

Voter awareness of premature campaigning in barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan elections in the municipality of Pangil, Laguna

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Abstract

Premature campaigning or early campaigning beyond the lawful campaign period have been rampant nowadays. This might have been the easy ride for politicians to solicit votes to their constituents and banner their names as aspirants in upcoming elections. It is prevalent during National and Local Elections as court ruling suggests early campaigning became legal due to significant period between the filing of candidacy and campaign period. Awareness with premature campaigning and other electoral policies of voters affect their rational decisions on who to vote and which aspirant is suitable for the positions to be voted for. Comelec have formulated ways to combat premature campaigning in the However, there is still a need to provide a sharpened idea with regards to premature campaigning and how the rules and regulation applied to it must be implemented. To identify the knowledge in premature campaigning and its governing policies, the researcher conducted a study in voter awareness of premature campaigning regulation in Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections in the municipality of Pangil, Laguna. The researcher gathered data by random sampling of voters' demographic profile, their level of awareness in relation to public policy with regards to premature campaigning. Differences of their awareness as grouped according to profile. Additionally, what initiative on policy formulation may be proposed. This resulted to moderate level of awareness when it comes to premature campaigning in Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections. Further, there is significant influence in age and employment status of voters indicating varying level of experience and engagement.

Keywords: Premature campaigning; elections; voter awareness; policy formulation

1. Introduction

An election serves as a structured decision-making process through which a community selects an individual for a public office. Engaging in the voting process is a vital form of political participation, granting individuals the ability to impact governmental decisions (R. Rose et al., 1967 as cited in Akeliwira et al., 2022). Barangay elections play a crucial role in grassroots local governance in the Philippines by facilitating citizen participation and enhancing transparency. While, in the study of Tamayo & Lopiga (2024), Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) elections are pivotal in empowering youth participation in local governance.

In the Philippines, election campaigns are lively, with candidates using various strategies, like social media, jingles, and tv or radio advertisements (Atienza, 2019). Campaigning for an elective position is regulated under Republic Act No. 9006 (Fair Election Act). The law provides the suitable election propaganda and specific timeline for campaign period. Many candidates comply with these regulations, however there are some aspirants also engage in Premature Campaigning (Cruz, 2023). COMELEC is having a hard time to address the challenges when it comes to premature campaigning effectively. In the last October 30, 2023

Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections (BSKE), COMELEC imposes to the candidates that premature campaigning once they committed, shall face liability to election code violations (PIA, 2023). In relation to this, as cited in Lapuz & Magno (2019) in First Time Voters: A Case of Continuing Political Disenfranchisement (Bagas, 2005), the insufficient intensive information campaigns and public awareness initiatives by the commission has also been criticized, voter registration processes were dominated by various political events, leading to potential disenfranchisement (Von Borzyskowski & Kuhn, 2020). Informed voters are less susceptible to campaign manipulation, including but not limited to premature campaigning, making it harder for politicians to use this setup.

In this research, the proponents would like to ascertain the level of awareness of voters with regards to the conduct of premature campaigning. Moreover, this research will determine the possible effect of voter's knowledge when it comes to campaigning and assist the Commission in formulating and/or revising frameworks in combating premature campaigning. The research may be used for future reference in amending the law when it comes with premature campaigning.

1.1. Background of the Study

Campaigning has been a major activity before the actual election event occurred. It is regulated under Republic Act No. 9006 (Fair Election Act), which outlines lawful election propaganda and specific campaign periods: 90 days for presidential elections, 45 days for local elections, and 15 days for barangay and SK elections (BP 881). The conduct of political campaign persuades the voter to ask for their favor and support the candidate soliciting their vote. There were many forms of campaigning which are utilized by candidates nowadays. These methods to reach for support and votes includes social media, television and radio political advertisements. While all of these are less expensive ways to expose voters to a candidate's political position, personalized face-to-face interaction is still considered the most effective way to campaign (Barton et al., 2013 as cited in Galasso et al., 2023).

Commission on Elections (COMELEC) in its regular activities always formulate the Calendar of Activities of an Election Event. The Calendar of Activities include but not limited to the List of Dates to conduct impertinent events related to election (e.g. preparation of electoral board member, inspection of voting centers, etc.) and Campaign Period where the candidates are to conduct their political activities to solicit votes to the public. Moreover, the Calendar of Activities also incorporates the period of prohibited acts such as Gun Ban, Liquor Ban and Campaign Ban.

Despite the list and definite days given by the Commission to Conduct Political Campaigning, there were candidates that still practice premature campaigning. Premature campaigning is an act done by a candidate prior to the actual date of campaign period. A person based on the Omnibus Election Code shall be considered an official candidate upon filing of their Certificate of Candidacy (COC) and shall be affected by the rules and regulation of the Fair Elections Act.

In the case of *Penera vs. Comelec*, the Petitioner Rosalinda Penera and respondent Edgar Andar were both candidates for Mayor the municipality of Sta. Monica, Surigao del Norte throughout the May 2007 elections. Penera was assumed to be conducting premature campaigning by Andanar. The Commission on Elections (COMELEC) after deliberation of the case, disqualified Penera. However, Penera then elevated the issue with the Supreme Court (SC). The SC granted Penera's Motion for Reconsideration (Castillo & Nonato, 2010). The decision by the SC occurred during a National and Local Election wherein the period of filing of COC was a long way before the Campaign Period due to different reasons as implied by the Commission such as printing of Official Ballots and Deployment of Vote Counting Machines (VCM).

Recently concluded BSKE 2023, followed a five-year gap and multiple postponements since the 2018 elections. Voter turnout increased from 68.67% (barangay) and 64.01% (youth) in 2018 to 75.76% and 76.08%, respectively, in 2023 (Guanzon, 2018; Caliwán & Patinio, 2023). With the rise of social media and expression of Freedom of Speech in the Philippines, the Commission received multiple complaints regarding

the candidates for BSKE in the whole country expressing their intention to solicit votes from the public. In lieu of this, the Commission creates a Task Force against Premature Campaigning. The task force is to receive, evaluate and investigate the complaints issuing Show Cause Orders to candidates and if proven to such act, the candidate can be disqualified in running the said election event.

This task force was only created this BSKE 2023. May 14, 2018 Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections (BSKE 2018) was the precedent event before the BSKE 2023. On that time, premature campaigning was considered legal despite having the set campaign period by the Commission and with reference to the SC decision on the case of Penera vs Comelec. However, this BSKE 2023, the Commission decided to express the prohibition of premature campaigning stating that the previous ruling of Penera vs Comelec only applies to an Automated National and Local Elections wherein the time between the filing of COC and Campaign Period is lengthy (Comelec Press Statement, 2023).

The existence of Task Force Against Premature Campaigning with a penalty of disqualification of an offender candidate this BSKE 2023 has been a game changer in previous elections that occurred. The campaign of COMELEC to have fair elections and “Anti-Epal” candidates is pushing through with this program. To determine if the voters are fully aware of the premature campaigning and its impact with the current situation of the election in the country, the researchers will analyze the knowledge of voters when it comes to premature campaigning.

The municipality of Pangil is a third-class municipality in the fourth district of Laguna composed of 17,787 registered voters as of November 2024. The locale is a small town that when election is coming, are not different from any other city or municipalities that is festive and colorful. Campaigning in Pangil, Laguna includes different areas with posted tarpaulins, roaming vehicles playing campaign jingles, motorcades and public rally. Voters in the locale are engaging when it comes to election. Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV) volunteers advocates voter participation by initiating *Meeting de Avanze*, in this way voters react, engage and interact with the politicians whom they are possibly be voting in the election activity. Registered voters of Pangil, Laguna actively participates in the electoral process. Moreover, there are many aspirants who filed their certificate of candidacy (COC) during the recently concluded 2023 BSKE despite having only eight (8) barangays.

There are limited studies and literatures in the local setting of the Philippines when it comes to elections and its frameworks. Most of the research are related to analysis and distribution of voters, others are comparison of politicians and historical data of politics and election in the Philippines. However, the researcher has yet to find study which relates to voter awareness specifically in the conduct of premature campaigning.

The result of this research might impact the decision making of lawmakers in amending the existing laws regarding campaigning and the definition of official candidates. Furthermore, this will lead to less candidates who will use their accessible resources to lobby votes from the citizens and have a fair election result. Hence, the necessity to conduct this research in the voter awareness in premature campaigning in Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections shall be conducted and a possible policy proposal is implemented to deter the effects of premature campaigning.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

This research is anchored in Public Policy Theory to have an overview of how the voter was knowledgeable to the rules governing premature campaigning and come up with a possible policy proposal to prevent said activity. Public Policy Theory offers a structured framework for understanding the processes through which governments identify societal issues, develop strategies, implement solutions, and evaluate outcomes. This theory emphasizes the roles of various stakeholders, including government institutions, policymakers, interest groups, and the general public, in shaping decisions that address public concerns.

There are key components as seen in Figure 1 for Public Policy Theory Cycle. This concept provides

the consecutive stages for policy development. First is Agenda Setting, which is identifying and prioritizing issues that require government intervention. Policy Formulation, making an appropriate strategy and drafting legislative actions to address these issues. Policy Implementation is the execution of the formulated policies through relevant government agencies and mechanisms related to its enactment. Policy Evaluation is the assessment of how effective the implemented policies to determine if they meet their objectives and how it will impact the end users. Additionally, the component of Policy Revision having necessary adjustments or improvements based on evaluation results to improve the policy's effectiveness.

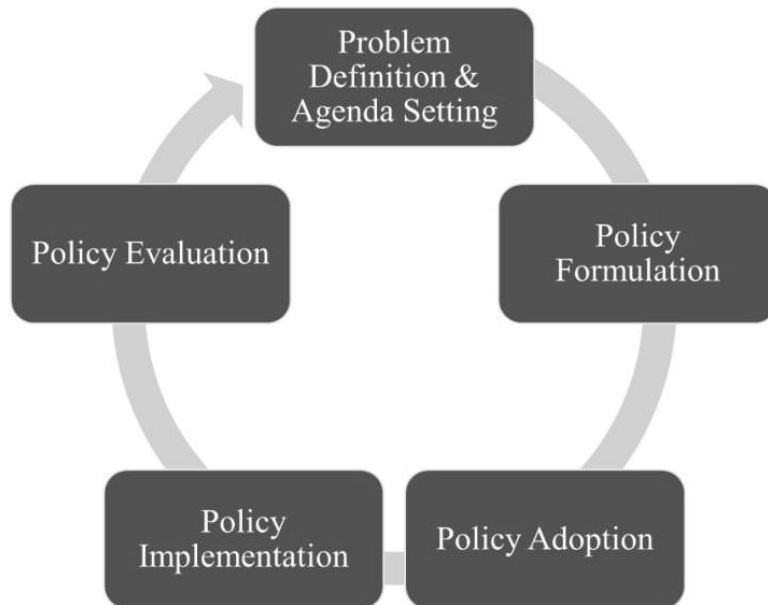


Figure 1. The Public Policy Theory

Relating the Public Policy Theory to the study of voter awareness regarding premature campaigning in Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan elections involves examining how policies are made and imposed to regulate electoral activities. This requires examining the effectiveness of current regulations, the role of government agency like the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) in policy implementation, the degree of voter awareness and engagement, and how they can identify the areas for policy improvement to maintain electoral integrity.

