

COVID-19: A Heuristic Justification of Presidency as a Rhetorical Institution

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ABSTRACT

Crisis leadership falls to the president, the nation's chief policymaker. In response to the global pandemic COVID-19 (Coronavirus), Namibian President Hage Geingob declared a state of emergency on March 17, 2020, under Article 26 (1) of the Namibian constitution. A national crisis is one of the most important occasions for the presidency as a rhetorical institution. Therefore, this article analyses the rhetoric of emergency used by Geingob as his political tool to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Rhetorical situations (Bitzer, 1968) and the rhetorical appeals of ethos, pathos, and logos (Aristotle, 2007) guide this research. National crises like COVID-19 are mostly handled by presidential rhetorical performance. Since the simple declaration of a State of emergency does not provide details of the meaning of the measure, Geingob formulated a number of regulations that constitute clear meaning in terms of measures that were to be followed in order to curb the COVID-19 pandemic as a state of emergency. This research is a qualitative analysis of Geingob's use of rhetoric in announcing the COVID-19 pandemic and outlining the initial COVID-19 safety precautions. Finally, the research found that the precautionary measures were reasonable and considered Namibians' mental state during social isolation and human nature and goodness in their numerous forms. Equally, declaring a state of emergency facilitated effective governance by streamlining decision-making processes and allowing rapid action to overcome the issues posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key Words: COVID-19, rhetoric, presidency, crisis, politics, language.

Introduction

In rhetoric, "a speech never comes alone" (Salazar, 2002, p. 19). There must be a rhetorical situation for any speech to be delivered, including President Geingob's declaration of a state of emergency. Salazar (2002) demonstrates that speeches are not isolated events. Every speech addresses social needs, concerns, and goals. Political speeches address critical issues, impact public opinion, and influence legislation. Influential speeches that inspire mass action have powered social reform movements, revolutions, and historical transformations. Hence, a speech is inseparable from the socio-political landscape in which it emerges. According to Bitzer (1968, p. 5), "rhetorical discourse comes into existence as a result of a response to a situation, in the same sense as an answer comes into existence as a response to a question." For anyone to understand Geingob's declaration, it should be clear that the rhetorical situation is the presence of COVID-19 in Namibia. It is COVID-19 that demands a response and an answer, which comes in the speech for President Geingob's declaration of the state of emergency and results in the formulation of the regulation measures. In other words, COVID-19 is the exigence of Geingob's discourse. Bitzer (1968, p. 6) explains the exigency of a speech as "an imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be." Bitzer (1968) further explains that exigency is a social ill or significant problem in the world, something to which people must attend [to].

Moreover, while crisis narratives continue to be key instruments in political communication, it is vital to emphasise the deeper comprehension of the presidency as a rhetorical institution. Presidents lead their countries and use rhetoric in their speeches to advance their policies. The power of the president is the power to persuade (Neustadt, 1990, as cited in Neuff, 2018). As a result, presidents justify their positions and push their policies through language. In other words, speeches have transformed the modern presidency into a vital platform for rhetorical leadership. Therefore, the aims of this research are as follows:

- Explore the functions of the presidency as a rhetorical institution in relation to the national crisis situation of COVID-19 in Namibia.
- Analyse the language and rhetoric of emergency used by President Hage Geingob as his political tool to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Literature Review

The Situation of Rhetorical Crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unprecedented global crisis that has affected every aspect of human existence. This article seeks to investigate the rhetorical crisis within the context of COVID-19. It investigates the numerous rhetorical strategies, discourses, and communication practices utilised by presidents during this crisis, highlighting their impact on public understanding, decision-making, and societal responses. The idea that presidents exert power through rhetoric is certainly not new. According to Medhurst (2007), rhetoric can be used as a leadership tool, and it is often the key measure of success or failure during one's presidency. In order to situate the arguments on the Namibian rhetorical presidency and its significant stance on the COVID-19 pandemic situation, the research begins with the following brief background information on this pandemic:

The coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic is the defining global health crisis of our time and the greatest challenge we have faced since World War Two. Since its emergence in Asia late last year (2019), the virus has spread to every continent except Antarctica. (World Health Organisation, 2020)

On February 4, 2020, the World Health Organisation declared the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC), and on March 11, 2020, it was declared a pandemic (WHO, 2020). In Namibia, the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic was made on March 14, 2020. The declaration came after a Romanian couple was reported to have had the first cases of COVID-19 in the country. Everything begins with words, as words have the critical power to shape realities. Words are embodiments of perspectives, as they are not only neutral tools for depicting the world, but they also need to fit the purpose of the speaker to become effective tools of persuasion. In times of emergency crises such as COVID-19, Namibians look up to their chief policymakers (presidents) for discourse on the way forward regarding their political leadership and legislation. Presidents react and address the nation; their oratory needs to fulfil and carry an informative function, making sense of the events and initiating the problem-solving process (Neuff, 2018).

