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HOW FILIPINOS REACT TO POLITICAL FAKE NEWS FLAGGED BY RAPPLER AND OTHER MAINSTREAM MEDIA ON FACEBOOK DURING THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2022: CASES OF MEDIA MISTRUST AND POLITICAL PARTISANSHIP

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Abstract

The overuse of social media, including the growing mistrust of mainstream news outlets has impacted the increasing influence of online disinformation. Social media has been a powerful tool in Philippine elections because of social media algorithms used by political parties to deploy fake news and damage their rivals. Political fake news on social media began last 2016 and became rampant in the 2022 presidential election when the candidates for the presidency were all victims of trolling. Mainstream media debunked fake news but because of political partisanship, the effort has been useless due to different political beliefs and parties. The methodology involves content analysis to systematically examine social media posts related to political disinformation during the 2022 presidential election specifically focused on identifying two reactions, the emotion-driven and reason-based comments. Most of the comments were emotional and contained sarcasm, threats, slander, and mockery. People's logical thought processes are influenced by their emotions. Users are frequently looking for information to confirm their existing views and reject or ignore information that contradicts them or is biased in favor of one political party over another. Educating the critical analysis key to both students and social media users is one of the advocacies to avoid spreading fake news in the next generations. In conclusion, emotional responses, such as anger and sarcasm, dominated the discourse, overshadowing reasoned discussions. Media mistrust and political partisanship shaped users' reactions, leading to reject the fact-checked information especially when it conflicted with their political beliefs.

Keywords: *Media mistrust, Political Partisanship, Emotion-driven, Reason-based, Political Fake news, Fact-checking, Social media algorithms.*

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INTRODUCTION

As of 2021, over 90% of Filipinos with internet access used social media, with 81% primarily engaging on Facebook, making it a critical platform for shaping public opinion. On average, Filipino internet users spend close to four hours daily on social media, significantly impacting how they consume information and form opinions. This extensive use of social media, combined with a growing mistrust of mainstream news outlets, has contributed to the increasing influence of online disinformation. Many businesses, celebrities, and political actors capitalize on this environment by employing trolls to defame rivals or create the illusion of widespread support (Quitzon, 2021).

Social media algorithms also play a key role in this dynamic, as they are designed to promote content that generates engagement, regardless of its accuracy. Arugay (2022) argues that these algorithms are particularly well-suited for political campaigning, where quick dissemination of information can sway public opinion. This has made social media a powerful tool in Philippine elections, allowing politicians to spread their messages rapidly and, in many cases, deploy fake news and disinformation to damage opponents or build their image.

A clear example of this was in the 2016 presidential campaign of Rodrigo Duterte, where his team, led by Nic Gabunada, effectively utilized trolls and propaganda to dominate the online discourse. This strategy not only contributed to Duterte's victory but also marked the beginning of an era where political campaigns in the Philippines heavily rely on social media to spread disinformation (Quitzon, 2021). The ease with which fake information spreads online was highlighted by the 2016 attack on Maria Ressa, CEO of Rappler, who received an average of ninety-nine hate messages per hour after exposing fake social media accounts (Arendano, 2018).

Despite efforts to combat this growing problem, fact-checking initiatives face significant challenges. Although fact-checking is essential in assessing the credibility of online content, it often struggles to keep pace with the rapid spread of misinformation (Cabañes & Santiago, 2022). The sheer volume of false information disseminated on social media platforms often outstrips the ability of fact-checkers to correct it in a timely manner. Moreover, these efforts are frequently undermined by a lack of public trust in mainstream media, with some Filipinos dismissing fact-checked reports due to deep political loyalties.

During the 2022 presidential election, this mistrust in the media continued to play a significant role. While media outlets like Rappler, ABS-CBN, Manila Bulletin, and CNN Philippines made concerted efforts to debunk false claims—such as misinformation about BTS's concert, Iglesia ni Cristo's endorsement of Marcos Jr., and spliced videos misrepresenting candidates like Leni Robredo—fact-checking alone was insufficient to counteract the spread of fake news. The political loyalties of many voters, combined with skepticism toward the media, meant that even debunked information often persisted in shaping public opinion.

Objectives

This study examines how Filipino social media users respond to the most engaging political fake news flagged by Rappler and other mainstream media during the 2022 presidential election. Specifically, it aims to address the following questions:

1. How do Filipino social media users exhibit emotion-driven and reason-based reactions to political fake news flagged by Rappler and other mainstream media on Facebook?
2. What evidence exists of media mistrust and political polarization in social media users' reactions to flagged fake news posted by Rappler and other mainstream media?

3. What advocacy strategies can be proposed to encourage social media users to fact-check and verify information before sharing it on social media?

METHODS

Methodology and Design

This study employed a qualitative research approach using content analysis to systematically examine social media posts, articles, and multimedia content related to political disinformation during the 2022 presidential election. Content analysis was chosen to allow the categorization of comments and to evaluate their authenticity and credibility.