The Public Policy Theory which is highly applicable to the study on Voter Awareness of Premature Campaigning in Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections, since it provides a framework for assessing how election policies are formulated, implemented, and evaluated. This theory highlights the role of government institutions, policy-makers, and stakeholders in developing public policies that govern the electoral processes. In the situation of premature campaigning, this helps to explain how laws such as the Omnibus Election Code (Batas Pambansa Blg. 881) and COMELEC resolutions are developed to guarantee fair elections and to prevent unethical actions. The study can consider whether these policies are enforced effectively and if the voters are knowledgeable of their rights and responsibilities under the existing regulations.

Additionally, the policy cycle of Public Policy Theory emphasizes the agenda setting, policy formulation, implementation, evaluation, and reform. This outlook allows the research study to assess if premature campaigning is recognized as a significant issue in the electoral process and how will the

government address it. This also examines how COMELEC and other government agencies or institutions to implement election policies and whether execution means are effective in deterring premature campaigning. If the voters have insufficient awareness to these regulations, this may suggest shortages in policy dissemination, civic education, or administration of strategies.

Furthermore, the theory considers the importance of public participation and stakeholders' engagement in developing election-related policies. The study can expound how civil society organizations, media, and voters influenced the enforcement of policies against premature campaigning. In applying the Public Policy Theory, this study can deliver insights into policy effectiveness, determine the gaps in enactment, and recommend enhancements to increase voter awareness and maintain the electoral integrity in Barangay and SK elections.

1.3. Conceptual Framework

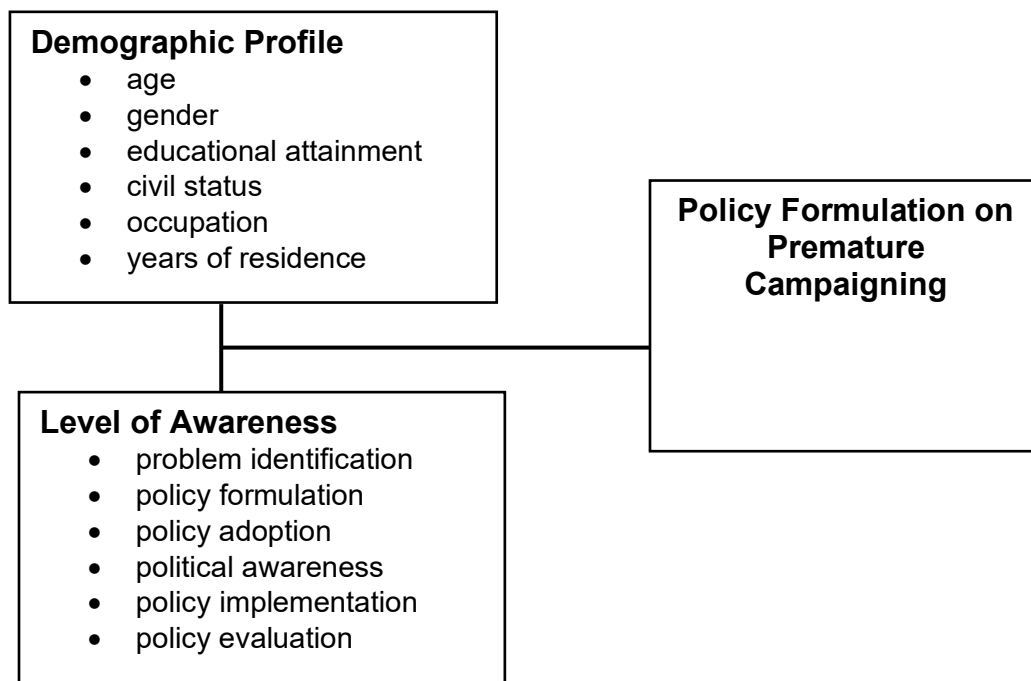


Figure 2. The Research Paradigm

Figure 2 shows the conceptual framework which determines the relationship between voters' demographic profiles and each variables' level of awareness when it comes to premature campaigning, eventually leading into the policy formulation of this issue. The demographic profile pertains to key characteristics that may impact voters' perceptions and awareness of premature campaigning. These factors such as age, affects the political engagement and awareness. Younger individuals and older voters often have varying levels of political experience. Gender may also play a key role in voter awareness, men and women may perceive and respond to premature campaigning differently based on political interaction. Educational attainment is another significant factor, individuals with higher education levels (usually college graduates) may have better knowledge to election policies and campaigning regulations. Civil status, including single, married, or in other categories, could affect political perspectives and participation. Moreover, occupation or employment may impact accessibility to political information, with certain professions being more inclined to

election-related discussions. Lastly, period or years of residence in a community may affect understanding of local electoral processes, as long-term residents tends to have a deeper awareness to political practices than fresher community residence.

Each voters' level of awareness with regards to premature campaigning is determined through various aspects of the policy processes. First, problem identification refers to the capability of the voters to know what is premature campaigning as an electoral issue and understand the implications it has to elections. Policy formulation involves the knowledge of how policies are made to address the issue provided, including the proposal of amendments and reforms. Policy adoption refers to the voters' understanding of the legal regulations and government activities to enforce regulations on premature campaigning. Political awareness replicates the over-all knowledge of political processes, campaign ethics, and election rules. Policy implementation measures how well voters comprehend the role of government agencies, stakeholders, and officials in applying premature campaigning regulations. Lastly, policy evaluation concentrates on voters' awareness of how existing policies are measured for effectiveness and if revisions are needed to improve execution.

1.4. Statement of the Problem

This study aims to determine the voter awareness of premature campaigning regulations in Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections in the municipality of Pangil, Laguna.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents, in terms of:
 - 1.1. age;
 - 1.2. sex;
 - 1.3. educational attainment;
 - 1.4. civil status;
 - 1.5. occupation; and
 - 1.6. years of residence?
2. What is the level of awareness in premature campaigning of the respondents in relation to:
 - 2.1. problem identification;
 - 2.2. policy formulation;
 - 2.3. policy adoption;
 - 2.4. political awareness;
 - 2.5. policy implementation; and
 - 2.6. policy evaluation?
3. Is there a significant difference on the level of awareness in premature campaigning when grouped according to profile of respondents?
4. Based on the result, what initiative on policy formulation with regards to premature campaigning may be proposed?

1.5. Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant difference on the level of awareness in premature campaigning as grouped according to profile.

1.6. Significance of the Study

This study aims to determine the level of awareness of the voters with regards to premature campaigning during the BSKE 2023 and their relevance with the voting practices during election.

Registered Voters. The researcher would like to help and determine the decision-making of voters in choosing who will they vote in elections. To express their given power or right of suffrage and chose the rightful leader for the government. Moreover, this study will provide the voters the idea on the premise of campaigning and voting.

Candidates. The study for the prevention of premature campaigning will be an eye opening to candidates on why they should not commit on doing illegal acts before and during campaign period. Candidates can opt in doing premature campaigning and maintaining their stand for a clean and free elections. They (candidates) can also incorporate in their campaign the strict following of rules during the election period.

The Commission on Elections. With this research done by the proponent, the COMELEC can refer to this research on how the Task Force Premature Campaign they have created was effective in mitigating the unlawful acts of candidates and other accountable individuals. This study gives an impact on which program they can implement in the future elections. The study can also be a benchmark in proposing this program in National and Local Elections.

The COMELEC Officials. In connection with the campaign of COMELEC official in preventing premature campaigning, this research shall provide the extensive reference for formulation of resolutions by the commission body.

The Graduate School of Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng San Pablo. This could serve as a reference or as an additional related literature on research papers of future students of the graduate school of the Pamantasan Ng Lungsod Ng San Pablo (PLSP).

The Future Researchers. This research can be a huge help to other future researchers as reference in comparing the programs implemented not only in the field of Commission on Elections but also for other regulations to be created by the government. Furthermore, this research can be a basis for future researchers to expand the scope of this study to other municipality or province to see the impact of premature campaigning on other location with different demography.

1.7. Scope and Limitation

The study aimed to determine the level of awareness of the voters when it comes to premature campaigning done and how it will affect their voting preference. The setting of the study shall be in the municipality of Pangil, Laguna. The respondents are the registered voters in the municipality and their socio-demographic such as: age; sex; occupation; education attainment; and period of residence.

To ascertain the level of awareness of the voters regarding premature campaigning, the researcher secured the total number of voters and candidates from BSKE 2023 from the Office of the Election Officer – Pangil, Laguna. The total no. of registered voters of Pangil, Laguna is seventeen thousand two hundred fifty-two (17,252). All barangays of the municipality are surveyed for the period of February 1, 2025 to March 15, 2025 through online survey questionnaire and face to face hand out of the forms. Face to face questionnaires is given to registered voters who are clients of the Office of the Election Officer – Pangil, Laguna, house to house survey for *Poblacion Barangays*: Natividad, San Jose and Isla, large barangays such as Balian and Sulib. While, online questionnaires were sent via Facebook Messenger to registered voters of far-flung barangays such as Dambo, Mabato-Azufre and Galalan.

1.8. Definition of Terms

The following terms were defined operationally:

Age – refers to the length of time a registered voter has, must be at least 15 years old and above for Sangguniang Kabataan Voters and/or 18 years old and above for Regular Voters of Barangay Election.

"Anti-Epal" – is a term coined by COMELEC referring to political candidates and/or supporters who are allegedly committing various acts of illegal campaigning such as premature campaigning and indirect

campaigning.

BSKE – acronym for (Synchronized) Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections, an election event under the premise of the Philippine Constitution and to be conducted every three-year term end of said officials. This can also refer to either May 14, 2018 and/or October 30, 2023 BSKE.

Calendar of Activities – is an approved resolution done by the COMELEC to established the dates and period of election activities related to an election event (BSKE, NLE) and prohibited acts during such period.

Campaign (electoral campaign) – is an act done by a candidate and his/her supporters to solicit votes from registered voters.

Certificate of Candidacy (COC) – is a document filed by an aspirant who will run from a specific position during an election event and if he/she won will be his/her eventual position in the Government.

Civil Status – or marital status, refers to the respondent's legal relationship, whether a person is single, married and legally separated

COMELEC – is the abbreviation for the Commission on Elections, a constitutional commission who cater and address the activities related to election and voter registration in the Philippines.

Educational Attainment – is the highest education background or achievement of the respondents.

Election – is an event in the Philippines as a democratic country to choose the next official who will run the government and make laws.

Election Offense – is an act punishable by law committed during election period and other action that is prohibited during election.

Fair Election Act – is the Republic Act No. 9006, which provides the rules and regulation with regards to election paraphernalia and expenditure limitation during elections.

Occupation – refers to the current employment status of the respondents.

