

Factors Influencing the Voting Preference in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija

Michael M. de Liña¹, Marie Jean A. Galicia², Jayvee F. Lopez³, and Elsie B. Viernes⁴

Core Gateway College, Inc., San Jose City, Nueva Ecija, Philippines¹
Core Gateway College, Inc., San Jose City, Nueva Ecija, Philippines²

Correspondence Email: mmdelina@cgci.edu.ph, mjgalicia@cgci.edu.ph, lopezfelixjayvee@gmail.com, and elsieviernes9@gmail.com

Submitted: July 2024. Accepted: January 2025. Published Online: June 2025.

ABSTRACT

This descriptive research was conducted to determine the factors influencing the voting preference in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija. A researcher-made survey questionnaire was distributed to 663 registered voters from the 38 barangays of San Jose City, who served as respondents in the study. The ages of the respondents ranged from 18 to 73 years old. The majority of them were male, married, college-educated, and had a monthly income of ₱10,000 to ₱15,999. The factors influencing the respondents' voting preferences were described as agreeable. Findings revealed that the problems encountered by the respondents in choosing who to vote for include vote buying, family influence, and a sense of indebtedness (*utang na loob*) among voters. Some recommendations were made to strengthen the campaign and ensure the observance of honest, fair, and reasonable elections.

Keywords: *local election, problems encountered, registered voters, suffrage*

INTRODUCTION

Elections are one of the indispensable processes of democratic life. Whether to vote or not depends on the individual's personal preference. The Philippines is a democratic country where people have the right to elect the politician of their choice to hold a position in the government. In Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Election (BSKE). The qualified voters of BSKE are as follows: those aged 15-30 are eligible to vote for Sangguniang Kabataan Officials, while those aged 18 and above are eligible to vote for Barangay Officials.

These days, politicians employ various methods and techniques to introduce themselves to voters and distinguish themselves. Politicians use social media and other technology in their campaigns. According to Graepel (2013), Political operatives develop highly detailed voter profiles, integrating demographic information, information about the economic, social, and political views of voters, and detailed records of online and even offline behavior into rich voter profiles that can also reveal, through powerful data analytics,

Their motivation influences an individual's decision to vote, as well as the ease or difficulty of casting a vote. Krosnick (2008) psychologically explains that the motivation to vote can correlate with strong preferences for a particular candidate or the belief in a civic duty.

According to Kurtbas (2015), the factors that influence voting behavior and voters' behavior in general are essential subjects that are widely addressed in political science and sociology. As the factors that influence voters' preferences are better understood, politics gets closer to the ideal of creating a "common good" for the people, settling issues, and ensuring social welfare and integrity.

Therefore, whenever politics, which is the only method in this framework, leaves it to other methods to fulfill these goals, the price is paid by "human suffering," which is always the price for wrong politics. In today's world, where sicknesses, poverty, and wars terrorize the entire planet, politics has a long way to go.

Elections demonstrate the best and worst of this country. The best is the enthusiasm, excitement, and energy of voters who insist on interacting directly with candidates and take seriously the right and responsibility to vote. Media coverage is enormous, with all candidates receiving dedicated TV and radio coverage befitting the stakes and intense national interest. It is common to see voters waiting four or five hours in a queue before casting their ballots. That wait, though, is part of the problem. For all our affection for elections, the process itself can feel bastardized. Vote buying remains far too accepted a tactic. Moreover, our candidates often lean on showbiz antics and even resort to political violence (Casiple, 2016).

According to data from the Commission on Elections (Comelec) Office in San Jose City, more than 102,032 registered voters were recorded. It is essential that people, especially the young, are engaged in formal political processes and have a say in shaping today's and tomorrow's politics. Inclusive political participation is not only a fundamental right in politics and democracy; it is also a crucial component of a healthy democracy. However, it is also crucial to build stable and peaceful societies and develop policies that respond to the specific needs of younger generations.

In the Philippines, many private institutions needed help retaining their teachers. According to Batugal (2019), private schools are experiencing an exodus from public schools. This predicament in teachers' commitment is undoubtedly due in part to the low salary and benefits, uncondusive working areas, and the lack of prestige of the teachers in some private colleges and universities. The resignations of

Tenured and qualified faculty members have caused the need for more qualified faculty members in the said colleges and universities.

