

Slogans of the Elected: Rhetoric, Meaning, and Political Identity in the 2025 Philippine Senatorial Elections

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Abstract

In the Philippines, electoral politics is shaped by personality, symbolic recognition, and affective communication. Within this context, campaign slogans function as strategic linguistic tools that condense political identity, emotion, and cultural meaning into memorable expressions. While existing studies have examined Philippine political slogans, less attention has been given to the slogans of elected senatorial candidates as a bounded qualitative dataset. Addressing this gap, this study conducts a rhetorical–semantic analysis of the campaign slogans of the twelve elected candidates in the 2025 Philippine senatorial elections. Drawing on Aristotle's rhetorical appeals, Denton's framework of rhetorical functions of slogans, and Leech's framework of associative meaning, the study examines how slogans construct political identity, mobilize affect, and communicate culturally recognizable meanings. Findings show that the slogans are organized mainly around pathos and ethos, while logos appears more selectively in issue-based slogans. The analysis further shows that slogans serve key communicative functions, enabling candidates to appear familiar, trustworthy, caring, or symbolically recognizable. Semantically, the slogans carry layered meanings through idioms, wordplay, family-centered appeals, gendered identity, and digital branding, as seen in *Maaasahan ng Pamilyang Pilipino* (Someone Filipino families can rely on), *Pinay in Action* (Filipina in action), and *#IMEESolusyon* (Imee is the solution). The study argues that senatorial slogans should not be understood as predictors of electoral success, but as rhetorical–semantic artifacts of political self-presentation.

Keywords: campaign slogans, rhetorical appeals, associative meaning, political identity, Philippine senatorial elections

1. Introduction

Campaign slogans function as strategic devices in political communication. They allow candidates to express complex political ideas in accessible terms, often drawing on themes such as change, nationalism, public service, and social justice (Garrido-Lora et al., 2022). However, slogans do more than simplify political messages. Their meanings extend beyond literal interpretation because they carry cultural, emotional, and symbolic associations that shape how voters understand candidates and their public identities. In this sense, slogans serve as condensed forms of political self-presentation, through which candidates communicate who they are, what they represent, and how they want to be remembered.

In the Philippines, slogans are especially important because electoral politics is deeply shaped by personality, relational trust, and cultural familiarity. Candidates often use names, familial roles, and emotionally resonant phrases to appear relatable. Slogans have historically served as tools of identity politics, particularly in an environment where dynastic names and public image carry strong electoral value. For instance, Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos’ *Sama-sama tayong babangon muli* (Together, we shall rise again) echoed narratives of his late father’s legacy, while Joseph Estrada’s *Erap para sa mahirap* (Erap for the poor) aligned with his pro-poor and working-class image linked to his acting career (Dooc, 2022).

Similarly, familial labels such as *tatay* (father), *kuya* (big brother), *nanay* (mother), and *ate* (big sister) are commonly used to signal care, closeness, and dependability. Mamunta (2022), for example, notes how Diehard Duterte Supporters (DDS) used terms such as *Tatay Digong*, *Kuya Bong Go*, and *Ate Sara* to create relational bonds with political figures. These practices reflect broader Filipino cultural values, including *utang na loob* or debt of gratitude, which may shape voters’ sense of moral obligation toward candidates who provide assistance (Agaton, 2024). Within this context, slogans become useful linguistic sites for examining how political identity is constructed through affective and culturally familiar language.

The 2025 Philippine midterm elections provide an important context for this analysis. Senatorial elections differ from presidential campaigns because candidates must compete individually within a national field, often relying on personal branding, name recall, and advocacies rather than clearly defined party platforms. The 2025 elections were also politically significant because they occurred halfway through the Marcos administration and were widely viewed as a test of Marcos’ popularity and a proxy contest shaped by the split between the Marcos and Duterte camps. Reuters (2024) reported that the election was seen as an opportunity for Marcos to consolidate power, while the Duterte family signaled its intention to challenge him after their alliance collapsed. With 12 of the 24 Senate seats at stake, candidates had to position

themselves carefully amid issues of economic relief, governance, public trust, and political rivalry.

While existing studies have examined the stylistic and rhetorical features of Philippine political slogans, many focus on selected presidential candidates (Go, 2024; Talamayan, 2025), regional cases (Mangad et al., 2024; Vallejo, 2022), or specific linguistic devices (Cantorne & Pacol, 2025; Valdez & Colcol, 2022). Less attention has been given to the slogans of elected senatorial candidates as a bounded qualitative dataset. Addressing this gap, this study examines the campaign slogans of the twelve elected candidates in the 2025 Philippine senatorial elections. The selection of these slogans provides a clear and purposive sampling boundary for qualitative analysis. It does not imply that slogans caused, predicted, or guaranteed electoral victory. Since electoral outcomes are shaped by multiple factors, this study treats slogans not as determinants of electoral success but as linguistic artifacts of political self-presentation. Drawing on Aristotle's rhetorical appeals, Denton's framework of rhetorical functions, and Leech's framework of associative meaning, the study analyzes how slogans construct political identity, mobilize affect, and communicate culturally recognizable meanings.

