



Broken Vows or Real Promises? A Preliminary Assessment of Political Slogans in the 2025 Midterm Election in the Philippines

Aira G. Cantorne

Central Luzon State University

airacantorne@clsu.edu.ph

Junior M. Pacol

Central Luzon State University

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Abstract

Language plays a pivotal role in shaping political discourse, particularly in the Philippines, where campaign slogans serve as potent tools of persuasion and ideological communication. In the context of the 2025 midterm elections, these slogans function not merely as rhetorical accessories but as discursive instruments that construct political identities and mediate relationships between candidates and the electorate. In contrast, slogans are a common feature of political campaigns, and limited scholarly attention has been paid to their metaphorical structures and ideological implications during the pre-campaign period, where early impressions and messaging often shape voter perception. This study addresses this gap by conducting a preliminary assessment of political slogans disseminated between October 2024 to January 2025. It aims to identify the conceptual metaphors, socio-economic promises, and ideological messages embedded within these slogans and analyze their functions in shaping political narratives. Anchored in Conceptual Metaphor Theory and situated cognition, the study employed a qualitative descriptive design and analyzed 135 slogan posters collected from various Philippine regions. Findings reveal six dominant thematic categories: integrity, health, development, public service, action, and grassroots connection. Each theme utilizes culturally resonant metaphors to convey leadership ideals. The study affirms that political slogans are symbolic acts of persuasion, reflecting and shaping the collective political imagination in Philippine electoral culture.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the vibrant and often changing landscape of Philippine elections, language functions not merely as a medium of communication but as a potent tool of persuasion and political maneuvering. From the earliest stages of campaigning, political slogans begin to saturate public spaces and digital platforms, shaping voter perception and expectation. These slogans, far from being neutral or decorative, are rich sites of ideological negotiation. Metaphors and discursive strategies are tactically employed to evoke emotion, construct social realities, and secure political allegiance—an enduring practice especially relevant in the lead-up to the 2025 national elections.

Political slogans encapsulate campaign promises, articulate visions, and tap into the socio-political sentiments of the electorate. They become rhetorical condensations of political

narratives, capable of reflecting and constituting public mood, anxieties, and aspirations. In this regard, slogans act as discursive artifacts that offer valuable insights into the collective consciousness and ideological undercurrents that characterize Philippine electoral politics. As scholars like Zinken (2003) and Mio (1997) have argued, metaphors in political language introduce powerful interpretive frames—intertextual and correlational—that link abstract political ideals with everyday experiences, enabling voters to internalize ideologies through emotionally resonant language.

This metaphorical potency is particularly evident in the Philippine context, where slogans often carry “hugot” (emotional roots) and “tunghin” (direction or intent), reflecting both personal and national struggles. Politicians strategically construct slogans that resonate with public concerns, presenting themselves as embodiments of popular will and agents of collective hope. The emotional, moral, and symbolic charge embedded in these brief yet powerful utterances underscores the need for critical and contextualized analysis of political rhetoric, especially in a multilingual and socially fragmented society.

Recent studies affirm the centrality of slogans in shaping political identities. Mangad, Gaston, and Ulla (2024) demonstrate how Philippine slogans strategically employ simple, localized language to convey authenticity and service-oriented values. This rhetorical simplicity functions not as a deficiency but as a deliberate method of aligning political identity with the linguistic and cultural sensibilities of regional voters. Similarly, comparative studies across Southeast Asia show parallel uses of slogans in projecting ideological and moral frameworks. Rodan and Hughes (2020) argue that moral ideology remains a dominant theme in Southeast Asian political discourse, with slogans framing candidates as ethical reformers in response to weakened democratic institutions.

This regional pattern is further reinforced by Kenny (2018), who notes that populist slogans often emerge in systems with fragile party structures, such as in the Philippines. The strategic use of terms like “change” and “discipline” during Rodrigo Duterte’s campaign illustrates how emotionally charged language bypasses formal party rhetoric and appeals directly to public sentiment. Ufen (2007) adds that in countries like the Philippines, where party systems are weakly institutionalized, slogans fill the representational void by offering emotionally and morally charged messages that function as surrogates for party identity. These findings are echoed in Wajdi and Asrumi’s (2024) analysis of the slogan “LUBER” in Indonesia’s general elections, which demonstrates how democratic ideals are embedded in rhetorical structures through critical discourse analysis.

From a theoretical perspective, scholars such as Lakoff (2008), Fowler (1991), and Fairclough (1995) highlight how slogans operate as metaphorical and lexical mechanisms that frame political ideologies, stimulate emotional identification, and construct public meaning. Recent cognitive and discursive studies further elaborate on this function. Baig et al. (2023) and Kaleem, Siraj, and Asif (2022) show how slogans encode ideological narratives and shape voter cognition, using discourse models to explain how political meaning is embedded in brief yet loaded language structures. According to Tincheva (2020) reinforces this by identifying cognitive and narrative strategies that activate shared schemas and mobilize public support. In the Algerian context, Loukrif (2021) illustrates how slogans within protest movements act as

semiotic disruptions that challenge existing power structures through peaceful yet assertive discursive acts.

