



**TECHNIUM**  
SOCIAL SCIENCES JOURNAL

[www.techniumscience.com](http://www.techniumscience.com)



**Vol. 66/2024**  
**A New Decade for Social Changes**

**PLUS**  
**COMMUNICATION P**



**International**  
Communication & PR

## **The Rhetoric of Village Heads in the 2023 Village Head Elections: Shaping Public Opinion in Babakan Losari Lor through Political Communication**

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**Abstract.** This study aims to analyze the local political dynamics in the village head election and to identify the rhetorical practices of the village head candidates in terms of ethos (credibility), pathos (emotional appeal), and logos (capacity and competence), which shape public opinion. A qualitative case study method was employed, involving participant observation, focus group discussions (FGD), and in-depth interviews with community members and the elected village head. Data collection included 10 informants: 9 community members and 1 village head. The results reveal that the elected village head effectively used ethos (credibility), pathos (emotion), and logos (logic) to influence voters. However, public opinion shifted after the election due to unfulfilled campaign promises, leading to dissatisfaction among some community members

**Keywords.** Formal Education, Informal Education, Religious Education

### **INTRODUCTION**

The direct election of village heads (Pilkades) is one manifestation of democracy that upholds freedom, human rights, and the rule of law. Pilkades is a routine activity in every village, held every five years (Falua et al., 2020). Although it occurs at a small level of government, Pilkades is part of the political dynamics that demonstrate the ongoing political processes in villages. This election is conducted by village residents who cast their votes to elect a village head candidate.

In the direct election of village heads (Pilkades), rhetoric plays a crucial role. Rhetoric has long been known as the art of speaking with the aim of convincing listeners or readers. In a political context, including Pilkades, rhetoric not only serves to convey ideas and programs but also to build an image and convince voters that the candidate is the best choice (Aristotle, 2007). During the campaign, village head candidates use rhetoric to show that they are qualified leaders, capable of solving problems, and able to bring the changes expected by the community (Sobur, 2015).

The direct election of village heads (Pilkades) can also serve as a medium for political education for the community. Civic education can be understood as an effort to change the political socialization process in society so that they better understand the values embedded in the political system (Kansil, 2005). In Indonesia, village heads are elected directly by the village residents, and the candidate with the most votes is declared the winner.

In Indonesia's political history, village heads are elected directly without the involvement of political parties. The direct election of village heads (Pilkades) is an important part of Indonesian democracy and reflects how political participation operates at the local level (Harijadi et al., 2023). This election not only determines who will lead the village but also influences the social, political, and economic dynamics of the community. The direct election of village heads (Pilkades) becomes a significant moment in the development of local democracy (Galih, 2023). Each candidate will campaign, which becomes a crucial moment in the local political process in various countries, including Indonesia (Surbakti, 2010).

In Babakan Losari Lor Village, the 2023 direct election of village heads (Pilkades) brought significant changes and challenges. Before the election, this village faced socio-political problems, such as a lack of structured leadership and unequal distribution of resources, which caused a divided community with varying levels of participation (Yusuf, 2020).

After the 2023 direct election of village heads (Pilkades) in Babakan Losari Lor, conflicts emerged not only involving public opinion but also internal conflicts between the supporters of the winning and losing candidates. These conflicts can impact the village's socio-political stability and affect the implementation of development programs. If conflicts persist, the decision-making process and implementation of village development programs could be disrupted, delayed, or even canceled.

Based on this background, this study is titled "The Rhetoric of Village Heads In the 2023 Village Head Elections: Shaping Public Opinion In Babakan Losari Lor Through Political Communication." Babakan Losari Lor Village was chosen as the object of study because it provides a concrete case that allows for an in-depth analysis of the political communication dynamics between the village head and the community in the 2023 direct election of village heads (Pilkades). This research is important as it not only seeks to understand the political process at the village level but also offers solutions to improve the quality of local democracy. The study provides insights into how the rhetoric of village heads, encompassing ethos (credibility), pathos (emotion), and logos (competence), influences the opinions and political preferences of the community. The aims of this research is to analyze the local political dynamics in the village head election and to identify the rhetorical practices of the village head candidates in terms of ethos (credibility), pathos (emotional appeal), and logos (capacity and competence), which shape public opinion.