Omnibus Election Code (OEC) – is the Batas Pambansa Blg. 881 with provisions regarding the election of public officers and, to the extent appropriate, all referenda and plebiscites.

Policy Adoption – refers to respondents' way of selecting and approving the policy being implemented.

Policy Awareness – refers to respondents' understanding and recognition of specific policies or regulation.

Policy Evaluation – refers to respondents' examination of the policy design or framework.

Policy Formulation – refers to respondents' understanding on how the potential solutions to identified problems are developed.

Policy implementation – refers to respondents' understanding on how the policy was put into action.

Premature Campaigning – is an act of political activities or campaign before the campaign period set by the Commission as an official candidate of such election event.

Problem Identification – refers to the respondents' awareness of the existing problems for the formulation of new policy to be implemented.

Prohibited Acts – are unlawful activities during campaign and election period.

Sex – refers to Male and Female

Show Cause Order (SCO) – is a written communication to candidates and/or voters who allegedly commit prohibited acts but not limited to premature campaigning.

Suffrage – the right to vote in political elections.

Task Force Against Premature Campaigning – is a committee formulated by the COMELEC to receive and answer all complaints/comment regarding premature campaigning and other prohibited activities during election period.

Year of Residence – refers to the length of residency of the respondents which as a qualified voter must have at least six (6) months of residence or more in the city/municipality.

1.9. Review of Literature and Studies

This chapter provides factual information related with the research. The following literatures and

studies were considered in determining the level of awareness of voters when it comes to premature campaigning during last BSKE 2023.

Premature campaigning, considered an election offense, refers to any form of campaign activities related to elections carried out prior to the official campaign period set by COMELEC. This form of electioneering is prohibited under Section 80 of Batas Pambansa Blg. 881, also known as the “Omnibus Election Code of the Philippines”, to wit:

“SECTION 80. Election campaign or partisan political activity outside campaign period. – It shall be unlawful for any person, whether or not a voter or candidate, or for any party, or association of persons, to engage in an election campaign or partisan political activity except during the campaign period: Provided, That political parties may hold political conventions or meetings to nominate their official candidates within thirty days before the commencement of the campaign period and forty-five days for Presidential and Vice-Presidential election. (Sec. 35, 1978 EC)”

Section 68 of the same law provides the penalty for premature campaigning, which may result in the disqualification of a candidate found guilty of committing the offense (AJA Law., 2025).

Premature campaigning manifests in various ways. Cruz (2023) identifies these activities as forming organizations, associations, clubs, committees, or similar groups aimed at gathering voter support or launching campaigns for or against a candidate. It also includes organizing political gatherings such as caucuses, conferences, meetings, rallies, or parades to solicit votes or promote or oppose specific candidates. Additionally, engaging in speeches, public announcements, interviews, or commentaries that endorse or criticize candidates, as well as publishing or distributing campaign materials in support of or against a particular candidate, are considered forms of premature campaigning. Soliciting votes, pledges, or support whether directly or indirectly is another common practice. The Commission on Elections and various election stakeholders in the Philippines have continuously urged voters to reject politicians involved in premature campaigning (Patinio, 2021). However, despite these warnings, many politicians persist in these activities, and election outcomes indicate that voters still support them. This trend suggests that reminders about the illegality of premature campaigning have had minimal impact.

In the Philippines, campaigning was like a celebration, colorful festivities, parades and advertisements during an election event. In the study of Lubos and Torres (2018), political propaganda plays a major role during elections, some focuses on taglines as a key element in the opinions of the voters. Moreover, they have look into content analysis to study political branding and campaign activities, emphasizing importance of political communication in voters’ decision-making. The success of a candidates’ electoral campaign is inclined to careful planning and execution, creating strategies like rallies, slogans and supporters’ engagement with voters (Usman et al., 2020). Furthermore, promoting active citizen engagement in decision-making processes through organizations that can initiate communication between voters and politicians will definitely lead to a more informed political environment (Wantchekon et al., 2017 as cited in Leon & Wantchekon, 2019).

However, by the grandiose of election campaign, there were various issues arises in electoral campaign and are considered prohibited acts for the election body like COMELEC. In an electoral integrity study of Norris, Frank and Coma (2014 as cited in Mauk, 2022) they found out campaign finance emerges as a critical issue in elections, surpassing concerns about voting fraud and ballot counting. They emphasize in the need for regulating money in politics to enhance public confidence and ensure fair competition.

According to Calimbahin (2023) with campaign finance issues, use of government funds for early campaigning were present in the Philippines. Access to state resources brings incumbency advantages in the form of government programs. Although, this must only be considered a premature campaigning once an individual officially files his/her COC. Despite that, a year before an election you will find numerous greeting posters of incumbent officials. In a study of Cabalza et al. with ex-president Duterte, an act of early posting of different campaign ads of Sara’s supporters as a violation of the campaign period guidelines can be considered premature campaigning. However, according to previous COMELEC Spokesperson, there were no

violation made with the early campaign ads.

In the case of premature campaigning, one of the most popular situations was about the ruling of Supreme Court about *Penera vs. Comelec* (599 SCRA 609 (2009)), because of this it enabled premature campaigning to become rampant and legal in the Philippines. They have recommended that a bill be passed to further smoothen the unclear areas in elections laws specifically on premature campaigning (Santos, 2015). In an article of Patrick (2021) he states that “premature campaigning is not illegal, but it can lead to legal troubles that would impact the campaign process in a negative way.” One of the consequences of premature campaigning is disqualification from running the office the candidate aspired for. On the other hand, in the last National and Local Elections (NLE 2022) a commissioner of COMELEC was quoted on saying there is no such thing as “premature campaigning”, where at that time many incumbent officials appearing on television and advertisements, which at that time are considered showing faces for their purposes in the upcoming elections (Patinio, 2021).

In contrary to the previous article, according to Patinio (2023) this BSKE 2023, COMELEC said that the aspirants who have filed their COC shall be considered candidates for the polls despite conducting premature campaigning. COMELEC explained that the case of *Penera vs COMELEC* court ruling the based on an automated election alone. Therefore, this ruling excludes the conduct of BSKE 2023 and any electioneering activity prior to the campaign period shall be considered premature campaigning. These inconsistencies in the nature of premature campaigning have been a debate for the public citizen.

In addition, Commission on Elections (Comelec) Chairperson George Erwin Garcia urged candidates in the Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections (BSKE) to adhere to campaign regulations and avoid premature campaigning. He acknowledged candidates who have complied with the rules and emphasized COMELEC’s strict enforcement, noting that some of the 1.4 million candidates have already received show-cause orders and disqualifications for non-compliance. COMELEC’s stand in assuring the public about fair elections by continuing the deliberation of disqualifications cases until October 30 (Antonio, 2023).

In the study of Aguilar (2024), it is revealed that premature campaigning despite being illegal in the Philippines, it still remains rampant. It is often seen in posters featuring politicians’ images months before the schedule campaign period or actual election period provided. The study determines generational perspectives on premature campaigning and its effect to voting preferences of the public. By using descriptive mixed-methods approach, data was collected from Gen Z, millennials, Gen X, and baby boomers by surveys and interviews. The study expounds an individuals’ attitude toward premature campaigning, its acceptability, and how it influences their voting decisions. Statistical treatment analyses, including Chi-Square and Pearson Correlation, and with thematic coding, revealed generational differences but there is consistency across sex, education, and social status. The results aim to notify policymakers and election authorities about the practice's appropriateness and electoral impact. This emphasizes the need for firmer regulations and implementation to uphold election integrity in the Philippines.

Another study of Sarangaya (2020) suggest that at present premature campaigning is not considered an election offense in the setup of the Philippines. Before the 2018 Barangay and SK Elections, the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) conceded that while premature campaigning is a “pernicious act”, there is no law that punishes it. However, other election overseers uphold that aspirants for an elective office should not take advantage of the absence of a law penalizing premature campaigning.

With regards to premature campaigning, Atty. Joel Dexter Nagtalon, Election Officer for Cagayan de Oro's 1st District, highlighted that the official campaign period is slated for October 19-28. Any campaign-related activities conducted before these dates may lead to disqualification and are considered election offenses with potential criminal implications. This includes activities like house-to-house visits, meet-and-greets, and handshaking events organized by candidates. For incumbent barangay officials, actions performed as part of their official duties are permissible; however, using such activities to promote their candidacy or that of others constitutes premature campaigning (Araña, 2023).

Salor (2023) examined the legal challenges surrounding premature campaigning in the Philippines.

The article discusses the Supreme Court's ruling in *Penera v. COMELEC*, which clarified that individuals are only considered candidates at the start of the official campaign period, thereby creating a loophole that allows pre-campaign activities without legal repercussions. The study emphasizes the need for policy reforms to address these legal gaps and enhance the integrity of the electoral process.

Voter's knowledge on the political system and current situation of the electoral practices in the present generation had been significantly crucial pre-requisite in the voting capability of an individual. The lack of political knowledge hinders a voter to understand the policy preferences given by politicians and have them understand campaign suggestions and voting choices (Fowler & Margolis, 2013 as cited in Adams et al., 2023). Political ignorance raises critical questions about the implications of their knowledge in the outcomes of elections. The study of Fowler & Margolis (2013 as cited in Adams et al., 2023), they address the respondents into two independent randomized controlled experiments. These tests the effects in providing information about one party's policy stances and aggregate opinions of the partisan. They found out public opinion and potentially election results and public policy have significant effect to where all the voters are informed.

This suggests that awareness of a voter with regards to political knowledge and issues will significantly affect their voting behavior. Moreover, this research will determine if a well-informed individual particularly in election shall make proper decisions in choosing their political candidate to vote.

In correlation with the voter's awareness, a study made by Kendall et al. (2013 as cited in Hewitt et al., 2024) highlighted the impact of campaign information on electoral outcomes using a randomized design to assess the different informational treatments. They studied the voters based on candidate valence and ideology and how information might influence voters' belief. The paper defines valence as the perceived quality or competence of a candidate, which is separate to their specific political positions. It attributes to integrity, experience and appeal the can influence a voter's preference. Kendall et al. (2013 as cited in Hewitt et al., 2024) found out that campaigning on valence messages are more effective in persuading voters compared to ideological messages when voters have insufficient information about the candidates.

In conclusion, the research provides the significant role of campaign message in getting the voters beliefs and electoral outcomes, emphasizing the efficiency of valence-focused strategies and the complexity of voter responses to information.

By the urgency of raising awareness to the voters with regards with to election and political system, most of the voters who are more engaged in learning about the concepts of election are youths. Youths who are wholly taking up their studies and learning about their courses in institutions. In the study of Amri et al. (2022), political participation is an integral instrument for measuring the quality of country's democracy. A rational voter uses their right of suffrage with knowledge, electoral awareness, and substance awareness of democracy. On the other hand, an irrational voters can give a negative stand point in contributing to the democratic country. The result of the research yields the suggestion of integration of Voter Education in some subject of the school to promote political education that stand-in and strengthen the knowledge of every voter more broadly and implicitly.