These findings resonate strongly in the Philippine case. In the study of Pacol (2023) analysis of slogans from the 2022 national elections reveals that key themes—such as pandemic recovery, anti-corruption, and education reform—mirror deep-seated socio-political anxieties and historical grievances. Here, slogans become not just tools for campaigning but vehicles for negotiating trust, legitimacy, and political vision. They operate as discursive microcosms of broader struggles between populist appeal and policy-driven messaging, elite-driven narratives and grassroots mobilization.

Given this background, the present study seeks to examine the ideological content and socio-economic promises embedded in political slogans for the 2025 Philippine elections. Specifically, it investigates how metaphorical, rhetorical, and linguistic elements are used to project ideologies, persuade the electorate, and shape voter consciousness. By analyzing slogans as condensed expressions of political identity and ideological framing, this study contributes to the broader discourse on political linguistics, critical discourse analysis, and the role of language in democratic participation. In doing so, it foregrounds the significance of slogans as central—not peripheral—artifacts in the complex terrain of electoral politics and democratic life.

1.1.Statement of the Problem

Political campaign slogans are more than just memorable catchphrases—they are strategic tools used to communicate ideologies, shape public opinion, and promise change. In the early stages of political campaigning, language becomes a powerful instrument in framing a candidate's image and agenda. This study explores the following objectives:

1. What ideological messages are embedded in politicians' campaign slogans?
2. What socio-economic promises are constructed through these political slogans?
3. How is the power of language used in the early stages of political campaigning?

2. THEORETICAL DISCUSSION: CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980, 1999), explains how people understand abstract concepts through more concrete experiences via cross-domain mappings—that is, mapping knowledge from one domain (source) onto another (target). Language, in this view, is not simply a medium for conveying information but a cognitive tool that shapes how we interpret the world.

In the context of this study, analyzing the slogans and discourses of politicians involves more than literal interpretation. It entails examining the linguistic metaphors that serve as vessels of ideological content. As emphasized by Mio (1997) and Zinken (2003), metaphors

are tools of persuasion and manipulation in political language, used to construct socio-economic promises and influence how voters perceive themselves and their nation.

However, Peer Bundgaard's (2019) critical assessment of CMT brings nuance to this analysis. He argues that while psychological evidence supports cross-domain mapping in the use of novel metaphors, conventional metaphors—such as "The Nation as Mother," "Elections as War," or "Politics as Game"—often no longer trigger active metaphorical reasoning in the minds of audiences. These have become standardized and habitual, functioning more as cultural discourse than dynamic cognitive structures. Bundgaard suggests that the structure of concepts may not solely rest on metaphorical mappings but should also be understood through the lens of situated cognition—that is, meaning arises from real-life contexts and use.

In the 2025 preliminary political campaigns, metaphors remain central to shaping voter perceptions. Slogans like "The Nation Will Rise" or "Voice of the People" continue to draw from lived experiences of poverty, hope, and transformation. These slogans act not just as rhetorical flourishes but as discursive bridges between candidates and the public, aiming to evoke emotional and ideological alignment.

Therefore, while CMT offers a powerful lens to understand the metaphorical power of language in politics, it is also important to recognize its limitations in accounting for conventional, context-bound language. Integrating situated cognition deepens our understanding of how metaphor and discourse influence voter attitudes and behaviors, especially in a politically charged and culturally complex society like the Philippines.

2.1.Scope and Delimitation

This study focuses on the preliminary assessment of political slogans used by prospective candidates for the 2025 Philippine midterm elections, with a focus on slogan posters publicly displayed during the pre-campaign period from October 2024 to January 2025. The starting point of this study coincides with the filing of Certificates of Candidacy (COC), which took place from October 1 to 8, 2024, as set by the Commission on Elections (COMELEC). Although the official campaign period had not yet begun, the act of filing the COC often triggers an informal but active promotional phase in which candidates begin circulating posters bearing slogans to enhance name recall and establish early messaging. While these materials are not yet regulated under COMELEC's formal campaign guidelines, they function as rhetorical tools that lay the groundwork for the official campaign narrative.

According to COMELEC Resolution No. 11086, the official campaign period for national candidates, such as senators and party-list groups, begins on February 11, 2025, and ends on May 10, 2025, while the campaign period for local candidates, such as district representatives, governors, mayors, and members of the Bangsamoro Parliament runs from March 28 to May 10, 2025. In line with the Supreme Court ruling in *Penera v. COMELEC* (G.R. No. 181613), individuals who file their COCs are not considered official "candidates" until the start of these campaign periods and thus are not legally liable for campaign offenses during the pre-campaign phase. Nevertheless, the widespread presence of slogan posters during this period indicates intentional political communication and provides a valuable site for rhetorical and conceptual analysis.

