

VOTERS PRACTICES IN THE PHILIPPINE ELECTION

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Received: 05.05.2020

Revised: 02.06.2020

Accepted: 28.06.2020

Abstract

Electing public officers is the most exciting event in Philippines. It is when friends turn to enemies and relatives into insignificant all in the name of the candidate they supported. The research unveils the rationale behind this exciting event. This research resolves the common practices before election. What are the problems and challenges encountered? How do voters behave before election? And what Policy Recommendation on Electoral Reforms can be proposed based on the findings of the study? This study made use purposive sampling. Interview is conducted in one of the poorest province in the Philippines which is Southern Leyte and Fifty (50) selected respondents from the five municipalities of Cebu Province must be of legal age (18) and above, and a registered voter. The researchers identified the following respondents based on characteristics that they deem to be the basic qualification significant to make this study possible. The result of the research strongly recommended that Commission on Election should provide an avenue so that the voters will know well the candidates they are about to choose. Debate is advisable prior to the election proper. In this way, the voters will be educated on the capabilities of the future officials. Government should do its best to stop vote buying.

Keywords--- election, electoral reforms, voters, vote buying, electorate, behavior

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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.31838/jcr.07.08.200>

INTRODUCTION

Rationale of the Study

Electing public officers is the most exciting event in Philippines. It is when friends turn to enemies and relatives into insignificant at all. Voters are diehard to the candidates they supported. As to the reasons why it is so, this research would answer along the way those queries. In addition, this research unveils the rationale behind this exciting event. Election is every 3 year except for the position of president, *barangay* and *sagguniangkabataan (SK)*. Only those who are 18 and older can elect. Elections are held not just for national leadership but also for the representation at the provincial and local level.

Accordingly, Philippine elections are often marred by violence, fraud and irregularities. Polling stations ran out of ballots; ballot boxes missing; names of legitimate voters are not on voting list; dead people remain on list that have not been updated; stations ran out of ink that keeps voters from voting twice. All these allegations will be verified in this research. In addition, there have also been allegations that computers have been manipulated to change results. Vote buying and dirty tricks are run-of-the-mill. In extreme situations, political groups resorted to switching ballot boxes.

According to Harden (2010), in his Washington post: "Elections in the Philippines are personality-driven, a kind of national soap opera in which distinctions between infamy and celebrity tend to blur over time." Elections in the Philippines are perceived as the arena in which the country's elite families compete for political power.

The wealthiest clans contest national and provincial offices. In the *Barangays*, where most people are equally poor, election confers social prestige but no real power or money. Thus, election which the embodiment of democracy fails to cast into print. Several laws crafted to mend problems in election but of no avail. According to Karl O'Connor, Saltanat Janenova and Colin Knox (2019), "[i]t is the only Central Asia country to be categorized as 'partly free' because of its commitment to democracy and modestly competitive party politics, although not without evidence of vote buying in elections."

Theoretical Background

This study is anchored on David Mayhew (1974) idea which provides a simple illustration in which he found out that individual motivation could reveal a great deal about the ways members behaved and even about what kinds of public policy actions would be likely to produce. Out of this theory, a conclusion can be drawn proving or disproving the aforementioned theory.

RELATED LITERATURES AND STUDIES

Montesquieu (1986) pointed out in "The Spirit of Laws", in the case of elections in a republic or democracy, voters alternate between being the rulers of the country as well as the subjects of the government. By the act of voting, the people operate in a sovereign (or ruling) capacity, acting as "masters" to select their government's "servants". Accordingly, even the changes in voting behavior, there is still a lot to be done in the electoral process. The right of suffrage is considered a vital exercise of democracy, yet not much is known about how voters themselves regard elections and the respondents did not know much about the Philippine electoral process. They had negative perceptions about elections in the country (Capadocia et. al, 2008). Voting as a political behavior can be influenced by several factors like the individuals' personal characteristics, their social environment, and their exposure to the mass media and other campaign materials. The personal networks of voters also significantly influence their voting behavior because people form and maintain social relations with others who have the same socio-economic, ethnic, and educational background, as well as political preference (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, & McPhee, 1968).

THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

This study described the Filipino Behavior during Election. Specifically, answers to the following queries were sought;

1. What is the profile of the respondent in terms of: age, gender, and civil status.
2. What are the common practices before election?
3. What are the problems and challenges encountered?
4. How do voters behave before election?
5. What Policy Recommendation on Electoral Reforms can be

proposed based on the findings of the study?

