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#ResBakuna on X: Rhetorical Appeals in the Philippine Department of Health's COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign

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Abstract

To combat the high level of vaccine hesitancy, the Philippine Department of Health (DOH) made use of social media as part of its "ResBakuna: Kasangga ng BIDA" campaign in order to promote COVID-19 vaccination. This study examines how the DOH developed persuasive vaccination messages on Twitter during the National Vaccination Days campaign in late 2021. Based on David Jolliffe's rhetorical framework, a qualitative rhetorical analysis is carried out to examine the rhetorical situation, the appeals, and the selected surface features of 24 tweets sent by the DOH containing the hashtag #ResBakuna between November and mid-December 2021. The results show that the campaign's messages mainly depended on pathos, especially by appealing to unity, heroism, the protection of family, and a safe Christmas. Logos was employed via statements regarding the protective effects and the safety, effectiveness, accessibility, and necessity of vaccination. The tweets also incorporated the Filipino language, inclusive pronouns, short sentence structures, hashtags, and expressions that are culturally relevant in order to present vaccination as a collective and morally significant action. The study provides a case study from the Philippines to the existing body of research on public health communication and the rhetoric of social media campaigns.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic turned health communication into a particularly important kind of public communication. In order to deal with constantly changing information on infection, prevention, treatment, and vaccination, governments and public-health organizations had to face uncertainty, misinformation, distrust, and unequal access to health services. Social media became a key setting for this kind of communication since health authorities were able to send out brief messages directly to the public who were connected via networks and could repeatedly spread campaign slogans, factual statements and appeals for action. The problem in terms of communication was not just about giving out information; it was also about making vaccination seem meaningful, believable, urgent, and socially desirable to different groups of people who had widely varying levels of willingness to get vaccinated.

In the Philippines, the Department of Health (DOH) was the main government body responsible for the country's response to COVID-19. As part of its efforts to expand vaccination and to deal with vaccine hesitancy, the DOH ran a campaign called "ResBakuna: Kasangga ng BIDA" with the aim of promoting COVID-19 vaccination. The campaign was launched when the country was increasing its vaccination program and trying to overcome resistance to vaccines. The communication materials issued by the DOH constantly described

the vaccines as safe, effective, and free and urged Filipinos to take part in "BIDA BakuNation." The official DOH materials also portrayed vaccination as a means of protecting both oneself and others and advised people to help their friends, family members, and colleagues who were hesitant about getting vaccinated (Civil Service Commission, 2021).

The situation in the Philippines is especially pertinent to communication research since vaccine hesitancy was caused by information deficits, mistrust, worries regarding safety and effectiveness, and people's perceptions of the risks and benefits. A survey experiment carried out by the World Bank in 2021 showed that vaccine hesitancy in the Philippines was still considerable and that communication focusing on the social and personal benefits could lead to higher vaccine acceptance, especially among those who were uncertain about getting vaccinated (World Bank, 2021). This is significant when considering why a government campaign might include factual statements together with appeals to family, community, identity, and emotion rather than depending solely on biomedical information.

Social media offered a particularly effective setting for this kind of approach. Earlier research has demonstrated that vaccination campaigns on Facebook and Twitter make use of different combinations of information, calls for action, personal narratives, and emotionally charged messages. For instance, Calo et al. (2018) discovered that online messages about HPV vaccination often covered topics such as disease prevention, vaccine safety, side effects, and the need for vaccination. Loft et al. (2020) found that personal stories included in a Danish Facebook campaign led to greater engagement and more positive discussions than did factual posts, even though factual information was still important for making informed decisions. Similarly, Pereira da Veiga et al. (2020) showed that a government vaccination campaign on Facebook employed a variety of content categories and multimedia formats when communicating with the public. Moreover, Herrera-Peco et al. (2021) found that vaccination-related messages posted by health professionals on Twitter could be generally divided into informational, action-oriented, and community-oriented messages.

Studies into the way COVID-19 vaccination is discussed on Twitter have also demonstrated that persuasive communication is closely linked to the emotional and political aspects of talks about vaccines. Nuzhath et al. (2020) found that safety and effectiveness, misinformation, conspiracy theories, mistrust of scientists and governments, freedom of choice, and religious beliefs were among the topics covered in negative tweets regarding COVID-19 vaccination. Other research indicates that online discussion of vaccines usually includes concerns about safety and mixed emotional responses (Malova, 2021). These studies show how important it is to look not just at what vaccination messages contain but also at the way in which they aim to persuade.

This is especially so in the case of the Philippines. Research into vaccine hesitancy among Filipinos has recorded feelings of fear and mistrust, the spread of misinformation and disinformation, doubts regarding the effectiveness of vaccines, and a lack of confidence in both the government and healthcare workers (Berdida et al., 2023). More up-to-date studies in the Philippines have also found that discussions on social media can perpetuate vaccine-hesitant views and that information provided by the government, health professionals, politicians, and other users competes for attention on online platforms. These results highlight the need to look at the rhetorical methods used by an official health institution to present vaccination as something that is desirable and responsible.

