



**PROPAGANDA AS A MEANS OF PERSUASION BY  
STUDENT LEADERS: A STUDY OF GRADUATE STUDENTS'  
ELECTIONS IN TWO UNIVERSITIES IN GHANA**

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**Abstract:**

This study investigated the use and effect of propaganda as a political communication tool in students' politics in two institutions in Ghana. The focus of the study was on elections of student leaders at the graduate level at the University of Cape Coast (UCC) and University of Education, Winneba (UEW). With Political propaganda theory and Aristotle's persuasion appeals as the theoretical framework, the manifestoes of candidates who contested the positions of President and Secretary were analysed to unearth the use of propaganda techniques in them. Questionnaires were used to collect data from student voters to determine the influence of propaganda techniques on their voting patterns. The findings revealed that candidates employed the propaganda techniques of name-calling, glittering generalities, transfer, bandwagon and card-stacking in their manifestoes. The desire to win power made student politicians employ these propaganda techniques as political communication tools in the graduate students' elections in both institutions. Data collected from the student voters in the two institutions also indicated that the propaganda techniques of card-stacking and plain folks influenced some of the student voters but the majority of the student voters were not. The study concluded that although propaganda is used in students' politics, it may not be very effective as it is in national politics. The study recommended that further studies are needed to detect the presence and effect of propaganda in elections in students' associations at the national level.

**Keywords:** elections, manifestoes, persuasion, propaganda, students' politics

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## 1. Introduction

Communication is an asset that enables organizations and individuals to share knowledge and coordinate their tasks by building and maintaining a viable relationship with one another and society at large (Abugre, 2017). For this reason, individuals and institutions ensure that they are able to win the admiration of their target audience as much as possible through the way they communicate. Sometimes, this is achieved through persuasion and manipulation which are primarily components of propaganda (Brunello, 2014; Heller, 2021).

Propaganda is defined as a social control by using words or tools of persuasion and manipulation from *“hidden or undefined sources to convince people to act or think in accordance and to uphold or support”* the choices and reasoning of another individual (Fitzmaurice, 2018 p. 64). In a similar manner, Jowett and O'Donnell (2019) explain propaganda as the deliberate and *“systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behaviour to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist”* (p. 7). Baran and Davis (2012) define propaganda as a *“no-holds-barred use of communication to propagate specific beliefs and expectations”* (p. 74). The Institute for Propaganda Analysis (IPA), which was set up in 1937 defines propaganda as an expression of opinion or action by an individual or a group deliberately designed to influence the opinions or actions of an identified individual or group with reference to predetermined effects (Baran & Davis, 2012). The institute was successful in explaining how the concept and practice of propaganda works and identified seven propaganda techniques that are found in text or speech.

Propaganda has been used in many disciplines in the quest to persuade the intended audience. Propaganda techniques have been explored by researchers as studies have been done extensively in determining how the techniques of propaganda are used in different disciplines (Baran & Davis, 2012). For example, Durmaz (2011) and Wimberly (2019) studied how propaganda has been re-captioned as a technique of public relations in the modern era. The studies focused on how modern Public Relations came into existence and how it works or operates. The studies revealed that the activities of persuasion and manipulation as found in Public Relations are just a re-brand of the techniques of propaganda. Greco (2018) posited that individuals may not always understand the proper use or benefits of a product or service but may acquire the product or service as a result of how persuasive and manipulative the marketer of that product could be, which is similar to the use of the techniques of propaganda. Harwani (2019) also studied the relationship between propaganda and advertising. He pointed out that advertising messages are replete with techniques of propaganda which aim at influencing the opinions or behaviours of target individuals.

Added to advertising and marketing messages, political communication has been the pivot of modern politics since political communicators often discuss the content of the manifestoes of their party with the target audience in order to persuade or manipulate the target audience in making decisions in politics. Several Studies have been done on

the use of propaganda in political speeches, messages and manifestoes. Al-Ameedi and Khudhier (2015) conducted a study on the use of political propaganda by Barak Obama, the 44<sup>th</sup> U.S. president. The study identified the use of speech acts in the speeches of President Obama. The study indicated how politicians use the principle of politeness in issuing their campaign messages, especially in their manifestoes. The study also analysed the use of rhetorical devices in political communication. Al-Ameedi and Khudhier (2015) posited that the use of persuasion, metaphor, repetition, and manipulation serves as the rhetorical devices used for political propaganda in speeches. In a similar study, Bjola (2018) explored how propaganda is used in the digital world. He posited that the use of propaganda techniques in political communication has exploded with the rise of social media.