Instrumentations

The data for this study were derived from public comments on social media posts flagged as fake news by Rappler and other mainstream media outlets during the 2022 Philippine presidential election. These comments were gathered from Facebook posts that garnered the most engagement, ensuring that the sample represented a wide range of user reactions. The following fake news items were selected for analysis due to their high interaction levels and potential impact on public opinion such as "Reuters Made a Disclaimer Pro-Rappler," "BTS Chant as Support for BBM," "Iglesia ni Cristo Endorsed Marcos," "Leni Forgot Her First Bill," "Isko Moreno Haunted by Excess Campaign Funds," "Manny Pacquiao Disqualified in 2022 Elections"

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted using an online comment extraction tool to gather comments from the flagged social media posts. The posts were selected based on their high engagement rates, including the number of comments, shares, and reactions, ensuring a diverse range of user responses. According to Dexter (2024), likes, shares, comments, and reactions are examples of engagement metrics that provide an in-depth comprehension of how users engage with content on social media sites. Comments offer more in-depth information about user thoughts and opinions, shares show the perceived worth and importance, and likes show how effectively the material connects with the audience. Only comments made after the posts were flagged as fake news were included in the analysis, as the focus was on user reactions to disinformation after it had been identified and corrected by mainstream media.

The comment extraction process involved capturing all relevant comments, followed by manual filtering to remove irrelevant or off-topic contributions. This ensured that the dataset remained focused on users' reactions to the flagged fake news content.

Data Analysis

The analysis involved manually categorizing the collected comments using content analysis techniques. The comments were coded according to their emotional or rational tone, allowing for the identification of patterns in how users reacted to political disinformation. The analysis followed several key steps:

1. *Word Segmentation and Text Cleaning:* The comments were cleaned by removing out-of-context or irrelevant responses. Only comments directly engaging with the fake news content were analyzed.
2. *Categorization of Comments:* First, the emotion-driven comments included slandering, mockery, sarcasm, and anger. These comments were often expressed through exaggerated language, insults, or aggressive capitalization (e.g., ALL CAPS). Secondly, reason-based comments involve logical reasoning, skepticism, and calls to action. These responses were typically more measured, offering factual counterpoints or encouraging further investigation.
3. Further Categorization:

Media Mistrust: Comments reflecting media mistrust were those that expressed doubt, criticism, or rejection of mainstream media outlets like Rappler, even after these platforms flagged certain posts as fake news. Media mistrust is characterized by a lack of confidence in traditional media, often based on beliefs that the media is biased or unreliable.

Political Partisanship: Political partisanship was evident in comments that aligned with users' political loyalties. Political partisanship refers to the strong allegiance individuals hold toward a particular political party or figure, often leading them to accept information that reinforces their beliefs while rejecting opposing views. This was reflected in the comments by users who either defended or attacked political figures based on their affiliations, regardless of the factual accuracy of the claims.

Binary Comments: Being prone to see things in rigid black-and-white terms, frequently missing the subtleties and complexity that exist inside any given scenario, is known as binary thinking. It entails dividing concepts, individuals, or ideas into two opposed and exclusive categories without taking a spectrum or middle ground into account.

The analysis revealed that media mistrust and political partisanship significantly influenced how users reacted to flagged fake news. Emotion-driven comments were more prevalent among users exhibiting partisan loyalty, while reason-based comments were often from users expressing skepticism toward both the fake news and mainstream media.

Ethical Considerations

Although this study utilized publicly available data from social media platforms, ethical considerations were strictly followed to ensure the responsible use of this data. No interaction was conducted with the social media users, and all comments were anonymized to protect users' identities in compliance with Republic Act No. 10173 (Data Privacy Act). The researchers also adhered to Republic Act No. 8293 (Intellectual Property Code) by properly acknowledging all sources and ensuring transparency in data usage.

Additionally, the researchers verify the credibility of the commenters ensuring that the person behind the comments is legitimate through manually checking and visiting the Facebook profile. The study aimed to contribute to the greater good by fostering media literacy and promoting fact-checking behaviors, all while maintaining the highest standards of integrity, respect, and confidentiality throughout the research process.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Emotion-driven and reason-based comments to the flagged political fake news

Fake news refers to the spread of false articles on the internet and social media platforms that appear factually correct but are not scrutinized or verified. During the 2022 campaign and election period, fake news was widespread, including several notable stories that circulated on social media such as Reuters Made a Pro-disclaimer pro-Rappler, BTS Chant as Support for BBM, Iglesia ni Cristo Endorsement, Leni Forgot Her First Bill, Excess Fund of Isko Moreno, and Manny Pacquiao Disqualification Case. Rappler and other mainstream media outlets such as ABS-CBN, Manila Bulletin, Philippine Daily Inquirer, and CNN debunked these fake news items. In the present study, only comments made on post-Rappler were collected. The comments or reactions from the users have two themes which are emotion-driven and reason-based for each fake news posted.