Increasingly, Philippine scholarly work also regards Twitter as a rhetorical setting rather than simply as a place where short textual messages are stored. For instance, Ladia (2025) looked at tweets using the #MassTestingNowPH hashtag as examples of citizens' rhetorical behavior during the pandemic and showed how such tweets could shape audiences, express shared concerns, and encourage audiences to take action. Although this study is connected with that area of research, it focuses on a different kind of rhetoric: instead of looking at citizens' advocacy towards the state, it looks at communication from the government to the public. This

difference enables us to consider how an official health organization rhetorically constructs the vaccine, the audience, and the act of vaccination.

The study now looks at the tweets that the Department of Health (DOH) issued under the National Vaccination Days campaign in late 2021 regarding the #ResBakuna initiative. It poses two questions: (1) What rhetorical devices did the DOH use in its #ResBakuna tweets? and (2) What recurring themes and textual features were employed in order to make vaccination appealing to Filipino audiences? The answers to these questions add to the existing body of research in the areas of health communication in the Philippines, social-media discourse, and rhetorical analysis.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Health Communication and Vaccination

Successful vaccination programs need to do more than just pass on biomedical facts. Public-health organizations have to present scientific information in a manner that enables the public to understand it, place trust in it, and relate it to their own everyday choices. Vaccine hesitancy is also multi-faceted. According to MacDonald (2015), vaccine hesitancy is described as the delay in accepting or refusing vaccination even though vaccination services are available. The concept thus involves not only outright opposition but also uncertainty and postponement.

Several recurring reasons for hesitancy were identified by research carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic; these include worries regarding safety, effectiveness, side effects, the speed at which the vaccine was developed, and trust in institutions. In a scoping review, Aw et al. (2021) found a number of individual, situational, and confidence-related factors linked to hesitancy about the COVID-19 vaccine. In the case of the Philippines, the World Bank (2021) stated that a lack of information, the presence of misinformation, mistrust, and the tendency to overestimate the risks of vaccination while at the same time underestimating its benefits were important issues. Because of this, communication has become an essential element of vaccination campaigns, even though communication on its own is not sufficient to overcome structural obstacles such as availability, access, or the capacity of the health system.

The survey experiment carried out by the World Bank in 2021 is particularly relevant to the present analysis since it shows that persuasive communication can have an effect by means of social and emotional factors. Vaccine acceptance rose when the messages asked people to consider the individuals they wanted to protect and the activities they looked forward to. This does not imply that emotional appeals are inherently better than factual information; instead, it indicates that people's decisions regarding vaccination may be affected by the way in which the information is linked to their relationships, the activities they anticipate and the benefits they perceive.

2.2. Social Media and Vaccination Campaigns

Social media have now become important channels for public-health messaging since they allow organizations to spread information quickly, repeat their messages, make use of audiovisual material and promote interaction. At the same time, these features leave health authorities open to the spread of misinformation and to different interpretations. According to Calo et al. (2018), online messages about vaccination generally center on questions and concerns regarding vaccine safety, disease prevention, and the need for vaccination. Their results show that there is still a need for vaccination communication to be clear, easy to understand, and concise.

Research into government-run campaigns indicates that various message strategies can lead to different kinds of engagement. Loft and colleagues (2020) discovered that personal stories used in a Danish HPV vaccination campaign caused higher levels of engagement and inspired more positive discussion than did posts containing factual information. However, the researchers stressed that factual information was still essential for enabling informed decision-

making. Pereira da Veiga and others (2020), when looking at the Brazilian Ministry of Health's Facebook campaign, found that the official vaccination messages combined different content categories, multimedia materials, calls to action, and targeted the audience. These studies therefore show that effective health communication cannot be limited to a single kind of message.

Twitter has special implications for communication in the field of health since its brief format promotes messages that can be quickly read, shared, and connected to wider discussions using hashtags. Herrera-Peco et al. (2021) discovered that a vaccination promotion campaign carried out in Spanish on Twitter contained messages that were informative, aimed at encouraging action, and focused on the community. Their results show that communication about vaccination can at the same time provide information, prompt behavior, and create a feeling of collective involvement.

Twitter can also be used to spread skepticism about vaccines and false information. Nuzhath et al. (2020) found several themes among the negative tweets about COVID-19 vaccination, such as safety and effectiveness, misinformation, conspiracy theories, mistrust, the right to choose, and religious beliefs. Malova (2021) reached a similar conclusion, noting that concerns regarding vaccine safety and side effects were prominent in the online discussions about COVID-19 vaccination. These findings point out the rhetorical difficulty that official health communicators have to deal with: they need to give out information while at the same time addressing people's fears, uncertainty, and conflicting narratives.

2.3. Rhetorical Analysis of Social-Media Discourse

Rhetorical analysis is the study of how people construct messages aimed at specific audiences and objectives. According to Jolliffe (2008), rhetorical analysis involves a systematic approach by means of which analysts can identify the decisions that writers and speakers make in order to influence meaning, purpose, and effect. The framework he proposes centers on the rhetorical situation, the rhetorical appeals, and the organization, structure, and form of the texts; the rhetorical situation comprises exigence, audience, and purpose; the appeals are logos, ethos, and pathos; and the surface features involve such choices as diction, syntax, imagery, and figurative language.