This study is therefore limited to the examination of slogan posters disseminated from October 1, 2024, to January 31, 2025, prior to the start of official campaigning because this specific time frame, slogans released during this period often bear more layered messages and rhetorically rich lines, as candidates begin to establish their identity and appeal without the constraints of formal campaign regulations. The study excludes campaign slogans used during the formal campaign periods and those conveyed through other media, such as television or radio. It also does not measure the effectiveness of slogans in influencing voter behavior or election outcomes. Instead, it focuses on the linguistic and metaphorical construction of political slogans, drawing on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) to explore how early political language shapes voter perception and frames abstract political ideals through concrete imagery and culturally resonant metaphors.

Methodology

2.2. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive design, specifically discourse analysis, to examine the metaphorical and ideological content embedded in the political slogans of prospective candidates for the 2025 Philippine midterm elections. Anchored in Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) by Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999), this design enables an in-depth exploration of how abstract political ideas—such as change, leadership, and nationhood—are communicated through concrete metaphorical expressions in political slogans. The study is further informed by situated cognition theory (Barsalou & Wiemer-Hastings, 2005; Bundgaard, 2019), which emphasizes the importance of context and use in meaning-making.

2.3. Data Collection

The primary data source for this study consists of slogan posters publicly disseminated between October 1, 2024, and January 31, 2025—the period immediately following the filing of Certificates of Candidacy (COC) and preceding the official campaign period defined by COMELEC Resolution No. 11086. Data were gathered through purposive sampling and photographic documentation of physical and online campaign materials (e.g., tarpaulins, banners, and digital posters on public pages). Posters were selected based on the following criteria: (1) The slogan must be prominently displayed on the material; (b) The poster must be attributed to an individual who filed a COC for the 2025 elections; and (3) The material must have been publicly accessible within the defined period.

A total of 135 slogan posters were collected from selected municipalities and online platforms, ensuring representation from national and local aspirants across various regions of the Philippines.

2.4. Data Analysis

The analysis proceeded in two main stages:

1. Identification and Classification of Metaphors

Each slogan was subjected to metaphor identification procedures (MIP,

following the Pragglejaz Group, 2007), which involve determining metaphorically used words and the domains they draw upon. These metaphors were then categorized into broader conceptual metaphors (e.g., "Politics is War," "The Nation is a Body," "Leadership is a journey"), consistent with the principles of CMT.

2. Contextual Interpretation through Situated Cognition

Following Bundgaard's (2019) critique of conventional metaphor processing, slogans were analyzed not only in terms of their metaphorical structure but also their situational and cultural embeddedness. This involved interpreting slogans considering local socio-political conditions, historical references, and emotional resonance to uncover how they function as tools of early political messaging. Attention was given to how metaphors draw on shared cultural experiences and symbolic values that appeal to voter sentiments during the pre-campaign phase.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The collected slogans were conceptually analyzed and naturally fall under seven major themes. Each theme represents a dominant commitment and message that the political slogan tries to convey and serves as a framework to understand not just the words but the socio-economic promises and ideological messages embedded in each campaign. These themes are the following:

Table 1. Katapatan (Integrity)

Political Slogan	Metaphor	Socio-economic Promises	Ideological Functions
-Subok na sa Maayos, Malinis at Tapat na Panunungkulan. Tunay na Lider sa Barangay at sa Bayan ng Pura. -Gobyernong Mapagkakatiwalaan -Serbisyo at Katapatan -Sa Pamumuno na may Integridad, Bayan ay Uunlad!	Integrity is Cleanliness	Development through clean governance	Moral superiority and trust
-Labanan natin ang korupsiyon -Itakwil ang makaluma't bulok na pulitika at itaguyod ang pulitika ng pakikibaka at pag-asa	Corruption is Disease	Reform and justice	Anti-system, healing politics
-Para sa Mamamayanang Marilenyo, Mula sa Buwis ng mga Marilenyo -Serbisyonong totoo, sa bago tayo! -Gobyernong Disiplinado Yayaman ang Manilenyo	Integrity is Accountability	Transparent and fair use of resources	Contractual governance

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- <i>MAkatao, Wasto, Inspirasyon, at Epektibo</i>	Integrity is Dignity	Leadership with justice and principle	Moral renewal and role-modeling
- <i>#GOByernongmayDANgal</i>			
- <i>Totoong tao, may prinsipyo</i>			
- <i>For righteous leadership</i>			

The core of these slogans is a deliberate effort by political candidates to position themselves as honest and transparent leaders. Integrity is framed not merely as an individual trait but as a defining attribute of political legitimacy. In many slogans, *Katapatan* (Integrity) is metaphorically expressed as cleanliness (“*maayos, malinis at tapat*”), resistance to decay (“*itakwil ang bulok na pulitika*”), and moral uprightness (“*totoong tao, may prinsipyo*”), all of which reinforce the image of a leader with principled character and incorruptible values.

The socio-economic promises tied to this conceptual metaphor are significant. Politicians present ethical governance as a vehicle for achieving fair treatment, justice, efficient public service delivery, and inclusive development. In this framing, moral leadership becomes a solution to systemic problems that offers anti-corruption, transparent budgeting, and responsible allocation of resources. For instance, slogans like “*Para sa mamamayang Marileno, mula sa buwis ng mga Marileno*” explicitly link honesty to fiscal transparency and equitable service.