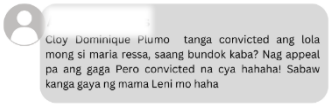
The first category 'Emotion-driven' comments includes slandering which means damaging someone's reputation by making false or unfounded statements, mockery using teasing, mocking, or name-calling to insult an

individual, sarcasm which is using words that mean the opposite of what is intended, often to insult, show irritation, or add humor, anger when commenters expressed with all capital letters and vulgar language, and lastly, threatening which involves statements expressing a desire to imprison, investigate, or harm someone.

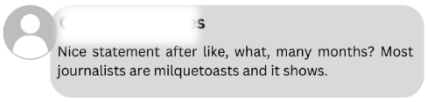
Furthermore, the second 'Reason-based' comment falls into the call-to-action statements, which aim to inspire people to take specific actions, logical reasoning comments which provide factual evidence to support a claim, skepticism which expresses doubt about the truth of something, lastly canvassing which uses words to influence others to share the same point of view, build a grassroots network, or support certain candidates.

Fake News No. 1: Reuters made a disclaimer pro-Rappler

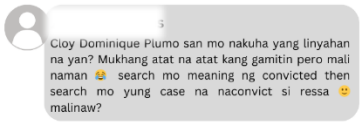
The first source of data is the 'Reuters Made a Disclaimer Pro-Rappler' post, in which Reuters issued a statement addressing the misinterpretation of its report on the trust rating of Philippine news outlets. In the survey, Rappler was ranked last among reliable news sources during the campaign period in 2022. Reuters then pleaded with the public not to use its survey as a springboard to undermine the respected media.



SS.1
"Idiot! Your grandma Ressa is convicted. In what mountain have you been hiding?"



SS.2
"Where did you get that word (convicted)? You are in a haste to use it."



SS.3
"Nice statement after, like, what, many months?" and "If Rappler is at the bottom of the list, explain how they aren't the least trusted"

After the analysis made by the researchers, fifty-two out of sixty-seven comments were categorized as emotion-driven reactions. Some commenters said "SS.1." Thirty out of fifty-two made slandering remarks about the news outlet Rappler. These commenters believe that Rappler is a source of fake news, while others claim that they are paid trolls. Meanwhile, fifteen of the commenters mocked Reuters Institute's 'disclaimer' post on Rappler. One commenter stated that they don't want to say or admit that Rappler is indeed the least trusted, calling the news outlet trash. Another was incredulous at Reuter calling the Rappler a 'respected' news outlet. Two commenters expressed anger by using vulgar language to address Rappler, its CEO, or another commenter.

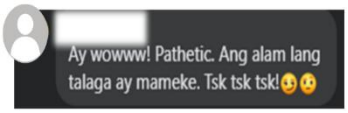
Meanwhile, four commenters made sarcastic statements toward another commenter. For instance, this is how the commenter replied to the other who made a called Ressa 'convicted' which may be seen on "SS.2" Additionally, only one commenter issued a threat, calling for the NBI to trace the location of the trolls, suggesting to teach a lesson for their behavior.

In the flagged fake news, seventeen commenters used reason-based comments, approaching the issue with wisdom and calm words that helped readers engage thoughtfully with their perspectives. Three of them were call-to-action remarks. These commenters expressed concern over the fake news circulating on social media, viewing it as indicative of broader problems within the Philippine education system. Commenters suggested that basic news education should be taught in the Philippine curriculum, arguing that people often lack the skills to interpret news correctly or the patience to understand the full context. Another comment raised issues about the accreditation of bloggers and vloggers for Malacañang press dealings, highlighting worries about credibility and transparency in media. Six out of the seventeen commenters provided evidence to support their claims, basing their points of view on their experiences and observations. For example, one commenter referenced the Reuters Digital News Report of 2021, emphasizing that brand trust scores are just one measure in a larger study on how news is consumed, particularly noting the impact of the pandemic on news platform development. Another commenter argued that Reuters Institute

should refer to local survey firms like SWS and Pulse Asia for a more accurate reflection of trust ratings, citing inconsistencies in Rappler's reporting, such as discrepancies in the reported death toll of the Philippine drug war. However, comments like "SS.3" expressed skepticism, questioning the accuracy of the survey, how Reuters interpreted the data, and how Rappler published and framed the survey results reflected doubt and suspicion about the reliability of the findings presented.

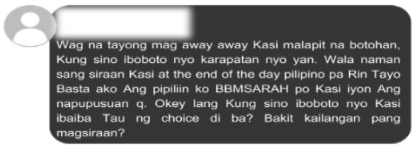
Fake News No. 2: BTS Chant as Support for BBM Candidacy

In the flagged fake news post titled BTS Chant as Support for BBM Candidacy, a video falsely depicted BTS, a well-known K-pop group, performing the Uniteam chorus at a concert. It was later revealed that the audio had been digitally altered and superimposed on the original footage to create a misleading impression. Out of the fifty-six comments on the post, forty-four were emotion-driven, divided into several sub-categories. Twelve commenters directed slanderous remarks at Rappler, who had fact-checked the circulated video clip and expressed distrust of the platform's work. One comment suggested that "posting this 'fact-check'" won't help them turn the tide on the then-upcoming election.