The framework is useful when it comes to analyzing social media since short posts are not just shorter forms of longer texts. Because they are brief, they involve the deliberate choice of words, pronouns, slogans, hashtags, and other kinds of signs. A hashtag can act as a label, as a slogan, as a means of spreading the message, and as an indicator of collective identity. Moreover, the use of inclusive pronouns can establish a relationship between an institution and its audience. In this way, rhetorical analysis can show how a public-health institution presents vaccination as a social practice rather than just as a medical procedure.

Recent research in the field of communication in the Philippines has shown the usefulness of adopting a rhetorical approach when dealing with tweets. Ladia (2025) looked at the hashtag #MassTestingNowPH and demonstrated that hashtags and short messages are able to carry out rhetorical functions and help to form temporary publics. Moreover, his study illustrates that the meaning of a tweet cannot be detached from the rhetorical situation in which it is circulated. The current study builds on this research carried out in the Philippines by looking at the official discourse on vaccination and concentrating on the persuasive portrayal of collective action, protection, and responsibility.

3. Theoretical Framework

The study adopts Jolliffe's (2008) rhetorical framework as its primary interpretive model. The framework provides an integrated approach to examining how texts respond to particular communicative situations, employ persuasive strategies, and construct meaning through their organization, structure, and stylistic features. It identifies three interrelated dimensions: (1) the rhetorical situation, which considers the circumstances, audience, and purpose surrounding a rhetorical act; (2) rhetorical appeals, particularly logos, ethos, and pathos, through which a

communicator seeks to persuade; and (3) organization, structure, form, and surface features, which concern how a message is linguistically and formally constructed. These dimensions provide the analytical basis for understanding how the Department of Health (DOH) presented COVID-19 vaccination through its #ResBakuna campaign.

3.1. Rhetorical Situation

The rhetorical situation concerns the circumstances that give rise to a rhetorical act and shape the choices made by its communicator. Bitzer (1968) explains that a rhetorical situation consists of three major elements: exigence, audience, and constraints. Exigence refers to a problem or condition that calls for a rhetorical response; audience refers to those capable of being influenced by the discourse or acting upon the situation; and constraints refer to the factors that shape the production and reception of the message. These elements are interconnected because the nature of the problem, the characteristics of the intended audience, and the circumstances of communication influence how a message is constructed.

However, rhetorical situations are not simply objective conditions to which communicators respond. Vatz (1973) argues that communicators also shape how situations are understood by selecting, emphasizing, and assigning significance to particular aspects of reality. This perspective highlights the role of discourse in constructing the meaning and urgency of public issues. Aristotle's (2007) discussion of *kairos* further emphasizes the importance of timing and appropriateness in persuasive communication, suggesting that messages must be suited to the particular circumstances in which they are delivered.

In the present study, these concepts provide a basis for examining the circumstances surrounding the #ResBakuna campaign. The exigence concerns the continuing COVID-19 threat, the government's efforts to expand vaccination, and the need to address public uncertainty and vaccine hesitancy. The audience refers to the publics that the DOH posts appear to address or construct, including eligible but unvaccinated Filipinos, individuals considering or completing vaccination, and members of families and communities who may encourage others to get vaccinated. The purpose concerns the communicative objectives of the posts, such as informing the public, reassuring hesitant individuals, encouraging vaccination, and presenting immunization as a form of collective protection. The constraints include the short-form conventions of Twitter, the institutional position of the DOH, and the broader public-health circumstances during the campaign period. Examining these elements makes it possible to understand why particular persuasive appeals and textual strategies were used in the campaign.

3.2. Rhetorical Appeals

Rhetorical appeals refer to the persuasive resources through which communicators seek to influence how audiences understand and respond to a message. Aristotle (2007) identifies three principal modes of persuasion: logos, ethos, and pathos. Although these appeals can be examined separately, they often work together in actual communication. Jolliffe (2008) similarly emphasizes that rhetorical analysis should consider how writers and speakers use arguments, credibility, and emotional engagement to achieve their communicative purposes.

Logos *r*efers to the reasoning and arguments presented in a message. It may be established through factual claims, explanations, evidence, comparisons, and cause-and-effect relationships (Aristotle, 2007; Jolliffe, 2008). In public-health communication, logos may appear in statements concerning vaccine safety, effectiveness, protective benefits, accessibility, and the importance of completing recommended doses. In this study, logos is used to examine how the DOH presented reasons and information to support COVID-19 vaccination.

Ethos concerns the credibility and character that a communicator establishes through discourse. Aristotle (2007) considers the perceived character of the speaker an important basis of persuasion, while Jolliffe (2008) recognizes credibility as a significant element in the rhetorical construction of a message. In institutional health communication, ethos may be

conveyed through the authority of the issuing organization, references to scientific or professional expertise, and language that communicates competence, responsibility, and concern for public welfare. Personal testimonials may also provide experiential perspectives that encourage identification with the message. In analyzing the #ResBakuna posts, the study considers how institutional authority and testimonial discourse are presented as possible sources of credibility.

