Revealing the Utilization of Pragma-dialectics and Fallacies in BongBong Marcos Supporters' Facebook Argumentations

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ABSTRACT

In this modern era, most transactions occur online, including the management of disputes. However, argumentation in the context of social media is rarely articulated in detail. Intuitively, people may recognize flaws in argumentation but may not be entirely certain about them. Hence, this research evaluates the reasonableness and effectiveness of online argumentation, particularly among Bongbong Marcos' supporters, as significant opposition exists due to his 2022 Philippine presidential candidacy. One example analyzed is De La Salle University's written unity statement posted on their Facebook page. Discourse analysis was employed to examine the data. Results show that Bongbong Marcos' supporters in the argumentative activity are not strategic in constructing their standpoint, as they distort critical discussion stages and commit fallacious arguments, failing to attain crucial stages of the evaluation process. Thus, Bongbong Marcos' supporters are not strategic in their arguments.

INTRODUCTION

To make democracy work, people are free to participate in the political landscape, taking part in decision-making by expressing their opinions and arguments on the pressing issues that concern them (Kaskazi & Kitzie, 2023), upholding the nature of politics which is persuasive and argumentative (Wodak, 2016). With the advent of digitalization, social media platforms like Facebook have been the platform for expressing opinions and argumentations. Calderaro (2018) contends that paying attention to social media paves the way for a new medium of communication that proliferates people's political knowledge. Hence, looking into how people exchange discourses and participate in democratic systems through social media is essential.

In the 2022 presidential election in the Philippines, abundant argumentation arose from the supporters of different presidential candidates, particularly the top two leading candidates—Bongbong Marcos (BBM) and Leni Robredo. One of the many enthusiastic statements of support that sparked multiple arguments on social media was the official statement of support from De La Salle University for Leni Robredo, which garnered almost 4,400 public reactions, 282 comments, and a thousand shares. The researchers used Facebook posts since Facebook allows a large number of characters, with 8,000 characters for comments and 63,206 characters

for regular posts, providing ample space for discussants to formulate their arguments thoroughly and effectively. However, many of the arguments found in the comment threads are not strategic and are biased, fallacious, and misleading to the public. Delving into these arguments is essential as it educates people on how to construct effective arguments and guides the public toward truths that matter in their voting decisions.

Furthermore, existing studies on argumentation explore how arguments are gathered and the need for them to be embedded in institutional and cultural contexts (Kimanova, 2010), in scientific publications (Clahsen et al., 2020), in press conferences (Wu & Zhou, 2023), in American presidential debates (Issa & Abbas, 2022), in campaign speeches (Gunawan, 2013), and in adult-children interactions (Greco et al., 2017). Additionally, Jovičić (2004) utilized authority-based argumentative strategies; Gijimah and Sabao (2022) examined the religious perspective of Christian faith healers and non-Christians in Zimbabwe; and Osisanwo and Adegbenro (2021) applied a framework on Obasanjo's narration. These existing studies focused on the use of argumentation in physical argumentative activities, highlighting the rarity of pragma-dialectical approaches to argumentation in a social media context, which calls for further empirical inquiries.

An empirical investigation is needed as emerging technologies have gradually shifted the way and the avenues through which people exchange their opinions and arguments to better understand the phenomenon of digital argumentation. In this new digital era, most social businesses take place in the technology sector (TED, 2012). These online transactions have been directed toward achieving personal gains, socializing, and even becoming part of the so-called norm, including online disputes that may be understood as online argumentation. However, to reiterate, argumentation in the social media context is often articulated in little to no detail. Intuitively, people may recognize flaws in argumentation but may not be entirely certain (Arnold, 2023).

The findings of this study may contribute to UNESCO's 16th Sustainable Development Goal. Disputes and disagreements over simple propositions, especially regarding political stances, can escalate into more complicated societal conflicts, such as violence or revolution. Hence, this study is significant in alleviating such tensions by involving society in political matters and employing a nonviolent method. Argumentation, according to Wodak (2016), is a nonviolent cognitive pattern of problem-solving. This aligns with UNESCO's 16th goal, which promotes peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provides justice for all, and seeks to build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels (UNESCO, 2023).

Accordingly, the study of argumentation strategies, while evaluating whether they are strategic or not, is significant for people in the community, particularly those enthusiastic about argumentative activities. This study will provide insights on how to craft strategic arguments and how to evaluate argumentation. Therefore, this research evaluates whether the argumentation found in the comment threads of the unity statement by De La Salle University on its Facebook page is strategic or not. Specifically, this study examines the argumentative strategies used in terms of the Confrontation, Opening, Argumentation, and Concluding stages, as well as the fallacies committed.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The study of pragma-dialectics in BBM supporters' Facebook argumentation argues that strategy-operated arguments result in reasonable and effective argumentation. This study is anchored on the Pragma-dialectical Theory of Argumentation and the Systematic Theory of Argumentation by van Eemeren and Grootendorst (2003).

The pragma-dialectical theory introduces the concept of strategic argumentation maneuvering. The idea is reconciling effectiveness while maintaining reasonableness. This is manifested in three different yet simultaneous

ways: the choices that the arguers made in topical potential, audience-directed, and the use of presentational devices, which is referred to as an expression (stylistics) that serve a purpose. To avoid letting the other objective prevail, the arguers aim to balance each at every discussion stage (confrontation, opening, argumentation, and concluding stage) (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1987).

A critical discussion begins with a confrontation stage in which a difference of opinion is manifested through the opposition between a standpoint and doubt regarding this standpoint. The absence of confrontation does not constitute a critical discussion (Bairmani & Algretawee, 2021; van Eemeren et al., 2014; Van Haaften, 2019). Hence, argumentation begins when one speaker opposes the other; otherwise, there is no critical conversation.