SS.4
"This is so pathetic. They all know is to create fake. Tsk tsk tsk!"

Some comments slandered both presidential candidates and their supporters. One claimed that Kakampinks created the video to bash and manipulate the Uniteam. At the same time, one accused BBM of deceitfully using the influence of BTS to win votes, claiming BBM steals everything. Commenters also expressed negative emotions to react to the fake video clip or the parties involved, with phrases like "SS.4."



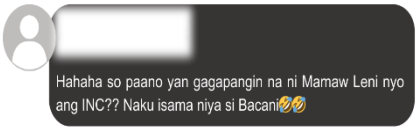
SS.5
"Let's not fight each other since the election is near. Your vote is your right. We are all Filipinos at the end of the day."

SS.6
"Where is the link to this fact-checked video? Are you just making this up?"

Meanwhile, twelve of the fifty-six comments were reason-based. Six commenters used inspiring words, four provided factual information, and two expressed doubts about the truth. Call-to-action comments urged people to stop spreading fake information and promote a more peaceful approach to political discourse: "SS.5." Some showed skepticism by questioning Rappler's credibility by demanding the source or link to the video clip, with statements like "SS.6"

Fake News No. 3: Iglesia ni Cristo Endorsed Marcos for President

Rappler refuted a false claim made by some zealots that Iglesia ni Cristo (INC) had endorsed Marcos for President. The Marcos Jr. camp clarified that the Uni-team's proclamation rally was not connected to any backing from Iglesia ni Cristo. This piece of fake news, which involved a known religious denomination allegedly endorsing Marcos Jr. for President, attracted thirteen comments from social media users.



SS.7
""Hahaha, so what now? Your mommy Leni will have to lick INC's boots. She should go with Bishop Bacani."

Among the comments, six were categorized as emotion-driven, with three comments mocking the claim and three expressing sarcasm. The mockery and sarcastic comments directed at Leni Robredo, Marcos's political rival, said that she should seek support from another religious leader. Commenter laughed at Rappler's fact-checking efforts, stating, "SS.7."

On the other hand, four comments were considered reason-based, using facts and experience-based statements. One commenter, a self-identified

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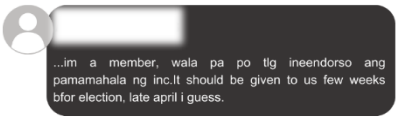


SS.8
"I am a member, there is no official endorsement made by INC. It should be given to use a few weeks before the election, late April I guess"

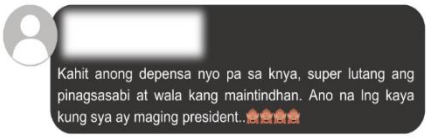
INC member, clarified that "SS.8," and added that any endorsement would be announced closer to the election date, likely in late April. Three others suggested that INC would wait until the outcome was clear in May before making any endorsements.

One commenter, a self-identified INC member, clarified that "SS.9," and added that any endorsement would be announced closer to the election date, likely in late April. Three others suggested that INC would wait until the outcome was clear in May before making any endorsements. Additionally, two commenters expressed skepticism about Rappler's consistent efforts to debunk fake news, questioning its credibility.

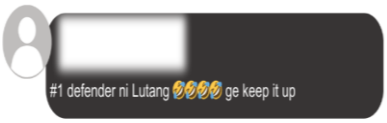
SS.9
"You keep debunking fake news; you must like doing that."

Fake News No. 4: Leni Forgot Her First Bill

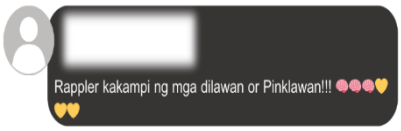
The fourth piece of fake news debunked on social media involved a circulated video clip titled Leni Forgot Her First Bill, which showed a spliced video of then Vice President Leni Robredo during a radio interview. In the video, Robredo appeared to have forgotten the first bill that Congress passed while she was a legislator. Rappler refuted this fake news with the headline "Kulang sa Konteksto" ("Lacking in Context") and shared the clarification on its website, which attracted considerable attention from social media users.



SS.10
"No matter how you defend her, she's so scattered-brain and incomprehensive. What will happen if she becomes president?"

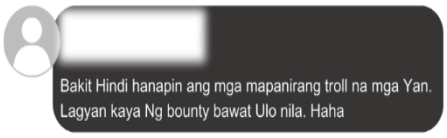


SS.11
""#1 defender of Lutang, keep it up"



SS.12
"Rappler is an ally of the yellows or Pinklawan".

