

Interrogating the scientific and ethical rigor of “*kalye*” surveys

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Abstract

As our contribution to Plaridel’s 20th anniversary, our paper focuses on the UP College of Mass Communication’s media and information literacy agenda, specifically highlighting the literacy required when engaging with surveys as social media content. In particular, our attention has been drawn to election-related *kalye* surveys that surfaced as popular local YouTube content eight months prior to the conduct of the May 2022 Philippine general elections. *Kalye* surveys (from the Filipino word “*kalye*”, or street) refer to person-on-the-street interviews about respondents’ electoral preferences while being filmed for live streaming or eventual uploading.

Grounding our analytical framework on the principles of valid, reliable, and ethical social science research, our analysis of 49 videos uncovered how YouTube content creators have exploited the scientific practice of survey research for partisan purposes by disregarding scientific and ethical rigor as they claimed to present themselves with authenticity. We conclude with a call for vigilance against movements that exploit scientific practices in forwarding partisan agenda, noting that *kalye* surveys are a part of the growing ecosystem of political information disorder in the Philippines.

Keywords: Survey, public opinion polling, scientific rigor, ethical rigor, elections, YouTube, social media, media and information literacy. SDG # 4 - Quality Education

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Kalye Surveys as Social Media Content

“*Kalye*” survey, which incorporates the Filipino word “*kalye*”, or street, refers to a person-on-the-street interview that essentially asks respondents about their electoral preferences while being filmed for live streaming or eventual uploading on YouTube (San Pascual et al., 2022a). As person-on-the-street interviews or vox pops (Ross et al., 2021), *kalye* survey became a popular type of YouTube content leading up to the May 2022 Philippine general elections.

Election-related *kalye* surveys are framed as an alternative to mainstream political polls conducted by established public opinion polling organizations and academic institutions (San Pascual et al., 2022a). *Kalye* surveys basically follow a constructivist approach in video documenting the administration of the survey, from approaching prospective respondents, delivering questions, engaging with participants, and tallying of responses (San Pascual et al., 2022a).

Literacy in Engaging with Survey as Social Media Content

The 2022 general elections was a highly discussed topic in the Philippines (Wee, 2022) and social media content creators were able to strategically capitalize on the creation of election-related content that audiences can relate to. Given the amount of media attention on pre-election public opinion polls from mainstream polling groups, combined with recurring questions stemming from the public’s limited survey literacy about how such surveys are conducted (ABS-CBN, 2022), some content creators started filming and uploading their own version of pre-election surveys, leading other content creators to follow this emerging local YouTube trend.

Our monitoring uncovered that *kalye* surveys started surfacing on YouTube in September 2021, a month before the official filing of certificates of candidacy for local and national posts for the May 2022 elections. It gained momentum in October 2021 and by February 2022, almost 400 *kalye* surveys had been uploaded on YouTube.

However, we argue that even though *kalye* surveys posture to be an alternative form of public opinion polling, as survey is supposedly a systematic form of data collection, *kalye* surveys are thus nonetheless expected to adhere to the prescribed scientific and ethical rigor across the entire stage of the research process—from conceptualization; to instrument development; to data collection, processing, and storage; to analysis and interpretation; and to any and all forms of dissemination—especially if its purpose is to properly inform the public about voting preferences and trends (San Pascual et al., 2022a).

In fact, the academic community has raised concerns about the proliferation of kalye surveys as social media content. In a statement released on 21 February 2022, the University of the Philippines School of Statistics called out the proliferation of surveys with unclear methodologies. They expressed that these surveys, including kalye surveys, have a tendency for the “abuse of survey methodologies” and the “disregard for the principles of data gathering” (UP School of Statistics, 2022, para 1). The Department of Communication Research of the College of Mass Communication of the University of the Philippines subsequently noted the rigor and discipline required in the conduct of surveys “from conceptualization to implementation and reporting” (UPD Department of Communication Research, 2022, para 2), which are particularly important if the survey is purported to “reflect the characteristics, beliefs, and behaviors of the population” (UPD Department of Communication Research, 2022, para 3).