In the opening stage, the protagonist assumes the responsibility of defending the viewpoint, while the antagonist takes on the responsibility of criticizing both the stance and the protagonist's defense. The roles of the protagonist and antagonist are established at this point. In this stage, the exchange of argumentative roles becomes clear (Bairmani & Algretawee, 2021; van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1987; Van Haaften, 2019). In other words, both parties acknowledge their roles as defender and challenger, maintaining these roles throughout the conversation.

In the argumentation stage of a critical discussion, the protagonist methodically argues in support of the position under discussion, countering the antagonist's skepticism and other critical reactions. If the opposing party maintains doubt despite the defender's arguments, further argumentation from the protagonist may be elicited. Both parties aim to advance their standpoints during this stage, which is reflected in their critical argumentative moves. Hence, both arguers can take on the roles of antagonist or protagonist at different stages (Bairmani & Algretawee, 2021; van Eemeren, 2018; Van Haaften, 2019).

In the concluding stage of a critical discussion, the protagonist and the antagonist decide whether the protagonist's standpoint has been successfully defended against the critical attacks of the antagonist. This stage evaluates whose points prevail in the argumentative discussion. Theoretically, the discussants determine whose standpoints prevail throughout the discussion based on certain criteria. However, in reality, some participants may refuse to withdraw or agree with the opposing standpoint. When this occurs, it necessitates further argumentation (Bairmani & Algretawee, 2021; van Eemeren, 2018; Van Haaften, 2019). If the arguments have been successfully defended and one party changes their standpoint, then an agreement is reached between the parties.

These stages of critical discussion highlight the aspect of argumentation where strategic maneuvering—encompassing the topic, audience framing, and the use of presentational devices—is strategically utilized and adapted to each stage. There is topical potential at every critical stage of discussion when specific topics are chosen from a list of available topics to support an argument (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992, as cited in Al-Hindawi & Jubair, 2021). Likewise, the "viewpoint or perspective from which the arguer selects the argumentative move he makes in strategic maneuvering" is referred to as a topical choice from the topical potential. In other words, it is the range of potentially contentious statements available to be made at a given point in the conversation (Simons, 1990, as cited in Algretawee & Bairmani, 2021).

On the other hand, audience demand refers to the adaptation of discussion moves to the audience the speaker or writer wishes to reach (van Eemeren, 2010). This concept can be traced back to Aristotelian rhetoric, specifically the notions of pathos and ethos, which correspond to appealing to the audience. Therefore, arguers focus on what resonates with the audience, selecting subjects that are conveyed through specific linguistic

realizations that are conventionally, culturally, and logically appropriate for their audience (Al-Hindawi & Jubair, 2021).

The aspect of presentational devices deals with the means of expression (stylistics) that serve a purpose (van Eemeren, 2010) and relates to the communicative tools used to present the discussion moves (van Eemeren, 2010). According to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1991), language choices enhance the effectiveness of arguers.

These stages of critical discussion and strategic maneuvering provide a framework for determining whether the claims and arguments in the selected Facebook comment thread are strategic or not. Another criterion for evaluation is the use of fallacies, as discussed in the systemic theory of argumentation.

The Systematic Theory of Argumentation presents 15 rules to which the arguers adhere. A violation that results in the obstruction of alleviation of disputes is considered fallacious (van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 1999). Among these rules are Rules 7, 8, and 9, which capture the crucial evaluation process (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2003). It is crucial to begin by identifying the three aspects of argumentation, along with the rules presented, since they capture the reasonableness and effectiveness of an argument.

Rule 7 of the code of conduct, the validity Rule, highlights the need to ensure that the conclusion obtained follows logically from the premises in circumstances where this is appropriate. Reasoning that is explicitly and thoroughly presented in an argumentation may not be illogical in a logical sense (van Eemeren, 2018). Violation of Rule 7 commits to any of the following fallacies: the fallacy of denying the antecedent, the fallacy of affirming the consequent, the fallacy of division, and the fallacy of composition (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1987).

Rule 8 of the code of conduct, the Argument Scheme Rule, ensures that standpoints can be conclusively defended by the use of argument schemes: Standpoints defended by argumentation that is not explicitly and fully expressed may not be regarded as conclusively defended by such argumentation unless the defense takes place through appropriate argument schemes that are applied correctly (van Eemeren, 2018). Violation of Rule 8 commits any or every one of the following fallacies: populist fallacy (argumentum ad populum), the fallacy of confusing facts with value judgments (argumentum ad consequentiam), the fallacy of authority (argumentum ad verecundiam), the fallacy of hasty generalization, the fallacy of false analogy, and/or the fallacy of slippery slope (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1987).

Rule 9 of the code of conduct, known as the Concluding Rule, ensures that both the protagonist and the antagonist determine rightfully with the result of the discussion: Inconclusive defenses of standpoints may not lead to sustaining these standpoints, and conclusive defenses of standpoints may not lead to maintain expressions of doubt with these standpoints (van Eemeren, 2018). Violation of Rule 9 commits any of the following fallacies: the fallacy of refusing to retract a standpoint that has not been successfully defended, the fallacy of concluding that a standpoint is true because it has been defended successfully, the fallacy of refusing to retract criticism of a standpoint that has been successfully defended, the fallacy of judging that a standpoint is true because the opposing stance has not been successfully defended (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1987).

Argumentation is not irrational and is not fabricated by mere emotions. According to Scott (n.d.), argumentation represents a "reasoned attempt," this signifies the effort extended by the person based on critical thinking with planning where these appeal to the mind or the human intellect, particularly the audience. Thus, argumentation is done to resolve a difference of opinion on the merits, with the standard of reasonableness

fully pledged to "critical discussion". In critical discussion, the involved party in the difference of opinion undertakes a concerted effort to reach an agreement (van Eemeren, 2018).