Pathos refers to the use of emotions, values, identities, and social attachments to make a message meaningful to its audience. Aristotle (2007) explains that persuasion may be shaped by the emotional dispositions of audiences, while Jolliffe (2008) recognizes the role of emotional engagement in rhetorical communication. In public-health campaigns, pathos may be expressed through appeals to family protection, solidarity, hope, fear, and shared responsibility. Such appeals can connect health recommendations to experiences and values that audiences recognize in their everyday lives.

3.3. Surface Features and Form

The third dimension of Jolliffe's (2008) framework concerns the organization, structure, form, and surface features of a text. These elements refer to how ideas are arranged and how meaning is expressed through linguistic and stylistic choices. Organization and structure involve the sequencing of information and arguments, while form concerns the mode or genre through which a message is communicated. Surface features include diction, syntax, imagery, figurative language, pronoun use, and other textual characteristics that contribute to the construction of meaning.

The analysis of these features is particularly relevant to social-media communication. Herring (2004), through computer-mediated discourse analysis, demonstrates the importance of examining linguistic and structural patterns in online communication, including the ways language is shaped by the technological and interactional conditions of digital environments. Social-media messages are not simply shortened versions of conventional written texts; their meaning is also influenced by platform conventions, audience interaction, and the possibilities for circulation and engagement. Similarly, Zappavigna (2012) explains how language use on Twitter can establish social affiliation and shared identity. Hashtags, for instance, can function not only as organizational markers but also as resources for connecting users around common topics, values, and communities.

In the context of the present study, surface features and form include the DOH's language choices, pronouns, sentence structures, slogans, hashtags, and culturally recognizable expressions. The use of Filipino expressions may establish cultural familiarity, while inclusive pronouns may construct a sense of shared identity and collective participation. Concise sentence structures and imperative expressions may communicate information and calls to action within the platform's short-form conventions. Meanwhile, hashtags such as #ResBakuna may serve as campaign identifiers and markers of collective affiliation. These features are examined in relation to how the DOH framed vaccination and communicated its campaign objectives to Filipino audiences.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design

The study conducted a qualitative rhetorical analysis of Twitter posts publicly released by the Philippine Department of Health. It is classified as a qualitative interpretive study since the quantitative figures mentioned in the results are merely descriptive summaries of the coded corpus.

4.2. Corpus and Sampling

The dataset included 24 tweets that were posted by the DOH during the timeframe that the original study designated as November to mid-December 2021, the period that coincided with the National Vaccination Days campaign. The tweets were obtained from the DOH's official

Twitter account by means of Twitter's advanced search feature and were included only if they had the campaign hashtag #ResBakuna.

The individual tweet or part of a tweet that contained substantial campaign discussion was the unit of analysis. The dataset contained certain posts that were parts of threads and had only the #ResBakuna or other related hashtags, as well as some that linked to other posts on DOH's social media. Although these fragments were kept in the corpus for transparency, they were not considered to be equivalent to full persuasive messages. It is important to note that a fragment consisting of nothing but a hashtag cannot reasonably be assessed using the same criteria as a complete argument.

4.3. Analytic Procedure

The analysis was carried out in three stages. In the first stage, the rhetorical situation of the campaign was rebuilt by determining its exigence, its intended audience, and its communicative purpose. In the second stage, each of the substantive tweets was examined for the presence of logos, ethos, and pathos. In the third stage, the analysis looked at the surface features and recurring themes, such as language choice, pronoun usage, sentence structure, slogans, hashtags, and references that resonated with cultural norms.

The analysis makes a distinction between a rhetorical strategy and its outcome. Just because a tweet makes use of an emotional appeal does not mean that the appeal had the effect of changing the reader's attitude or leading to vaccination; therefore, the study does not assert that the #ResBakuna tweets caused an increase in vaccination rates. To make such a claim, it would be necessary to have audience-response or vaccination-uptake data, which are not included in the corpus.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1. Rhetorical Situation: A Public-Health Problem Translated into a Collective Communication Task

The tweets under the #ResBakuna were the result of a situation in which there was a need to boost COVID-19 vaccinations, but public confidence and the willingness to do so were still inconsistent. The urgency of the campaign was therefore not merely about COVID-19; it was also about the communication difficulties arising from the ongoing health crisis, the necessity of vaccination, and the public's uncertainty regarding vaccination.

The campaign was aimed at a wide audience. Although the DOH spoke to Filipinos as a whole, the phrasing of the posts also indicates that account was taken of those who had not yet had the vaccine and of those who could influence their family members, friends, and other members of the community. The fact that the audience is so broad is in line with the campaign's use of collective language, since instead of viewing vaccination as merely a personal medical choice, the tweets kept on presenting it as something that people do for and with other people.

The aims of the campaign were therefore varied. The tweets were intended to inform people about vaccines, persuade them to accept vaccination, encourage them to finish the doses they were required to have, and give vaccination a positive social significance. It is important to note that the messages did not depend entirely on a deficit model, which assumes that the public simply does not have enough information; they also tried to make vaccination socially and emotionally significant.

