

# Political Candidates' Credibility and the Filipino Youth's Voting Behaviors: Gauging the Influences of Ethos in the 2016 Philippine National Elections

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## *Abstract*

The paper investigates the possible effects of the Filipino youth's perceptions of political candidates' ethos on their voting behaviors in the 2016 Philippine National Elections. Ethos or source credibility is measured through its dimensions originally conceptualized by Aristotle—competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill. The results reveal that the three facets have significant effects on voting decisions. Moreover, the statistical models employed show that the interactions between ethos dimensions and voting patterns are more than just causal relations; competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill could be significant predictors of polling decisions. The findings reaffirm the propositions of both classical and contemporary persuasion theories that argue the crucial role of credibility in persuasive communication transactions. The same data as well implicitly lend support to the triadic association of the aforementioned ethos factors, strengthening claims that these dimensions are intercorrelated; and that they move in the same direction.

**Keywords:** *ethos/ source credibility, competence, trustworthiness, goodwill, voting behaviors, 2016 Philippine National Elections*

## Introducing the Problem: Ethos as a Mode of Persuasion and the Philippine Elections

Any Philippine election, considering the dynamics and the nature of the country's socio-political space, may be regarded as a battle of persuasion, where candidates' chances of being elected partly lie in their abilities to convince the populace – including the youth, accounting for about 37 to 40 per cent of the total voting population in the 2016 National Elections (Nicolas and Santos 2015) – to vote for them. Persuasion, as a means of securing enough votes to win, comes in various forms and acts. Diverse and innovative cases of alleged vote buying (Gotinga 2015), for instance, as reported by different media, can be seen as persuasive measures to ensure advantageous candidacy outcomes. The traditional “promise making” in political gatherings and campaign sorties, where the pressing concerns of the public are addressed through speeches, can be interpreted as a mode of convincing them to cast favorable votes. Political advertisements aired on television, radio; and bannered on the Internet platforms are another modern alternative way of persuading laymen to vote, or even, fight for their bets. Whether adhering to ethical standards or not, the aforementioned may be seen as mechanisms of persuasion whose ultimate goal is to translate voting preferences into actual favorable voting behaviors.

Persuasion, as an art of convincing message receivers, audience, or market, whether in the context of elections or other communicative situations, is not limited to tangible or explicitly observable actions and/ or behaviors as it is shaped by a number of factors (Bulan and de Leon 2002, 63; McCroskey 1986, 62-66). The Aristotelian tradition, for example, argues that while persuasion could be influenced by inartistic operations (the more recognizable modes), it is also determined, perhaps even to a greater extent, by artistic means (the ones that can be directed by the source of communication) (Tompkins 1982, 31)

Although the inartistic modes of persuasion could be used to strengthen the presented arguments, they are not really made, controlled, and structured by the communication source (Tompkins 1982, 31-32). Examples of these are oaths, contracts, pieces of evidence, facts, and other items of information that can support and

reinforce the ideas of the message source. On the other hand, the artistic category of persuasion is classified into three: ethos, pathos, and logos (Bulan and de Leon 2002, 60; Tompkins 1982, 31-32). Simply, ethos pertains to the communicator's source credibility; pathos, to the communicator's emotional appeal; and logos, to the communicator's method of reasoning and argumentation (Bulan and de Leon 2002, 60).

Among the three modes, it is assumed that ethos is the most potent. Moreover, it may be removed from the triadic association it maintains with pathos and logos since it operates at a different level or plane of classification (Rosenthal 1966, 26). While this view of the importance of ethos has undoubtedly acceptable basis, it may be supererogatory as more recent interrogations of the concept contend that credibility cannot be totally detached from emotion and logic primarily because their manifestations and functions may also be exemplified and embodied in ethos (Cheng 2012, 428); perceptions of ethos may largely stem from pathos and logos (in the same way that the values of pathos and logos may as well be dependent on ethos—emotion and logic in the absence of credibility cannot be persuasion). Moreover, the conceptualization of ethos as a construct that is connected with empathy and intelligence (among other concepts linked with credibility) (McCroskey and Teven 1999, 95-96; Niu and Ying 2016, 45) may imply its inherent relations with pathos and logos, hence, questioning its absolute independence from the two other artistic persuasion measures. Despite these seemingly contradicting takes on ethos' interactions with pathos and logos, none of them refute the former's vital position in communication transactions that necessitate persuasive appeals. Following, then, the notion that ethos plays an extremely crucial role in persuasion, it may be said that if credibility is presented well and perceived positively by the message receivers, it is easier for the source to persuade the listeners, rendering higher probability of the receivers to act the way the source wishes. In the context of the study, it can be claimed that credibility of politicians may, to a great extent, hone the public's voting behaviors, especially those of the youth who can significantly influence election results, considering their substantial numbers.

