

**FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH VOTING BEHAVIORS OF MANDAYA
ELECTORATES**

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**MARY FIL M. BAUYOT
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Abstract

This study examines the factors associated with voting behaviors of Mandaya electorates in Barangay Don Salvador Lopez, Mati City, Davao Oriental, Philippines. A factorial-correlational research design was applied in this study to describe the sociodemographic characteristics and voting behaviors of Mandaya electorates in terms of casting of vote and expression of preference for a candidate. Primary data were gathered through the use of survey questionnaire involving information of participants' sociodemographic characteristics and voting behaviors. Respondents were selected through simple random sampling. Secondary data sources included the use of focus group discussion (FGD) and observations to obtain information on other factors that affect the voting behavior of Mandaya electorates. Analysis between sociodemographic and voting behaviors show significant results in different variables. Three themes, namely, background, services, and deeds, emerged from the FGD on factors that affect the voting behavior of Mandaya electorates. Furthermore, 2 themes, namely, anxiety and advantages of PCOS machines, also emerged from voting behaviors of the said electorates towards automated elections. The study concludes that the Mandaya are one of the vulnerable populations of the Philippines; the advent of automated elections influences their voting behavior during the past election, and even on the upcoming election; and personal characteristics and abilities of the candidate such as knowledge, experience, honesty, morality, compassion and leadership ability seemed to define the voting behavior of Mandaya electorates in terms of expression of preference for a candidate during campaign period. The study recommends that social scientists, social psychologists and political psychologists should also conduct researches on the political aspect of indigenous groups as well on voting behavior, vote decisions vis-à-vis electoral fraud to be able to create a clear picture of a Mandaya voter; a thorough orientation on the use of PCOS machine before election should be conducted to Mandaya electorates; and finally, future researches is also recommended to gain more insight and deeper understanding of the electorates' voting behavior.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The constitution guarantees the people of their sovereignty, where all government authority comes from. Sovereignty or the power to govern is exercised directly in the form of suffrage; and indirectly through public officials elected by the people. The will of the people is best expressed through clean, orderly and honest election. Elections socialize and institutionalize political activity, making it possible for most political participation to be peacefully channeled through the electoral process. It presents voters with important choices. Whether it is a local race that will affect the community or a national race that could change the direction of the country, it is time to consider the issues which people care about and decide which candidate to support because elections are held in order to identify the representative chosen by voters (Arenasa, 2004). A vote is an individual's act of voting, by which a person expresses support or preference for certain, whether a certain candidate, and/or a selection of candidates or political party. In politics, voting is the method by which the electorate of a democracy appoints representatives in government. The citizen voters are entitled to free and informed choice on whom to vote and must be dictated by the genuine welfare of the majority. Every political choices and decisions made by the citizen voters will determine the kind of government that will serve them (Citizen Voter Education Module, 2005).

The most interesting questions about an election are not concerned with who won but with such questions as why people voted the way that they did or what the implications of the results are. These questions are not always easily answered. Looking only at the campaign events and incidents will not suffice. The unique aspects of the election must be blended with a more

general understanding of electoral behavior to create full explanation (Rocamora, 1998). On what basis voters decide on how they will cast their ballot? Several basic factors can be identified as reasons for preferring one candidate in an election. The voter may decide on the basis of one or more of the following considerations such as evaluation of the personal qualities of the candidates, general assessments of the performance of the government, orientations on specific issues of public policy, basic loyalty to or preference to a particular political party (Arenasa, 2004), shared characteristics between voters and candidates, specific interests seen to be championed by the candidates, and the appeal of the candidates' programs and plan of acting. The other characteristics that are observed to be shared by candidates and voters were language, religion, wealth, and poverty (Lande, 1984).

What leaders do Filipinos want? Why do Filipino voters elect the kind of leaders we now have? What is the rhyme and reason behind their voting behavior? As cited by Sanchez, Porcil and Davide (2010), studies on political behaviors and attitudes in the Philippines usually approach the topic from the standpoint of socialization. Researches focus on social factors such as kinship (Hollnsteiner, 1962; Lande, 1968), peer groups (Youngblood, 1962), families and schools (Sicat, 1976; Ortega, 1984), alliance system (Stone, 1973), involvement in labor, sectoral and cause-oriented groups (Carlos, 1985; Butalid, 1982), martial law and people power (Montiel, 1985; 1989; Licuanan, 1987), leadership and authoritarianism (Abinales, 1987; Montiel, 1990), and political structures (Montiel, 1986; 1990). Moreover, in the study conducted by the Institute of Political Reform (2005) on voter behavior, it suggests that the top four factors that determines the vote of Filipino electorates are candidate's public servant image, political machinery, popularity and endorsement of traditional network and organization which include the family, the church, the ward leaders, and formal groups and associations.

