

Critical Discourse Analysis and Political Facebook Posts in Bangsamoro Tapatan Lane

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Abstract. This study examined political posts in the Facebook Group, Bangsamoro Tapatan Lane. More specifically, it investigated (1) the ways political posts in the Bangsamoro Tapatan Lane constructed social inequalities; (2) the ways Facebook contributed to represent public opinion; (3) the ways the Facebook posts impacted beliefs and value systems; and (4) the possible actions to mitigate the issue. To determine these, the paper employed Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, which was a qualitative analytical approach to critically describe, interpret, and explain the ways in which discourses construct, maintain, and legitimize social inequalities. It asserted that discourses could be used to resist power, criticize and assert power, and express knowledge and identity. The findings revealed that political posts on the Facebook Group, Bangsamoro Tapatan Lane, constructed social inequities through the effective use of language. The language in the posts was purposeful, conscious, measured, manipulative, and persuasive. Important findings were: (1) derogative adjectives were used in the posts to call for reform in the government and expose erroneous actions done by the government. The choice of adjectives communicated that something was wrong with the administration, which required the public to correct or fix the government system. They were used as a political ploy to rule the public. That is, they were used to subtly influence the audience to take the side of the writer; (2) passive voice was used in the posts to hide agents or to hide lack of information; (3) intertextuality was used to strengthen the argument of the writer and/or for the writer to emphasize a point; (4) modals were used as a mode of persuasion; (5) pronouns were used to show inclusivity; (6) Facebook was used as a platform to influence the public through the effective use of language and the media. It had become a platform to let people know of one's knowledge, thoughts, and opinions in just in a few clicks of a button; (7) Facebook became a platform where people could reach a large number of audience and freely talk about their political ideologies and convince other people to adapt their way of thinking; (8) the posts were made to try and turn the audience against their government by feeding their sense of insecurity; (9) political beliefs and ideologies could be hidden underneath the simple structure of language choices in text, thereby changing the audiences' perspective, attitude, and even beliefs; and (10) raising awareness through webinars and seminar-workshops among the youth and all social media users about critical reading and critical discourse analysis is important as indeed, with the use of simple personal pronouns and adjectives, people could be persuaded to accept and even embrace another person's political ideologies.

Key words: Critical Discourse Analysis, Political Posts, Social Inequities, Manipulation, Persuasion, Purposeful Language

Introduction

Bangsamoro Tapatan Lane, formerly known as *Public Tapatan Lane*, *Amanah Tapatan Forum*, and *New Mindanao Watch*, is a public Facebook Group created to stand as a platform to discuss news, historical events, and social issues among Muslims, Christians, and Lumads in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). More specifically, it was made on March 01, 2019, with the sole intention of creating initiatives relative to making Mindanao a better community for people of different culture and faith. It

currently has five thousand and three hundred (5,300) members and has approximately five (5) new posts daily. The admin are the Bangsamoro Press Corps and Mr. Ali Macabalang, a Moro, who is both a news editor at Philippine Muslim Today and a freelance journalist. He finished his Bachelor's degree, his Master of Public Affairs degree, and his Certificate of Governmental Management (CGM) at Mindanao State University, Main Campus.

Bangsamoro Tapatan Lane is a Facebook Group which is open to new members, and which is open to political posts and discussions. It shares posts criticizing political, academic, and public decisions. Interestingly, the admins' rule for publishing a post is to come up with solutions. That is, criticisms must come with suggested resolutions because "fault-finding without remedial suggestions only worsen situations on particular issues" (Macabalang, 2019). Popular topics in the Facebook group are moral governance, Bangsamoro, and vote buying. These are all generally about politics.