Bitzer (1968) presents the conception of rhetorical situations as a controlling and fundamental concern of rhetorical theory. Bitzer further asserts that a rhetorical situation comes into existence as a response to a situation in the same sense that an answer comes into existence in response to a question or a solution in response to a problem (p. 5). Bitzer further clarifies that a situation is rhetorical if it needs and invites discourse capable of participating in the situation and thereby altering its reality. In addition, Werth (1999, p. 47) argues that the linguistic definition of discourse is "a combination of text and its relevant context". This assertion is relevant as it provides context for the crisis situation, which triggered rhetorical responses from President Geingob. Furthermore, by noting the importance of the language used in political rhetoric, Filardo-Llamas (2014, p. 212) asserts that "political discourse is more connected to the political principles underlying discourse in the place where it is produced".

Bitzer's theory further exemplifies that the "rhetorical situation" centres on the fact that people functionally interact with their environment. Therefore, he concludes that rhetoric is the means through which people use discourse to "achieve harmonious adjustment with the environment" (Bitzer, 1980, p. 21). Overall, Bitzer maintains that the nature and purpose of rhetoric are communication that alters a situation when introduced and will be used to alter situations when something is seen to be other than how it should be (Bitzer, 1980).

The novel COVID-19 is a global health pandemic situation, which means that the disease is a threatening condition for the public. In his articulations of COVID-19's first precautionary measures, the Namibian president highlighted the exigent nature of COVID-19. COVID-19 is not only a threat to the lives of the Namibian people and the public health system; it also bears negative economic impacts, threatening the survival of businesses and consequently jobs and livelihoods (Geingob, 2020); therefore, the president stressed curbing the spread of the disease as the key priority.

Rhetorical Presidency and Aristotelian Rhetorical Appeals

President Hage Geingob's declaration of COVID-19 as a state of emergency is in accordance with the Namibian constitution. Article 26 (1) of the Namibian Constitution grants the President the authority to declare a state of emergency in certain situations, including those that endanger public health and safety. This declaration's communication reveals the functions of the presidency as a rhetorical institution through his public engagement techniques. The research draws on Aristotle's (2007) works on the three rhetorical appeals of pathos, ethos, and logos. Pathos denotes the function of the audience's emotional state, while ethos denotes trustworthiness, authority, and tone, and logos denotes the logical appeal of the argument, such as facts, statistics, and scientific data. According to Aristotle (2007), the success of the speaker is dependent on the emotional dispositions of the audience. As a result, Geingob appealed to Namibian emotions to persuade their minds to fully understand the COVID-19 response measures. According to Ahmad (2020), the President of Indonesia made an effort to establish a particular leadership style during the COVID-19 epidemic by emphasising the Aristotelian appeals of pathos, ethos, and logos. As a result, "different systems of government generate various types of discourse (Campbell & Jamieson, 1990). The executive branches use a language of authority to enable governments to convey to the public the ethos, logos, and pathos that are necessary for making critical decisions.

Due to his prominent political position and his access to means of communication, a president, by defining a situation, might be able to shape the context in which events or proposals are viewed by the public (Zarefsky, 2009). President Geingob formulated strategic regulatory measures in response to the pandemic situation. These regulations have a clear meaning in terms of the measures that must be in place for Namibia to curb the further spread of COVID-19. Geingob presented these measures directly to the people; therefore, an emergency crisis offers an opportunity for presidential rhetorical leadership. It shows how rhetoric functions within the context of a culture.

Finally, the president's role as an institution of rhetoric is crucial in times of crisis. President Hage Geingob of Namibia used language strategically to influence public opinion, direct government action, and foster national solidarity during the COVID-19 emergency. This research contributes to a greater comprehension of the role rhetoric plays in crisis communication by shedding light on the relationship between the presidency, constitutional conformity, and the role of rhetoric.