Out of forty-nine comments on the flagged post, thirty-two comments like "SS.10" were identified as emotion-driven. Eleven of these comments mocked Robredo, calling her derogatory names like "lutang" (scatterbrained) and "pautal-utal" (stuttering), and urged Rappler to stop defending Leni. Six comments were categorized as sarcastic, displaying irritation toward Rappler's fact-checking efforts, with statements like "SS.11". Twelve comments contained slander, insinuating that Robredo's stuttering or memory lapse was due to drug use or laziness in Congress. While some accused Rappler of being biased in favor of Robredo, labeling it "pro-Leni" or "dilawan" (a derogatory term for her supporters): "SS.12."



SS.13
"Why you did not find those trolls and put a bounty on their heads. Haha."

On one hand, one particularly angry comment was directed at trolls and fake news spreaders, accusing them of disinformation. One comment even went so far as to suggest placing a bounty on trolls spreading fake news, expressing a more extreme reaction to comments like "SS.13." On the other hand, nineteen out of forty-two comments were categorized as reason-based, showing evidence and concise reasoning.

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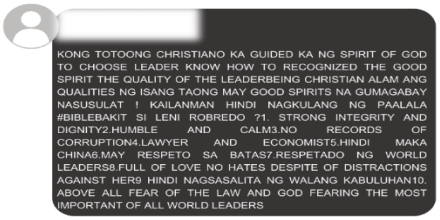
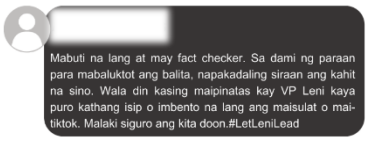
Six commenters used call-to-action statements to encourage others to fact-check and stop spreading malicious information, often using religious themes for inspiration. One such comment read, "SS.14" and listed various qualities they believed made her a worthy candidate.



SS.14
"IF YOU ARE A TRUE CHRISTIAN GUIDED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD TO CHOOSE A LEADER, KNOW HOW TO RECOGNIZE THE GOOD SPIRIT… WHY LENI ROBREDO?"

Seven commenters applied logical reasoning, offering explanations for why Robredo might have forgotten her first bill and expressing support for fact-checking to counter fake news. They argued, "SS.15" and provided possible reasons such as being busy or confident in the bill's merit. Only one comment expressed skepticism, asking to see the entire video of Robredo's interview to verify if she had indeed forgotten the bill. Lastly, six comments were identified as canvassing which is also a call-to-action, where users express and share their political views, often accompanied by hashtags or campaign tags. Examples include, "SS.18"

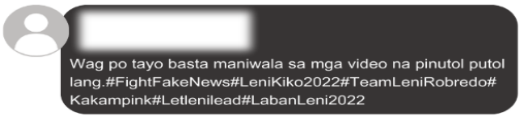


SS.15
"Good thing there's a fact-checker. With so many ways to twist news, it's very easy to discredit anyone,"

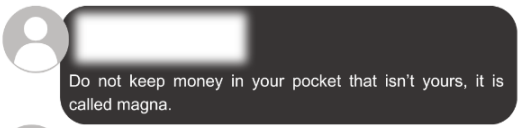
SS.16
""Where's the full video? Why don't you show it?"

Fake News No. 5: Excess funds of Isko Moreno

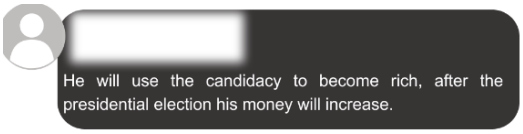
One of the six flagged pieces of fake news circulating on social media was about the excess funds of Isko Moreno. The Mayor of Manila acknowledged that he paid all taxes and kept the remaining campaign cash from 2016, but the public continued to question the source and management of these funds.



SS.16
"Let's always stand for the truth. #LetLeniLead #LeniKiko2022," and "Let's not just believe in videos that are cut off. #FightFakeNews #LeniKiko2022 #TeamLeniRobredo #Kakampink #LetLeniLead #LabanLeni2022



SS.17

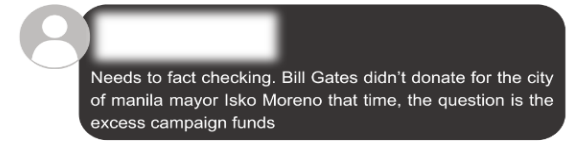


SS.18

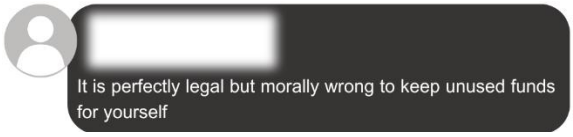
SS.19

The flagged issue attracted sixty-three comments from netizens, of which thirteen were categorized as emotion-driven. Eleven of the comments like "SS.16," and "SS.17," slandered Moreno, suggesting that his candidacy made him wealthy and implying that he ran for President primarily to enrich himself using leftover campaign funds. Two commenters mocked Moreno, speculating about the whereabouts of 15 billion pesos that some believed Bill Gates had donated to his campaign. Comments like "SS. 18." On the other hand, forty-nine comments were categorized as reason-based, reflecting a range of perspectives. Two comments fell under call-to-action statements, urging fact-checking regarding the rumors of Bill Gates' funding. For example, one commenter stated, "SS.19."