Tigno (2023) stated that educating the voters is just as critical to the effective functioning of a democratic system as the electoral process itself. The provision of vital information to voters allows the electorate to have a better and enlightened choices during election. Voter education is necessary and cannot be overlooked. If voter education is neglected, it can undermine the integrity and credibility of any electoral process. This will soon pose a serious challenge to democratic institutions. Certainly, voter education allows the public citizens to have a sound respect for the democratic process regardless of the result of each election.

Furthermore, voter's awareness serves as a crucial link between voters and candidates, helping to align their positions on various policies. According to Boudreau et al. (2019), it enhances voters' ability to recognize candidates who share their policy perspectives. Their experimental survey revealed that providing voter education tools outlining candidates' policy positions aids in strengthening voters' connections with candidates and their platforms. Additionally, their findings suggest that such interventions are particularly

beneficial for less-informed voters, as they help bridge knowledge gaps more effectively than for those who are already well-informed.

In 2022, PPCRV created its e-Boto2 hub portal to disseminate useful basic information on the mechanics of registration and voting. It also provides various types of valuable information pertaining to national candidates and politicians ranging from their platforms and promises to their actual performance in office. It also acts as a platform for its fact-checking and anti-disinformation campaign. More importantly, the portal acts as a vehicle for voters themselves to become inform.

Baskin (2020) highlighted the concept of "information inequality" among American voters, emphasizing the significant disparities in political knowledge across different demographic groups. The research suggests that while some voters are well-informed about political news and policy issues, others lack critical information, leading to an uneven understanding of key electoral matters. These disparities can be influenced by factors such as education, socioeconomic status, media consumption habits, and access to reliable sources of political information. The study also explores how misinformation and selective exposure to news sources contribute to gaps in voter knowledge. Individuals who rely on partisan or low-quality news outlets may develop biased or inaccurate perceptions of political events, further deepening information inequality. Additionally, the study emphasizes that a well-informed voter tends to have more assurance in their choices of who to vote. On the other hand, those with limited knowledge may have a hard time to assess the candidates and different policies effectively.

A study provides that age significantly influences political awareness, having older individuals typically indicating a higher understanding of electoral laws than the younger individuals (Ong, 2020). Contrary to this, younger voters participating in SK elections, may have insufficient familiarity with rules on premature campaigning due to limited civic exposure to these types of topics. Gender also affects political awareness, women and men engage with political information and processes differently (Torres & De Guzman, 2019). In educational attainment, it has been widely linked to higher political consciousness, those attaining college level education or having taken graduate studies are more likely to have an awareness on election-related issues (Delos Reyes, 2021). Civil status and employment also play roles in influencing a voter's exposure to political discourse; as an example: married individuals and those employed in public service or educational sectors often display greater participation in civic matters (Manlapig & Alipio, 2020).

Furthermore, years of residence within a community can affect the extent of voter understanding with candidates and local election regulations. Residents for a long period of time are more likely to be aware of political traditions and local election practices, this includes the common manifestation of premature campaigning (Lenard, 2015 as cited in Ferris et al., 2020). This suggests that both voter education and community exposure to election regulations are a key in raising their awareness and lessening electoral violations. As such, voter profile variables age, gender, education, civil status, occupation, and years of residence must be carefully considered in research concerning premature campaigning and electoral engagement.

In addition, Arsenal et al. (2019) examined voters' political awareness in Cebu City. Voters use television or social media and internet as their source of information. Although voters choose candidates based on their advocacy and political backgrounds, there are still who based their votes on their family's and religion's choices. Not all voters are conscious with the problems in their community especially to those voters who lack participation and don't have interest in politics. Political awareness differs from person to person, those who lack political awareness are those voters who don't immerse and involved themselves in politics. Thus, it is something that can be improved through educating and participating in the current events in politics.

Moreso, in the study of Obenza & Rabaca (2023) demonstrated that political efficacy acts as a mediator between political awareness and social media political participation among youth, suggesting that enhancing political knowledge and efficacy is necessary for promoting political participation.

Likewise, Agustin (2019) stated that the awareness on political issues is a way of monitoring

political activities in society. The efficiency and cooperativeness in working together most importantly in resolving matters towards community development is shown. Furthermore, the way of recognizing the ideas of each individuals' awareness through participatory engagements coming from international or local relationship are present within certain groups. Individuals are enabled to deal intelligently and more efficiently in the different aspects of life when they understand politics. As the result study, it showed that there was a need to be aware on issues and problems that has a direct relation on political matters concerning the institutions in order to have a level, constant flow of events that will directly guide the activity.

There were many factors that affects the voting preference of a registered voter when it comes to election. From their knowledge about the political system to influences made by relative, friends and also religion. On the other hand, some voters were also based on the campaigning behavior of a candidate.

In the study of Gallardo (2015 as cited in Batara et al., 2021) identified that the voting and electoral outcomes primarily focuses on models to explain and predict the electoral behavior based on the significant factors, social identity plays a crucial role in the voter turnout. In this matter, voters feel like they are represented by the candidates who share their group identity. The researcher's study yields that candidates endorsed by religious groups are more likely to win in their regions, highlighting the relevance of social identity in the electoral success of a candidate. Therefore, the result of the paper stresses on the importance of social identity in the electoral process. Voters in the Philippines are influenced by their affiliations and the perceived representation of their interest for the candidates they want to vote.

On top of that, the voting preferences based on affiliation, the study of Batara et al. (2021) about the factors affecting the voting preferences of youth during the senatorial or midterm elections last 2019. The study focuses on party identification, issue orientation, candidate orientation and pre-election surveys. They have noted that there is a positive relationship between party identification and pre-election surveys conducted with the voting preferences of the youth. Moreover, issues and candidates' orientations were not significant factors in the preferences of voters. On the other hand, another study made for the voting preference of Filipinos wherein the voters in the barangay level base their choices on relatives, personal relationships and the campaign method of politicians (Caldá, et al., 2016 as cited in Moreto et al., 2022). The researchers, found out the divide in voting behavior between educated and uneducated voters. There is a need to understand the motivations behind the voting choices.

Collado, Orozco, & Banaria (2020) revealed that young Filipino voters are likely to show their support to their preferred candidates among their peers and families than in online communities. The research reveals the desire of Filipino voters to increase the quality of campaign activities and their candidates' preference who can communicate their platforms and plans for the country through public discussions, debates, and forum. Moreover, based on the results, that young voters vigorously seek political information on the records or history of aspiring public officials, this results also concentrates on their high voting autonomy from the recommendations of their families and religious groups. The young voters' "elastic" voting commitment also is a positive indication of their ability to intelligently distinguish in the electoral process. The government must boost the young citizens participation in these democratic activities in the manner that makes an intelligently informed choice possible.

Gonzales (2022) conducted a study to determine how political campaigning influences the voting preferences of residents in Barangay Bacagan. The research found that exposure to political advertising and media coverage significantly affected voters' choices. It also examined how campaign factors, such as gifts from politicians, impact voting behavior. The study suggests that policy formulations should address the ethical implications of campaign strategies to ensure fair electoral practices.

During election year, the preparation of the agency, Commission on Elections (COMELEC) administers and provides the election laws for the aspirants who filed their certificate of candidacy prior to election. These politicians may be an experienced individual and have run for multiple positions and longer terms of their life and others were their first take in the electoral system.

Compliance in the policy and provisions regarding the election law has been a common knowledge

that a politicians must aware of for his/her benefit during election period. In the paper made by Little et al. (2013 as cited in Meng et al., 2023) they suggested that politicians may not always follow the electoral rules. However, elections are treated as public signals of the incumbent's popularity which have more knowledge on election laws. Various factors influenced the adherence to rules including the public sentiment and the potential negative campaign for the politicians. Additionally, they have emphasized that when elections are informative and more citizens are knowledgeable with the election laws, it is more likely that the politicians will follow the rules. This in turn, makes the electoral outcome peaceful and fair.

Sancelan-Guelos (2024) found out that the traditional political practices based on patronage politics and clientelism have significantly influenced the behavior and conduct of elected SK officials, which implies that the political culture that prevails among SK officials is an appendage of traditional politics in the Philippines. However, a number of SK official participants denied the existence of traditional political practices among them. The study recommends that there shall be a watchdog monitoring and evaluating the performance of SK officials and federations and improved the capacity of SK officials in youth governance.

Conferring to Balanon, et al., (2022) there is an emerging movement worldwide to give the youth a direct role in shaping policies and programs. Institutionalizing the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK), a youth governance mechanism created by law in the Philippines have its own budget and became a national agency as a secretariat. The law that creates SK, is now more than a decade old. The Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) sought the assistance of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Manila to fund a systematic and nationwide assessment of the SK's impact on the youth. This will a basis for more rational and effective recommendations for SK. Among the key results of the study, it is found out that SK's performance for the past ten years has been generally weak. This is especially true when it comes to making legislations, promoting the development of youth, submitting reports, liquidation of budgets and holding consultations with their constituents. They have also discovered notable strengths of the SK, including their tremendous potential to develop the next generation of leaders, engage youth community and teach them accountability, honesty and integrity.

On the other hand, in the study of Kawashima-Ginsberg & Levine (2014 as cited in Campbell, 2019) education policies and state voting laws vary widely and are in rapid flux; their impact is important to understand. Directly after the 2012 election, a sample of 4,483 youth was surveyed that included at least 75 respondents in each of the 50 states and national oversamples of African Americans and Latinos. Their experiences with civic education and support from their families predicted their informed political participation as young adults. However, there are variations in the existing state policies did not matter. This may suggest that states have enacted such as allowing early voting kinds of policies or requiring one course on government in high school. This might not be helpful but policies that promote extracurricular participation and discussion of current issues in schools could be much more efficient.

In addition, Norris, P. (2017 as cited in Arifin, 2024) stated that cornerstone of all forms of democracy resulted to free and fair elections. In many representative democracies, elections are practically the only way where voters can participate, hold the political parties, candidates and the incumbent governments accountable for their capacities and performance. Moreover, there are generally no legal or constitutional grounds for monitoring or necessitating that politicians to meet electoral promise. Elections are often the only opportunity that citizens have to compensate or penalize candidates on the basis of their integrity and performance. All over the world, however, and especially in transitional and emerging democracies, free, fair and peaceful elections are far from the norm. There is lack of electoral transparency and accountability, the use of money or violence influencing or intimidating voters and the criminalization of politics are critical problems. On the other hand, participatory governance promotes many forms of citizen contribution beyond voting, free and fair elections are nevertheless a vital element of democracy and good governance. The tools for this category are meant to improve electoral and political accountability whilst also looking for into promoting empowerment to voters ang making them effectively participate in the electoral process and enabling them to make better choices.

Synthesis

Premature campaigning, which is defined as electioneering outside the official campaign period, is an election offense under the Omnibus Election Code of the Philippines. Having legal prohibitions, premature campaigning remains prevalent because of legal loopholes, inconsistent enforcement, and developing court rulings, such as the Supreme Court decision in *Penera vs. COMELEC* (2009), which effectually allowing premature campaigning. Conversely, COMELEC continues to provide warnings and disqualifications, the lack of clear legislation has caused continued debates and public confusion over what constitutes the act of premature campaigning.

