



Determinants in Choosing Political Candidates among Benguet State University Students

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ABSTRACT

The participation of the youth in the Philippine electoral process matters because they are too many to be ignored and the issues that affect the youth of today are the very same issues that will define the future of the Philippines. The study identified and explained the voting considerations that determine students' choice of candidates for elective positions in the government. This qualitative study utilized descriptive survey based research in describing the voting determinants of BSU students. Findings revealed that the most important personal characteristic of a politician is probity (*malinis na pagkatao*). Furthermore, the endorsement of the family or relatives is the foremost consideration of students when choosing a candidate and that the most important characteristic considered in voting for a candidate is someone who promotes government programs for development (*nagtataguyod ng programa ng gobyerno para sa kaunlaran*). Moreover, the findings also showed that there is a difference in the students' perceptions of the personal characteristics of a politician when grouped according to gender. In general, the findings of the study show that the Filipino youth is not perpetrated by the *bobotante* (stupid voter) virus. Furthermore, the results illustrate that today's youth are not politically indifferent.

KEYWORDS

Voting determinants
Elections
Elective positions
Youth vote
Election candidates

INTRODUCTION

Section 1, Article II of the 1987 Philippine Constitution enshrines that: "The Philippines is a democratic and republican state. Sovereignty resides in the people and all government authority emanates from them." This provision

of the country's fundamental law remarks that the country is a democratic state that adheres to the principles of a representative democracy, otherwise known as indirect democracy or republicanism, where political sovereignty is vested among the people, the electorate. This was as well highlighted by Dannug and Campanilla (2004) stating that in a republican or representative

state, the people exercise powers of sovereignty through chosen representatives. They further remarked that the right of suffrage is premised on the theory that the people who bear the burden of government should share in the privilege of choosing the officials of that government.

Thus, the election season is one of the most exciting occasions in Philippine politics. The various candidates will always put their best foot forward to earn the support and eventually the votes of the electorate. The campaign managers of the different candidates think of a number of campaign tactics and campaign gimmicks aimed at pleasing the electorate. This was clearly seen in the documentary titled, "Philippine Agenda: *Reporma sa Eleksyon*" featured by GMA Channel 7 in 2007. Based on the said documentary, Jessica Soho, the host, noted that elections in the Philippines are like fiesta because everyone is in a festive mood. Various candidates wooing the electorate offering them entertainment and refreshments. The mentioned documentary suggests that it is during this season that the ordinary Filipinos feel their significance to the candidates simply because the latter's future in the eyed government position rests on the hands of the former. This impression is supported by Coronel and Chua (2004) who asserted that while ordinary Filipinos are drawn to the fiesta atmosphere of elections, they consider their participation as an opportunity to bring about change, as it is the only legitimate means to choose leaders. Therefore, they take part wholeheartedly in the process.

However, it is also during this season when the so called *bobotante* (stupid voter) virus exists among the populace. The term *bobotante* emanates from the Filipino word *bobo* which means stupid and *botante* which is voters. Allanegui (2016) labeled *bobotantes* as people who happen to be of a lower social class who prefer the "wrong" candidate (para 11). This coincides with Aguilar's (as mentioned by Hegina, 2016) remark that poor voters are tagged as "*bobotantes*" (para 22). Espina-Varona (2015), on the other hand, described a stupid voter as one who elects corrupt politicians in exchange for a few hundred pesos worth of bribes and other displays of patronage (para 7). According to a blog post authored by a person under the pseudonym, Sentimental Wanderer, the virus has been around the Philippines for more than 20 years (How to spot a *bobotante*: An election reflection, 2013). In general, the author underlined that a person is considered *bobotante* if he/she relies on survey results, television advertisements, or

commercials in choosing which candidate to vote; he/she is entertained by dance or song numbers of certain candidates; and he/she looks for a popular name among the list of candidates.

The youth, on the other hand, make up one significant sector of the Philippine society in terms of participation in electoral processes. Section 13, Article II of the 1987 Philippine Constitution enshrines that: "the state recognizes the vital role of the youth in nation-building"; thus, the state should "encourage their involvement in public and civic affairs." De Leon (1999) also emphasized that the bulk of Philippine population is composed of the young people who are 15 years old or younger, and they "are better educated and far more well-informed and articulate, and politically conscious (page 59)." He also asserted that the youth of today are the country's future leaders; hence, they should be properly trained and guided.