Specifically, this study asks:

1. What rhetorical appeals and communicative functions are present in the slogans of the elected senatorial candidates?
2. How do associative meanings transform the slogans into culturally meaningful forms of political self-presentation?
3. How do the slogans of the elected senatorial candidates construct political identity through rhetorical and semantic strategies?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Philippine Politics, Personality, and Relational Campaigning

Philippine elections are formally democratic, but they operate within a political environment where weak institutions, elite dominance, and patronage-based politics often shape electoral competition. Rather than functioning primarily as contests between parties or policy platforms, elections often depend on personal recognition, family networks, and candidates' ability to present themselves as trustworthy and socially connected. These tensions between electoral procedure and unequal political power have been described in different ways: Törnquist (1993) as a rootless democracy weakly grounded in organized social movements, Linantud (2005) as an illiberal democracy weakened by corruption, violence, and weak law enforcement, and

Teehankee (2017) as an electoral system strongly influenced by political families, patronage, and vote-buying. These studies show why campaign language in the Philippines often does more than communicate policy. It also helps candidates perform familiarity and relational closeness within a political culture where personality and social ties remain essential.

This context makes electoral communication highly personal and affective. Political support is often shaped not only by ideology or policy programs but also by emotional attachment and perceived closeness. Montiel (2012) explains that voters may form attachments to candidates in ways similar to celebrity fandom, while practices of assistance and symbolic care may produce *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude). Agaton (2024) similarly emphasizes that patronage remains embedded in Philippine political and social life. Campaign messages become persuasive when they activate familiarity, obligation, care, and trust.

The persistence of political dynasties further strengthens the importance of name recall and inherited public image. Acuña et al. (2025) show that dynastic families in the Philippines have become increasingly connected through alliances such as marriage, reinforcing political influence across generations. This helps explain why familiar surnames and family associations continue to matter in campaigns. Slogans can transform existing recognition into brief but recognizable political identities. Prominent political names have often been linked to recognizable symbols: the Marcoses to unity and restoration, the Aquinos to moral reform and democracy, and the Dutertes to toughness and discipline. Slogans, therefore, do not merely identify candidates; they attach them to public memories and family legacies.

Digital platforms have also reshaped how these identities circulate. Duterte's 2016 campaign built a strongman image around discipline and immediate solutions to crime and insecurity, resonating with voters frustrated by weak institutions (Teehankee & Thompson, 2016). By 2022, Bongbong Marcos and Leni Robredo used social media extensively to reach and mobilize voters, especially younger audiences (Ampon & Salathong, 2024). Memes and short-form expressions further show how political language becomes affective, shareable, and platform-oriented. Matias et al. (2024) argue that memes simplify political issues into humorous and shareable forms that shape perceptions of candidates and values. Kiko Pangilinan's use of *sana all* (I hope everyone could experience this) in one of his speeches illustrates how meme-like language can create an emotional connection with voters. However, digital

communication is also contested, as memes and online content may contribute to propaganda, misinformation, and competing narratives (De Leon & Ballesteros-Lintao, 2021; Suarez, 2022). This context provides the basis for examining slogans as brief political texts through which candidates convert personal recognition, relational trust, affective appeal, dynastic memory, and digital visibility into recognizable public identities.

2.2 Political Slogans as Rhetorical-Semantic Artifacts

Political slogans are not merely shortened versions of campaign platforms. In Philippine elections, they function as rhetorical-semantic artifacts that condense candidate identity, political promise, emotional appeal, and cultural memory into brief but memorable expressions. Cantorne and Pacol (2025) show that Filipino politicians often build political brands through recurring themes such as *puso* (heart), *bayan* (nation), and *hugot* (emotional depth). These recurring themes show how slogans turn political identity into culturally familiar and emotionally meaningful language.

Historically, Philippine slogans and jingles have shaped candidate image by linking political figures to moral, emotional, or ideological narratives. Resos and Albela (2023) trace this practice to Ramon Magsaysay's "Magsaysay is My Guy," which marked a shift toward mass-oriented political appeal. Later slogans similarly attached candidates to broader public expectations. Benigno Aquino's *Kung Walang Corrupt, Walang Mahirap* (Without corruption, there would be no poverty) framed governance as moral reform, while Rodrigo Duterte's *Change is coming* transformed public dissatisfaction into a promise of decisive change.