METHOD

Method Used

This study employs a qualitative approach using discourse analysis to examine Facebook argumentation by BBM supporters. The analysis focuses on language use within varying social contexts, particularly at the intersection of language and politics in argumentation. This is crucial for examining the reasonableness and effectiveness of the arguments, framed within the Pragma-dialectical theory of van Eemeren (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1987). The study aims to systematically observe how these supporters utilize language to fabricate their political stance, whether to build trust, incite doubt, evoke emotions, or manage disputes in a social media context.

Sources of Data

The primary data for this study is gathered from Facebook comments on the Facebook page of De La Salle University under their written unity statement, which expressed opposition to Bongbong Marcos' 2022 Philippine Presidential candidacy. This statement also referenced issues surrounding his late father, former President Ferdinand Marcos. The post, published on October 8, 2021, drew the attention of BBM supporters, prompting them to defend their candidate by commenting. Comments were gathered between October 8 and October 10, 2021, following Bongbong Marcos' filing of his candidacy. During this period, five comment threads emerged, but only three were chosen randomly, yielding 58 comments: seven from thread one, 25 from thread two, and 26 from thread three. The limited number of comments and the findings that emerged do not necessarily represent the overall argumentative strategies of participants commenting on the Facebook post.

Data Gathering and Analysis

To obtain data for this study, the researchers gathered all comments on DLSU's post that contained exchanges of grounds and classified them using the stages of discussion alongside aspects of argumentation, including topical potential (TP), audience demand (AD), and presentational devices (PD). These were analyzed in conjunction with the discussion stages (confrontation, opening, argumentation, and concluding) from the Pragma-dialectical Theory of Argumentation by van Eemeren and Grootendorst. The researchers also scrutinized fallacies committed by participants during the argumentation and concluding stages, reflecting on rules crucial for the evaluation process as introduced in the Systematic Theory of van Eemeren and Grootendorst (Validity Rule 7, Argumentation Scheme Rule 8, and the Concluding Rule 9). Research ethics were strictly observed by assigning codes to participants' names and backgrounds to maintain confidentiality. Furthermore, the arguments and comments were used solely for research purposes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 revealed that participants' A, D, F, and G's argumentations are not strategically maneuvered, while participants' B, C, and E's argumentations are strategically maneuvered. These findings are elaborated in Table 1.

The first thread of comments started with A's opposition to the unity statement posted by De La Salle University, highlighting the Hacienda Massacre and Mendiola massacre during the Aquino Administration, which A believes to be more brutal than martial law. This is expressed in the following extract:

C1 L1, by A: *Hindi pa kayo buhay nong martial law... pero daming nyo ng sinasabi. Pero itong kalian lang na buhay na kayo at may mga isip na hindi nyo alam yon hacienda massacre at mendiola massacre...*[You are not born yet during martial law yet you have a lot to say. But now that you exist and are already mindful, you are not aware of Hacienda and Mendiola massacres].

Table 1. Argumentation strategies in thread of comments 1

Part.	Pers.	Confrontation			Opening			Argumentation			Concluding			Evaluation
		TP	AD	PD	TP	AD	PD	TP	AD	PD	TP	AD	PD	
A	pro	√	√	√										Not
B	con				√	√	√							Strategic
C	con				√	√	√							Strategic
D	pro		√											Not
E	con				√	√	√							Strategic
F	con	√	√											Not
G	pro													Not

Legend:
- 'Part.' participants (represented in letters)
- 'Pers.' perspective ('pro') for a stand supporting BBM and 'con' for against BBM)
- Aspects of argumentation (topical potential (TP), audience demand (AD), and presentational device (PD) with the discussion stages (confrontation, opening, argumentation, and concluding)

Evaluation ('strategic', and 'not'['not strategic argumentation])

This opposing statement of A is categorized as the confrontation stage as it conveys non-acceptance of the unity statement, signifying differing opinions. When another speaker holds a different opinion from the first, an argument takes place (Bairmani & Algretawee, 2021; van Eemeren et al., 2014; Van Haaften, 2019). Additionally, the statement was strategically maneuvered at this stage as all aspects of argumentation were adhered to. Conveying the irregularities of the Aquino administration implies a topical potential that was chosen from the topics being considered at the moment, which is about the irregularities from the Marcos administration. Tindale (2004) explains that topical potential refers to the process of selecting resources from those available based on what arguers believe will best serve their interests.

Moreover, the strategic use of "kayo" or "you" appealed not only to the proponents of the unity statement but also to the general audience and successfully conveyed its intention. According to Al-Hindawi and Jubair (2021), arguments become strategic when arguers focus on what the audience finds interesting and select topics that are conveyed through specific linguistic realizations. Similarly, this approach enhances the argument's effectiveness (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1991), qualifying it as a presentational device.

However, A's proposition at confrontation has not carried throughout the discussion even though it has been called to defend by Participant F, making it a not strategic argumentation. F's opposition is expressed in the following statements:

R5L1: *........ hindi na ito laban ng Aquino at Marcos na pare parehong patay laban ito ni Bongbong na nagiingat ng nakaw na salapi at ni Leni Robredo* [This is not anymore about Aquino and Marcos who are both dead, this is now between Bongbong, who is careful on the ill-gotten wealth, and Leni Robredo].
L2: *Sabihin mo kay Bongbong humingi ng sorry sa bayan at ibalik ang ninakaw nilang maganak* [Tell Bongbong to apologize to the public and return the ill-gotten wealth of his family].

This statement by F still qualifies under the confrontation stage, as it responds to A's premise, initiating a new critical conversation. However, this statement is not parallel to A's standpoint and is therefore not strategically

maneuvered, as it fails to establish a strategic topical potential. A's assertion addresses Martial Law and the Mendiola Massacre, which F was required to adhere to rather than introducing a new topic. According to van Eemeren's (2018) Rule 3, both participants must not distort the standpoint at issue. This occurs when the antagonist attacks a standpoint different from the one advanced by the protagonist.

