



ELECTION FINANCES OF GUADALUPE VILLAGE CANDIDATES IN CEBU CITY, PHILIPPINES

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Abstract:

This study examined and analysed the election expenditures incurred by local candidates during the latest 2013 village level election in Guadalupe, Cebu City, Philippines. The study also assessed the capability of Guadalupe village election candidates to run and win elections taking into account their income, campaign funds and incurred expenditures. A descriptive survey research design was employed in the study through one-on-one interviews with identified respondents. Secondary data substantiated the primary information generated from the research respondents. Findings revealed that campaign funds of election candidates are too high compared to the average income of ordinary village residents. In effect, only 15 candidates ran for election in Guadalupe village out of 33,000 registered voters. Ordinary aspiring candidate could not afford to raise the huge campaign needed funds. Because of limited income, Guadalupe residents aspiring to run in the local election were not able to take part in the election race. The study concludes that election financing and expenditures play a crucial role in determining voting behaviour and election outcomes. Examining election candidates' expenditures affords transparency, fair electoral processes and can provide check and balance towards corruption and its prospects of occurrence especially during election period. It is recommended that the Commission on Election puts ceiling on election expenses to minimize campaign spending among the candidates thereby foster fair play during election campaigns. The candidates may also employ cyber campaign strategies by making use on social media as affordable and cheap way to do campaigns.

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Keywords: campaign expenditures, electoral processes, campaign funds, election outcomes, poverty, cyber campaigning

1. Introduction

Election is the process wherein electorates chose candidates for public office and service. Election is a critical period since it signals changes in the societal ruling within a community. Objectively, it is a time where unworthy and corrupt public officials are replaced with worthy candidates to bring about a positive change of political leadership. During election period, candidates organize mass rallies, do house to house campaigns, promote their names on various media platforms, most commonly on radio, television, the print and the social media. Many even hire celebrities as their endorsers just to influence the people's vote in their favour.

During election, politicians adopt different tactics to publicize their names. Usually, they organized street marches along public places, hang tarpaulins, posters and other campaign materials on the streets, on walls and on lamp posts. These campaign strategies are proven influential and play vital contributions to elicit votes from the electorates. In effect, almost every election candidate puts heavy efforts on their publicities. Obviously, they require huge funding which is often shouldered by the election candidates (Johnston et al., 2011).

In the Philippines, people view the election for "*the more ostentatious campaign, the greater chances of winning*" (Johnson, 2012). Logically, the majority of election candidates are the wealthy or those who have accessed to financial resources. So rich candidates dominate the election arena in the Philippine context, in strong contrast with their poor counterparts. It even does not matter whether a candidate is highly educated or just complete basic education (Abocejo and Padua, 2010) as long as he can read and write and has sufficient campaign funds.

One major reason for poor persons not to run for public office is because they don't have the much needed campaign machinery as wealthy people do (Abocejo, 2015) during election period. Apparently, there is no equal chances to win election. Many income-limited people do not run for election knowing they can hardly win due to lack budget needed for campaign expenditures. Poor people are not capable of running for public office because they are economically deprived, cannot afford to run for election since they don't have the much needed finances for campaign materials such as tarpaulins, posters, among others and for organizing rallies. Campaign machinery play a crucial role in the Philippine political election (Abocejo, 2015). If only the poor could afford to organize campaign strategies such as organizing rallies and hire celebrities (but not necessary), somehow election in the Philippines is not going to be wealthy-dominated political exercises.

Filipino electorates are governed by the elite class starting from the declaration of independence way back in 1898 until the present. This is not surprising because those who run for election come from the rich families and clans. The majority of elected leaders in the Philippines, if not all, belong to the upper income class group. In contrast, the

largest members of the masses remain poor (Inabangan, Garcia and Abocejo, 2019). With the rich and the elite governing this country, the Philippines continually suffer from income poverty (Fernandez and Abocejo, 2014) with other poverty-related problems prevailing in the country until today. Notwithstanding coming from rich families, elected leaders do steal money from public funds (Hesami, 2010). They are not economically deprived, yet they involve in various forms corruptions (Šumah, 2018).