Credibility is composed of three dimensions: competence or authoritativeness, trustworthiness or character, and goodwill or intention

(Bulan and de Leon 2002, 63; McCroskey 1986, 62-66). These three facets of ethos are all essential in measuring credibility. In fact, empirical data suggest that ethos may not be quantified using only one category rating; meaning, three ratings, one for each dimension, should be computed when accounting for credibility (McCroskey and Teven 1999, 99). In this paper, then, these concepts are variables that are necessary in gauging the effects of political candidates' credibility on public's voting behaviors.

Establishing that credibility is a critical aspect of persuasion, and accepting the idea that the elections comprise a communicative situation strongly anchored in the principles of persuasion, it is undeniably interesting to define the roles of ethos and its dimensions in convincing people to vote for certain candidates. More specifically, it is thought-provoking to determine the effects of the Filipino youth's perceptions of political candidates' credibility on their voting behaviors in the 2016 National Elections.

### **Defining the Current Study: Effects of Filipino Youth's Perceptions of Candidates' Ethos on Their Voting Behavior**

As framed earlier, the paper argues that credibility, operationalized through its dimensions namely competence or authoritativeness, trustworthiness or character, and goodwill or intention, may be considered a strong factor of persuasion that affects quite a number of communicative acts like elections. Taking this into account, the paper aims to answer the question: What are the effects of the Filipino youth's perceptions of political candidates' competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill on their voting behaviors in the 2016 Philippine National Elections?

### **Reviewing the Literature: Ethos, and Its Role in Persuasive Communication and Elections**

Ethos and its dimensions, taken as a research point, is no longer a new zone in the field of communication studies, more so, in the area

of persuasion. However, its dynamic features, anchored in its evolving characteristics: being a product of perception; being a function of time, culture, and geographic location; being situational and contextual; being composite; and varying from individual to individual, and from group to group (Bulan and de Leon 2002, 63; McCroskey 1986, 62-66), warrant thorough investigations, especially when linked with other variables, such as the one being examined in this paper—voting behavior(s).

### *Ethos as a Construct*

Being an artistic persuasive mode, ethos is all the time associated with pathos and logos. Pathos is often referred to as the use of emotional appeals (Bulan and de Leon 2002, 60; McCroskey 1986, 264), the state of mind that shapes judgments (Covino and Joliffe 1995, 71). It is said that the message source is persuasive if s/he is able to “stir the emotions” of the receivers. Logos pertains to the source’s method of reasoning and argumentation (Bulan and de Leon 2002, 60; McCroskey 1986, 264). The Aristotelian tradition supposes that proofs through logos are made up of persuasive examples and enthymemes (Covino and Joliffe 1995, 64), which are indispensable in rhetorical communication mainly because they aid in strengthening the arguments presented in the content of the message. It must be noted though that the premises of these proofs are based on message receivers’ beliefs and dispositions rather than on certainties or accepted facts (Covino and Joliffe 1995, 48).

The main distinction that separates ethos, pathos, and logos (artistic modes of persuasion) from the inartistic persuasive devices lies in the idea that the former are creatively controlled and resourcefully manipulated by the communication source, while the latter are more focused on the materials that are used to build and intensify arguments (Tompkins 1982, 31). Inartistic factors draw their values from the veracities of the pieces of information made available to the message receivers during the communication transaction; artistic modes deduce their significance from the ability of the source to craft the performance effectively using accessible and relevant substantiations. In simpler terms, the inartistic cluster deals with “what is presented”; the artistic cluster, with “how ‘what

is presented' is actually presented." These elucidations answer why artistic modes belong to the realm of rhetoric, and the inartistic means do not.

In classical rhetorical theory, largely anchored in Aristotelian principles, ethos is most emphasized because of its capability to strongly impress, convince, and actuate listeners (McCroskey 1986, 264). Apart from its definition as "the attitude toward a source of communication held at a given time by a receiver" (McCroskey 1986, 62), it is also frequently related to prestige, character, integrity, believability, and likeability (Bulan and de Leon 2002, 63; McCroskey 1986, 62).

Ethos has three stages: extrinsic or initial; intrinsic, transactional or derived; and terminal (Bulan and de Leon 2002, 64-65; McCroskey 1986, 62-63). Extrinsic ethos is the source's credibility level prior to the actual interaction (Bulan and de Leon 2002, 64; McCroskey 1986, 62-63). Social characteristics, personal traits, educational and family backgrounds, previous knowledge about the communication source, other information made available to message receivers, and the communication environment are relevant to the assessment of initial credibility (Bulan and de Leon 2002, 64; McCroskey 1986, 66-70).

Next to initial ethos is the intrinsic ethos or the source's credibility during the encounter. This is the modified initial ethos, determined by the rhetorical choices included in the message, the message itself, and how the message is crafted and presented (Bulan and de Leon 2002, 64; McCroskey 1986, 63, 71-77). Aside from these, the circumstances where the communication takes place, to a certain degree, also affect this ethos stage (Bulan and de Leon 2002, 64; McCroskey 1986, 63).