Participants A and F failed to establish a point of departure and did not continue to strengthen their grounds, even though the premise was called into question at the argumentation stage by B, C, and E. According to van Eemeren (2018), argumentation must pass through the discussion stages to resolve differences of opinion. Hence, the moves described above show no signs of strategic maneuvering. As a result, no critical discussion is taking place, and theoretically, this does not qualify as strategic argumentation.

Participant D's and G's participation at the argumentation stage misuse of the three aspects of argumentation, especially presentational devices (esp. language use), resulting in no stage of argumentation being qualified as reflected in the premise:

> A.L1: *Isipen mo kung bakit lalaban si Leni lugaw dito sa Bicol nga walang nagawa* [Think of it, why will Leni, porridge, run, she has even done nothing in Bicol].
> R6L1: *p*kyu...puro ka sabing magnanakaw eh mas mukha akapang magnanakaw...* [F*ck you, you keep on saying corrupt but your face is more corrupt].

This statement contains vulgar language, such as "p*kyu," and misogynistic terms like "lugaw" (porridge). It does not contribute to advancing the discussion or serve any purpose (van Eemeren, 2018); therefore, it cannot be considered strategic argumentation as it fails to adhere to the aspect of presentational devices. The expression used by the participant does not enhance the effectiveness of the argumentation, as noted by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1991), resulting in no stage of argumentation being initiated. Moreover, no potential topic is clearly expressed in the argument raised. While D's question may provoke the audience to think, the claim that Leni has done nothing remains unsupported, even in the latter part of the argumentation, further classifying it as not strategic.

Participants B's, C's, and E's participation in the thread using the following statements:

> (B) R1L1: *Bakit po nadamay ang Aquino? Wala naman pong tatakbo sa kanila diba?* [Why are Aquinos involved here, none from them are seeking for any position?].
> (C) R2L1: *Bakit sinisisi nyo kay Lenie ang maling nagawa ng Aquino di naman cla magkamagananak tarlac ang Aquino at Bicol si Lenie* [Why are you putting the blame to Leni for what Aquinos has erred, they are not even relatives, Aquinos are from Tarlac, while Leni is from Bicol].
> (E) R4L1: *di po ba't mas masaklap kung buhay na kayo noong panahon ng martial law at di niyo nalaman at nakita ang mga nangyari?* [Isn't it worse if you had been alive during martial law and had been unaware of what happened back then?]

These questions directly challenge A, focusing on the opening stage, where A is identified as opposing the unity statement. This opposition is contested by B, C, and E, who are recognized as the protagonists. The opening stage establishes the division of discussion roles (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1987; Bairmani & Algretawee, 2021; Van Haaften, 2019). Furthermore, the statements of B, C, and E are strategically maneuvered at this stage, as they all critically challenge the topical potential expressed by A, which was not addressed. It is A's obligation to defend the expressed standpoint. The participation of these three participants in the opening stage constitutes a 'strategic' argumentative move. Theoretically, the antagonist, in their role within this discussion, must critically attack the protagonist's standpoint, with the attack framed around the relevant topic at hand (van Eemeren, 2018).

Similarly, the framing of rhetorical questions has improved the argument and made it more thought-provoking for both readers and the opposing side. Additionally, rhetorical questions are employed to persuade the audience that they contain important answers (Ainsworth-Vaughn, 1998). Therefore, the use of rhetorical questions qualifies as strategic in terms of both audience demand and presentational devices.

To sum up, participants A, D, and G failed to recognize the argumentative aspects within their premises at the confrontation stage and discontinued their support for their standpoints, even though their propositions were called into question during the opening, argumentation, and concluding stages, making their arguments not strategic. These participants belong to the 'pro' perspective. Meanwhile, participants B, C, and E strategically attacked the propositions of the 'pro' perspective during the opening stage. Although they did not explicitly reach the argumentative and concluding stages, the absence of a response from the opposing parties suggests acceptance of their arguments. Participant F's failure to adhere to the topic rendered his arguments not strategic.

Table 2 reveals that participants A, B, and E have strategic argumentations in the second thread of comments, while C, D, F, and G do not.

Table 2. Argumentation strategies in thread of comments 2

Part.	Pers.	Confrontation			Opening			Argumentation			Concluding			Evaluation
		TP	AD	PD	TP	AD	PD	TP	AD	PD	TP	AD	PD	
A	pro	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√				Strategic
B	con	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√				Strategic
C	pro	√	√	√										Not
D	pro				√	√								Not
E	con	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√				Strategic
F	pro													Not
G	con							√	√					Not

Legend:
- 'Part.' participants (represented in letters)
- 'Pers.' perspective ('pro') for a stand supporting BBM and 'con' for against BBM)
- Aspects of argumentation (topical potential (TP), audience demand (AD), and presentational device (PD) with the discussion stages (confrontation, opening, argumentation, and concluding)

Evaluation ('strategic', and 'not'['not strategic argumentation])

Participant A asserted her opposition by stating her ground by asserting Windfarms as one of BBM's projects, evoking others' viewpoints (specifically discussants B, E, and G). She implicitly indicated her support in the following extract:

> C2L1: As an advocate of renewable energy for sustainable development, BBM built wind farms in various areas of the province to sustain not only the energy supply of Ilocos Norte but also for the rest of Luzon.
> C2L2: *...di pa nga president yan [BBM] ang dami ng nagawa...*[He is not even yet a president, he had a lot of things accomplished].

This statement contains topical potential, implying that the wind farms in Ilocos are BBM's project, framing the audience as A seeks to reach the Filipino people by directly mentioning North, South, and parts of Luzon, referring to the people benefiting from the wind farms. When a topic is a divisive assertion that can be introduced at any point during the conversation, it is considered to have potential (Simons, 1990, as cited in Algretawee & Bairmani, 2021). According to Al-Hindawi and Jubair (2021), arguments become strategic when

arguers focus on what the audience finds interesting and select topics that require precise and culturally relevant linguistic realizations. Highlighting benefits is certainly culturally appropriate and appealing.