At the linguistic level, slogans become persuasive through the interaction of rhetorical action and stylistic form. Vallejo (2022) demonstrates that political slogans can operate as declarations, promises, and claims, while Reponte-Sereño et al. (2023) show that their force often depends on metaphor, repetition, rhyme, and memorable phrasing. A slogan's sound, rhythm, word choice, and structure can shape how a candidate is perceived and remembered.

Tatcho (2018) suggests that the slogans of Grace Poe and Mar Roxas, despite emphasizing empathy and continuity, appeared less aligned with public demand for decisive action than Duterte's message. Mangad et al. (2024) similarly argue that Philippine political slogans rely on simple, emotionally resonant, and culturally familiar language to build relatability and trust. At the same time, slogans should not be treated as direct explanations for electoral

outcomes. Torres and Lubos (2018) argue that while repetition may enhance recall, electoral success depends on whether slogans connect with voters' concerns. Slogans are also open to reinterpretation and contestation. Calimbo (2016) shows how internet memes parody slogans such as Aquino's *Daang Matuwid* (Straight Path), exposing tensions between official campaign narratives and public perceptions. Once circulated, slogans can be affirmed, mocked, contested, or reworked by the public.

These studies show that Philippine campaign slogans operate through persuasion, communicative function, public sentiment, and culturally recognizable meaning. They are not fixed or purely decorative campaign lines; rather, they are dynamic rhetorical-semantic texts through which political identity, affect, cultural values, and public memory are constructed and negotiated.

This supports the present study's use of Aristotle's rhetorical appeals, Denton's framework of rhetorical functions of slogans, and Leech's associative meaning. Aristotle's framework helps identify how slogans construct credibility (ethos), emotion (pathos), and reason (logos); Denton's framework explains whether slogans operate as identification, reinforcement, solidarity, emphasis, simplification, or other communicative functions; and Leech's framework enables analysis of how slogans generate cultural, emotional, stylistic, reflected, and collocative meanings.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Data Collection and Sample Selection

This study adopts a qualitative textual analysis using a rhetorical-semantic framework to examine the campaign slogans of the twelve elected senatorial candidates in the 2025 Philippine Midterm Elections. The focus is on slogans as linguistic artifacts of political self-presentation.

Senatorial slogans were selected because senatorial elections in the Philippines present a distinct communicative context. Unlike presidential campaigns, which often center on one national executive candidate and a broader campaign narrative, senatorial elections involve multiple candidates competing simultaneously for national visibility. Candidates must distinguish themselves within a crowded national field, often through personal branding, name recall, advocacies, and memorable messages. This makes senatorial slogans useful texts for examining how political identity is constructed.

The dataset was intentionally limited to the slogans of the twelve elected senatorial candidates. These slogans were retrieved from publicly available sources, including news reports, candidates’ official websites, campaign posters, and social media platforms during the official campaign period from February 11 to May 10, 2025. The selection of elected candidates provides a clear purposive sampling boundary. It does not imply that slogans caused, predicted, or guaranteed electoral victory. Rather, the dataset is significant because it provides a focused basis for analyzing how national candidates who secured Senate seats linguistically presented themselves during the campaign. Slogans were cross-checked across multiple sources to enhance data credibility. Table 1 shows the twelve elected senatorial candidates included in the study, their campaign slogans, English translations, and language classification.

Table 1
Elected senatorial candidates and their campaign slogans

Candidate	Campaign Slogan	English Translation	Language
Bong Go	<i>Bisyo ay Magserbisyo</i>	My vice is public service	Filipino
Bam Aquino	<i>Libreng Kolehiyo! Siguradong Trabaho!</i>	Free college! Guaranteed jobs!	Filipino
Ronald Dela Rosa	<i>Sagot ko kayo! Itaga mo sa bato!</i>	I’ve got your back! Set it in stone!	Filipino
Erwin Tulfo	<i>Kakampi ng Inaapi</i>	Ally of the oppressed	Filipino
Francis Pangilinan	<i>Hello, pagkain sa mababang presyo!</i>	Hello to affordable food prices!	Bilingual
Rodante Marcoleta	<i>Kay Marcoleta, may pag-asa ka!</i>	With Marcoleta, you have hope!	Filipino
Panfilo Lacson	<i>Ang tama ay ipaglaban, ang mali ay labanan</i>	Fight for what is right, oppose what is wrong	Filipino
Vicente Sotto III	<i>Maasahan ng Pamilyang Pilipino</i>	Someone Filipino families can rely on	Filipino
Pia Cayetano	<i>Pinay in Action</i>	Filipina in action	Bilingual
Camille Villar	<i>Bagong boses para sa bayan</i>	A new voice for the nation	Filipino
Lito Lapid	<i>Ang Supremo sa Senado</i>	The ‘supremo’ in the Senate	Filipino
Imee Marcos	<i>#IMEESolusyon</i>	Imee is the solution	Filipino

3.2 Analytical Framework and Data Analysis

This study combines Aristotle’s rhetorical appeals, Denton’s (1980) rhetorical functions of political slogans, and Leech’s (1981) associative meaning to examine different but related dimensions of campaign slogan analysis. Aristotle’s framework explains how slogans persuade through credibility, emotion, and reasoning. Denton’s (1980) framework explains what slogans do as campaign messages. Leech’s (1981) framework explains how slogans produce meanings beyond their literal wording through cultural, emotional, stylistic, reflected, and collocative associations.