The third stage, the final one, is the terminal ethos. This is the source's credibility upon the completion of the communicative act, the sum total of the first two ethos levels, the product of extrinsic and intrinsic credibility (Bulan and de Leon 2002, 64-65; McCroskey 1986, 77-78). It may be assumed that this is the most critical ethos stage since it can greatly affect the source's initial ethos in future communication interactions.

Understanding ethos' conceptualization is not limited to

knowing its stages as its dimensions are equally important, if not more so, especially in gauging its effects on different components in various communication settings. Aristotle's rhetoric proposes three universal ethos facets: competence or authoritativeness (source's expertise, training, and intelligence), trustworthiness or character (source's honor and moral qualifications), and goodwill or intention (source's genuineness and sensitivity) (McCroskey 1986, 63-66). These dimensions are said to be concrete determinants of communicator's total credibility (McCroskey and Teven 1999, 95-96; Teven 2008, 389-94), which means that they stand on equal footing and are evenly important; hence, the three must always be considered in any attempt to gauge one's credibility so as to preserve the triadic nature of ethos. In determining, then, the effects of political candidates' credibility on Filipino youth's voting behaviors, it is of paramount importance that all the three above-said aspects are assessed; otherwise the quantitative evaluation of ethos is compromised.

The conversations on Aristotelian conception of ethos facets may be extended to their manifestations in persuasive transactions as abstracted from an approach, like source credibility theory (SCT) (Hovland, Janis, and Kelley 1953, 35). While having incongruent labels, the theory allocates the same degree of importance to each of the credibility factors initially constructed by Aristotle; it supposes, based on research evidence, that "intentions" (goodwill in classical rhetorical tradition), "expertness" (competence in classical rhetorical tradition) and "trustworthiness" (same label in classical rhetorical tradition) are significant cues that shape one's credibility, and in turn, persuasiveness (Hovland, Janis, and Kelley 1953, 35).

Interpretations of SCT put forward the idea that the power of credibility in relation to persuasion can be comprehended and simplified through three models: the factor model, the functional model, and the constructivist model (Umeogu 2012, 115). Each of these models may be taken as a level or a degree, where the third phase ultimately becomes the outcome, the magnitude of the source's persuasive appeal.

The factor model discusses the extent to which the receivers deem the source as credible. It is the first mechanism that affects the degree of persuasion, in the manner that, if the judgment of the receivers is favorable

to the communication source, persuasion becomes easier (Umeogu 2012, 115). Commonsensically, on the other hand, if the evaluation of the receivers is negative, persuasion becomes more challenging. The second is the functional model which operationalizes credibility as the ability of the source to satisfy the needs of the receivers (Umeogu 2012, 115). It is said that when these needs are met, the receivers are more inclined to believe the source and be persuaded by him/ her. From this, it is clear that effective persuasion is a product of a credible source's faculty to touch, address, and fulfill the needs of the intended message receivers. Finally, the third, the constructivist model, tackles the humanistic side of the theory, by analyzing what the receivers do with the proposal of the source (Umeogu 2012, 115). This may be presumed to be the definitive gauge of persuasion, especially in communicative settings that actuate message receivers, or that require observable actions. It is at this stage that the conceptualized attitudes towards the communication source and his proposal materialize.

In a nutshell, SCT maintains that intentions (goodwill), expertness (competence), and trustworthiness (same label) concurrently operate at different but continuous planes that define credibility's power to influence communication receivers. Additionally, it posits that ethos may be classified as the most compelling mode of persuasion, that by enhancing it and ensuring audience's positive perception towards it, the communication source may expect advantageous outcomes.

Despite the consistent and evidence-based assumptions that confirm the positions of competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill in measuring credibility, ethos still faces challenges that interrogate the validity of its third factor. One side of such question claims that over goodwill, dynamism is a more appropriate and a more substantial credibility facet (Sereno and Hawkins 1967, 58-64; Tuppen 1974, 253-60); while the other side either simply reaffirms and strengthens the constancy of the first two factors, or offers a totally diverse set of ethos determinants; thus, neither acknowledging goodwill's position in the realms of ethos and persuasion nor recognizing the contended worth of dynamism (Hellmueller and Trilling 2012; Holtzman 1966, 464-66; McCroskey and Dunham 1966, 456-58; Ostermeier 1967, 141-43; Sereno 1968, 476-81). It is argued, for example, that in lieu of defining credibility as end product of the source's



competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill, it may be supposed that its multifaceted and multidimensional nature is rooted in the principles of telling the truth (“inclination toward the truth”), knowing the truth (“potential of truth”), and appearing to tell the truth (“presentation of truth”) (Eisend 2006, 23). Although this perspective presents seemingly new takes on ethos dimensions, examination of its central tenets shows that they essentially mirror the previously discussed credibility clusters originally theorized by Aristotle; that they are reiterations – if not basically more detailed phrasings – of the classical rhetorical tradition’s characterizations of credibility. “Inclination toward the truth” may be an elaboration of the trustworthiness dimension; “potential of truth,” of the competence dimension; and “presentation of truth,” of the goodwill dimension.