Literature available shows that the use of propaganda in national politics has been studied. When it comes to students' politics, it is not established that there is the use of propaganda. However, there are some features of students' politics that are similar to politics at the national level. Students, especially from universities and colleges, engage in rigorous campaigns and political activities in their quest to sell their ideas to their fellow students in order to win or get the nod of students, to represent them as student leaders. Student politics therefore cannot be devoid of propaganda which is in national politics.

This study investigated the use of propaganda as a communication tool in students' politics. It investigated the use of propaganda in the manifestoes which serve as the official political communication tool of political candidates in students' politics at two universities in Ghana. The two institutions are University of Cape Coast (UCC) and University of Education, Winneba (UEW). The study focused on students at graduate school. The study sought to identify the propaganda techniques used in the manifestoes of candidates in the graduate students' elections at UCC and UEW and how the use of propaganda persuaded or influenced student voters.

## 2. Literature review

Propaganda was first introduced by the Roman Catholic Church in 1622, when the Vatican, through a Papal Bull, set up the "Congregatio de Propaganda Fide" or Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. This was generally organized to harmonize the Catholic faith and "to suppress the protestant reformation" (Baran & Davis, 2012 p. 76). The study of propaganda has evolved over the years. This review outlines the types of propaganda, the techniques of propaganda, explains political propaganda theory and relates the use of propaganda as a means of persuasion to the rhetorical theory of persuasion.

Baran and Davis (2012 p. 75) outlined three types of propaganda. These are white propaganda, black propaganda and gray propaganda. White propaganda is used when there is a deliberate suppression of "potentially harmful" messages with a deliberate effort of pushing positive information to mitigate the spread and effects of the potentially

harmful message. Black propaganda is the “*deliberate and strategic transmission of outright lies*” for a specific purpose. Gray propaganda is when information put across by an individual or organization might or might not be false.

According to Baran and Davis (2012), Hamdani (2017) and Sproule (2001), the techniques of propaganda are name calling, glittering generalities, bandwagon, transfer, testimonial, card-stacking and plain folks. The first technique, name calling is in use when a propagandist uses negative labels or bad names to identify opponents in order to create distrust, dislike and loss of confidence and affection among subjects or target audience. Glittering generalities, the second technique is the use of slogans, catchy phrases, and vague and sweeping statements by the propagandist without giving substantial and supporting evidences to buttress the arguments or claims. Transfer is used usually to support or approve of someone, an ideology or a thing so that the authority, respect, popularity or affection that that person, ideology or thing has, will be transferred to the propagandist. Testimonials, the fourth propaganda technique is used when a propagandist uses popular or respected people in the society to endorse the propagandist’s ideas or messages, hoping that the approval of the ideas and messages of the propagandist from the respected or popular person, will in turn make the public like the propagandist’s ideas or arguments because they are endorsed by the highly respected persons among the populace. Plain folks, the fifth propaganda technique is used when the propagandist purposefully appears and displays himself or herself as an ordinary or regular person just like members of the target group. Penultimately, the bandwagon propaganda technique is in use when the propagandists claim that their ideas and messages have the widespread support of the target and therefore call on individuals to join the masses who are supporting, according to the propagandists, the ideal messages. Ultimately, card-stacking, the seventh propaganda technique, is in use when propagandists make their ideas seem to be the best option and refer to all other alternatives to be comparatively worse and against the public’s reasonable interest.

Propaganda is linked to political communication. The use of propaganda in political communication has resulted in what is known as political propaganda. Political Propaganda theory was proposed in 1927 by Harold Lasswell. The theory defines propaganda as the management of collective attitudes by the manipulation of significant symbols in the quest to arrive at a favourable response from the propagandist (Lasswell, 1927). In addition, Harold Lasswell’s Propaganda theory posits that the power of propaganda is not found in the power of efficiency or results of the substance or appeal of specific messages, rather, the power of persuasion is as a result of the vulnerable state of mind of the average people (Baran & Davis, 2012). The state of the mind is made vulnerable due to the political debates and discourses that are characterized by democracy in politics. Lasswell, therefore, sees democracy as a “*fatal flaw*” due to its efforts to locate the truth and make decisions through openly conducted debates on issues. In addition, Matson (1964), cited in Baran and Davis (2012) asserted that Harold Lasswell, the political propaganda theorist, perceives public political debates as irrational and irrelevant since the political debates threaten the survival of the lives of individuals

and as such, these individuals allay their fears by turning to other political messages replete with propaganda for the reassurance of their survival in the context of the political debates.

It must be noted that an effective political campaign persuades the target individuals from their initial state of opposition or indifference to the stage of support or interest for the political communicator (Ross & Burger, 2014). Fundamentally, political campaigning or communication is an exercise of attracting the attention of other individuals to accept and support the political message, whether the message is true or false.