Table 2
Analytical Framework for Rhetorical-Semantic Analysis

Framework	What it analyzes	Why is it needed in this study?
Aristotle’s rhetorical appeals	Persuasive appeals	Shows whether slogans construct credibility, emotion, or reasoning through ethos, pathos, and logos.
Denton’s (1980) rhetorical functions of slogans	Communicative functions	Shows what slogans do as campaign messages, such as identifying the candidate, reinforcing trust, building solidarity, or emphasizing a key issue.
Leech’s (1981) associative meaning	Cultural and semantic meanings	Shows how slogans carry connotative, stylistic, affective, reflected, and collocative meanings beyond their literal wording.

The analysis followed three stages. First, Aristotle’s appeals were used to identify ethos, pathos, and logos, referring to credibility, emotion, and reasoning. Since slogans are layered, a single slogan can contain multiple appeals. Second, Denton’s rhetorical functions were used to examine what each slogan performed as a campaign message, including identification, reinforcement, solidarity, emphasis, simplification, activation, and rationalization. Third, Leech’s associative meaning was used to analyze meanings beyond literal wording, particularly connotative, stylistic, affective, reflected, and collocative meanings. The coded slogans were then compared to identify recurring rhetorical, functional, and semantic patterns in the construction of political identity.

4. Research Findings

4.1 Rhetorical Appeals and Communicative Functions

This section examines how the twelve campaign slogans use rhetorical appeals and communicative functions to construct political identity. The analysis focuses on how they present candidates through emotion, credibility, and practical reasoning. Using Aristotle's appeals and Denton's rhetorical functions, the slogans were first grouped according to their dominant persuasive appeal: pathos, ethos, or logos. Then, Denton's framework further helps explain what the slogans do as campaign messages, such as building identification, reinforcing trust, creating solidarity, emphasizing key concerns, simplifying issues, or rationalizing political claims. This combined approach shows how elected senatorial candidates used brief campaign messages to project care, reliability, moral conviction, public identity, and issue-based concern.

Table 3
Dominant Rhetorical Appeals and Communicative Functions

Dominant Appeal	Slogans	Interpretation
Pathos	1. Erwin Tulfo: <i>Ally of the oppressed</i>	These slogans rely primarily on emotional appeal. They construct candidates as sources of protection, care, reliability, moral support, and principled action. The dominant emotional cues include empathy, assurance, trust, service, family concern, and moral urgency.
	2. Bong Go: <i>My vice is public service</i>	
	3. Ronald Dela Rosa: <i>I've got your back! Set it in stone!</i>	
	4. Vicente Sotto III: <i>Someone Filipino families can rely on</i>	
	5. Panfilo Lacson: <i>Fight for what is right, oppose what is wrong</i>	
Ethos	1. Pia Cayetano: <i>Filipina in action</i>	These slogans foreground candidate identity, credibility, public image, or symbolic recognition. They present candidates as active, hopeful, representative, authoritative, or solution-oriented figures.
	2. Rodante Marcoleta: <i>With Marcoleta, you have hope!</i>	
	3. Camille Villar: <i>A new voice for the nation</i>	
	4. Lito Lapid: <i>The 'Supremo' in the Senate</i>	
	5. Imee Marcos: #IMEESolusyon	

Table 3

Dominant Rhetorical Appeals and Communicative Functions (cont.)

Dominant Appeal	Slogans	Interpretation
Logos	1. Bam Aquino: Free college! Guaranteed jobs!	These slogans foreground practical reasoning and issue-based claims. They connect political identity to education, employment, food prices, affordability, and governance concerns.
	2. Francis Pangilinan: <i>Hello to affordable food prices!</i>	

Note. The slogans are grouped according to their dominant rhetorical appeal. However, because campaign slogans are layered, a single slogan may contain secondary appeals. For example, a pathos-dominant slogan may also construct credibility, while an ethos-dominant slogan may also evoke hope, national belonging, or emotional reassurance.

Table 3 shows that the twelve slogans are organized mainly around pathos and ethos, while logos appears more selectively. Pathos-dominant slogans emphasize emotional connection through protection, care, trust, family concern, service, and moral urgency. These slogans position candidates as figures who can respond to vulnerability, provide reassurance, or stand with voters in moments of social and moral concern. Ethos-dominant slogans foreground candidate identity, credibility, and symbolic recognition. They present candidates as active, hopeful, representative, authoritative, or solution-oriented public figures. Logos-dominant slogans are fewer, but they are significant because they translate political concerns into practical and issue-based claims, particularly around education, employment, food prices, and affordability. This table suggests that the slogans function less as detailed policy statements and more as brief forms of political self-presentation that combine emotional resonance, credibility-building, and simplified reasoning.