While the developments and alterations of ethos’ theoretical bases demonstrate a range of conflicting perspectives on the capacity of the third dimension intellectualized by Aristotle—goodwill—to translate source credibility levels into numerical evaluations, none of them challenge the merit of ethos in persuasion. In fact, more recent papers propose that the crucial role of credibility even in the more current times may never be dismissed (La Ferle and Choi 2005, 77-79; Florentino 2010, 181-184; Jackson and Darrow 2005, 95-97); thus, lending support to the current study’s thesis that credibility may partly shape voting patterns or behaviors.

### *Ethos in Persuasion and Political Communication*

In situations that aim to sway communicators, credibility may be perceived as a powerful tool in convincing the intended message receivers to act in accordance with how the source wants them to. This action, which may be interpreted as compliance gaining, is verified to maintain positive correlations with ethos dimensions—competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill (Florentino 2010, 181-184). By providing evidence of relationships, these findings partially prove the possible effects of credibility on persuasiveness. Since election is treated in this paper as a communicative act that centers on persuasion, it may be supposed that credibility would carry the same function and exemplification in said kind of transaction.

The impact of credibility on the degree of persuasion, to the extent of attitude shift or reversal, cannot be discounted as it is empirically proven to be significant (La Ferle and Choi 2005, 77-79; Jackson and Darrow 2005, 95-97). This expresses that ethos, as an apparatus of persuasion, is capable of changing or altering behaviors in numerous communication contexts. Following this line of argument, it may be safely assumed that its dimensions can be regarded as fundamental components of any election process (taking into consideration the process's nature as a persuasive communication event) since the components can undoubtedly convey and bring about preference change, even in relation to public's voting patterns.

The presupposed connection between electorate's perceived credibility towards politicians and their predilections in elections is strengthened by findings derived from positivist methods that relate ethos dimensions, especially competence and trustworthiness, with voting decisions (Relao 2011, 115-22; Teven 2008, 389-94). The moderate to strong correlations that exist between the two, while not explicitly indicating causation, still strongly emphasize the value of credibility in persuasion and political communication, in general; and in elections, in particular.

Further investigations on credibility and voters' selections reveal that the former is instrumental in finalizing polling decisions (Alsamydai and Al Khasawneh 2013, 122; Stephen et al. 2004 [cited in Alsamydai and Al Khasawneh 2013, 109]). It is claimed that electoral success may be critically dependent on ethos level, in the sense that a candidate would garner favorable votes if people deem him/ her credible. Credibility, in this setting, is constantly operationalized as the combination of being competent, being trustworthy, and showing goodwill (Teven 2008, 391-93).

Credibility's power in political candidates' chances of winning the elections may never be underestimated as it is forwarded that the character of anyone running for elective government office may be the most important issue in determining the public's voting behaviors (Stephen et al. 2004 [cited in Alsamydai and Al Khasawneh 2013, 109]). In addition, it is contended that, persona-based perceptions – that is to say, personal traits – are salient to the selection process electors go through before casting their votes (Wayne 2002 [cited in Teven 2008, 386]). Indeed, source ethos, in this case,

candidate credibility, may incontestably be a significant and solid predictor of political persuasion (Teven 2008, 389-94); therefore, elections as political contests are assumed to be competitions in credibility (McCroskey 1971, 5).

While the paper, through the studies reviewed above, aims to solidify the grounds of credibility in the turf of political persuasion, it cannot be denied that there are also data that somewhat negate or downplay ethos' weight in assessment of one's persuasive faculty. Claims that credibility does not enjoy significant effects on behavioral change in the context of persuasive political communication is found in existing literature (Morin, Ivory, and Tubbs 2012, 418-19). It is suggested that though ethos and its facets may sustain relationships with the public's electoral preference, the significant influences of the former on the latter can not be categorically inferred. Although this does not support the paper's claims on the centrality of ethos dimensions in Filipinos' voting attitudes, it nevertheless, and in fact, all the more, necessitates examination or reexamination of said variable primarily because of the incongruent view it exhibits.

In the local socio-political space, it is posited that credibility is vital to formations of voting choices. Data affirm that competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill occupy key roles in elections (Relao 2011, 115-22; Office of the Ombudsman n.d., 15). They are fundamental characteristics the public looks for in a candidate.

Considering the various, but coherent, arguments that establish the associations and possible effects of credibility and its dimensions with and on persuasive appeals in the context of political communication – more precisely, in connection with voting behaviors – it is certainly necessary to conduct a study that may provide empirical, practical, and theory-driven data that can argue and stress the importance and value of ethos.