Politics is a fight and a struggle for power to put certain economic and social ideas into practice. It may be viewed positively as coming up with decisions for political solutions (Leftwich, 2015), but it also carries with it negative connotations, such as promoting one's own political views among people (Hammarlund, 1985). It is closely related to language, as every political action is accompanied and influenced by language. These two together—politics and language—make an interesting study for Critical Discourse Analysis.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a qualitative analytical approach to critically describe, interpret, and explain the ways in which discourses construct, maintain, and legitimize social inequalities. CDA asserts that language use is purposeful, regardless of whether discursive choices are conscious or unconscious. It investigates the human experience in the world through language. More specifically, it looks into how discourses are used to resist power, criticize and assert power, and express knowledge and identity.

Hence, the focus of this paper was on five (5) randomly selected political posts in the Facebook Group, Bangsamoro Tapatan Lane. More specifically, it was on (1) the ways the selected political posts constructed social inequalities; (2) the ways Facebook contributed to represent public opinion by the conscious or unconscious use of purposeful language, and (3) the ways in which language was used to impact beliefs and value systems.

To elucidate, this paper examined what political information was given to the public, the ways the information constructed social inequalities, the ways in which Facebook was used to represent public opinion, and the ways the information impacted the readers' emotions, beliefs, and even attitude toward their administrators, officials, or politicians. This study was significant in its pursuit to expose in what way language might be used to manipulate views and emotions through the powerful and effective use of language and the social media.

Objectives of the Study

This study focused on the political posts made public on the Facebook group, Bangsamoro Tapatan Lane. It aimed to establish in what way the political posts constructed social inequities, represent public opinion, and impact the audience. More specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. In what way do political posts in Bangsamoro Tapatan Lane construct social inequities?
2. In what way does Facebook contribute to represent public opinion?
3. In what way do the posts impact the audiences' beliefs and value system?
4. What possible actions can be taken to mitigate the issue?

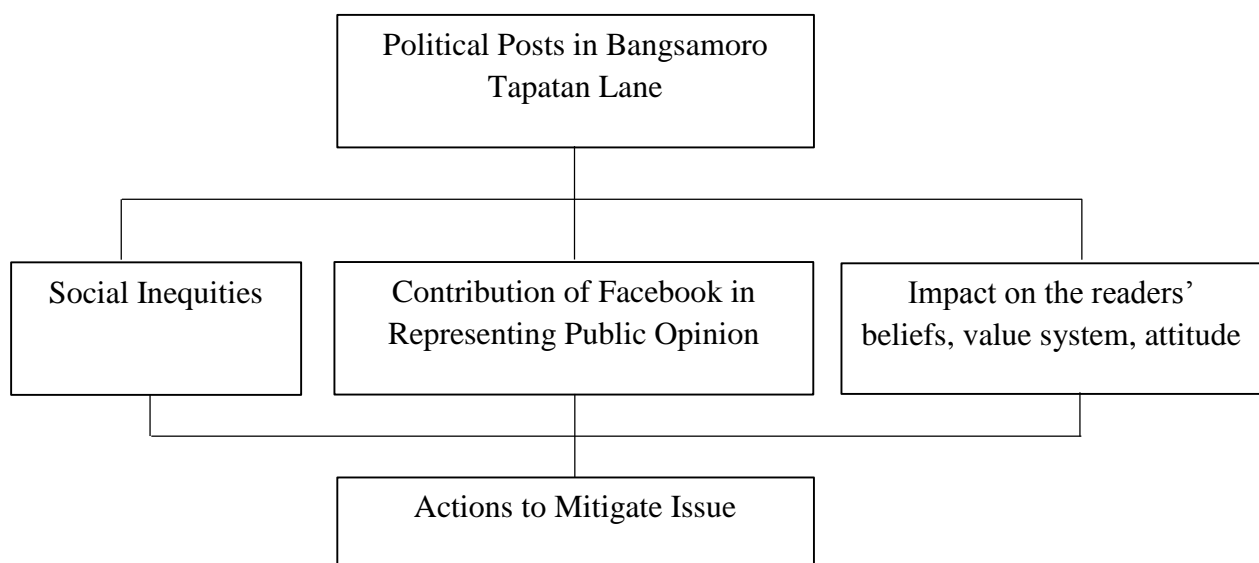
Materials and Methods

This study employed Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis. The researcher randomly chose five (5) posts in the Facebook group, Bangsamoro Tapatan Lane, whose