Another scenario is that positions in the government are handed down from the grandparents to grandchildren, evidently nepotism (Issacharoff, 2010; Evangelio and Abocejo, 2015). If these practices continue, the Philippines will have difficulty achieving progress (Abocejo, 2017) since the quality of life of its populace is jeopardized under the ruling of elected corrupt government officials (Abocejo, 2015).

Every citizen has the right to participate in the government. Under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 21 in 2015, states that *“everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives”* and *“everyone has the right of equal access to public service on his country”* (United Nations, 2015) Leadership is not about educational attainment, nor based on the level of popularity and wealth in the society (Shields, 2010). Indian legend and leader Gandhi, who belonged to the lower class group, led India against the oppressive rule of the British government (Ishu, Singh and Neha, 2013). The authors further noted that Gandhi fought against the British through *“Ahimsa”* or through non-violent method proving that poor has the ability to lead the people although they are not well educated and not wealthy. What matter most is the heart to serve the people, denying ones’ own self-interest and set good example (Ciulla, [Ed.], 2014).

Some interested citizens fail to exercise their rights and to participate in the government when they decide not to run for election due to the high finances needed as pivotal campaign logistics. It is evident that campaign expenditures have direct and positive effect on election results (Abocejo, 2015). There were only 15 people out of 33,000 registered voters in Guadalupe village who decided to run because they have enough sources of income and campaign funds going through the election race.

This paper contends that examining the expenditures of candidates during election period can shed light supportive to anticorruption initiatives affording full transparency on election campaign financing and expending. This can also bring about improvement on the electoral processes thereby create a fair arena for an electoral competition. Assessing election expenditures offer a check and balance towards revealing corruption or its possibility to happen in the political processes, encourage prudent expenditures and help assess how election regulatory framework are followed and executed in the actual setting, particularly at the village or grassroots level. This paper further argues that campaign expenditures drive the candidates’ influence on the voting behaviour and election outcomes through financial channelling.

1.1 Study Objectives

This study investigated the election expenditures incurred by Guadalupe village election candidates during the latest local village level election in 2013. Specifically, the study

examined the annual income of election candidates, explored their sources of campaign funds and assessed the types of incurred expenditures.

2. Literature Review

People always clamour for justice from the government and desire to eradicate injustice in society. But many do not know that *“social injustice stems primarily from a lack of opportunity, whereby talented individuals are unfairly prevented from achieving their full potential”* (Schaar, 2010). In reality, some individuals have lesser opportunity compared to the privileged persons (Inabangan, Garcia and Abocejo, 2019). In the Philippine society, there is a need to give fair opportunity to every Filipino to run for election rather than limiting only to elite, the highly educated and financially able candidates. The ordinary citizen, including the poor must be given the chance, they too have leadership capabilities (Goleman, 2004).

The current economic woes of the Philippines are often associated with the poor governance of corrupt local and national leaders (Abocejo, 2017) who mostly belong to the privileged class as they hold key positions in the government. So that choosing the right candidate during elections is a crucial right and duty of every Filipino whose majority are poor. Ivanic, Martin and Zaman (2012) reported that *“poverty rose by 44 million with 68 million people falling into poverty and 24 million people raised out of poverty at the extreme poverty line of US\$1.25 per day”*. This is a very alarming truth. If money is needed to create a competitive campaign (Magleby, 2010) how can one expect the lower middle class and the poor to run for public office? For the campaign alone they can foresee defeat in the electoral race ahead of them.

In May 2010, there were over Php4.3 billion spent on the political ads among the candidates who ran for public office posts (Biezen, 2010). The role of media in the in the campaign is very important, television alone reached up to 76 percent of the overall media spending by political aspirants (Viudez-Panela, 2010). Through television, it becomes easier and faster for candidates to broadcast their candidacy to the public. But in order to campaign through television and other means of media, one needs a huge budget which poor candidates cannot afford. According to Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA)'s Annual Poverty Indicator Survey (APIS), poverty incidence in the Philippines rose by 1.2 percent from 24.6 percent in 2010 to 25.8 percent in 2011.