Theoretical Framework

Bitzer's (1968) rhetorical situation and Aristotle's (2007) rhetorical appeal of ethos, pathos, and logos guide this research. This framework analyses persuasive communication through the integration of rhetorical situation theory and rhetorical theories of ethos, pathos, and logos. This is in the sense of how rhetorical situations influence the use of ethos, pathos, and logos to persuade.

Bitzer's rhetorical situation provides a valuable approach to analysing President Hage Geingob's speech on the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic and his proclamation of the first precautionary measures of the COVID-19 state of emergency. By considering the exigency, audience, constraints, and rhetorical strategies employed, this research unpacks how the speech effectively addresses the rhetorical situation, communicates key information, and motivates the audience to respond appropriately to the pandemic. This framework allows a comprehensive analysis of the speech's persuasive power and its impact on public perception and actions. Moreover, by examining the speaker's ethos, pathos, and logos, researchers can gain insights into how President Geingob effectively communicates and persuades the audience regarding the seriousness of the pandemic and the necessity of the state of emergency measures. This framework allows a comprehensive analysis of the speech's persuasive strategies and their impact on the audience's perception and response.

Methodology

This research is a qualitative analysis of the rhetoric that President Geingob used in his declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic and his proclamation of the first precautionary measures of the COVID-19 state of emergency. These are the most significant statements in which the President of Namibia addressed the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the analysis does not only provide insights into the president's rhetoric and communication strategies but also provides one of the important functions of the presidency as a rhetorical institution concerning national crisis management as well as his constitutional authority. The Namibia Constitution's provisions for the president's duties, powers, and functions clearly illustrate this. This will therefore justify the notion of COVID-19 as a heuristic justification of the presidency as a rhetorical institution. Therefore, the primary data collection includes the declaration speech and the first speech where President Geingob provided COVID-19 precautionary measures. Additionally, official government sources such as reports, publications, and documents released by the Namibian government or relevant ministries were consulted to gain a comprehensive understanding of the official response to COVID-19. Moreover, news articles from credible sources discussing the Namibian President's rhetoric and communication during the pandemic were gathered to provide context and additional perspectives.

Analysis and Discussion

Geingob's Declaration of state of emergency in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic brought with its alarm and despondency as it decimated the human population of the world, starting in Huwan, China, and spreading across the world like an octopus. With this danger in Namibia, Hage Geingob's presidency made the fight against COVID-19 a concerted effort for all Namibians by involving all stakeholders from the beginning of the fight against the pandemic. The Namibian president made this decision because the pandemic has demonstrated the delicacy of humankind. Therefore, the preparedness of all Namibians was required from the onset in order to curb the pandemic.

One of the duties, powers, and functions that are provided to the Namibian president by the Constitution is to declare a state of emergency. Article 26 (1) provides this directive, which is to be done at a time of national disaster or during a state of national defense or public emergency threatening the lives of the nation or the constitutional order. Therefore, in his capacity as the President of the Republic of Namibia, Hage Geingob made a declaration of a state of emergency for Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on March 17, 2020, as follows:

Under Article 26(1) of the Namibian Constitution, read together with section 30(3) of the Disaster Risk Management Act, 2012 (Act No. 10 of 2012), I declare that, with effect from 17 March 2020, a State of emergency exists in the whole of Namibia on account of the outbreak of the Coronavirus disease (COVID -19). (Geingob, 2020)

The phrase “state of emergency” paints a picture of impending danger and instills fear in the mind of the audience, directly and indirectly appealing for them to behave themselves accordingly in the presence of COVID-19. According to Windt (1986), the president must make a public announcement that declares the situation a crisis, calling for the full support of the public while illustrating the need for decisive action. Windt (p. 6) further states that “the president’s perception of the situation and the rhetoric he uses to describe it mark an event as a crisis.” Therefore, the Namibian President, Hage Geingob, used the power provided to him in Article 26 (1) of the Namibian Constitution to declare a state of emergency for COVID-19. He further ordered a range of responsive measures to control the emergency of COVID-19.