On the ideological level, the metaphor of *Katapatan* performs a powerful function as this constructs a moral authority that distinguishes the candidate from traditional, often corrupt political actors. This moral positioning not only elevates the candidate’s personal image but also implicitly challenges entrenched systems of patronage and political decay. Furthermore, by invoking values such as dignity (*#GOByernongmayDANgal*) and righteous leadership (*For righteous leadership*), the slogans tap into a collective yearning for ethical reform, justice, and national moral renewal.

Katapatan in political slogans allows candidates to turn personal integrity into a political brand as a symbolic shorthand for trustworthy, transformative, and people-centered leadership. These metaphors function not only as campaign rhetoric but also as ideological tools that shape public perception, reaffirm democratic ideals, and attempt to restore citizen trust in governance.

Table 2. *Kalusugan* (Health)

Political Slogan	Metaphor	Socio-economic Promises	Ideological Functions
- <i>Kalusugan Pangalagaan</i> - <i>Kabaleyan, kalusugan ay pahalagahan</i>	Health is Care	Consistent, empathetic service delivery, people-first healthcare	The politician is portrayed as a caregiver who prioritizes the welfare of constituents

- *Alagang Ramdam sa Lahat ng Panahon*

- *Serbisyong Doctorney, For righteous leadership*

- <i>Free ECG, Ultrasound, Dental</i>	Health is Access	Free essential health services, financial and medical assistance to the poor	Emphasizes equity and portrays the leaders ensure universal access to health services
- <i>Libreng Gamot at Pagpapagamot, Gawin na Natin</i>			
- <i>Special Ayuda, Libreng Gamot at Financial Assistance para sa Sta. Ana</i>			
- <i>Trabaho, Kalusugan, Agrikultura, Edukasyon</i>	Health is National Investment and a Path to Development	Holistic programs combining health, education, work, and livelihood and community empowerment	Health is vital infrastructure for development and investing in it benefits the nation's economy and human capital.
- <i>Ang programang aasenso taumbayan</i>			
- <i>Para sa kapakanan ng bayan: kalusugan, karunungan, kabuhayan</i>			
- <i>Doc ng Bayan</i>	The Politician is a Healer	Healing from systemic neglect, addressing community wounds (poverty, inequality, corruption) through care-based leadership	The politician assumes the symbolic role of a doctor or healer not only of physical ailments but also of social and economic problems
- <i>Serbisyong Doctorney, For righteous leadership</i>			
- <i>Alagang Ramdam sa Lahat ng Panahon</i>			

These political slogans are a strategic metaphorical construction of **Kalusugan (Health)** as both a right and a responsibility and the politician as a healer or provider of care. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, “Kalusugan” has become more than a campaign promise because it is now a central symbol of government competence and compassion. The slogans frame health services not only as medical provisions but as tangible expressions of empathy and solidarity between leaders and constituents. For example, slogans like “*Doc ng Bayan*,” “*Serbisyong Doctorney*,” and “*Alagang Ramdam sa Lahat ng Panahon*” metaphorically position the politician as a doctor, a caretaker trusted to heal a wounded nation.

These metaphors implicitly highlight repeatedly stress-free, localized, and inclusive services such as “*Free ECG, Ultrasound, Dental*,” “*Libreng Gamot at Pagpapagamot*,” and “*Special Ayuda at Financial Assistance para sa Sta. Ana*”. In these expressions, health is framed as a gift from the state, not a privilege, thereby reinforcing an image of the government as both a compassionate provider and a guarantor of welfare. These metaphors extend the role of the politician from legislator to caregiver, promising an empathetic state capable of addressing urgent physical and economic suffering.

From a socio-economic standpoint, the promise of accessible and affordable healthcare infrastructure is a particularly resonant issue in the post-pandemic context, where health vulnerabilities become more visible. The inclusion of slogans like “*Trabaho, Kalusugan, Agrikultura, Edukasyon*” also reflects an intersectional understanding of health as dependent

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on employment, food security, and education, thus presenting healthcare as integral to holistic national development.

Ideologically, the metaphor of health as a right function redefines the state-citizen relationship. Rather than portraying governance as bureaucratic or punitive, these slogans promote a vision of a nurturing and attentive government. This challenges the often-impersonal image of state healthcare and repositions political actors as proximate, caring figures, reinforcing both legitimacy and accountability. For example, “*Kalusugan Pangalagaan*” and “*Kabaleyan, Kalusugan ay Pahalagahan*” draw on community-based metaphors, making health care a shared cultural value and public duty.

Kalusugan in political slogans serves as a metaphorical framework for leadership, resilience, and nation-building. It transforms public health from a sectoral issue into a moral and emotional anchor for post-pandemic governance. By framing politicians as healers and public health as a shared good, these slogans seek to rebuild public trust, realign voter priorities, and affirm that health is not only survival but a political promise of care, inclusion, and equity.

