Voting Preferences in the National Election: A Case among First-Time Voters

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Abstract:- This research study aims to know the preferences of first-time voters in the national election. There are overall 12 respondents in the study that are divided into three respondents per age group that ranges from 18 - 21 years old. The participants were the first-time voters in Tacloban City, Philippines who participated in the 2022 National Election. They were chosen using the Probability Sampling, specifically the Stratified Random Sampling. Qualitative Research is applied in this study which uses Descriptive Research Design, specifically Descriptive Case Study Research. This used to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context. For the data analysis, Thematic Analysis was used, and based on the results and findings from the coded and transcribed responses from the interviews, three (3) core themes and ten (10) sub-themes were generated.

With the utilization of a Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire, coding, and careful analysis of the responses, the first patent theme that was identified, was the Qualities Sought in a Candidate, which is extracted into four sub-themes, (1) Clean Track Record (2) Has Leadership Experience (3) Educational Background and (4) Platforms. Subsequently, the second major theme focuses on the Factors Affecting Voting Preference, and it resulted in four sub-themes (1) Peers (2) School (3) Family, and (4) Political Party. Ultimately, the third main theme centers around the Effects of Social Media campaigns on Voting Preference, and it is divided into two subthemes, (1) Tracks Candidate's Record and (2) Misinformation.

First-time voters believe a candidate who has a clean political record, outstanding leadership experiences, degree holder, and a vision for the country and its people are the most important qualities they must possess to be a good and effective leader. Furthermore, the family, school, peers, and political parties have a vital role to play in influencing the preferences of a first-time voter. Social media is also one of the most powerful campaign platforms according to the first-time voters, it can either educate voters or a breeder of misinformation.

Keywords:- First-Time Voters; Election; Clean Track Record; Educational Background; Leadership Experience.

I. INTRODUCTION

An election is a formal process of selecting a person for holding a public office (Webb et.al, 2020). For first-time voters, voting in national and local elections will be a new experience. However, since they are first-time voters, they may have little to no idea of their basis on who to choose during the national and local elections. According to Arkorful et.al (2020), voters' choice preferences are anchored on the candidate's expertise, image, quality, trust, and attractiveness. Each factor influences the other. The level of expertise the candidate has could be a benchmark of their attractiveness and/or even raise the voter's trust for the position. Candidates with a good and positive image are more likely to be trusted or deemed worthy for the position they are running for than candidates that fall short of the trusted qualities. The attractiveness of the candidate also influences how voters see the quality of the candidate and are likely to be perceived as worthy of the position (Arkorful et.al, 2020).

In the Philippines, the national election is held for the presidency every 6 years and the senate and local government for every 3 years. Last May 2022 were the national and local elections where, according to the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) Director James Jimenez, 52% of the total registered voters are young adults. That equals around 31 million out of the 60.46 million registered as of September 11, 2021. The COMELEC has recorded more than 4 million new voters belonging to the 18 to 21 age group. The data from the Information Technology Department of the poll body as of October 14 showed that a total of 4,094,614 young adult Filipinos are newly registered (Patinio, 2021)

In this light, the researchers aim to determine the influential factors of first-time voters in choosing their candidate. The researchers argue that there is a need to determine the influential factors as it is the basis for young inexperienced voters to choose who will lead the country. Knowing these influential factors helps us understand why a person would want to vote on a particular candidate, hence, this research will serve as a basis for young inexperienced voters to help understand the reason/s why other people would support a particular candidate and help them decide properly on who to place their vote on the next elections.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This study used a descriptive research design specifically a descriptive case study research. A case study is a research approach that is used to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context. It is an established research design that is used extensively in a wide variety of disciplines, particularly in the social sciences.

This research design applies to this study as the researchers only aim to know the voting preferences of first-time voters and how this preference influences their decision-making. Moreover, this study only focuses on the first-time voters in Tacloban City ranging from ages 18 to 21.