In his declaration, Geingob cited legal references, such as Article 26(1) of the Namibian Constitution and Section 30(3) of the Disaster Risk Management Act, 2012. By grounding his declaration in legal provisions, Geingob demonstrated his authority and adherence to the rule of law. This helps establish his credibility and persuades the audience to view him as a knowledgeable and responsible leader. Furthermore, the president provided a clear and rational justification for declaring a state of emergency. He related the outbreak of COVID-19 to the legal provisions, explaining that it is a situation that warrants exceptional measures. By explicitly mentioning the constitutional and legal frameworks, Geingob provided a logical basis for his decision. This appeals to the audience’s sense of reason and encourages them to accept the necessity of the state of emergency. Overall, President Geingob’s declaration effectively employs Aristotle’s rhetorical appeals. By establishing his ethos through legal references, presenting logical reasoning for the state of emergency using *logos*, and appealing to the audience’s emotions with *pathos*, he constructs a persuasive argument. The combination of these rhetorical elements strengthens President Geingob’s position and encourages the Namibian people to support and comply with the government’s response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

This section analyses President Geingob’s emergency rhetoric in terms of the declaration of a state of emergency of COVID-19 that he presented to the people of Namibia. Geingob proposed a course of action as he had appealed for public support, transcending a higher moral principle. All the courses of action Geingob’s Presidency proposed were through legislation. This, in a way, demonstrates the rhetoric of inclusiveness and a healthy democratic society.

Proclamation of the first regulation measures of the COVID-19 state of emergency

Rhetoric is one of the defining characteristics of President Geingob’s leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic. He started by giving regular news conferences at the State House to keep Namibians

properly informed about this pandemic. The first seven regulatory measures were formulated following the confirmation of two cases of COVID-19 in Namibia. On March 14, 2020, the president made the nation aware of these actions and urged everyone to consider them in order to stop the pandemic. Geingob asserted that:

The World Health Organisation has declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. Therefore, Namibia has to take steps to deal with this pandemic. The Minister of Health announced this morning that there are two confirmed cases of COVID-19 on Namibian soil. (Geingob, 2020, p. 1)

With a pluralistic response to COVID-19, different stakeholders, both at the government level and at the non-governmental level, contributed to this response. Among others, “WHO Namibia, as part of an all UN approach with partners, has been providing support for preparedness, response, and mitigation of the outbreak” (Namibia COVID-19 Situation Report no. 96).

Controlling the spread of the virus in Namibia required prioritising the health and safety of people. Therefore, in his speech, Geingob asserted that “the health of the Namibian people is the first priority”. Dinh (2020) asserts that policymakers in developing countries must concentrate first on implementing health-related measures and then on economic measures. President Geingob's first response to preventing the spread of the virus in Namibia highlights the significance of taking necessary precautions, especially in the area of health. This rhetorical emphasis on preventative actions aims to convey the urgency and seriousness of the situation. Geingob emphasised the need for these actions to show how seriously the government takes the threat of the virus to the health and safety of the people of Namibia. Moreover, leaders must navigate uncertainty and ambiguity during crises. Therefore, by updating, clarifying, and resolving issues, honest communication reduces uncertainty. Walker et al. (2016, p. 11) concluded that the role of open and honest communication is crucial not only for understanding the complex nature of a crisis but also for assisting the leader in forming a mindset to guide the organisation through the crisis and interpret the experience of the crisis.

To protect and caution Namibians from being deeply affected by COVID-19, President Geingob outlined seven precautionary measures as follows:

- The Independence Celebrations that were scheduled for the Independence Stadium were called off. However, Geingob’s swearing-in-ceremony for a second term of office, which was to have coincided with the celebrations, took place in a relatively low-key event at State House.
- Funds budgeted for the Independence Celebrations were to be diverted to the COVID-19 campaign.
- Inbound and outbound travel to and from Qatar, Ethiopia and Germany was suspended with immediate effects.
- All big gatherings were banned, and the restrictions were to be reviewed after 30 days.
- Lockdown of Windhoek Gymnasium School, where there had been suspected contact with the virus, for two weeks.
- Suspension of all foreign travel by Namibian government officials, including State-Owned Enterprises. (Geingob, 2020)

Like other governments around the world, the Namibian government issued guidelines and regulations to combat the spread of COVID-19. These regulation measures focused more on

limitations of the size of public gatherings, protocols for maintaining social distance, and restrictions on travel and movement. The cancellation of the Independence Day celebrations was the first measure. A country's independence celebration is a significant landmark in its political landscape. However, the 20th Namibia independence celebration, which had also marked the inauguration of President Hage Geingob's second term of office, was abruptly cancelled due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

