

A Rhetorical Analysis of a Filipino Psychic's Selected Viral Predictions and Their Public Reception on Facebook

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Abstract: Psychic predictions made by a prominent Filipino psychic frequently go viral on Facebook, generating intense public engagement and influencing how social media users interpret uncertainty, danger, and future events. These posts circulate widely during moments of collective anxiety, making it important to understand how such messages are constructed and how audiences make sense of them. Yet, fear-based messages like psychic predictions remain largely understudied in communication research, particularly in relation to rhetorical construction, persuasive strategies, and patterns of audience reception in digital spaces.

This study examines selected viral prediction posts of a prominent Filipino psychic and their public reception on Facebook. It analyzes the rhetorical strategies embedded in the predictions, the thematic patterns in audience responses, and how audiences appraise the messages based on perceived threat and efficacy. Guided by Aristotle's Rhetorical Theory and Witte's Extended Parallel Process Model (EPPM), the study employed a qualitative interpretive research design, analyzing three highly engaged prediction posts—Calamity, Accident, and Death—along with their corresponding audience comments.

The analysis shows that the predictions rely primarily on emotional appeals, with pathos emerging as the dominant rhetorical device that intentionally instigate fear and urgency. Ethos appears intermittently through assertions of prophetic insight, while logical reasoning is largely absent. Audience responses reflect varied interpretive approaches, with faith-based comments being the most prominent across all datasets. EPPM appraisal indicates that perceived efficacy appears more frequently than perceived threat, suggesting that many commenters respond by invoking prayer, vigilance, or precautionary behaviors. Non-EPPM responses, including humor, skepticism, and off-topic remarks, occur but are comparatively limited.

These findings highlight how viral psychic predictions function as persuasive fear narratives that shape public engagement by appealing to emotion and perceived credibility. The study contributes to ongoing discussions on digital fear communication and underscores the importance of enhancing public vigilance and critical evaluation when encountering fear-driven content online.

Keywords: Aristotle's Rhetorical Theory, Extended Parallel Process Model, Facebook, Fear Appeals, Psychic Predictions, Public Reception, Filipino Psychic, Rhetorical Analysis, and Social Media.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the digital era, fear-instigating narratives have become widespread on social media, especially on Facebook. Among these, viral psychic predictions about calamities, death, or accidents stand out. Many users believe and share these posts due to fear, particularly when psychics have previously made accurate claims. These narratives often trigger strong emotional responses, leading to widespread panic and online discourse.

Fear, as defined by the American Psychological Association (2020), is a reaction to perceived threats—both physical and digital. On platforms like Facebook, users experience fear from the content they consume daily. As Saha et al. (2023) note, "fear speech" on social media effectively drives engagement, sometimes resulting in real-world consequences.

Psychics often use strategies and speculations to gain attention. Dunbar et al. (2014) emphasize that repetition and credibility help fear-based content spread online. Similarly, Pailhé et al. (2022) found that fake psychic demonstrations can manipulate beliefs, stressing the need for critical thinking.

This study seeks to examine how a Filipino psychic’s viral predictions on Facebook employ rhetorical strategies to instigate fear—and how audiences respond. Additionally, it aims to offer recommendations that help users critically assess and react to fear-based content. Ultimately, the research intends to provide insight into how fear functions as a persuasive tool

II. SYNTHESIS OF RELATED LITERATURE

The reviewed literature presents a solid foundation for understanding the dynamics of fear-instigating communication in the digital age, particularly in the context of viral psychic predictions on social media platforms, specifically, Facebook. Drawing from interdisciplinary perspectives—rhetoric, psychology, media studies, and cultural analysis—this chapter underscores the significance of fear as both a rhetorical strategy and a psychological trigger that influences public perception and behavior.

At the theoretical level, Aristotle’s Rhetorical Theory—comprising ethos, pathos, and logos—remains a vital framework for analyzing this type of communication.

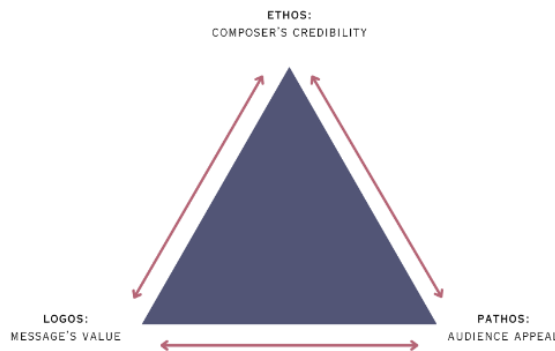


Figure 1. Aristotle’s Rhetorical Theory

The widespread use of pathos in psychic predictions highlights how emotional appeal, particularly fear, can override logical reasoning (logos) and elevate the perceived credibility of the communicator (ethos).