B. Research Locale and Sample

This research was conducted at Tacloban City, Leyte, a highly urbanized city in the Philippines' Eastern Visayas region. The research will be done in this location since Tacloban City has the highest new voters' registration in Eastern Visayas.

The participants of this study were carefully chosen to provide an honest and sincere response from the in-depth semi-structured interview to be conducted by the researchers. The chosen participants are first-time voters in Tacloban City ranging from ages 18 to 21. The sampling technique used for this research is probability sampling, specifically the stratified random sampling where three first-time voters from each age group (18-21) was chosen. This technique is used to guarantee good representation and proportions of the population. This technique will also prevent the researcher from obtaining data that are only from the same age group of first-time voters.

C. Data Collection and Ethical Consideration

The researchers maximized the use of social media platforms to get the list of first-time voters by posting publication materials (pub mats) and google form links indicating the purpose of our study, the Data Privacy Act if they participate, and the verification if they are qualified as participants by attaching a screenshot of the precinct finder status from the Comelec site. The researchers used the Interview method to obtain more comprehensive data from the participants.

The study used a semi-structured interview questionnaire with open-ended questions as a method of gathering the primary data for analysis. The whole duration of the interviews was done face-to-face. The researchers also sought for consent to the participants of recording the audio of the interview. Wargo (2012) opines that note-taking is not a preferred method because it can impede the interviewer from what the participant is saying, which could potentially keep the interviewer from asking additional questions for clarification. The questions were about the voting preferences in the national election among first-time voters.

In order to maintain ethical research behavior, the researcher secured an informed consent agreement from the participants. This began with the researchers sending the informed consent agreement to the participants. The informed consent agreement emphasized the participants' voluntary involvement in the research, the rationale & the process of gathering the data, and the mechanisms to ensure data privacy and confidentiality. Under data privacy laws and research ethics, the researchers shall protect the personal information of the participants and ensure that personal data shall remain confidential between the researchers and the participants. All information gathered was kept secure and private. The transcript of the interview will be destroyed when the study is already finalized and published.

D. Data Analysis

The researchers used thematic analysis in understanding the voting preferences and participation in the national election of the first-time voters. Thematic analysis is defined as a method for identifying, analyzing, organizing, describing, and reporting patterns that are found within a given data set (Braun and Clark, 2006, as cited by Nowell et. al., 2017). Through this method, it allowed the researchers to examine the different perspectives of first-time voters in choosing a candidate, and draw out their similarities and differences. Thematic analysis will help in coding the data from the respondents' responses to the interview questions and in identifying keywords, concepts, ideas, and perceptions from it. It will help in handling data with a well-structured approach and produces organized and clear results by deriving and defining themes from the various codes made on the comprehensive overview of the gathered data.

III. FINDINGS

A total of twelve participants were chosen to take part in the study. Transcripts of semi-structured interview responses were the main source of data. Presented findings were related to the research questions outlined in the study and the results were presented following their main codes of incorporation with raw quoted responses of the participants. Each code or subcode was ranked from most responses to least responses per category. Analyzing the data thematically was the method used for analysis.

During the analysis, there were (3) three main themes that were identified in this study. The following are (1) Qualities Sought in a Candidate (2) Factors Affecting Voting Preference and 3) Effects of Social Media Campaign in Voting Preference. Correspondingly, in each theme, subthemes were also identified which are summarized below with significant quotes from the participants.