Makabenta (2015) noted that the Philippines had around 54 to 56 million voters in 2016, and the new entrants such as the Generation Y (citizens born between 1980 and 2000), who are popularly known as the millennial generation, were a potent force in the 2016 balloting. Tiquia and Cariaga (2001), as cited by Makabenta (2015), highlighted that the Filipino voter is young (para 15) and that youth participation in the electoral process in 2016 could be a major factor, making or breaking candidates (para 20). Makabenta (2015) also emphasized COMELEC Chairman Andres Bautista's remark that out of the 50 million voters in 2016, 28 million are young voters (para 12).

There have been a number of studies about the voting behavior of the Filipino youth that has been conducted since 2013. The studies piloted by the Asian Institute of Management (AIM) Policy Center in 2013 and Publicus Asia, Inc. in 2015 both reveal that personality politics is still prevailing among the Filipino youth. This denotes that the youth choose candidates based on personalities, last names, and their television advertisements. They do not care to look at the candidate's platforms of governance. This finding is synonymous with the findings of the study on the voting behavior of the Filipino electorate conducted by the Institute for Political and Electoral Reform (IPER) in 1995 where it was revealed that the candidate's popularity and image are the primary considerations of the Filipino voters.

Makabenta (2015) described the millennials



as the new greatest generation and this group will change and save countries. However, David Yap, AIM Policy Center Economist, noted that youth voters do not feel empowered. They do not recognize the full responsibilities associated with being a citizen of a democratic country (Cayabyab, 2013, para 5). Attorney Sara Suguitan, an election lawyer from Ateneo de Manila University, also agrees with Yap's idea about the youth of today. She remarked that many college students are steeped in the Philippines' political history and traditions (Cayabyab, 2013, para 21). Hence, there is a need to start educating the youth about politics inside the classrooms.

The young people of today ought to possess a vivid basis for choosing a political candidate to whom they will entrust sovereignty for a certain period of time. There is a need to pay attention to the various considerations of the youth in choosing possible candidates to be elected in the Philippine government. There is an impending need to comprehend the voting determinants the youth considers. In this study, the term youth refers to college students, ages 16 to 18. On the other hand, voting determinants in the context of the study pertains to the considerations that the youth contemplate in the selection of candidates for elective positions in the government. The voting determinants include the following: personal characteristics of the candidate; endorsement of a unit in the society; and characteristics of a candidate (other than the personal ones). Hence, this study was conducted with the aim of establishing a vivid portrait of a politician who is sought for by today's youth.

Specifically, the study aimed to identify the most important personal characteristics of a politician preferred by students; to determine which endorsement from which unit in the society affects the student's choice of candidate; to distinguish the most important characteristic (other than the personal ones) the students consider in choosing a candidate; and to identify if a difference exists among students' perceptions when grouped based on gender.

METHODOLOGY

The study made use of the descriptive survey research design patterned to the 2003 study conducted by the Institute for Political and Electoral

Reform (IPER). Adanza (1995) explained that the descriptive method of research is designed for the investigator to gather information about present conditions. The main objective of this research method is to describe the nature of a situation as it exists at the time of the study and to explore the causes of a particular phenomenon. The present study provides a description of the voting determinants of today's youth; it imparts the various considerations that affect the student's choice of a candidate for elective positions in the Philippine government. The study employed the use of a survey questionnaire and library research.

The survey questionnaire was utilized to draw statistical data on the profile of the respondents and to determine the most important personal characteristics, the endorsement of which social units, and the most important characteristics (other than the personal ones) that the youth consider in choosing a candidate to elective positions in the government. The research instrument adopted the questionnaire used in the July 2003 study conducted by the Institute for Political and Electoral Reform (IPER) that updated the psychographic study (a research that attempts to place the electorate in psychological rather than purely demographic dimensions) of its December 1995 study on the voting behavior of the Filipino electorate.

The study was conducted in Benguet State University (BSU) during the First Semester of Academic Year 2015-2016. Purposive (homogeneous) sampling was utilized in the study. This non-probability sampling technique involves the researcher identifying the respondents based on "their similar characteristics because such characteristics are of particular interest to the researcher (Purposive sampling, n.d., para 4)." A total of 284 youth respondents were considered in the study. They are the researcher's students from the College of Teacher Education enrolled in her Social Science 14 (Politics, Governance with the New Constitution) classes. These students were selected because the researcher intended to understand how students enrolled in a political science class choose candidates whom they will elect to positions in the government.

