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Attributes, Challenges, and Participation of the Youth in the Protection of Electoral Integrity

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ABSTRACT

The youth are seen as the nation's future. They take risks and do not hesitate to speak up for what they think. This study determined the attributes of youth in Dumarao, Capiz, their challenges encountered, and level of participation in the protection of electoral integrity. It also ascertained if there is a significant difference in the challenges encountered and the level of participation when their profile such as sex, religion, household income, highest educational attainment, and community participated in were considered. Likewise, it looked into the influence of youth's challenges encountered to their level of participation to gain insights towards an enhanced contribution to voter education. This study was descriptive and utilized a validated and reliability tested researcher-made survey questionnaire conducted to 388 youth of the 33 barangays in Dumarao. The data gathered were processed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences, employing tools such as frequency, percentage, mean, t-test, Analysis of Variance, and regression analysis. The results revealed that the youth of Dumarao were helpful, always seeking new skills to learn but lags in completing tasks on time. Their challenges encountered were on submission of registration requirements with the Commission on Election, attending election campaign, convincing their family to vote their chosen candidate, and finding their names in the voter's list. These challenges were considered highly challenging but considered their participation as very high. Significant differences on challenges encountered were established on gender, estimated family income, and community activities participated in, while on level of participation, differences were noted in gender, highest educational attainment, and community participated in. Challenges encountered were found to influence the youth's level of participation.

Keywords: Youth attributes, Youth challenges encountered, Youth participation and Voter's education.

INTRODUCTION:

Every Filipino is taught in school that, in the words of Dr. Jose Rizal, the Philippines' National Hero, "the youth is the hope of our fatherland." Youth are seen as nation's future, but usually seen as marginalized as to politics and decision-making since they lack

knowledge and experience essential to participate in politics and bring about constructive change in their communities. Mim, (2021) noted that over one billion young people are between the ages of 15 and 24 worldwide, with young women making up half of this

demographic due to their varied lived experiences and political viewpoints. Young people's political involvement has suddenly transformed the digital media ecosystem. Social media platforms provide young people a new platform to share their thoughts, goals, and interests. Ramos, (2019) said that the youth have been far more politically proactive than ever before. Several of the young discussants in the recently held webinar titled Democracy Talks in Manila: The Role of Youth Voices in Democracy, which was sponsored by the Swedish Embassy in Manila, discussed some of the difficulties they are seeing with Philippine democracy. These include attacks on press freedom, a lack of involvement from civil society, a lack of access to resources for public health, and a weak political party structure that restricts citizens' ability to participate in democracy. Youth organizations and activities are increasing because young people are tech savvy and want to contribute by being able to adapt to online conversations.

It is in this premise that the researcher, a youth worker, embarked on this study, guided by the Political Participation Theory of Milbrath, (1965) and Lam, (2003). This is to recognize that it is critical to examine the youth's attributes in terms of political values, political knowledge and political involvement, political engagement and the challenges they encountered and gain insights to help protect their participation in protecting electoral integrity of the municipality of Dumarao, Capiz. This study determined the attributes of the youth present during election period, their level of challenges and participation in protecting the electoral integrity of Dumarao, Capiz. The study likewise ascertained whether there were significant differences in the challenges as well as in the level of participation of the youth respondents when grouped according to profile. Moreover, it was part of the study to find out whether the level of challenges encountered by the youth influenced their level of participation. This was conducted with the hope to gain insights to enhance contributions to voters' education.

METHODOLOGY:

This study utilized the descriptive research method. The researcher used quantitative and qualitative data collected and analyzed to find insights concerning the UniversePG | www.universepg.com

level of youth participation in the electoral practice and the challenges they encountered during election in protecting electoral integrity. Descriptive research design was employed to describe the profile of the respondents and provide information about the immediate group of data considering that access to the whole population was limited. Moreover, inferential statistics was also used in testing the hypotheses and drawing conclusions about the population based on the sample. The inferential method of research was used to determine the significant differences using the demographic profile variables such as gender, highest educational attainment, estimated monthly family income, and community activities participated in, as well as whether the level of challenges influenced the level of participation of the youth in protecting electoral integrity. This study was conducted in 33 barangays in the municipality of Dumarao, Capiz.