Likewise, this conveys a clear manifestation of support for BBM and opposition to the unity statement of DLSU, indicating a confrontation. The confrontation stage initiates a critical conversation by expressing disagreement and challenging a viewpoint (van Eemeren et al., 2014; Bairmani & Algretawee, 2021; Van Haaften, 2019).

B's non-acceptance of the standpoint of A calls for another confrontation, as expressed in the following:
> (B) R1L1: Hindi po si BBM ang nagpatayo ng wind farms... [BBM is not responsible for these wind farms].
> EDC po ang may-ari nun...[EDC owns it].

The framing is directly to the issue advanced by A, making it topical potential as B contentiously selects this argument with a supporting claim that "EDC owns it." The use of "po (an expression of politeness)" is a strategic use of presentation device as it enhances the politeness of argumentation. Politeness is an argumentative technique that can add value and convince the speaker of something (Alcoba & Poch, 2010).

This standpoint of B is not accepted by A, which was challenged by B, opening a critical discussion as shown in the following extracts:
> A. R1: *T*hat was his ideas and Passed.
> B. R2: *Binasa ko kasi lahat nung mga nasa website ng EDC at FirstGen, wala namang nasabing pangalan niya* [I read everything that was written on EDC and FirstGen websites, his name was never written there.].
> R3: *Di rin naman niya pera yung ginamit para sa pagpapatayo nun* [Well, he did not spend his personal money on that project].

The conversation between participants A and B progresses to the next stage, the opening. In this stage, the rules of engagement between the two parties are clearly established as they continue to defend their viewpoints. Theoretically, van Eemeren et al. (2014) state that the opening stage manifests the division of roles. It is evident that the argument framed by B is directed at the audience B wishes to address and uses direct language to indicate its purpose, which is to compel A to defend the claim. Moreover, in this stage of argumentation, A could have responded to B's arguments, making the statement topical potential, but failed to strategically use presentational devices. This failure to appeal to the audience is due to the response being very short and incomplete, which does not enhance A's argument at this stage.

A and B's moves, from manifesting different standpoints to opening the discussion for further argumentation, are logically valid and are framed around the issue advanced. Their conversation is further elevated in the following extracts:
> R4L1 by A: This early, Ilocos Norte is already reaping the benefits of its windfarms, thanks to the foresight of Senator Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr., who led the construction of the only major wind farm development in the country. Source: Wind Energy.
> R5L1 by B: *nasan po yan? Pakisend naman po yung link dito* [Where can I read that? Can you share with me the link?].
> R6L1 by A: without ideas Money is useless!! You need to be a Visionist in order to make the nation great not just to fulfill the mission rather to be a good visionist for the sake of nation

In this argumentation stage, participant A continues to support his claim from the confrontation stage that BBM is responsible for the wind farms, using the analogy that he is a violinist, which illustrates topical

potential. Moreover, A cited sources to make the claim more credible and appealing to the audience, which became the basis for Participant B's response, asking for the source of such a claim. B's question is both potential and thought-provoking. The politely framed question also enhances its effectiveness, adhering to the principles of presentational devices.

Both A and B strategically maneuvered their arguments up to the argumentation stage, though no single argument explicitly prevailed. In reality, some participants may refuse to withdraw or agree with the opposing standpoint (Bairmani & Algretawee, 2021; van Eemeren, 2018; Van Haaften, 2019).

Going back to the asserted standpoint of A in C2, another arguer expressed its standpoint of non-acceptance-E. E confrontation realizes the issue A expressed in the first premise. Both arguers deliberately play their roles in constructing the issues, framing directly to the person they wish to reach as E requests A to provide a reliable link and source in R23, particularly in the argumentation stage. This move made by E in the online world taps the audience framing. Thus, this is to let A prove the premise and that this strengthens the proposition needed by the netizens. Though A vs. E's argumentation throughout the stages is little, both successfully established their grounds about the light of explicitness in every standpoint.

The continuity of this argumentation move of A vs. B and A vs. E is unrecognized. Thus, both argumentative discourses fail to conclude whose party's point prevails, and no party could retract their ground. Though the premises were laid down into critical discussion stages, they remain inclusive. The inclusiveness of the discussants' argumentation may be explained as no real completion of this argumentation was made (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1987).

Contrary to the previously stated discussants, C, D, F, and G participants make a move that is not an argumentation. Logically, they fail to craft an argumentation. Particularly, C's discussion does not move in stages, and the discussion does not manifest the aspects of argumentation, directly contributing to stages with no critical discussion made in the premise:

> R13 L4: Why don't you ask the people living in Ilocos and ask them about BBM's projects and how they are benefiting from it.
> L5: Then ask the people in Bicol about Leni's projects.
> L6: And I'm not sure, correct me if I'm wrong, but it was said that Leni only came back in Bicol for her candidacy.

The underlined phrase in L6 emphasizes an unsure proposition, which is not a strategic move parallel to utilizing topical potential. D's response in R15, though challenged by B, fails to adhere to the standpoint of the issue, and G's request to B jumps directly to the argumentation stage with no difference of opinion manifested. Among the four discussants in the 'pro' perspective, only A strategically crafts argumentation, realizing all the stages and aspects of argumentation throughout the discussion. Strategic argumentation maneuvers in using the aspects of argumentation in each stage; hence, failure to recognize its role is not a strategic argumentation (van Eemeren et al., 2014).

Table 3 revealed that participants C and H have strategic argumentations, while the rest do not.

The thread commences with A's proposition, expresses the standpoint opposing BBM's candidacy, directly supporting De la Salle University's written unity statement, remembering the sufferings of the community (DLSU) during the Martial law as shown in the following extract:

> A L1: For those who support Marcos in this thread, as much as I respect your political stand, you need to understand that our community was built also on the suffering of student (C)leaders, activists, and members of the academe who were detained and suffered under Martial law.

