

The Impact of Political Beliefs on the Social Relationship of FEU Registered Voter: A Qualitative Analysis of Differing Perspectives

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Abstract—This study investigates the key factors that influence voter decision-making when selecting electoral candidates, with a specific focus on candidates' educational background, political experience, and proposed platforms. Drawing data from second-year Medical Technology students at Far Eastern University – Manila, the study reveals that educational attainment and previous political experience are perceived as the most important criteria, followed closely by how well a candidate's platform aligns with the voters' personal values. While previous research has primarily centered on general voting behavior and long-term trends, this study offers a more focused look at student voters' perspectives. The findings suggest that, among student voters, qualifications and experience weigh more heavily than campaign promises in the decision-making process. Furthermore, the study highlights the role of political awareness and environmental influence in shaping how young voters evaluate candidates. These insights contribute to a deeper understanding of youth political engagement in the context of elections. It also emphasizes the importance of encouraging informed political discussions among students, as well as the need for candidates to demonstrate both competence and transparency to gain the trust of younger demographics.

Keywords— Decision-making; Educational background; Political experience; Student Voters; Platform alignment

I. INTRODUCTION

Elections are a pillar of democracy, shaping not only leadership but also reflecting the political consciousness of a society. However, voting behavior and political beliefs are shaped by a range of social, economic, and educational factors, leading to diverse perspectives. Although the Philippines possesses a lively political environment, long-established political families have consistently controlled politics ([Article about Pre Election Assessment in the Philippines], n.d.). Because there is a prominence in political dynasties in the country, it threatens the elections integrity. Consequently, more than a third of registered voters in the country (37.9%) characterize Philippine politics as "magulo" (*February 2025 Pulso Ng Bayan Survey: Media Release on Filipinos' Description of Philippine Politics*, n.d.). According to Española (2025), on March 28, the opening day of the local election campaign period, the National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) issued a

statement criticizing the "alarming rise" in election-related violence. Furthermore, when elections are held, incumbents manipulate them to the point at which the opposition is indifferent between participating and fighting (Przeworski et al., 2015). These aggressive occurrences weaken the foundations of democracy and jeopardize the legitimacy of the electoral system (Anfrel, 2025). Elections are competitive when their outcomes make some but not too much difference (Przeworski et al., 2015).

Political beliefs are based on personal preferences, but it is primarily influenced by external factors such as education, social media and diverse culture. Le and Nguyen (2021) reported that political engagement is heavily influenced by education. Specifically, schools serve an important civic role in cultivating in students the habits and dispositions of citizenship, including how to access information, determine the veracity of claims, think critically, research problems, ask questions, collaborate with others, communicate ideas, and act to improve the world (Hyttén, 2017). Berinsky and Lenz (2011) argue that education proxies for the factors that lead to political engagement. Hence, the higher the level of education in the environment, the smaller the effect of individual-level education (Aars & Christensen, 2018).

Beyond education, trust in the government is a key factor in political involvement. Holum (2022), emphasizes that trust is one of the most important objectives and performance indicators of governments at any level. However, bribery in the form of financial aid or incentives is a common tactic to initiate political participation during campaigns. Many perceive these acts as goodwill from politicians when, in reality, they create an expectation of reciprocity. Noonan (1988) described reciprocity as the rule of life, which explains why Aars and Strømsnes (2006) argue that citizen-initiated contact with politicians is one of the most effective forms of political participation.

Family influence also plays a significant role in political engagement. This is due to the fact that political opinions are heavily influenced by their childhood upbringing as parental guidance from an early age influences a child's worldview, and in many cases, political beliefs are inherited rather than developed independently. Zhang and Zhu (2021) assert that

both daily and political ties are believed to generally help reduce the information constraints involved in citizen contact, making it easier for citizens to engage. Additionally, Pedersen (1978) found that the least politically informed and least interested citizens are the partisan voters that are most likely to change their vote. Thus, despite the fact that traditional political advertising is an obvious and very public tactic to influence voter preferences, it is still widely used (Burkell & Regan, 2019). This study examines the key determinants of political views and voting behavior among FEU registered voters, focusing on factors such as educational attainment, bribery, and cultural influences. Understanding these influences is crucial in fostering informed decision-making, encouraging critical political engagement, and promoting responsible voting behavior among young voters.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The study aims to explore the impact of political beliefs on the social relationship that influence student voters' decision-making and perception in politics. With various perspectives, the study will determine how different political beliefs influence interaction, create divisions, and understand the perception among students within Far Eastern University.

Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What factors influence voter's decision-making when choosing an electoral candidate?
 - 1.1. Educational attainment
 - 1.2. Political career and experience
 - 1.3. Proposed political platform
2. How do these factors affect their social relationship?

III. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study will benefit to the following group:

Students. This study will enable students to gain awareness regarding the influence of political beliefs on their social relationships and decision-making. Furthermore, the study will help them recognize emotional biases, and critically evaluate and develop a more educated perspective on electoral candidates.

Registered Voters. This study will serve as an eye opener that encourages voters to conduct further research when selecting the right candidate for the position. They will become more aware of the state of the country and the potential consequences of electing a good or unqualified candidate. This awareness will help them make decisions based on the candidate's qualifications and platform rather than the air or support received from electoral candidates

Electoral Candidates. This study will help them gain a deeper understanding of voters' perceptions, allowing them to create a more effective, clear, and realistic platform to earn the trust of the voters. Additionally, they will be encouraged to ensure transparency by highlighting their educational background and previously conducted projects to gain the trust and support of Filipino voters.

Philippine Government. In Understanding voter's behavior, they can improve governance and policy making that promote fair electoral candidates campaigns and ethical campaigns

ensuring that the provided assistance shall be limited to providing physical aid rather than emoluments that contribute to voter bias.

Future Researchers. The data gathered in this study can be utilized by future researchers as reference to their works

IV. SCOPE AND DELIMITATION

The study is Descriptive Qualitative Design examining the relationship between variable political beliefs (Independent variable) and perspectives of registered FEU Students (Dependent variable). It examines the extent to which FEU students' political beliefs will affect their relationship with peers having opposing views. It intends to study how political differences influence social interaction, as well as academic cooperation among students. Furthermore, it will be limited to undergraduate students who are currently enrolled at FEU during the school year 2024-2025, as the study does not include faculty and staff. It will primarily use surveys to collect data analyzing the variables regarding their social cohesiveness, political tolerance, and conflict resolution. However, the effects of psychological or family factors on students' political attitudes will not be taken into account, nor the much broader effects of such political polarization at societal or national levels.

V. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Bribery. Act of giving or receiving gifts, money or favors to influence someone's actions.

Culture. Shared beliefs, customs, traditions, values, behaviors and way of life of a group of people or society, passed down from generation to generation.

Economic Factors. The financial and social conditions that influence individuals.

Education. Process of gaining knowledge, skills, values, and habits through teaching, learning or training, usually in schools.

Elections. Process in which people vote to choose leaders or make decisions on policies.

Government. System or group of people responsible for making and enforcing laws and overseeing a country, state, or community.

Political Beliefs. A viewpoint about issues that are handled by the government.

Voter. A person who has the legal right to participate in an election by making a vote.

VI. METHOD

A. Research Design

In this study, the researcher used Descriptive Qualitative Design to examine the relationship between FEU registered voter's political beliefs and relationship to peers with opposing views. It provides an overview of students' political beliefs. Student surveys will provide data regarding the experience, opinion, and behavior of students on political discussions within their social circles.

B. Sampling Procedures

The study will use stratified random sampling from various academic years of FEU registered voters to ensure

representation of the population. To gather diverse perspectives, a minimum sample size of 12 respondents will be selected. The population will be divided into strata according to academic year for a distributed representation of students with different political views, and randomly selected participants from each stratum. Required participants are current undergraduate students willing to share their political experiences and opinions with their peers as included in the criteria.

C. Ethical Considerations

This study will comply with ethical principles to ensure the safety, rights and privacy of all participants. Before collection of data, all participants will be required to agree to an informed consent form that will detail the study's objectives, methods and their right to withdraw at any time.