Our study contributes to enhancing citizen’s literacy when engaging with surveys as social media content. It falls within the general stream of enriching citizen’s media and information literacy (MIL) by equipping them with “the ability to understand information for public good; the ability to critically engage with information, media and digital communications for participation in sustainable development; and the ability to seek and enjoy the full benefits of fundamental human rights” (Grizzle, et al., 2021, p. 3). Citizens who have mastered MIL are better able to access, discern, reflect, demand, create, and disseminate quality information (Aufderheide, 1992; Livingstone, 2004; Potter, 2022) as MIL allows citizens “to engage critically with information, navigate the online environment safely and responsibly and ensure there can be trust in our information ecosystem and in digital technologies” (Grizzle, et al., 2021, p. 3). As the social, economic, political, and cultural spheres of our lives are increasingly mediatized (Hepp, 2013; Hepp & Krotz, 2014; Krotz & Hepp, 2013), citizens who are equipped with MIL are thus in a better place to participate in a democracy more meaningfully as their literacy would enhance their ability for informed citizen engagement and decision-making (Wilson et al., 2011).

Specifically, our study probes the scientific and ethical rigor of kalye surveys, which mimic public opinion polls, given the former’s proliferation as local YouTube content at the height of the May 2022 Philippine general election campaign season. In fact, public opinion scholars have noted the danger of misusing surveys for partisan purposes, such as when it is used “to manipulate public opinion and to cloud the factual circumstances of political decisions” (Kunczik & Schweitzer, 2008, p. 501). YouTube, through its content creators, incentivization metric, and platform logic, has been a site for networked political brokerage, facilitating the creation, propagation,

and affirmation of political narratives without the review and accountability present in legacy media production and distribution (Soriano & Gaw, 2021).

Indeed, YouTubers have already been documented to exploit traditionally professional sources by imitating mainstream experts while breaking traditional norms as they feature overt partisanship in their content (Rodelo, 2022), and such is the case with kalye surveys. Our evaluative inquiry documents our interrogation of how kalye surveys have exploited the scientific practice of survey research, and so we pose this fundamental question: *How did election-related kalye surveys misuse scientific survey practices for partisan purposes?*

Our current inquiry expands our initial exposition about kalye surveys that was published as a three-part article in Rappler in April 2022, citation of which has been provided across this paper. Since no other scholarly work has extensively examined such emergent kind of election-related surveys in Philippine media landscape, our undertaking is significant as (a) it surfaces the exploitation of the scientific practice of survey research for partisan agenda and (b) it exposes the need for MIL when it comes to engaging with highly mediatized kalye survey content. While anecdotal accounts already point to the apparent scientific violations of kalye surveys, we nonetheless argue that documenting and grounding our methodical evaluation of kalye surveys on the principles of valid, reliable, and ethical social science research would emphasize the discipline involved in the entire survey process, which could help citizens in their critical engagement with survey content in the media, and in demanding quality surveys and survey findings.

The Scientific Practice of Survey

Survey, as a social science research method, follows the principles of scientific and ethical rigor. Grounded in positivist roots, the scientific rigor of surveys espouses objectivity, measurement validity and reliability, external validity, and statistical veracity (Alwin, 2010; Blair et al., 2014; San Pascual et al., 2022b; Wimmer & Dominick, 2014). Meanwhile, the ethical rigor of surveys commits to the autonomy of participants, to benefitting and not harming them, and to fairness (Lomibao & Labor, 2021; Wimmer & Dominick, 2014)

A. The scientific rigor of surveys

The ontological anchor of surveys epistemologically positions it to view reality objectively. Objectivity necessitates that surveys be standardized to protect against biases that may surface from the construction of question and response options, as well as biases that may arise from actual survey administration (San Pascual, 2021a; Wimmer & Dominick, 2014). Thus,

surveys must make use of meticulously constructed standardized survey instruments that consist of thoroughly formulated questions and response options (Blair et al., 2014; Fowler, 2014; Krosnick & Presser, 2010; Krosnick, 2018; San Pascual, 2021a; San Pascual, 2021b; Schutt, 2012; Wimmer & Dominick, 2014). Such carefully crafted standardized survey instruments must likewise be standardly administered to a representative set of participants to enable unbiased data gathering and recording (Blair et al., 2014; San Pascual, 2021a; San Pascual, 2021b; Wimmer & Dominick, 2014).