The respondents were the 388 from a population of 13,052 youth of the different barangays in the municipality of Dumarao with age 15 to 30 years old and registered with the Commission on Elections. They were identified through stratified proportional random sampling so that each barangay is represented in the study. For computing the sample size, it was stratified to 33 barangays, using the Cochran, (1974) formula. This study utilized a set of researcher-made survey questionnaire as the research instrument. This questionnaire was composed of five parts. Part I determined the profile of the respondents, such as gender, highest educational attainment, household income, and community services participated in. Part II was on the attributes of the youth during election in terms of competence, confidence, and connection. Part III identified the challenges encountered by the youth. Part IV measured the level of challenges encountered by the youth during election in terms of education and training, promoting confidence in the electoral results and promoting effective voting practices. Part V dealt on the level of participation of the youth in terms of education and training, registration, and voting practice.

Since the researcher assumed that there were respondents with very low educational attainment, the instrument was translated to the local dialect for easy understanding of the statements and to accurately

capture the perception of the respondents. Lastly, to support the quantitative data gathered through the questionnaire, an unstructured interview was conducted to further validate the information taken from the respondents. The survey questionnaire was validated by five experts in public administration and youth development composed of three public administration professors, a statistician, and the Municipal Local Government Operations Officer of the municipality of Dumarao. The validation was based on its content using the eight-point criterion of Goods and Scate, (1972) to ensure that information gathered served its purpose. Moreover, items were either retained, revised, or removed as recommended by the validators. After the questionnaire was validated, it was subjected for a reliability test to 30 respondents. The test was conducted to the youth of the different barangays of the municipality of Dumarao, who did not participate in the actual survey as respondents. The reliability test used Cronbach's alpha, which coefficient should range between 0.80 to 1.00 to be reliable, indicating that questions reliably measured the research objectives. A reliability coefficient of 0.951 proved that the questionnaire was reliable and was conducted to the respondents.

Before conducting the actual survey, the researcher requested permission from the Municipal Local Government Operations Office (MLGOO) and the head of the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) to conduct the study through a letter signed by the researcher, her thesis adviser, and the dean of the College of Management. With the approved letter, the researcher reproduced the questionnaire according to the number of respondents. During the conduct of the survey, the researcher visited each of the barangay captains for a courtesy call and provided them with the approved letter. With the go signal from the barangay captains, the research distributed the questionnaire to the respondents for them to answer. The researcher personally conducted the survey and answered the queries of the respondents and was able to ensure fast and complete retrieval of the questionnaire.

After collecting the answered questionnaire, the researcher checked if all items were answered. The responses were then encoded in Excel format using the UniversePG | www.universepg.com

scoring guide. After encoding the responses in Excel format, the data were processed through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software with the help of a statistician. The researcher also ensured the completeness of the scores. The attributes of the youth were arranged from highest to lowest for easy identification of which attributes were highly present and observed as perceived by the youth of Dumarao, Capiz. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, and mean were used in measuring the level of participation and level of challenges of the respondents. The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and t-test were used to determine if there are significant differences in the levels of participation and challenges of the respondents when their profile is considered, while regression analysis was utilized to find out if level of challenges influences the level of participation of the youth. For this study, the researcher ensured that the participant's privacy was not invaded. The researcher sought for their consent, guaranteeing that the information given were unidentified to anybody other than the researcher, that the research did not hurt their feelings. All information received from them were acknowledged and accurately represented. Respondents were informed that they may ask clarificatory questions and have the option to stop from answering the questionnaire, if they feel uncomfortable or unable to answer.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