5.2. Pathos: Constructing Vaccination as Solidarity, Heroism, and Care

Pathos was the most frequently cited appeal in the corpus, appearing 12 times. It was shown through constant references to unity, heroism, family, and Christmas. As a result of these themes, getting vaccinated changed from being just a personal health choice into one that also had moral and social importance. The prominence of affective framing is in agreement with research indicating that campaigns for COVID-19 and other vaccinations generally combine informative content with emotional and social appeals rather than relying entirely on

biomedical information (El-Dakhs, 2022; Ho et al., 2024). It is nevertheless essential to see pathos as part of the campaign's rhetorical design rather than as evidence that emotional appeals were necessarily more effective than other strategies.

Unity was particularly noticeable in this regard. About half of the texts examined included the phrase "Sama-sama tayo sa BIDA BakuNation!" ("Let's join together in BIDA BakuNation!"). The frequent use of the expressions "tayo" ("we/us") and "natin" ("our") establishes an inclusive relationship between the organization and the public. The campaign does not merely advise a person to say, "You should get vaccinated"; instead, it incorporates the individual into a collective "we" which is meant to react to a common national issue.

The phrase "Isang Bayan natin labanan ang Covid" ("Let's fight Covid as one nation") achieves the same effect by making vaccination a collective national effort. The idea of having to fight a common enemy presents COVID-19 as an opponent which the Filipinos have to face together. In a rhetorical sense, the message removes the gap between the official communicator and the public, since the DOH and the public are on the same side in this common struggle.

The significance of this approach is that it gives vaccination a civic dimension. The group in question is not merely a collection of individual patients; it is viewed as a national community in which its members have duties towards one another. This kind of rhetorical framing is consistent with research showing that pandemic-related messages on social media can produce a feeling of collective identity and lead audiences to accept a sense of shared responsibility. Moreover, Ladia's (2025) study of #MassTestingNowPH, even though it focused on citizen advocacy rather than on government health messaging, also shows that tweets during a pandemic can create publics by using collective language and by making calls to action. Research that has compared vaccination campaigns also shows that government health messages can combine community-oriented communication with action-oriented communication, which means that the DOH's collective framing is in line with a broader trend in social-media health campaigns (El-Dakhs, 2022; Herrera-Peco et al., 2021).

Heroism is also a significant pathos technique. The campaign linked vaccination with that of the "hero," as can be seen in the phrases "maging bayani para sa kapwa nating Pilipino!" ("be a hero to your fellow Filipino!") and the hashtags #BayaniAngBakunado and #HeroesGetVaxxed. By using this rhetorical approach, it transforms a normal health-related action into one that is highly valued by society. Rather than viewing vaccination as passive compliance, the advertisement presents it as an action that enables an individual to protect other people.

The strategy is important since it deals with the conflict between self-interest and a sense of collective responsibility. Someone who is unsure about getting vaccinated might consider the decision mainly in relation to their own risk. The campaign, by referring to the vaccinated person as a "hero", offers another way of evaluating the decision: it can be seen as an act of courage, solidarity, and care for other people. The message thus gives the behavior both a moral and an emotional dimension. This kind of framing, which focuses on collective benefits, is appropriate for the Philippine situation because the World Bank (2021) found that messages highlighting the people that the respondents wished to protect and the activities they wished to resume could increase acceptance of the vaccine. Research into public health messages concerning COVID-19 also shows that frames which are emotional or focused on well-being can influence the way the audience responds, although the effect depends on the level of trust in the audience and the context of the message (Vaala et al., 2022).

The family theme functions in a similar way but is based on a more personal kind of social relationship. The tweet "Magpa-ResBakuna kung pagkakataon mo na para sa iyong sarili, mga kaibigan, at buong pamilya!" ("Get ResBakuna when it's your chance for yourself, friends, and the whole family!") clearly extends the idea of protection from the individual to include friends and family. Similarly, the message "Ibigay ang regalo ng proteksyon sa buong pamilya!" ("Give the gift of protection to the whole family!") treats vaccination as a metaphorical gift.

The reason why the family-focused approach is so prominent in the Philippine case is that it connects a public health recommendation with everyday elements of personal relationships. Rather than employing technical biomedical terminology, the message describes vaccination in terms of relationships which people can easily relate to. The vaccine is thus something that one can 'give' to one's family members as a result of the protection it is said to provide. This approach is consistent with the evidence that shows a social-benefit strategy can affect vaccine decisions in the Philippines (World Bank, 2021) and with broader research on vaccination among social media users indicating that personal and relational storytelling can result in engagement and positive discussion (Loft et al., 2020). However, the present study does not demonstrate that the family framing led to any change in behavior; it only identifies the rhetorical approach by which the campaign made vaccination socially meaningful.

The timing of the campaign also provided an opportunity to make use of the Christmas theme. Through the use of the hashtag #LigtasChristmas ('#SafeChristmas') and by describing giving protection as a 'gift', the campaign connected vaccination with a major cultural time of year when families get together and celebrate. The reasoning follows a simple pattern: vaccination provides protection; this protection in turn makes gatherings safer; it is thus one of the conditions that people want in order to have a safe Christmas. This finding demonstrates that emotional appeals in public health communication are context-dependent. For example, Ho et al. (2024) found that emotional appeals varied according to the phase of the COVID-19 response and argued that such appeals should be understood in light of the communication context rather than being regarded as generally effective tools.