posts were all political in nature. She then analyzed the raw data or the selected texts. She closely studied the texts and used Fairclough's three-dimensional framework for studying discourse: (1) analysis of written texts; (2) analysis of discourse practice (processes of text production, distribution and consumption); and (3) analysis of discursive events as instances of socio-cultural practice. More specifically, in answering research problem 1, the researcher focused on the micro-level of interpretation (linguistic analysis). In answering research problem 2, the researcher used meso-level of interpretation (text production, distribution, and consumption). In answering research problem 3, the researcher used macro-level interpretation (socio-cultural analysis). Lastly, in answering research problem 4, the researcher recommends possible actions to be taken to mitigate the issue.

The next page shows the analytical model of the research, followed by the materials of the study.

Analytical Model



Material 1 (Post A)

Alexander Tomawis Mangorsi shared a post. Visual Storyteller · 3d · 🌐

Warrantless Arrest in Cavite

In the early dawn of 17 February 2021 in Cavite, a construction site was raided. 11 workers were arrested without a warrant on suspicion of being members of the Abu Sayyaf and 7 of them were Muslims.

In a statement, House Deputy Speaker and Basilan Representative Mujiv Hataman expressed concern that these alleged warrantless arrests could be an abuse of the controversial Anti-Terrorism Law.

"Ito na po ba ang kinakatakutan nating mga pang-aabuso sa ilalim ng Anti-Terror Law? The NICA (National Intelligence Coordinating Agency) and NCRPO (National Capital Region Police Office) should clarify the arrests, produce the 11 individuals and inform their families of what happened. Madami sa mga ito ay taga-Basilan pa, sa lalawigan namin," Hataman said.

Hataman claimed that the incident was similar to martial law.

Aside from the incident in Cavite, Hataman said arrests were also made against Muslims in the cities of Manila and Taguig, where some individuals were allegedly taken by persons who identified themselves as operatives from the National Bureau of Investigation.

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Like Hataman, the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCFM) has expressed alarm and deep concern over the recent spate of arrests of "poor" Muslim construction workers, reportedly conducted by Metro Manila police.

"My office considers the arrest and detention of poor Muslim construction workers appalling and a violation of human rights," NCFM Commissioner Yusoph J. Mando told the PIA-NCR.

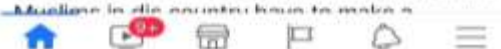
"Under the cover of being tough on crime, some law enforcers are targeting Muslims as part of a strategy that relies merely on suspicion just because they are Muslims," Mando added.

"It is unfortunate that those wrongfully arrested have allegedly been maltreated despite introducing themselves as mere poor construction workers who just want to provide for their families." Mando pointed out.

"They were arrested, handcuffed and were brought to a still unknown place. Without doubt, there is an urgent need to strengthen law enforcement capabilities and support these to adequately and effectively contain the menace of terrorist acts for the preservation of national security and the promotion of general welfare," he added.

"I am therefore appealing to the Muslim Communities to police their ranks for it not to be infiltrated by anyone perceived as an enemy of the state so that those who just wanted to earn an honest living and to make both ends meet for their families will not get affected," Mando furthered.

ABSOLUTELY, Under this Anti Terror Act, Govt agents...can just stop, frisk and arrest anyone on the street...or even prevent the movements of religious people like the Tablegh, stop Islamic seminars and Madrasah Schools. The whole country would be like under a Pseudo Martial Law...the entire



Material 2 (Post B)

Ayubkhan Conding
 New Member · 1 Mar · 🌐

Media and journalist are the secret weapon in swaying all bad elements specially governance corruption. Let's support Allaho akbar!

👍❤️👎 16 1 Share

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

Material 3 (Post C)

Alexander Tomawis Mangorsi
Visual Storyteller · 5d · 🌐

POLITICAL CORRUPTION

Corruption, one of the biggest reasons for poverty and underdevelopment across nations, is simply defined as the abuse of political power for private gain. It may include graft, bribery, embezzlement, backdoor deals, nepotism, and patronage, among others.

