



ELECTORAL ATTITUDES, ELECTORAL DECISION-MAKING, AND VOTING EXPERIENCES DURING THE 2025 PHILIPPINE NATIONAL AND LOCAL ELECTIONS: A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored the electoral attitudes, decision-making processes, and voting experiences of voters in San Agustin, Isabela during the 2025 Philippine National and Local Elections. Using a phenomenological qualitative research design, the study sought to understand how voters perceived political participation, evaluated candidates, and navigated their electoral choices within the local political context. Data were gathered through in-depth semi-structured interviews with fifteen registered voters selected through purposive sampling. Thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's framework was employed in analyzing the data. Findings revealed that voters' electoral decisions were shaped by interconnected factors including perceptions of candidate integrity, public service performance, community relationships, family influence, political trust, and exposure to social media information. Participants emphasized the importance of honest leadership, accessibility of candidates, and visible community engagement in influencing their voting preferences. The study further revealed that while some voters practiced issue-based and reflective voting, others experienced challenges related to misinformation, political pressure, and emotional political attachment. The findings highlight the evolving nature of local electoral behavior in rural Philippine communities and underscore the importance of political awareness, voter education, and ethical political communication in strengthening democratic participation. The study contributes to the growing body of literature on electoral behavior and democratic engagement within localized Philippine political settings.

Keywords: electoral attitudes, voting experiences, political decision-making, qualitative study, voter behavior, Philippine elections, local politics

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I. INTRODUCTION

Elections remain one of the most significant democratic processes through which citizens express political preferences and participate in governance. In the Philippines, national and local elections serve not only as mechanisms for selecting leaders but also as reflections of citizens' political values, perceptions, and experiences. Voting behavior is shaped by a complex interaction of political beliefs, social influences, candidate perceptions, and community-based realities that collectively influence electoral participation.

The 2025 Philippine National and Local Elections occurred within a rapidly evolving political environment characterized by heightened digital political engagement, intensified campaign activities, and increasing public exposure to political information through social media platforms. In many local communities, electoral participation remains deeply embedded in interpersonal relationships, social networks, and localized political culture. Consequently, understanding how voters interpret political realities and make electoral decisions requires deeper exploration beyond numerical patterns and statistical trends.

Electoral attitudes refer to individuals' perceptions, beliefs, and orientations toward politics, governance, elections, and democratic participation. These attitudes often influence how voters assess candidates, interpret political messages, and ultimately decide whom to support during elections. In local settings such as San Agustin, Isabela, electoral choices may be influenced by personal interactions with candidates, family recommendations, community expectations, political trust, and lived experiences with local governance.

Existing studies on Philippine electoral behavior frequently focus on political dynasties, patronage politics, campaign strategies, and voter demographics. However, there remains limited qualitative inquiry into how ordinary voters personally experience electoral participation and construct meanings around their voting decisions within rural municipal contexts. Understanding these lived experiences is essential in capturing the human dimensions of democratic participation and political engagement.

This study aimed to explore the electoral attitudes, decision-making considerations, and voting experiences of voters in San Agustin, Isabela during the 2025

Philippine National and Local Elections. Through qualitative inquiry, the study sought to uncover how voters interpreted political participation, evaluated candidates, and experienced the electoral process within their local community context. The findings may contribute to broader discussions on democratic participation, political behavior, and voter education in Philippine local politics.

Review of Related Literature

Electoral Attitudes and Democratic Participation

Electoral attitudes significantly influence citizens' participation in democratic processes. According to Dalton (2021), political attitudes shape how individuals perceive governance, public institutions, and civic responsibility. Voters who possess positive democratic attitudes are more likely to engage actively in elections and political discussions. Electoral participation is also closely linked to political trust, civic awareness, and perceptions of leadership effectiveness.

In the Philippine context, electoral attitudes are often shaped by social relationships, historical political experiences, and perceptions of government accountability. Mendoza and Yap (2022) emphasized that Filipino voters commonly associate good leadership with honesty, accessibility, and responsiveness to community needs. Such perceptions become particularly influential in local elections where candidates maintain direct relationships with constituents.