Table 3. Pagpapaunlad ng Bayan (National or Local Development)

Political Slogan	Metaphor	Socio-economic Promises	Ideological Functions
- <i>Sama-sama sa pag-abante ng Pilipinas</i> - <i>Dadamayan ka tungo sa kaunlaran</i> - <i>Pwersa ng Pag-asa</i>	Development is Collective Progress	Inclusive development, participatory governance, equal opportunity for all	Encourages collective responsibility while portraying the candidate as part of a transformative movement rooted in community empowerment
- <i>Ipagpapatuloy ang pag-unlad ng Makabagong San Jose</i> - <i>Asenso</i> <i>Bulakenyo- Asenzo Tayo</i>	Leadership as Engine of Modernization	Urban renewal, improved public services, continuation of projects	Establishes political continuity and casts the candidate as a catalyst for innovation and infrastructure expansion
- <i>Agrikultura ngayon gawing akma at tama</i> - <i>Sa suporta sa agrikultura, panalo ang masa</i> - <i>Murang Pagkain, Gawin natin</i>	Agriculture as Economic Foundation	Food security, rural investment, agricultural modernization	Reinforces a pro-poor, pro-rural ideology that challenges urban-centric development narratives
- <i>Benepisyong Better sa Makati, Gagawing Better sa buong bayan</i> - <i>Bangon, Balon San Carlos</i> - <i>Abby Better!</i>	Localized Success as a Scalable Model	Scalable public service models, replicable urban strategies	Positions the candidate as both proven and pragmatic, with credibility grounded in tested governance
- <i>Empowerment, Livelihood, at Education</i>	Justice and Peace as Prerequisites for Development	Sustainable development, job creation, equal access to learning	Shifts focus from infrastructure to human-centered growth; promotes

- <i>Jen para sa Bayan: Hustisya, Edukasyon, at Napapanahong Pagbabago</i>		a narrative of long-term planning	
- <i>Oras na para makiisa sa Pwersa ng Pag-asa!</i>	Hope and Renewal as Visionary Politics	Renewal of trust, values-based governance, moral recovery	Constructs the candidate as an ethical alternative, representing optimism and national healing
- <i>Takbong POGI (Patience, Observance, Gentleness, Integrity) lang</i>			

Pagpapaunlad ng Bayan (National or Local Development) metaphorically frames progress as movement forward, growth, or construction, wherein candidates position themselves as agents of mobility and builders of modernity. Slogans such as “*Asenzo Tayo*,” “*Sama-sama sa pag-abante ng Pilipinas*,” and “*Ipagpapatuloy ang pag-unlad ng Makabagong San Jose*” evoke metaphors of development as a journey or upward path, emphasizing sustained growth and forward motion. Meanwhile, calls like “*Agrikultura ngayon gawing akma at tama*” and “*Murang pagkain, gawin natin*” ground development in the material realm, especially agricultural reform and food security, framing leadership as practical, responsive, and anchored in basic socio-economic needs.

These metaphors encode socio-economic promises such as infrastructure improvement, rural modernization, economic equity, and sustainable livelihood. Politicians are represented as enablers of opportunity (*Patas na Oportunidad*) and champions of regional replication of success (*Benepisyong Better sa Makati, Gagawing Better sa buong bayan*). The slogans suggest that development is not merely an abstract aspiration but something achievable through collective action and visionary leadership.

On the ideological level, the metaphor of progress functions to establish legitimacy by portraying the candidate as a competent, future-oriented leader. It challenges narratives of stagnation and decline and replaces them with hope and strategic continuity. As part of campaign discourse, these slogans frame politics not as conflict but as collaborative nation-building, aligning individual leadership with systemic transformation.

Pagpapaunlad ng Bayan in political discourse is metaphorically rendered as a path forward, a rebuilding process, and a promise of upliftment. It integrates economic revitalization, infrastructure enhancement, and community empowerment into a singular vision of a future-ready nation. These slogans serve as ideological vehicles that communicate not only the functional goals of governance but also deeper symbolic aspirations: to modernize without exclusion, to grow while remembering the grassroots, and to lead not from above but *with* the people toward shared national advancement.

Table 4. Pamublikong Serbisyo (Public Service)

Political Slogan	Metaphor	Socio-economic Promises	Ideological Functions
- <i>Serbisyong may puso</i> - <i>Malasakit sa Puso, Serbisyo sa Bayan!</i>	Public Service is Caregiving	-Social welfare prioritization and	Service is framed as an act of emotional compassion, like

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- <i>Galing sa Puso</i> - <i>Naglilingkod ng may malasakit sa bayan mula noon hanggang ngayon</i>		personalized community care	caregiving from the heart. The politician is a nurturer.
- <i>Bisyo ang magserbisyo</i> - <i>Mr. Malasakit, Bisyo ang Magsesebisyo</i> - <i>Responsableng Maglilingkod Manggagawang Panlipunan para sa Opayuc!</i>	Public Service is a Vocation or Calling	Unwavering commitment and Long-term presence	Service is represented as a lifestyle or personal devotion rather than a job, which suggests dedication.
- <i>Tuloy-tuloy na serbisyo at progreso Iboto! Para sa Tuloy Tuloy na Serbisyo</i> - <i>Subok ang Serbisyo!</i> - <i>Lagi Mo Kong Maasahan</i>	Politician as Persistent Servant	Institutional reliability and Continuity of programs	Service is seen as sustained and continuous, not conditional or seasonal.
- <i>Serbisyong RAMdam nang luBOS</i> - <i>Ramdam ang Serbisyo</i> - <i>Serbisyong totoo, Hindi lang Pangako</i> - <i>Ang #KONSEmisyon na umaaksyon!</i>	Public Service is Tangible and Felt	Concrete projects and immediate benefits	Strengthens perception of delivery over promises and counters image of performative governance