In essence, campaign expenditures have big impact on election outcome (Johnston et al., 2011). The authors further affirmed the contention that *“the more that a party spent, the better its performance at the polls”*. During election campaigns, independent candidates and political parties organize grandiose campaign (Elmer et al., 2007). Campaign funds and spending directly correlate with greater chance of winning in the election (Johnson, 2012), implying that elections in the Philippines ever favour the wealthy and the elite class.

Wealthy people predominate the elected positions in the Philippine government, this is a common scenario all throughout the country. There are controversies that these wealthy people who are officials in the government, used the money of the people in their

campaign during election (Abocejo, 2015). They corrupted the money of the people for use in their personal interests, specifically on campaign expenses. Most of the people in the government use power as a source of their campaign funds (Raja and Schaffner, 2015). They also buy votes to win election (Abocejo, 2015).

It is undeniable that money can influence votes because of the pressing economic difficulties in Philippines society today (Carlos and Lalata, 2010). There is a need to put clear distinction between political campaign expenditure and contribution in order to minimize campaign corruption (Sample, 2010). A policy needs to be put in place to ensure that the money use by election candidates for campaign came from their pockets rather than from the people's taxes (Essenberg, 2010; Noveck, 2010).

Election candidates get involved in politics to fulfil their personal desire. Their personal motives must be stopped, otherwise the government, run by people interested only to bring about their own interests, cannot render authentic service to its constituents (Alvarez, Ong, & Abocejo, 2017). Because of the gravity of campaign corruption during election, a campaign finance regulation is created through campaign finance disclosure laws to discourage campaign corruption (Wilson, 2010). These campaign finance restrictions aim to limit the amount of money to be spent during campaign activities (Wilson, 2010) where election candidates must be transparent (Andaya and Abocejo, 2019) to the public about their campaign expenses and their sources of campaign funds. This informs the public especially the voting age group whether campaign expenditures are legally funded or otherwise.

Meanwhile, Mirandilla (2010) explained that there is now a new form of campaign initiatives. It is cheaper contrary to the traditional campaign activities utilizing tarpaulins, posters, among others. This is called the cyber campaigning. With the invasion of the internet in the society, cyber campaigning is found to be the easiest and most accessible type of campaigning (Chen and Walsh, 2010). By just a click, poor people who want to run for election can now already publicize their candidacy to the masses (Chen and Walsh, 2010). Essentially, interested people with limited campaign funds can now have a large scale of influence to the electorate but less expense through cyber campaigning (Sudulich and Wall, 2010).

On the positive note, there is a growing trend of women participation in politics as more women file candidacy during election registrations. This scenario is currently apparent in the Philippines society from the local or village level until the national arena (Abocejo et al., 2012). In Guadalupe village, more and more women are now interested to take part in the election race reflecting that gender equality and opportunity are improving the political climate in the study area.

2.1 Theoretical Background

This study is anchored on the Theory of Justice by Rawls (2005), Social Contract Theory of Rousseau (2007) and the Principle Political Right and Article 21 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 2015).

Rawls (2005), argued that *"each person must have equal rights up to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others"*. The meaning of this statement is that

every person, rich or poor, of any race, old or of legal age, regardless of status in the society, shall possess equal rights. Rawls (2005) enumerated the political rights or the basic liberties of a citizen which are political liberty to vote and run for office, freedom of speech and assembly, freedom from personal property and freedom from arbitrary arrest. He also argued that civil liberty includes the political liberty to vote and run for office, clarifying that states “*offices and positions in the government must be open to everyone under the conditions of equality*”. From the very start of the campaign period, equality among candidates should be visible already. He also stressed that there is equality when there is balance campaign between candidates in terms of their campaign expenditures.