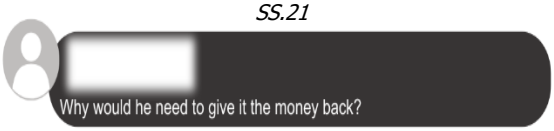
Seventeen commenters offered reasoning statements, claiming that the money was contributed specifically for Isko, not the country, and was used to help individuals in need.



SS.20



SS.21

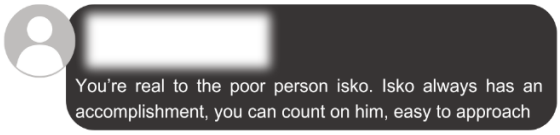


SS.22

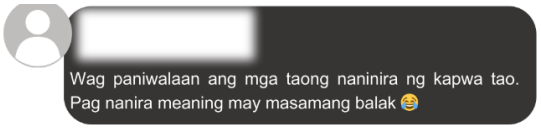
These comments argued that Isko benefits from the funds regardless of what happens politically. Examples include, "SS.20". Others questioned why Isko Moreno should return the funds or donations when he has previously shown that he is self-sufficient, even displaying receipts proving he had not accepted money from others. There are some comments like "SS.21" About half of the comments were analyzed as canvassing, where commenters sought to garner support for Isko Moreno by highlighting his reputation and achievements. Statements such as "SS.22", emphasize their support for his candidacy.

Fake News No. 6: Disqualification case of Manny Pacquiao

The last issue that spread during the 2022 campaign and election period was the rumored Disqualification Case of Manny Pacquiao It was falsely claimed that Manny Pacquiao, a presidential candidate, had been disqualified from the race due to early campaigning. This piece of fake news garnered ten comments on social media. The circulated information about Pacquiao's disqualification prompted six emotion-driven comments. Three of these comments were slanderous, targeting individuals involved in the case and accusing them of spreading false information and rumors. One commenter challenged others to fact-check and uncover the truth, suggesting the case was a ploy to create chaos. Two other comments were sarcastic, mocking the situation and individuals involved, "SS.23" insinuating that the early campaigning issue is true. One comment expressed hostility and threatened violence, questioning why Sara Duterte had not faced any consequences for her actions, particularly concerning tarpaulins, and suggesting harm should come to her. On the other hand, four comments were categorized as reason-based. One call-to-action comment suggested that when individuals publicly criticize or attack others, their motivations might be suspect. The commenter advocated for integrity and critical thinking: "SS.24" Another asked, "SS.25."

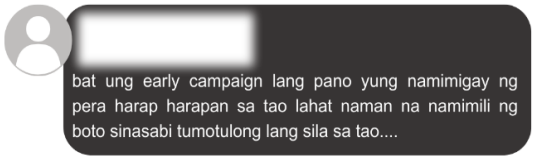


SS.23



SS.24

"Don't believe in people who say bad things to other people. If someone tells bad things to others, it means that they have an evil plan."



SS.25

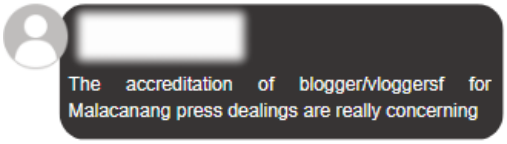
""Why only focus on the early campaign? What about those who give money to people openly [to buy their votes]?"

In summary, the analysis reveals that many comments on these fake news posts were emotion-driven, characterized by slander, mockery, sarcasm, and even threats. Conversely, reason-based comments utilized logical reasoning, skepticism, and calls to action to counter misinformation. An analysis of specific fake news stories, such as altered videos of BTS and false endorsements by Iglesia ni Cristo, showed a blend of emotional reactions and thoughtful

discourse, illustrating the divided landscape of public opinion during the campaign. Also, shreds of evidence of the public's media mistrust are apparent in many comments.

The reactions of the commenters for all (six) political fake news flagged by Rappler and other Mainstream Media supported the claims of Khobzi et. al, (2019) that emotions significantly influence communication on social media, often triggering impulsive responses. On the other hand, Jung et. al., (2018) highlight that rational, reason-based comments reflect more analytical thinking, yet these comments are often drowned out by the volume and intensity of emotional reactions.

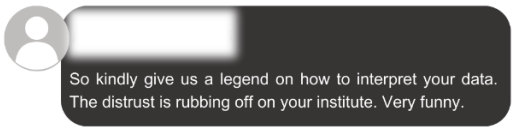
Of the six flagged political fake news, only one revealed so-called "binary comments" in which the commenters expressed their feelings without the proper context like "SS.26" where the commenters say that considering that the content of the post is the issue about the Reuters disclaimer pro-Rappler.