## Operationalizing the Variables: Measures of Ethos and Voting Behaviors

The paper's central thesis rests on the presupposition that credibility, being a function of perception (Bulan and de Leon 2002, 60-67; Covino and Joliffe 1995, 48-71; McCroskey 1986, 62-82, 261-272; Tompkins 1982, 30-32), can greatly influence voting preferences. It views ethos and its three facets—competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill—as quantifiable constructs whose effects on voting patterns can be measured statistically.

While voting behaviors carry various definitions, in this paper, they are operationalized as either positive or negative. Positive voting behavior indicates favorable voting decision (voted for); negative voting behavior, unfavorable voting decision (did not vote for and would have least likely voted for).

### Stating the Hypotheses: Causal Interactions between Ethos and Voting Behaviors

*H1:* There will be a significant difference between the Filipino youth's perceived competence levels of political candidates whom they voted for (exhibiting positive voting behavior) and political candidates whom they did not vote for (exhibiting negative voting behavior).

*H2:* There will be a significant difference between the Filipino youth's perceived trustworthiness levels of political candidates whom they voted for (exhibiting positive voting behavior) and political candidates whom they did not vote for (exhibiting negative voting behavior).

*H3:* There will be a significant difference between the Filipino youth's perceived goodwill levels of political candidates whom they voted for (exhibiting positive voting behavior) and political candidates whom they did not vote for (exhibiting negative voting behavior).

## Presenting the Methods: Procedures of Assessing Ethos and Its Effects on Voting Behaviors

A total of 206 respondents, from different academic units of the University of the Philippines Diliman, participated in the study that was conducted approximately two months after the elections. Originally, 210 students were requested to answer the survey forms; however, four of them did not completely fill out the questionnaires. The sample size was arbitrarily determined considering the assumptions of the required statistical tool. This might not be statistically representative of the investigated population, and thus, will not yield inferences and generalizations; however, it will still undoubtedly deliver valid and useful empirical data.

The respondents were each selected through purposive sampling technique which posed the following criteria: (1) an undergraduate student of the University; (2) 24 years old or below (United Nation's definition of young adult's age) when the study was implemented; and (3) voted in the last national elections.

The first half of the respondents, 101 students, evaluated the credibility of the presidential candidates they voted for in the last 2016 Philippine National Elections; while the remaining 105 respondents assessed the credibility of the presidential candidates they did not vote for and would have least likely voted for. The presidential aspirants were chosen to represent and contextualize "political candidates" in this study. Since this might carry certain limitations, especially with regard to validity of findings in measuring the effects of credibility dimensions on voting decisions concerning other candidates or elective posts in general, a question asking the youth respondents to rank and gauge the likeliness of them assigning the same ratings to other politicians was included in the survey.

Source Credibility Measure(s) (McCroskey and Teven 1999, 95), composed of 18 pairs of bipolar adjectives (six for each credibility facet), was used to quantify the dimensions of ethos. Having a highest possible score of 42 and lowest possible score of 6 for each dimension, scores ranging from 31 to 42 can be categorized as high; 19 to 30, moderate; and 6 to 18, low. The instrument's alpha reliability rates

can range between .80 and .94 (McCroskey and Teven 1999, 95).

To determine the effect of credibility dimensions on Filipino youth's voting behaviors, t-test of independent samples was utilized. The statistical results were analyzed and interpreted at the usual .05 alpha level.

### Detailing the Findings: Effects of Filipino Youth's Perceptions of Candidates' Ethos on Their Voting Behaviors

Findings show that 94.06% of the youth respondents who rated the credibility of the presidential candidates they voted for assigned them high competence ratings. These are consistent with the perceived competence mean score of 38.61, also categorized as high. In the cases of trustworthiness and goodwill dimensions, the same findings are observed; 82.18% of the same respondents gave their presidential bets high trustworthiness ratings (mean score of 35.12, high); and 64.36% assigned them high goodwill ratings (mean score of 32.15, high). Table 1 summarizes these results.

Score Categories	Ethos Dimensions					
	Competence		Trustworthiness		Goodwill	
	Number of Respondents	%	Number of Respondents	%	Number of Respondents	%
High	95	94.06	83	82.18	65	64.36
Moderate	6	5.94	18	17.82	36	35.64
Low	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean Scores	38.61 (High)		35.12 (High)		32.15 (High)	

*Table 1: Summary of Ratings Assigned by the Respondents Who Exhibited Positive Voting Behavior*

Out of the 105 student respondents who demonstrated negative voting behavior, 63.81% gave the presidential candidates they did not vote for (and would have least likely voted for) moderate competence ratings. These are consistent with the perceived competence mean score

of 24.98, also regarded as moderate. For the two other dimensions, 58.10% of the above-said respondents assigned low trustworthiness ratings (mean score of 16.73, low); and 65.71% gave low goodwill ratings (mean score of 16.24, low). Table 2 presents these findings.