The use of propaganda as a means of persuasion is different from the means of persuasion in rhetoric as advanced by Aristotle. Rhetorical theory of persuasion projects that a statement is said to be persuasive when there is an individual or group of individuals whom the message aids in changing their thinking and actions (Garver, 1995). The rhetorical theory of persuasion does not mean manipulation but persuasion (Baran & Davis, 2012). Ross and Burger (2014) asserted that the level of persuasion in political communication can make individuals who initially were not interested in the political discourses of a politician become even more interested, thus, rhetoric plays a major role in inciting interest that moves to persuasion. Effective political persuasion therefore will demand a mastery use of Aristotle's persuasive appeals.

In rhetoric, there are three persuasive appeals. These are ethos, pathos and logos. Garver (1995) presented the three appeals in Aristotle's rhetorical theory of persuasion. First, ethos is an ethical appeal meant to convince the target audience of the credibility of the speaker in question. With this, political communicators tend to persuade their audience by projecting who they are. This is to say that the speakers use their credentials and innate abilities, qualities, experience and potentials to make their arguments seem better than that of opponents. When speakers do this, then, the speakers are using ethos in Aristotle's theory of rhetoric. With the techniques of propaganda, transfer seems to agree with the ethos as an ethical appeal. Generally, the ethos appeal of persuasion may be seen to be in line with the propaganda technique of transfer. This is because when the propaganda technique of transfer is used, the credibility, popularity and acceptance of a highly respected person is perceived to be transferred to the propagandist. However, ethos or credibility appeal focuses on the qualities of the speaker while the propaganda technique of transfer seems to make the propagandist credible because of the highly respected person the propagandist approves or endorses.

Another aspect of ethos appeal is the use of words and expressions that show that the speaker is similar to the audience. In this case, the theory posited that the political communicator should use words and expressions that will make the listeners identify themselves with the politician. This likely goes in line with using plain folks as a propaganda technique. This technique describes the propagandist as an ordinary person just like the voters and as such, the politician or the candidate knows the key plights of the voters and happens to be a victim of those plights of the voters. Plain folk as a propaganda technique is used by politicians in order to persuade voters to believe in the

politicians' ideas, claims and interests in order for the voters to vote for a person who projects this similarity with them. If the use of language that shows similarity between the speaker and the audience should have an effect on the voting pattern of students, then the ethos aspect of Aristotle's rhetorical theory of persuasion is in use. In this case, student voters would not cast their votes based on realistic and logical campaign promises but will merely consider the fact that the student politician is an ordinary student just like the student voters and would be attached to the candidate.

Aristotle believes that the more a speech is emotive, the more it becomes persuasive. To this end, the pathos component of Aristotle's rhetorical theory of persuasion which indicates that this component relies on the emotions of the target audience is evoked to persuade audience. It is therefore concluded that the pathos component of the theory illumines on the appeal to emotions by indicating the choice of words that evoke specific emotions such as the emotion of sadness, happiness anger or any specific emotion. The Rhetorical theory of persuasion indicates that an appeal to emotions is one effective way of persuading an individual or audience. It is therefore imperative for politicians and student politicians to use words and expressions that evoke desired emotions. Propaganda techniques are perceived to be emotive and that could ride on the feelings of audience.

The third component of the theory is logos. This is a logical appeal meant to persuade the audience using reason, facts, and figures. Logos can also enhance ethos by making the individual and specifically, the speaker appear knowledgeable and updated. This could be a great tool of propaganda. Logos may be used by an individual to objectively criticize and entrench one's beliefs and convictions on electorates with the use of facts and figures. However, while the examples, facts and figures used to persuade audiences as the use of logical appeal in rhetoric are real life evidences, the claims in propaganda may be difficult to be ascertained. It must be noted that when claims used in attempt to persuade audience happen to be untrue and in some cases used deliberately, such usage will characterize propaganda. This specifically falls under gray propaganda which usually comprises the usage of claims whose authenticity cannot be verified.

### **3. Methodology**

Document analysis was used as the instrument of data collection for the study. The manifestoes of the students who contested the position of President and Secretary of the graduate students were collected as data for the study. The manifestoes of the candidates for the President and Secretary positions were formally requested from the office of the Electoral Commission of each institution: UCC and UEW. The manifestoes were analysed using the seven (7) techniques of propaganda identified by the Institute for Propaganda Analysis (IPA) to identify the use of propaganda in the manifestoes.