SS.26

The Evidence of Media Mistrust and Political Divide to the flagged Fake News Posted by Rappler and other Mainstream Media on Social Media.

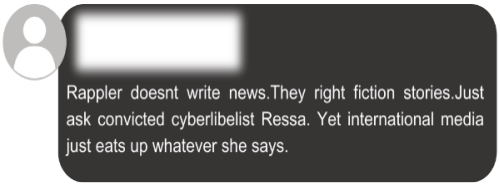
Rappler and other mainstream media flagged the fake news circulated on social media during the 2022 elections such as Reuters Made a Pro-disclaimer pro-Rappler, BTS Chant as Support for BBM, Iglesia ni Cristo Endorsement, Leni Forgot Her First Bill, Excess Fund of Isko Moreno, and Manny Pacquiao Disqualification Case. The six mentioned flagged fake news on social media gained numerous responses from the netizens. The comments of the netizens were analyzed and categorized into two such Media Mistrust which usually provokes many kinds of responses from readers on social media platforms, such as doubt, criticism, and outright rejection of the mainstream media or a known news outlet, and Political Divide which usually manifested through polarized, emotionally charged, and often contentious responses of posts, reflecting broader societal splits. The following sections explore the dynamics of media mistrust and political division, demonstrating how these factors influence public opinion and fuel polarization around critical issues.



SS.27

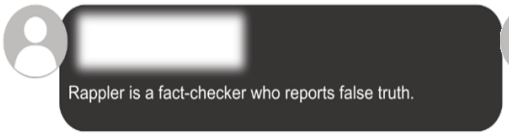
Media Mistrust was visible on the Reuters Institute released a survey showing Rappler at the bottom of the list of trusted news outlets, leading many netizens to question the credibility of the media organization. Some even questioned the credibility of the Reuters Institute itself, with comments like, "SS.27"

Despite the Reuters Institute's clarification that their research did not label Rappler as the "least trusted," many users remained unconvinced, interpreting Rappler's position at the bottom as an indication of its lack of trustworthiness

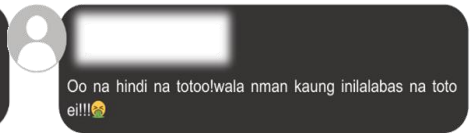


SS.28

In the comment "SS.28" Commenters accused Rappler of being a source of fake news and propaganda, alleging foreign funding and a Western agenda. Users cited negative experiences with Rappler, including biased reporting and a perceived lack of objectivity, referencing Rappler CEO Maria Ressa's cyber libel conviction as a reason for distrust.



SS.29



SS.30
"You're not releasing anything true anyway."

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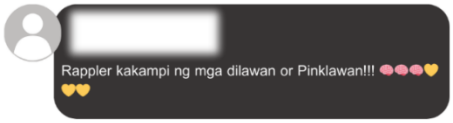
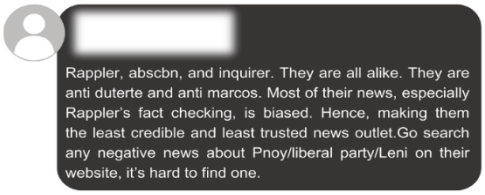
SS.31
"Trash Rappler"



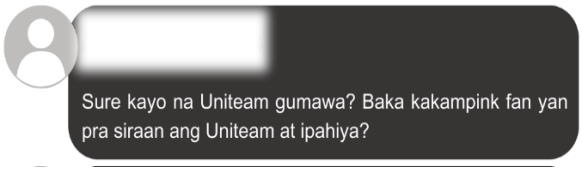
SS.32
""Rappler is an ally of the yellows or Pinklawan!!."

Comments on other issues, such as the video of BTS fans supposedly chanting in support of the Uniteam, reflected similar skepticism about Rappler's fact-checking efforts. Commenters questioned Rappler's credibility, accusing it of biased reporting, with statements like, "SS.29" There was also skepticism regarding Rappler's debunking of fake news about Iglesia ni Cristo's alleged endorsement of Marcos Jr. Some accused Rappler of continuing to spread false news, with comments like, "SS.30" When Rappler flagged a manipulated video of Leni Robredo, users expressed distrust in its credibility, labeling the outlet as biased. Comments such as "SS.31" and "SS.32" illustrated the persistent skepticism toward the media organization.

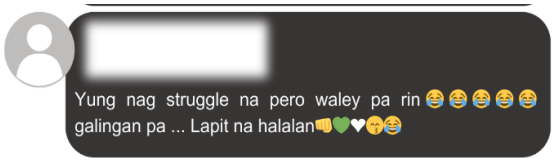
The comments also revealed a clear political divide, with netizens polarized along partisan lines. Supporters of President Marcos and Duterte expressed strong anti-Rappler sentiments, accusing the outlet of bias against their leaders. One commenter stated, "SS.33," and accused Rappler of bias, saying, "Rappler's fact-checking is biased, making them the least credible and least trusted news outlet."