Review of Related Literature

Electoral systems relate to the detailed constitutional arrangements and voting systems which determines individuals and political parties are elected to position of power through votes. Voting systems then determine the results on the basis of the tally. Philippines follows the popular election where the candidate who garnered the highest number of votes will eventually win. Thus, making the election day as the day to win in the political arena. In proportional system, election day is not the only to sit in public office, making the election day as not ultimate end to the political ambition. Many countries have growing electoral reform movement, which advocate systems such as approval voting, single transferrable vote, instant run-off voting or a Condorcet method; these methods are also gaining popularity for lesser elections in some countries where more important elections still use more traditional counting methods. Lately, and several elections held, Philippines adapted a system to avoid fraud by the use counting machine.

The Philippines has a long history of competitive politics extending far back into the Spanish colonial era. From early Spanish times, municipal officials (*gobernadorcillos*) were chosen, usually at two-year intervals, by and from among *illustrados* of each municipality, who qualified for that honour by their superior wealth and education.

Elections are the most highly-anticipated events in the Philippines. It is held so that we can have a voice in the government. We can't be all in the government, so we choose whose best among us. Indeed, election is viewed to be the primary mechanism in determining who has political control over the government in the national and local levels. It can be viewed that election is a modern way of a Darwinian doctrine of Survival of the Fittest.

Participation is central functioning of a democratic society and we should find out if organized citizen participation enhances the success of any government program, especially the delivery of public services. The Philippine experience with citizen participation, though quite dismal in some respect attest to the fact that in a way, citizen participation enhances the administration of government programs. "[T]he individual who is denied the right of participation in public affairs is limited in his capacity for responsible public action, while the person who participate in decision making is forced to weigh interests other than his own; and is guided to the case of conflicting claims by another rule, principle and maxim other than his private partialities which have for their reason of existence the common good" (Mill in Cole, 1974).

Free Show - candidates will hire *artistasto* sing and dance to ensure that voters will show up at their campaign gigs. Free foods - without foods, no Filipino gathering. Free clothes - one classic campaign item is the T-shirt that usually features a picture of the candidate and their names in a great big letters. And the most addictive is Money.

The political field is structured like religion. The former arbitrarily designates a sphere or field as the only legitimate field of politics. With this self-definition, it posits what are to be taken as the only legitimate, relevant political problems and proffers the corresponding competencies which those who would seek to act in the political field must have in order to advance solutions to the problems (Bourdieu, 1984)

A complete theory of politics clearly requires analysis at both levels, electoral and governmental. Voters must evaluate governments' promises in terms of the post-election governmental game that the elected officials will have to play and

elected officials' incentives in the governmental game are largely determined by their perceptions of how the voters will behave in the next electoral game Myerson (2001).

Ballock et al. (2001) suggested nine features of modern policy making which could look into the policy to consider. The first one the long term effect of the policy. Second is how communicating to the people. Third is the innovative, flexible, and creative process. Fourth is the evidence based of sources. Fifth is involvement of key stakeholders sixth is organizational structure. Seventh is reviewing. Eight is systematic evaluation of the policy and lastly lessons learn on the implementation of the policy.

In relation to this study, understanding the policy through policy models would enhance the understanding of how should policy be crafted in solving issues and problems. The first model is the "1960s system model" explains that policy is product of information and produces outputs such as laws and regulations. Second is the "heuristic model" which policy undergoes cycle from issue identification up to evaluation. Third is the "rational model" which assumes that policy decisions are made rationally. Fourth is the "bounded rationality model" point out that people should engage in policy activity. Fifth is the "institutional rational choice framework" focuses on how institutional rules alter individual behaviors. Sixth, the "Incrementalism model" that engaged people in the policy activity argue based on their existing information. Seventh, the "punctuated equilibrium model" explains that policy changes slowly. Eight is the "multiple streams model" suggest that solutions are products of politics, policy and the problem. Lastly is the "advocacy coalition's model" which emphasizes on the power of advocacy groups. With these, the aforementioned models emphasize greatly that policy is a long process and it should involve other stakeholders for a good policy to exist. Policy should not be crafted alone by the government officials rather an open communication in policy activity as pointed out by the different models.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter highlights explanations about the operations of the research process which includes the research method, the environment, the informants the instrument and the data gathering procedure.