"Indeed, a society is corrupt when the people elected to govern it is driven, not to serve the best interests and welfare of its people but by their unbridled greed for wealth and power." ATM

"Corruption erodes trust, weakens good governance, worsens poverty, hampers economic development and further exacerbates inequality in society.

"Corruption is a cancer: a cancer that eats away at a citizen's faith in democracy, diminishes the instinct for innovation and creativity; already-tight national budget crowding out important national investments. It wastes the talent of entire generations. It scares away investments and jobs." Joe Biden

The Qur'an says :

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ

And when it is said to them, "Do not cause corruption on the earth," they say, "We are but reformers. Qur'an 2:11

أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَكِنْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ

Unquestionably, it is they who are the corrupters, but they perceive [it] not. Qur'an 2:12.

In our place,

Corruption can take many forms, and can include behaviours like:

LGU Officials

- may steal or plunder public funds (Internal Revenue Allocations and funds for government projects),
- LGU officials can indirectly undertake public works infrastructures in their areas (as shadow subcontractors), paying only royalty (fees) to contractors named in the projects. To insure maximum profit : substandard materials and non compliance with plans and specs are an expected outcome;
- Worst form is when govt project becomes a ghost;

Head of Govt Offices may also commit corruption, among others, when they :

- Grant jobs or contracts in exchange for

favor;

- When they bloat their plantilla with ghost employees,
- When overpricing are made during procurement of office materials, equipments and when substandard materials are procured;
- Demand money or favours in exchange for services rendered;

To Fight Corruption, we must elect only visionary and meritocratic leaders (if possible) if not, then elect those we know who have the heart for the pain and suffering of the people.

And finally, elect those leaders who have a platform for Transparency governance.

"Transparency is all about knowing who, why, what, how and how much. It means shedding light on formal and informal rules, plans, processes and actions. Transparency helps us, the public, hold all power to account for the common good." Transparency

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International.

The main reasons for the growth and institutionalization of corruption are: a culture of secrecy with lack of transparency, and weak institutions for securing the accountability of public servants, such as the Vigilance bodies, the criminal investigative agencies and the judiciary. Prashant Bhushan

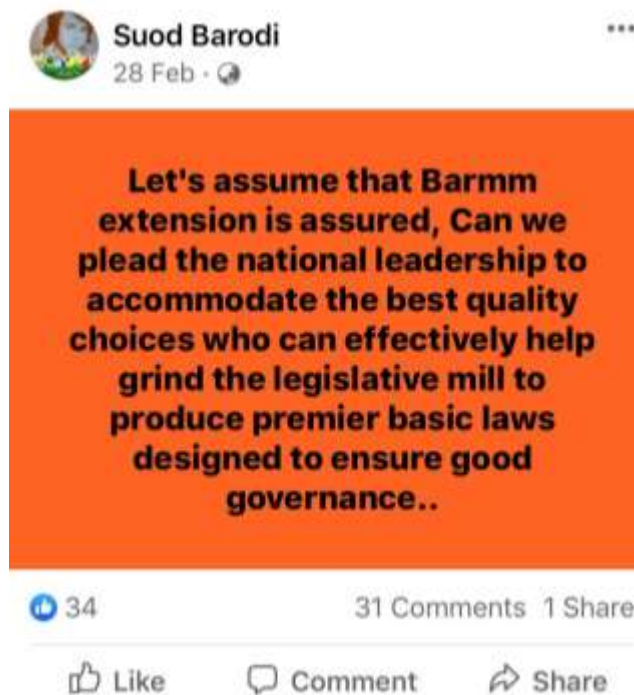
Corruption is worse than prostitution. The latter might endanger the morals of an individual, the former invariably endangers the morals of the entire country. Karl Kraus

To confront criminals, we need to finish with corruption. If we don't do this, there is no hope. Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador




The biggest disease is

Material 4 (Post D)



Material 5 (Post E)



Results and Discussion

In what way do the political posts in Bangsamoro Tapatan Lane construct social inequities?