Score Categories	Ethos Dimensions					
	Competence		Trustworthiness		Goodwill	
	Number of Respondents	%	Number of Respondents	%	Number of Respondents	%
High	21	20.00	2	1.90	2	1.90
Moderate	67	63.81	42	40.00	42	32.38
Low	17	16.19	61	58.10	69	65.17
Mean Scores	24.98 (Moderate)		16.73 (Low)		16.24 (Low)	

Table 2: Summary of Ratings Assigned by Respondents Who Exhibited Negative Voting Behavior

Results of the statistical test indicate that the difference between the competence ratings of the youth respondents who demonstrated positive voting behavior (perceived competence mean score of 38.61, high) and those who exhibited negative voting behavior (perceived competence mean score of 24.98, moderate) is significant ( $p$ -value: 0.000), *accepting the first hypothesis that there would be a significant difference between the Filipino youth's perceived competence levels of political candidates whom they voted for (exhibiting positive voting behavior) and political candidates whom they did not vote for (exhibiting negative voting behavior).*

For the trustworthiness dimension, the findings reveal that the difference between the ratings provided by the student respondents who assessed the credibility of the presidential candidates they voted for (perceived trustworthiness mean score of 35.12, high) and those who quantified the ethos of the presidential candidates they did not vote for (and would have least likely voted for) (perceived trustworthiness mean score of 16.73, low) is significant ( $p$ -value: 0.000), *accepting the second hypothesis that there can be a significant difference between the Filipino youth's perceived trustworthiness levels of political candidates whom*

they voted for (exhibiting positive voting behavior) and political candidates whom they did not vote for (exhibiting negative voting behavior).

Lastly, for the goodwill dimension, the same findings are recorded. The difference between the evaluations of the respondents who displayed positive voting behavior (perceived goodwill mean score of 32.15, high) and those who presented negative voting behavior (perceived goodwill mean score of 16.24, low) is significant (p-value: 0.000), *accepting the third hypothesis that there would be a significant difference between the Filipino youth's perceived goodwill levels of political candidates whom they voted for (exhibiting positive voting behavior) and political candidates whom they did not vote for (exhibiting negative voting behavior).*

Table 3 shows the results of the statistical test for difference run to examine and measure the effect of credibility dimensions on youth's voting patterns.

Ethos Dimensions	95% Confidence Interval Estimates of the Difference in Mean Scores		p-values
Competence	12.04	15.23	0.000*
Trustworthiness	16.72	20.05	0.000*
Goodwill	14.41	17.41	0.000*

*Table 3: Summary of the Statistical Differences Measuring the Effects of Credibility Dimensions on Youth's Voting Behaviors*

*\*significant at .05 alpha level*

To generate additional findings, logistic regression was also performed. Results of the test suggest that competence (p-value: 0.012), trustworthiness (p-value: 0.027), and goodwill (p-value: 0.046) can be significant predictors of voting behaviors, where the probability of a youth voter demonstrating favorable voting attitude towards a specific presidential candidate could increase by 23.10% for every one-point increase in the perceived competence score; 21.50% for every one-point increase in the perceived trustworthiness score; and 22.48% for every one-point increase in the perceived goodwill score. Table 4 illustrates these findings.



Ethos Dimensions	Odd Ratios	Standard Errors	95% Confidence Inteterval Examinations		p-values
Competence	1.2310	0.1016	1.047008	1.447129	0.012*
Trustworthiness	1.2150	0.1067	1.022958	1.44311	0.027*
Goodwill	1.2248	0.1242	1.00406	1.494016	0.046*

Table 4: Summary of the Logistic Regression Test Results Examining Each Credibility Dimension as a Predictor of Voting Behaviors  
 \*significant at .05 alpha level

As mentioned earlier, the presidential candidates, being the “subjects” of the study, were employed simply to represent political candidates in the 2016 National Elections (and contextualize the paper). To verify if the respondents would have given the same ratings to other politicians they voted for or did not vote for (and would have least likely voted for), one question included asked them to quantify the chance of them assigning the same ratings to the credibility of other candidates (through rating said chance on a scale from one to five; one being the lowest, and five being the highest). Out of the 206 student respondents, 79.61% said that they would assign the same ratings; while only 20.39% said otherwise. Table 5 condenses these findings.

Responses	Number of Respondents	%
Would have given the same ratings (Gave scores of 3, 4, and 5)	164	79.61
Would not have given the same ratings (Gave scores of 1 and 2)	42	20.39

Table 5: Summary of Ratings on the Likeliness of Giving the Same Credibility Evaluations to Other Political Candidates in the 2016 National Elections

## Making Sense of the Findings: Discussions and Implications of Ethos' Causal Relations with Voting Behaviors

Despite the limitations posed by the sampling procedure and size, the results of the study may still argue that credibility and its dimensions occupy a crucial role in persuasion and political communication, especially in the context of election. The significantly higher competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill ratings assigned by selected Filipino young adults to political candidates they voted for, exemplifying positive voting behavior, provide concrete empirical evidence to assume the possible influence of credibility on voting patterns. These findings lend support to past studies and other existing literatures, positing that credibility may be key to attitude modification, or to a certain extent, attitude shift, in persuasive communicative interactions (La Ferle and Choi 2005, 77-79; Jackson and Darrow 2005, 95-97). More precisely, the current paper's results echo other evidence-based observations that ethos dimensions may be intensely linked with polling decisions, in such direction that when perceptions of credibility facets are positive, favorable voting patterns may follow (Alsamydai and Al Khasawneh 2013, 122; Relao 2011, 115-22; Stephen et al. 2004 [cited in Alsamydai and Al Khasawneh 2013, 109]; Teven 2008, 389-94).