This rhetorical approach is further contextualized through the Extended Parallel Process Model (EPPM), which explains how individuals process fear-inducing messages.

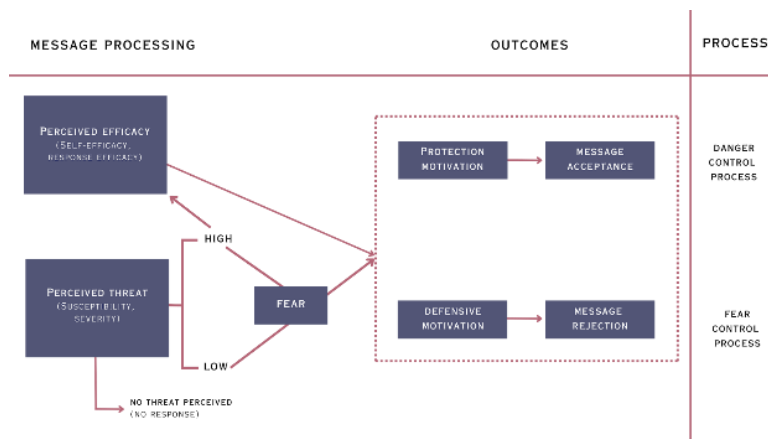


Figure 2. Extended Parallel Process Model (EPPM)

The model illustrates that when a message triggers a high perception of threat without corresponding efficacy, audiences are more likely to engage in fear control responses, such as denial or emotional sharing, rather than danger control, which involves constructive behavioral changes.

The literature also points to a growing trend where fear-arousing content—especially when framed with urgency and emotional language—achieves greater virality and engagement. Studies demonstrate that emotionally intense content receives more comments, shares, and reactions, highlighting a behavioral pattern among digital audiences. However, some findings suggest a saturation point in fear-based messaging, where extreme levels of fear no longer increase engagement, indicating that emotional manipulation has limits. This finding introduces a critical nuance: while fear is powerful, its persuasive impact depends on how it is framed and perceived in relation to user efficacy, as explained by the Extended Parallel Process Model (EPPM).

Cultural perspectives further enrich this discourse. In the Filipino context, belief in the supernatural and psychic phenomena is deeply rooted in cultural and spiritual traditions. As Cervantes (2023) explains through the Sarili-Mundo model, Filipino audiences may view psychic predictions not merely as entertainment or misinformation but as spiritually valid narratives. This cultural dimension helps explain the receptiveness of local audiences to fear-based psychic content, which may function as both a warning and a spiritual call to awareness.

In terms of scholarly gaps, the reviewed literature largely supports the persuasive power of emotional appeals; however, few studies directly examine how these rhetorical strategies function within the specific genre of psychic predictions—particularly in the Filipino context. This study, therefore, contributes to the field by integrating rhetorical theory, psychological models, and cultural perspectives to explore how fear is not only instigated but also strategically structured or framed in online narratives, and how it is received by online audiences—specifically on Facebook.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative interpretive research design. It is qualitative in nature because the study aims to examine meanings, emotions, and audience interpretations rather than quantify data (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) emphasize that qualitative interpretive research focuses on how individuals make sense of their experiences and social contexts. Grounded in the belief that reality is subjective and socially constructed, this approach is ideal for exploring how audiences interpret messages and uncovering deeper meanings beyond surface-level descriptions.

This approach helps the researchers understand how viral psychic predictions on Facebook are presented and how audiences respond to them. Furthermore, it allows for a deeper exploration of the strategies these narratives use to influence public perception and engagement.

Source of Data/Corpus

The primary source of data for this study is Facebook—a widely used social media platform that facilitates the rapid circulation of content and encourages active audience engagement. This platform is particularly suitable for the study as it hosts a wide array of user-generated content, including public predictions and reactions, which are central to the research focus.

According to Christy Balita via *Statista*, Facebook remains the most widely used social media platform in the Philippines. In the third quarter of 2024, 94.7% of internet users in the country accessed Facebook monthly, highlighting its dominance among Filipino internet users. Additional reports from *Meltwater* and *We Are Social* reveal that Filipinos spend an average of 3 hours and 32 minutes per day on Facebook, underscoring its significant role in the daily lives of users.