Research Design

This research uses descriptive type of research typically taken from the survey and interview.

Research Respondents

This study made use purposive sampling. Interview is conducted in the poorest province in the Philippines which is Southern Leyte and Fifty (50) selected respondents from the five municipalities of Cebu Province must be of legal age (18) and above, a registered voter, a citizen of the Philippines, a certified Cebuano and is residing within the jurisdiction of the Province of Cebu. The researchers identified the following respondents based on characteristics that they deem to be the basic qualification significant to make this study possible.

Research Environment

Cebu is the Center of commerce and trade in the Visayas region of the Philippines blessed with abundant resources and strategic location along with its immense population, its leaders have proven good governance in their areas of political jurisdiction where Cebuanos are considered to be "critical voters" during elections and the presence of many civic organizations that operate based on the needs of the Cebuano people.

The researchers have selected five municipalities in the Province of Cebu. The following are tabulated below based upon the class distribution:

Table 1. Class Distribution of Municipalities

Municipality	Class Distribution
Municipality of Minglanilla	First Class
Municipality of San Fernando	Second Class
Municipality of Cordova	Third Class
Municipality of Sogod	Fourth Class
Municipality of Ronda	Fifth Class

Research Instrument

The researchers used a research-made survey questionnaire which contained relevant information of the electoral process, election participation, and problems/challenges encountered which the respondents gave their own answers related to the problem of this study.

Research Procedures

Gathering of Data

A number of printed communications were addressed to the local government of the five municipalities to support formality in administering the study.

Upon the approval of the requests, the researchers arranged, reproduced and distributed the research-made questionnaires to the respondents/selected registered voted that is qualified in the conduct of this study.

Treatment of Data

Gathered data from the survey were tabulated for presentation, analysis, and interpretation.

The result of the survey was processed using descriptive statistical analysis. This includes weighted mean and simple percentages.

For the profile of the respondents, simple percentage is applied using the following formula:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100$$

Where: P = Percentage
 F = Frequency Count
 N = Number of Observation

For the purpose of this study the weighted mean is utilized to describe level of participation, perception on the implementation of electoral process, and the problems/challenges encountered. Hence, this formula was used:

$$WM = \frac{\sum fw}{N}$$

Where: WM = weighted mean
 \sum = Summation
 f = frequency count
 w = weight
 N = number of observation

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the answer to specific problems, analysis of data and its implication. Gathered responses from the selected voters OF the five municipalities conducted by the researchers within the scope of the study were also corroborated.

Profile of the Respondents

Shown in Table 1 is the profile of the respondents from the five (5) selected municipalities in Cebu Province in the following frequency and percentage distribution.

In terms of age, 18 (36%) are under the age 18-23 years old; 13 (26%) are within 40 and above; 7 (14%) of the respondents belonged to ages 24-29; while there are the same number 6 (12%) that are under age groups 30-35 and 36-40. This means that majority of the respondents are still young and are newly registered voters. Next to the highest are respondents who are adults and are *Lumads* that have lived in their respective municipalities many years already thus they are well-versed on the electoral process and activities involving election. Hence, their perceptions are reliable and accurate as to the performance of the municipalities during election periods.

In terms of gender, majority of the respondents are females 31 (62%) and only 19 (38%) who are males. This is because; the population of women outnumbers the population of men. Study shows that the ratio of men compared to women in the Philippines in terms of population is 1:7. And this is also because, men has a greater percentage in terms of mortality rate ranging to 22.49 deaths than female who only have 17.26 in the year 2010.

According to Panoplo and Rolda (2014), the effects of industrialization and urbanization are more apparent in the changing role of women in the society. With the advent of the 20th century, there has been an increase in women’s participation in the economy. Even in the Philippines, there are women who occupy positions of power as CEO (Chief Executive Officer) and managers. Their election to position of power has indicated that more and more women participate productively in activities/work outside homes.

In terms of civil status, table 1 shows that 29 (58%) are single, 19 (38%) are married, and there is only 2 (4%) widow among the respondents. This means that majority of the respondents are single.

In terms of income, 25 (50%) have an income of 5,000 or below; 5 (10%) receive an income of 9,000-11,000 likewise to the income ranging 16,000-18,000 monthly; there are 10 (20%) under the monthly income 12,000-15,000; while 3 (6%) of the respondents fall under monthly income ranging from 6,000-8,000 and 2 (4%) to 19,000 and above. This means that majority of the respondents have a monthly income of 5,000 or below that falls less than the minimum wage.