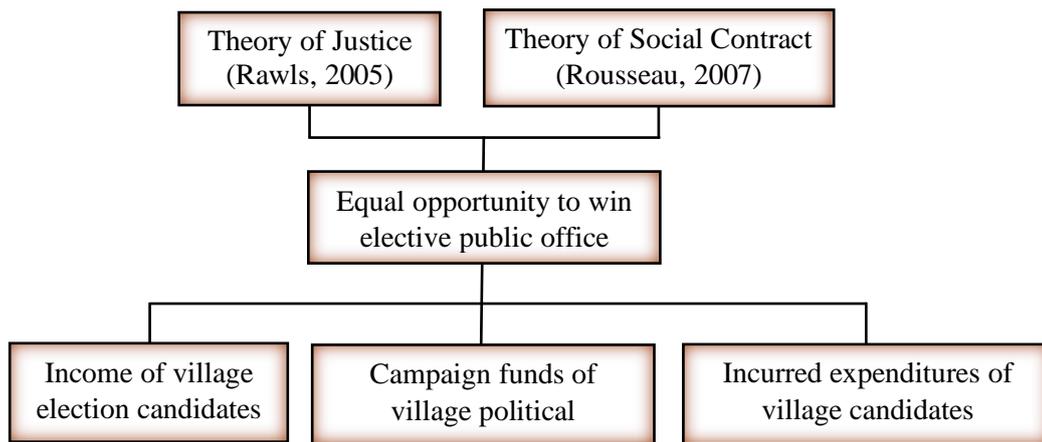


Figure 1: Theoretical and conceptual framework of the study

To sum up Rawls Theory (2005), justice can only be achieved if each citizen is capable to win positions in the government. There must be no restraining factors (especially financial) that would prevent individuals to run and most importantly to win public office. Many people decided not to run because they don't have the enough income and campaign funds to buy campaign expenditures. In order to achieve justice, differences in the income and campaign funds between the privileged and less privileged citizens (Evangelio and Abocejo, 2015) should not affect the opportunity to win election among the candidates.

This study is also anchored on the Social Contract Theory of Rousseau (2007) which argued that “*everyone is entitled to join in the law making process because everyone possesses same amount of rights and impose same duties to all*”. This phrase “*entitled to join in the law making process*” is tantamount to hold a public office. Because everyone possesses the same amount of rights, everyone should also have equal opportunity to win elections. Opportunity to win election must not be only to the side of the elite class, but it should be manifested also to the normal citizens because everyone possesses the same degree of rights.

3. Research Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to generate the needed data. The randomly chosen study respondents included the campaign managers and election candidates during the 2013 village level local election as they provided reliable information of the financial transactions during the election campaigns. The interviews were conducted at the village Hall of Guadalupe, Cebu City, Philippines. Face-to-face unstructured interviews were carried out using a survey questionnaire ensuring a free-flowing conversation in the natural setting. Secondary data were also gathered to substantiate the primary generated data. The survey questionnaire was subjected to expert and content validation.

Each respondent was formally informed and consented to voluntarily participate in the study, only upon full consent that they form part of the study respondents with a duly signed an informed consent. Ethical considerations were observed all throughout the implementation of the study. The respondents were assured of the confidentiality of all gathered information, they would be solely use for the purpose of the study. All respondents remained anonymous.

The generated data were organized and presented in graphical forms and presented in charts to provide more lucid discussion of study findings. Quantitative and qualitative approaches were employed on the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the data.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Income Sources of Election Candidates

Apparently, election candidates used their income during campaigns, for purchases of their campaign materials and other incurred expenses. The data show that the main source of income among political candidates who ran in the previous election in Guadalupe village was from real property followed by business income source. Income from real properties included apartments for rents in the urban areas and income from agricultural farms. Election candidates with businesses were more fortunate since money was always there, even when not working, they earn profit which they were able to use in campaigning during election period. Following the business income, many election candidates had savings from their employment wages. They really confirmed having plan ahead of their desire to run for public office.