The results revealed that the youth perceived their attributes to be highly observed in terms of helping, friendship, patience, learning new skills, listening to other's ideas, analyzing situations before making decisions, and aiming to do better. Their less observed attributes were timeliness, writing letters, speaking to a large audience, dressing up properly, communicating in English and Filipino, getting along with other leaders, and extending help to other political groups. This result implies that the respondents possesses highly observed attributes during election period such as being given tasks to help their youth organization, preparing presentations, speaking in large audience, writing letters and not giving up on challenging assignments. This can be inferred that the young people of the municipality of Dumarao exhibits competence when asked to participate during election

time because they have attended skills development trainings and seminars, were trained by their parents and peers and were given similar assignments and opportunities in their schools and student organizations. Most of those who are very active in communities were also actively involved in events and competitions in their schools. Likewise, their competence may come from their active participation in meetings and assembly, where they get most of their knowledge and awareness of the things that are happening during election time. The result also infers that the respondents possess the attributes of striving to improve themselves as they mature to adulthood. Education, trainings, and other daily activities they engage in in the community, as well as in their schools, contribute to their confidence and emerge when asked to participate during election period. They recognize the value of being patient, particularly for teammates, who cannot deliver or finish an assigned task on time. This signifies development of leadership, which is an attribute present in the young that contributes to their level of confidence. Most of the youth recognize appropriately dressing up for occasions such as meetings/assembly and trainings as part of exuding confidence.

Conferring to (Collado *et al.*, 2020; Hasibuzzaman *et al.*, 2022), almost 40 percent of respondents overall seemed ready with a list of candidates to vote for two months before Election Day, suggesting a comparatively early readiness to exercise their democratic rights. Although this is somewhat admirable, it highlights the possibility that some respondents have already decided who would serve as the next public official. The majority of respondents acknowledge that in order to stay updated on the candidates' platforms, records, and causes, they instead read articles on social media (78.3%), visit official websites (66.1%), and watch and listen to these candidates on media programs (80.1%). The majority of young voters display pre-election attitudes and actions that express their desire to improve the caliber of election-related events and their inclination for candidates that welcome criticism and actively involve the electorate. The result further implies that the youth of the municipality of Dumarao values paying attention and listening intently during meetings, seminars, and

trainings and in their peers too to gather relevant information and make wiser decisions in voting for government officials during election period. This also helps them receive the trust of their peers and their support in the activities they undergo to support their candidates. The result further shows that the lowest scores were noted in items that indicate helping other groups or teams or being supportive to them during election time. This indicates that the youth respondents of this study distance themselves from their friends during election period. They only offer help after helping their groups. They respect the relationship they have with their friends but this does not affect their decision to whom to support during election. This demonstrates that they possess the positive attribute of loyalty and firmness in their decisions. The result of the study of Cadano and Cadano, (2023) showed that lack of interest, lack of invitation, lack of confidence, lack of time, and lack of funds are the main causes of youth participation that is not active. The young people must become active in community activities and youth organizations. Further-more, youth organizations should inspire other young people to engage in community service with them. In order to inspire young people to get involved in the community, parents should urge their children to join, and the local government to design initiatives that support these different youth activities.

This study also revealed that the youth's top most challenging activity encountered during election was submitting registration requirements with the Commission on Election. This was followed by attending election campaigns, travelling from their residence to the voting centers, finding their names on the voter's list, and convincing their family members to vote for their chosen candidate. Additionally, the following ranked lowest among the challenges: family dictating whom to vote; spending money to cast votes; being offered money to vote for a candidate; casting votes on the machine during election day; and expressing their choice on social media. The result reflects that the youth of Dumarao faced challenges of attending the election campaign. It is a known fact that leftist is still present in the municipality and travelling far is stressful for them because they are afraid of harm that may befall them for siding on one political

party, fear of ambush while travelling aside from the cost they incur. Also, the nuisance of not finding one’s name on the list of qualified voters, being delayed and at time being unable to vote should the problem be not remedied at once by the officials in charge can still be a challenge although digitalizing the registration system had somehow lessened this burden. In a study of Velmonte, (2020) it was determined that voters’ perceptions of the electoral process were within a

reasonable range. The findings have demonstrated that the five towns chosen from Cebu Province implement procedures and processes related to election day, requirement attainment, and awareness. Additionally, it is expected that voters will take part in election-related events and programs. But there are issues like vote buying, polarization, political dynasties, and congested precinct regions that demand the attention of the higher authorities right now.