Beyond identifying rhetorical appeals, it is also important to examine the communicative functions that campaign slogans perform. Drawing on Denton's (1980) framework, slogans can be understood not only as persuasive messages but also as strategic tools that identify candidates, reinforce public trust, build solidarity, and emphasize key issues or qualities. In this study, these functions help explain how elected senatorial candidates use slogans to present themselves, connect with voters' concerns, and condense broader political meanings into brief and memorable campaign messages.

Table 4
Rhetorical Functions of Campaign Slogans

Rhetorical Function	Integration in Senatorial Slogans	Illustrative Examples
Identification	Establishes the candidate's persona, credibility, advocacy, public role, or symbolic identity.	Pinay in action (PIA); A new voice for the nation
Reinforcement	Strengthens existing trust, loyalty, or positive perception of the candidate through values such as reliability, service, and care.	My vice is public service; Someone Filipino families can rely on
Solidarity/Unification	Creates a sense of shared belonging by aligning the candidate with families, oppressed groups, the nation, or ordinary citizens' concerns.	Ally of the oppressed
Emphasis	Highlights an issue, promise, or quality that the candidate wants voters to remember, such as service, hope, justice, affordability, or action.	Free college! Guaranteed jobs!

Note. Since slogans may perform more than one rhetorical function, the table highlights only the most frequent and analytically significant functions rather than listing all of Denton's rhetorical functions.

As shown in Table 4, the slogans perform four key communicative functions: identification, reinforcement, solidarity/unification, and emphasis. Identification is visible in slogans that construct candidates through recognizable public roles or symbolic identities, such as action-oriented, representative, or nation-centered figures. Reinforcement appears in slogans that strengthen perceptions of reliability, service, care, and dependability, allowing candidates to appear familiar and trustworthy. Solidarity/unification is expressed through slogans that align candidates with vulnerable groups, families, or collective public concerns. Emphasis, meanwhile, focuses on the issue or promise that the candidate wants voters to remember, such as education, employment, affordability, hope, or justice. These functions show that senatorial slogans operate as rhetorical tools for constructing political identity, building collective connection, and highlighting memorable campaign values.

The slogans reveal a rhetorical pattern in which emotional and identity-based appeals outweigh policy reasoning. Pathos and ethos dominate because candidates are presented less as policy specialists and more as caring, reliable, or symbolically recognizable public figures. Logos appears only in slogans tied to concrete concerns such as education, jobs, and food

prices, but even these are reduced to brief, simple claims. Through Denton’s functions, the slogans primarily serve identification, reinforcement, solidarity, and emphasis, indicating that their primary role is not to explain platforms but to make candidates recognizable, trustworthy, and emotionally accessible in a crowded senatorial contest.

4.2 Semantic Analysis

While rhetorical analysis explains how slogans persuade, it does not fully show how meaning is constructed beyond direct appeal. Using Leech’s (1981) framework, this section examines how connotative, stylistic, affective, reflected, and collocative meanings shape the slogans as forms of political self-presentation. This analysis shows how the slogans of the twelve elected senatorial candidates carry cultural associations, emotional cues, wordplay, and familiar word pairings that make political identities more recognizable and meaningful to voters.

Table 5
Semantic Patterns in the Campaign Slogans

Associative Meaning	Illustrative Examples	Interpretation
Connotative Meaning	1. Bong Go: <i>Bisyo ay Magserbisyo</i> (My vice is public service) reframes <i>bisyo</i> (vice) from a negative habit into devotion to service.	Connotative meaning helps candidates move beyond literal statements and associate themselves with culturally valued roles and expectations.
	2. Tito Sotto: <i>Maaasahan ng Pamilyang Pilipino</i> (Someone Filipino families can rely on) implies reliability, tradition, and closeness to Filipino families.	
	3. Camille Villar: <i>Bagong boses para sa bayan</i> (A new voice for the nation) implies representation and generational change.	
Stylistic Meaning	1. Kiko Pangilinan: <i>Hello, pagkain sa mababang presyo!</i> (Hello to affordable food prices!) uses a conversational opening before introducing a serious economic and policy concern.	Stylistic meaning shows how slogans create tone and personality. Slogans use playful, familial, professional, and digital styles to make candidates appear relatable, trustworthy, or action-oriented.
	2. Imee Marcos: <i>#IMEESolusyon</i> (Imee’s solution) uses a digital, branded, and hashtag-based style.	

Table 5
Semantic Patterns in the Campaign Slogans (cont.)