Still aligned with its positivist roots, survey instrument construction must follow a deductive approach in transforming concepts to variables and variables to measures; doing so allows for the generation of questionnaire items that would validly and reliably measure the concepts and variables that the survey intends to measure (Babbie, 2014; San Pascual et al., 2022b; Wimmer & Dominick, 2014). Hence, survey instrument development not only covers question and response option construction but also includes instrument pretesting and revision so that appropriate adjustments can be made to improve its measurement validity and reliability on the one hand, and its communicative clarity, on the other (Babbie, 2014; Blair et al., 2014; Fowler, 2014; San Pascual, 2021a; San Pascual et al., 2022b; Wimmer & Dominick, 2014). In this manner, survey instruments can facilitate the generation of valid and reliable data (Babbie, 2014; Blair et al., 2014; Fowler, 2014; San Pascual, 2021a; San Pascual et al., 2022b; Wimmer & Dominick, 2014).

A survey has external validity when findings from its representative sample can be used to make inferences about the target population. To claim external validity, a survey's sampling design must first generate a representative sample, which is essentially an adequately sized and randomly selected pool of respondents derived from identified segments of the target population (Babbie, 2014; Frankel, 2010; San Pascual, 2021b; San Pascual et al., 2022b; Wimmer & Dominick, 2014). Next, data from a representative sample is subjected to inferential statistics, which is a set of quantitative techniques that tests whether data generated from the representative sample can indeed be used to make inferences about the target population (Frankel, 2010; San Pascual, 2021b; San Pascual & Bunquin, 2021; San Pascual et al., 2022b; Wimmer & Dominick, 2014). In short, a survey can claim external validity when it draws data from a representative sample, and when inferential testing provides support that the results derived from the representative sample may indeed describe the target population within an acceptable confidence level and tolerable margin of error (Frankel, 2010; San Pascual, 2021b; San Pascual & Bunquin, 2021; San Pascual et al., 2022b; Wimmer & Dominick, 2014).

Given survey's ontological anchor, surveys and statistical testing go hand-in-hand to ensure statistical veracity of survey results. Statistical veracity also contributes to the professional and unbiased reporting of survey results.

B. The ethical rigor of surveys

In following the tenets of ethical rigor, surveys must also conscientiously strive to protect the autonomy of participants by acquiring their informed consent before their actual survey participation (Babbie, 2014; Fowler, 2014; Lomibao & Labor, 2021; San Pascual et al., 2022c; Wimmer & Dominick, 2014). Informed consent provides participants with adequate information about the research project, the team behind the project, its sources of funds, terms of survey participation (e.g., response task, probable benefits, elimination or minimization of possible harm), and data management (e.g., confidentiality, data privacy, data storage) (Babbie, 2014; Blair et al., 2014; Citro, 2010; Fowler, 2014; Lomibao & Labor, 2021; San Pascual et al., 2022c; Tourangeau, 2018; Wimmer & Dominick, 2014).

Moreover, surveys must also be fair by adhering to the stipulations in the informed consent form (Babbie, 2014; Blair et al., 2014; Citro, 2010; Fowler, 2014; San Pascual et al., 2022c; Wimmer & Dominick, 2014). It also honors the goodwill of the participants who volunteered their data (San Pascual et al., 2022c).

Conducting the Study

We reviewed kalye survey content to probe its public polling methodologies, and the extent of scientific and ethical rigor present in its conduct and reporting. Each video was analyzed using guidelines on the scientific and ethical conduct and reporting of surveys. Our evaluation guide contained three sections: 1) basic video profile, 2) scientific rigor check, and 3) ethical rigor check. Our assessment focused not only on the conduct of the kalye surveys but also on the post-processing elements incorporated in the uploaded videos.

Using a tool directly linked to the YouTube API, our team scanned YouTube using general election keywords, including candidate names and political party names, from May 2021 (a year prior to the May 2022 Philippine general elections) up to February 2022. Our collection was split into three quarters: May to July 2021 (data extracted in August 2021), August to October 2021 (data extracted in November 2021), and November 2021 to January 2022 (data extracted in February 2022). While we observed that kalye surveys only started appearing in September 2021, which is within Quarter 2 of our data collection, by our Quarter 3 data extraction,

we noted that a total of 388 kalye survey videos had already been uploaded on YouTube.