The notion that credibility, including character and personality, has great weight in electors' selection process and on their voting patterns (Stephen et al. 2004 [cited in Alsamydai and Al Khasawneh 2013, 109]; Wayne 2002 [cited in Teven 2008, 386]) is further highlighted in the current study since the findings may statistically prove that the three dimensions of ethos could greatly impact voting decisions. Undeniably, the recorded significant differences between the respondents' quantitative assessments of the candidates' competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill offer substantial proofs of the credibility's power, as a rhetorical device, to partly dictate Filipino young adults' polling behaviors.

The additional findings, derived from the logistic regression (model) test, that emphasize the ethos dimensions' natures as predictors of youth's voting behaviors certainly attest to the earlier stated assertion that credibility may be deemed one of the determinants of voting patterns (Teven 2008,

389-94). Having said this, two other assumptions may be forwarded: first, that whatever happens to politicians' credibility levels will reflect in their ability to market themselves to the voting populace; and second, since credibility can partially forecast voting behaviors, the factors that hone ethos at its various states and stages may well have bearing on polling verdicts.

Some declarations undervalue the role and function of credibility in persuasive communication, limiting the connection between the two variables to relationship, consequently, debunking the claim of causation (Morin, Ivory, and Tubbs 2012, 418-19). While these are valid since they are grounded in accepted positivist methodologies, the current paper's conclusions may somehow offer an alternative view as the results of the statistical procedures done denote not only the causal agency of credibility, but more strongly, its predictive facility.

Aside from the study's implications on voting behaviors, the data may also reaffirm the triadic association of ethos dimensions originally conceptualized by Aristotle (Bulan and de Leon 2002, 63; McCroskey 1986, 63-66; McCroskey and Teven 1999, 101; Teven 2008, 386-94). The consistent results across respondents' competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill ratings of the political candidates they voted for and did not vote for may convey the intercorrelatedness of the three credibility facets. Undoubtedly, the data produced in the paper can strengthen and revalidate the central tenets of the classical rhetorical tradition, rooted in the Aristotelian fashion, that assumes the universality of ethos factors and their capacity to transcend cultural, contextual, and situational boundaries. They as well confirm the applicability of said approach even in the changing times and in various communication settings, more specifically, in the area of persuasion.

Aristotle's assumption that ethos can be defined by the personality and other traits of the source as perceived by the message receivers is implicitly proven in this study. The high competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill ratings assigned to the presidential candidate voted for confirm the classical rhetorical theory's proposition that points to the importance of credibility in the realm of persuasive communication. The findings, from both the difference test and the logistic regression model, may partially prove that ethos is a valid mode of persuasion in the Philippine setting. The quantitative

evidence that shows the statically significant effects of ethos on Filipino youth's voting behaviors and its predictive nature reaffirm the applicability of a classical tradition in the contemporary and changing times. More than these, the consistent evaluations of ethos facets presented earlier may advance imperative theoretical implications, supporting the tenets of Aristotelian rhetoric, with regard not only to the multidimensionality of credibility, but more notably, to the triangular relations of competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill as universal and cross-cultural dimensions of ethos.

While not a primary objective of the study, the empirical data may as well offer basis for acceptance of goodwill's legitimacy as a measure of Aristotelian ethos. The results also reconfirm the statistical validity and reliability of the constructs included in the instrument to quantitatively assess credibility.

Applying the source credibility theory's propositions, explained in the earlier sections, in interpreting the generated data, it may be argued that ethos as a major factor that sets the direction of persuasion may be accepted. The findings evidently reveal credibility's power to influence message receivers in a persuasive communication event. Moreover, they open avenues that foster and facilitate better comprehension of SCT's three models and the connection they maintain. Through the empirical evidence presented in this paper, it may be supposed that ethos' effect (demonstrated by the assigned credibility ratings) on the source's persuasiveness (reflected in the Filipino youth's voting behaviors) starts with the audience's perception of the source's credibility; and ends with the product of said perception. This means that positive attitudes towards source's credibility can lead to solicitation of the desired responses to the communication source's proposal. This process may be referred to as the materialization of ethos.