Pampublikong Serbisyo (Public Service) is a compelling metaphorical framing of governance as caregiving, companionship, and everyday reliability. Politicians are portrayed not merely as public officials but as “*tagapaglingkod*” or servants who lead with compassion, presence, and a deep moral obligation to serve. Phrases like “*Serbisyong may puso*,” “*Paglilingkod galing sa puso*,” and “*Mr. Malasakit, bisyo ang magserbisyo*” reinforce this metaphor by aligning governance with empathy and emotional connection, portraying the act of serving the public as a moral vocation rather than a duty tied to political gain.

The socio-economic promises embedded in these slogans revolve around efficiency, consistency, and inclusivity in service delivery. Slogans such as “*Tuloy-tuloy na serbisyo at progreso para sa bayan*,” “*Dekalidad na serbisyo hatid namin sa inyo*,” and “*Itutuloy ang serbisyong tama*” reflect a commitment to institutional continuity, suggesting that public service should be uninterrupted, dependable, and professionalized. Simultaneously, slogans like “*Libreng Sakay*,” “*Bibigyan ka ng Ayuda at Trabaho*,” and “*Serbisyong totoo, hindi lang pangako*” highlight tangible, grassroots-level interventions that aim to make services accessible to all, especially the marginalized. These promises frame service delivery not just as policy but as daily impact.

On an ideological level, these slogans function as tools to redefine political leadership as relational and accountable, moving away from bureaucratic detachment toward a citizen-centered, emotionally resonant governance model. By rooting leadership in values like *malasakit* (compassion), *puso* (heart), and *kalinga* (care), politicians aim to differentiate themselves from traditional, impersonal political systems, tapping into voters' desires for sincerity and accessibility in public officials. Slogans like “*Responsableng Maglilingkod*,” “*Subok ang Serbisyo*,” and “*Atty. sa Konseho, Tapat na Serbisyo*” reinforce the ideal of the public servant as a tested, ethical, and hands-on leader.

Pampublikong Serbisyo in political discourse is conceptualized as a compassionate act of daily devotion, grounded in emotional sincerity, efficiency, and availability. Politicians are

imagined as care providers, neighbors, and partners, promising a style of leadership that is not only efficient and results-oriented, but also anchored in moral integrity and empathetic public engagement. These metaphors shape public expectations around what it means to serve and to be served in a functioning and humane democratic society.

Table 5. *Pagkilos* (Action/Responsiveness)

Political Slogan	Metaphor	Socio-economic Promises	Ideological Functions
- <i>Action agad!</i> - <i>Say Aksyon Man Ed Serbisyo</i> - <i>Gawa hindi salita</i> - <i>Aksyon sa Tunay na Buhay</i>	Leadership is an Immediate Movement	Fast delivery of services, less bureaucracy	Positions leader as active and hands-on, responsive to real-world needs
- <i>Bibigyan ka ng ayuda; Bibigyan ka ng trabaho</i> - <i>Tiyak na trabaho at sapat na kita</i> - <i>AyMaaasahan</i>	Leadership is a Provider or Doer	Economic support through jobs, subsidies, and livelihood programs	Aligns leaders with laboring masses invokes solidarity with the poor
- <i>Ang Karapatan ng Kabataan makapag-aral, ipaglalaban ni tol</i> - <i>Totoong Aksyon, Edukasyon ang Prayoridad...</i>	Leadership is Resistance/Advocacy	Expanded access to education and human rights protections	Frames the politician as a rights advocate; appeals to youth and marginalized communities
- <i>Madaling Hanapin, madaling lapitan</i> - <i>Make Manila great again</i>	Leadership is Presence and Proximity	Local governance that is close, reachable, and prideful	Undermines detached leadership; promotes responsive, grounded representation

Pagkilos (Action/Responsiveness) is the metaphorical portrayal of the candidate as a mover, problem-solver, and agent of urgency. These slogans position leadership as an active, continuous process of doing rather than merely promising. Action becomes the currency of credibility. Phrases like “*Gawa hindi salita*” (Deeds, not words), “*Itutuloy ang serbisyong tama*”, and “*Tuloy-tuloy na serbisyo, pag-asa, at progreso*” construct the politician as someone already in motion and an executor of change, rather than a planner in waiting.

The socio-economic promises embedded in these slogans revolve around tangible progress, rapid delivery of services, and visible development. Slogans like “*Benepisyong better sa Makati, gagawing better sa buong bayan*” and “*Ang programang aasen sa taumbayan*” promise not only improved living standards but also accelerated access to benefits from infrastructure and livelihood to food affordability and agricultural reform. “*Murang pagkain, gawin natin*” exemplifies how the call to action directly links to resolving daily needs, reflecting a hands-on, result-driven governance model.