Facebook was also selected because it is the primary platform used by the psychic figure featured in this study, due to its accessibility and wide reach. Therefore, Facebook was chosen over other platforms because of its unparalleled influence and direct relevance to the subject of this research in the Philippine context.

The corpus will consist of publicly accessible posts containing psychic predictions, along with the corresponding audience comments. These materials will serve as the basis for analyzing how fear-instigating narratives are framed, and how audiences interpret and respond to such content. Facebook's algorithmic features and built-in interaction tools further

provide valuable context for understanding the visibility and dissemination of emotionally charged narratives in digital spaces (Meta, 2022).

Sampling Technique and Selection Criteria

This study employs purposive sampling as the primary strategy for selecting information-rich data sources that align with the research objectives. The sample consists of viral psychic predictions circulated on Facebook, along with corresponding public comments that reflect audience reception. Specifically, the research focuses on three viral predictions of one prominent Filipino psychic figure, whose identity was anonymized to protect her privacy and adhere to ethical research standards.

To ensure the inclusion of content that aligns with the study's focus on fear-instigating narratives and rhetorical impact, criterion sampling, a subtype of purposive sampling, is employed to identify psychic predictions that meet the following criteria: (1) the post must have been published between 2024 and 2025; (2) the content must involve a prediction concerning a significant or fear-instigating event (e.g., accidents, calamities, and deaths); and (3) the post must have achieved a high level of engagement, as displayed by at least 1,000 shares and 1,000 comments.

To capture the full spectrum of audience responses, this study employs total population sampling by analyzing all comments on the selected Facebook posts, excluding replies to comments. Each comment will be categorized based on its themes. By systematically examining every comment, this approach ensures that the findings accurately represent the overall audience reception.

Together, these strategies allow the researchers to focus on texts and reactions that are not only rhetorically rich but also socially significant in understanding the public reception of a Filipino psychic's viral predictions among audiences.

Data Collection

The data collection procedures for this study follows a structured approach aligned with its qualitative design and research objectives. The researchers begin by identifying a prominent Filipino psychic figure—whose Facebook page consistently features viral psychic predictions. This individual is selected based on a large follower count, high engagement rates, and the frequent virality of her content.

To gather the dataset, the researchers will manually visit the official and public Facebook page of the prominent Filipino psychic figure. Posts published between January 2024 and April 2025 will be reviewed and retrieved for accurate selection. Facebook's comment section will be used to collect *all* user comments, which will then be systematically categorized according to their emotional or cognitive tone.

Purposive sampling will be employed to deliberately select posts that meet the study's inclusion criteria. Selection will be based on both quantitative indicators—such as a minimum of 1,000 shares and 1,000 comments displayed—and qualitative features, including emotionally charged language, fear-based themes, and identifiable rhetorical strategies. Only posts containing public predictions will be included, while irrelevant posts will be excluded. Additionally, all comments will be reviewed and recorded based on emerging themes to capture audience responses to the predictions. However, replies to comments are excluded to maintain the focus of the study.

Each selected post will be documented through screenshots and saved links, with relevant metadata recorded in a data log. This metadata will include the date of posting, type of content (e.g., text), and the number of shares and comments.

Data Analysis

This study utilizes rhetorical analysis to examine the Filipino psychic's selected viral predictions on Facebook and applies deductive thematic analysis, anchored in Witte's Extended Parallel Process Model (EPPM), to interpret the corresponding public reception. The objective is to uncover the persuasive strategies used to instigate fear and to understand how audiences interpret and respond to such narratives—ultimately providing insights into the use of fear as a persuasive tool.

The analysis of the viral posts is guided by Aristotle's rhetorical appeals—ethos, pathos, and logos—which provide a theoretical foundation for identifying how credibility, emotional engagement, and logical reasoning are constructed within the messages. In addition, rhetorical devices such as imagery, tone, diction, and narrative structure will be examined to highlight stylistic techniques that enhance persuasion.

The units of analysis include both the full content of the selected psychic prediction posts and the corresponding Facebook comments representing public reactions. Each post will be manually coded to identify rhetorical strategies associated with fear appeals, focusing on both persuasive content and stylistic presentation.

For the reception analysis, deductive thematic analysis based on EPPM constructs will be applied to interpret audience responses. Facebook comments will be qualitatively analyzed and categorized according to EPPM's core dimensions: perceived threat (including severity and susceptibility) and perceived efficacy (self-efficacy and response efficacy). This allows a deeper understanding of whether audience reactions align with danger control (constructive engagement) or fear control (defensive avoidance, denial, or skepticism).