It is also important to note that not all private school teachers can encounter various challenges that may lead to job dissatisfaction, like heavy workload, limited resources, compensation, lack of job security, and professional isolation. However, some may find their work highly satisfying despite these challenges. The specific issues teachers face can vary depending on the school, its culture, and the individual circumstances of the teacher. This research determined the correlation between organizational culture and job satisfaction.

METHODS AND PROCEDURE

A total of 663 registered voters from all 38 barangays of San Jose City, Nueva Ecija, who served as respondents in this study, were personally given a researcher-made survey questionnaire. The data gathering was administered personally by the researchers. The respondents were given enough time to answer the questionnaire.

A quantitative research design was used in the study. In presenting the data, a descriptive method was employed. Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, rankings, and means, were used to describe the gathered data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The ages of the respondents ranged from 18 to 73 years old. The majority of them were male, married, college-educated, and had a monthly income of ₱10,000 to ₱15,999.

Factors Influencing the Voting Preference in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija

The factors influencing voting preference had an overall mean of 2.54, which is described as 'Agree.' This indicates that the respondents were influenced by their voting preferences.

Sociological Approach

The sociological approach yielded a pooled mean of 2.39, described as "Disagree." This shows that the respondents' voting preferences are not easily affected by sociological factors.

The highest mean of 2.80, described as Agree, was obtained on the statement "I follow the recommendation of the people or group whom I trust"; on the other hand, the lowest mean of 2.05, described as Disagree, was obtained on the statement "I vote for a

candidate endorsed by a *celebrity* . "The result implies that some voters trust the group they believe in, which may be their family and friends and are not easily influenced by celebrities.

According to Stamp (2010), individuals between the ages of 18 and 24 are twice as likely to be swayed by relatives or friends as those aged 65 and older. The combined power of family ties and peer pressure is the hidden 'swing factor' that even the most astute political strategist cannot convincingly master.

Economic Approach

The economic approach yielded a pooled mean of 2.82, described as 'Agree,' indicating that economic matters influenced respondents' voting preferences.

The highest mean of 3.33, described as "Strongly Agree," was on the statements "*I vote for those who advocate programs for economic prosperity*" and "*I vote for the candidate that supports charitable work*." The statement "*I sell my vote*" received the lowest mean of 1.55, described as "*Strongly Disagree*." This implies that voters are becoming more informed and aware of the vote-buying that often occurs during elections and are, therefore, assessing the candidates they want to vote for.

Candidates would spend millions, not on election lawyers or poll watchers, but rather on giving money to families. Due to poverty, families would often take that. This occurs before the elections when people are told not to vote anymore (Yang, 2019).

Psychological Approach

In this approach, the result obtained a pooled mean of 3.21, described as 'Agree.' This indicates that the candidates' attributes and traits are important to the respondents in determining their voting preferences.

The statement "*I vote for a candidate who is trustworthy*" received the highest mean of 3.53, described as "*Strongly Agree*." The statement "*I vote for a candidate who has a strong family background*" appears to be the lowest, with a mean of 2.80, described as "*Agree*." This reveals that voters judged candidates

by their characteristics rather than choosing a candidate from a wealthy or influential family.

Fundamentally, people expect a leader to be trustworthy. Trust is gained and sustained through the consistent demonstration of character, competence, and commitment. In other words, leaders earn trust when they fulfill their duties well, do so in the right way, for the right reasons, and persevere (Raidht, 2019).

Rational Approach

In the rational approach, the result obtained a pooled mean of 3.02, described as 'Agree.' This implies that respondents believed they were making a rational choice of a candidate.

The statement *"I gather information about the candidate"* received the highest mean of 3.24, described as "Agree." However, the statement *"I rely on my intuition"* received the lowest mean of 2.82, described as "Agree." This implies that in choosing a candidate, respondents tend to be more rational than relying on their emotions.

On the other hand, research based on the subjective definition of rationality suggests that voters are essentially rational, as they have shown remarkable consistency in their attitudes and choices (Chen, 2017).