Metaphorically, *Pagkilos* is framed as movement toward progress, where the politician becomes a driver, builder, or force of change. Slogans such as “*Pwersa ng Pag-asa*”, “*Sama-sama sa pag-abante ng Pilipinas*”, and “*Bangon, Balon San Carlos*” invoke collective momentum and urgent transformation. These metaphors implicitly promise to “move the nation forward,” with the candidate as the catalyst who awakens dormant systems, revitalizes governance, and mobilizes people.

On the ideological level, slogans emphasizing action contrast the candidate against political inaction, bureaucracy, and stagnation. *Pagkilos* becomes an ideological stance which

claims that leadership is not about prestige but about productivity. Slogans like “*Kalaban ng kriminal, gawa hindi salita*” and “*Oras na para makiisa sa Pwersa ng Pag-asa*” reflect a rejection of passivity and corruption, replacing it with images of urgency, responsibility, and proactive leadership.

Moreover, the frequent use of imperatives such as “*Gawin natin,*” “*Bangon,*” “*Ipagpapatuloy*” in these slogans reinforces a sense of immediacy and agency. These linguistic choices signal to voters that the candidate does not merely aspire to change but is already mobilizing that change and inviting the public to act alongside them. This creates a relational metaphor of the politician not as a distant authority but as a partner in progress, committed to collective uplift.

Pagkilos, as framed in political slogans, transforms leadership into a metaphor of relentless motion, execution, and concrete progress by portraying themselves as decisive doers. Candidates position action as both proof of leadership and promise of transformation. These metaphors resonate with citizens' desire for responsive, energetic, and effective governance, especially in a socio-political landscape where time lost is opportunity lost.

Table 6. Koneksyon sa Mamamayan (Connection with the People)

Political Slogan	Metaphor	Socio-economic Promises	Ideological Functions
- <i>Kuya ng Masa</i> - <i>Kuya ng Kabataan</i> - <i>Nanay ang Bayani</i> - <i>Tol ng Bawat Pilipino</i>	Leader is a Family Member	Programs for youth, family, and vulnerable sectors	Humanizes leadership; creates trust through familial familiarity
- <i>Boses ng Vendors</i> - <i>Boses ng Senior Citizens</i> - <i>Partylist ng Novo Ecijano</i>	Leader as Voice of the People	Policy advocacy for marginalized groups	Legitimizes power through representation and empathy
- <i>Bulakenyang Maaasahan</i> - <i>Tangkilikin ang Sariling Atin</i> - <i>The North Never Forgets</i> - <i>Batang Regasco</i>	Shared Regional Identity	Prioritized local service delivery and regional pride	Frames leadership as rooted in shared geography and culture
- <i>Para sa Diyos at sa Pilipinas kong mahal</i> - <i>May Nag-iintay sa 'yo</i> - <i>Paglilingkod para sa Diyos</i>	Emotional/Moral Connection	Moral-based leadership, personal responsibility, and protective governance	Asserts emotional legitimacy; aligns politics with conscience and faith and marginalized communities

Koneksyon sa Mamamayan (Connection with the People) constructs the politician as a family member, ally, or neighbor as someone familiar, accessible, and deeply embedded in the daily lives of the people. These metaphors aim to collapse the distance between leaders and citizens, portraying governance not as a top-down institution but as a shared space of empathy, listening, and companionship.

Slogans such as “*Kuya ng Bayan,*” “*Ang Kuya ng Nueva Ecija,*” “*Nanay ang bayani ng tahanan,*” and “*Tol ng bawat Pilipino*” draw from kinship metaphors. By framing themselves as “*kuya,*” “*nanay,*” or “*tol,*” candidates tap into cultural ideals of trust, protection, and relational care, positioning themselves as leaders who understand and represent the needs of ordinary people.

On the ideological level, slogans emphasizing connection serve a populist function, positioning the candidate as “from the people” and “for the people.” They invoke a contrast between *the ordinary citizen and the political elite*, where the politician who listens (“*Una palagi ang kapakanan ng kababayan*”) emerges as a symbol of responsive democracy. This framing resonates strongly in a context where citizens often feel excluded from decision-making processes.

Political slogans under *Koneksyon sa Mamamayan* construct leadership through metaphors of relational proximity, familial care, and grassroots solidarity. By portraying themselves as leaders who listen closely, act locally, and identify with the struggles of the people, candidates foster trust and emotional connection. These metaphors not only humanize politics but also redefine governance as a collaborative relationship rooted in everyday realities.