L6: A lot of those wounds and the impact on the community was still relatively there, and there were still a lot of people who passed on the stories and verbal histories to those of us who took over our student orgs (I remember Bro. Andrew spoke extensively on how Martial law affected life in DLSU...those were really sad stories too).

Table 3. Argumentation strategies in thread of comments 3

Part.	Pers.	Confrontation			Opening			Argumentation			Concluding			Evaluation
		TP	AD	PD	TP	AD	PD	TP	AD	PD	TP	AD	PD	
A	con	√	√	√										Not
B	pro	√	√	√										Not
C	pro	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√				Strategic
D	pro	√	√	√										Not
E	pro	√	√	√										Not
F	pro	√	√	√										Not
G	pro	√	√	√										Not
H	con	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√				Strategic
I	pro	√	√	√										Not
J	pro							√	√					Not
K	pro	√	√	√										Not
L	neut													Not
M	pro													Not
N	pro													Not
O	pro	√	√	√										Not
P	pro	√	√	√										Not
Q	pro	√	√	√										Not

Legend:
- 'Part.' participants (represented in letters)
- 'Pers.' perspective ('pro') for a stand supporting BBM and 'con' for against BBM)
- Aspects of argumentation (topical potential (TP), audience demand (AD), and presentational device (PD) with the discussion stages (confrontation, opening, argumentation, and concluding)

Evaluation ('strategic', and 'not'['not strategic argumentation])

The first statement of thread 3 falls under the confrontation stage as it expresses opposition not to the unity statement of DLSU but to those who commented against it, indicating a differing opinion. A critical conversation begins with a confrontation stage, where disagreement is expressed by opposing a viewpoint and casting doubt on it (van Eemeren et al., 2014; Bairmani & Algretawee, 2021; Van Haaften, 2019). Furthermore, participant A's confronting argument has topical potential as it adheres to the issue of how and why DLSU opposes the return of the Marcoses. It strategically uses presentational devices such as the language "respect your political stand," which highlights good values and enhances the argument's effectiveness. Additionally, it appeals to the audience's empathy by using expressions like "wounds," which imply suffering.

A topic is considered potential if it is a divisive assertion that can be raised at any point during the discussion (Simons, 1990, as cited in Bairmani & Algretawee, 2021). According to Al-Hindawi and Jubair (2021), arguments become strategically focused when speakers emphasize topics that captivate their audience and provide linguistically and culturally relevant insights. Despite these strengths, participant A's argumentation would still not be considered strategic as it failed to pursue and defend its arguments, even when called upon to do so.

B, D, E, F, G, I, J, K, M, N, O, Q, and R ended by expressing their non-acceptance of the expressed standpoint of A and not committing to winning an argument they started, for at the following premises by their respective discussants:

D (R3): *...kahit anong sasabihin ninyo cenzan po solid BBM kami for president. 80's ka pala eh, akala mo na witness mo ang panahon ni FEM. Angkasabihan ang naniniwala sabi-sabi walang bait sa sarili. Peace* [Whatever you say, we are solid BBM for president. You are actually born in the 80s, you assume to be a witness of FEM. There is a famous saying which says 'only fools believe in hearsays.' Peace].

B (R1): *...kasing, magpasaway kayo, ayaw nyong may kumokontrol sa inyo, Malaya kayong gawin ang gusto nyo kahit na hindi na dapat...Abusado kayo sa karapatan. Simple* [You are delinquent, you hate being controlled, you cry for freedom beyond the limits, you are abusive].

E (R4): *......Almost 30 years since mawala si macoy...umunlad ba ang pinas...ang umunlad mga elitists at oligarko..yan ang katotohanan...* [30 years has passed since the death of Macoy, has our nation progressed? Only the elitist and oligarchs have, that's the truth].

These statements represent their participation in this thread, as their arguments shared similar characteristics in response to Participant A. All their statements simply expressed opposition to A's arguments but were not pursued or supported, even when called upon to do so, rendering their arguments not strategic. According to van Eemeren (2018), argumentation must pass through discussion stages to resolve differences of opinion. Nevertheless, these participants were able to generate potential topics, as they introduced potential disagreements related to the argument being considered.

The spectrum of potentially divisive remarks that can be raised at any given moment during the conversation is known as topical potential (Simons, 1990, as cited in Algretawee & Bairmani, 2021). As Tindale (2004) argues, selecting materials from those available, based on what arguers believe will best suit their interests, is also referred to as topical potential. Similarly, these contentious statements provoke the audience's thoughts, particularly those opposed to the Marcoses, by appropriately using language such as a metaphor to compare them to fools. According to Widyanti (2013), metaphors are employed to draw attention to, critique, or offer commentary on specific aspects of phenomena. Additionally, participant E uses rhetorical questions for a persuasive effect, as their profundity prompts the audience to seek answers (Ainsworth-Vaughn, 1998).

Only C and H carried out their stand throughout the discussion. The argumentation of C vs. H underwent a critical discussion. C's expressed standpoint in R2:

R2L1: *asa nung respect jinilang taon nalumipas binabato nyu pa dn ky BBM ung nkaraan* [Where is your respect, years had passed, you still blame BBM for the past].

L2: *tandaan nyu ang kasalan ang AMA nd kasalanan. Ng anak bkt ang ikaw nasa sitwasyon papaya kba na kasalanan. Ng ama u kasalanan u dn diba nd...*[Remember this, the sin of the father is not the sin of the son, if you were in BBM's situation, would you take responsibility for your father's sin?].

This was directly challenged by H:

L2: so it's safe to say that the achievements of the father cannot be inherited by the child too.

This was addressed by C in:

L1: *contributions of BBM madami at madami na xa natulungan ng walang CAMERA. At nd nka media* [BBM has many contributions, and he has helped many without media coverage or cameras].

H critically attacks C in the following:

L1: can you give me credible sources that will backup all your claims? I'm intrigued.