A. Theme 1: Qualities Sought in a Candidate
   a) Subtheme 1.1 Clean Track Record
   With the cases of corruption among politicians, it is hard to determine if the candidates can fulfill their promises during their campaigns. With this, participants place importance on the candidate's track record to make sure that the candidate is capable of serving the country well. A clean public service record is important for them to become a good and effective leader of the country, he/she must have performed well in their previous positions, at least in terms of projects implemented and laws passed. The following are some of the participant's statement on clean track record as qualities in choosing a candidate:

Clean track record can help figure out their character from the past record of service, their political field or if they have cases of corruption. -(CP 9)

"I'm sick of seeing clowns in politics and all of them were just a laughing stock, ignorant, greedy, no sense of accountability and responsibility that put our country into worst as it was today. I want a change for a the next generations to come' -(CP 12)

"One who has already proven that they can lead a country even in the midst of a pandemic. They must be knowledgeable in the problems currently being faced by the country. Not only is competence important, but they must also possess a clean track record." -(CP 5)

"I consider this as an important quality because it will give us a good leader or a good server. I mean, who would love to have a dirty record? A less-than-stellar leader? I believe our nation will progress with the help of this quality" -(CP 8)

"A candidate that could give us or show us transparency, clean track record, experienced, and has a will to listen is totally enough to be a candidate. -(CP 3)

Meanwhile, de Figueiredo et. al (2021) study suggests that revealing a candidate's corruption record in public can influence voters' decisions, but the results are still dependent on how important a clean government is to the people. As a result, the impact of increased transparency which reveals the corruption record of a politician can result in a situation where one is punished while the other is not.

b) Subtheme 1.2 Has Leadership Experience
Politicians are expected to accomplish different tasks than ordinary citizens. They must be endowed with distinguished traits and skills to engage in a leading position, work effectively with the public, or communicate through news media. The participants in this study highlight leadership experience in choosing a candidate. This experience stretches their skills and challenges their ability to lead the country. Through this, leaders are expected to be tough in making decisions yet rational. The process of making decisions often involves evaluating risks and planning for potential events that might threaten a successful outcome. Below are some of the participants' responses on leadership experience.

"I consider those qualities important, because it shows how capable they are in leading a country." -(CP 1)

"Leaders must strictly impose rules and regulations and has the power to encourage people to follow abiding rules" -(CP 7)

"A good leader isn't simply empowered to make decisions due to their position. They must be willing to take on the risk of decision making. Thus, they need to acquire this quality to ensure that they have the capacity to lead the country,

address issues, and provide adequate services to the public. -(CP 4)

B.PAC (2020) emphasized that political leaders are crucial because they define how power and money are distributed through government policies, form relationships with other stakeholders, and make decisions that can have a significant impact on a country's well-being and population. Above and beyond any short-term personal rewards, political leadership experience necessitates a focus on a country's longterm improvement. Strong political leadership necessitates a blend of charm and honesty, as well as the ability to assess a situation and make decisions based on what is best for the majority.

c) Subtheme 1.3: Educational Background
There is evidence that leaders' level of education has a positive effect on governance outcomes, thereby educational background has been largely looked into by voters. The participants in this study also consider the educational background in choosing a candidate. Politicians should have a good level of education since education provides numerous leadership qualities. Leaders who lack knowledge are unable to cope with change, which impedes a country's progress. A leader's education is essential for the country's bright future and prosperity. Below are the participants' responses highlighting their educational background in choosing a leader.

"Although it may not entirely predict how they will run the country, it can already give you a hint on their personality and as well as their beliefs. These beliefs can reflect the ideologies they hold that can affect the course of their administration." -(CP 6)

"gusto ko makapagtapos sila ng pag-aaral na may malaking tulong when engaging in politics"
[I want politicians with a degree that will help in political decisions] -(CP 9)

Hossain et al., (2017) found out that candidates' qualifications, especially their educational attainment, had the highest effect on voting decisions. As a consequence, citizens want candidates to exhibit certain required traits to a larger degree than they exhibit themselves (Dynes et al., 2019). A leader should be mature, experienced, compassionate, and educated, as well as comprehend the feelings, thoughts, and visions of others. And it all stems from our moral lives and education (Catchuela et. al 2017).

d) Subtheme 1.4 Platforms
Political platforms are specific statements of values and beliefs, explaining a party's views in great detail. Respondents of this study take high regard for candidates' platforms in casting their votes. Their platform encompasses their beliefs, policy choices, ambitions, and written commitment to projects and programs for the country. Leaders must have a

substantive platform that would give an idea to the general public as to how they would manage their work, how things will be accomplished, and the areas which need improvement if they are already in a certain position. Below are the participants' responses highlighting platforms in choosing a leader.