To investigate the persuasive nature of propaganda, student voters were selected to respond to questionnaires. A random sampling technique was employed for the selection of student voters. The voter turnout for the elections was four hundred and

fifty-five (455) graduate students at UCC and three hundred and fourteen (314) graduate students at UEW. These figures constituted the population of the study. The sample size for graduate student voters in the graduate students' elections at UCC was two hundred and ninety-one (291) At UEW, the sample size was two hundred and thirty-four (234). Questionnaires were used to collect data from the students for the study. Likert-scale questions were used to determine the influence of the propaganda techniques used in the manifestoes of the student leaders on student voters. Data collected were analysed using a statistical software. The software was used to obtain percentages of student voters who were influenced by the various propaganda techniques used in the manifestoes of student leaders in the graduate students' election in the two institutions.

#### **4. Findings and discussion**

The study employed the seven (7) techniques of propaganda explored by Hamdani (2017) and Sproule (2001) as codes for analysing all the words, phrases, clauses and sentences employed in the manifestoes of the candidates. The propaganda techniques identified in the manifestoes that served as tools for political communication by the candidates of the graduate elections in the two universities were *name calling, glittering generalities, transfer, bandwagon and card-stacking*.

##### **4.1 Name calling**

Hamdani (2017) and Baran and Davis (2012) explain name calling as the use of negative labels for the opposition of a communicator and the use of positive labels for the propagandist in the quest to incite hatred for the opposite side and love for the propagandist. With this, propagandists use words or expressions that positively identify the propagandist and negatively identify the contenders of the propagandist. Name calling propaganda technique was identified in the manifestoes of candidates. Below are excerpts that illustrate name calling.

*"To this end, we hope that we increase visibility by an agenda we call "the hear Graduate Student Campaign".*

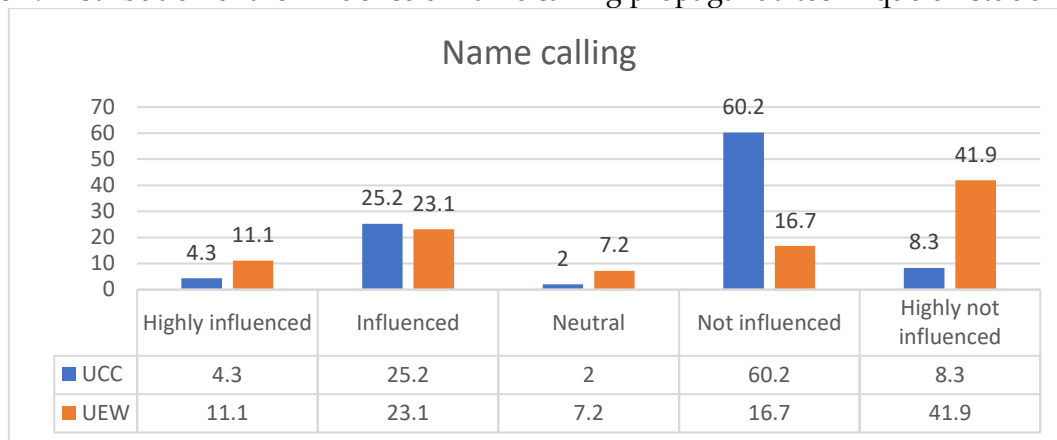
*"I present to you my outstanding policies when implemented will uplift the image and the welfare of graduate students of UCC and project graduate students in UCC"*

In the first excerpt, the candidate identified or named the manifesto as the "the hear Graduate Student Campaign". For that reason, the candidate identified the manifesto as the "Student Campaign" in the quest to identify his manifesto to be of an advantage to the students. In the second excerpt, the candidate identified his policies to be outstanding when implemented and will also uplift the image of the graduate students. There is no substantial evidence to support this claim. These examples illustrate the use of name calling in the manifestoes of the candidates. Ross and Burger (2014)

asserted that propaganda turns individuals into the target to be persuaded through character and emotional appeal with words and expressions of the persuader, in this case, to attract the votes of the students. With this example, the pathos component of Aristotle's rhetorical theory of persuasion that deals with the use of emotive language as posited by Gaines (2018) was employed by the candidate to influence the student voters. The candidate used "outstanding policies" as an emotive expression in the manifesto.

Some statements were outlined to ascertain how student voters were influenced by name calling as a technique of propaganda as used in the manifestoes of the candidates. Figure 1 below shows the percentages obtained after analysing the responses of the student voters.

**Figure 1:** Distribution of the influence of name calling propaganda technique on student voters



At UCC, with the use of the technique of name calling by the selected candidates in the elections at UCC, 29.5% of the student voters were highly influenced and influenced by the propaganda technique of name calling while 175 voters representing 60.2% were not influenced and 8.3% were highly not influenced by the propaganda technique of name calling.