Before the survey questionnaires were distributed and explained to the respondents, their informed consent was considered by the researcher. The researcher discussed the main objective of the study and they were also informed that the results



of the study will be utilized to substantiate the researcher's classroom discussions on the Suffrage topic and the elective positions in the Philippine government for the succeeding semesters. After the items in the questionnaire were discussed, the respondents were asked about their willingness to participate in the study. They were assured that they were not compelled to partake in the answering of the survey questionnaire. The researcher asked the respondents for further questions or clarifications considering the filling out of the study's questionnaire. After which, those who were willing to participate were asked to raise their hand. Only those who expressed their willingness to participate were given questionnaires to fill out. These respondents were also informed that they can quit anytime and their questionnaire will be disregarded. These ethical considerations of the study were also discussed with the panel of evaluators when it was presented as a completed research during the 2016 Agency RDE In-House Review.

Descriptive statistics revealed that majority of the respondents consists of female students (about 77.50%) while the least of the respondents were LGBT (about 8.10%) (Table 1).

Table 1. Profile of the respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	220	77.50
Male	41	14.40
LGBT	23	8.10
Total	284	100

Data gathering was done during the third week of November 2015. The researcher, being the class facilitator, distributed the questionnaires to students in each of her class. The students were made to understand that the filling out of the questionnaire should be voluntary on their part.

Responses were tallied and tabulated. Results were subjected to computations such as frequency counts, percentage, mean, and ranking. Frequency was utilized for the profile of the respondents. A frequency table was constructed and percentage was computed using the formula:

$$P (\%) = \frac{f}{n} \times 100\%$$

Where f = frequency in each category or cell
n = total number of respondents

To compute for the mean rank, the following formula was utilized:

$$Xr = \frac{\sum r}{n} = \frac{\sum X}{n}$$

where X represents the data values
n represents the number of values

The non-parametric test Kruskal Wallis H-Test was used to identify the difference in the students' perceptions when they were grouped based on gender. The Kruskal Wallis H-Test is a Chi-Square distribution based test. Thus, in analysis, the value shown is a Chi-Square value. According to the Graham Hole Research Skills Kruskal-Wallis hand out, this test is appropriate for use under the following circumstances: (a) you have three or more conditions that you want to compare; (b) each condition is performed by a different group of participants; i.e. you have an independent-measures design with three or more conditions. (c) the data do not meet the requirements for a parametric test. (i.e. use if the data are not normally distributed; if the variances for the different conditions are markedly different; or if the data are measurements on an ordinal scale).

The formula for the Kruskal-Wallis test is:

$$H = \frac{12}{N(N+1)} \left(\frac{R_1^2}{n_1} + \frac{R_2^2}{n_2} + \dots + \frac{R_k^2}{n_k} \right) - 3(N+1)$$

where: H is the Kruskal Wallis Test Statistic
N is the total sample sizes (the sum of the sample sizes)
Ri is the sum of ranks for sample i, from a total of k samples

The findings of the study were then substantiated using related literatures and through document analysis that are available online and in the Benguet State University library.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Personal Characteristics of a Politician Most Important to the Respondents

The most important personal characteristics



of a politician that affects the preference of the respondents is presented in Table 2. Results revealed that the most important characteristic of a politician as perceived by the respondents was “*malinis na pagkatao* (probity)” with a mean description of 1.76. This finding suggests that a candidate’s integrity may be important in the evaluation of candidates.

This thinking among the students may be brought about by the recent turn of events where a number of elected politicians and candidates have been dragged into graft and corruption practices or cases that have been highly publicized by the various media outlets in the Philippines. Some of these cases (such as the corruption of the donations for the victims of typhoon Yolanda, Hacienda Binay, Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) Scam or the Pork Barrel Scam) that were exposed by the mass media had been discussed and examined in class; thus, causing a modification in the outlook of the students.

The finding supports the result of the random interviews among the youth conducted by Fiona Nicolas and David Santos (2015) of CNN Philippines. The random interviews revealed that the youth prefer a candidate who is not corrupt, who has not been tainted with corruption, and who is fair and just with his/her judgment. There were also some youth who mentioned during the interview that they prefer candidates who are strict and can impose discipline among the people and candidates who are responsible and possess strong conviction.

This finding also affirms the statement that was underlined by Juana Pilipinas in the online article “Why Making the Right Choice in the 2016 Election is Crucial (April 2014)”. The author enumerated 10 qualities to look for in a presidential candidate. The foremost listed quality is integrity/honesty. The author remarked that the candidate who deserves people’s vote should be someone who has a track record of being an honest person. Once a dishonest person is voted, it will be disadvantageous to the nation because the government money that is supposed to be utilized for public services and infrastructures will no longer be used for such purposes; instead, the money will be employed by the dishonest leader for self-serving purposes.