Political Approach

The political approach yielded a pooled mean of 3.05, described as 'Agree,' indicating that voters are becoming more engaged in politics, which could enhance their civic participation.

The statement *"I prefer those candidates who have a good platform that benefits the majority"* received the highest mean of 3.45, described as "Strongly Agree." The lowest mean of 2.65 was obtained for the statement *"I choose those who are from the family of a politician,"* which was described as Agree. That means that voters depend on the candidate's platform rather than just voting for a candidate from a family of politicians.

Dovi (2007) elaborates on three virtues that a good representative should possess: the virtues of fair-mindedness,

critical trust-building, and good gatekeeping. Fair-minded politicians uphold the norms and values of representative democracy.

Table 1. Factors Influencing the Voting Preference in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija

STATEMENTS	MEAN	DESCRIPTION
Sociological		
1. I choose a candidate that my family decides to vote for	2.44	Disagree
2. I choose the candidate that my religious group decides to vote for	2.35	Disagree
3. I look at the physical appearance of the candidate	2.29	Disagree
4. I vote for the candidate endorsed by a celebrity	2.05	Disagree
5. I follow the recommendations of the people or group I trust	2.80	Agree
Pooled Mean	2.39	Disagree
Economic		
1. I sell my vote	1.55	Strongly Disagree
2. I vote for those who offer help to the needy	2.95	Agree
3. I vote for the candidate who supports charitable works.	3.29	Strongly Agree
4. I vote for those who advocate programs for economic prosperity	3.33	Strongly Agree
5. I vote for a candidate who has served for a long time	2.96	Agree
Pooled mean	2.82	Agree
Psychological		
1. I look at the quality of the candidate	3.26	Strongly Agree
2. I choose a candidate who is good at public speaking	3.14	Agree
3. I vote for a candidate who has a strong family background	2.80	Agree
4. I vote for a trustworthy candidate	3.53	Strongly Agree
5. I vote for a candidate who has political will	3.33	Strongly Agree
Pooled mean	3.21	Agree
Rational		
1. I gather information about the candidates	3.24	Agree
2. I decide by comparing the candidates (negative/positive)	3.10	Agree
3. I rely on my intuition	2.82	Agree
4. I vote for a candidate who supports my interests	2.90	Agree
5. I voted for a candidate that I liked	3.07	Agree
Pooled mean	3.02	Agree
Political		
1. I look at what political party a candidate belongs to	2.84	Agree
2. I choose a candidate who is from a family of politicians	2.65	Agree
3. I prefer a candidate who has a good platform that benefits the majority	3.45	Strongly Agree

4. I chose a candidate who had a good political track record	3.40	Strongly Agree
5. I vote for a candidate who is leading in a political survey	2.90	Agree
	Pooled mean	3.05
	Overall mean	2.54

Legend:	3.25 - 4.00	Strongly Agree
	2.50 - 3.24	Agree
	1.75 - 2.49	Disagree
	1.00 - 1.74	Strongly Disagree

Problems Encountered by the Voters in Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections

Table 2 shows the problems encountered by the registered voters during local elections. The main problems they encountered were vote buying and selling, followed by the influence of family, and “*Utang na Loob*” (*Debt of gratitude*).

Our country has had the most extended history of democratic elections, but attaining a credible election system still extends beyond the election process itself. Despite the aim for orderly and honest elections, various problems were encountered by youth voters during the local elections. This was an alarming situation during elections, as voters chose candidates for various reasons, including the effectiveness of their campaigns and the candidates' characteristics. There should be an increased concern in examining the basis on which voters exercise their suffrage, the basis on which they vote, and, most importantly, the reasons behind their voting choices.

Vote buying and accepting money during the election season are seen as major problems by the respondents. For one, people tend to accept fraud for socio-economic reasons. The finding implied that vote buying changes the perception of how voters choose an electoral candidate. They now consider accepting any form of dole-out in exchange for their vote. Voters primarily cast their votes for a candidate who can provide them with the benefits (Helmke & Levitsky, 2006).