## RESEACH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. The qualitative approach focuses on subjective assessment, rather than numerical or statistical values (Sugiyono, 2017). Babakan Losari Lor Village was selected as the research location due to its relevance to the objective of analyzing the political communication dynamics between the village head and the community in the 2023 village head election. Locations with specific phenomena can provide more in-depth data (Yin, 2018).

Data collection techniques include participant observation, focus group discussion (FGD), and in-depth interviews. Observation was conducted to understand the interaction between the village head and the community, while FGD was used to explore the community's views on the village head's performance (Marshall et al., 2014). In-depth interviews provided rich, descriptive data through responsiveness to the context that emerged during the interaction (Morgan et al., 1984). Informants were selected using purposive sampling, with 10 informants consisting of 9 community members and 1 elected village head.

Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman (1994) model, which includes data reduction, data display, and verification. Data from 9 community members and 1 elected village head were summarized and focused on key points, then presented in narrative form to facilitate the drawing of conclusions. The research findings will be presented in a narrative explaining "The Rhetoric of the Elected Village Head in the 2023 Village Head Election: Shaping Public Opinion in Babakan Losari Lor Through Political Communication."

## DISSCUSSION

This study finds that one of the crucial factors in the village head election in Babakan Losari Lor in 2023 was the role of rhetoric used by the candidates. As Sobur (2015) found, rhetoric is not only the art of communication used to convey information but also to build an image and persuade the audience. This is relevant to the finding that the elected village head effectively utilized rhetorical strategies, particularly through the use of ethos, pathos, and logos, which played a significant role in shaping public opinion.

### **1. The Use of Ethos in Building Credibility**

This study finds that the use of ethos significantly contributed to the formation of the credibility of the village head candidates in the Babakan Losari Lor election of 2023. Ethos, as one of the rhetorical elements introduced by Aristotle (2007), reflects the credibility and character of the speaker. In this context, the elected village head successfully built their credibility through direct interaction with the community, consolidation with village officials, and demonstrating a friendly and polite demeanor.

According to Lucas and Stob (2020), ethos involves elements such as honesty, competence, and integrity, which the audience sees as the foundation for building trust. The findings from the interviews in this study support this view, showing that the community felt more confident in candidates who demonstrated consistent and open character. This is consistent

with the statement by Bortree and Seltzer (2016), which emphasizes that a leader's credibility is often determined by how well they can exhibit traits that the audience perceives as authoritative and reliable.

Research by Mahan and Schmitz (2019) also found that ethos plays a crucial role in political campaigns, where voters are more likely to support candidates who can demonstrate competence and commitment through direct interactions. In the context of the village head election, the elected candidate effectively utilized ethos, as explained by Murrar and Waller (2021), who showed that voters evaluate candidates based on personal interactions and their reputation in the community.

Furthermore, Smith and Smith (2023) explain that developing ethos in modern political campaigns involves transparent and authentic communication strategies, which are also evident in the approach of the elected village head. The use of rhetorical techniques focusing on integrity and commitment has built strong credibility and influenced voter perceptions.

Thus, the use of ethos in the village head election in Babakan Losari Lor proved to be an effective strategy for building credibility. This aligns with rhetorical theory, which emphasizes the importance of character and reputation in influencing public opinion and election outcomes.

## **2. The Use of Pathos to Evoke Public Emotions**

This study finds that one of the crucial factors in the 2023 village head election campaign in Babakan Losari Lor was the use of pathos in political rhetoric. Pathos is used to evoke the audience's emotions to gain sympathy and support, which aligns with Aristotle's (2007) view that pathos is a significant element in political persuasion.

During the campaign, the elected village head actively built an emotional connection with the community through house visits and sharing personal stories that touched the hearts of residents. These findings align with Perloff's (2017) statement that emotional narratives in political rhetoric can enhance voter engagement and strengthen the emotional bond between candidates and voters.

According to Dillard and Shen (2021), strategies focusing on pathos can be highly effective in local political contexts, where the closeness between the candidate and voters plays a significant role. This is reflected in the campaign in Babakan Losari Lor, where the village head candidates used a personal approach to create an emotional connection with the community, ultimately affecting election outcomes.

