

The Rhetorical Strategy of Putri Karlina in Building the Image of a Female Leader in the Garut Regional Election

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ABSTRACT: Women's representation in Indonesian local politics is hindered by structural and cultural barriers, including gender stereotypes that deem women less suitable for leadership. This study explores how Putri Karlina navigated these challenges during the 2024 Garut Regional Election. Using a qualitative approach, data were gathered through in-depth interviews with her media team, observations of campaign activities, and analysis of social media content. The study focuses on Karlina's rhetorical strategies, drawing on Aristotle's ethos, pathos, and logos. The results show that Karlina strengthened her credibility (ethos) by consistently engaging with the community and addressing social issues. She used emotional appeals (pathos) through personal stories, local language, and empathetic interactions to connect with voters. Additionally, she employed logical arguments (logos) by presenting data-driven visions and concrete solutions to public problems. This combination of rhetorical strategies not only enhanced her public image as a competent and empathetic leader but also helped overcome gender biases in a male-dominated political environment. The findings contribute to the understanding of gender dynamics in political communication, especially in the context of local elections.

Keywords: Political Rhetoric, Female Leadership, Ethos, Pathos, Logos.



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INTRODUCTION

The development of democracy in Indonesia has expanded opportunities for participation, particularly as women are increasingly able to enter politics (Ivana Theo Philia, 2024). The Indonesian government has implemented several affirmative policies to support women's political involvement. One such policy is stipulated in Law No. 12 of 2003, Article 65 Paragraph 1, which mandates a minimum quota of 30% female representation in legislative elections. Women's leadership opportunities were also evident in President Jokowi's 2014 Working Cabinet, which included eight female ministers (Balkis, 2020). Female political representation at both local and national levels continues to face considerable obstacles. These challenges stem from gender stereotypes, persistent structural barriers, and insufficient social-political support. Fundamentally,

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political office is a right extended to all Indonesian citizens nevertheless, these systemic factors impede the realization of equitable gender parity in leadership.

Political communication is a strategic process undertaken by political actors to shape, influence, and sustain a positive public image. In efforts to build a favorable image, communication and transparency are essential (Purwo & Puspasari, 2020). Political actors utilize diverse communication channels, including television, radio, advertisements, and social media (e.g., Instagram and TikTok), to convey messages designed to attract public sympathy and support. Political communication is critical for establishing and maintaining legitimacy by providing public clarification and demonstrating leadership capability. Its core function is to deliver visions, missions, and programs to meet public expectations. Ultimately, it is a persuasive and symbolic tool aimed at constructing a positive image and fostering a productive leader-populace relationship. (Faraid et al., 2023).

This study focus on analyzes Putri Karlina's political rhetoric and image-building strategies as a female regional leader candidate. Her candidacy is compelling because patriarchal culture deeply rooted in Indonesia often fosters the perception that women are less suited to leadership, an inequality sustained by gender-based stereotypes. Gender injustice arises from stereotypes about roles divided by sex, which delineate tasks between men and women. The division of labor is one of the fundamental distinctions in power between women and men (Zuhri & Amalia, 2022). Such views influence public preferences in leadership choices, compelling women candidates to work harder to demonstrate their skills and competencies. A leader, defined by their specific competencies and advantages, influences individuals or groups to collaborate toward shared goals. Consequently, women running for office must work harder to demonstrate their abilities and expertise to achieve collective goals.

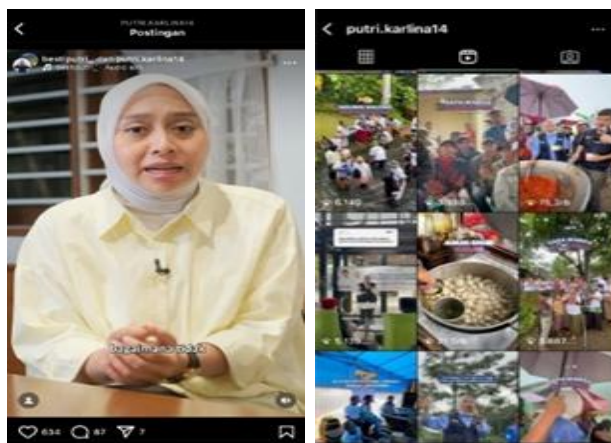


Figure 1 & 2. Social media post of Putri Karlina
Source: Instagram @Putri.karlina14

In Figures 1 & 2, several visual campaign contents from Putri Karlina are shown to persuade the public using her rhetorical techniques. During the campaign period, Putri Karlina expressed her rhetoric through video narratives posted on her personal Instagram account. The narrative conveyed solutions to the issues of public concern in Garut, such as poverty, health, community welfare, and employment. In response to these issues, Putri Karlina consistently presented answers aligned with her vision and mission, which aims to make Garut "a Great and Sustainable Garut."

Speeches and rhetoric are often used as communication tools in politics and economics because both share the same goal and purpose, which is to influence others (Ayunda et al., 2021).