However, Philippine elections have frequently been marred by allegations of widespread cheating and other electoral malpractice. Concerns over election credibility have been exacerbated by the typically long period between voting and the official announcement of results. Delays were caused in part by an antiquated polling procedure that required voters to remember candidate names and write them on a ballot paper, leaving polling officials to decipher the handwriting of all voters, including some less than fully literate, all the while dealing with complaints from watchful party officials who were certain that the illegible scrawl was a vote for their candidate. These are the common scenarios that usually happen during election using the traditional mode of voting. With the advent of technology in the modern times, automated elections come into picture. Increasing public frustration prompted the Philippine government to propose in the mid-1990s that the polling process be automated to decrease cheating and simplify polling and vote-counting. Some supported this because they believed automation would serve as an effective check on cheating, while others saw modernization as a means to finally do away with the infamous write-in ballot process. Thus, automated elections were finally tested in the 2008 Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) elections and in the May 10, 2010 National Elections. However, despite the proven technology, some say they are unclear how well it will work and others say they worry that the machines might not accurately record the votes, either because they are unreliable or because they have been rigged. A series of problems with the machines have helped fuel this uncertainty (Meisburger, 2010). Many questions and complaints arise from this issue such as its reliability. Some people said that anything that is being done computerized could be easier to falsify. In the side of indigenous people it would be hard for them to vote if the election will be done automatically because some of them are illiterate (Cayabyab, 2012).

It is the inspiration of this research to study voting behaviors and how electronic voting or automated voting system affected Mandaya electorates in casting their vote and expressing their preference for a candidate during campaign period. In Barangay Don Salvador Lopez, Mati City, Davao Oriental, it has been recognized that Mandaya electorates are often the uninformed, less fortunate, less educated and underprivileged citizens. They comprise the 75% of the voting population of the barangay whose votes usually determine who gets elected into office. However, these background characteristics will put Mandaya electorates to a dilemma in their voting behavior especially with the introduction of Automated Election System in the Philippines.

Despite the government and non-government organizations' information and education campaign on the Automated Election System especially in its advantages and benefits to voters and to the electoral process in general, Mandaya electorates' voting behaviors are endowed with mixed emotions such as their apprehensions and anxieties towards the credibility and validity of the machine in terms of vote counting which caused them to remain reluctant and hesitant towards this newly-introduced technology in the country. Thus, this study determined the factors associated with voting behaviors among Mandaya electorates and how they will vote in the upcoming automated local elections, being their first time to vote for candidates in the local executives using the Precinct Count Optical Scanner (PCOS) machine.

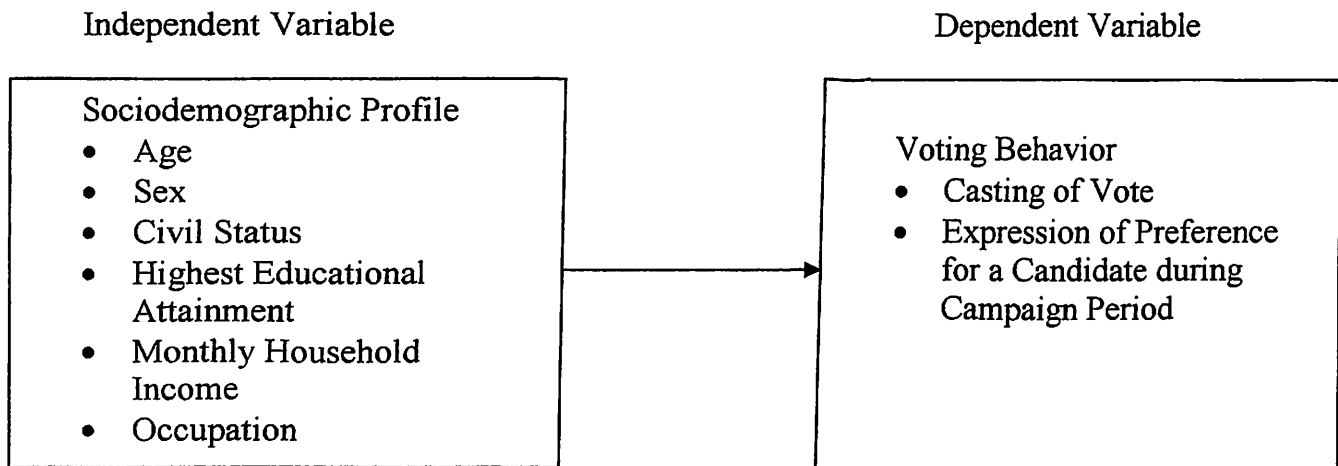
Theoretical Framework

This study used the following theories to determine factors associated with voting behaviors of Mandaya electorates in a barangay of Mati City, Davao Oriental, to wit;

Ideological Theory is used to determine factors associated with voting behaviors among Mandaya electorates. This helped explore how people choose candidates according to their ideology, principles, and beliefs.