SS.33
""Rappler, ABS-CBN, and Inquirer are all alike; they are anti-Duterte and anti-Marcos"

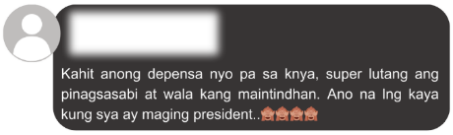


SS.34
"Uniteam supporters will never manipulate or edit videos. This is the doing of Kakampinks"



SS.35
"They are already struggling to win the election but posting this 'fact-check' still won't help them"

On the topic of the manipulated BTS video, commenters were also divided along political lines. Uniteam supporters viewed the fact-checking as a mudslinging attempt by Kakampinks, while Kakampinks criticized the video as a deceitful tactic by the Uniteam to gain votes. Comments like "SS.34" and "SS.35" demonstrated this divide.



SS.36
"No matter how you defend her, what she says is so brain-scattered and incomprehensible.

The political divide was evident in reactions to the manipulated video of Leni Robredo. Supporters of Robredo defended her, arguing that trolls were trying to undermine her campaign, while critics doubted her credibility, stating, "SS.36"

These examples highlight how media mistrust and political affiliation influence public opinion, fueling polarization and skepticism toward information and fact-checking efforts. Huddy and Bankert (2017) argue that partisanship is a key factor in shaping media trust, with many voters aligning their media preferences with their political loyalties. This is particularly evident in the Philippines, where attacks on media outlets like Rappler by political figures have further eroded trust in traditional journalism.

The Propose Advocacy Plan to Encourage Social Media Users to Fact-check the Information Posted on Social Media.

Encouraging social media users to fact-check the information they encounter online is crucial in combating the spread of misinformation. Despite the efforts of Rappler and other mainstream media to debunk fake news and flag misleading content, many users continue to reject these corrections, clinging to their pre-existing beliefs. This resistance is often driven by emotions, which can lead users to make rash judgments and, in some cases, engage in below-the-belt, inflammatory comments.

In addition, political partisanship plays a significant role in shaping how users respond to fact-checking efforts. Many users not only express strong political loyalties but also question the credibility of mainstream media outlets like Rappler. This skepticism reflects a deeper mistrust of the media, with users perceiving these outlets as biased or aligned with specific political agendas.

The influence of media morality is crucial in shaping societal values and behaviors. Depending on how content is communicated, the media can either uphold moral values or contribute to their decline. Given its power as a communication tool, the media need to act responsibly in promoting truth and accuracy.

To address this, a proposed advocacy plan involves regularly conducting a 'Morality in Media Seminar' aimed at establishing a community of Media Morality Advocates. This initiative would encourage social media users to critically evaluate the information they consume, fact-check claims, and understand the potential consequences of their digital footprint. By teaching students and other users how to analyze content critically, recognize biases, and identify fake news, we can foster a more informed and responsible digital community.

Table 1. Advocacy Plan – Morality in Media Advocates Strategies

Strategy	Objective	Persons Involve	Budget	Success Indicator
• Conduct seminars and trainings about social media trends and its impact on social media users for administrators, faculty, and students • Workshop on how to be social media literate while considering and accepting the trends on social media for school administrators, faculty, and students.	• Develop professionals into media literate. • Establish a leader to be a promoter and morality media advocate. • Promote Fact-check First Campaign	School Administrators, Faculty, Students, and other Stakeholders	TBD	The School Administrator, Faculty, Students, and other Stakeholders will know the trends on social media and be social media literate while considering and accepting its trends.

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After a thorough seminar, training, and workshops for the Administrators, Faculty, and Student Leaders, the next strategy will be the: ● Regularly conduct morality in media seminars for the students for their awareness of how to use social media and accept these trends in a good manner and to be a student member who will help for the success of the advocacy	Provide leadership training programs and membership	Faculty, Student Leaders, and Student Participants	TBD	The school or institution/ organization will have student members who will help for the success of the advocacy.
Often advertisements campaign through social media pages to fact-check and verify all information posted on social media.	● Establish a community that has morals in using social media and focuses on the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. ● Encourage social media users to fact-check and verify all the information posted on social media.	Morality in Media Advocates Members	TBD	Social media users and the community have morals and good manners in using social media focusing on facts through verifying and checking all information while considering and accepting the trends in social media nowadays.

CONCLUSIONS

This study successfully addressed the reactions of Filipino social media users to political fake news flagged by mainstream media during the 2022 election. It found that emotional responses, such as anger and sarcasm, dominated the discourse, overshadowing reasoned discussions. Media mistrust and political polarization significantly shaped users' reactions, leading to the rejection of fact-checked information, especially when it conflicted with their political beliefs.

The study also proposed strategies to encourage fact-checking and media literacy, emphasizing the need for critical thinking to combat misinformation and promote healthier online discussions. These findings highlight the importance of addressing emotional reactions, media mistrust, and political polarization in fighting disinformation.

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