Various studies highlighted what are the impacts of premature campaigning on electoral contexts. Political propaganda, strategic planning, and the use of campaign slogans influence voter perception and decision-making (Lubos & Torres, 2018; Usman et al., 2020). Moreover, the utilization of government state resources by the incumbents and unfettered campaign financing contributed to electoral inequalities (Norris et al., 2014 as cited in Mauk, 2022; Calimbahin, 2023). Despite these issues, political statement about election fairness remains a powerful tool in shaping voter behavior, specifically when targeting uninformed or disengaged electorates.

Voter awareness plays a vital role in the effectiveness of election campaigns. Research proposes that a well-informed voters make more rational political decisions and reduces the impact of premature campaigning (Fowler & Margolis, 2013 as cited in Adams et al., 2023; Kendall et al., 2013 as cited in Hewitt et al., 2024). However, due to differing levels of political literacy, most voters are still susceptible to campaign strategies that prioritize image over substance. This underscores the need for stricter regulations, improved voter education, and enhanced electoral transparency to ensure fair and credible elections in the Philippines.

With that, the study of the researcher is somehow related to the above presented studies and literature. However, the researcher will use the existing laws and regulation presented in the Philippine Constitution and Memorandum set by the Commission on Election in determining the knowledge of voters when it comes to premature campaigning. The target respondents came from the Municipality of Pangil, Laguna. Moreover, there were many research papers that studied the Voting Preferences of Voter and what factors affect their decision, in this study it will provide evidences as to how their knowledge about premature campaigning will affect their decision on voting candidates.

With having presented this review, the research conducted by the proponent could be a reference for the existing research papers and can help update the existing laws and regulation with regards to premature campaigning. This research could fill the gaps and additional resources in the voting preference of voters and supplemental knowledge in the electoral process.

2. Research Methods

This chapter presents the methodology, respondents of the study, sampling technique, research instrument, data gathering procedure, and statistical treatment of the data obtained.

2.1. Research Design

The approach of this study is descriptive design and quantitative approach. Descriptive study is to describe individuals, events, or conditions by studying them as they are in nature. Moreover, the researcher does not manipulate any of the variable but rather only describes the sample and/or the variables (Siedlecki, 2020). Also, with quantitative approach, collected data from sample presented shall be interpreted and conclusion can be inferred by numbers.

According to Thomas (2023) descriptive designs answers primarily descriptive questions and the potential statistical tools to be used for this type of research design shall be mean and standard deviation.

2.2. Respondents of the Study

The researcher has chosen respondents from the municipality of Pangil, Laguna. Respondents must be a registered voter of the said locale and supposedly participated in the Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections. Voters in the locale are engaging when it comes to election. Registered voters of Pangil, Laguna actively participates in the electoral process. Furthermore, there are many candidates, almost three hundred (300) aspirants during the recently concluded 2023 BSKE despite having only eight (8) barangays. The eight (8) barangays namely, Natividad, San Jose, Isla, Balian, Dambo, Mabato-Azufre and Sulib have varying distribution of number of registered voters. Sulib have the highest no. of voters with 4,658 comprises 26% of the total registered voters and the sample size gathered was from 99 respondents. Balian is the next highest no. of registered voters (23% of the total) with 4,058 voters, 86 respondents are gathered. Isla is next with 2,029 voters, 11% of the total and 43 respondents are needed. Natividad has 2,025 population of voters (12%) and have 43 respondents. Dambo and Mabato-Azufre are far-flung barangays with 1,507 (8%) and 1,250 (7%) registered voters, respectively. The no. respondents for these barangays are 32 and 26. Lastly, Galalan situated at the mountain, have only 1,055 voters (6%) and gathered 22 responses from them.

2.3. Sampling Technique

The proponent determined the sample and/or respondents by the definite latest number of Registered Voters. The registered voters of Pangil, Laguna consist of 17,787 individuals. Proportional stratified random sampling was used to determine each sample size within the Eight (8) Barangays of the municipality. Moreover, Slovin's Formula was used to have the definite number of respondents (See Appendix A).

A popular method is proportional stratified random sampling, in which samples are selected from each stratum according to its size within the population after the population is split up into subgroups (called strata). When the objective is to guarantee that all significant subgroups are represented in the sample in accordance with their true proportions, this approach is thought to be very suitable, producing more accurate and trustworthy results.

2.4. Research Instrument

The research instrument to be utilized in this study is a self-made questionnaire, considering the information gathered from the different sources in the internet modified that may suit the respondents of the study. It was also developed based on the conceptual framework of the study. It is designed to gather relevant data on the respondents' demographic profile, their level of awareness regarding premature campaigning, and their perceptions of the effectiveness of policies addressing this election offense.

The questionnaire's Part I emphasized on the demographic profile of the respondents, this includes their age, sex, educational attainment, civil status, occupation, and years of residence. This section aimed to provide a background of the respondents and their possible experience to election-related activities.

Part II of the questionnaire measures the respondents' level of awareness regarding premature campaigning. This section makes up the respondents' understanding in relation to various aspects such as problem identification, policy formulation, policy adoption, political awareness, policy implementation, and policy evaluation. It sought to ascertain their knowledge of premature campaigning, their understanding with laws and regulations governing it, their recognition of its effect on political processes, and their awareness of how policies are executed and evaluated.

The final part of the questionnaire assessed the respondents' insights of the effectiveness of policy implementation in addressing premature campaigning. This includes their point of view on the possible creation Policy Proposal with regards to Premature Campaigning, their knowledge of consequences imposed on violators, and their thoughts on whether a stricter enforcement is necessary. The section aimed to collect

insights into the effectiveness of existing procedures and identify potential improvements in policy enforcement.

The survey consists of both multiple choice and Likert-scale inquiries to ensure clearness and ease of response. The data collected through this research instrument served as the basis for examining the respondents' awareness and understanding with regards to premature campaigning and its policy implications.

Test for validity and reliability of the self-made questionnaire formulated was first provided to registered voters in the municipality of Kalayaan, Laguna, specifically barangay San Juan who have the same demographic profile to the target respondents. The researcher was granted permission to administer the questionnaire by the Sangguniang Barangay of San Juan. Thirty-seven (37) individuals are surveyed and the result was tested for validity. The Cronbach's Alpha resulted to .987 which means that the questionnaire is valid and ready for administration to the actual respondents.

Validated questionnaire was administered thru online survey Google Forms sent through Facebook Messenger for the far-flung barangays (Dambo, Mabato-Azufre and Galalan), while face-to-face survey was done in Poblacion and large barangays: Natividad, Isla, San Jose, and Balian, Sulib, respectively.

2.5. Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher sought the content validation of the survey questionnaire to the Graduate School and was approved for administration. Questionnaire was also accompanied with Data Privacy and Informed Consent part for the understanding of the respondents right to Data Privacy and the processing of their provided information, respectively. Conversely, an Ethical Clearance was secured from PLSP after the review of the survey questionnaire of the panel of evaluators.

The period of survey was from February 1, 2025 to March 15, 2025 for almost one and half month. Online questionnaire was first distributed using Google Forms and the link was sent through Facebook Messenger. Respondents from far-flung barangays such as: Dambo; Mabato-Azufre; and Galalan with limited means of transportation were administered online questionnaires. All data gathered from online setup was collected and arranged in the Google Sheet automatically done after filling out the Google Form. On the other hand, Poblacion barangays and large area barangays such as: Natividad, San Jose, Isla, and Balian, Sulib, respectively was surveyed face-to-face. Registered voter clients of the Office of the Election Officer were frequently given questionnaires and the same were retrieved after they finished answering it. Furthermore, house-to-house visitation of registered voters to ask for their permission and answer the survey questionnaire, multiple voter or respondents can be found in a single household. The filled-out questionnaire was immediately retrieved after answering them. The total number of responses gathered through online questionnaire and face-to-face survey is three hundred seventy-seven (377).

After collating all of the responses, the data provided with extreme confidentiality was encoded through Microsoft Excel for the ease of analyzing and having the statistical result of the data gathered. The encoded data are sent to the Statistician for statistical treatment and interpretation.

The statistical treatment of data was turned over last April 4, 2025 and were analyze and interpreted in this study to determine the voter awareness of premature campaigning in barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan election in the municipality of Pangil, Laguna.

2.6. Ethical Considerations

During the course of the conduct of the research, the proponent has exercised ethical considerations ensuring the protection of the respondents, the integrity of the research process, and the credibility of the results gained.

The researcher has secured an Ethical Clearance from the Ethics Review Board of Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng San Pablo (PLSP) having checked the survey questionnaire and informed consent made to be

introduced to the respondents. Respecting the rights, dignity, and the independence of all respondents are considered, reassuring voluntary participation and informed consent. Protecting the respondent's privacy and keeping the data safe by the researcher to have extreme confidentiality and anonymity of the responses.

Moreover, the researcher avoided fraud, plagiarism, and misrepresentation, and disclosed conflict of interest in case the need arises to have an accountable treatment during the course of the study.

2.7. Statistical Treatment of Data

The data gathered in this study were subjected to the following treatments:

Frequency Count and Percentage were used to determine the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, educational attainment, occupation and years of residence. On the other hand, Mean and Standard Deviation were used to determine the level of awareness in premature campaigning of the respondents.

Additionally, Kruskal Wallis H-Test was utilized to test if there is a significant difference in the level of awareness of premature campaigning as grouped based on the demographic profile of the respondents.

3. Results and Discussion

This chapter provides the results, analysis, and discussion of the findings, detailed examination of the data collected, focusing on the awareness levels and perceptions of voter's awareness with regards to premature campaigning in the municipality of Pangil, Laguna. The following data are interpreted and implications are explained thoroughly to support the results given.

Table 1
Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Profile	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
Age		
15-17	4	1
18-30	129	34
31-60	225	60
61 above	19	5
Sex		
Female	251	67
Male	126	33
Educational Attainment		
College Graduate	212	56
College Undergraduate	68	18
Doctoral Degree	4	1
Doctoral Units	1	0
Elementary Graduate	7	2
Elementary Undergraduate	8	2
High School Graduate	31	8
High School Undergraduate	12	3

Masteral Degree	19	5
Masteral Units	2	1
Vocational Course	13	3
Marital Status		
Married	185	49.07
Separated	1	0.27
Single	174	46.15
Widowed	17	4.51
Employment		
Employed	243	64
Homemaker	17	5
Retired	8	2
Self Employed	28	7
Student	28	7
Unemployed	53	14
Years of Residence		
0-3	21	6
4-7	23	6
7-11	19	5
12-15	11	3
16 above	303	80

Note. $N = 377$

The data from Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents, including variables such as age, sex, educational attainment, civil status, employment, and years of residence. The analysis emphasizes on the highest and lowest frequencies and percentages within each categories provided.