At UEW, 234 student voters responded to the questionnaire. For the first statement, 26 representing 11.1% were strongly persuaded by name calling and 54 representing 23.1% were influenced and highly influenced by the technique of name calling. On the contrary, 58.6 student voters were not influenced by propaganda technique of name calling. To conclude on name calling as a propaganda technique, data from the manifestoes analysis agreed with Gyampo (2012), Paolo and Gyampo (2019) and Wilbur (2017) that propaganda is potent in manifestoes and activities in political communication because most of the target populace may ascribe to propaganda messages. However, from the findings, the propaganda technique of name calling did not persuade the majority of student voters to vote for a candidate in the graduate students' elections at UCC and UEW.



## 4.2 Glittering generalities

Glittering generalities are identified by the Institute of Propaganda Analysis as the use of catchy statements, sweeping statements, vague expressions and enticing messages without giving substantial and supporting evidence to buttress one's arguments or claims to the target audience (Baran & Davis, 2012). Glittering generalities as propaganda techniques were identified in the manifestoes of candidates in the elections. The excerpts below are examples of glittering generalities identified in the manifestoes analysed.

*"Pursue a course of ensuring the assistance and encouragement of every graduate student to publish a research paper, article, project, etc. before completing their programme."*

*"With a better lecture theatre, we will put resources into making lecture theatre that befits graduate students' learning. This we will do by procuring air conditioners and Land Area Networks in theatres designated for that."*

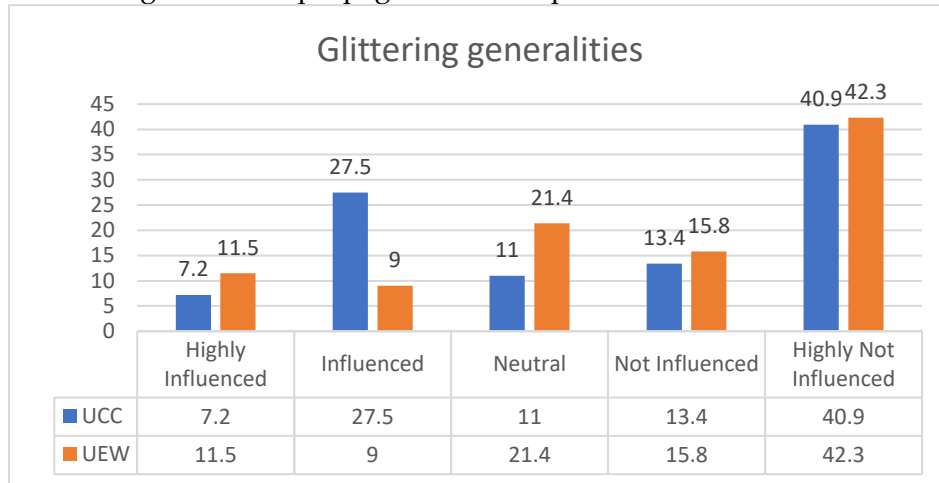
*"I will also want to ensure that the website includes educative sites and health aspects that you can talk to a medical doctor at any point in time. It will also include scholarship opportunities, exchange programmes and opportunities for business owners to also advertise their businesses".*

In the examples above, glittering generalities were employed in the manifestoes of the candidates with no pragmatic measures that will ensure that the promises are fulfilled. Student voters were then expected to support the candidates as such. The candidates just made mention of sweeping statements and vague statements for student voters to vote for them with no justifiable measures of achieving the stated promises in the manifesto. The candidates employed sweeping statements and never gave constructive directives in the quest to fulfil the campaign promises. This propaganda technique was targeted at using statements that are focused on using sweeping statements without any viable means of achieving them. This is focused on attracting the votes of the student voters with such sweeping statements with no means or measures of achieving them. This agrees with Lasswell's Political propaganda theory which argues that the "vulnerability of the mind" allows individuals to be influenced by propaganda messages.

At UCC 54.3% of the respondents disagreed and were not influenced by catchy phrases in the propaganda technique of glittering generalities. Eleven (11%) of the respondents remained neutral while 27.5% and 7.2% were influenced and highly influenced by the propaganda technique of glittering generalities in political communication. At UEW, 58.1% disagreed and indicated that they were not influenced by the propaganda technique of glittering generalities in making electoral decisions. However, 20.5% of the respondents were influenced by the propaganda technique of glittering generalities such as catchy phrases and sweeping statements of candidates. To

conclude, the majority of the students from the two institutions indicated that they were not influenced by glittering generalities as a propaganda technique.

**Figure 5:** Distribution of the influence of glittering generalities propaganda technique on student voters



### 4.3 Transfer

Transfer as a propaganda technique is identified by the Institute of Propaganda Analysis to be in practice when propagandists usually support or approve of someone, an ideology or a thing as theirs so that the authority, respect, popularity or affection that that person, ideology or thing has, will be transferred to the propagandist (Hamdani, 2017). This technique was identified in the manifestoes of the candidates in both institutions. Below are some examples.