The political posts on the Facebook Group, Bangsamoro Tapatan Lane, constructed social inequities through effective use of language. Whether the use of words in the posts were conscious or unconscious, the way the posts were written were purposeful. As asserted by CDA, the use of language was purposeful, regardless of whether discursive choices are conscious or unconscious (Fairclough, 2003).

A. Use of Adjectives

The use of adjectives in the posts is purposeful. This goes well with the notion that the way language is used is purposeful, regardless of whether discursive choices are conscious or unconscious (Fairclough, 1989; 1995; 2003). In this case, derogative adjectives are effectively utilized to call for reform in the government or as a revelation of some erroneous actions done by the government. For instance, “warrantless arrest,” “wrongful arrests,” “weak institutions,” “ghost employees,” “substandard materials,” “unbridled greed,” “bad elements,” “maltreated,” and “unconstitutional” are adjectives found in the posts to evoke a frame. They communicate that something is the matter with the system, which requires correction. In this respect, the phrase is similar to an effective political ploy to rule the public. Once the public accepts these phrases, they have bought into the idea that they need to be relieved from the affliction of “bad things,” of social inequality, and that they need to fix the system. Such adjectives are used to subtly influence the audience to take the side of the writer and to call for action.

B. Use of Voice

Instead of active voice, the writers utilize passive voice. The use of passive voice is evasive, compared to the use of active voice, which is direct, and where all agents are named. By using passive voice, some doers of action can be hidden. More importantly, some important information can be omitted. Many writers use passive voice when they do not have exact details, when the action is more relevant to them than the agent, and when they want to present a certain image in the media. For instance, if a writer writes “the bus driver was murdered,” instead of “the butler murdered the bus driver,” the agent would be missing, which means that the action and the result were more important than the well-protected identity of the murderer. Passive voice then is the choice of people who prefer secure expression of their thoughts.

In the posts, passive voice is present, such as “a constructed site was raided, “arrests were also made against Muslims in the cities of Manila and Taguig...”, and “some individuals were allegedly taken.” All these beg the question “by whom?”

C. Use of Intertextuality

The posts also utilize intertextuality. Texts such as: “divided we fall, united we stand,” and verses from the Holy Qur’an, such as “and when it is said to them, ‘do not cause corruption of the earth,’ they say, ‘we are but reformers,’” are found in the posts. Intertextuality goes well with CDA as it focuses on how elements of other texts are incorporated and combined within a particular text (Fairclough, 2003). In this case, the texts are included in the posts to strengthen the argument of the writer, to shape their own meaning of the referred text, or for the writer to emphasize a point. Thus, intertextuality occurs when the writer is being argumentative or proving a point, and it should be noted that analyzing political discourse as argumentative discourse is a relevant approach to textual analysis because of the nature of politics (Fairclough, 2003).

D. Use of Modals

Modals are used as a power of persuasion. They are used in the posts to convince the readers that they have an obligation to their community, urging them to make an action to change a political situation. Such use of modality can manipulate certain value systems, adjust people's behavior, and influence the structure of society. By making action obligatory to the people, the writers become more able to subtly persuade their readers to see the validity of their views. If the people's view changes, the true power of social media really does lie in influence (Paul, 2018). This is, in all actuality, emphasized by Goodyear (2014) who said that writers on social media have endless opportunities to manipulate and influence their readers.

"The entire muslim leadership in dis country, the BARMM, our Congressmen and Governors and Mayors **should** by now have the courage to air our collective concerns..."

"We **must** elect only visionary and meritocratic leaders..."

"...can we plead the national leadership to accommodate the best quality of choices who **can** effectively help..."

"The project contractor, NIA-10 and COA-10, **should** update the public..."

The claim that modality is used to manipulate and influence is further supported by the study of Rambe (2012) wherein posts are replete with manipulative tendencies of writers (knowledgeable learners, educators) aimed at influencing the psychology and social behaviour of readers / communicants (peers) through language—or in this case, modals.