This method is consistent with the World Bank's (2021) finding that communication which emphasizes the people that the respondents wished to protect and the actions they wanted to see started could help reduce vaccine hesitancy. Even though the present analysis does not prove that the DOH's Christmas messages resulted in an increase in vaccine acceptance, it does indicate that the campaign employed the type of social and anticipated-benefit framing which had been found to possibly be persuasive in the Philippine context.

5.3. Logos: Vaccination as Protection and Rational Choice

Logos was the second most frequently reported type of appeal, appearing in seven instances. The messages classified as being based on logos mostly concerned protection, vaccine safety and effectiveness, accessibility, and health conditions. Unlike pathos messages, which emphasize relationships and values, those relying on logos frame vaccination as a reasonable response to a health risk. This is comparable to El-Dakhs's (2022) analysis of tweets from health departments in Saudi Arabia and Australia, in which it was found that government communication on vaccination made heavy use of logical appeals, even though the balance between logos and pathos differed from one national context to another. It also corresponds with earlier research on online attitudes towards vaccination, which demonstrated that concerns about safety, disease prevention, and the necessity of vaccination were ongoing informational issues (Calo et al., 2018).

The idea of protection was a recurring line of reasoning. For example, one tweet said, "I will get RESBAKUNA for added protection!" Another urged people to complete the required doses in order to achieve "guaranteed protection." These remarks establish a straightforward connection between action and benefit: vaccination is worthwhile since it offers protection.

The appeal works because it connects the recommended action with a specific benefit. However, there is reason to be cautious about the phrase 'guaranteed protection' since vaccines do not eliminate all the risk of infection, and public-health messaging should distinguish between reducing risk and providing complete protection. With this revised interpretation, the rhetorical function of the statement is recognized without considering its wording as scientifically accurate. Even though the tweet presents vaccination as rationally desirable by highlighting protection, the rhetorical analysis should not turn a statement made in a campaign into an independent scientific conclusion.

The campaign also examined the safety, effectiveness, and accessibility of vaccines. The statement "Lahat ng mga bakuna kontra COVID-19 ay ligtas, epektibo, at libre!" ("All vaccines against COVID-19 are safe, effective, and free!") brings together three different issues in a single clear claim. This method of rhetoric is efficient in that it addresses concerns regarding possible harm by referring to safety, answers questions about the benefits by talking about effectiveness, and eliminates any possible economic or access-related barrier by stating that the vaccines are free. These points are particularly relevant to the case of vaccination in the Philippines, since research has shown that there was uncertainty about the various vaccine brands, difficulties in accessing the vaccines, and other factors that hindered uptake (Amit et al., 2022). Likewise, studies on internet-based communication about vaccination show that safety and effectiveness are often discussed in the public discourse on vaccines (Calo et al., 2018; Nuzhath et al., 2020).

This example shows how logos and pathos can be combined. In terms of content, the tweet provides reasons for getting vaccinated; but on a psychological level it also aims to reduce people's anxiety by stating that the vaccine is safe and available. It is essential to draw this distinction since rhetorical appeals are not mutually exclusive. A statement about safety can serve an informative purpose and at the same time help to ease fear. The interaction between informative and affective communication is also evident in government social-media research: Ngai et al. (2023) found that information, emotional support, and other trust-building measures can all be used together in government COVID-19 communication, while Ho et al. (2024) demonstrated that emotional appeals are context-dependent elements of crisis communication.

The fact that the campaign targets people who already have health problems is further proof of the use of reasoned appeal. For example, someone says, "Since I have hypertension, I'll have ResBakuna for extra protection!" The message illustrates a person with a health condition deciding whether to get vaccinated based on their own assessment of risk and the need for protection. This line of thinking is in agreement with research conducted in the Philippines, in which it was found that people's intentions to be vaccinated and the vaccination rate were influenced by their perceptions of risk, safety, benefits, and trust, although the present study does not look into whether this particular message had an effect on those perceptions (Amit et al., 2022; Caple et al., 2022).

The message is an example of logos since it gives a reason for getting vaccinated. This reading of the argument is reasonable when one looks at its structure. It offers a premise ('I have hypertension') and a conclusion ('I will get vaccinated for extra protection'). At the same time, the statement has a testimonial character because it is presented in the first person. Therefore, it can be seen as an instance of overlapping appeals.

5.4. Testimonial Ethos: Constructing Credibility through Lived Experience

Ethos was the rarest of all the appeals, since there was only one instance in the original code. The suitable tweet is "Kahit may heart condition ako, kayang kaya pa ring labanan ang COVID-19!" ("Even if I have a heart condition, I can still fight COVID-19!"). When rhetorical analyses are carried out regarding vaccination, ethos refers to the credibility or character that a speaker or information source displays; although personal experience can contribute to this credibility, it does not automatically imply that the person has expertise or institutional authority (Savolainen, 2023).