In this case, political rhetoric is one of the right instruments used to address various public concerns. With the right rhetoric, a female candidate can strengthen her image as a competent, firm, and visionary leader. Additionally, mass media and social media play a strategic role in the dissemination of political messages. The effective use of media allows the candidate to reach a wider audience and strengthens the political narrative being built. Moreover, the level of trust in information on social media becomes a crucial factor in influencing the political participation of users. Using various forms of social media, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and YouTube, allows messages to be spread more widely among the general public (Abrams & Greenhawt, 2020). Social media has become an inseparable platform, making it an ideal place to convey political messages aimed at image-building, allowing users to interact (Nazila et al., 2025).

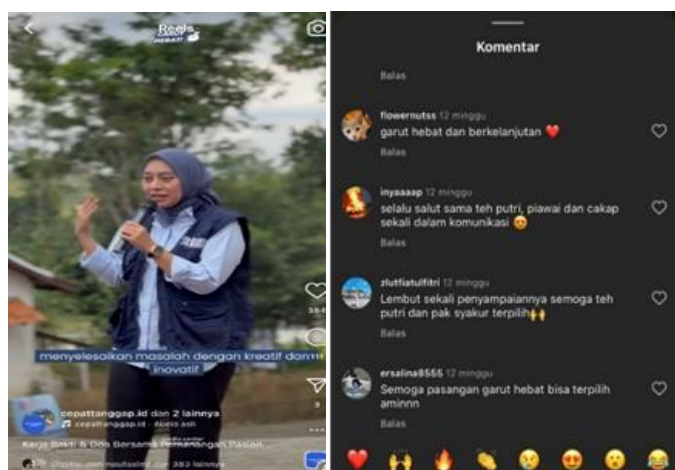


Figure 3 & 4. Rhetorical sentences that influence public opinion
Source: Instagram Putri.Karlina14

An analysis of how Putri Karlina utilizes media to deliver her political messages is a key element in this study. This can be observed from one of Putri Karlina's campaign videos, in which she addresses the public's concerns in Garut, stating, "Solving problems creatively and innovatively" as a triggering statement to persuade the audience. This statement received a positive response from the public, as shown in comments such as @inyaaap's "Always admire Teh Putri, very skilled and competent in communication" and @zulfiatulfitri's "Her delivery is so gentle, I hope Teh Putri and Pak Syukur win." The large number of positive comments from Instagram users on Putri Karlina's account made her video quickly visible to many people. The comment section is often used to express opinions and thoughts.



Figure 5. the result survey from Indikator.id
Source: Indikator.id

Furthermore, according to data from the web indikator.co.id conducted in October 2024, there was a significant increase in Putri Karlina's popularity, with 51.8% of the public recognizing her, while 79.7% expressed liking for her. The highest public approval rating was 79.7%, followed by Helmi Budiman at 74.5%, Abdusy Syakur Amin at 72.8%, and Yudi Nugraha at 72.2%. In this case, popularity is fundamental in electoral politics; it is impossible to be elected if the candidate is not known. However, popularity does not guarantee election if there is a more favored candidate. As popularity must be complemented by a positive personal image, this study critically analyzes Putri Karlina's social media messaging. The core focus is to understand the political rhetoric strategy she employs to achieve this positive construction. Interaction between individuals has become easier and more sophisticated due to the advent of new wave technology (Nurhadi, 2020). This research aims to explore in-depth how a woman can build a strong leadership image amid complex political challenges.

This research aligns with previous studies titled "Dissecting Political Communication Rhetoric and Its Implications in the 2024 Elections," which highlights that rhetoric is not merely about conveying knowledge but emphasizes persuasive techniques to maintain a position through rational arguments. The study's results indicate that three rhetorical factors credibility, emotion, and logic play essential roles in persuading an audience (Muhlis, 2021).

This study is further supported by the relevant research titled "Rhetorical Analysis of Gibran Rakabuming in the Solo 2020 Mayoral Election Debate," which examines Gibran's success in applying rhetorical theory through the approaches of ethos, pathos, and logos. Gibran is considered to have communicated his message clearly without confusing the audience, with a direct, firm, and authoritative communication style. The study shows that the primary goal of every political campaign is to attract public attention to ensure that the audience receives and follows the messages conveyed by political communicators.

The difference of this research lies in its in depth analysis of the use of rhetorical techniques in female political campaigns, which is still rarely discussed in the context of dynamic Indonesian politics. It also provides an in-depth analysis of the use of ethos, pathos, and logos by Putri Karlina and their impact on her electability. Although there are many studies on political rhetoric, research

specifically connecting the application of Aristotle's rhetoric and contemporary rhetoric with changes in electability in the context of dynamic Indonesian politics is still very limited.