President Geingob's ethical appeal was indicated by the cancellation of the independence celebrations and the adjustment of the inaugural ceremony. In this measure, Geingob's rhetoric showed that he is a responsible leader who prioritises the welfare of the Namibian people over his own political or personal interests by prioritising public health and safety over ceremonial occasions. Therefore, it is evident that presidential rhetorical leadership influences the collective interpretation of the crisis (Montiel et al., 2021). Furthermore, the decision to cancel the Independence Day celebrations was reasonable because huge crowds significantly increased the risk of COVID-19 spreading. To ensure the safety of the people and prevent the possible transmission of the virus, President Geingob amended the events with a valid justification. This further emphasised the seriousness of the COVID-19 epidemic and the necessity of prioritising public health. Additionally, this was an emotional appeal that appealed to the shared concerns, anxieties, and sense of duty among Namibians, fostering a sense of unity and support for the government's decision.

The COVID-19 pandemic created an emergency that required the postponement of significant meetings in order to stop the virus from spreading. In order to protect the public's health, a response was necessary given the pandemic's severity and immediacy. The pandemic had a direct impact on the Namibian people, who were looking forward to President Geingob's inauguration and the independence celebrations with great anticipation. They required assurance and information regarding the change. Therefore, arguing from Bitzer's (1968) rhetorical situation, President Geingob's decision resonates with the audience and effectively addresses the exigency. Equally, the ethical, logical, and emotional arguments emphasised his responsibility; therefore, the research demonstrates how the decision aligns with the pandemic's exigencies and addresses the situation's constraints, ultimately assuring the health and safety of the population.

It is important to note that the target audience was those in Namibia who suffered from the pandemic. People needed to be aware that the government is attempting to combat the virus and that adequate funding is supporting those efforts. Therefore, in his second precautionary measure, Geingob asserted that "Funds budgeted for the Independence Celebrations were to be diverted to the COVID-19 campaign". Additionally, this measure employs a rhetorical strategy based on responsibility and practicality. Geingob once again emphasised the necessity of prioritising public health and combating the virus. Shifting funds from a party to the COVID-19 campaign is a strategy aimed at gaining the audience's acceptance and compassion by demonstrating carefulness and intelligent utilisation of resources. Therefore, "it is the rhetorical event that takes the shape of a rhetorical situation if national pride or state concerns impose an exigency" (Salazar, 2009).

The reallocation of funding from the Independence Day celebrations to the COVID-19 campaign was necessary. The regulation was created to control the spread of the disease and guarantee that resources were distributed fairly. This measure has also used a rhetorical technique based on

accountability and pragmatism. By diverting cash from a party to the COVID-19 campaign, Geingob again emphasised the need to put public health first and fight the virus head-on. By displaying careful and thoughtful use of resources, this approach hopes to win over the audience's approval and sympathy.

The third precautionary measure also ordered an immediate suspension of travel for Germany, Ethiopia, and Qatar. By stopping flights to and from Germany, Ethiopia, and Qatar, President Geingob showed his moral authority. He, therefore, prioritised the well-being and security of the Namibian people over economic considerations. Furthermore, this measure was formulated in order to prevent the importation and spread of the COVID-19 virus from nations with high infection rates. The president further appealed to Namibians' emotions by allaying their concerns about the spread of the virus by temporarily restricting travel to and from these nations. The limitations were the impediments or challenges that shaped how one responded to the exigence. In this instance, restrictions included upholding public trust and cooperation, following foreign travel regulations, and striking a balance between public health and economic interests.

Furthermore, Geingob (2020) articulated in his fourth preventative measure that "all large gatherings were prohibited, and the restrictions were to be reviewed after 30 days." The ban on such gatherings made sense because there was a considerable risk that the virus would spread through them. The prohibition on large gatherings employed both pathos and ethos by addressing the public's valid concerns about the likelihood of disease transmission in such circumstances. The COVID-19 pandemic created an urgent situation that required swift intervention. In order to protect the public's health and prevent broad transmission throughout Namibia, immediate action was required due to the severity and speed of the virus's spread. Equally, ethical leadership builds trust and confidence. Ethics helps leaders build a culture of respect and trust, which boosts their public image. Therefore, garnering people's trust and respect demands strong integrity, fairness, and justice before persuading the team to act ethically (Samad et al., 2022). As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government has banned large gatherings and stated that they will re-evaluate their decision in 30 days. Ethical rationalisations, logical reasons, and emotive pleas all supported the effort to protect the Namibian people from the dangers of big crowds. It addressed the critical nature of the pandemic, considered the well-being of the Namibian people, and managed the difficulties of preserving public health while balancing economic concerns and winning over people.