#### **Past Religious Leader – Mother Theresa**

*“As Mother Theresa of the blessed memory said, “I alone cannot change the world but I can cast a stone across and it will create many reforms.””*

#### **Past and Current Presidents**

*“Our leadership shall be visionary as that of Kwame Nkrumah*

*Our leadership shall be generous as that of Nelson Mandela*

*Our leadership shall be so determined as Barack Obama*

*Our leadership shall be of great essence like that of Fidel Castro”*

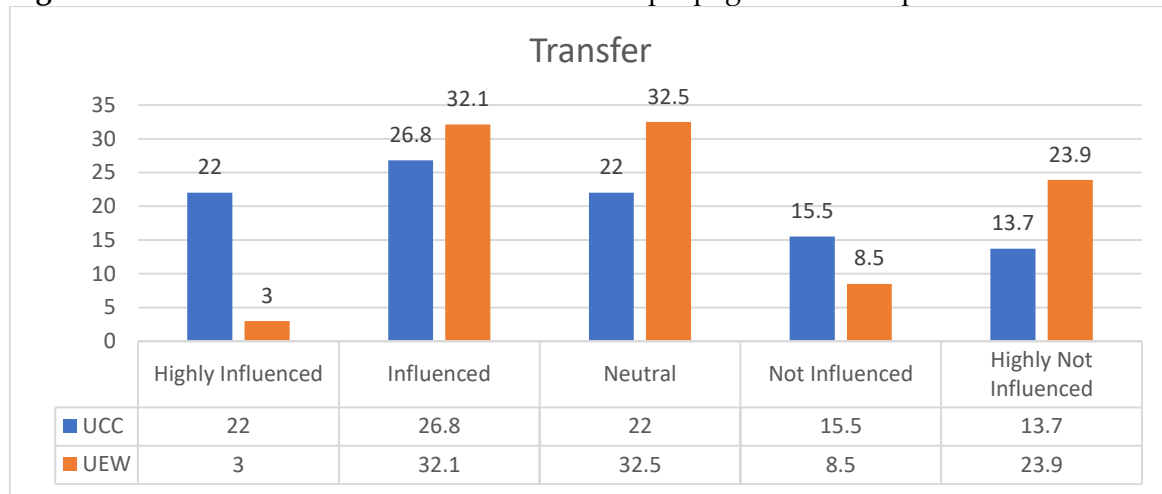
The use of the quotation of Mother Theresa who is widely loved by many people in the Christian faith and the civil or secular environment was targeted at winning the support of student voters who oblige to the sayings of the religious and public person. The usage of the name of a past religious leader, according to Nieuburt (2021), is a propaganda technique which is effective because propagandists frame their speeches in a manner that is culturally and religiously acceptable for their target audience. Ross and Rivers (2017) asserted that propagandists who identify with any cultural or religious

entity of the target audience empower those who would not otherwise engage in political dialogue or cast their vote in the elections to be persuaded to do so because of the propagandist.

In the second example, the candidate expressed attachment to the ideals of some selected politicians in Ghana and beyond. This technique was adopted by the candidate in his quest to align his choice to students who also align with these key persons in national politics. This will obviously direct student voters who support the identified national politicians to also align with the candidate. This is to transfer the like and acceptance of the national politicians to the candidate.

The table below shows how transfer influences student voters.

**Figure 3:** Distribution of the influence of transfer propaganda technique on student voters



At UCC, the propaganda technique of transfer indicated that 48.8% of the student voters were influenced by the use of the propaganda technique of transfer. However, 29.2% of the respondents did not support candidates who used the propaganda technique of transfer.

At UEW, 32.5% of the student voters remained neutral as 35.1% of the respondents were influenced by the propaganda technique of transfer. On the other side, 32.4% of the student voters were not influenced by the use of the propaganda technique of transfer and did not just vote for candidates who used the propaganda technique of transfer in the graduate students' elections. Generally, the ethos component of Aristotle's rhetorical theory of persuasion is perceived to be in line with the propaganda technique of transfer. With the use of the transfer technique of propaganda, the candidates seem to be appealing to ethos (credibility appeal) as the use of transfer relates to the credibility of the candidate. This perception of using transfer to boost the credibility of the student leaders in the election did not seem to achieve the desired results. This is because the credibility of the speaker is expected to lead to the persuasion of the student voters but the results show that majority of the student voters indicated that they were not influenced by the use of the propaganda technique of transfer. It could be concluded that appealing to the speakers' own credibility such as the speakers' past experiences and

expertise works better to persuade audience than to transfer someone else's credibility to the speaker.

In all, the majority of the respondents for all three descriptive statements were not persuaded or manipulated by transfer as a propaganda technique in the graduate elections at UCC and UEW since the majority indicated neutral on the effect of transfer propaganda.