Associative Meaning	Illustrative Examples	Interpretation
<i>Affective Meaning</i>	1. Rodante Marcoleta: <i>Kay Marcoleta, may pag-asa ka!</i> (With Marcoleta, there is hope) evokes optimism and trust. 2. Erwin Tulfo: <i>Kakampi ng Inaapi</i> (Ally of the oppressed) evokes empathy, justice, and moral concern.	Affective meaning reveals how slogans connect with voters emotionally. Slogans commonly evoke hope, trust, care, and justice, making political messages feel meaningful.
<i>Reflected Meaning</i>	1. Bato Dela Rosa: <i>Sagot ko kayo! Itaga mo sa bato!</i> (I've got your back! set it in stone!) reflects both the idiom of permanence and the candidate's nickname, <i>Bato</i> or "stone." 2. Pia Cayetano: <i>Pinay in Action</i> (Filipina in action) reflects both gendered national identity and the candidate's initials, PIA.	Reflected meaning adds layered interpretation to slogans. Through wordplay, idioms, names, initials, and symbolic references, slogans become more memorable and carry multiple associations at once.
<i>Collocative Meaning</i>	1. Bam Aquino: <i>Libreng Kolehiyo! Siguradong Trabaho!</i> (Free college! Guaranteed jobs!) links education with employment and upward mobility. 2. Lito Lapid: <i>Ang Supremo sa Senado</i> (The 'supremo' in the Senate) links <i>Supremo</i> with leadership, heroism, authority, and historical memory.	Collocative meaning shows how familiar word pairings make political messages easy to understand. These slogans connect candidates to recurring associations such as education–employment, heroism–leadership, and oppression–justice.

Note. Semantic coding was conducted only on the 12 slogans of the elected senatorial candidates. The examples in the table illustrate the main associative meanings identified in the dataset.

As shown in Table 5, campaign slogans derive much of their meaning from their ability to compress political identity, cultural values, and voter expectations into brief and memorable expressions. Rather than functioning as literal statements, the slogans operate through associative meanings that attach candidates to familiar public roles such as servant, protector, family

figure, reformer, or representative voice. This pattern shows that political meaning is repeatedly organized around service, care, protection, hope, justice, and national belonging. In this sense, semantic meaning becomes a key mechanism of persuasion because it allows candidates to appear socially grounded and emotionally accessible without relying on detailed policy explanation.

The table also suggests that the slogans gain persuasive force through layered, culturally recognizable language. Stylistic choices such as conversational openings, hashtags, wordplay, and familial or heroic labels make slogans easier to recall and circulate. At the same time, affective meanings transform political concerns into emotional experiences of hope, trust, security, or moral concern. Reflected and collocative meanings further deepen this effect by linking candidates to idioms, names, historical references, and familiar word pairings such as education–employment, family–reliability, and heroism–leadership. These patterns show that campaign slogans persuade not only by what they promise, but by how they activate shared cultural memory, emotional resonance, and symbolic associations within Philippine political discourse.

4.3 Integrated Rhetorical-Semantic Patterns

While the previous sections examined rhetorical appeals, communicative functions, and associative meanings separately, this section brings these layers together to explain how the slogans construct political identity. Through this interaction, candidates are positioned as protectors, servants, solution-providers, moral actors, or symbolic representatives.

Table 6
Political Identity as Constructed Through Campaign Slogans

Identity Pattern	Illustrative Slogans	Interpretation
Candidate as protector	Ally of the oppressed; I've got your back! Set it in stone!	Identity is built through protection, care, assurance, and reliability.
Candidate as servant	My vice is public service; Someone Filipino families can rely on	Identity is built through service, dependability, and public care.
Candidate as solution-provider	Free college! Guaranteed jobs! Imee is the solution	Identity is built through simplified problem-solving and issue-based claims.

Table 6

Political Identity as Constructed Through Campaign Slogans (cont.)

Identity Pattern	Illustrative Slogans	Interpretation
Candidate as symbolic representative	Filipina in action; A new voice for the nation	Identity is built through gender, newness, authority, representation, and symbolic recognition.
Candidate as moral actor	Fight for what is right; oppose what is wrong	Identity is built through moral contrast, justice, and principled action.

Table 6 shows that the slogans construct political identity through recognizable public roles rather than detailed policy explanation. Candidates are framed as protectors, servants, solution-providers, or symbolic representatives, suggesting that slogan-based self-presentation depends on making political figures emotionally accessible and culturally familiar. The protector and servant patterns rely heavily on pathos and ethos because they associate candidates with care, assurance, service, and dependability. The solution-provider pattern introduces logos, but still simplifies complex issues into memorable claims, such as education, employment, and problem-solving. Meanwhile, the symbolic representative pattern shows how identity can be built through gender, newness, national belonging, or symbolic authority. These patterns show that the slogans construct political identity by combining emotional appeal, credibility, symbolic meaning, and simplified issue-based claims into recognizable public roles.