The interpretive process will connect the rhetorical strategies identified in the posts with the range of audience responses, as framed by EPPM, while also considering the digital and socio-cultural context of Facebook as a platform for viral communication. This integrated analysis aims to reveal the dynamic interplay between message construction and public reception in the case of viral psychic predictions.

To ensure validity and trustworthiness, the study will implement peer debriefing to review coding and interpretations, and maintain an audit trail documenting all analytic procedures, enhancing transparency and methodological rigor.

Ethical Considerations

This study will strictly adhere to ethical research practices, particularly in handling data sourced from social media. All Facebook posts and comments analyzed will be publicly available, ensuring that no private or restricted information is accessed without consent. The content specifically involves viral psychic predictions posted by a prominent Filipino psychic content creator. Since the material is publicly accessible and intended for mass audiences, the

researchers are not required to seek direct informed consent from the psychic or the commenters. This approach aligns with ethical guidelines for research involving publicly available online content.

To protect the privacy of individuals involved in this study, no names, profile pictures, or personally identifiable information will be included in the analysis or the final output. Commenters will be anonymized using generic codes or labels (e.g., "User A," "Commenter 1"). The data will be collected and stored securely, accessible only to the researchers, and will be used solely for academic purposes.

The researchers will ensure the confidentiality of all collected data by removing or masking identifying details, and by presenting the findings in a way that avoids singling out any individual. The study will also comply with the ethical standards set by Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng San Pablo and with the provisions of the *Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173)*, which mandates the responsible and lawful processing of personal data. These measures will ensure that the rights, privacy, and dignity of all individuals involved will be respected throughout the research process.

IV. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

This study examined a Filipino psychic's selected viral predictions and their public reception on Facebook, guided by three core objectives. First, it sought to describe the rhetorical strategies employed in the predictions and the corresponding audience perceptions and responses that contribute to fear-instigating communication. Second, it aimed to analyze how these predictions construct and employ fear as a persuasive tool using Aristotle's Rhetorical Theory, particularly through the appeals of ethos, pathos, and logos. Third, the study endeavored to evaluate the influence of the predictions on public reception using Witte's Extended Parallel Process Model (EPPM), assessing how audiences interpret, negotiate, and respond to perceived threats and efficacy cues. These objectives were examined through the analytical lenses of Aristotle's Rhetorical Theory and the EPPM to provide an integrated understanding of how fear operates within viral psychic predictions circulating in online spaces such as Facebook.

The salient findings of this study are as follows:

Rhetorical Patterns in the Psychic Predictions

The findings reveal that the prediction posts were intentionally constructed to evoke a strong emotional reaction. Their arrangement followed a continuous, unbroken sequence of escalating unfortunate events, framed with catastrophic diction,

vivid imagery, and a prophetic tone. These features created a sense of immediacy and inevitability. Pathos dominated the rhetorical landscape, supported by ethos constructed through repeated claims of supernatural visions. Logos was largely absent, as the predictions relied heavily on impressionistic and visionary narrative rather than verifiable evidence. Collectively, the rhetorical structure fostered fear, urgency, and spiritual dependence.

Thematic Patterns in Audience Responses

Audience responses revealed a wide range of interpretations. Faith-based reactions emerged as the most dominant theme, indicating that spirituality and divine intervention serve as the primary lens through which many readers make sense of distressing content. Other prominent themes included skepticism, concerns for safety, sarcasm, dismissal, emotional expressions, mockery, hostility, informative contributions, and speculative interpretations. These patterns illustrate the diverse ways online audiences negotiate fear, uncertainty, and belief systems in response to viral psychic predictions.

Message Appraisal Based on EPPM

EPPM appraisal revealed that Perceived Efficacy was the most frequently observed category across the dataset. Many commenters expressed confidence in prayers, vigilance, and precautionary actions as effective coping mechanisms—indicating a general belief in their ability to manage or counter potential risks. Perceived Threat also appeared prominently, reflecting audience recognition that the predictions could be dangerous or personally relevant. However, the intensity of threat appraisal varied by post: the *Calamity* and *Accident* posts were generally interpreted as high in efficacy but low in threat, suggesting that audiences felt capable of taking preventive measures and maintaining control over the situation. In contrast, the *Death* post elicited high perceived threat but low perceived efficacy, signaling heightened alarm and a perceived inability to influence fatal outcomes.

Non-EPPM responses accounted for a smaller portion of the dataset and consisted of humorous, off-topic, or observational remarks that did not engage with the threat–efficacy dynamic. Overall, these distinctions demonstrate that audience reactions were shaped by varying combinations of perceived threat and efficacy, revealing how different thematic focuses influence the urgency, emotional tone, and sense of manageability associated with viral psychic predictions.

