strengthen political engagement but may also generate controversy when insufficiently controlled.
Logos	References to nutrition, stunting, education, national development, and criticism of government policies	Persuasive communication requires evidence-based explanations and substantive responses to competing arguments.
Rhetorical interaction	Controversial expressions attract attention away from broader policy messages	An imbalance between emotional expression, credibility, and rational argumentation may weaken message effectiveness.

These findings extend the application of Aristotle's rhetorical framework to contemporary presidential communication by demonstrating that rhetorical effectiveness is shaped not only by the presence of ethos, pathos, and logos but also by their balance. Presidential communication becomes more persuasive when institutional credibility is supported by emotional sensitivity and rational argumentation. Conversely, the dominance of confrontational language may create a gap between the intended policy message and its public interpretation.

3.6 **Public Communication, Deliberative Democracy, and Presidential Leadership**

Beyond the analysis of individual rhetorical expressions, the selected materials point to a broader issue concerning the relationship between presidential communication and democratic governance. The criticism directed toward the Prabowo administration concerns not only the language used by the president but also the perceived openness, consistency, and responsiveness of government communication. Habermas's (1992) theory of deliberative democracy emphasizes the importance of public communication in which political decisions can be questioned and justified through the exchange of arguments. From this perspective, criticism constitutes an essential component of democratic accountability rather than an obstacle to effective government. Experts, academics, journalists, and citizens provide different forms of knowledge and evaluation that may help identify weaknesses in public policy. The materials suggest that the challenge for presidential communication is to distinguish between rejecting a particular criticism and rejecting the legitimacy of criticism itself. A government may reasonably disagree with an expert assessment, but such disagreement should be accompanied by explanations and evidence that allow the public to evaluate the competing positions. This distinction is important because the quality of democratic communication depends not on the absence of disagreement but on the capacity to manage disagreement constructively.

The reported concerns about limited two-way communication further reinforce this point. The views attributed to communication analysts and academics in the selected media material emphasize the importance of involving citizens in policy discussions, communicating problems before announcing solutions, and explaining the reasoning behind government decisions. These perspectives indicate that effective public communication requires more than one-way information delivery. It also requires opportunities for public participation, feedback,

and institutional responsiveness. The survey result reported in the provided material, which places public satisfaction at 37 percent, should also be interpreted cautiously. The figure indicates a reported level of public satisfaction in the cited survey, but the available information does not provide sufficient methodological details to establish the causes of the reported result. Therefore, it cannot be concluded from this figure alone that controversial presidential communication directly caused declining public satisfaction. Nevertheless, the accompanying commentary highlights communication as one of the factors discussed in relation to public perceptions of government performance.

The findings also have implications for leadership theory. Maxwell [15] emphasizes the role of influence in leadership, suggesting that sustainable leadership depends on more than formal authority. In presidential communication, influence is strengthened when political authority is accompanied by trust, consistency, and the ability to engage with different perspectives. The capacity to respond constructively to criticism is therefore an important indicator of communicative leadership. Overall, the analysis indicates that the quality of presidential political communication is closely related to the way authority, emotion, and reasoning are managed in public discourse. Prabowo's communication demonstrates the potential of assertive leadership rhetoric to establish political visibility and communicate national priorities. However, the selected controversies also reveal the importance of maintaining rhetorical balance, particularly when responding to criticism. Presidential communication is more likely to support democratic legitimacy when it combines credible leadership, appropriate emotional expression, and evidence-based argumentation while preserving space for public deliberation.

4. Conclusion

This study examined Prabowo Subianto's presidential political communication through Aristotle's rhetorical framework of ethos, pathos, and logos. The findings demonstrate that presidential discourse is shaped by the interaction of institutional authority, emotional expression, and rational argumentation. These three rhetorical dimensions play an important role in constructing political messages, establishing leadership identity, and influencing how presidential statements are interpreted in the public sphere. The analysis reveals that ethos in Prabowo's presidential communication is primarily associated with his institutional authority, leadership identity, and commitment to national development. However, the controversy surrounding his remarks about critical experts illustrates that formal authority alone is insufficient to sustain communicative credibility. Presidential ethos also depends on the ability to engage with disagreement respectfully and respond to criticism through substantive explanations. Regarding pathos, assertive language, emotional expression, and changing leadership imagery represent important elements of Prabowo's communication style. Although these elements can strengthen political visibility and audience engagement, excessive emotional intensity may generate controversy and divert public attention from the substantive content of policy messages. Meanwhile, logos is reflected in references to national development priorities, including nutrition, stunting, education, and human resource development. Nevertheless, the analysis highlights the importance of strengthening evidence-based reasoning and providing substantive responses to competing arguments, particularly when addressing public criticism.

The central finding of this study is that the effectiveness of presidential political communication depends not merely on the presence of ethos, pathos, and logos, but also on the balance among them. An imbalance in which emotional expression and institutional authority overshadow rational argumentation may weaken the persuasive quality of political messages and create a gap between the intended meaning of presidential discourse and its public interpretation. This finding highlights the significance of rhetorical balance in contemporary political communication, particularly within a digital media environment where controversial statements can circulate independently of their original context. Theoretically, this study contributes to political communication scholarship by applying Aristotle's rhetorical framework to the analysis of contemporary presidential discourse. It demonstrates how ethos, pathos, and logos can be used not only to identify persuasive strategies but also to examine tensions between political authority, emotional expression, and rational justification. The findings further suggest that rhetorical effectiveness should be understood in relation to the broader democratic communication environment, in which credibility, reasoned argumentation, and responsiveness to criticism are essential elements of legitimate political leadership.

Practically, the findings emphasize the importance of developing more coherent, evidence-based, and dialogic communication practices within presidential institutions. Political leaders and government communication teams should ensure that policy messages are delivered consistently, supported by verifiable

information, and communicated with sensitivity toward diverse public perspectives. Criticism from experts, academics, journalists, and citizens should be addressed through substantive arguments rather than personal responses. Such practices can help maintain public trust, improve policy communication, and strengthen the relationship between government institutions and society. This study has several limitations. First, the analysis relies on selected presidential statements, media reports, and public commentaries, meaning that the findings reflect the interpretation of a specific documentary corpus rather than the entirety of Prabowo's presidential communication. Second, the study focuses on rhetorical construction and does not directly measure audience perceptions, changes in public trust, or the effects of presidential statements on political attitudes and behavior. Consequently, the findings should not be interpreted as establishing a causal relationship between rhetorical practices and public satisfaction. Future research could expand the documentary corpus across different presidential communication contexts, incorporate comparative analyses with other political leaders, and combine rhetorical analysis with audience surveys, interviews, or digital discourse analysis. These approaches would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how presidential rhetoric is constructed, circulated, and received in contemporary democratic societies. Ultimately, effective presidential political communication requires more than the authority to speak or the ability to mobilize emotions. It requires the capacity to establish credibility, communicate with emotional intelligence, and justify political positions through sound reasoning. The strength of presidential leadership is therefore reflected not only in the messages delivered but also in the ability to respond constructively to disagreement and maintain an open space for democratic deliberation.

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