Being helpful to the needy (*matulungin sa mga nangangailangan*) with a mean value of 1.83 and easy to approach (approachable) with a mean value

of 2.52 were ranked second and third respectively. These personal characteristics reflect the typical attitude of the Filipino *masa* (common people) who always resort to politicians for aide in times of need/crises. Thus, they prefer a candidate they can easily approach for help; those who are pro-poor. This personal characteristic of a politician is highlighted in the documentary, “*Eleksyong Pinoy*”. In the documentary, Felipe Miranda, founder of Pulse Asia Research Inc. and Atty. Christian Monsod, former COMELEC chairman, noted that voters looked for candidates who are “*makamasa* (context of pro-poor)” and those who have sympathy for the masses. Miranda explained that this is not perplexing because most of the Filipinos regard themselves as poor.

These personal characteristics also reflect the patron-client framework which is usually used to describe the electoral process in the Philippines. IPER (1995) describes this framework as one where political leaders who are of a higher socioeconomic status (patron), acquire power by providing material benefits to people of lower status (client), who in turn, commit their votes to the patron during elections. Electoral exercises are often oriented to more personal and practical concerns as manifested during election campaigns where candidates woo voters not through programs of government but through favors and promises of material reward. This is underlined by Montiel (2012) when she articulated that a candidate will most likely say, “*Kung matutulungan namin kayo* (If we can help you) in any way, please just come to the office.” These candidates who were described by Montiel are the so called traditional politicians or more popularly known as “*trapos* (traditional politicians)”.

Table 2. Personal Characteristics of a politician most important to the respondents

Personal Characteristics	Mean	Rank
<i>Malinis na pagkatao</i> (probity)	1.76	1
<i>Matulungin sa mga nangangailangan</i> (helpful to the needy)	1.83	2
<i>Madaling lapitan</i> (approachable)	2.52	3
<i>Pagiging sikat</i> at popular (being popular)	4.10	4
<i>Pagiging artista</i> (being a celebrity)	4.79	5



Ibalan (2010) defines a *trapo* as one who claims to be pro-poor, promises the moon and the stars, and then forgets everything after getting elected. Likewise, Young (2010) also looks at *trapo* as someone who will promise the voter anything under the sun during the campaign period, but will forget any of them after elections.

On the other hand, the top two least important personal characteristics of a politician were “*pagiging sikat at popular* (being popular)” and “*pagiging artista* (being a celebrity)” with mean rank values of 4.10 and 4.79, respectively. Although physical attractiveness and popularity have been known in the psychological literature to be an important determinant of impressions about others, it was shown in the study that it has the least effect on the preference of candidates as perceived by the respondents.

Popularity is no longer the priority of students for choosing a candidate to support. This somehow attests to the claim of the online article, “Philippines: Politics of Popularity (May 2010)” that emphasized that the popularity of the candidate is not the gauge why he/she should be voted for. It is only performance and not the other way around. This coincides with Ambassador Henrietta T. De Villa’s assertion in the documentary, “*Eleksyong Pinoy: Bagong Yugto*” that it is important that the electorate look into the track record of a candidate and his/her program. By doing this, the issues and his/her platforms will be discussed.

The findings of the study as to the most important personal characteristics of a candidate illustrate that popularity politics among the students may already be fading due to the realization of the students that there is a need to vote for a candidate who possesses probity or who exudes integrity rather than vote for a candidate simply because the person is popular. This consciousness maybe brought about by what they see in mass media. They are aware that mass media has continuously and vigorously exposed or featured anomalous transactions or unfulfilled promises of elected people in the government and they notice the impact of this to the common *Pinoy*. These, however, may not also overshadow the consequence, progress, and development brought by the politicians in a positive note.

In addition, the concept of traditional politicians and the impact of their election to the Philippine

society has been repeatedly deliberated in most of the classroom lectures in Social Science 14. The consequences of electing unfit candidates into government positions were discussed in the topics: Politics and Power; Images of Philippine Politics; Principles of Good Governance; Suffrage (Article V of the 1987 Philippine Constitution); and Composition and Responsibilities of People in the Legislative and Executive Departments of the Philippine Government (Articles VI and VII of the 1987 Philippine Constitution). This could also be a reason for the student’s preference for a candidate who shows probity. Through the lectures, the students may have understood why the *masang Pinoy* (ordinary Filipino) is oftentimes labelled as *masang tanga* (stupid ordinary Filipinos) by some political analysts; hence, a change in their perception of the personal characteristics of a candidate. They could have understood based on the classroom lectures that part of being a responsible voter is to seriously scrutinize the personal characteristics of a candidate.