We first identified the top five YouTube channels per quarter, which were the channels with the most viewed kalye survey videos as of the period of our data extraction. The channels that made it to the top five list in Quarter 2 were excluded and replaced with the next highest channel in Quarter 3. Thus, we sampled a total of ten unique YouTube channels.

From the sampled channels, we selected videos that represented a range of variation in kalye survey content. We did this to exclude videos that repeated similar kalye survey material and videos that merely extended earlier uploaded content (such as Part 2, Part 3, etc). We were thus able to select a total of 49 videos displaying a range of kalye survey content. The median running time of the sampled videos was 31.19 minutes ($M = 32$ minutes; $SD = 0.01$ minutes; $Min = 8$ minutes; $Max = 1$ hour and 8 minutes). Meanwhile, the median view count at the time of data extraction was 124,888 ($M = 133,660$ views; $SD = 124,044.31$ views; $Min = 336$ views; $Max = 458,160$ views).

Evaluating Kalye Surveys Through the Lens of Scientific Rigor

To the members of the public, surveys may appear to be a straightforward method of data generation, with a design and implementation that seem to be uncomplicated. Moreover, because of possibly limited survey literacy, surveys can be intentionally or unintentionally misused and abused.

While our paper does not delve into the survey literacy of kalye survey content creators, in this section, we will present how the scientific practice has been deliberately or unwittingly exploited in election-related kalye surveys. We found that the conduct of kalye surveys and reporting of its results have disregarded the principles of objectivity, measurement validity and reliability, external validity, and statistical veracity.

We observed that kalye surveys have the tendency to overlook objectivity, given the propensity of survey enumerators to administer the survey in an unstandardized manner across survey respondents, as exemplified by inconsistent phrasing of vote-choice questions, affirmation of responses that align with their own biases, and at times, even outward disagreement with the respondent when the provided response runs counter to their own political preference. The manifestation of political bias in question phrasing and respondent engagement also deviates from the prescription of measurement validity and reliability.

In one kalye survey from a popular partisan YouTube channel, the survey questions presented inconsistencies within the same kalye survey.

Some respondents were asked open-ended questions (“*Sino presidente niyo ngayong darating na halalan?*” [Who is your president this upcoming elections?]); some were asked close-ended questions (“*Sino sa anim ang napupusuan niyong iboto ngayong darating na halalan?*” [Out of the six, who do you prefer to vote for this upcoming elections?]), and only some were asked with a specific time frame of reference (“*Sino presidente niyo ngayon?*” [Who is your president now?]). Follow-up questions were also inconsistently delivered. In the same kalye survey of such popular partisan YouTube channel, only some respondents were asked the follow-up question, “*Bakit si [Candidate X] ang napili niyo?*” [Why did you choose [Candidate X]?], therefore only giving some respondents the chance to clarify their initial answers to the survey.

Apart from inconsistent phrasing of vote-choice questions, kalye surveys can introduce strong biases when survey enumerators affirm responses that match their own political preference. For example, we observed how some enumerators build up excitement to a given response by urging respondents to repeat their vote choice, but in a more resounding manner the next time around. There was even an enumerator who permitted a group of respondents to empathically shout the name of their preferred candidate. In addition, we also observed a survey enumerator candidly revealing his choice for president when prompted, “[*Candidate X*] *po ako*” [I am for [Candidate X]]. Such conduct of survey runs contrary to the principles of objectivity, standardized survey administration, and confidentiality of response.

In addition to hyping up responses that align with the survey enumerator’s vote-choice preference, we were able to come across a kalye survey video wherein the enumerator debated against a respondent when the latter disclosed a presidential bet different from that of the enumerator’s. This particular scene was also edited to make it appear as if similar-minded supporters were confirming the righteousness of the enumerator’s own vote-choice preference.

These snippets of partisan survey administration and the inclusion of partisan elements in the post-processed video materials were captured in the kalye survey videos uploaded on YouTube. Thus, these election-related kalye surveys do not only disregard the scientific standards in survey practice by disregarding the principle of objectivity in its survey administration; they also deviate from the standard of unbiased reporting of survey results as the content creators’ partisan alignment was on display.