The theory in this research focuses on the analyzes Putri Karlina's rhetorical strategies used to build her leadership image in the 2024 Garut Pilkada. Originating from the Greek "art of speaking" (rhetrik). The theoretical focus employs Aristotle's classical rhetoric, which identifies Ethos (credibility), Pathos (emotion), and Logos (logic) as the three essential elements for effective persuasion. In rhetorical communication, speakers must demonstrate credibility and integrity (ethos). This is, of course, related to the language used by Putri Karlina to influence the public. Language plays an essential role in human life, both orally and in writing (Gabiella et al., 2023).

This research also involves contemporary rhetoric, which is an extension of classical rhetorical theory that is more responsive to modern contexts. In the political realm, contemporary rhetoric not only emphasizes verbal communication aspects but also involves various strategies and approaches tailored to technological advancements, social dynamics, and the evolving demands of the audience. Communication processes, including political communication, can utilize the internet to reach millions of people worldwide (Faridah et al., 2021).

The researcher will utilize the theory of contemporary rhetoric, which encompasses diverse communication forms like advertising, mass media, and digital presentations, to analyze how Putri Karlina constructs her rhetoric. This analysis will focus on her development of interactive and adaptive communication strategies including the use of language, images, videos, and persuasive digital techniques relative to context and audience. The advantage of digital communication is that it facilitates communication without being constrained by time and place. This theory aims to study the development of persuasive communication practices in modern times, which are often influenced by technological advancements, social media, and social and political changes.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive method with a qualitative approach. This method was chosen because it provides a deeper understanding of the complex phenomena occurring in the dynamics of political communication. Therefore, this study aims to identify and narratively describe the rhetorical strategies used by Putri Karlina in building her image as a female leader in the 2024 Garut Regional Election, as well as to analyze the impact of these strategies on campaign activities during the election period in Garut in 2024 (Zamhasari, 2024).

This research was conducted in Garut Regency, West Java, the site of the 2024 Pilkada and the primary location for Putri Karlina's campaign activities. The study employs a qualitative approach using three data collection methods: in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. These methods were selected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the rhetorical strategies used by Putri Karlina in shaping her image as a female leader. The analysis focuses on her use of classical rhetoric (ethos, pathos, logos) and contemporary rhetoric via social media. The research examines various forms of political communication, including speeches, digital posts, and campaign narratives, to assess how these strategies influence public perception of her as a competent, empathetic leader with strong electability.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on individuals directly involved in Putri Karlina's political communication and those capable of representing public perspectives. Key informants from her Media Centre were chosen for their role in planning and executing campaign strategies across social and digital media, providing insight into content, rhetorical techniques, and public responses. Additional sources included young citizens and political academics not directly involved in the campaign, offering critical perspectives on how her messages were received and how her rhetorical strategies shaped the public image of a female leader

Tabel 1. Data Informan Research

No	Name of Informan	Age	Employment
1	Fidella Sita Aprilia	24	<i>Creative media centre</i> Putri Karlina
2	Arief Hardiyana Restu	22	<i>Video assistance</i> Putri Karlina
3	M. Ikhlusul Haqiqi	25	<i>Editor chief media</i> Putri Karlina

Source: Researcher Processed Data

Tabel 2. Research Source Data

No	Name of Source Person	Age	Employment
1	Bimantara Muhammad	24	Young Activist
2	Agus Barkah	50	Lecturer of Politic

Source: Researcher processed data

This research method is designed to provide an in-depth insight into how the rhetorical strategies employed by Putri Karlina can shape the image of female leadership in the context of the 2024 Garut Regional Election. A qualitative approach, utilizing in-depth interviews, observations, and literature studies, allows the researcher to uncover the dynamics of political communication that not only influence public perception but also offer a perspective on the application of effective rhetoric in political campaigns.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study analyzes the rhetorical strategies employed by Putri Karlina in constructing her image as a female leader during the 2024 Garut Regional Election. This analysis uses a descriptive method with a qualitative approach, utilizing classical rhetoric theory from Aristotle (ethos, pathos, logos) and contemporary rhetoric. The primary data was gathered through interviews with three key members of the Putri Karlina Media Center, who were directly involved in planning and producing the campaign communications: Fidella Sita Aprilia (Creative Media for Putri Karlina), Ikhlusul Haqiqi (Chief Editor for Putri Karlina), and Arief Hardiyana Restu (Field Media Team). The data was further supported by interviews with sources from Suara Muda Garut, such as Bimantara Muhammad, and political academic Agus Barkah.