Decision-Making Processes in Voting

Voting decisions are influenced by both rational evaluation and emotional-social considerations. Lau and Redlawsk (2020) explained that voters assess candidates using multiple criteria including leadership competence, credibility, policy positions, and personal character. However, voters may also rely on social influences such as family opinions, peer recommendations, and community expectations when making electoral decisions.

Curato (2021) noted that Filipino voters increasingly demonstrate issue-based political awareness while still navigating traditional political practices such as patronage politics and relational voting. This suggests that voting behavior reflects a combination of reflective judgment and socio-cultural influence.



Media, Information Exposure, and Electoral Perceptions

The emergence of digital political communication has transformed how voters access political information and engage with electoral discourse. Howard (2020) argued that social media platforms significantly shape political perceptions by increasing exposure to political narratives, campaign messages, and public opinion. However, the spread of misinformation and emotionally charged political content may also influence voter perceptions and electoral behavior.

Ong and Cabañes (2019) emphasized that online political communication in the Philippines has become deeply influential during elections. Voters are increasingly exposed to political content through social media, which shapes their understanding of candidates and political issues.

Local Political Culture and Voting Experiences

Local electoral behavior is deeply connected to community relationships and localized political realities. Timberman (2021) explained that Philippine local politics often involve interpersonal trust, familiarity with candidates, and community-based political interactions. In rural communities, voters may evaluate candidates according to visibility, accessibility, and direct service to the community.

These localized political experiences shape how voters interpret leadership and democratic participation within their communities. Understanding these lived experiences provides valuable insights into the social dimensions of electoral behavior.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on the Rational Choice Theory of Anthony Downs (1957), which posits that voters make electoral decisions based on perceived benefits, candidate evaluation, and expected governance outcomes. The theory explains how individuals assess political options according to personal and community interests.

The study was also anchored on Social Influence Theory by Kelman (1958), which explains how attitudes and behaviors are shaped by interpersonal relationships, social environments, and community interactions. In local elections, social influence plays a significant role in shaping political perspectives and voting decisions.

These theories collectively guided the exploration of how

voters in San Agustin, Isabela interpreted their electoral experiences and constructed meaning around their voting decisions

II. METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore and understand the lived experiences, electoral attitudes, decision-making considerations, and voting behavior of voters during the 2025 Philippine National and Local Elections in San Agustin, Isabela. Phenomenology was deemed appropriate because it enabled the researcher to examine how participants interpreted their experiences, constructed meanings regarding political participation, and described the factors that influenced their voting decisions within their local political context. Through this approach, the study captured the subjective realities, perceptions, and reflections of voters concerning democratic participation and electoral engagement.

The study was conducted in the municipality of San Agustin, Isabela, Philippines. The locale was selected because of its active electoral participation and its localized political environment during the 2025 National and Local Elections. The municipality provided a relevant setting for examining voters' lived electoral experiences within a rural Philippine community where interpersonal relationships, community interactions, and local political dynamics are evident during election periods.

The participants of the study consisted of fifteen registered voters who were selected through purposive sampling. The inclusion criteria required participants to be registered voters in San Agustin, Isabela, individuals who actively participated in the 2025 National and Local Elections, and persons willing to share their electoral experiences and political perspectives. The participants represented varied age groups, occupations, educational backgrounds, and voting experiences to ensure diversity of viewpoints and richer descriptions of electoral behavior and decision-making processes.

Data were gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews. The interview guide focused on participants' electoral attitudes, candidate evaluation considerations, political information sources, and personal experiences during the elections. The semi-structured format allowed participants to freely express their thoughts, perceptions, and experiences while enabling the researcher to probe



deeper into relevant issues and emerging themes. Prior to the conduct of the interviews, ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were strictly observed to ensure the protection of participants' rights and welfare throughout the study.