We also observed how kalye surveys fall into the trap of generalizing its results even when its sampling design does not lend itself to external validity claims. To viewers of kalye surveys, these generalizations may paint

a picture of landslide on-ground support for certain candidates despite kalye surveys typically selecting their respondents through convenience sampling—by intercepting prospective participants on pedestrian locations such as along streets, around food kiosks, in public markets, and in transport terminals. Based on the kalye surveys’ declaration of their data collection locations, it would also appear that kalye surveys covered a multitude of locations across the country and even overseas, involving Filipinos based abroad. Some content creators also seem to have been motivated to add to the pool of kalye surveys by filming their own version in locales that have not been included in previously uploaded kalye surveys.

As this is the case, kalye survey videos tend to frame the titles and thumbnail descriptions with claims that the survey reflects the opinion of the majority in the target population, such as, “(CANDIDATE X) NUMBER 1 SA (LOCATION X)” [(Candidate X) NUMBER 1 IN([LOCATION X]); “NAGSALITA NA ANG TAGA (LOCATION X) SINO ANG PRESIDENTE NILA SA HALALAN 2022” [THE PEOPLE OF (LOCATION X) HAVE SPOKEN ABOUT WHO THEIR PRESIDENTIAL CHOICE IS FOR THE 2022 ELECTIONS].

We also noted at least one instance when the survey enumerator’s opening spiel claimed generalizability of results, saying: “*Aalamin natin sino ba ang sinisigaw ng mga taga (Location X) para maging presidente sa susunod na halalan*” [We will find out who the people from (Location)] are clamoring for to be president in the next elections”]. A caption that likewise claimed generalizability also accompanied the uploaded video: “*Ating pakinggan ang tinig ng ating mga kababayan mula sa (Location X) kung sino ang gusto nilang maging susunod na Presidente ng Pilipinas*” [Let us listen to the voice of our fellowmen from (Location X) on who they prefer to be the next President of the Philippines].

Such framing lacks statistical veracity since the nonprobability sampling design does not lend itself to inferential testing. At best, results from a conveniently drawn sample can only describe the sample at hand but not the larger population.

Moreover, some kalye survey videos captured side comments that were uttered by the enumerator while the kalye survey was being administered. For instance, an enumerator commented, “*Solid North na po talaga*” [There really is a solid north], after obtaining a respondent’s answer. Solid North is a term used to describe the voting consensus in the northern region of the Philippines that has been associated to collectively favor a prominent political clan from the north (Pawilen, 2010). Such claims disclose the partial result of the ongoing survey to the respondent and to other prospective respondents within the close vicinity, which violates first, the prescription

on objectivity as it may introduce a bandwagon effect, and second, the prescription on statistical veracity since the entirety of the collected data must first be processed and statistically analyzed before survey results can be accurately and comprehensively reported.

Scientific rigor also calls for reliable processing, analysis, and reporting of kalye survey results. We have observed that some kalye survey videos exclusively featured tallying of survey responses; however, some videos did not report aggregate results at the end of the recording, and most captured on-the-spot tallying of responses. Given that kalye survey videos tend to be post-processed, it is rather challenging to ascertain if all responses have indeed been accounted for in the uploaded videos or whether the videos were edited for reported results to favor a particular candidate.

Additionally, the visibility of the ongoing tally to succeeding respondents introduced leading question elements, which compromised the supposed objectivity of the survey instrument and its administration. This was a common practice in the kalye surveys we reviewed: a survey enumerator holds a tally board, which likewise functions as a show card that lists the names of the candidates. Some enumerators even provided respondents with a summary count of responses as part of survey enumeration. Such manner of survey administration exposed respondents to possible bandwagon or underdog effects.

We also observed how enumerators tended to provide an incomplete report when the responses of those who remained undecided and those who refused to answer were left uncounted in the tallying and aggregation of results.