The Philippine Statistics Authority reported in 2013 that the population of Cebu City increased by almost 185,000 individuals, about two-thirds of whom are voters. Among the 80 villages comprising Cebu City, Guadalupe is the most populous village. Based on the 2011 Annual Poverty Indicators Survey (APIS) conducted by Philippine Statistics Authority, out of 1,429 families in Cebu City, 560 families belong to the poor group and 13.4 percent of this family experience hunger. Since the majority of Guadalupe residents are poor, even if interested to run, they decide not to due to low income as compared with those moneyed political candidates. There is much poverty in Guadalupe

village where a person, even with all the needed qualities and suited to be a good political leader, choose to secure his survival and family needs first rather than running for the election.

4.2 Village Election Candidates' Sources of Campaign Funds

Campaign funds are the money used by political candidates during for the campaign. It is important to know the sources of campaign funds by election candidates to fully grasp if they succumb to ostentatious campaigns. From the generated data, personal fund account the highest percentage of campaign fund among the candidates. It comprised about 30 percent (Figure 2) of total campaign funds.

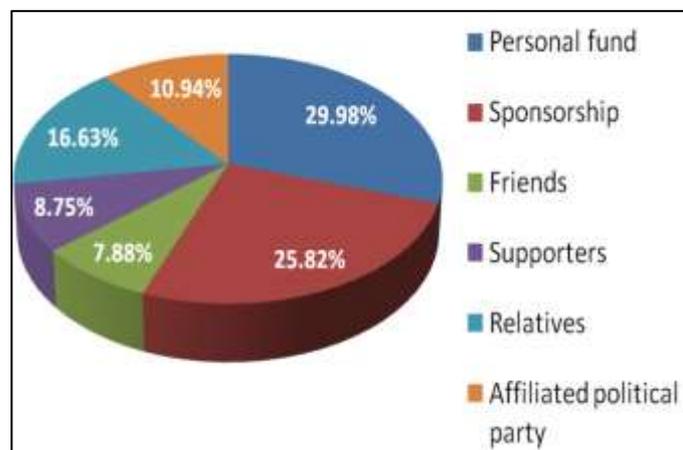


Figure 2: Source of campaign funds among political candidates in Guadalupe village

Personal funds are usually derived from the various income accrued by the candidate. Obviously, personal funds rank the highest among the sources of campaign funds. Though some of these personal funds remain questionable, whether or not coming from their pockets and savings, especially when the candidates are incumbent government elected officials. Next is sponsorship which contributing roughly 26 percent of campaign funds. Sponsors refer to people or companies which support the candidacy of a politician financially because he/she/they may see it favourable in their part if that candidate wins. To a wider extent, sponsorships refer to business enterprises whom business people engage in with the vested interests of getting favour back their sponsored or supported candidates win the election and get into office.

Next are relatives which comprises about 16 percent of campaign funds. Small in proportion, but the amount widely varies among election candidates. For instance, there is a candidate in the previous election who received PhP50,000 from a close relative which augmented much of the candidate's campaign logistics. Established good relationship towards relatives somehow offer tangible benefits in sum of money during elections.

Another source is political party affiliation accounting about 11 percent (Figure 2) of campaign funds. Even though the funds received by candidates are substantial enough compared to their personal funds, to be a member of a political party which is strong and influential offer big possibility to win the elections. Still another source is the donation from the supporters posting about 9 percent. While it is true that funds coming from the

supporters rank low from the rest of the campaign funds, the corroboration from the supporters alone has great contribution already to the side of the candidate. The corroborations of the supporters cannot be paid by money actually. During election period, these supporters can be seen on the streets holding mass parade, shouting at the streets and many more means of supports to influence the public to vote for that candidate concerned.