Moreover, Schnall and Roper (2021) emphasize the importance of emotional approaches in creating positive perceptions of candidates. The community, feeling the emotional attention from the village head candidates, is more easily swayed by campaign promises, as found in interviews with several informants in this study.

Additionally, the pathos approach used by the village head candidates is consistent with Buchanan and Jahnke's (2019) research, which found that emotions play a crucial role in influencing voters' political preferences. This emotional engagement shapes the perception

that the village head candidates not only care about local issues but also have empathy for the needs of residents.

### **3. The Use of Logos to Demonstrate Competence**

This study finds that the use of logos in the village head election campaign in Babakan Losari Lor in 2023 played a crucial role in establishing the candidates' competence. Logos, as described by Aristotle (2007), refers to the use of logic and reason to support claims and strengthen arguments before the public. In the campaign, the elected village head clearly presented their vision and mission and offered concrete programs to address village issues, demonstrating their capability as a leader.

Research by Cappella and Jamieson (2020) shows that the use of clear evidence and reasoning in political campaigns can enhance public trust in candidates. This supports the findings of this study, where the elected village head successfully convinced the community through logical arguments related to systematic village development plans.

Furthermore, Chen and Slyke (2021) state that strong logos strategies, such as presenting accurate data and logical arguments, play a role in creating a high impression of competence in the eyes of voters. In interviews with the residents of Babakan Losari Lor, many felt that the elected candidate could demonstrate expertise in formulating sustainable public policies, even though some campaign promises had not been fully realized.

Additionally, Valentino et al. (2019) highlight that in local political contexts, logic conveyed through long-term visions and realistic solutions can be more influential than populist campaign promises. This finding is relevant to the elected village head's campaign, where, despite some residents being disappointed by the slow realization of promises, they still acknowledged the candidate's competence in formulating realistic visions for the village's future.

Sun and Wolf (2022) also emphasize that the use of empirical data and evidence-based arguments not only enhances perceptions of competence but also reduces the risk of criticism against the candidate after being elected. In this case, the elected village head maintained community support by using logical arguments supported by concrete data, even though not all campaign promises had been fulfilled.

### **4. The Dynamics of Public Opinion Post-Election**

This study finds that public perceptions of the elected village head changed after observing their performance. This is relevant to the concept of public opinion proposed by Noelle-Neumann (2020), where public opinion is influenced by social interactions and experiences gained after the election process. Public opinion is an aggregation of individual views, attitudes, and beliefs in the community that can affect social and political behavior.

During the campaign, the promises made by the village head candidates successfully attracted the community's attention; however, the reality after their election showed that many promises were not fulfilled, which triggered a shift in public opinion. According to Glynn

(2019), individual perceptions can change when the expectations built during the campaign are not met by reality.

Furthermore, Mutz (2018) explains that public opinion is shaped through communication processes and public discussions. This aligns with the study's findings, showing that the community began to question the village head's campaign promises after witnessing a lack of tangible actions during their tenure. This dissatisfaction reinforces the idea that public opinion is not only determined by initial expectations but also by the actual performance of the elected leader.

According to Zarefsky (2020), one factor influencing changes in public opinion is the mismatch between campaign promises and post-election performance. In the context of the village head election in Babakan Losari Lor, changes in the community's perception of the elected head occurred due to the discrepancy between expectations and reality after the campaign. This negative opinion can disrupt local political stability and hinder the implementation of development programs in the village.

## CONCLUSION

The 2023 village head election in Babakan Losari Lor highlighted the pivotal role of rhetoric in shaping public opinion and influencing electoral outcomes. The elected village head effectively employed Aristotle's rhetorical elements—ethos, pathos, and logos—to establish credibility, evoke emotional connections, and demonstrate competence during the campaign. These rhetorical strategies proved successful in swaying voter preferences. However, post-election realities, such as unmet campaign promises, led to shifts in public opinion, revealing the dynamic nature of public perception in response to leadership performance. This study underscores the significance of rhetoric in local political processes and its potential impact on political stability and community trust. Future research could explore strategies to align campaign promises with governance practices to maintain public trust and enhance the quality of local democracy.

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