Furthermore, while kalye surveys fell short on external validity, the way voter preference was tabulated, reported, and, at times, even hyped-up, may have created an impression that a particular candidate was leading, especially among the members of the online public with limited survey literacy. Hearing a particular candidate's name recited often enough, combined with the enumerators' partisan reinforcement of certain votes and exposure to editing elements in the video that highlight partisan-aligned responses, could create the illusion that a particular candidate has taken an assured lead even if the survey did not follow scientific protocols for generating a representative sample, nor was the survey data subjected to testing for statistical veracity. Because of the vivid documentation of kalye surveys and the semblance of random sampling that they offer as random people were approached (Ross et al., 2021), the audience can potentially hold a false impression that the surveys validly and reliably reflect and represent the voices of the electorate.

Moreover, the titles and thumbnail descriptions also reveal political

leanings as partisan YouTube channels tend to spotlight the name of their preferred candidate in the videos. This was especially prominent when partisan content creators uploaded numerous multi-location kalye survey videos, dubbed as “*kalye serye*” (“*serye*” is a Filipino word for series), that repeatedly proclaimed the strong lead of their preferred candidate. This likewise creates an illusion of reliability as multiple surveys from various locations were framed to provide strong evidence of a runaway preference for a particular candidate.

The algorithm of video recommendation in YouTube also adds to this illusion of overwhelming respondent support for a certain candidate, since recommendations are based on previously viewed kalye survey videos and content creator channels. Given that YouTube has grown to be a platform for networked political brokerage (Soriano & Gaw, 2021; Soriano & Gaw, 2022), a YouTube subscriber may be presented with a barrage of partisan thumbnails, titles, and descriptions of kalye surveys displaying a particular candidate’s unscientifically founded overwhelming lead.

Thus, the intentional or unintentional exploitation of survey practice to further partisan agenda materializes not only in the implementation of the kalye survey itself, but also in the production and publication of the kalye survey videos on YouTube, as well as in the algorithm that underlies the video sharing platform (Soriano & Gaw, 2021, 2022). Unfortunately, the rise and viewer popularity of kalye surveys in the lead up to the 2022 Philippine general elections consequently contributed to hyper partisan information disorder, which has been disguised as the result of a legitimate scientific practice.

Evaluating *Kalye* Surveys Through the Lens of Ethical Rigor

Because the survey administration was video-documented, kalye survey content creators claimed that their pre-election survey is more authentic than the public opinion polls conducted by mainstream political polling groups. In particular, kalye survey content creators claimed that the filming of actual respondents serves as proof that real people were actually behind the survey numbers, unlike the confidential data collection followed by mainstream polling groups. Moreover, kalye survey content creators also claimed authenticity that their survey numbers reflect real vote choice, in contrast with the aggregated results published by mainstream polling groups at the end of the survey round, because viewers could keep track of responses through the on-the-spot kalye survey tallying, or they could even do the tallying themselves as the kalye survey is being conducted.

Guided by codes of professional conduct and ethical practice, established polling groups follow the scientific and ethical prescriptions for

administering surveys, managing data, and reporting results. Mainstream polling groups do not video-document nor publish a recording of any of their survey enumeration to safeguard the confidentiality and data privacy of participants (San Pascual et al., 2022a). Moreover, established polling groups provide pre-election survey results from completed data gathering and results are anonymized when reported in aggregated form (San Pascual et al., 2022a).

Perhaps due to limited survey literacy, this seeming lack of transparency in data collection and tabulation has raised doubts in the minds of the public regarding the validity and reliability of survey results emanating from mainstream polling groups (ABS-CBN, 2022). In social science research, however, transparency is documented through a thorough description of research methods and data analysis techniques. In other words, manifesting transparency does not have to be a literal recording and publication of actual data gathering and tabulation.

Pre-election kalye survey content creators have opportunely latched onto this purported lack of transparency to claim that they are offering a more authentic form of survey. A number of them even disclosed that they have embarked on their kalye survey project as a critique against the seemingly nontransparent mainstream public opinion polling practice. In their misguided attempt at authenticity and transparency, kalye surveys have intentionally or unintentionally deviated from the prescribed standard of ethical rigor by disregarding the prescription for autonomy, confidentiality, and data privacy in their production of partisan online content.