"Proposed platforms give benefits to other people including me. Benefits like improving the welfare of the marginalized and/or ourselves" -(CP 2)

"One factor to examine when selecting a candidate for me is their platform as a quality candidate because it reveals how well-coordinated and inclusive their intentions are for the people. It gives us an idea if they will serve the interests and welfare of the people or their own interests" -(CP 11)

Moreover, political platforms are significant to the electoral process. They give voters a sense of what the candidates believe in, the socio-economic issues they think are important, and how they are going to address them if elected. Informed voters can identify their political preferences and opportunities, and then translate those preferences into support for a candidate or issue (Bimber et al, 2015). These decisions are guided by information gathered from the news media. Depending on how people pay attention to the media, surveillance needs alone may not lead to electoral participation. Individuals instead take cues about what is, and what is not important from their extended social networks (Kaiser et al., 2018)

B. Factors Affecting Voting Preference

a) Subtheme 2.1: Peers

Youth participants learn about the candidates through peer relationships, and as they get more informed, they tend to identify more firmly with the center of the political spectrum. Youth with more engaged peers are better informed about social events and some issues are clarified. Below are the specific responses of the participants on how their peers affect their voting preferences:

"They shared factual evidence that should not be disregarded… it should be used in informing others to cut the misconception and fake news." -(CP 1)

"As I interact with them on a daily basis, they can easily persuade me but only if I have no prior knowledge on the topic at hand (e.g., climate response)" -(CP 5)

"The discourse with them expanded my knowledge about politics." -(CP 6)

"It influenced me, because what they are saying has a good point, and it is always the facts that comes out from their mouth" -(CP 9)

Meanwhile, Campos et al. (2013) divulge that some studies show evidence consistent with the claim that people follow their peer's political affiliations. Moreover, some literature supports the idea that voting is contagious in social circles, with people responding to social pressure by voting more frequently. However, nothing is known about the process that causes compliance in this situation.

b) Subtheme 2.2: School

For the first-time voters, they take high regard for school as a factor influencing their voting preference. This is responsible for providing venues for young people to socialize in particular skills and values in society. Schools also provide voters with education webinars to stimulate youth attitudes and civic behavior. Below are the participants' responses highlighting the role of the school in choosing a leader.

"Because school plays a big role in my growth and development. It is where I learned my rights, and my limitations. It also guided me to be a better individual and citizen of this country. Furthermore, my school also stands strong with its core values: relevance, integrity, truth and excellence, so I believe that with its influence I am siding with what is right" -(CP 2)

"I trust the information that schools provide because they are a learning institution that adheres to unbiased data" -(CP 4)

"My education makes me critical about the candidate since the environment at school fosters external policy inquiry" -(CP 10)

"In school it promotes the vision of integrity and dignity of an individual" -(CP 12)

Moreover, Medina (2020) stresses that schools have a very big influence in helping youth navigate what they are seeing, and hearing about civic life right now is crucial. Students who had these experiences in high school are not only more attentive to what's going on in the election; they're more informed as well. The analysis revealed that students who had been both encouraged to vote and taught how to register to vote were best prepared to navigate modern election procedures.

c) Subtheme 2.3: Family

The family has a significant impact on children's emotional attachment to politics. One of the factors affecting first-time voters' voting preferences according to the participants of this study is their family. Participants in this study considered their family and/or parents to be specific as a huge influence on their political views, the values they bring to politics, and their voting preference. It's about growing up and seeing the parents vote, as well as having political discussions at home. Below are the

participants' responses highlighting the family as one of the factors affecting their voting preferences:

"natutulungang nila akon timbangiin kung maayos ba ang pamumuno ng isang
kandidato"
[They help me evaluate if the leadership of a
certain candidate is agreeable]
-(CP 3)
"These factors influence me by setting collective ideas about society, the attributes of political leaders, political institutions and
bureaucracy." -
(CP 7)
"They influence me by giving their personal experience in choosing a specific candidate"
-(CP 8)

Meanwhile, Perri Klass, M.d. (2016) believes that parents (or a family) who talk about politics and political participation are also more likely to transmit their partisan feelings and political party identification to their children.

d) Subtheme 2.4 Political Party
Participants identify themselves with a political party or make a choice when they see that the services, accomplishments, and ideologies are in line with their interests. The following are the insights of the participants into how political parties shape their preferences:

"Political Party and my friends
also influenced me in choosing a candidate. They were also a great help because they explained things on what a candidate should be.
-(CP 11)

This identification resulted from the voters' assumption that a particular party could serve their political, economic, and social interests (Batara, 2021).Walgrave et. al., 2017 summarized three ways how voters' issue orientations can affect their electoral choices. First is the perception of the parties where voters care about how close candidates' or parties' positions are to their own, and whether candidates and parties stay on the same side of an issue as they are. The second is the idea of competence. It holds that people vote for the party that they consider being most competent to solve an issue. Third, is the idea that people vote for parties that they consider committed. It holds that issue voting is not only a matter of agreeing with parties positionally and of considering parties as competent (or not) to deal with specific policy issues but that it is also a matter of appreciating the priority parties give to specific issues.

C. Theme 3: Effects of Social Media Campaign in Voting Preference
a) Subtheme 3.1 Tracks Candidates Record
One of the effects of social media campaigns according to the respondents of this study is to track the candidate's record. The record of performance (track record) is often taken as an indicator of likely future performance. It is significant because it will demonstrate whether a candidate is capable of fulfilling his promises and deeds outlined in his platforms. Below are the specific responses of participants on how social media campaigns aid in tracking candidates' records.

"Social media provides me with so much information that it keeps my voting preference updated in a manner that changes my perspective on a certain candidate"
-(CP 1)
"Social Media was a great help for me as first time voter because I was able to know the candidates freely and I was also able to freely search the candidates
background and
history" -(CP 5)
"Interactions on social media platforms don't really affect my preference, but if their credentials are lengthy and their advocacy is evidently for the greater good, it can definitely attract my attention (and will urge me to do further research on said candidate)." -(CP 6)
"Nowadays, social media plays a vital role in campaigning. It does affect a lot of people, especially those who believe what they have read even though they haven't fact checked it. And I make certain that I always fact check and find all of the "resibo" where it all started. Is it really true? Thus, this social media campaign really affects my voting preference. In a way, I could fact check whether this is true or not. I was able to determine what his or her platform was all about. Is it important or relevant to us, to our nation' -(CP 7)
"Social media campaigns affect my voting preference because the campaign gives me Idea who is the person I vote for.
-(CP 11)

Belmonte (2018) believes that when it comes to electing leaders, people should be reflective and look into the candidate's personality and background to determine if they are capable of implementing positive change for their constituents. Social media serves as an aid to check these backgrounds in the contemporary world.

b) Subtheme 3.2 Misinformation
In today's technology, social media has been the breeding ground for candidates campaigning during elections. Participants in this study highlight that social media mobilizes fake news and internet propaganda. It operates as an amplifier, providing a platform for fans, and trolls alike to manipulate online

sentiment and activity in support of their candidates. Below are the specific responses of participants on how social media campaigns can be a breeder of misinformation.