The gathered data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework. Interview transcripts were carefully transcribed, coded, and categorized to identify recurring patterns, meanings, and themes related to electoral participation and voting behavior. The analysis involved familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing and defining themes, and producing thematic interpretations grounded in participants' narratives. To establish the trustworthiness of the study, the researcher employed credibility measures such as member checking, triangulation, audit trails, and thick description to ensure the accuracy, consistency, and authenticity of the findings.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Theme 1: Valuing Integrity and Honest Leadership in Candidate Selection

Participants consistently emphasized that honesty, integrity, and moral character were among the most important considerations in selecting candidates. Many voters associated trustworthy leadership with transparency, accountability, and sincere public service.

One participant shared:

"Mas gusto ko iyong kandidatong nakikita naming totoong nagseserbisyo at hindi lang nagpapakita kapag eleksyon."

Another participant stated:

"Importante sa akin na malinis ang record ng kandidato kasi sila ang hahawak ng pondo at magdedesiyon para sa komunidad."

The findings suggest that voters increasingly prioritize ethical leadership and credibility in evaluating candidates.

Theme 2: Community Visibility and Public Service as Basis for Electoral Trust

Participants revealed that candidates' visibility and actual community involvement strongly influenced their voting decisions. Voters valued leaders who maintained direct engagement with community members even outside election periods.

A participant expressed:

"Kapag kilala mo na tumutulong talaga sa barangay kahit walang kampanya, mas nagtitiwala ka."

The findings indicate that localized political relationships and observable service contribute significantly to electoral trust in rural communities.

Theme 3: Influence of Family, Peers, and Community Networks

Several participants acknowledged that family members, friends, and community discussions affected their political perspectives and voting choices. Electoral conversations within households and neighborhoods shaped political opinions and candidate preferences.

One voter mentioned:

"Minsan pare-pareho kami ng ibinoboto sa pamilya dahil pinag-uusapan namin kung sino ang mas okay."

This reflects the continuing influence of social relationships and interpersonal political discussions in local electoral behavior.

Theme 4: Navigating Political Information and Social Media Influence

Participants described social media as both informative and problematic. While online platforms provided easier access to political information, participants also expressed concerns regarding misinformation and biased political content.

A participant stated:

"Madaling makakita ng impormasyon sa Facebook pero mahirap malaman kung alin ang totoo."

The findings demonstrate the growing role of digital political communication in shaping electoral perceptions and voter decision-making.

Theme 5: Experiencing Voting as Civic Responsibility



and Democratic Participation

Participants generally viewed voting as an important civic responsibility and democratic right. Many expressed a sense of duty to participate in elections to influence community development and governance.

One participant explained:

“Bumoboto ako dahil gusto kong may ambag ako sa pagpili ng maayos na lider para sa bayan.”

The findings highlight the continuing importance of democratic participation and civic consciousness among local voters.

IV. CONCLUSION

The study revealed that voters in San Agustin, Isabela construct their electoral decisions through a combination of personal values, social influence, political trust, and lived community experiences. Candidate integrity, visible public service, and community engagement emerged as major considerations influencing voting behavior during the 2025 Philippine National and Local Elections.

The findings further showed that while voters increasingly practice reflective and issue-based political evaluation, social relationships and media exposure continue to shape electoral perceptions and decision-making. Voting was commonly perceived as both a civic responsibility and a meaningful expression of democratic participation.

The study underscores the evolving nature of electoral behavior within rural Philippine communities and highlights the importance of political awareness, ethical leadership, and informed democratic engagement.

Implications of the Study

The findings of the study may guide electoral educators, policymakers, and community leaders in strengthening voter education initiatives that promote critical political awareness and responsible electoral participation. Educational institutions and civic organizations may

develop programs focusing on media literacy, political evaluation, and democratic values to help voters navigate political information responsibly.

The study also emphasizes the importance of ethical leadership and genuine community engagement among political candidates. Strengthening trust between leaders and constituents may contribute to more meaningful democratic participation and community-centered governance.

Future qualitative studies may further explore generational differences in voting experiences, digital political engagement, and the influence of local political culture on electoral behavior in other Philippine municipalities.

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