Kalye surveys are designed to be a “fast survey,” a quick ask-and-go method of acquiring responses (San Pascual et al., 2022c). As such, we noticed that kalye surveys overlooked the standard protocol for obtaining respondents’ informed consent. Typically, kalye survey enumerators would nonchalantly approach prospective respondents, announce that they are conducting kalye surveys, and then ask at least one vote-choice question. This method tends to assume that prospective respondents have given their consent, not only to participate in the survey itself, but also for their participation to be captured on camera and uploaded on YouTube. We also noted that in the process of filming the respondents’ surroundings, some enumerators accidentally captured minors who were not participants in the kalye survey, or captured the interior of some respondents’ homes. These two types of incidents may need additional consent from the respondents, who may not know that their children and/or their private spaces were already being filmed.

We have likewise observed instances when prospective respondents would display their discomfort by steering away from the camera or by

concealing their faces, but they were still nonetheless included and filmed for the kalye survey. In another instance, a respondent consented to participate on the condition that he would not be filmed. The enumerator reassured him, “*Itatanong na lang. Hindi na kita i-video... ‘Yan narinig niyo na lang ah. Ayaw magpa- video eh*” [I will just ask you. I will not video-record. You [talking to the audience] heard him, he doesn’t want to be video-recorded]. Even with this reassurance, however, the uploaded video still displayed this respondent’s unblurred face. Such acts of survey administration, video documentation, and video uploading violate the ethical principles of informed consent, confidentiality, and data privacy.

Moreover, by tapping ordinary citizens as respondents, kalye survey content creators presented the audience with real-life characters whom they can identify with, which introduced believability and legitimacy in their brokerage of partisan narratives on YouTube (Soriano & Gaw, 2021). Consequently, however, the respondents inadvertently became pawns in the exploitation of a scientific practice in furthering the kalye survey content creators’ partisan objective. While the undisguised displays of the respondents and their vote choice lend a seeming authenticity and transparency to the conduct and reporting of kalye surveys, they have likewise unconsciously contributed to the misuse of surveys for political gains.

Furthermore, autonomy, confidentiality, and data privacy were also compromised when kalye surveys were administered within hearing distance of others in the locations where the survey was conducted. For one, respondents may have been socially pressured to provide answers that appeared to be socially acceptable. We actually observed some respondents shifting their initial response upon hearing the candidate preferences of others. On some occasions, the enumerator administered the question to a group who then hollered their answers back. There were also instances when the survey was administered to a crowd of individuals, and these individuals can be heard remarking on the preferences of others. Thus, there is a very high possibility that groupthink and bandwagon effect took place as kalye survey respondents could have provided what they perceived to be socially pleasing answers. Conducted as such, kalye surveys have collected data that inaccurately reflected voter preferences.

As non-beginners in the field of online content production and dissemination, kalye survey content creators have taken advantage of the multi-sensory affordances that YouTube provides them (Burgess & Green, 2018). Drawing from micro-influencer formulas known to capture and hold the attention of YouTube viewers, enumerators have added variations in their delivery of the same vote choice question to avoid monotony. They

made their banter with their respondents engaging, and added visual and sound effects in their uploaded videos to make the content more interesting. They also incorporated their own version of intriguing opening and closing spiels to drive-up viewership. They also sensationally phrased the video titles and thumbnail descriptions to be clickbait.

While such manner of survey administration, reporting, and dissemination is a deviation from mainstream professional practice, what is more disconcerting is the manifestation of partisan leanings in the conduct of kalye surveys, in their tallying and reporting of survey results, and in their framing of the title and description of their videos on YouTube. To add an appearance of legitimacy (Rodelo, 2022), some partisan kalye surveys even mimicked the delivery of professional anchor-driven newscasts.

Kalye surveys, when done scientifically and ethically, can meaningfully contribute to the election information landscape. However, the design of kalye surveys to supposedly be “more” transparent and “more” authentic than mainstream public opinion polls to gain legitimacy among the members of the public brings with it a host of scientific and ethical issues.

Exploitation of Scientific Practice for Partisan Purposes

In our contribution to *Plaridel's* 20th anniversary issue, our paper focused on the UP College of Mass Communication's media and information literacy agenda, specifically highlighting the literacy required when engaging with surveys as social media content. In particular, we surfaced how the practice of surveys has been exploited when scientific and ethical rigor have been intentionally or unintentionally disregarded for partisan purposes. We focused our attention on election-related kalye surveys that emerged as a popular local YouTube content eight months prior to the conduct of the May 2022 Philippine general elections.