In classical rhetorical analysis, ethos refers to the credibility or character of the speaker as presented in the discourse. A first-person testimonial may help to build up the speaker's ethos if he or she is portrayed as credible or trustworthy, but merely mentioning a health condition is not enough to establish credibility. In this instance, the available text does not adequately clarify the speaker's identity or expertise. It follows that the message cannot be regarded as strong evidence of ethos in the same way that an explicit institutional qualification, medical authority, or expert endorsement could be.

The testimonial establishes a sense of experiential credibility by indicating that the speaker has personally experienced a health condition and by mentioning that it is possible to receive a vaccination while having that condition. This may increase people's feeling of identifying with the situation and provide them with reassurance, even though it also makes use of both pathos and logos—evoking emotional responses through the speaker's personal vulnerability and offering a reason for getting vaccinated based on their own experience. This interpretation is consistent with research in health communication, which identifies source credibility, transparency, and the reduction of uncertainty as key factors in building trust on social media (Ngai et al., 2023) and also agrees with the evidence that personal stories can result in positive engagement in vaccination communication, even though engagement should not be considered the same as actual vaccination behavior (Loft et al., 2020).

More generally, the result indicates that institutional health campaigns could build their credibility indirectly by using familiar personal voices rather than depending entirely on formal institutional authority. Although the DOH's official status may offer some background authority, it is the tweet itself that creates a more particular kind of credibility based on lived experience.

5.5. Language, Diction, and Inclusive Address

The tweets were mainly in Filipino, and this is a matter of rhetorical importance since the campaign was aimed at the Filipino public and the use of Filipino enabled the Department of Health to communicate in a language linked with wide national coverage and everyday interaction. Also, the campaign could make use of expressions that would not be quite as easily understood if they had been translated into formal English.

The pronouns 'tayo' and 'natin' are especially important since, when inclusive pronouns are used, the distance between the institution and the audience is decreased because both parties are included in the same social group. To speak of "we" involves more than simply referring to a group; it, in fact, contributes to the creation of such a group. In the campaign, the collective "we" is built upon the shared experience of the pandemic and on the common responsibility regarding vaccination. This finding supports Ladia's (2025) study of pandemic tweets as rhetorical actions that can lead to the formation of publics and show shared concerns, just as Herrera-Peco et al. (2021) also discovered that community-focused communication is an element of pro-vaccination messaging on Twitter.

The campaign makes use of a combination of Filipino and English, especially in the case of hashtags such as #ResBakuna, #BayaniAngBakunado, #HeroesGetVaxxed, and #LigtasChristmas. These hashtags act as concise rhetorical devices since they not only make the campaign's themes easy to search for and repeat but also turn the campaign's propositions into slogans. For instance, #BayaniAngBakunado does more than just describe people who have had the vaccine; it gives them a positive identity.

5.6. Short-form Structure and Social-Media Affordances

The tweets were typically short; the average length was about 19.8 words, and each tweet contained roughly two sentences. The brevity is not just a result of Twitter's character limit; it also serves the campaign's rhetorical strategy by enabling messages to be read, remembered, and passed on quickly. This short format is appropriate for the nature of health communication on the platform, since brief, informative, and action-oriented messages can be repeatedly seen and linked together using hashtags (Herrera-Peco et al., 2021; Ladia, 2025).

A great many of the messages link a statement to an implied or direct appeal for action; for example, a remark concerning protection may be followed by advice to get vaccinated, a statement about family might be paired with an invitation to have the vaccine, and a slogan can be supported by the use of a hashtag. This kind of structure imparts a clear campaign pattern to the posts.

Hashtags also serve to organize the discussions, with #ResBakuna acting as the main label of the campaign and the other hashtags developing particular themes. For example, #LigtasChristmas links vaccination to the seasonal wish for a safe Christmas, and #BayaniAngBakunado creates a moral identity in relation to vaccination. Thus, the campaign makes use of hashtags not just for classification but also for framing and summarizing the meaning.

The fact that these features are present shows that the campaign's rhetorical strategy was multimodal, even though this study concentrates on the textual content. The hashtags, the visual material, the links, and the campaign's branding all contributed to the meaning of a tweet. Since the current corpus was mainly analyzed on the basis of the text contained in the tweets, the results cannot be applied to the campaign's entire visual rhetoric.

6. Discussion

The findings indicate that the DOH's #ResBakuna campaign made use of both informational and emotional forms of communication. Even though pathos was the primary type of appeal in the initial examination, logos was also frequently incorporated. Rather than seeing these appeals as mutually exclusive, the campaign usually combined them. This method is consistent with earlier research concerning government vaccination tweets, in which various public health organizations have combined informational, emotional, and credibility-based strategies in different proportions (El-Dakhs, 2022). It also aligns with the general observation that crisis communication entails not only providing information but also addressing uncertainty, emotion, and trust (Ho et al., 2024; Ngai et al., 2023).