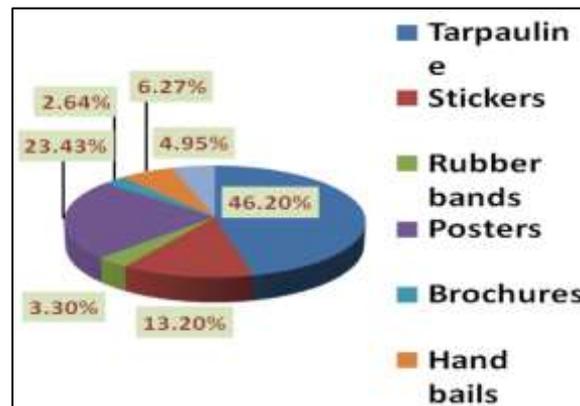


Figure 3: Incurred campaign expenditures among political candidates in the previous election in Guadalupe village

4.3 Incurred expenditures by the village candidates

Extensive and ostentatious campaign of our political candidates happen during election period. Candidates march on the streets wearing their party colour giving away campaign materials like tarpaulins, posters, hand bails and stickers, among others with the purpose of having the candidates be known to the voting public. When candidates want to publicize their names to the public, they need to spend more on campaign materials. Dowdle et al. (2015) affirmed that *“the more that a candidates spent, the better its performance at the polls”*. Among the campaign expenditures incurred by political candidates during the 2013 village level election in Guadalupe, tarpaulins were the most widely used campaign material comprising about 46 percent, almost one-half for overall campaign expenditures (Figure 3).

This is the reason why in the previous village level election in Guadalupe, many tarpaulins were posted everywhere, on lamp posts, outside houses' walls, outside business establishments, among others. Gathered data revealed that election candidates spent between Php10,000-Php30,000 solely for the tarpaulins. This the reason why some interested residents in Guadalupe village decided not to run because from the tarpaulin alone they have no match in the campaign machinery with those who have finances. Campaigns are crucial during election because these are the times when candidates convince, persuade and get the heart of the people to vote for them.

In fact, many interested residents of Guadalupe village were unable to exercise their rights to take part in the government elections as stipulated in Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 because they of limited finances. Evidently, only the wealthy interested people in Guadalupe village with the enough finances ran for public office.

Posters came next to tarpaulins with 23 percent share in the campaign expenditures among political candidates of Guadalupe. Village candidates spent about Php20,000 for the posters alone, they were pasted on electric posts and walls. These posters have been criticized by many environmentalists because they were unpleasant and considered eye sores. This the one reason why election candidates preferred tarpaulins over posters since tarpaulins are not considered as eye sores along public places and easier to remove than pasted posters. Meanwhile, stickers which accounted about 13 percent of campaign expenditures revealed that candidates spent Php10,000 - Php15,000 for the stickers alone. They are pasted on walls, houses, posts but more commonly on public utility 'Jeepneys' or PUs (Arnado, Gogo and Abocejo, 2017).

The last campaign materials with the least incurred budget are hand bills. They comprised just about six percent and election candidates spent Php2000 - Php5000 for hand bills on the average. This budget is affordable funded to candidates with less finances, but it is not competitive enough to match the campaign of the highly funded election candidates.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the study findings, it is concluded that money election funds play crucial role for election candidates. The bigger the funding, the more facilitated are the election campaigns and other related activities. Access to election funding comes indispensable in any election candidacy and political exercise in the Philippine context. Popularity also matters for public support, contributes an important factor for the candidates to garner votes from the electorate. To run for candidacy during election, one could be economically poor as long as he/she have access to election campaign funding, as long as he/she is able to draw finances from benefactors which can be from friends, family members and co-party alliance.

There is a need for the Commission on Election to put ceiling on campaign expenditure by local or village candidates during election. Low campaign spending will encourage dedicated individuals to file candidacy and run during election. On the one hand, cyber campaigns can be done as alternative ways for candidates, these are fast and cost efficient. The use of internet in election campaigns is more viable since people get connected only in everyday life, it is affordable and can reach the target audience as very fast speed.

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