Ethos: Building Credibility and Leadership Reputation for Women

The concept of ethos in Aristotle's rhetoric emphasizes the importance of the speaker's credibility in delivering their message. Based on observations from the informants, Putri Karlina builds her ethos through the primary pillar of personal integrity. She has shaped her image as a trusted and respected female leader not through superficial image-building, but through consistent presence in the community. Her involvement in social issues such as poverty, education, and family economics strengthens her reputation as a responsive leader close to the people. As stated by Fidella (Informant 1):

“Putri’s image is not the result of fake branding like many other politicians. She has been consistent in being present on the ground, reaching the rural areas, and getting involved in solving community issues, from poverty, weak economies, to social issues that are rarely highlighted. This is what makes people feel close and trust her.” (Sita, 2025)

Fidella's statement reflects that Putri Karlina's image is built not through artificial branding but through consistent direct engagement in the community. This image is reinforced through visual content showcasing authentic activities, not staged performances. In the context of contemporary rhetoric, ethos also concerns how a leader asserts authority in the digital space. Putri Karlina often appears on her official social media without excessive formality, presenting herself as a human, empathetic leader who understands the people of Garut. This approach aligns with previous studies on credibility, such as “Credibility of Legal Notary Leaders with Employees”, which concluded that credibility significantly influences the public's acceptance of messages (Barokah et al., 2024).

To further improve her public image, Putri Karlina has launched unique programs such as "Hap Huap Asyik" (a free communal meal) and "Ngagogo Balong" (free fishing together), which are not just campaign strategies but tangible ways to build emotional closeness and public trust through the symbolic leadership ethos. These activities reflect compassion, empathy, and equality between the leader and the people, reinforcing Putri Karlina's image as a leader who is close and open to the aspirations of the public.

“The Hap Huap Asyik and Ngagogo Balong programs are not just campaign entertainment. They show that Putri has a unique and down-to-earth way of building closeness with the community. These simple activities carry deep meaning, creating a sense of togetherness, equality, and empathy between the leader and the people.” (Haqiqi, 2025)

Based on the interview, this activity indicates Putri Karlina's consistent image as a female leader who understands the needs of the community and engages directly without formality. This approach reflects Aristotle's concept of phronesis (practical wisdom) in ethos, where a leader not only acts but also strives to be a virtuous person. This is a key element in maintaining ethical communication. Ethical communication is about being responsible towards others and respecting their rights in the communication process (Shahreza, 2023) Putri Karlina illustrates that effective leaders must not only speak well but also take action and offer concrete solutions. A communicator with strong ethos earns audience trust through competence, integrity, and goodwill.

This aligns with the ethical communication principle of responsibility towards truth and respect for the rights of communicators and recipients. Putri Karlina shows that ethical leadership is not just measured by rhetorical skills but by sincere actions and serious efforts in solving societal problems. Furthermore, strong ethos in communication shapes the public's perception of a leader's character. Putri Karlina's credibility, built on a consistent track record of competence, integrity, and goodwill, fosters the public trust essential for strengthening local democratic governance and ensuring policy legitimacy.

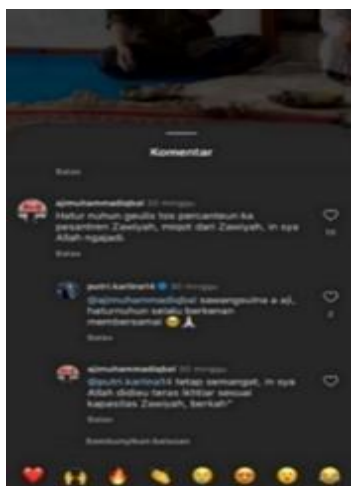


Figure 6 & 7. The activity of Hap Huap Asyik & Ngagogo Balong
Source: Instagram Putri.Karlina14

These activities collectively reflect credibility through the consistency of her campaign messages, positioning Putri Karlina as a female leader who fundamentally understands community needs. By participating actively rather than merely speaking, and interacting without formality, she demonstrates the Aristotelian dimension of phronesis (practical wisdom). This emphasizes that individuals should not only question their actions but also define their desired character. Crucially, Putri Karlina's main rhetorical strategy is leveraging social media for genuine interaction. By using features like Q&As and comment responses, she fosters a two-way, bottom-up communication style that allows the public to voice their aspirations.

This demonstrates a practical commitment to public-oriented leadership, moving beyond symbolism. Ultimately, this direct engagement builds her political legitimacy on a foundation of earned public trust, not just on formal procedures of virtue and morality (Yulanda, 2020). Her quick response to community dynamics demonstrates her adaptive competence, social sensitivity, and concrete action to address public needs. (PRATIWI et al., 2023) This reflects a leader committed to public service and social change, viewing leadership as a mission to enhance the community's quality of life.



Figure 8. Putri Karlina's Interaction Responding to Public Comments
Source: Instagram Putri.Karlina 14

The ethos strategy of Putri Karlina aligns with findings on Nadiem Makarim's rhetoric regarding empathetic character, yet their approaches differ significantly. Makarim focused on formal, conventional speeches to build official credibility. In contrast, this study combines Aristotle with contemporary social media rhetoric, showing Karlina building ethos through direct, emotional interaction, highlighting her human side and credibility via social activities, not just formal address.