Table 2. Problems Encountered by the Voters in Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED	FREQUENCY	RANKING
Vote Buying/Selling		
Influence of Family		
Voters Utang na Loob (Debt of gratitude)	275	1
Influence of Friends	177	2
Relationship to Candidate	122	3
Voters' Educational Background	109	4
Voters Sincerity	106	5
“Binigyan ng Listahan” (given a list of whom to vote)	70	6
“Makumpleto lang ang iboboto” (to complete the vote)	65	7
“Wala ng ibang maiboto (not other candidates)	2	8
	2	9
	1	10
Total	929	

*Multiple Response

Proposed Solution to the Problem Encountered on Voting

Voting is a crucial component of the democratic process. Many, if not all, are aware of this, but in reality, many people do not vote (Wunderlich, 2018).

The following were proposed solutions to the problems encountered during elections:

1. The government should strengthen the anti-vote buying and vote selling law because this study found that it is the primary problem encountered by registered voters, ensuring fair and honest elections.
2. Provide effective and comprehensive enforcement of voter education and broader civic education programs, enabling campaigns to take a long-term view and increase people's understanding of how their vote is linked to future events.

CONCLUSIONS

The ages of the respondents ranged from 18 to 73 years old. The majority of them were male, married, college-educated, and had a monthly income of ₱ 10,000 to ₱15,999. The factors

influencing the respondents' voting preferences were described as agreeable. Findings revealed that the problems encountered by the respondents in choosing who to vote for include vote buying, family influence, and the voter's debt of gratitude (*utang na loob*). The proposed solution is to strengthen the anti-vote buying and vote selling law and to provide effective and comprehensive enforcement of voters' education and wider civic education programs that encourage active campaigning with a long-term view to increasing people's understanding of how their vote is linked to future events.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were derived from the findings: more seminars about voting rights should be conducted to integrate voters and inculcate in their minds the importance of not accepting money from politicians or making promises to vote according to their conscience, thereby becoming responsible voters. Voters should gather information about the candidate to evaluate their standards on the issue and examine their leadership activities. The government, specifically the Commission on Elections, should make improvements in the conduct of voter registration and the manner of casting votes to prevent cheating and vote buying. The people must work together and must contribute to the effort to improve the conduct of elections. It is the people, the electorate, that first show signs of reforming their attitudes and behavior in elections. Further study should be conducted to strengthen and broaden this research, focusing this time on the satisfaction of registered voters with the election of officers.

REFERENCES

- Casiple, R. (2016). *The Philippines' Election Was Corrupt —and a Victory for Democracy*. Retrieved from: <https://www.publicsquare.org/2016/06/08> The Philippines' election was corrupt and a victory for democracy.
- Chen, A., Chen, E., Lee, I., Lin, W., & Tsai, C.H. (2016). *Voting Intention and Choices: Are Voters Rational or Deliberative?* Retrieved from <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0148643>
- Dovi, S. (2007). *The Good Representative*. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/287851019_The_Good_Representative
- Graepel, T. (2013). *Private Traits and Attributes are Predictable from Digital Records of Human Behavior*. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 110(15), 5802-5805. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1218772110>
- Helmke, G. & Levitsky, S. (2007). *Informal Institutions and Democracy: Lessons from Latin America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press. [Google Scholar]
- Krosnick, J. (2008). *Why do People Vote? A Psychological Analysis of the Cause of Voter Turnout*. Journal of Social Sciences, 64(3),525-549. doi:10.1111/j.1540-4560.2008.00576
- Kurtbas, I. (2015). *The Factors Influencing Voting Preferences in Local Elections: An Empirical Study*. International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/295095195_The_Factors_Influencing_Voting_Preferences_In_Local_Elections_An_Empirical_Study
- Raidht, J. (2019). *When you vote, choose leaders who command respect and are trustworthy*. Retrieved from <https://thehill.com/opinion/white-house/475799-when-you-vote-choose-trustworthy-leaders-who-command-respect>

- Stamp, G. (2010). *Election: How do Friends and Family Influence Votes?* BBC News. Retrieved from: https://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/election_2010/8622748.stm
- Yang, A. (2018). *Voters are urged to be wary of vote buying, fake news, and misleading campaigns.* Retrieved from <https://news.ans-cbn.com/spotlight/02/27/19/voters-urged-to-beware-of-vote-buying-fake-news-circus-campaigns>