E. Use of Pronouns

Pronouns in the posts are used to show inclusivity. Present in all the posts are the personal pronouns *we*, *us*, and *our*. This is to show that the writers belong to the common people, to the mass, not a member of *them* and *they*. The use of pronouns is powerful. It enables the writers to exploit language in order to build trustworthiness in their readers and to plant in them a sense of collectivity. When the readers appreciate how they are included, this opens an avenue for the writers to persuade, and at times, even manipulate their views. By using personal pronouns that include the readers and excludes "the enemy," the readers are attracted, which sparks both interest and sympathy. It makes it easier for them to take the side of the writers, accept their political ideologies, and even agree with them, because they believe they are on the same side. Using personal pronouns (*we*, *us*, *our*), one is seen to be observing and acquiring sensitivity of the needs of the general public, which makes it easier for them to gain their support. Indeed, language is the establishment of both personal and community identity (Brown, 2000).

F. Use of Naming

Though agents are often hidden in the posts, some names have been given, either to mention individuals who acted on the issue or to call for those who can act on the issue. Those who have acted on the issue/problem have been named completely, even their position in the government: *House deputy speaker and Basilan Representative, Mujiv Hataman, NCMF Commissioner, Yusoph J. Mando*. However, in calling out those who can help, collective nouns were simply used: Supreme Court and LGU Officials. This implies that people do like to be secure in the expression of their thoughts.

In what way does Facebook contribute to represent public opinion?

Facebook contributes to represent public opinion through the effective use of language (Sipra & Rashid, 2013) and social media. The posts selected by the researcher were all published in the Bangsamor Tapatan Lane, a Facebook Group, in February to March 2021. They were posted respectively by Alexander T. Mangorsi, Ali Macabalng, Suod Barodi, and Ayubkhan Conding. Their choice of words was measured and intended. They were all promoting good governance and avoiding corruption for the greater good of the common people, thereby standing as the voice or the representatives of the mass. Their posts are

testimony to how Facebook is a platform to let people know of one's knowledge, thoughts, and opinions in just in a few clicks of a button. This shows how internet gives people freedom. They now have a relevant voice because of Facebook; they have a voice like they never had before (Goodyear, 2014). They are heard by their community and are supported by them, which is powerful as social media is a platform which can be used to convince consumers of one's ideologies. Such a notion is supported by the study of Kulaszewicz (2015) wherein the media has heavy influence on the public's beliefs and views. It can change their perspective, attitude, and beliefs, which is the aim of the writers. Therefore, by using purposeful language, the writers become the voice of the general public through their chosen medium, Facebook. Facebook becomes a platform, an effective medium of communication which can reach a large number of people.

In what way do the posts impact the audiences' beliefs and value system?

The time in which the posts were made and published publicly, the martial law was recently lifted. With the martial law gone, state of emergency still persisted in Mindanao. During such a time when political crisis was probable, people could be overwhelmed. They could be astonished and intimidated by a presentation that would fill them a sense of insecurity. The writers do this to their Muslim readers. They try to turn them against the government and the militia by mentioning the anti-terror law and by presenting to them descriptive texts: "they were arrested, handcuffed, and were brought to a still unknown place" and "ABSOLUTELY, under this anti-terror act, Govt can just stop, frisk, and arrest anyone on the street...or even prevent the movements of religious people...the whole country would be like under pseudo martial law..."

The writers also call for good governance by mentioning the evils brought upon by political corruption, supporting these with verses from the holy Qur-an.