As a final point of analysis on the connection between the two problematized variables in this paper, it could be said that the study mainly speaks about one major feature that Filipino young adults consider as they cast their votes—ethos. Even if there is a contention that demographics such as socio-economic status, educational attainment, family background, and other related indicators can affect youth's polling patterns, the empirically verified presumption of ethos serving as a stimulus that shapes informed votes cannot be rejected. In the end, since young voters in the Philippines

constitute a big chunk of the electing population and play a vital role in any Philippine election, since they constitute a big chunk of the electing population, this paper provides political candidates an effectual means to secure affirmative voting attitudes. Indeed, the study, in general, stresses the strength of ethos in the field of persuasion and communication.

### **Extending the Implications: Other Thoughts on Ethos as a Concept in Persuasion**

While the paper really intends to center on the association between credibility and voting behaviors, the findings may also be useful in furthering the theorization on Aristotelian ethos. The generated data may open or reopen the interrogation on the acceptability of the three Aristotelian ethos dimensions—competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill—as factors that define credibility. The respondents' coherent evaluations of the three ethos facets (of the political candidates) largely speak about their inter-correlatedness both at the surface level, and as proven through statistical procedures. From this, it may be inferred that each of the three is dependent on the other two, that good assessment of one ethos aspect can almost always predict positive valuations of the remaining two. On the other hand, negative perceptions towards one credibility dimension may forecast negative attitudes towards the other two. Although there are contentions that goodwill cannot accurately represent a portion of credibility as other indicators might be more appropriate, say for instance, dynamism (Serenio and Hawkins 1967, 58-64; Tuppen 1974, 253-60), the findings reveal that goodwill shares significant relations with competence and trustworthiness. This leads to acceptance of goodwill as an equally important feature of ethos, just like competence and trustworthiness.

It must be noted that while the study results advance the legitimacy of goodwill, along with competence and trustworthiness, as ethos criterion, they do not discredit other alternative hypotheses that expect isolations of more constructs that can likewise determine ethos. Meaning, it is possible that apart from the three universally accepted dimensions, credibility may be shaped by other variables. In a nutshell, the findings acknowledge and demonstrate the importance of Aristotelian ethos constructs, but

do not discount the capacities of other factors to impact credibility. This assumption can be further amplified and supported by the fundamental conceptualization of ethos as a function of culture and geographic location (Bulan and de Leon 2002, 63; McCroskey 1986, 62-66). If it were cultural, it would be logical to claim that it has certain components that vary from one setting to another. In the local ground, for example, it is found that language, specifically, the use of English, has effects on perceived credibility (Madrigal 1992, 108). This presupposition stems from the data that argue that Filipinos have a tendency to put a premium on one's English language competence; that proper, elegant, and eloquent speaking of said language may lead to more favorable credibility ratings. Although it may be contended that the command of the language is subsumed in the competence dimension, the findings suggest that its functions are manifested at a distinct plane, making it a credibility facet that is connected, yet, dependent from the three theorized by classical rhetorical approaches. Regardless of whether or not language proficiency belongs to the competence aspect of ethos, what is interesting in this data set is its attempt to establish a different stance on the issue of credibility factors by asserting a fourth component. This undoubtedly provides venues for theorizing and conceptualizing more ethos features that are rooted in the unique characteristics of the communication source's and message receivers' cultural and social atmospheres.

In connection with the points above, since ethos may be anchored in the dynamics of one's culture, it may be argued that the bases for evaluating and quantifying its dimensions are modified from one sociocultural space to another. This supposes that while ethos may have parallel dimensions that transcend cultural boundaries, indicators of such dimensions differ depending on one's cultural frame. Taking the data of the present study, for example, although there is firsthand evidentiary verification that competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill are stable gauges of credibility, it cannot be repudiated that the descriptions and evaluative metrics of these ethos aspects are not uniform across geographic locations; hence, their indicators may be different. The case of competence dimension may be taken as an example. Regardless of the established meters of communication source's competence (i.e. educational background, experience, training, expertise, and others), its ratings are not solely reliant on these measures as its dimensionality in

connection with ethos is a function of perception. Meaning, even if the source may be regarded as highly competent in consideration of socially acceptable proof-based gauges, if the perceptions of the audience are incongruent, then the source's credibility level remains low. This principle may be assumed to hold true as well for trustworthiness and goodwill.

Finally, the intercorrelatedness of competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill not only strengthens the triadic, or maybe multifaceted, nature of ethos, but as well signifies their overlapping characteristics. Being aspects of credibility that presumably stand on equal grounds, many of the factors that affect each of the three, to a certain extent, also influence the other two. For instance, the audience perceives the source to be caring and having good intentions (goodwill dimension); therefore, s/he is recognized as someone who can be trusted (trustworthiness dimension). Another may be when one is regarded as an expert or a well-trained individual (competence dimension), s/he is thought to be ethical (trustworthiness dimension).

In sum, all these discourses that build platforms for debates, discussions, and dialogues on the nature of ethos and its positions in various persuasive communication transactions like elections (among others) demonstrate credibility's discursive character, almost always requiring examination and reexamination.

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