The fifth precautionary measure was to "lockdown Windhoek Gymnasium School, where there had been suspected contact with the virus, for a period of two weeks" (Geingob, 2020). Windhoek Gymnasium School's proximity to a possible source of the virus produced a public health emergency that necessitated a quick response to contain the outbreak and stop its spread. The lockdown of the school was based on sound reasoning, as it is known that even minimal exposure to the virus can result in widespread infection. This action is consistent with reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission within the academic community and stopping its spread to the general public. Therefore, the lockdown at Windhoek Gymnasium School addressed the fears and worries of the Namibian people about their children being exposed to the virus at school. The government's concern for their safety and security, especially that of students, teachers, and staff, was reaffirmed.

The last precautionary measure was the "suspension of all foreign travel by Namibian government

officials, including state-owned enterprises” (Geingob, 2020). The ban on international travel for all Namibian government employees and State-Owned Enterprises addressed the anxieties and concerns of the Namibian people about the possible spread of the virus, appealing to their pathos. This demonstrates the government's concern for their welfare and inspires confidence and peace of mind. The rationale for the travel ban is that going abroad raises the probability of picking up the virus and spreading it to others. This action is consistent to reduce the influx of COVID-19 cases from other countries and stop their possible spread within Namibia.

Moreover, Geingob's initial regulatory measures are consistent with Bitzer's rhetorical situation theory. The urgency of the pandemic necessitated a rhetorical response to safeguard the Namibian population. The measures effectively resolve the exigence, considering the constraints of the social and emotional status of the audience. Equally important, the measures employ rhetorical appeals and strategies to mitigate the impact of the infection and protect public health. Moreover, the effectiveness of these measures was analysed based on their capacity to address the exigence and meet the expectations of the target audience. Therefore, it conforms to “the rule of law and justice for all” of the Namibia Constitution, Article 1(1). This means that all the people and institutions in the country, including government officials, were expected to follow those regulations and be subjected to penalties where they are found to be in breach. Therefore, the pandemic of COVID-19 justifies the presidency as a rhetorical institution.

Namibia had gone 44 days with no new confirmed cases reported during COVID-19 stage 1 (WHO, 2020). Therefore, Geingob’s presidency received high praise for its success in quickly containing and stopping the spread of COVID-19 in the country. However, on a sad note, COVID-19 cases in Namibia had been gradually increasing during Stage 2 of the state of emergency. Such a notable increase was worrisome to the government. Therefore, other additional measures were added. However, those additional measures are not part of this research. The current research focuses solely on the measures of stage 1.

Conclusion

This research analysed President Geingob’s emergency rhetoric for his declaration of the COVID-19 state of emergency and the first precautionary measures. Geingob proposed a course of action and urged public support. This clearly shows the presidency to have been a rhetorical institution. This was characterised, among others, by the urgent announcement of the pandemic as part of the power vested in his office by the constitution. He issued guidelines and regulatory measures to combat the spread of COVID-19. This was a strategic action towards mitigating the pandemic. It appears, from the analysis, that President Geingob acted fast, and that action resulted in Namibia being able to manage and contain the spread of the virus at an early stage when the first cases were recorded in the country. They were all imported cases, and Namibia, at that time, was hailed as one of the leaders in containing the virus, especially in Southern Africa (WHO, 2020). All these successes are attributed to Geingob’s swift rhetorical performance in dealing with the pandemic.

Recommendation

Based on the rhetorical analysis of the declaration of a State of emergency and the announcement of the first precautionary measures for the COVID-19 pandemic that was done in this study, it is commendable that the government of Namibia has implemented measures that have helped to

control the pandemic to a large extent in stage 1. While President Geingob was crystal clear on social and economic measures, his rhetoric was silent on technological measures, leaving everyone to compete independently in this technological or digitalization-related domain. The acquisition of the necessary technological tools to prepare the nation for the e-governance policy should have been included in the president's rhetoric at that stage, to prepare the nation for the e-governance policy. This policy should aim to leverage technology to enhance the efficiency, transparency, and accessibility of government services. In retrospect, Geingob's rhetoric seemed to miss the opportunity to outline how the government would implement the e-governance policy in response to COVID-19's challenges. These measures would have better prepared the nation to enhance its capacity to respond to global challenges, contribute to the global digital community, and maintain resilience since the beginning of the pandemic.

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