The impact on the readers can be seen and observed by the way they call for updates, demand for people capable of doing their jobs correctly, and by the way they support the mass media. They even go as far as saying that journalists are the secret weapon of the government who will drive away the *bad elements* of the government. The impact is palpable by the number of reactions, comments, and shares the posts have. When people start demanding for explanations and supporting the writer in his thoughts and ideas, the influence is manifest. Their thoughts have been swayed and their emotions touched. Their attitude towards the government changes; their doubts grow. They demand for budget liquidation, or they demand for information from the government. They also become free with their thoughts, embracing freedom of expression. They embody sovereignty, and Philippines, being a democratic country, they know that they are sovereign. They are empowered; they protest: "Without doubt, there is need to strengthen law enforcement capabilities" and "Let us support." This clearly shows how CDA helps to expose how ideologies and political beliefs are hidden underneath the simple surface structures of language choices in text (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

Actions to Mitigate Issue

The action that the researcher proposes in order to resolve such an issue is to raise awareness among the youth and all social media users about easily accepting other people's perspectives without critical reading. With the advent of technology and internet, webinars may be organized on critical discourse analysis, or more generally, critical reading.

Also, the researcher recommends all writers or Facebook posters to avoid using passive voice. This means that all agents must be named, and one must be truly informed of what one wants to post in order to avoid using passive voice. If a public servant is needed for

assistance, he must be named; collective nouns must be avoided. This brings in true clarity and transparency.

Indeed, during this time, there is no stopping the youth in embracing freedom of expression, that is why journalists and other experts are encouraged to speak about the true meaning of freedom of expression and if there are both moral and social limitation to freely expressing one's opinions, ideas, and beliefs.

Certainly, the media expresses societal events and realities, but it is undeniable that they also mark the ideologies behind how such events and realities are portrayed to the public. One must therefore be a wise consumer. But therein lies the prospective problem; most social media users are young people. Political posts are often designed to be argumentative and to persuade people to take action. In the present time, there are a lot of protesters who are very young, and in their passionate minds, dying is little a price to fight for what they think is right. The issue is, what if they are merely being manipulated? To avoid this, it will be of a great help if webinars will be organized to help them become critical readers and thinkers. It is easy to use the slogan "Freedom of speech." It is also easy to use Facebook as a platform to manipulate people's beliefs. When done with the best of intentions, it is alright, however, not all Facebook posts are good. Herein lies the importance of raising awareness. If young people are to be taught about critical discourse analysis early in their education, the issue of being easily manipulated by the expert use and choice of words can be avoided. It is known that the concept of CDA is only introduced in higher levels of education, but if CDA can be introduced earlier, such as in junior high or senior high, students will become critical readers early on and thereby critical users of various platforms found on the internet.

Conclusions

The use of language in the political posts was purposeful, conscious, manipulative, and persuasive. This meant that the choice of words was not merely linguistic but an ideological tool. Important findings were: (1) the adjectives found in the posts called for reform in the government and exposed erroneous actions done by the government. The choice of adjectives communicated that something was the matter with the administration, which required correction. In this respect, the phrase was similar to an effective political ploy to rule the public. Once the public accepted these phrases, they had bought into the idea that they needed to be relieved from the affliction of "bad things" and that they needed to fix the system. Such adjectives were used to subtly influence the audience to take the side of the writer; (2) the voice used was passive to hide agents or to hide lack of information; (3) intertextuality was used to strengthen the argument of the writer and/or for the writer to emphasize a point; (4) modals were used as a mode of persuasion; (5) pronouns were used to show inclusivity; (6) Facebook became a platform which had a heavy influence on the public, but the influence could be both positive and negative; and (7) political beliefs and ideologies could be hidden underneath the simple surface of structure of language choices in text.

With all these findings, it could be inferred that Facebook was a platform where people could freely talk about their political ideologies and in the process, convince other people to adapt their way of thinking. It was easy to persuade people just by the use of simple personal pronouns and adjectives that it could become an issue in the future. Indeed, the use of social media, more specifically, Facebook, was not a bad thing. Facebook posting was also not a bad thing, especially if one's objective was to seek for transparency, good governance, and justice. However, consumers and social media users must be critical readers. They must be able differentiate the truth from the falsehood (Saraigh & Arika, 2020), or they must be capable of reading between the lines, as choice of words was not merely linguistic but also an ideological tool.

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