Rational Choice Theory is used to help investigate voting behaviors of Mandaya electorates in a barangay of Mati City since election engages voters in a cost-benefit situation where they are presented with various electoral choices by the political parties and candidates. This explained how voter chooses the electoral outcome that is believed to yield the most personal benefits – the height of rationality.

Conceptual Framework



The conceptual framework includes the independent variable involving sociodemographic factors in terms of age, sex, civil status, highest educational attainment, occupation, and income of the participants while the voting behavior of the participants such as

casting of vote and expression of preference for a candidate during campaign period are considered the dependent variable of the study.

Statement of the Problem

The study is aimed to determine the factors associated with voting behaviors of Mandaya electorates in the local elections at Barangay Don Salvador Lopez, Mati City, Davao Oriental.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the sociodemographic characteristics of the Mandaya voters in terms of;
 - a. Age
 - b. Sex
 - c. Civil Status
 - d. Highest Educational Attainment
 - e. Monthly Household Income
 - f. Occupation
2. What is the voting behavior of Mandaya voters in terms of (a) casting their vote and (b) expression of preference for a candidate during the campaign period?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the sociodemographic characteristics of the Mandaya voters and their voting behavior?
4. What are other factors that affect the voting behavior of Mandaya electorates?

Hypothesis of the Study

There is no significant relationship between sociodemographic characteristics and voting behavior of Mandaya electorates.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study is conducted to Mandaya electorates who are of legal age, registered voters and bona fide residents of Barangay Don Salvador Lopez, Mati City, Davao Oriental. This study also determined factors associated with the voting behaviors of Mandaya electorates. The exclusion of Commission on Election (COMELEC) Officer's experiences to voting via automation and the failure of the researcher to find for his replacement are considered to be the limitation of this study.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are operationally defined in this study:

Sociodemographic Characteristics. This includes age (participants' voting age); sex (categorized as male or female participant); civil status (being single, married, and widow/widower); highest educational attainment (includes elementary undergraduate, elementary graduate, high school undergraduate, high school graduate, college undergraduate, college graduate, etc.); occupation (refers to participants' present work); and monthly household income (refers to gross income obtained in a month).

Voting Behavior. Refers to participants' behavior in terms of casting their vote and their expression of preference for a candidate during the campaign.

Automated Election System. Refers to a system using appropriate technology for voting, counting, consolidating, canvassing, transmission of election results and other process in the conduct of electoral exercises. In the Philippines, Precinct Count Optical Scanner (PCOS) machine is used.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study are significant to the following:

Academe. This research provides additional information which may help students understand realities in politics. This may help the academe conduct researches relevant to providing perspectives, models, lobby policies and programs necessary for electorates' political maturity. This may also help young generation strengthen their advocacies towards importance of voting or exercise the right of suffrage in relation to candidates' moral standards and thus help them effectively assess who among the election candidates are worth choosing for. This may also serve as a vehicle to understand political realities and to foster future electorates to vote based on their own research, evaluation on particular candidates, and their conscience.

Church Leaders and People's Organizations. The findings of this study may be utilized to lobby for fair campaign practices and form appreciation for professionalism in government service.

Government Leaders. This study may encourage them to lead the way of having high morals during elections so that the voting public can vote wisely.

Community. Valuing the existence of their culture, beliefs, norms and practices, this may help the community increase sensitivity and responsibility in assisting and safeguarding electorates in their right to suffrage.

Mandaya Electorates. The results of this study may be of help for them to be guided in their choice of civil servants, exercise the power of the ballot more judiciously so that those elected will serve their best interest. Moreover, this study may also help improve their awareness on issues concerning election, on making decision to the kind of leaders they would choose to

best represent and assist them to build trust and confidence vis-à-vis the new mode of voting in the country, the Automated Election System using PCOS machine.

Mindanao studies. With the limited and inadequate studies on indigenous people, this research may contribute to the literature on Lumad behavior and political mainstreaming of our indigenous communities.

Political psychologists, political scientists, analysts and advisers. Any political and electoral campaigns directed towards Mandaya electorates, the results of this study may be used as a guide and instrument for political strategy.