#### **4.4 Bandwagon**

The bandwagon propaganda technique according to Baran and Davis (2012) is used by political communicators when the propagandists claim that their ideas and messages have the widespread support of the target and therefore call on other individuals to join the masses who are supporting the ideal messages.

Brunello (2014) argued that the use of bandwagon as a propaganda technique is contrary to the moral or ethical flow of information in modern propaganda. He argued that the use of bandwagon propaganda for political communication is the charting of the unethical flow of information. Laswell (1927) argued that the use of propaganda as a communication tool does not follow ethical principles in giving out information (Bowen, 2004). Below are examples of the use of this technique in the manifestoes of student leaders in the graduate students' election.

##### **Majority support and worse alternatives**

*"...grand speeches that will highlight their individual personalities and policies that will help some specific field. But we are saying that it is not about us as candidates but as us as members of the graduate students' of UCC and how we can make the group better that is why the students support this dream."*

It is important to note that the message of the propagandist was about "us as members of the graduate students' of UCC and how we can make the group better". This claim was to have support from individual members who want to join the masses in order to support what the masses are following or agreeing to.

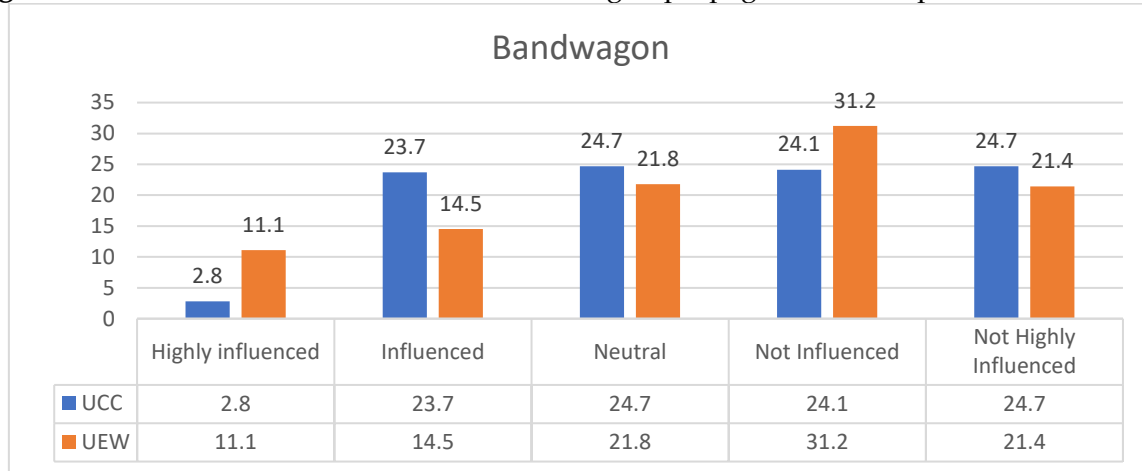
Figure 4 illustrates the responses of students about how the bandwagon influences them in casting their votes.

At UCC, 24.7% remained neutral while 48.8% of the respondents disagreed with the statements on the use of bandwagon and were not influenced by the propaganda technique of bandwagon.

At UEW, 21.8% of the respondents remained neutral whereas 31.2 and 21.4 were not influenced and not highly influenced respectively. Then, 25.6% of the respondents were influenced and highly influenced by the propaganda technique of bandwagon. With all three questions on the bandwagon as a propaganda tool for political communication, they did not persuade or manipulate student voters to rally behind the student politicians. With bandwagon as a propaganda technique for political

communication, most student voters in both institutions did not rally behind voters with messages of such propaganda technique.

**Figure 4:** Distribution of the influence of bandwagon propaganda technique on student voters



#### 4.5 Card-stacking

Card-stacking propaganda technique according to the Institute of Propaganda Analysis (IPA) is in use when propagandists make their ideas seem to be the best option and refer to all other alternatives to be comparatively worse and are against the public’s reasonable interest (Baran & Davis, 2012). Hamdani (2017) argued that the card-stacking propaganda technique is in use when the claims of the propagandist are without any justifiable reasons to support the assertions. It is worth noting that such assertions are substantiated with no facts and are just used by the propagandist to indicate that all other alternatives of the propagandist ideas are comparatively worse.