YouTube content creators need to produce content that would attract considerable public attention (Rodelo, 2022) and the as-it-happens chronicling of actual person-on-the-street interviews about voter preference panders to a reality-TV consuming public interested in following the horse-race narrative of the elections. Being able to personally witness the conduct of a pre-election survey and being able to follow the ongoing tallying of voter choice offer the online public a novel way of consuming a rather popular election season media content. Moreover, the strategy of intercepting pedestrians as they go about their daily lives lends to the relatable optics of kalye surveys (Ross et. al., 2021). Approaching a sizable number of random ordinary citizens also contributes to the illusion of representativeness and generalizability of results (Ross et. al., 2021).

The survey enumerators also provided an accessible optic to kalye

surveys, as they appeared to be a typical next-door neighbor or overseas residing relative asking a seemingly mundane election-related question. They usually gave off a very casual, conversational, non-threatening, and at times, comedic vibe when they engaged and bantered with the respondents on camera. In reality, some of these survey enumerators are established or emerging micro-influencers—some have an existing YouTube channel with a good volume of uploaded content, a number even have a considerable subscriber count, while others have already previously posted partisan content. By presenting themselves as ordinary persons, the survey enumerators were able to appear as authentic (Elemia, 2022; Rodelo, 2022), and this benefits their engagement with their viewers (Soriano & Gaw, 2021).

As non-beginners in YouTube content production, these survey enumerators knew how to engage with the audience as they rode on the popularity of election discourse during election season. They also played on the public sentiment against the seeming non-transparency of mainstream public opinion polls by serving an alternative form of pre-election survey that they claimed to be more authentic. They were also able to capitalize on their experience on framing titles and thumbnail descriptions to attract views.

As a potentially lucrative election-related YouTube content, it is not surprising that content creators produced kalye surveys not only to facilitate collection of voter preference data for public consumption, but also as a viable online material for clout chasing (Rodelo, 2022). It is also highly likely that there are content creators, especially those who are known to produce partisan content in their YouTube channels, who deliberately exploited the scientific and ethical practice of surveys to push their partisan objective; it would not be the first time that YouTube content creators displayed overt partisanship while imitating professional practices (Rodelo, 2022). Then again, there may also be kalye survey content creators who, due to limited survey literacy, have unwittingly neglected scientific and ethical prescriptions when they manifested their political bias. Regardless of intention, the organic and algorithmic online circulation of unscientific kalye surveys that breached ethical guidelines have further expanded the partisan information disorder that was already existing even before the 2022 Philippine general elections (Sochua, 2022). Unfortunately, these questionable survey practices emanate primarily from the supporters of one prominent presidential candidate, whose supporters have also been documented to produce and circulate political disinformation (Elemia, 2022).

We therefore enjoin our fellow social science researchers to be on the lookout for these new forms of disinformation campaigns, and to be vigilant against movements that exploit scientific practices in forwarding partisan agenda. Apart from calling these out, we should actively participate in heightening citizen's MIL, specifically on the science and ethics of survey practice so that they can capably assess survey quality as consumers of survey text and, if necessary, so that they can ably design, implement, analyze, and report survey results if they themselves are content creators. Equipping citizens with MIL is a necessary self-defense tool in an era where partisan information disorder is rampant, progressively obscure, and crecively savage.

Apart from the practical significance of interrogating and addressing the scientific and ethical malpractices present in kalye surveys, kalye surveys actually offer a fecund field for updating our theorization on the social construction of public opinion (Krippendorff, 2005) as they are situated within the ecology of democratized content creation and consumption on the one hand, and within the ecosystem of political information disorder on the other hand. Kalye survey summons social science scholars to investigate the incessantly expanding industry of social media content creation and its increasingly strategic position in the public's formation of political choices. It also beckons us to examine the seemingly innocuous public consumption of online political content, which could nonetheless lead to consequential political decisions.

Kalye survey thus opens a fertile opportunity for social science scholars to theoretically and practically engage with the idiosyncratic concerns of our era. It offers a compelling reminder about our enduring responsibility of safeguarding the integrity of social science inquiry. It also presents a chance for us to respond to the omnipresent challenge of making the practice of social science accessible and ever relevant.

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