"Social Media has become a common and source of information and unfortunately, people easily believe these without proper research and backing" -(CP 2)

"The presence of social media also contributed a lot of fake news and misinformations…but it is on our own decision and will to chose and dig more about that candidate" -(CP 3)

"Most of the campaign seen on social media are hateful, some are even sharing fake news just to campaign their candidate" -(CP 8

"The influence of social media should promote learning but due to trolls, who are sharing fake news, many would believe it easily. But at some point, ignorance is not the problem anymore, but it is the pride and lack of empathy"

-(CP 9)

"A communication platform such as social media is persuasive, and often works to change or influence opinions when it comes to political views. However, because of the abundance of ideas, thoughts, and opinions circulating through the social media platforms people often rely on fake informations"

-(CP 10)

Quitzon (2021) emphasizes that a presidential campaign's ability to effectively utilize social media and dominate digital spaces will be instrumental in shaping national opinion. The accessibility of social media makes it a prime platform for swaying public opinion; consequently, political actors are willing to do anything to capture the public's attention.

IV. DISCUSSION

This study aims to identify the inferential factors of young voters in choosing their candidate and how they participate in the recently concluded national election. The (1) Qualities Sought in a Candidate (2) Factors Affecting Voting Preference and (3) Effects of Social Media Campaign in Voting Preferences were identified as emerging themes from the generated responses of the participants.

The first patent theme that was identified is the Qualities Sought in a Candidate. This refers to the distinctive attributes or characteristics possessed by a political candidate. The first theme was extracted into four sub-themes which are the following: (1) Clean Track Record (2) Has Leadership Experience (3) Educational Background and (4) Platforms.

The first sub-theme of the first theme centers on the candidate's clean political record. The respondents believe that for a politician to become a good and effective leader of the country, he/she must have performed well in his previous positions, at least in terms of projects implemented and laws passed. They made it a point to mention that the candidate

should be able to put forward change in the government. The genuine, systemic, and structural change will help lift the poor condition of the country. With this, they noted that a candidate must possess a vision for the country and its people. A vision that will allow the candidate to lay out long-term plans and projects that will be able to withstand difficulties and obstacles along the way.

The second sub-theme talks about leadership experience. Leadership experience is important in closing developmental gaps and maximizing chances for future success. Experiences taught potential leaders different lessons that may be used in making sound decisions for the improvement of the country. Moreover, the respondents of this study highlight that leadership experience is important because it shows that they have enough knowledge thus capable of leading the country.

Meanwhile, the third sub-theme talks about educational background. Having a degree aligned with politics and humanitarian services is important to elevate the kind of service in the country. Respondents of this study consider the educational background as a prerequisite to running for the highest positions in the country. The respondents argued that although it is not a requirement in the Philippine Constitution, we should not elect for bare minimums. It is important to remember that politicians shape not only the country's future but also the individuals. They are responsible for promulgating laws that will be used in the country for a long time. The execution and implementation also lie in their leadership and compliance. Catchuela (2017) further states that a leader should be mature, experienced, compassionate, and educated, as well as comprehend the feelings, thoughts, and visions of others. And it all stems from our moral lives and education.

The fourth sub-theme is highlighted on the candidate's platform. Platforms are important because they give the candidates a clear political position with which they can campaign. They give voters, in this case, the first-time voters a sense of what the candidates believe in, the issues they think are important, and how—if elected—they will address them. Moreover, respondents of this study argued that they want clear and rational platforms and not mere too-good to be true promises.

The second patent theme that was identified is the factors affecting the voting preferences of first-time voters. This refers to influential factors that can affect the choices or preferences of first-time voters among the candidates running for public office. The second theme was extracted into four (4) sub-themes: (1) peers, (2) school, (3) family, and (4) political party.