C responded:

L1: *sarap ilapag ung video dto nuh kaso walang nkalagay na image sa Cs pra masagot ung tanong u* [I'd love to show you the video to answer your queries, but it doesn't have the required image for posting].

Both discussants acknowledged their differing opinions and their roles as pros and cons. They have even reached the point of supporting their claims, reaching the argumentation stage. The hero defends the protagonist's point of view by using arguments to counter the antagonist's inquiries and other fundamental reactions (Bairmani & Algretawee, 2021). However, this critical discussion ended with no resolution to the discussants' differing opinions, and no conclusion was drawn from them. Nevertheless, both of them were strategic in their participation in this thread.

Table 4. Scrutinized fallacies in threads 1, 2, and 3

Types of Fallacies	Thread 1	Thread 2	Thread 3	Total
Validity Rule 7				
- Fallacy of denying antecedent	1			1
- Fallacy of affirming the consequent,				
- Fallacy of division,				
- Fallacy of composition				
Argumentation Scheme Rule 8				
- Fallacy of Slippery Slope	1			1
- Fallacy of Authority		1	1	2
- Fallacy of Hasty Generalization			1	1
- Populist fallacy				
Validity Rule 9				
- The fallacy of refusing to retract a standpoint that has not been successfully defended				
- The fallacy of concluding that a standpoint is true because it has been defended successfully				
- The fallacy of refusing to retract criticism of a standpoint that has been successfully defended				
TOTAL		5		

As shown in the table 4, five fallacies are found in the three threads of comments – the fallacy of authority was used twice. In contrast, the fallacy of denying the antecedent, the fallacy of the slippery slope, and the fallacy of hasty generalization were used once. These fallacious statements make the participants' arguments not strategic or weak.

The fallacy of authority is illustrated in the following extract: "…then ask the people in Bicol about Leni's projects. and im not sure, correct me if im wrong but it was said that Leni only came back in Bicol for her candidacy."

By theoretically examining this move, its scheme is incorrectly applied since the premise and the standpoint are unrelated. The people in Bicol are not a relevant source of Leni's projects, considering Leni was the vice president of the Philippines at that time. This argument violates rule 8 of the code of conduct, the Argument Scheme Rule, as the argument is not conclusive (van Eemeren, 2018). Specifically, this is a logically invalid argumentation move, committing directly to the fallacy of authority as it appears that the people of Bicol have the authority to evaluate the programs and projects of former Vice President Leni Robredo. This reasoning is erroneous when the individual making it lacks legal authority in the subject matter being discussed (Michaud, 2018). Hence, making the people of Bicol the authority is fallacious as they do not have the legitimate authority to evaluate Leni's project as vice president.

The fallacy of denying the antecedent is illustrated in the following extract:

> L2: *kung nagnakaw sila sana nakulong na sila, taena wala nga sila naipakulong* [If they were corrupt, they could have been in jail, in fact, they are not in jail].

This if/then premise may be articulated in logical form as, "if thief, then imprisoned," and therefore, "not thief, then not imprisoned." While this may appear logical at first glance, the conclusion that X is not a thief simply because X is not imprisoned is flawed; it only signifies that further argumentation is required to make the statement reasonable. When someone asserts, without sufficient evidence, that because B occurred right after A, A must have caused B, this is referred to as a post hoc fallacy (Nikolopoulou, 2023). This argument violates rule 7 of the code of conduct, the Validity Rule, which emphasizes the need for the conclusion to logically follow from the premises when appropriate (van Eemeren, 2018). Hence, not being in jail does not necessarily guarantee that one is not corrupt.

The fallacy of the slippery slope is illustrated in the following extract:

> *tignan mo nga…sa pananakawan ng mga aquino anu nagawa nila para sa mga pilipino? …mga bobo!!! Yang tubig at Meralco sa gobyerno yan, bininta ng mga dilawan… tapos panay kayo reklamo sa gobyerno na mataas ang singil sa kuryente at tubig.*.[Look at this… with the theft of the Aquinos, what have they done for the Filipinos? …You fools!!! Water and Meralco, which were owned by the government, were sold by the Yellows… and now you complain about the government for high electricity and water bills…].

Such claim ended with an awful illogical conclusion:

> *tignan mo ikakahiya sana ng pilipino bininta sa mga kamaganak…ngayon sabihin mo kung sino ang magnanakaw?* [Try to see, in Aquino's corruptions, what have they done? You are fools!!! Water and Meralco, which were originally owned by the government, was sold by them—the Yellows. Here they are complaining about high water and electric bills... all that could have alleviated the lives of the Filipinos were given to their cronies. Now tell me who is more corrupt?].

These statements follow a causal argumentation scheme. A cause-and-effect argument here commits the fallacy of a slippery slope. G's reasoning, attributing the poverty of Filipinos to the actions of the Aquinos, is logically invalid. The slippery slope fallacy involves the belief that a relatively minor event will trigger a series of conditions leading to a drastic or unfavorable outcome (Jefferson, 2014). This technique is often used to evoke fear or other negative emotions in the audience. It is frequently employed to oppose a particular decision by exaggerating its (speculative) dire consequences and presenting them as certain (Jefferson, 2014).

In this statement, the arguer claims that the Aquinos were responsible for Filipinos' suffering and the high prices of water and electricity, asserting that government-owned water and electric companies were sold to their cronies—without providing any evidence to support these claims. This argument was intentionally constructed to appeal to the public's emotions by focusing on the suffering of many Filipinos. Therefore, it violates Rule 8 of the code of conduct, the Argument Scheme Rule, as the arguments supporting the claims are not explicitly laid out (van Eemeren, 2018).