Part of the researcher’s classroom activity is the “What’s New?”. Every meeting, before class discussions would formally commence, the researcher would call three of her students to share what is new in Philippine politics. These students are asked to share in class current news (national or local) about Philippine politics which they had come to know through the various forms of mass media. The researcher noticed that most of the news reports shared in class are those dealing with the negative aspects of the country’s politics. Graft and corruption, political killings, personal issues/controversies of politicians, substandard government projects, poverty, and drug related issues are some of the most commonly shared news in the class. These might have opened the awareness of the students as to the importance of choosing candidates to be elected in the government.

Thus, although the Philippines, in general, still adheres to popularity rather than performance, the result shows that the students are becoming politically intelligent when it comes to their choice of candidates. The study may imply that students are becoming intellectual and responsible voters, although this generalization may only be true to the study’s respondents. Integrity and empathy are being preferred over popularity politics.

Endorsement from Units in the Society

Results show that family/relatives would likely



be the most important influential unit in the endorsement of a candidate with a mean rank of 2.26 (Table 3). This may be attributed to the fact that the Philippines is a family-oriented country where most decisions of the individual are based on the consensus of family members. This principle is reflected in making decisions about significant events like marriage and even elections. More often than not, the family members meet and talk about political issues and candidates whom the family will support.

The finding conforms with Pondoyo's (2015) remark that the family influences its individual member's disposition and outlook in life; thus, the individual members value and respect the opinions or thoughts of the other family members, especially the elder ones.

The result that the students also consider candidates who were endorsed by leaders in the community suggests that youth nowadays have a keen respect on previous leaders that they also take into consideration the candidates that these people endorse. The youth look into the reasons why certain political leaders endorse a particular candidate for definite positions in the government. It is possible that the leader finds the candidate worthy of people's vote because the person possesses desirable personal characteristics that are listed in Table 1 or the candidate promised to continue the good deeds of the leader who endorsed him/her. For instance, former Philippine President Benigno Aquino III endorsed Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Manuel Roxas for Presidency and Camarines Sur Representative Leni Robredo for Vice Presidency in the 2016 national elections. The mass media highlighted

that Secretary Roxas vowed to continue President Aquino's *Daang Matuwid* (straight path) or campaign for good governance since both of them came from the same political party. Representative Robredo was also highly recommended by the former president because he believes that she also possesses the integrity and dedication to work comparable to that of her late husband, former DILG Secretary Jesse Robredo.

The endorsement of a political leader in the community had a mean rank of 2.44. Garcia (n.d) as mentioned by Agting (2013), noted that educated voters may consider politician endorsers as more credible than celebrity endorsers. Garcia (n.d) further mentioned that the credibility of the politician endorser is also reflected on the campaign. For example, the 2013 elections saw President Benigno Aquino III and Vice President Jejomar Binay straightforwardly proclaiming support for the Liberal Party (LP) and United Nationalist Alliance (UNA) candidates, respectively. Senator Miriam Defensor-Santiago also voiced out support for Sonny Angara, which the senatorial candidate believed was a great boost to his campaign.

The third institution that influences the respondent's choice of candidate is the church. Omas-as et al. (2003) asserts that the church is the conscience formators of people. They explained that the church is entrusted with the task of teaching morality to individuals and groups. Thus, any personality who embodies a certain church's principles or position in an issue and will be endorsed by the church will definitely be considered by the congregation.

Although the Philippine Constitution enshrines the principle of separation of church and state, religion and politics are difficult to be separated. Padilla (2012) stressed that the intersection of religion and politics in the Philippines is historically indelible they are not only virtually inseparable but publicly consumable and entertaining. He also remarked that: "It is now indispensable and convenient for politicians to use religion as a weapon in their arsenal for power-grab and vice-versa. Interestingly, politicians and religious leaders shop each other for the best deals that serve their respective self-interests, à la carte (para 11)."