In terms of educational attainment, majority of the respondents (34%) are college graduate; next is 13 (26%) high school graduate; 8 (16%) are undergraduate level; 7 (14%) high school level; and 3 (6%) elementary level. Further, with the lesser number of 2 (4%) belonged to elementary graduate. This means that most of the respondents are with high educational attainment making them professionals and critical thinker individuals.

This is necessary especially in determining the voter’s perception on electoral process. Educational attainment is the level of education a person reached in his entire life. The respondent’s education was being profiled in this study to determine their perception and knowledge in terms of the electoral process.

Most of possible problems which registered voters encountered throughout the pre-election, election proper and post-election process in the Municipality of Sogod was self-assessed by the voters. The problems were appraised as **Strongly Agree**; **Agree**; **Disagree**; and **Strongly Disagree**.

Table 4 gives the list of problems according to rank and how each is a praised by the election voters. Of the nine main problems given, none was perceived as **Strongly Agree**, however, only **two** were **agreed** upon by the respondents; **five** were considered **Disagree**; and **two** were regarded as **Strongly Disagree**.

Table 2. Problems and challenges encountered by voters
In terms of pre-election phase

Variable/Indicator	Municipality by Class					Overall Mean	Description
	1st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th		
Pre-Election Process							
Partisanship	3.57	2.73	3.23	2.77	3.2	2.97	Agree
Vote Buying	3.13	2.25	2.47	2.25	2.66	2.55	Agree
Political Dynasty	2.7	2.8	3.0	2.42	2.85	2.86	Agree
Nepotism	1.6	2.3	2.4	2.1	2.3	2.24	Disagree
Debt of Gratitude	1.6	2.5	2.3	2.0	2.1	2.16	Disagree
Bribery	1.3	1.9	1.2	1.3	1.7	1.33	Strongly Disagree
Nuisance Candidate	1.6	1.8	1.7	1.5	1.5	1.63	Disagree
OVERALL	2.21	2.33	2.33	2.05	2.33	2.25	Disagree

Ranges for Weighted Mean

Mean Range	Description
3.26–4.00	Strongly Agree
2.51–3.25	Agree
1.76–2.50	Disagree
1.00–1.75	Strongly Disagree

As can be gleaned in the table, voters ranked number one the problem of **Partisanship**, with an average mean of 2.97 and is **Agreed** by the respondents as a problem in the implementation of the electoral process during pre-election phase. This implies that creation of groups per political party, creation of leaders for vote buying as well as loyalty to one’s political party may affect the sound implementation of the policy process. This may be due to the reason that candidates often opt to be in a group or political party to increase their political influence and power, thus, they benefit as a whole compare to independent candidates.

Political partisanship eventually divides the country and the voters into emotional camps and start political war. However, public support on political party depends primarily on the choice and perception of the people-which most of the time, on the ground of which party best benefits the people and provides their need.

This relates to the **Public Choice Theory** of Buchanan and Tullock as cited in Abocejo, 2014. The theory stresses that people are primarily motivated by self-interests. The theorists assumed that people, though show concerns for others, are mainly motivated by self-interests, may they be politicians, lobbyist, voters or bureaucrats participating in the political arena (Shaw, 2002 as cited by Abocejo, 2014). This only implies that the public will support and remain loyal to the party that they perceived to benefit the mat that certain time.

Moreover, ranking second and third is **Political Dynasty** (2.86) and **Vote Buying** (2.55) respectively and is both **Agreed** upon by the body as one of the prevailing pre-election problems. This shows that candidates can win even when they are not

competent as long as they are wealthy and comes from deeply-rooted political families in the country. Infact according to Mimi Swartz, as cited by Jeffrey Hays (2008), Vote buying is common wherein election in the Philippines function something like a national welfare system and was considered normal.

On the other hand, with a computed mean of 1.33 and is interpreted as **strongly Disagree**, **Harassment** fall last in the rank of the problems encountered by the voters from the five selected municipality of Cebu Province. This indicates that improper use of force or coercion was not practiced by the political candidates to garner votes from the public, thus, does not pose as a problem before the election day.