Hasty generalization is illustrated in the following extract:

> *contributions of BBM madami at madami na xa natulungan ng walang CAMERA. at nd nka media. Alam u kc ang gusto u tlgang tumulong d nakailangan ng camera. dami nang na donate this pandemic sa mga hospital, namigay pa ng relief goods ud nd nka media ud nd binabalita, oh nung kasagsagan ng Yolanda andun din xa tumulong pro walang camera d binabalita... Pro nd pa un VP c Leni tumutulong c BBM c Leni ksma puro camera puro pandemia d naman gumagawa* [BBM has contributed and helped a lot of Filipinos behind cameras or without the media. You know, if you extend help with sincerity, cameras are not needed. He has donated a lot in hospitals during the pandemic, he has even provided relief goods, and even when Yolanda struck, he helped without cameras. Leni wasn't VP that time, but BBM had started helping, while Leni keeps on moving with cameras on her, she did nothing at all].

The claims are not supported by evidence, committing the fallacy of Hasty Generalization. Subsequently, the participant presented a claim based on baseless evidence, without providing any supporting proof. In political discourse, media, and advertisements, hasty generalizations based on erroneous statistical interpretations often fabricate stories or are employed as sales techniques (Muñiz, 2018). Hence, the claim that BBM has helped a lot of Filipinos is a clear example of the misuse of statistics to sanitize the Marcoses' image, as no specific achievement or act of help was cited to support such a claim.

This constitutes another violation of Rule 8 of the code of conduct, the Argument Scheme Rule, which underscores that claims must be explicitly defended with solid arguments (van Eemeren, 2018). Thus, logical fallacies are false statements intentionally or unintentionally used to construct arguments and deceive audiences, rendering such arguments not strategic.

Based on the findings presented, most participants' argumentations are not well-maneuvered and lack strategic framing. Participants merely expressed opinions they believed or ideas they had heard, possibly from unreliable sources, resulting in weak argumentation. This aligns with the findings of Cionea et al. (2019), which indicate that argumentative competence depends on one's knowledge of the topic under consideration. Hence, the poor argumentation shown by the participants in the comment threads could be attributed to insufficient knowledge of the issue. As Liqing (2021) stated, the more knowledgeable arguers are, the stronger the relationship between pertinent claims and conclusions that can be established. As reflected in the results, participants only reached the confrontation and opening stages, expressing their limited knowledge of the issues. They were unable to proceed to the argumentation stage due to a lack of evidence. Therefore, before engaging in any argumentation, individuals should invest time in reading and understanding the critical points of the issues at hand to maneuver the argumentation effectively from the confrontation stage to the concluding stage.

Furthermore, confirmation bias could also be a major factor in their poor argumentation, as their minds are already closed to what they believe and have heard. This finding reflects the study by Castells et al. (2022), which revealed that people frequently accept information that supports their beliefs without question. As reflected in the findings, participants do not reach the concluding stage because they only embrace facts that favor their claims, resulting in unresolved issues. Thus, when engaging in argumentation, one should recognize the multifaceted and complex nature of human discourse and argumentation by considering other claims open-mindedly rather than perceiving them as personal attacks.

In addition, the use of fallacies, especially the violation of Rule 8, the Argument Scheme Rule, contributes to the poor and weak arguments of the participants. Studies have demonstrated that arguments become invalid and weak when fallacies are present. El Khoiri and Widiati (2017, p. 71) stated that "the presence of logical fallacy, which can be simply defined as an error in reasoning, shows either illegitimate arguments or irrelevant points that will undermine the strength of a claim." Lismay (2020) added that "logical fallacies can damage the credibility of the speaker or writer and improperly manipulate the emotions of the audience or reader." However, the use of fallacies in argumentation can also trigger reactions and counterarguments that may resolve issues related to the fallacious claim, as reflected in the study by Mueller and Yankelewitz (2014). Thus, weak arguments caused by fallacies invite stronger arguments to address the issues, prompting reactions and comments. While fallacies may have both positive and negative effects on argumentation, their negative impact is more significant; therefore, one should be cautious and avoid using fallacies in argumentation.

Finally, as reflected in the findings, those comments labeled as 'strategic' appropriately utilized strategic maneuvering—topical potential, audience demand, and presentational devices. This indicates that in making

claims and arguments, a thoughtful and expedient choice of topics from the available options is made (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, as cited in van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 1999); the preferences and sensibilities of the audience are considered to create empathy; and discursive and stylistic effectiveness are carefully attuned (van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 1999).

CONCLUSION

Based on the results, it is concluded that most participants in the comment threads did not effectively maneuver their discussion in the aspects of argumentation and failed to advance their propositions throughout the critical discussion. Thus, the findings reveal that their arguments are not strategic, often committing fallacious moves in stages crucial for the evaluation process. This implies that opinions are not yet argumentations but merely the initial stage of argumentation; argumentation requires a broader and deeper understanding of certain issues, the ability to embrace complexities, and open-mindedness. Argumentation becomes weak yet provocative when fallacies are present, and strategic maneuvering is essential in advancing arguments. Hence, to make sound arguments, the stages of argumentation must be adhered to, which involves supporting opinions with critical discussions. Likewise, arguments should be grounded in logic to avoid fallacious statements.

Furthermore, the results confirm the importance of language as a presentational device in shaping arguments to make them appealing to the audience and capable of capturing their attention. These findings could contribute to discussions on making sound arguments, particularly in writing argumentative essays and speeches, and serve as guidance for social media users when addressing opposing ideas to avoid miscommunication and conflicts. Sound arguments foster effective communication. Finally, argumentation should not hinder but rather enhance the exercise of freedom of speech, encouraging people to participate in political discourse and reach agreements on matters affecting them, whether on social media or other platforms. This study was limited to three threads of comments on De La Salle's Facebook post, which were analyzed using an argumentation framework designed for in-person argumentation. Therefore, further studies are recommended to analyze additional comment threads from President Bongbong Marcos's avid supporters using an online argumentation framework, if available. Additionally, it is suggested that argumentation related to fake news be analyzed using similar or alternative argumentation frameworks suited for online platforms.

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