Pathos: Emotional Connection Through Personal Narratives and Empathy

The dimension of pathos in Aristotle's rhetoric refers to the ability to stir the emotions of the audience. Pathos occurs when the speaker intentionally tries to provoke the emotions of the audience for persuasive purposes, using linguistic tools. One of Putri Karlina's most effective strategies is the use of personal narratives that evoke sympathy and emotional closeness. For example, in her Instagram post on November 17, she used a phrase in Sundanese, which translates to English as:

"Yeuh danguken nu leuwih peka dina ngarasaken mahalna barga sakabeh pangabutuh hirup teh lain lalaki tapi awewe, kunaon awewe kusabab awewe anu leuwih ngarti dina ngatur kauangan" ("Listen, the one who is more sensitive to the rising cost of living isn't men, but women, because women understand better how to manage finances.") (Karlina, 2024)

This statement strengthens the issue of gender equality in a simple but emotionally strong way. The use of the Sundanese language on many occasions not only strengthens cultural identity but also deepens the sense of belonging between Putri Karlina and the people of Garut. The use of local language also becomes an emotional strength (Karlina, 2024). Putri Karlina reduces psychological distance and fosters pathos by using the local dialect and addressing concerns like the cost of living. This positions her as an equal community member who understands their struggles. Her call for public involvement in development reinforces this inclusive partnership, Indonesia places women's participation in political decision-making as an important aspect (Zamhuri, 2023).

In several video posts on her social media, Putri Karlina often shares daily moments that portray her as a mother, daughter, and ordinary citizen. This becomes part of her communication strategy that reinforces the message that women are capable, empowered, and play significant roles in both the family and society. This humanization serves as a strong rhetorical tool in breaking down the stereotype that female leaders must always appear rigid or formal.

Putri Karlina effectively uses pathos to address gender justice by focusing on women's roles in finance and economic challenges. This strategy not only fosters empathy for hardships experienced but also serves to inspire the community by highlighting the potential and strength of women in society. This creates her contemporary rhetorical narrative shown through her social media, asserting that women are not only victims but also agents of change. This aligns with the statement made by Arief Hardiyana, the second informant, who expressed:

"This political campaign with Ms. Putri feels like a humanitarian mission due to her unique, heartfelt approach. Her sincere social media presence and emphasis on listening rather than just speaking foster a team environment centered on genuine care for the community. The goal transcends winning an election; it is about being present with empathy, feeling the public's struggles, and offering sincere hope" (Hardiyana, 2025)

Interviews with informants confirm that Putri Karlina's rhetorical strategy is centered on pathos, using emotion and empathy to build her image as a female leader. By connecting emotionally with the community, she has proven that this approach is key to earning public trust and voter support. Her use of social media allows her to deliver structured, empathetic, and persuasive messages that effectively position her as a leader who is with the people. These messages, grounded in real-world context, naturally build trust and encourage persuasion. (Amjad, 2023).

The similarity in the pathos dimension aligns with previous research titled "Analysis of Persuasive Communication in the 2024 Presidential Debate (An Aristotle Rhetoric Study)," which similarly explains the elements of Aristotle's rhetoric (ethos, pathos, logos) to analyze political communication (Isa, 2024). While other research often examines rhetorical elements solely in the context of presidential debates, without discussing gender dynamics, this study is distinct. Its aim is to analyze how a female leader breaks gender and social stereotypes while strategically building a strong public image within a predominantly male-dominated political arena.

Logos: Rational Argumentation in Political Messaging

Within the framework of logos, Aristotle emphasizes the importance of logical and rational argumentation. Putri Karlina's strategy in presenting her vision and mission for her work program uses a problem-solution approach. Through her campaign narrative, she does not stop at merely introducing the issues but also provides solutions backed by accurate data. The use of data and evidence on social media is done selectively and strategically to strengthen her arguments, build credibility, and show that the ideas being presented are grounded in reality, not just political rhetoric.

To project an image of a rational and capable leader, Putri Karlina's campaign consistently employs data-driven transparency via infographics, testimonials, and statistics. This strategy is an effective modern application of logos, meeting the contemporary public need for leaders grounded in solutions and quantitative understanding. Data driven planning for regional development helps ensure that the implemented programs align with the needs and aspirations of the community (Lino et al., 2025), as expressed by the first informant, Fidela Sita Aprilia, who mentioned:

“As part of the creative team, we are highly focused on delivering Putri Karlina’s political message in a clear, rational, and data-driven manner. We know that to reach a wider audience, especially those who prioritize logic and evidence, we need to integrate rational arguments that are easy to understand in every campaign material we create. In the creative process, we not only make engaging visual content, but also include relevant statistical data.” (Sita, 2025)

The choice of simple, warm, and data-driven language in Putri Karlina's communication cultivates a public perception of her as an approachable, down-to-earth leader. Leveraging the internet as the primary channel, she employs a blended strategy using Sundanese for local ties and social media for broad visibility. This approach, alternating between formal arguments and a solution-oriented online tone, successfully builds trust and an image of responsive leadership. This transition to both static and dynamic online platforms represents a key phenomenon that has fundamentally reshaped the landscape of contemporary political communication globally (Noorikhshan et al., 2023).