The highest frequency and percentage are observed in the age group of 31-60 years, having 225 respondents (60%). The data provides that the majority of the respondents fall within the age range, this could be due to the higher likelihood of individuals in this age group being more active and are engaged in different community or survey activities. Moreover, the age group often signifies a major portion of the working population, which might describe their higher representation. In terms of sex, most of the respondents are female, with 251 respondents (67%). The higher percentage of female respondents could be attributed to different factors, such as higher willingness to participate in surveys or community activities among women, the specific focus of the survey attracting more female respondents.

Regarding educational attainment, the highest frequency is observed among college graduates, with 212 respondents (56%). This suggests that a significant portion of the respondents have attained higher education, which might reflect the educational background of the community or the target population of the survey.

The lowest frequencies and percentages are observed in several categories. For age, the 15-17 age group has the lowest representation, with only 4 respondents (1%). This could be due to the younger age group being less likely to participate in surveys or being less targeted by the survey. In terms of educational attainment, the lowest frequencies are observed among those with doctoral degrees (4 respondents, 1%) and

those with doctoral units (1 respondent, 0%). This is likely due to the relatively small proportion of the population pursuing or having completed doctoral studies.

Table 2.1 Level of Awareness in Premature Campaigning in terms of Problem Identification

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
<i>In terms of Premature Campaigning, I am / I</i> <i>(Sa mga tuntunin ng Premature Campaigning,)</i>			
1. aware of how it creates issues during elections. <i>(alam ko kung paano ito lumilikha ng mga isyu sa panahon ng halalan.)</i>	3.45	0.65	Agree
2. understand the negative impact of it on voter decision-making. <i>(naunawaan ko ang negatibong epekto nito sa paggawa ng desisyon ng isang botante.)</i>	3.48	0.60	Agree
3. recognize it as a violation of electoral rules. <i>(nakikilala ko na ito ay isang paglabag sa mga tuntuning elektoral.)</i>	3.44	0.59	Agree
4. can identify activities that constitute it. <i>(matutukoy ko ang mga aktibidad na pumapaloob dito.)</i>	3.35	0.58	Agree
5. aware of the ethical concerns associated with it. <i>(nalalaman ko ang mga etikal na alalahanin na nauugnay dito.)</i>	3.37	0.62	Agree
6. understand how it affects the fairness of elections. <i>(naunawaan ko kung paano naapektuhan nito ang pagiging patas ng halalan.)</i>	3.53	0.60	Strongly Agree
Overall	3.44	0.48	Agree
<i>Legend: 3.51-4.00 Strongly Agree; 2.51-3.50 Agree; 1.51-2.50; Disagree; 1.00-1.50 Strongly Disagree</i>			

The data from the table centers on the level of awareness regarding premature campaigning when it comes to problem identification. In general, respondents agree that they are aware of the issues pertaining to premature campaigning, with an overall mean score of 3.44 and a standard deviation of 0.48. This indicates that there is a moderate level of agreement among respondents.

The highest mean score of 3.53 corresponds to understanding of the impact of premature campaigning on the fairness of elections. This suggests that respondents strongly agree on this point. The high level of awareness could be attributed to the widespread discussions and media coverage focusing on the importance of fairness in elections. Conversely, the highest standard deviation of 0.65 is associated with the awareness of issues during elections, this indicates more variability in responses. The result suggests that while many respondents agree, there is less consensus on this issue. This is possibly due to differing levels of exposure to information or differing personal experiences.

The lowest mean score of 3.35 is related to identifying activities that constitute premature campaigning. This indicates that respondents agree but to a slightly lesser extent. This might recommend a need for a more intensive education or clearness on what specific activities fall under premature campaigning. The lowest standard deviation of 0.58 for the same indicator suggests that there is relatively consistent agreement among the respondents on this point.

Voter awareness plays a key role in ensuring that fair and democratic elections, particularly in grassroots level contests such as the Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) elections in the Philippines. Premature campaigning is defined as the act of endorsing a candidate before the official campaign period. This is a recurring issue that destabilizes the integrity of the electoral process. The Commission on Elections

(COMELEC) has frequently issued warnings against such practices for candidates and that campaigning outside the prescribed period is a violation of the Omnibus Election Code. This may result in disqualification or legal action (Philippine Information Agency [PIA], 2023).

Table 2.2 Level of Awareness in Premature Campaigning in terms of Policy Formulation

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
<i>In terms of Premature Campaigning, I am / I</i> <i>(Sa mga tuntunin ng Premature Campaigning,)</i>			
1. familiar with policies addressing it. <i>(pamilyar ako sa mga patakaranang tumutugon dito.)</i>	3.27	0.70	Agree
2. understand the role of stakeholders in formulating policies against it. <i>(naunawaan ko ang papel ng mga stakeholder sa pagbuo ng mga patakaran laban dito.)</i>	3.27	0.64	Agree
3. aware of the gaps in existing policies related to premature campaigning. <i>(batid ko ang mga puwang sa mga umiiral na patakaran na may kaugnayan dito.)</i>	3.23	0.64	Agree
4. believe that public consultation is crucial in creating effective anti-premature campaigning policies. <i>(naniniwala ako na ang pampublikong konsultasyon ay mahalaga sa paglikha ng epektibong patakaran para sa anti-premature campaigning.)</i>	3.49	0.59	Agree
5. can identify the key elements required in a policy to combat it. <i>(natutukoy ko ang mga pangunahing elemento na kinakailangan sa isang patakaran upang labanan ito.)</i>	3.25	0.61	Agree
6. know how policy formulation helps ensure fair election practices. <i>(alam ko kung paano nakakatulong ang pagbabalangkas ng patakaran upang matiyak ang patas na mga gawi sa halalan.)</i>	3.38	0.63	Agree
Overall	3.31	0.51	Agree

Legend: 3.51-4.00 Strongly Agree; 2.51-3.50 Agree; 1.51-2.50; Disagree; 1.00-1.50 Strongly Disagree

The result of the data from the table emphasizes on the level of awareness regarding premature campaigning in terms of policy formulation. Overall, respondents generally agree with their awareness of the policies addressing premature campaigning, with an overall mean score of 3.31 and a standard deviation of 0.51. This specifies a moderate level of agreement among the respondents participated in the study.

The highest mean score of 3.49, which resembles to the belief that public consultation is vital in making an effective anti-premature campaigning policy. This suggests that respondents strongly agree on this point. A high level of agreement could be attributed to the recognition of the relevance of involving the public in policy-making processes, ensuring that policies are comprehensive and addresses the concerns of various stakeholders. Conversely, the highest standard deviation of 0.70 is associated with familiarity with policies which addresses premature campaigning, and indicates more variability the responses. The result suggests that while many respondents agree, there is less consensus on this issue. This is possibly due to differing levels of exposure to information or varying personal understandings with policy formulation.

The lowest mean score of 3.23 is related to awareness of gaps in present policies related to premature

campaigning, this indicates that respondents agree but to a slightly lesser degree. The data might suggest a need for more intensive education or clarity on the specific gaps in the existing policies and how it can be addressed. The lowest standard deviation of 0.59 for the certainty in the importance of public consultation provides relatively consistent agreement among respondents on this point.

As supported by Gonzales (2022) study to determine how political campaigning influences the voting preferences of residents in Barangay Bacagan. The research found that exposure to political advertising and media coverage significantly affected voters' choices. It also examined how campaign factors, such as gifts from politicians, impact voting behavior. The study suggests that policy formulations should address the ethical implications of campaign strategies to ensure fair electoral practices.

Also, Arsenal et al. (2019) examined voters' political awareness in Cebu City. Voters use television or social media and internet as their source of information. Although voters choose candidates based on their advocacy and political backgrounds, there are still who based their votes on their family's and religion's choices. Not all voters are conscious with the problems in their community especially to those voters who lack participation and don't have interest in politics. Political awareness differs from person to person, those who lack political awareness are those voters who don't immerse and involved themselves in politics. Thus, it is something that can be improved through educating and participating in the current events in politics.

Table 2.3 Level of Awareness in Premature Campaigning in terms of Policy Adoption

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
<i>In terms of Premature Campaigning, I am / I</i> <i>(Sa mga tuntunin ng Premature Campaigning.)</i>			
1. aware of the processes involved in adopting policies to prevent it. <i>(nalalaman ko ang mga prosesong kasangkot sa pagpapatibay ng mga patakaran upang maiwasan ito.)</i>	3.19	0.68	Agree
2. understand the importance of legislative approval in implementing anti-premature campaigning policies. <i>(naunawaan ko ang kahalagahan ng pag-apruba ng lehislatibo sa pagpapatupad ng mga patakaran sa anti-premature campaigning.)</i>	3.27	0.66	Agree
3. aware of the barriers to adopting anti-premature campaigning policies. <i>(batid ko ang mga hadlang sa pagpapatibay ng mga patakara para sa anti-premature campaigning.)</i>	3.15	0.64	Agree
4. know the stakeholders responsible for adopting policies related to it. <i>(alam ko ang mga stakeholder na responsable sa pagpapatibay ng mga patakarang may kaugnayan dito.)</i>	3.23	0.66	Agree
5. believe that strong leadership is necessary for the adoption of anti-premature campaigning policies. <i>(naniniwala ako na ang matatag na pamumuno ay kinakailangan para sa pagpapatibay ng mga patakarang laban sa napaagang pangangampanya.)</i>	3.50	0.59	Agree
6. familiar with the timeline required to adopt policies addressing it. <i>(pamilyar ako sa timeline na kinakailangan upang magpatibay ng mga patakarang tumutugon sa maagang pangangampanya.)</i>	3.24	0.67	Agree
Overall	3.26	0.52	Agree

Legend: 3.51-4.00 Strongly Agree; 2.51-3.50 Agree; 1.51-2.50; Disagree; 1.00-1.50 Strongly Disagree

The result of the data from the table focuses on the level of awareness regarding premature campaigning when it comes to policy adoption. Overall, respondents generally agree that most of them are aware of the processes involved in adopting policies and preventing premature campaigning, with an overall mean score of 3.26 and a standard deviation of 0.52. This indicates a moderate level of agreement among respondents.

The highest mean score of 3.50, which corresponds to the belief that a strong leadership is needed for

the likelihood of adoption of anti-premature campaigning policies, this suggests that respondents strongly agree on this point. A high level of agreement could be attributed to the recognition of the relevance of having decisive and effective leadership to direct the complexities of policy adoption and ensure an effective implementation. Conversely, the highest standard deviation of 0.68, associated with awareness of the processes involved in adopting policies, this provides more variability in responses. Moreover, the result suggests that while many respondents agree, there is less consensus on this issue, this is possibly due to varying levels of exposure to information or different personal experiences with the policy adoption processes.

The lowest mean score of 3.15 is related to awareness of hindrances to adopting anti-premature campaigning policies, indicates that respondents agree but to a slightly lesser extent. This might suggest a need for more education or clarity on the specific barriers that exist and how they can be overcome. The lowest standard deviation of 0.59 for the belief in the necessity of strong leadership suggests relatively consistent agreement among respondents on this point.