To maintain confidentiality and anonymity, the researchers will refrain from using personal identifiers and all responses will remain confidential. The data will be stored and secured, ensuring that it is only accessible to the research team.

The participation in this study will be entirely voluntary, and participants may withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. Any potential discomfort will be addressed appropriately.

D. Data Gathering Instrument

In gathering the necessary data, the researcher used a structured questionnaire to collect information regarding the impact of educational attainment, different political beliefs, support that is received, and idolization of politicians that influence voters' decision making. (1) Demographic data section. (2) Open-ended questions. Through this, it allows the researchers to obtain in-depth insights that go beyond surface-level responses, allowing for a deeper understanding of the respondents' thoughts, perceptions, and experiences.

VII. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Factors that Influence Voter's Decision-making when choosing for electoral candidates

Theme 1: Educational Background of Electoral Candidate Influence Voters' Decision-making

This study aimed to examine the factors that influence voter decision-making among university students. The findings indicate that most participants prioritize a candidate's educational background, political experience, and how well their platform aligns with the voters' values. As shown in Theme 1.1, initial themes such as personal background, educational background, and platform alignment emerged consistently across participant responses. These themes reflect a tendency among voters to make more informed choices based on qualifications and past performance rather than personal appeal alone. Participants viewed these factors as indicators of a candidate's credibility, emphasizing a rational approach to decision-making rooted in values and perceived competence. Table 1.1 presents a breakdown of participant responses and the themes that support these findings.

TABLE 1. Theme Describing Educational Background of Electoral Candidate Influence Voters' Decision-making

Participant Number	Significant Statements	Initial Theme Coding	Theme Coding
Participant 1	"Uhm, for me, track record, advocacy, views on current social issues"	Social stance Past accomplishments	Educational background of electoral candidate influence voters' decision-making
Participant 2	"For me, I value the reputation and background they have built. And also, how well-known they are"	Personal background Popularity	
Participant 3	"Factors influence my decision-making when selecting an electoral; candidate are their platforms, credibility, and education background."	Educational background Credibility Platform alignment	
Participant 4	"I will be searching if what is the personal background of the candidate and find the right people that I should choose to vote"	Personal backgrounds	

Theme 2: Political Record of Electoral Candidate Influence Voters' Decision-making

Building on this, the second set of emergent themes, shown in Theme 2, emphasizes the significance of a candidate's past performance. These results provide further insight into how a candidate's track record influences university students' voting decisions. The recurrent theme suggests that, in addition to personal histories, prior accomplishments heavily impact voter preference. This highlights the importance of evaluating whether candidates have a proven ability to follow through on their proposed projects, rather than relying solely on their popularity or public persona. Several participants expressed skepticism toward campaign promises, noting that some candidates use persuasive tactics or deception to secure votes but ultimately fail to deliver. Nevertheless, a few still consider personal background a relevant supporting factor, suggesting that voters value both competence and integrity. These insights align with broader research indicating that voters prioritize demonstrated effectiveness and credibility when making informed choices.

TABLE 2. Theme Describing Political Record of Electoral Candidate Influence Voters' Decision-making

Participant Number	Significant Statements	Initial Theme Coding	Theme Coding
Participant 1	"Uhm, for me, track record, advocacy, views on current social issues"	Track record	Political records of electoral candidate influence voters'

			decision-making
Participant 2	“It is because of the platform or projects that will happen in the near future when they win, which some of the candidates do not do, it’s more like words than action. So basically, voters are blinded by their assurance of the candidates’ platforms.”	Platform Deception	
Participant 3	“Factors influence my decision-making when selecting an electoral; candidate are their platforms and credibility educational background.”	Platform of Candidates	
Participant 4	“I will be searching if what is the personal background of the candidate and find the right people that I should choose to vote”	Personal background	

Theme 3: Candidate Proposed Political Platform Influence Voters’ Decision-making

Theme 3 presents the third set of emerging themes derived from participant responses, focusing on the importance of a candidate's platform. These findings offer further insight into the promises that were made and the actions that were taken. The recurring theme indicates that participants emphasize the need for a solid political platform and political enlightenment before casting their vote. This reinforces the idea that voters are more inclined to choose candidates that they think have the platform that is in the best interest of the people and not for the candidates themselves. Participants also expressed concern over the discrepancy between pre-election promises and post-election performance, highlighting the need for greater accountability. These perspectives reflect a growing demand for authenticity and transparency in political campaigns.