“Mrs. Putri always uses humanized and relatable language in her communication. She even refers to her supporters as 'Besti.' This is not just a style, but an emotional strategy that makes the public feel close, not distant, from their future leader. This approach clearly builds a strong emotional bond between her and the public.” (Hardiyana, 2025)

Arief Hardiyana's statement, as part of the field media team for Putri Karlina, highlights the importance of emotional communication strategies in building proximity between the candidate and the public. According to her media team, Putri Karlina's strategy utilizes emotional communication pathos to build proximity with the public. Through humanized language and symbolic nicknames like “Besti Putri,” she dismantles formal barriers to create a psychological bond, fostering trust and loyalty. This is complemented by a non-confrontational, solution-oriented narrative logos that frames her as a nurturing leader engaged in tangible, socio-cultural activities rather than just political slogans. Ikhlusul Haqiqi, the editor for Putri Karlina, expressed:

“Mrs. Putri prefers to emphasize values of mutual cooperation, collaboration, and respect in every program and campaign she presents. We focus on how the policies she promotes are rooted in local culture and how they have a direct positive impact on the community. For example, in some campaign materials, we highlight real stories from the community, such as women’s empowerment and increasing access to education.” (Haqiqi, 2025)

Based on the data from this informant's statement, it is clear that Putri Karlina's emphasis on rhetoric shows that she understands the importance of building trust in the long term, not just short term electability. Putri Karlina utilizes social media to boost her political visibility and present

an approachable image, successfully challenging the rigid stereotype of female leaders. This demonstrates social media's efficacy as a vital political communication tool in the digital age

In this section, the researcher will analyze the discussion of the dimensions of ethos, pathos, and logos based on data from the informants, supported by previous research. In the dimension of ethos, Putri Karlina successfully demonstrates strong credibility, not because of instant image-building, but due to her direct involvement in the community's life. She consistently engages with the people, addressing crucial issues such as health, poverty, and women's economic empowerment. Her roles as a mother, entrepreneur, and local public figure show that she is not only present as a formal leader but also as part of the community itself. This approach aligns with Aristotle's view that credibility is the fundamental foundation in delivering persuasive messages, and credibility is the primary basis for persuasive communication. Based on an interview with political academic Agus Barkah, he stated:

"The success of Putri Karlina's campaign in building a trustworthy and integral leader image is a clear example of effective Aristotelian ethos. By demonstrating consistency between her actions and her articulated values of fairness and community concern, she established a strong credibility that persuaded the audience to place their trust in her leadership." (Barkah, 2025)

Interview data confirms that the public was positively swayed by Putri Karlina's campaign narratives, which detailed a vision for change. This increased her ethos (credibility), securing public trust in her messages and successfully persuading them toward her long-term objectives. Additionally, a second informant emphasized the role of social media in establishing and disseminating this ethos to a wider audience. Social media has undergone changes and growth, which political actors have utilized as a campaign strategy offering significant chances for victory (Azzikra et al., 2024).

"Putri Karlina's relatable social media communication avoids formality, using shared stories to build closeness with youth. Her rhetoric successfully establishes her as a caring, down-to-earth leader who understands the everyday needs and dynamics of the younger generation" (Muhammad, 2025).

In Aristotle's framework, ethos is one of the three pillars of rhetoric, focusing on the speaker's credibility. Credibility is built through three main dimensions: phronesis (wisdom or competence), arete (moral character), and eunoia (goodwill toward the audience) (Koszowy et al., 2022). The informant's statement shows that Putri Karlina's communication strategy on social media successfully combines these three dimensions to create the image of a relevant, inspiring, and approachable female leader, especially for young people.

From the perspective of phronesis (competence and wisdom), the "relatable" attitude she displays shows Putri Karlina's ability to read the needs of her audience, which is the younger generation. The concept of phronesis comes from Aristotle's philosophy, meaning practical wisdom the leader's ability to act not only based on theory but also on moral consideration, experience, and social context (Rego et al., 2025). The use of social media in politics provides a direct, interactive communication channel, moving beyond mere promotion. By facilitating the sharing of personal stories, it effectively adapts political messaging to the preferences of the digital generation.

Furthermore, from the perspective of arete (moral character and integrity), the “caring” and “down to earth” image perceived by the informants is evidence that the message conveyed is consistent with the behavior shown. Authenticity becomes key because the younger generation tends to be skeptical of public figures who only build artificial images. By sharing real stories from everyday life, Putri Karlina presents herself as a figure who is not distant from the community. This character strengthens the public perception that she holds sincere and grounded leadership values, not just empty rhetoric.

Meanwhile, from the aspect of eunoia (goodwill), The use of social media strategically demonstrates attention to the younger generation's aspirations and lifestyle dynamics. This goodwill is established through topical relevance, inclusive language, and fostering two-way communication. Ultimately, effective communication necessitates thorough analysis of the message and audience to ensure accurate comprehension of the intended meaning. (Raflina et al., 2025). This makes the audience feel acknowledged and valued, not just targeted for a campaign. The informant emphasized that this quality is important because they value leaders who not only inspire but also truly understand the realities of everyday life.