The importance of this combination should be understood in the light of vaccine hesitancy in the Philippines. As hesitancy arises from uncertainty, misinformation, and a lack of trust, appeals based solely on emotion may not suffice; people also need information about safety, effectiveness, access, and protection. Conversely, communication that is entirely factual will not be able to connect vaccination with the relationships and values that affect individuals' decisions regarding their health. Studies carried out in the Philippines have pointed out concerns about vaccine safety, different brands, trust, and access, thus showing the communicative value of both informational and relational appeals (Amit et al., 2022; Caple et al., 2022). The #ResBakuna campaign considered both of these aspects rather than relying only on one kind of persuasive approach.

The clearest pattern is the shift in the perception of vaccination from something that is purely biomedical to one that is seen as a social and moral issue. In order to convey this change, emotional appeals are employed, making use of concepts such as unity, heroism, family, and Christmas to create a symbolic framework. Vaccination is portrayed as taking part in a national effort, as an act of heroism, as a way of showing care for one's family, and as a necessity for having a safer Christmas celebration. This kind of rhetorical strategy is significant because it provides people with reasons to take action beyond just considering their own personal risks. It also reflects the social-benefit and collective-wellbeing perspectives that have been identified in vaccination research in the Philippines and in other places (World Bank, 2021; Vaala et al., 2022).

The study also shows the way in which government health communication can create an imagined audience. Rather than targeting a specifically defined demographic group, the DOH spoke to Filipinos as a single national group and kept on using inclusive pronouns to build a sense of shared identity. This is in keeping with the general role of hashtags and the type of communication found on short-form social media, where messages are able to address individuals at the same time as bringing together a wider public.

The results have important consequences for research into health communication in the Philippines. Firstly, they show the importance of viewing government messages on social media as rhetorical artifacts rather than just as units of information. Secondly, the study illustrates how culturally relevant ideas such as family, national unity, heroism, and Christmas

can be used as means of influencing public opinion. Thirdly, it proves that short-form government communication is capable of integrating both informative and emotional strategies in one campaign.

The findings should nevertheless not be used to infer that emotional appeals are inherently more effective than factual information. The World Bank's (2021) findings support the potential value of social-benefit framing, but the present study does not test message effects. Similarly, research by Loft et al. (2020) suggests that personal stories can increase engagement, while Ngai et al. (2023) found that certain trust-building strategies were associated with public engagement; neither finding means that engagement automatically translates into vaccination behavior. The present study therefore contributes by explaining how the campaign constructed persuasion, not whether that construction produced a measurable behavioral outcome.

Ultimately, the Department of Health ought to evaluate the effectiveness of its communication not only on the basis of reach or level of engagement. While this study has identified a number of rhetorical strategies, it has not been able to establish whether or not these have influenced people's vaccination intentions or their actual behavior. Future campaigns carried out by the DOH could therefore make use of an evaluation framework that incorporates both message-level indicators (for example, reach, shares, comments and questions) and audience-oriented measures (such as knowledge, trust, perceived risk, intention and reported barriers), and, where appropriate, also considers program indicators like service use or vaccination uptake. This would allow the communication teams to distinguish between visibility and persuasion and between persuasion and actual behavioral outcomes. It would also enable the DOH to discover which combinations of informational, emotional, testimonial, and community-engagement strategies work best at different stages of a crisis and for different audiences.

The #ResBakuna campaign shows that public-health communication can make use of factual statements together with emotional, relational, and identity-based appeals. At the same time, the results indicate that an effective crisis-communication approach should not view persuasion as a one-way process in which organizations merely pass on messages to the public; rather, communication should be seen as a continuous process involving informing, listening, responding, and adapting. This view is in line with the recommendations on risk communication and community engagement (RCCE), which stress the importance of providing timely, credible, accessible, and actionable information together with opportunities for community feedback and engagement (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2020; World Health Organization, 2022, 2024).

7. Conclusion

This study examined how the Philippine Department of Health rhetorically presented COVID-19 vaccination in 24 #ResBakuna tweets posted during the National Vaccination Days campaign in late 2021. The analysis found that pathos was the most prominent appeal, particularly through references to unity, heroism, family, and Christmas, while logos supported vaccination through claims about protection, safety, effectiveness, and accessibility. Filipino expressions, inclusive pronouns, concise messages, slogans, and hashtags further framed vaccination as a collective responsibility grounded in shared social and cultural values.

The main contribution of the study is its account of how a Philippine government health campaign combined rhetorical appeals and culturally resonant textual choices to construct vaccination as both a health measure and a socially meaningful act. These findings explain the campaign's persuasive design; they do not establish that the messages changed vaccination attitudes or behavior. The study is limited by its small corpus of 24 tweets, its focus on the November to mid-December 2021 campaign period, and its analysis of tweet text rather than the full visual, audiovisual, and interactive features of the posts. Future research could examine a larger corpus across a longer period and integrate visual analysis with audience-response and

behavioral data to assess how such messages are received and what effects, if any, they produce.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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Declaration of AI Use and AI Disclosure Statement

ChatGPT was used to assist with language editing, proofreading, and improving the manuscript's clarity. We, the authors, critically reviewed and revised all AI-assisted outputs, and we take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the final manuscript. No AI tool was used to generate or fabricate research data, results, or references. We affirm that the analysis and argumentation were done by us, and we retain full responsibility for the integrity and accuracy of the work.

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