Table 2.4 Level of Awareness in Premature Campaigning in terms of Political Awareness

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
<i>In terms of Premature Campaigning, I am / I</i> <i>(Sa mga tuntunin ng Premature Campaigning,)</i>			
1. knowledgeable about the laws governing it in my country. <i>(may kaalaman ako tungkol sa mga batas na namamahala dito sa aking bansa.)</i>	3.23	0.58	Agree
2. distinguish between legal campaign activities and premature campaigning. <i>(matutukoy ko ang pagkakaiba sa pagitan ng ligal na mga aktibidad sa kampanya at maagang pangangampanya.)</i>	3.25	0.59	Agree
3. understand how it influences political platforms. <i>(maunawaan ko kung paano naiimpluwensyahan ng maagang pangangampanya ang mga pampulitikang plataporma.)</i>	3.34	0.61	Agree
4. aware of the role of media in preventing or promoting it. <i>(nababatid ko ang papel ng media sa pagpigil o pagtataguyod nito.)</i>	3.39	0.58	Agree
5. know how it affects voter perception and behavior. <i>(alam ko kung paano naaapektuhan nito ang pananaw at pag-uugali ng botante.)</i>	3.44	0.58	Agree
6. stay informed about candidates' activities before the official campaign period. <i>(nananatiling may kaalaman tungkol sa mga aktibidad ng mga kandidato bago ang opisyal na panahon ng kampanya.)</i>	3.36	0.58	Agree
Overall	3.34	0.49	Agree

Legend: 3.51-4.00 Strongly Agree; 2.51-3.50 Agree; 1.51-2.50; Disagree; 1.00-1.50 Strongly Disagree

The data from the table focuses on the level of awareness regarding premature campaigning in terms of political awareness. Overall, respondents generally agree that they are knowledgeable about the laws governing premature campaigning, with an overall mean score of 3.34 and a standard deviation of 0.49. This result indicates a moderate level of agreement among respondents participated.

The highest mean score of 3.44 that corresponds to knowing how premature campaigning affects

voter perception and behavior, suggests that respondents strongly agree on this statement. Having high level of agreement could be attributed to the recognition of how it is significantly premature campaigning is impacting on shaping voters' opinions and actions. Conversely, the highest standard deviation of 0.61 is associated with understanding how premature campaigning influences political platforms, this indicates a more variability in responses. This suggests that while many respondents agree, there is less consensus on this problem, possibly due to the respondents' differing levels of exposure to information or varying personal experiences with political platforms.

The lowest mean score of 3.19, that is related to awareness of the processes involved in adopting policies to prevent premature campaigning, indicates that respondents agree but there is a slightly lesser extent. This suggests a need for more education or clarity on the specific processes involved and how they can be effectively executed. The lowest standard deviation of 0.58 for several indicators, including knowledge about laws governing premature campaigning, distinguishing between legal campaign activities and premature campaigning, awareness of the role of media, and staying informed about candidates' activities, suggests relatively consistent agreement among respondents on these points.

Table 2.5 Level of Awareness in Premature Campaigning in terms of Policy Implementation

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
<i>In terms of Premature Campaigning, I am / I</i> <i>(Sa mga tuntunin ng Premature Campaigning.)</i>			
1. aware of how policies on premature campaigning are enforced. <i>(nalalaman ko kung paano ipinapatupad ang mga patakaran sa maagang pangangampanya.)</i>	3.26	0.61	Agree
2. understand the role of government agencies in implementing anti-premature campaigning policies. <i>(nauunawaan ko ang papel ng mga ahensya ng gobyerno sa pagpapatupad ng mga patakaran sa anti-premature campaigning.)</i>	3.30	0.60	Agree
3. can identify challenges in implementing policies against it. <i>(natutukoy ko ang mga hamon sa pagpapatupad ng mga patakaran laban dito.)</i>	3.22	0.63	Agree
4. believe strict implementation of policies deters it. <i>(naniniwala ako na ang mahigpit na pagpapatupad ng mga patakaran ay tumutulong upang hadlangan ito.)</i>	3.35	0.64	Agree
5. aware of penalties imposed on individuals or groups engaging in it. <i>(alam ko ang mga parusang ipinapataw sa mga indibidwal o grupo na nakikibahagi dito.)</i>	3.21	0.67	Agree
6. understand how community participation aids in implementing anti-premature campaigning measures. <i>(maunawaan ko kung paano nakakatulong ang partisipasyon ng komunidad sa pagpapatupad ng mga hakbang sa kampanya laban sa napaagang pangangampanya.)</i>	3.34	0.59	Agree
Overall	3.28	0.51	Agree
<i>Legend: 3.51-4.00 Strongly Agree; 2.51-3.50 Agree; 1.51-2.50; Disagree; 1.00-1.50 Strongly Disagree</i>			

The data from the table focuses on the level of awareness regarding premature campaigning in terms

of policy implementation. Overall, respondents generally agree that they are aware of how policies on premature campaigning are enforced, with an overall mean score of 3.28 and a standard deviation of 0.51. This indicates a moderate level of agreement among the respondents.

The highest mean score of 3.35, which corresponds to the acceptance that a strict implementation of policies deters premature campaigning, this suggests that respondents strongly agree on this point. The high level of agreement could be attributed to the recognition of the importance of rigorous enforcement in preventing premature campaigning activities. Conversely, the highest standard deviation of 0.67, that is associated with awareness of penalties imposed on individuals or groups engaging in premature campaigning. This indicates that there is a more variability in the responses. This suggests that while many respondents agree, there is less consensus on this issue, possibly due to differing levels of exposure to information or varying personal experiences with execution of measures.

The lowest mean score of 3.21, that is related to awareness of penalties imposed on individuals or groups engaging in premature campaigning, indicates that respondents agree but to a slightly lesser extent. This might suggest a need for more education or clarity on the specific penalties and how they are applied. The lowest standard deviation of 0.59 for understanding how community participation aids in implementing anti-premature campaigning measures suggests relatively consistent agreement among respondents on this point.

According to Manlangit (2023) highlighted how electoral incentives can impact the implementation of policies, particularly in the context of disaster preparedness, which can be analogous to the implementation challenges in regulating premature campaigning.

Table 2.6 Level of Awareness in Premature Campaigning in terms of Policy Evaluation

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
<i>In terms of Premature Campaigning, I am / I</i> <i>(Sa mga tuntunin ng Premature Campaigning,)</i>			
1. aware that it is prohibited under election laws. <i>(batid ko na ito ay ipinagbabawal sa ilalim ng mga batas sa halalan.)</i>	3.45	0.59	Agree
2. understand the penalties and consequences of engaging in it. <i>(maunawaan ko ang mga parusa at kahihinatnan ng pagsasagawa nito.)</i>	3.29	0.64	Agree
3. believe that current policies on it are effectively enforced. <i>(naniniwala ako na ang kasalukuyang mga patakaran dito ay epektibong ipinapatupad.)</i>	3.25	0.67	Agree
4. think that the existing regulations on it needs to be stricter. <i>(iniisip ko na ang mga umiiral na regulasyon para dito ay kailangang maging mas mahigpit.)</i>	3.47	0.60	Agree
5. knowledgeable about the legal definition and scope of it. <i>(may kaalaman ako sa legal na kahulugan at saklaw nito.)</i>	3.14	0.67	Agree
6. aware of the authorities responsible for monitoring and implementing policies against it. <i>(alam ko ang mga awtoridad na responsable sa pagsubaybay at pagpapatupad ng mga patakaran laban dito.)</i>	3.30	0.62	Agree
Overall	3.31	0.51	Agree
<i>Legend: 3.51-4.00 Strongly Agree; 2.51-3.50 Agree; 1.51-2.50; Disagree; 1.00-1.50 Strongly Disagree</i>			

The result of data from the table focuses on the level of awareness regarding premature campaigning

in terms of policy evaluation. Generally, respondents agree that they are aware that premature campaigning is prohibited under election laws, with an overall mean score of 3.31 and a standard deviation of 0.51. This indicates a moderate level of agreement among the respondents.

The highest mean score of 3.47, which corresponds to the belief that present regulations on premature campaigning need to be strictly imposed, this suggests that respondents strongly agree on this point. A high level of agreement could be attributed to the recognition that the current regulations may not be sufficient to deter premature campaigning effectively. This highlights a demand for more stringent measures. Conversely, the highest standard deviation of 0.67, associated with knowledge about the legal definition and the scope of premature campaigning, indicates more variability in responses of the respondents. This suggests that while many respondents agree, there is less consensus on this issue, this is possibly due to differing levels of understanding or exposure to legal definitions and scopes.

The lowest mean score of 3.14, that is related to knowledge about the legal definition and scope of premature campaigning, indicates that respondents agree but to a slightly lesser extent. This might suggest a necessity for more intensive education or clarity on the specific legal aspects and boundaries for premature campaigning. The lowest standard deviation of 0.59 for understanding the penalties and consequences of engaging in premature campaigning provides relatively consistent agreement among respondents on this point.

As provided in the study of Salor (2023), the legal challenges surrounding premature campaigning in the Philippines. The article discusses the Supreme Court's ruling in *Penera v. COMELEC*, which clarified that individuals are only considered candidates at the start of the official campaign period, thereby creating a loophole that allows pre-campaign activities without legal repercussions. The study emphasizes the need for policy reforms to address these legal gaps and enhance the integrity of the electoral process.

Furthermore, according to Agustin (2019) the awareness on political issues is a way of monitoring political activities in society. It shows how efficient and cooperative the public citizens are in working together specifically in resolving matters towards the growth of the community. Furthermore, it is a way of recognizing their knowledge for awareness through participatory and active engagements brought about by international or local relationship within certain groups. The knowledge of politics then allows an individual to deal intelligently and more efficiently in the different aspects of life. As the result of her research showed that there was a necessity to be aware of any issues related to or has a direct relevance on political matters concerning the institutions in order to have a smooth, continuous flow of events that will directly guide the activity.

Table 3 Test of Difference on Perceived Implementation of Participatory strategies as grouped based on Profile

Profile Variable	H-Value	P-Value	Interpretation
Age	9.40	.024	Significant
Sex	0.04	.845	Not Significant
Employment	29.98	.000	Significant
Years of Residence	3.28	.511	Not Significant

Legend: $p < 0.05$ Significant

The data from the table focuses on the test of difference in the perceived implementation of participatory strategies as grouped based on profile variables, including age, sex, employment, and years of residence. The results indicate that age and employment are significant factors in the perceived implementation of participatory strategies, while sex and years of residence are not significant. Specifically, the significant P-value for age ($P = .024$) suggests that there is a notable difference in perceptions based on

age, likely due to varying levels of experience and engagement in participatory activities among different age groups. Likewise, the significant P-value for employment ($P = .000$) indicates a substantial variation in perceptions based on the employment status, with employed individuals possibly having more exposure to the participatory strategies through organizational or community activities. In contrast, the non-significant P-values for sex ($P = .845$) and years of residence ($P = .511$) suggest that these factors do not significantly impact perceptions, indicating that both males and females, as well as individuals regardless of their period of residence, have similar views on the implementation of participatory strategies.