This aspect is supported by previous research titled "A Systematic Review of Leader Credibility." The study states that a leader's credibility significantly affects the effectiveness of communication and the acceptance of messages by the audience (Williams et al., 2023). In this context, Putri Karlina's image is built not merely through rhetoric, but through her real presence and a track record that can be verified by the public. Meanwhile, from the perspective of pathos, the emotional approach taken by Putri Karlina has a significant impact on her closeness to the public. She uses personal narratives that are touching, as well as warm and relatable language, such as the use of Sundanese. This strengthens the emotional bond between her and the public. Through social media posts depicting her personal life and social activities, she successfully showcases the human side of a leader. Data from political academic Agus Barkah reveals:

"From an Aristotelian perspective, Putri Karlina effectively uses pathos (relatable narratives, inclusive language) to bolster her ethos (credibility and integrity). By strategically integrating personal and social content online, she successfully projects the image of a humane and trustworthy leader, thereby securing the confidence of varied audiences." (Barkah, 2025)

The pathos rhetorical pillar in Putri Karlina's political communication strategy is reflected in her ability to evoke positive emotions and a sense of connection through personal narratives that are relevant to the daily lives of the public. The use of local language, and particularly Sundanese, serve as affective triggers that strengthen the psychological closeness between the leader and the audience. This aligns with Aristotle's view that effective pathos must connect the message with the emotional experiences of the audience. From the perspective of a young informant, it is stated:

"Putri Karlina skillfully uses pathos (emotional appeal) through her personal narrative, Sundanese language, and the greeting "Besti Putri" to build audience closeness and authentic camaraderie. This strategy strengthens her ethos by projecting an honest, caring, and consistent personal side aligned with leadership values. Her social media use effectively merges pathos and ethos to establish a strong emotional bond with the public." (Muhammad, 2025)

Putri Karlina's strategy effectively uses pathos to build a strong foundation of public support for the Garut District Election. She creates an emotional connection through relatable personal narratives, the local Sundanese language, and familiar greetings like "Besti Putri." This approach enhances her social legitimacy and positive image by fostering psychological closeness, which turns emotional appeal into tangible political support. This emotional appeal bolsters the leader's positive image and enhances their social legitimacy. Thus, the effectiveness of political communication demonstrated through this approach lies in its ability to touch the emotional side while also emphasizing personal credibility, both of which form a strong foundation in building public support in political contests such as the Garut District Election.

“Putri Karlina's use of logos (data, achievements, and evidence via infographics) provides a rational base for her ethos and pathos. This evidence-based approach minimizes skepticism by showing policies derive from comprehensive analysis, making her messages convincing and rationally verifiable.” (Barkah, 2025)

The statement from the political academic aligns with data from the second informant, who explicitly places Putri Karlina's communication strategy within the framework of Aristotle's logos dimension in rhetorical theory (Listiyani & Muliawati, 2023). Putri Karlina effectively employs logos, the appeal to logic, by presenting arguments backed by factual evidence and concrete, verifiable solutions. This data-driven approach minimizes public skepticism because her message is rooted in tangible proof rather than mere opinion. By allowing the audience to rationally assess her arguments, this strategy not only persuades them logically but also significantly strengthens her long-term credibility and trust (ethos).

This aligns with the findings of Lino, Djani, Noh, & Cervesius (Lino et al., 2025), using clear data and information enhances trust in policies and program effectiveness. Putri Karlina's strategy integrates logic-based communication with emotional and cultural appeals. Her key strength in contemporary rhetoric is using social media for two-way interaction, allowing public feedback and direct responses, instead of just one-way messaging. This creates two-way communication and fosters genuine public engagement. states that the success of modern political communication greatly depends on the political actor's ability to adapt to digital dynamics and the needs of the modern audience.

“The communication style of Teh Putri on social media is different from most other politicians. She doesn't just use social media to deliver one-sided narratives or promote programs, but truly makes it a place to interact with the public. Our comments are read, feedback is heard, and she often responds directly. It feels like talking to a friend, not a future leader. This two-way interaction makes us feel more involved and valued, so our support for her also feels more natural and sincere.” (Muhammad, 2025)

The statement from the second informant shows that Putri Karlina's social media strategy aligns with contemporary rhetoric's emphasis on two-way symmetrical communication (Grunig and Hunt's Excellence Theory). By actively engaging and responding to public comments and feedback, she establishes an interactive dialogue, moving beyond one-way messaging to foster mutual understanding and engagement. Excellence theory is an extension of the four models of media relations, namely: Press Agency (publicity), Public Information, Two-Way Asymmetric, and Two-Way Symmetrical (Apriyani et al., 2020).