5. Summary and Discussion

This study examined how the slogans of the twelve elected senatorial candidates in the 2025 Philippine elections construct political identity through rhetorical appeals, communicative functions, and associative meanings. The findings show that slogans are not merely decorative phrases or simple campaign promises. Rather, they operate as condensed forms of political self-presentation. Candidates present themselves as protectors, servants, solution providers, moral actors, or symbolic representatives. In the Philippine electoral context, where politics is shaped by personality, relational trust, visibility, and affective attachment, slogans help make candidates appear familiar, credible, and emotionally accessible.

5.1 Political Identity as Strategic Self-Presentation

The slogans do not simply introduce candidates; they turn public image, prior work, and symbolic roles into recognizable political identities. Through pathos, candidates appear as protectors, allies, or servants. Through ethos, they project credibility through prior service, public roles, gender identity, or symbolic authority. In this sense, slogans not only persuade voters emotionally; they organize how candidates want to be seen. This aligns with Montiel and Uyheng's (2020) interpretation that collective emotions in Philippine politics do not only reflect political attitudes but also help construct political meanings. In the slogans, affect creates relational positions: the candidate becomes the protector, servant, or solution-provider while voters are positioned as people who need care, justice, service, or assurance.

This pattern is especially important in the Philippine context, where personal relationships, obligation, and public familiarity often shape political identity. This aligns with the argument of Montiel (2012) that Philippine politics is highly personalistic, where political relationships are often understood through kinship, friendship, and connections. Hutchcroft (2017) similarly argues that patronage remains especially important in weak institutional contexts, where political parties and institutions are less able to organize politics around clear policies and platforms. With this, slogans may activate values associated with *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude), patronage, and *hiya* (shame), where assistance, service, and social pressure can shape expectations of loyalty or reciprocity. However, this creates a problem: slogans that make candidates sound caring and approachable may also encourage voters to depend on personalities and political image rather than on clear platforms, policy programs, or accountability after the election.

Several slogans show how public service, advocacy, and political record are repackaged as personal identity. Bong Go's *Bisyo ay Magserbisyo* (My vice is public service) creates a paradox by transforming *bisyo* (vice), a term associated with harmful habits, into devotion to service. As the longtime aide of the former president, Go's slogan also carries associations with the Duterte era. The word *bisyo* may evoke moral discipline and anti-drug rhetoric, but the slogan reverses its negative meaning by framing service as the candidate's "vice." In doing so, the slogan turns public service into *malasakit* (compassionate service), making it appear not only a political duty but also a personal habit, moral commitment, and an extension of Go's public image.

Bam Aquino's *Libreng Kolehiyo! Siguradong Trabaho!* (Free college! Guaranteed jobs!) shows a different form of identity construction. It uses logos through a concrete issue-based claim, but its meaning is also social and affective. In the Philippine context, free education is closely tied to social mobility, while guaranteed work addresses the survival pressures of ordinary Filipinos. Since Aquino is associated with free college legislation, the slogan reinforces

ethos by linking the promise to his prior public work. Francis Pangilinan’s *Hello, pagkain sa mababang presyo!* (Hello to affordable food prices!) similarly connects political identity to everyday struggle by linking food prices with his long-standing advocacy around farmers, agriculture, and food security. The conversational “hello” makes the issue sound ordinary and accessible, while food affordability connects policy to household anxiety.

These examples show that slogans are not weak because they are simple. Rather, their simplicity makes political identity familiar, memorable, and emotionally legible. This supports Mangad et al.’s (2024) argument that Philippine slogans often use straightforward and localized language to convey authenticity, service, familiarity, and relatedness. Cantorne and Pacol (2025) also show that slogans function as discursive instruments that construct political identities and mediate candidate-voter relationships. However, this accessibility is politically ambivalent. It makes complex concerns such as education, employment, food security, healthcare access, and poverty emotionally understandable, but it may also compress them into candidate-centered promises. Thus, strategic self-presentation does not merely decorate political messages; it helps organize how candidates become socially meaningful within a personalistic, patronage-shaped electoral culture.

5.2 Cultural Meaning, Relational Trust, and Symbolic Recognition

Slogans become persuasive not only because of their rhetorical appeals, but because these appeals are carried through culturally recognizable meanings. In Leech’s terms, the slogans work through associative meanings, such as idioms, names, historical references, family terms, digital forms, and familiar word pairings. These meanings strengthen rhetorical appeals. For example, Dela Rosa’s *Sagot ko kayo! Itaga mo sa bato!* (I’ve got your back! Set it in stone!) does not only express pathos through assurance; it also uses reflected meaning because *bato* (stone) refers both to firmness and to the candidate’s nickname. Similarly, Lapid’s *Ang Supremo sa Senado* (The “Supremo” in the Senate) builds ethos through symbolic authority. The word *Supremo* connects the candidate to leadership and historical memory because it recalls Andres Bonifacio, the known revolutionary leader and *Supremo*. At the same time, it echoes Lapid’s popular image from a television series, where he has a strong, heroic, and authoritative role. In these cases, meaning is persuasive because the slogan makes a candidate’s identity easier to remember. This supports Reponte-Sereño et al.’s (2023) points that political campaign language persuades not only through content but also through linguistic devices, imagery, repetition, and memorable symbolic forms.