The separation is difficult to be observed especially during elections. Candidates try their very best to woo religious leaders hoping that

Table 3. Endorsement from Units in the Society

Endorsement from a Societal Unit	Mean Rank	Rank
Endorsement of family/relatives	2.26	1
Endorsement of a political leader in the community	2.44	2
Endorsement of church	2.77	3
Endorsement of organizations	2.87	4
Endorsement of showbiz personalities	4.65	5



their names will be endorsed by the latter to their members. This scene in Philippine politics is not new since faith-based politics is very evident in the country. A classic example of this image of Philippine politics is the bloc voting practiced by the Iglesia ni Cristo (INC). Esmaguera (2016) pronounced that in INC's bloc voting members elect only the candidates whom their religious leaders endorse. He also stated that former President Benigno Aquino III as well as his predecessors Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and Joseph Estrada won the INC's blessings. Nicolas (2016) of CNN Philippines reported that INC endorsed Mayor Rodrigo Duterte for Presidency and Senator Bongbong Marcos for Vice Presidency for the May 2016 elections. Umbao (2016) also reported that Pastor Apollo Quiboloy of the religious sect, Kingdom of Jesus Christ, endorsed Mayor Rodrigo Duterte for Presidency because he was able to see how the Mayor was able to transform Davao City.

Further, Mabunga (1997) cited that the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) has issued a number of pastoral letters whose messages are potent tools in shaping the Filipinos' concepts and values of democracy and citizenship. For instance, on January 16, 1995, the CBCP issued a pastoral letter calling the youth to exercise suffrage guided by pro-God, pro-life, and pro-family principles. In another pastoral letter dated April 9, 1995, the church emphasized the need for intelligent voters not to be cowed by and to be wary of those who overspend during elections.

Before the May 2016 elections, the CBCP again publicized a pastoral letter encouraging the voters to be perceptive in choosing leaders. Furthermore, it cautioned the electorate from voting candidates who "takes morally reprehensible positions on important issues (GMA News, 2016)."

Showbiz personalities are the least institution that influences the respondents in choosing a candidate to vote. This result, perhaps, can be associated with the finding that the respondents consider being popular and being an actor as the least important personal characteristics of a politician.

Jimeno and Sabangan (2010) noted the communications consultant Fernando Gagelonia's idea of transference. This is the fusion of showbiz and politics in the Philippines that has made celebrity endorsements part and parcel of political

campaigns. The authors also underlined Yes! Magazine Editor-in-Chief Jo-Ann Maglipon's emphasis that a candidate who wants instant recall and immediate rapport with a large audience needs to have celebrity endorsers. It is a must and the endorser cannot be just anybody. Agting (2013) also mentioned Art Garcia's point that: "The most basic factor to consider is how recognizable the celebrity is to the chosen crowd." Garcia also underlined that an endorser's value is determined by his or her closeness to the masses. Hence, politicians spend millions to pay celebrity endorsers. Arao (2007) noted that popular actors, singers, and athletes endorse candidates by either appearing in political advertisements or going to campaign sorties to entertain the crowd.

Discussions on New Born Multimedia politics, which shapes public opinion about issues and controversial personalities in the Philippine society may have been a factor in the way the respondents view the endorsements of politicians and showbiz personalities. Also using the various forms of mass media and online media, the students may have been acquainted with the performance of politicians who were endorsed by former community leaders or showbiz personalities. Hence, a generalization that endorsements of these people does not necessarily mean that the candidate is a good choice.

The League of Women Voters Education Fund (2010) specified that voter need to learn how other people view the candidate because this can aid the voter clarify his/her own views. In this sense, it is but essential that the students consider the ideas of their family, their church, certain community organizations, and even showbiz personalities in evaluating candidates. Once these groups accord their "stamp of approval" to a candidate this gives the students, the voter, a clue on the issues the candidate supports. But it is also to be emphasized that the students, having a mind of their own, need to be critical in considering the endorsements of these units in the society. In the end, their own views about the candidate will be their primary bases whether or not to vote for a candidate.

Most Important Characteristics that the Respondents Consider in Voting

Results shows that the most important characteristics (other than personal ones) that the respondents will take into consideration in choosing a candidate will be "*nagtataguyod ng programa*



ng gobyerno sa kaunlaran (promotes government programs for development)” and “*nagtataguyod ng alternatibong programa para sa kaunlaran* (promotes alternative program for development)” with mean rank values of 1.73 and 2.22, respectively (Table 4).

This negates the results of surveys conducted in 1995 by the Institute for Political and Electoral Reform (IPER) and in 2013 by the Asian Institute of Management (AIM) Policy Center where it was revealed that the least consideration for Filipino voters is the party program or platforms of governance. This also disproves the concept of electoral politics in the Philippines as described by IPER (1995) where it was emphasized that electoral exercises are often oriented to more personal and practical concerns as manifested during election campaigns where candidates woo voters not through programs of government but through favors and promises of material reward.

On the other hand, the result affirms Fiona Nicolas and David Santos’ (2015) note that the choices of the young voters hinge on who the candidates will be and the platforms they have to offer. This also ties up with the thoughts of the key informants in the 2003 survey conducted by IPER. These key informants explained that the intelligent voters’ basis of selecting a candidate is their platform and program of government. For the intelligent voter, it is important because it is based on consultations and identification of the problems of the community that should be addressed.