A notable feature in the construction of political slogans during the campaign period was the linguistic creativity employed by candidates, characterized by the use of metaphor, rhyme, repetition, and emotional resonance to enhance memorability and persuasive appeal. The lexical choices made in these slogans were far from arbitrary; rather, they were strategically selected to evoke culturally embedded values and ideologies. Several recurring words illustrate this point:

- (a) **bayan** /bà.yan/ (nation or community) evokes a sense of *national identity and collective belonging*. In Philippine political discourse, “bayan” functions as a metonym for the people and the homeland, invoking historical narratives of nationalism, sacrifice, and communal solidarity. It positions the candidate as a representative or protector of the Filipino people and reinforces notions of *patriotic duty*.
- (b) **bago** /bá.goh/ (new) signals rupture and renewal, suggesting the introduction of fresh leadership and a departure from corrupt or ineffective governance. The term aligns with discourses of reform and transformation, which are especially resonant in a political culture marked by disillusionment with traditional elites. Its semantic emphasis on change reflects the public’s desire for new beginnings and political cleansing.
- (c) **serbisyo** /ser.bís.yoh/ (service) frames governance as a moral and civic obligation rather than a position of privilege. The emphasis on service underscores ideals of humility, accountability, and responsiveness. It reflects a shift from authoritarian leadership styles to more participatory and people-centered governance models.
- (d) **better** /bét.er/ often used in bilingual or code-switched slogans, signifies aspiration and improvement. Its inclusion in English—alongside Filipino terms—may also be interpreted as a rhetorical strategy to appeal to middle-class, urban, or younger demographics who are more familiar with English discourse. The word encapsulates visions of progress and modernization, serving as an anchor for future-oriented narratives.
- (e) **para** /pá.rah/ (for), as a preposition, introduces phrases such as “para sa bayan” or “para sa masa,” emphasizing purpose and audience. It marks political action as directed toward the welfare of the people and highlights inclusivity and alignment with public interest.

- (f) **puso** /pu.sòʔ/ (heart) brings an emotive dimension to political messaging. Its use conveys sincerity, compassion, and authentic concern for the citizenry. In a society where emotional intelligence and relational leadership are valued, “puso” becomes a powerful symbol of ethical governance and moral character.

The lexical items above do not merely decorate slogans but construct ideological narratives and frame the candidate’s political identity. They also perform effective labor, engaging not just the rational faculties of voters, but their emotions, cultural memory, and sense of belonging. The recurrence of such terms reveals a shared discursive strategy among candidates: to bridge the emotional gap between the public and political institutions, and to mobilize support by tapping into the Filipino electorate’s deep-seated aspirations for unity, reform, and inclusive national progress.

4. CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the metaphorical and ideological structures embedded in political slogans during the pre-campaign period for the 2025 Philippine midterm elections. Drawing from Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and the theory of situated cognition, the research highlighted how language—particularly through metaphor—functions as a potent tool in shaping political narratives, constructing public perception, and influencing voter consciousness. Political slogans, as this study has shown, are not just catchy phrases or campaign accessories; they are symbolic instruments of persuasion that convey carefully constructed visions of leadership and governance.

The results of the analysis revealed that candidates utilize slogans to articulate core promises and projected values that resonate with the everyday concerns of the Filipino people. Among the most commonly expressed commitments were: (1) *Katapatan* (Integrity), positioning themselves as honest, transparent leaders, (2) *Kalusugan* (Health), highlighting access to better healthcare, especially in a post-pandemic context, (3) *Pagpapaunlad ng Bayan* (National or Local Development), promising economic growth, infrastructure, and modernization, (4) *Pampublikong Serbisyo* (Public Service), emphasizing efficient, accessible, and heart-driven governance, (5) *Pagkilos* (Action/Responsiveness), portraying themselves as leaders who take swift and decisive action, and (6) *Koneksyon sa Mamamayan* (Connection with the People), asserting that they will listen to and work closely with the grassroots.

A notable observation was the creativity in slogan construction, with many candidates employing metaphor, rhyme, repetition, and emotional appeal to reinforce their message. Commonly used words included “bayan” (referring to the nation or a specific locality), “bago” (suggesting new leadership or change), “serbisyo” (emphasizing commitment to serve), “better” (implying transformation and improvement), “para” (denoting service *for* the people), and “puso” (signaling sincerity and heart in governance). These lexical choices reflect deep cultural values and reveal the underlying narratives candidates aim to connect with—hope, unity, reform, and inclusive progress.

Consistent with Bundgaard's critique of CMT, while many of these slogans utilize conventional metaphors that may not trigger active cross-domain mapping, they function powerfully at the level of situated meaning. That is, they gain their strength not from novelty but from their relevance to real-life experiences and collective memory. These slogans mirror societal aspirations, frustrations, and historical struggles, embedding each phrase with both emotional weight and political significance.

In a country where politics is deeply personal and emotionally charged, language—especially the language of slogans—carries sharp persuasive power. It can mobilize, divide, inspire, or manipulate. It reflects how politicians want to be seen, what issues they prioritize, and how they intend to relate with the electorate. In essence, slogans serve as miniature platforms, offering a glimpse into the character, vision, and ideological stance of a candidate.

Therefore, political slogans in the pre-campaign period play a crucial role in shaping electoral discourse. They are more than linguistic expressions; they are strategic acts of political imagination that frame leadership in ways that voters can emotionally and culturally relate to. Understanding these slogans—through the lens of metaphor and context—enables us to better grasp the underlying dynamics of political engagement in the Philippines and how language continues to shape democratic participation.

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