The first sub-theme talks about the influence of peers on the individual preferences of first-time voters. The results divulged in this sub-theme are important given that there is limited literature on the affirmative side on whether peers affect the voting preferences of the youth. In fact, in America, there is no evidence that an individual's political identity is influenced by the political identities of his or her peers (Campos et al., 2013). The peer influence talked about by the respondents mainly hinges on the expansion of knowledge on facts, issues, and other matters concerning candidates and the

elections in general. Further, peer influences congruently function as fact checks on the erroneous information fed to the participants by the media including the social media and the community. Results show that respondents consider that their peers share factual evidence that should not be disregarded and the same should be used in informing others to rectify the misconceptions, misinformation, and fake news. This portion of the results of the study is consistent with existing literature. Campos et al. (2013) stated that youth participants learn about the candidates through peer relationships, and as they get more informed. Further, youth with more engaged peers are better informed about social events and some issues are clarified. However, results show that there are conditions on when and under what circumstances their peers could influence their preferences: 1) if they have no prior and established knowledge on the matter, 2) the points their peers' utter qualify as a good point to the respondent themselves.

The second sub-theme talks about school as an influential factor for voting preference among first-time voters. Our respondents take high regard in school for the information it gives to students. They trust the information given to them because they are a learning institution that promotes and stimulates civic competence. Medina (2020) stresses that schools have a very big influence since peers and educators are inside in the same location or place. Helping the youth navigate what they are seeing and hearing about civic life right now is crucial. Students who had these experiences in high school are not only more attentive to what's going on in the election; they're more informed as well. The analysis revealed that students who had been both encouraged to vote and taught how to register to vote in high school were the best prepared to navigate modern election procedures.

The third sub-theme talks about family as an influential factor in voting preference. In the Philippine context, Filipinos cherish their families the most. As a result of that, according to our respondents, first-time voters rely on their families for evaluating a candidate if their leadership skills are fit for the position the candidates are running for or being influenced by them giving their personal experience in choosing a candidate. These responses could be rooted in the parental education of parents given to children (Persson, 2015). Through their parental education, first-time voters are likely to support the candidates that their parents support, as proven in Turan's (2017) study. However, when a person uses the family as a primary source for choosing which candidate the person will support, they do so for a variety of reasons. It may be because of the lack of information about the candidate. Family members recognize the candidate through his/her family name or the trust of their extended family members. In other cases, one reason may be the policy platform of their interest (Davidson et.al, 2017).

The fourth sub-theme provides the influence of political parties on the preferences of the respondents of the study. Although the response came only from a single respondent, the result is still relevant to the existing literature. The result of this sub-theme focuses on how political parties explained things about what a candidate should be thereby influencing

the respondent in choosing a candidate. The data presented in this sub-theme present to us a small portion of the effects of political parties among the voters in the Philippines. The result however is not unusual. The prevailing electoral system in the Philippines—as provided by the 1987 Constitution— inadvertently guarantees the perpetuation of weak and incoherent political parties (Asia Foundation, 2019). As long as political parties are weak and incoherent, the influence of parties on individuals will remain minimal. An exception however to this is that political parties will normally have favorable influences on their members and on those who directly benefit from these parties such as students for scholarship programs, subsidies, and other benefits for other beneficiaries and sectors.

The third main theme centers around the Effects of Social Media campaigns on Voting Preference. It refers to the influence of social media as a platform for the election campaign toward the people's choice of candidates. It is divided into two subthemes, 1) Tracks Candidate's Records, and 2) Misinformation.

Tracks Candidates Record is the first subtheme in the Effects of Social Media Campaign on Voting Preference. According to the respondents, the candidate's performance records displayed on social media platforms grabbed their attention, prompting them to like him. Politicians can use social media to spread their campaign messages widely and for free, highlight important advocacy initiatives, make speeches and comments easily available, and get free advertising (Buenaobra, 2016). As a result, while keeping track of candidates' history is important when selecting a candidate, the way this candidate appeared on social media platforms differed. Indeed, social media is a potent and game changing instrument that allows a politician to connect with a vast number of voters and volunteers.