Overall, the respondents **Disagreed** on the problems encountered during pre-election phase as listed in the table with a total average weighted mean of 2.25. This indicates that the voters faces some problems and challenges even before the election day in general, but these can be cope up with some effort.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

Based on the data gathered the following findings were drawn: The profile of the respondents showed that the Socio-demographic data, most (36%) of the respondents were between 18 to 23 years old; majority (62%) of the respondents were female; majority (58%) of the respondents were single; half (50%) of the respondents received monthly income of 5,000 or below; most (34%) of the respondents were college graduate.

While Voter’s Perception on the Implementation of the Electoral Process: the Awareness had an overall computed weighted mean of 3.30 interpreted as Strongly Implemented; Requirement Attainment had an overall computed weighted mean of 3.02 interpreted as Implemented; Election Day Procedures had an overall computed weighted mean of 2.94 interpreted as Implemented. In the Level of Election Participation: Voters from the Municipality of Minglanilla characterized as first class municipality had an overall computed weighted mean of 2.15 interpreted as Somewhat Unlikely. Voters from the Municipality of San Fernando characterized as second class municipality had an overall computed weighted mean of 3.03 interpreted as Somewhat Likely. Voters from the Municipality of Cordova characterized as third class municipality had an overall computed weighted mean of 2.89 interpreted as Somewhat Likely. Voters from the Municipality of Sogod characterized as fourth class municipality had an overall computed weighted mean of 2.21 interpreted as Somewhat Unlikely. Voters from the Municipality of Ronda characterized as fifth class municipality had an overall computed weighted mean of 2.93 interpreted as Somewhat Likely.

In General, the Problems/Challenges Encountered during Pre-election Process had an overall computed weighted mean of 2.25 interpreted as Disagree.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that the voters’ perceptive on the electoral process belonged to an acceptable level. The results have shown that Awareness, Requirement Attainment, and Election Day procedures and processes are implemented in the five selected municipalities of Cebu Province. Also, voters will likely to participate on activities and programs related to elections. However, there are problems encountered such as vote buying, partisanship, political dynasty, and crowded precinct areas that needs immediate attention by the authority in charge.

To better improve the electoral process, the succeeding policy recommendations are presented.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Anchored on the findings of the study, the following are hereby recommended:

1. COMELEC shall issue policy providing for guidelines and mechanism on election surveys and propagandas and candidates' campaign rallies for a wider know-how of voters and citizens.
2. It is suggested that COMELEC conduct extensive voter education in the barangays especially in the grassroots. The trainings may be conducted in the dialect for better understanding of the participants. The reading materials for voters' education could also be in the dialect. It is also recommended that several sectors and non-government organizations be tapped to help bring voter education to a wider audience and a bigger target market. Thus, it is strongly recommend that Commission on Election should provide an avenue so that the voters will know well the candidates they are about to choose.
3. Debate is advisable prior to the election proper. In this way, the voters will be educated on the capabilities of the future officials.
4. There should be a policy providing that the queuing system should be systematized and organized for better and fast election outcomes.
5. To avoid crowding of polling places due to the huge number of voters, it is worth taking into consideration the passage of a policy allowing the use of centralized counting machines for a group of five to seven established precincts where each established precinct will have their own set of BEI attending to a maximum of 200 voters only. A fewer number of voters per polling place can be easily managed by the BEI.
6. Election seminars are very important for a better understanding to election processes and procedures, it can also be a tool to spread awareness to voters regarding the dos and don'ts of election. Thus, election seminars must be conducted effectively and productively, if possible, there should have free snacks, freebies, certificates or monetary incentives so as to encourage participation among stakeholders.
7. Partisanship and Vote buying shall be given due attention since it was the problems that are experience by most of the voters.
8. Election does not stop on the day of the election, the COMELEC shall keep an eye on the counting and processing of election results including in respective local government unit to ensure highest degree of transparency and accountability.
9. For stronger implementation on the security and accessibility during elections, the COMELEC should create a task force/committee with the main responsibility of ensuring high level of security and providing assistant to persons with disabilities for an efficient election that is responsive to the needs and concerns of the voters.
10. LGUs are encouraged to strengthen citizen participation and involvement to election related endeavors for a wider inclusion and vigilance to electoral problems and issues, find direct solution thereof. Through this, voters will also be empowered in solving problems and helping LGUs for a consensus-based and clean election.
11. To conduct future studies on the effect of voters' participation on the effectivity of electoral process in national and local elections.

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