Rhetorical Appeals in Audience Responses

Audience comments primarily reflected pathos, as many expressed fears, worry, and other emotional reactions. Ethos also appeared, particularly in comments that reinforced the visionary’s credibility through references to past predictions and spiritual authority. Logos was the least visible, consistent with the emotional and belief-driven nature of the discourse. The interplay of these appeals demonstrates how audiences rely on emotional resonance, trust in authority, and collective spiritual beliefs when responding to fear-instigating online content.

Conclusions

Contingent on the findings derived in this study, the following inferences were drawn:

1. Fear functions as the core rhetorical force in the construction of viral psychic predictions.

The predictions employed escalating sequences of misfortune, catastrophic language, and a prophetic tone that collectively heightened emotional intensity. These elements worked together to create urgency, inevitability, and a heightened sense of danger.

2. Audiences interpret fear-based content primarily through spiritual and faith-centered lenses.

The dominance of faith-based responses demonstrates that many individuals rely on spirituality and divine intervention to understand, validate, or manage the emotional weight of the predictions. This positions religion as both a coping strategy and a source of credibility for the visionary.

3. Fear triggers varied behavioral orientations, not merely alarm or panic.

EPPM appraisal revealed that many commenters expressed high perceived efficacy—turning to prayer, vigilance, and precautionary actions. This suggests that fear-based messages can mobilize coping-oriented behaviors and communal preparedness rather than overwhelming anxiety.

4. Online audiences negotiate and reinterpret fear rather than accepting it uncritically.

Skeptical, humorous, sarcastic, and dismissive responses illustrate active meaning-making. These counter-narratives challenge the authority of the visionary and limit the persuasive power of fear within the discourse.

5. Emotional rhetoric dominates both the production of the predictions and the public's reactions.

Pathos emerged as the most salient appeal in the posts and in audience comments. Ethos appeared through references to spiritual authority, while logos was minimal. This confirms that emotional and belief-driven engagement is central in digital fear communication.

6. Fear-based viral content contributes to polarized and multi-layered digital discourse.

The coexistence of faith, skepticism, emotional support, hostility, and humor reveals that such predictions become contested rhetorical spaces. These interactions highlight how digital publics clash and converge around belief systems, cultural norms, and emotional responses.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion built in the study, the following recommendations are hereby presented.

For Media and Communication Researchers

1. Investigate the role of digital fear narratives across different platforms.

Future studies may compare how predictions circulate on other social media platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, or Twitter to determine whether rhetorical patterns differ depending on platform affordances.

2. Explore audience susceptibility to emotionally laden content.

Researchers should examine how age, digital literacy, religiosity, and psychological resilience influence the reception of fear-based online discourse.

3. Develop an analytical framework for analyzing fear-based narratives.

Developing a Strategic Reception Framework that enhances public reception and critical engagement with fear-instigating narratives in digital communication would significantly benefit future communication research.

For the Public and Online Communities

4. Promote digital literacy to reduce uncritical acceptance of fear-inducing content.

Programs emphasizing media verification, source evaluation, and emotional awareness can help prevent panic and misinformation.

5. Advocate for balanced and responsible interpretation of viral predictions.

Community moderators, influencers, and content creators should model critical thinking and discourage the amplification of unverified fear narratives.

For Government, Educators, and Advocacy Groups

6. Integrate media literacy education into school curricula.

Teaching students how to evaluate rhetorical strategies, emotional appeals, and online claims can mitigate the impact of digital fear-mongering.

7. Develop public information campaigns addressing misinformation and harmful fear-driven content.

Government agencies and NGOs can collaborate to create accessible reminders promoting verification, preparedness, and calmness in times of uncertainty.

8. Support mental health interventions for fear-affected communities.

Because viral predictions can provoke distress, institutions should offer online counseling resources, psychological first aid, and community discussions.

For Future Researchers

9. Conduct longitudinal studies on predictive content and audience behavior.

Observing audience reactions over time can determine how sustained exposure to fear-based predictions shapes public trust, anxiety, and belief systems.

10. Examine other fear-centric content such as conspiracy theories, sensationalized news, or health misinformation.

Comparative analysis will help identify broader patterns in digital fear communication.

11. Examine the ethical application of fear appeals in communication.

Particularly how institutions (corporate, government, health sectors) can employ fear responsibly grounded in evidence, accompanied by actionable guidance, and aligned with public welfare to avoid manipulative or harmful outcomes.

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