As supported by (Ong, 2020) age significantly influences political awareness, with older individuals typically representing a higher understanding of electoral laws than their younger counterparts. Conversely, younger voters, especially those participating in SK elections, may have insufficient familiarity with rules on premature campaigning due to limited civic experience. Gender also impacts political awareness, as women and men often involve differently with political information and processes (Torres & De Guzman, 2019). Educational attainment has been widely related to higher political consciousness, those attaining college-level education or higher being more likely to be aware of election-related issues (Delos Reyes, 2021). Civil status and occupation also play a major role in shaping a voter participation in political discourse; for example, married individuals and those working in public service or education sectors often exhibit greater engagement in civic matters (Manlapig & Alipio, 2020).

Furthermore, years of residence within a community can impact the extent of voter familiarity with candidates and local election regulations. Residents for long period of time are more likely to be aware of political traditions and local election practices, this includes the common occurrence of premature campaigning (Lenard, 2015 as cited in Ferris et al., 2020). This suggests that both voter education and community integration are key in enhancing awareness and reducing electoral violations. As such, voter profile variables age, gender, education, civil status, occupation, and years of residence must be carefully considered in research concerning premature campaigning and electoral engagement.

Policy Proposal

By the following results and data collected the researcher have made a Policy Proposal with regards to the effective implementation to deter the premature campaigning in the conduct of electoral activities, and to strengthen electoral fairness act.

The formulated policy titled: Strengthening Electoral Fairness Act: A Policy on the Regulation and Penalization of Premature Campaigning, provides an exclusive background after the recent findings of this research indicates a grooving concern among public citizens regarding the widespread practice of the premature campaigning. Given the lack of comprehensive regulation and enforcement, the policy provided will establish clear guidelines and consequences to premature campaigning in the Philippines. This will deter the early campaigning practices and promotes electoral fairness, having equal opportunities among candidates, and restore voter trust in the electoral system.

The objectives of the policy are to provide a clear definition of premature campaigning, regulate political activities, establish penalties and sanctions for violators, educate the public and aspirants about ethical campaigning, and address both traditional and digital forms of premature campaigning. Moreover, the policy components provided are definition of premature campaigning, monitoring and reporting, sanctions and penalties, public education campaigning, and digital and social media regulation.

The implementation and review of the policy shall be done every three (3) years and law-making bodies and implementors shall have a report on the number of violators and enforcement of the actions taken.

In summary, the policy the policy initiative aims to uphold the sanctity of the electoral processes and ensures that all political operate on a level playing field. Providing political fairness and integrity of the electoral processes.

Policy Proposal

Title: *Strengthening Electoral Fairness Act: A Policy on the Regulation and Penalization of Premature Campaigning*

I. Introduction

The conduct of fair and democratic elections is fundamental to a just society. However, recent findings indicate a growing concern among citizens regarding the widespread practice of premature campaigning. Respondents view this act as a form of political propaganda that gives certain candidates an unfair advantage. Given the lack of comprehensive regulation and enforcement, this policy initiative seeks to establish clear guidelines and consequences for premature campaigning in the Philippines.

II. Rationale

Based on the research results, the majority of the public considers premature campaigning unethical and damaging to the integrity of the electoral process. Yet, the current legal framework is inadequate in addressing or penalizing such activities effectively. A policy that deters early campaigning practices will promote electoral fairness, equal opportunities among candidates, and restore voter trust in the system.

III. Policy Objectives

1. To provide a clear and enforceable definition of premature campaigning.
2. To regulate political activities that unfairly promote candidates outside the official campaign period.
3. To establish penalties and sanctions for violators.
4. To educate the public and political aspirants about ethical campaigning practices.
5. To address both traditional and digital forms of premature campaigning.

IV. Policy Components

1. Definition of Premature Campaigning

Premature campaigning refers to any act by a candidate or political party—whether direct or indirect—that promotes a person's candidacy outside of the officially designated campaign period. This includes:

- Distribution of paraphernalia (e.g., shirts, calendars, tarpaulins) with names and slogans
- Appearances in public events under the guise of charity or advocacy
- Political endorsements via social media platforms
- Sponsored digital content or advertisements
- Announcement of candidacy or political intentions before the filing of candidacy period

2. Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism

- The Commission on Elections (COMELEC) shall establish a **Premature Campaign Monitoring Unit** tasked with monitoring compliance.
- A **hotline and digital platform** will be launched for citizens to anonymously report violations.
- Regular audits and media monitoring will be conducted during the pre-campaign period.

3. Sanctions and Penalties

- First Offense: Written warning and public disclosure of violation
- Second Offense: Fine ranging from ₱50,000 to ₱100,000
- Third Offense: Disqualification from candidacy or revocation of eligibility
- Offenses involving social media campaigns may involve coordination with relevant tech platforms for content removal

4. Public Education Campaign

- COMELEC shall lead a **nationwide information drive** on the ethical conduct of elections.
- Civic education modules on premature campaigning will be integrated into senior high school and tertiary level curricula.
- Partnerships with media outlets will be established to run regular segments on responsible political engagement.

5. Digital and Social Media Regulation

- All political content published online prior to the official campaign period must be declared to COMELEC.
- Paid political content on platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube will be flagged and recorded.
- Influencers and content creators endorsing potential candidates shall be required to disclose sponsorships.

V. Implementation and Review

- The policy shall be implemented in the 2025 national elections, with a review every three years.
- COMELEC shall submit an annual report to Congress on the number of violations and enforcement actions taken.

VI. Conclusion

This policy initiative aims to uphold the sanctity of the electoral process and ensure that all political candidates operate on a level playing field. By curbing premature campaigning through clear regulations, enforcement mechanisms, and civic education, we promote a more honest, informed, and democratic electoral environment.

4. Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter presents the summary of findings, conclusion, and recommendations based on the results of the research titled Voter Awareness of Premature Campaigning in Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections in the Municipality of Pangil, Laguna. By analyzing the gathered data, this chapter focuses on the key insights derived from the respondents' demographic profiles and perceptions. Derive conclusions based on the results, and provides recommendations to address the gaps and reinforce voter education and electoral practices.

4.1. Summary of Findings

The summary of the research in accordance with the statement of the problem provided in Chapter 1 are as follow:

1. Majority of the respondents who participated in the research were middle-aged individuals (31–60 years), of female sex, were degree holders or college graduates, currently employed, and has the long term of residency in the locality;
2. Overall, respondents exhibited a moderate level of awareness regarding premature campaigning across various scopes in problem identification, policy formulation, adoption, implementation, and evaluation. The highest awareness was noted in recognizing the negative impact of premature campaigning on election fairness. On the other hand, the lowest awareness levels were in identifying specific activities that constitute premature campaigning and understanding the legal definitions and penalties;

3. Statistical analyses provide that there are significant differences in the level of awareness in premature campaigning when grouped according to age and employment. However, there is no significant differences based on sex or years of residence; and
4. Lastly, based on the results gathered an initiative was proposed by the researcher entitled: “Strengthening Electoral Fairness Act: A Policy on the Regulation and Penalization of Premature Campaigning” for the implementation of rules and regulations governing Premature Campaigning.

4.2. Conclusions

Based on the data gathered, the results suggest that the majority of the respondents are middle-aged (31–60 years), female, and college graduates. This indicates that the survey largely reflects the views of educated, working-age women. Meanwhile, younger individuals and those with doctoral degrees are the least represented, suggesting limited participation from these groups.

When it comes to the level of awareness of voters in Premature Campaigning, the findings reveal that respondents possess a moderate level of awareness regarding premature campaigning, with a strong understanding of its impact on electoral fairness. At the same time, the findings promote that while respondents exhibited a moderate level of awareness regarding policies on premature campaigning, there is great consensus on the relevance of public consultation in policy formulation. Moreover, the analysis highlights a moderate level of awareness regarding the adoption of policies to prevent premature campaigning. Additionally, the data provides a moderate level of political awareness among respondents regarding premature campaigning, with great recognition of its effect on voter’s perception. The results of the data gathered suggests a moderate level of awareness among respondents regarding the implementation of policies on premature campaigning, there is a strong consensus on the importance of strict application, whilst indicating gaps in knowledge about penalties and the necessity to have a more comprehensive public education on these measures. Finally, the data provides a moderate level of awareness with regards to the legal prohibitions on premature campaigning, respondents strongly encouraging for stricter regulations.

On the other hand, the findings indicate that the Hypothesis stated in Chapter 1 of this research indicates that the age and employment status significantly influence level of awareness of participatory strategy implementation. The age reflects the differences due to varying levels of experience and engagement, and employment status affecting exposure to such strategies. However, sex and the years of residence did not significantly impact these perceptions.

Lastly, the proposed initiative on the policy formulation with regards to premature campaigning was provided highlighting the need to have this regulation that was based in recent findings about the awareness of widespread acts of premature campaigning. The proposal also provides the penalties and sanctions of the violators and concentrates the need for voter education drive to further increases the awareness of the public when it comes to premature campaigning.

4.3. Recommendations

Based on the conclusion formulated from the findings, the following recommendations are adapted:

1. For the registered voters, that they may refer to this research in determining their decision-making for the candidates whom they will vote for in the next elections. They will look in to the effects of the premature campaigning in the electoral process and how it affects the fairness in campaigning exposure. Moreover, the participation of least represented groups of voters and engagement to these groups provide a more comprehensive understanding of public view across different demographic sectors.

2. For candidates, that they have an overview as to what constitutes premature campaigning. This will become an eye opener to them on the reason why they should not commit on such activities. Candidates may opt out in practicing premature campaigning when they learn the sanctions and penalizations to be given when they commit premature campaigning. They can also incorporate in their campaign the strict implementation of rules to be followed during election.
3. For the Commission on Elections (COMELEC), that they may enhance the educational efforts on premature campaigning while respondents established a moderate level of awareness about premature campaigning, there must have a greater educational effort in the information dissemination. This comprises clarifying specific activities related to premature campaigning; policy gaps, legal definitions and penalties associated with it. Furthermore, public consultations should be emphasized during the dissemination of information, as respondents value the inclusive decision-making in policy.
4. For the COMELEC Officials and Stakeholder, that they may determine barriers to the effective policy adoption since the findings provides a need for better understanding of the obstacles to policy adoption. Future initiatives or policies to be formulated by the law makers should focus on educating the public about these barriers, how premature campaigning is a violation of the existing law, and the importance of strict implementation to deter such activities.
5. For future researchers, that they may duplicate the research exploring the greater detail how different demographic groups perceive premature campaigning, particularly focusing on younger individuals and those with higher levels of education. This will guarantee that all perspectives are considered in the development of policies. Furthermore, future studies should examine the effectiveness of different educational methods and interventions meant at refining public understanding of premature campaigning. Lastly, additional research should also assess the role of leadership in successful adoption of policies and the effectiveness of policy enforcement in supporting the electoral integrity.

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