This two-way communication strategy becomes a strength in building the image of a female leader who does not only speak to the public, but also speaks with the public, in line with the principles of effective political communication in the digital age, which states that contemporary rhetoric in politics demands a more dynamic and participatory digital engagement. Furthermore, the study by emphasizes that positive comments and digital social interactions play a crucial role in building a consistent image of a public figure, particularly in the context of social media platforms.

Through her success in building communication on social media. Putri Karlina has built significant credibility through a consistent, positive, and participatory communication style that welcomes feedback. Her rhetorical strategy showcases her as a present, responsive, and grounded female leader. By prioritizing empathy, local culture, and active involvement, she has successfully cultivated a strong leadership image within the Garut community. Building a positive image for a candidate is crucial to ensuring a fair election (Sarah Eka Maharani & Rusdiana, 2025). As expressed by political academic Agus Barkah, the second informant:

“Putri Karlina's core strategy is an inclusive and personal narrative that effectively leverages emotion. She projects an image as a caring yet firm female leader who addresses social issues. For instance, her approach highlights the role of women in social development, resonating with Garut's local norms and expectations, demonstrating her ability to engage diverse segments of society with a blend of emotional and rational appeals” (Barkah, 2025)

Based on the data from the interview and the informant's statements, it is evident that political credibility is not only built on the stage but is demonstrated through real interactions that touch the daily lives of the community. In the context of digital media, transparency of information becomes even more important because the audience has wider access to verify information (Manullang & Rahmanita, 2025). This emphasizes her presence not only in campaign symbols but also in real actions, with consistent and constructive communication based on logos. Moreover, the impression of integrity is reinforced by her track record in advocating for women's and children's issues, as well as her quick response to hot issues within the community. As stated by the research informant Bimantara Muhammad:

“Mrs. Putri Karlina's integrity is reflected in her consistent track record in advocating for strategic issues, particularly related to women and children. In addition, her capacity to respond swiftly to various social issues emerging within the community demonstrates her genuine commitment to leadership responsibilities that prioritize the public.” (Muhammad, 2025)

The informant's statement emphasizes that Putri Karlina's communication style is grounded in real experience, not just empty rhetoric. For the younger generation, her presence represents a shift, showing that female leaders can have strong track records, not just symbolic ones. Putri Karlina frequently reposts community content, replies to messages, and engages with comments on her social media, demonstrating that she listens, responds to concerns, and cares about public issues. However, this study focusing on challenges such as patriarchy, gender stereotypes, and the limited participation of women in local politics. In contrast, the previous research was neutral, not addressing gender, and focused on general political contests and the relationship between candidates and their constituents.

Leveraging social media, Putri Karlina employs a contemporary rhetorical strategy that successfully integrates ethos, pathos, and logos to appear relatable, empathetic, and rational. This approach fosters a transparent, personal connection with the Garut populace, establishing her as an integrity-driven and responsive leader. Her focus on local culture and active digital engagement proves that political credibility is effectively shaped by genuine community interactions.

This study examines the rise of female political leadership in Indonesian local politics, despite persistent patriarchy and masculine narratives. It explores how rhetorical strategies are vital for female candidates to build credibility and secure public support. The research seeks to address challenges in female representation and analyze communication methods that effectively connect candidates with local public needs, offering both academic and practical contributions toward inclusive political participation.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the rhetorical strategies employed by Putri Karlina in the 2024 Garut Regional Election proved effective in constructing a strong and competent image of female leadership. By combining the dimensions of ethos, pathos, and logos in her political communication, and by utilizing social media as the primary platform for disseminating political messages, Putri Karlina successfully enhanced her popularity and electability in the public eye. Despite the persistence of patriarchal cultural challenges, she has demonstrated that women possess equal potential in leadership and can make significant contributions to regional development.

From the dimension of ethos, Putri Karlina built her leadership image through consistent presence among the people, direct involvement in social issues, and the projection of integrity and authenticity on social media. This strengthened public trust in her as an authentic and credible female leader. From the dimension of pathos, she employed personal narratives, the Sundanese language, and friendly expressions such as “Besti Putri” to create emotional closeness with the community. This strategy fostered empathy, connectedness, and humanization, effectively dismantling stereotypes of female leaders as rigid or distant. Meanwhile, the dimension of logos was evident in her vision, mission, and campaign programs, which were delivered through rational arguments supported by data, infographics, and concrete solutions to public issues. This fact-based approach added legitimacy and reduced public skepticism.

Putri Karlina's rhetorical approach successfully achieved a balanced integration of ethos, pathos, and logos with contemporary digital rhetoric. She effectively established herself as a competent, empathetic, and solution-oriented female leader by strategically adapting to the demands of political communication, thus strengthening her image within a male-dominated political culture. Furthermore, as a young leader, she leveraged contemporary rhetoric by using social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok) not just for promotion, but also for sharing personal stories and engaging directly with the public. This utilization of digital tools allowed her to disseminate political messages in an interactive, personalized manner, successfully portraying her as both approachable and responsive to a wider, digitally-native audience.

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