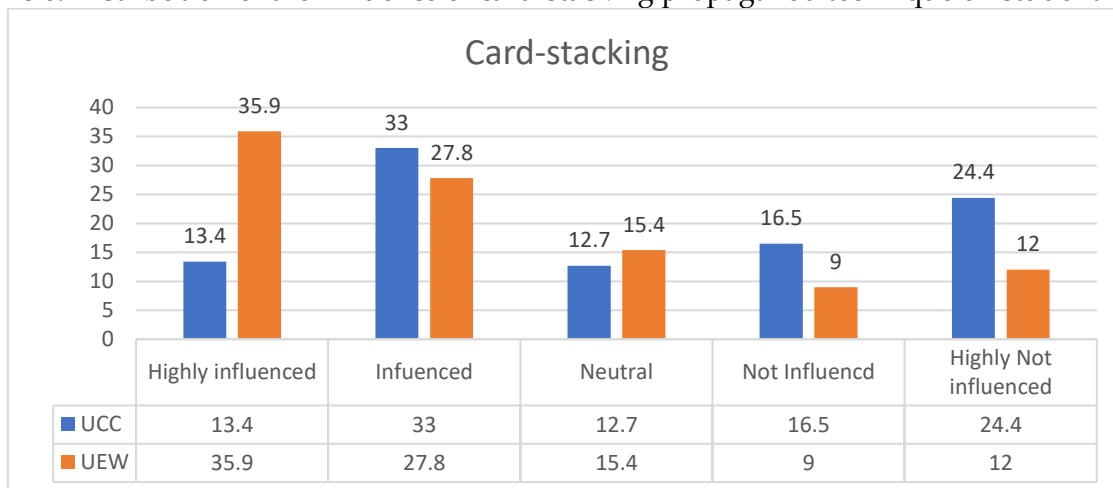
##### Good option against other options

*“I am an avid self-believer...intrinsicly motivated to accept responsibilities and execute them with great analytical and critical thinking abilities unlike others... She is a campaigner of a firm vision to reach out...”*

With the above example, the candidate expressed qualities of leadership that make her distinct from the contenders. This is generally to identify the supposed features of the candidate and add that other candidates do not have the requisite features and experience. With the example above, the candidate employed the card-stacking propaganda technique to comparatively argue to be better as compared to the alternatives. Card-stacking was used as a propaganda technique by some of the candidates in order to have a positive effect on the target audience as argued by Lasswell’s theory of political propaganda that the vulnerability of the mind of average people could make such people to be influenced by the use of card-stacking propaganda technique.

Card-stacking propaganda technique was identified to have had some influence in making a choice in the graduate students' elections in both institutions. At UCC, 46.4% always rallied behind and voted for the candidate whose campaign messages targeted pointing out the follies and disadvantages of the opponent's messages, that is the use of the propaganda technique of card-stacking. However, 119 student voters representing 40.9% were not persuaded by student politicians who always focused solely on pointing out the challenges of others.

**Figure 6:** Distribution of the influence of card-stacking propaganda technique on student voters



At UEW, 35.9% of the respondents were highly influenced while 27.8% of the respondents were influenced. Then, 9% and 12% of the respondents were not influenced and highly not influenced respectively. However, 15.4% of the respondents were neutral to the statements on card-stacking.

In conclusion, a great percentage of the respondents at UCC were influenced by the propaganda technique of card-stacking unlike the other techniques discussed early on. At UEW, card-stacking persuaded the majority of the student voters: 149 student voters representing 63.7% were influenced by the propaganda technique of card-stacking. Only, 21% of the respondents were not influenced by the propaganda technique of card-stacking.

To conclude on the efficacy of the propaganda techniques used by candidates in their manifestoes, the majority of the students were not persuaded or manipulated by name calling, glittering generalities, bandwagon, and transfer as techniques of propaganda that were used by the selected candidates in the elections of graduate students at UCC and UEW. Rather than conceptualize propaganda education as an ideology, Hobbs et al (2018) argued that a cultural specificity must be applied when discussing the techniques of propaganda in any social setting. Thus, the cultural setting of propaganda as used in the Ghanaian university context seem to suggest that largely, the use of propaganda does not influence student voters. This may serve as a guide for future studies and political leaders.

## 5. Conclusion

The study sought to explore the presence of propaganda in manifestoes that serve as the political communication tool in university students' politics in Ghana and examined its effect on student voters in making decisions in the elections. Data were drawn from the manifestoes of candidates who contested the leadership position of president and secretary. The study was underpinned by the theory of Political Propaganda by Harold Lasswell, the seven (7) propaganda techniques introduced by the Institute of Propaganda Analysis (IPA) and Aristotle's rhetorical appeals of persuasion. The propaganda techniques of name calling, glittering generalities, transfer, bandwagon and card-stacking were used by student politicians in their manifestoes to win student votes in the two positions investigated in the graduate students' elections at UCC and UEW. The study posed questions to the student voters to determine how the use of propaganda influenced them in making their choices about the candidates to vote for. The results of the responses got from the student voters indicate that majority of the them were not influenced by the propaganda techniques used by candidates in their manifestoes.

### Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

### About the Authors

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