The second sub-theme talks about misinformation. Based on the participants' responses, social media is a convincing medium that is supposed to promote learning, however, it produces a lot of false information, and people tend to easily believe such pieces of information without finding out what is factual. Many people believe easily because there are plenty of ideas, thoughts, and opinions that are going around on social media, and at the same time, there are trolls who share fake news. It is also pointed out that the occurring problem is not the people's ignorance anymore, but their pride and lack of empathy.

V. CONCLUSION

The following conclusions can be drawn based on the collection and analysis of data gathered:

This research aims to identify the inferential factors of first time voters in choosing a candidate in the national elections. Based on the responses, it is concluded that attributes or characteristics possessed by a political candidate matter. Influential factors also affect the choices or preferences of first-time voters among candidates, such as peers, school, and family. and political parties. First-time voters attest to how the aforementioned themes serve as a

foundation for them in choosing the right and deserving candidate for the right position.

In conclusion, a clean track record, educational background, leadership experience, and platforms are the most important qualities of a candidate sought by first-time voters. First-time voters believe a candidate who has a clean political record, outstanding leadership experiences, degree holder, and a vision for the country and its people are the most important qualities they must possess to be a good and effective leader. Furthermore, the family, school, peers, and political parties have a vital role to play in influencing the choices or preferences of a first-time voter.

Finally, first-time voters who use social media often can be an advantaged or disadvantaged as they are exposed to a lot of candidates' political advertisements and records, and trolls who spread false information. Social media is one of the most powerful campaign platforms a candidate can use as it can educate first-time voters or deceive a wide range of voters.

VI. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings and conclusions presented, the researchers make the following recommendations for Voting Preferences in the National Election: A Case Among First Time Voters. As the research progressed, a few areas emerged as potential targets for further studies. The recommendations are as follows:

- Voters should look at the background of the politician to identify his/her capability as a leader. Looking at the candidate's political background and track record will help voters determine whether the candidate has been involved in corruption during his or her previous years in government service.
- Knowing one's capability as a leader should also be checked, how a specific candidate or politician will accomplish different projects, and how the candidate or politician will make decisions for the sake of the people. It is not always about how a leader decides because of his position, but how willing he is to take the risk to have good governance.
- First-time voters or not, the educational background of the candidate should be checked, even if it will not have a big impact and will not define the person who is in the position, but this quality will help people consider the knowledge and how a candidate can make wise decisions in dealing with change.
- A candidate's political platform reveals his vision for the country and his plans for the future. This demonstrates how he/she will manage the country's ambitions and goals for improving the economy. Therefore, voters should always consider checking the platforms of their desired candidates to better understand if the candidate is a good fit for the position.
- Perspective towards voting may depend on how we get influenced by the people that surround us. Peer relationship is important because we tend to make a particular exchange of perspective toward our preferable candidate however, we should always have to consider facts because our peers may have a particular bias toward supporting a candidate. Peers

are also the biggest influencer of our decision; therefore, we should always exclude biases and focus on the truth.

- Schools are a perfect place for interaction with other students, others' decisions showcase how we are being influenced by our classmates on their chosen candidates. However, if we look at the bigger perspective, the school teaches us information that may help us in choosing the best leaders, books and other sources of information helps us in having that knowledge which may help us in having unbiased data about the political backgrounds of leaders. School should always be a better place for gathering facts and information and also a perfect institution that will provide students and first-time voters ideas about their classification of their chosen candidates.
- Social media is increasingly influencing the national election. Using various social media platforms, political candidates can directly engage and influence voters. To learn more about candidates' backgrounds and histories, voters should keep track of their records. It is significant because it will demonstrate whether a candidate can keep the promises and actions outlined in their platforms.
- In today's modern era, social media has become a breeding ground for candidates campaigning during elections. It has become one of the most popular sources of information, but it has also contributed to a significant amount of misinformation. In that case, voters should fact-check to avoid misinformation.
- The researchers of this study also recommend researching the same problem with a different respondent to bridge the gap of voting deficiency in the country.

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