Relational trust also appears strongly, but it should not be treated as automatically persuasive for all candidates. It works best when a slogan is supported by an already recognizable

name, family image, media persona, or affiliation. Tito Sotto's *Maaasahan ng Pamilyang Pilipino* (Someone Filipino families can rely on) not only claims dependability; it activates family-centered trust. The name "Tito" also carries a relational meaning, as it means "uncle" in Filipino, making the candidate sound familiar and close to home. His long visibility strengthens this familiarity as a noontime television host known across generations. In this sense, relational trust is not simply created by the slogan; the candidate's existing public memory activates it. This is important because political dynasties and familiar names often have an advantage in Philippine elections. Tadem and Tadem (2016) argue that family is central to political dynasties, where public office can become a family asset, while Neironi (2025) similarly argues that political dynasties allow families to maintain visibility, resources, and influence across electoral cycles.

This creates a useful contradiction for interpreting the slogans. On one hand, relational slogans can make candidates appear close, dependable, and socially grounded. On the other hand, they may also strengthen the same political culture where familiarity and family name recognition matter more than clear platforms or institutional accountability. Camille Villar's *Bagong boses para sa bayan* (A new voice for the nation), for example, appears to emphasize freshness and generational renewal. However, because she comes from a known political family, the word "new" carries tension: it suggests change while still benefiting from inherited visibility. This does not make the slogan weak. However, it shows how associative meaning can hold two meanings at once: renewal and continuity. The slogan performs ethos by presenting Villar as a representative voice, but its connotative meaning also depends on the recognition already attached to her surname.

Symbolic recognition also extends to digital and visual campaign culture. Imee Marcos' *#IMEESolusyon* (Imee is the solution) uses stylistic meaning through hashtag form, making the slogan concise, branded, and platform-ready. The hashtag does not make the slogan bilingual, but it makes it digitally recognizable. This reflects how campaign language now circulates through social media environments where short, repeatable, and meme-like expressions can travel quickly. Matias et al. (2024) note that memes and condensed digital messages can make political ideas more accessible and shareable, especially among younger audiences. However, digital resonance also has risks. Calicdan-Del Campo et al. (2025) show that new media and echo chambers can intensify political polarization and strengthen social enclaves. Thus, symbolic recognition can make slogans memorable, but it can also deepen political division when slogans, hashtags, and names become markers of partisan belonging.

Moreover, slogans connect rhetorical appeals to cultural memory, relational trust, and symbolic authority. Historical labels give them authority, family terms activate relational

trust, and surnames carry inherited recognition. However, these same meanings also reveal tensions in Philippine political communication: relational trust may favor dynastic familiarity, historical symbolism may simplify complex political identities, and digital recognition may increase both visibility and division. Finally, slogans are culturally powerful because they not only say what candidates promise, but also shape how they are remembered and recognized.

5.3 Limitations and recommendations

This study has several limitations. First, the analysis focuses only on campaign slogans, which represent one component of electoral communication strategy. Slogans may shape candidate image and voter recall, but they do not fully capture the influence of speeches, debates, advertisements, posters, jingles, interviews, endorsements, or social media engagement. Second, although the study focuses on the twelve elected senatorial candidates, it does not claim that slogans alone explain electoral success. Third, the study relies on textual analysis and lacks data on voter reception; therefore, it examines how slogans are constructed rather than how voters actually interpret or respond to them.

Future research may extend this study by comparing slogans with other campaign materials, such as posters, jingles, TikTok videos, Facebook posts, and televised advertisements, to examine how verbal and visual persuasion interact. Researchers may also conduct audience-based studies, such as interviews or focus groups, to explore how voters interpret the meanings of slogans and whether these messages influence political perceptions or recall. Comparative studies across other Global South electoral contexts may further reveal how affective, relational, and digital forms of political communication vary across cultures, platforms, and levels of electoral competition.

6. AI Disclosure Statement

The authors used ChatGPT to improve the clarity, coherence, and organization of the manuscript. At the same time, Grammarly was used to refine language. All content was critically reviewed, edited, and validated by the authors to ensure accuracy and alignment with the study's objectives.

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and open to multiple meanings, we welcome alternative interpretations and future scholarly discussion on political communication, campaign language, and meaning-making in Philippine electoral discourse.

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