It can also be gleaned from Table 4 that the students pay least importance to candidates who do house-to-house campaign as well as those candidates who have a number of campaign posters and streamers.

It may be implied that students look into the agenda of the candidates during the campaign period. This thinking may be a product of the insights they gained from classroom lectures where it is always emphasized that there is a need to look deeper into the platforms of governance of candidates since the future of the country lies in the policies that they will make and implement. The lectures were also supplemented by documentaries that show the present issues in the Philippine society (such as corruption, inadequate educational facilities, poverty, poor health services). Students were tasked to write a thought paper about the documentaries. These classroom activities may have awakened the realization among the students that whoever has position in the government has a big responsibility of resolving these issues; hence, the result that they are to consider seriously the candidate’s platforms before anything else.

In general, the study’s findings reveal that the respondents are not inflicted with the *bobotante* (stupid voter) virus. The students are thinking voters. They are distinct as to the personal characteristics and attributes they are to look for in a candidate. Moreover, they have a mind of

Table 4. *Most Important Characteristics that the Respondents consider in Voting*

Characteristics	Mean Rank	Rank
<i>Nagtataguyod ng programa ng gobyerno para sa Kaunlaran</i> (promotes government programs for development)	1.73	1
<i>Nagtataguyod ng alternatibong programa para sa Kaunlaran</i> (promotes alternative program for development)	2.22	2
<i>Matagal ng nanungkulan at subok na</i> (have long been serving the government and tested)	2.47	3
<i>Pagiging kabilang sa oposisyon</i> (being included in the opposition party)	4.89	4
<i>Mahusay magtalumpati sa pagtitipon</i> (good in delivering speeches in gatherings)	5.29	5
<i>Partidong kinabibilangan ng kandidato</i> (the political party of the candidate)	5.42	6
<i>Nagbabahay-bahay sa panahon ng kampanya</i> (goes house-to-house campaign)	6.01	7
<i>Maraming poster at streamer</i> (many posters and streamers)	7.51	8



their own although the points of view of their family as to which candidate to vote still matter. There is a clear hope that the future of Philippine government will be better in terms of governance, given the fact that today's youth are far more critical in the attributes of a politician to whom they will entrust sovereignty for a period of time.

Difference of Students' Perceptions When Compared According to Gender

Analysis shows that there are differences in terms of the personal characteristics of a candidate that are important to the students when compared based on gender (Table 5). Specifically, there is a significant difference among the students considering the personal characteristic "*matulungin sa nangangailangan* (helpful to the needy)."

The LGBT respondents ranked this personal characteristic as number 1; on the other hand, the female and male respondents ranked this as number 2 and 3, respectively. The result is not surprising. The LGBT, a minority group in the Philippine society, often experience discrimination in terms of rights and job or business opportunities. The LGBT community has constantly looked for politicians who will be able to help them achieve their advocacies and help them attain their needs to live as a decent human being. Also, they consider a candidate who will be able to put an end to bullying, discrimination and hate crimes against the LGBT community. These concepts were considered in the classroom discussion of sectoral representation in the House of Representatives. There were students who inquired as to why the group *LADLAD* or the LGBT Partylist was not credited by the Commission on Elections during the previous elections. Also issues like the construction of a bathroom cubicle for LGBT students of BSU, cross dressing among BSU students, and the like were also raised and deliberated in class.

Meanwhile, presidential candidate Rodrigo Duterte and senatorial aspirant Risa Hontiveros are known supporters of the LGBT community. Sison (2015) noted that: "A candidate that openly supports equality and is against the discrimination of LGBT people can easily get the votes of the community as well as those of their family members and friends (para 18)." In the 2016 elections, Geraldine Roman, a transgender politician, won a seat in the House of Representatives. She is now the representative of the District of Bataan. She vowed

to "push for anti-discrimination bill that ensures equal treatment in the workplace, schools, commercial establishments, and government offices (France-Presse, 2016, para 14).

The difference among the students' perceptions considering the personal characteristics "*pagiging artista* (being a celebrity)" and "*pagiging sikat at popular* (being popular)" is highly significant. "*Pagiging artista* (being a celebrity)" was ranked the most important personal characteristic of a candidate by the LGBT respondents while the female respondents ranked it second, and the male respondents ranked it third.