TABLE 3. Theme Describing the Candidate Proposed Political Platform Influence Voters’ Decision-making

Participant Number	Significant Statements	Initial Theme Coding	Theme Coding
Participant 1	“Social media misinformation, lack of political awareness, and also lack of opportunities in learning what qualities a leader should possess”	Lack of Political Awareness	Candidate proposed political platform influence voters’ decision-making
Participant 2	“Ung credentials, platforms, and communication.”	Track record Communication skills	
Participant 3	“Factors influence my decision-making when selecting an electoral; candidate are their platforms and credibility background.”	Platform of Candidates	
Participant 4	“It is because of the platform or projects that will happen in the near future when they win, which some of the candidates do not do, it’s	Platform deception False Promises	

	more like words than action. So basically, voters are blinded by their assurance of the candidates’ platforms.”		
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B. Factors that Affect Voters Social Relationship

Theme 4: Political Beliefs Contributes to the Division of Social Relationship

Theme 4 presents the final set of emerging themes, focusing on how political beliefs and voting behavior influence social relationships among students. The data reveals that political beliefs can lead to both positive and negative social outcomes. While some participants reported being able to maintain open and respectful discussions with peers despite differing opinions, others expressed discomfort or social strain arising from political disagreements.

A recurring theme indicates that mutual respect, political alignment, and openness to dialogue significantly affect social dynamics during election periods. Some students noted that political judgments can lead to bias or stereotyping, discouraging open expression. On the other hand, shared beliefs often foster understanding and solidarity. Social media influence also played a role in shaping peer interactions, sometimes reinforcing divisions or facilitating constructive dialogue. These findings underscore the complex interplay between political identity and social belonging within academic communities.

TABLE 4: Theme Describing Political Beliefs Contributes to the Division of Social Relationship

Participant Number	Significant Statements	Initial Theme Coding	Theme Coding
Participant 1	“Both positive and negative. It allows me to meet friends who has the same belief as mine, but it also creates a hostile environment, especially if the other person refuse to listen and respect my choices”	Hostile environment Misalignment of political beliefs	Political beliefs contributes to the division of social relationship
Participant 2	“Experiencing different political beliefs doesn’t that much affect my interaction with fellow students. As I prefer a healthy exchange of political opinions and ideas allowing to understand their personalities and get along with them.”	Alignment of Political Beliefs	
Participant 3	“Quite frankly, my political beliefs make me judgmental as I believe that these beliefs reflect a person’s values”	Judgements	
	“This will be hard to interact when the people around you is not open in sharing their political beliefs”	Discomfort	

VIII. CONCLUSION

This study explored the key factors influencing voters' decision-making when selecting electoral candidates, specifically focusing on educational backgrounds, political career and experience, and proposed political platforms. The findings reveal that a candidate's educational background and political experience are perceived as the most significant criteria among student voters, closely followed by how well the candidate's platform aligns with their values. These factors shape voter perception and contribute to the formation of political preferences. However, the study also highlights how these preferences can create social tension among student voters, particularly when conflicting views arise, leading to division within peer groups. Social media further amplifies this division, whereas they consider their political views based on who is the most favored electoral candidate rather than doing an informed analysis of the candidates. Based on the perception of the respondents towards older generation, the study found that a lack of political literacy or critical evaluation often results in surface-level engagement and decisions based on choosing a candidate in relation to charisma and popularity that results to being "deceive" by the candidates' platform

With this, it underscores the importance of promoting informed and critical thinking in political participation, especially among the youth. Future researchers may further explore how political education programs or institutional support can reduce the influence of superficial factors in decision-making. Strengthening voter education may not only enhance the quality of electoral choices but also promote healthier discourse and unity among diverse social groups.

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