The LGBT considers voting someone who is a showbiz personality because of their idea of gay icon. A gay icon, according to Dalton (2016), is a public figure who is embraced by the gay community. The LGBT community has a liking for showbiz personalities because they perhaps somehow can relate with the lives of these people. Dalton (2016) explained that for an artist to reach a gay icon status, they must be able to relate with the LGBT community through flamboyance, glamour, strength, triumph over adversity, and androgyny. Film stars and musicians are known modern gay icons in entertainment. Dalton (2016) enumerated Madonna, Mariah Carey, and Lady Gaga as some of the most famous gay icons at present.

The male respondents ranked the characteristic "*pagiging sikat at popular* (being popular)" as the most important characteristic of a politician whereas the females considered it second in importance and the LGBT ranked it third.

It was revealed in Table 5 that there was no significant difference on the perception of the students as to endorsement of which social unit influences their vote and the most important characteristics (other than personal ones) that influence their vote when compared based on gender with significance values all greater than 0.05.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it is deduced that the respondents are no longer moved by the principles of popularity or personality politics; hence, they are thinking and intelligent voters. In



Table 5. Significant differences of students' perceptions when compared according to gender

Traits	Mean Rank			SIG. Value	Result
	F	M	LGBT		
<u>Personal Characteristics</u>					
<i>Madaling lapitan</i> (approachable)	2.52	2.63	2.30	0.227	NS
<i>Malinis na pagkatao</i> (probity)	1.76	1.61	1.96	0.316	NS
<i>Matulungin sa mga nangangailangan</i> (helpful to the needy)	1.78	2.17	1.74	0.040	S
<i>Pagiging artista</i> (being a celebrity)	4.85	4.59	4.57	0.001	HS
<i>Pagiging sikat at popular</i> (being popular)	4.08	4.02	4.43	0.001	HS
<u>Endorsement</u>					
Endorsement of family/relatives	2.26	2.05	2.61	0.181	NS
Endorsement of church	2.71	3.05	2.87	0.282	NS
Endorsement of organizations	2.92	2.73	2.65	0.267	NS
Endorsement of showbiz personalities	4.69	4.57	4.48	0.354	NS
Endorsement of a political leader in the community	2.42	2.60	2.39	0.676	NS
<u>Characteristics</u>					
<i>Pagiging kabilang sa oposisyon</i> (being included in the opposition)	4.84	4.85	5.41	0.149	NS
<i>Matagal ng nanungkulan at subok na</i> (have long been serving the government and tested)	2.42	2.78	2.45	0.512	NS
<i>Partidong kinabibilangan ng kandidato</i> (the political party of the candidate)	5.48	5.37	4.95	0.233	NS
<i>Maraming poster at streamer streamer</i> (many posters and streamers)	7.52	7.37	7.68	0.316	NS
<i>Mahusay magtalumpati sa pagtitipon</i> (good in delivering speeches in gatherings)	5.24	5.35	5.63	0.496	NS
<i>Nagbabahay-bahay sa panahon ng kampanya</i> (does house-to-house campaign)	6.09	5.81	5.71	0.336	NS
<i>Nagtataguyod ng programa ng gobyerno para sa kaunlaran</i> (promotes government programs for development)	1.68	1.80	2.00	0.419	NS
<i>Nagtataguyod ng alternatibong programa para sa kaunlaran</i> (promotes alternative program for development)	2.25	2.20	1.91	0.280	NS
Legend: NS – no significant difference S- significant HS- highly significant					

addition, the respondents' choice of candidate/s is guided and shaped by the opinions and suggestions of distinct social units, but in the end, the respondent's choice of a candidate prevails. Moreover, the respondents are not politically

indifferent. They look into what a candidate can offer or what the person is capable of doing once placed in position.

Finally, there is a difference in the students'



perception of the most important personal characteristics of a politician when compared based on gender. On the other hand, there is no significant difference in the students' perception as to the social unit that influences their vote and the most important characteristics that influence their vote when compared based on gender.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the recommendations of the study: (1) The principles of voting determinants, which pertains to what people are supposed to probe as they consider candidates for elective positions in the Philippine government, need to be emphasized among students. A better voter education means that the students understand the value of their exercise of suffrage. They ought to realize that there is wisdom in the cliché, "Vote Wisely". In addition, the students are to be inculcated with the elaboration on why there is a need to look for candidates who can make a difference once they are in position. Thus, the personality, the track record, and the platforms of governance of candidates need to be given attention to by the students; (2) Family members must be judicious or definite in evaluating their choices of candidates since the younger members always consider their opinions or suggestions; (3) Another study area that may be drawn from the research is gender based stratification of voting determinants.

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