Table 1: Level of Challenges Encountered by the Youth in Voting as a Whole.

Statements	Total Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Education and Training	4.38	Highly Challenged
Promotion and Confidence in the Electoral System	4.35	Highly Challenged
Promoting Effective Voting Practices	4.38	Highly Challenged
Grand Mean	4.37	Highly Challenged

Mean Range	Verbal Interpretation
4.21 – 5.00	Highly Challenging
3.41 – 4.20	Challenging
2.61 – 3.40	Slightly Challenging
1.81 – 2.60	Less Challenging
1.00 – 1.80	Least Challenging

Source: Data from the researcher

As to challenges encountered by the youth in voting in terms of education and training, promotion and confidence in the electoral system and promoting effective voting practices, they perceived the activities related to these as very challenging with a grand mean. On the positive note, their level of participation as a whole and in terms of education and training, registration and voting practices was very high with a grand mean of 4.34. The result implies that the youth of the municipality of Dumarao believe that they have encountered high level of challenges during election period particularly in improving their knowledge and attending voter’s education forum. This can be attributed to distance from the barangay, which are mostly far from the venue of education and training because it is usually held at the municipal hall. Some of them may not be able to attend even though invited because of lack of funds as well as their work in the farm. Working youth find it also challenging to attend

voters’ education trainings, serve their political groups, stay at polling precincts as watchers to help protect votes because they have to report for work. There were also limited materials provided where they can get information regarding election policies, procedures and activities.

Additionally, the youth find it difficult to convince their family members to vote for their chosen candidates. They find it frustrating that since they have attended several forums, caucuses, meetings and other activities to learn more about their candidates, yet they cannot convince their family to vote with them because of friendships. These difficulties may at times hinder the promotion of effective voting practices, such as knowing the candidates well, registering early, honest voting, and the likes, which also could decrease their confidence in the electoral system.

Table 2: Level of Participation of the Youth in the Election as a Whole.

Components	Total Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Education and Training	4.41	Very High
Registration	4.38	Very High
Voting Practices	4.22	Very High

Grand Mean	4.34	Very High
Mean Range	Verbal Interpretation	
4.21 – 5.00	Very High	
3.41 – 4.20	High	
2.61 – 3.40	Average	
1.81 – 2.60	Low	
1.00 – 1.80	Very Low	

Source: Data from the researcher

The study also found that when the youth were grouped according to profile, there was a significant difference in their level of challenges encountered in terms of gender, estimated monthly family income, and community activities participated in, while no such difference in terms of highest educational attainment. The results imply that the youth of the municipality of Dumarao, Capiz perceive their challenges encountered to be the same when they are grouped according to their educational level, while they differ in their opinions when grouped according to gender, estimated monthly family income, and the community activities they were engaged in. These results further imply that men and women young voters of the municipality of Dumarao differ because they may have been engaged in different community activities they did in the past, particularly those that are related to politics and their involvement in the political activities of their barangay or municipality. Their participation may have been affected too due to their economic status. There are youth members in the community whose family maybe economically challenged and this situation hinders them from participating on activities that may require them to use their personal funds like attending to trainings in the city or municipal center where they have to shoulder their food and transportation expense. Other youth members are already working and they have to prioritize work because their family depends on their income for food and other family expenses.

The findings of Collado *et al.* (2020) found that despite the fact that the majority of respondents (77.5%) ask their parents for political advice, parental attempts to influence their children's voting behavior may be ineffective. Also, 70.1 percent of all respondents stated

they would not alter their resolve to support their chosen candidates based on the advice and preferences of their parents and family members. However, a higher percentage (79%) of respondents stated that they are unwilling to be persuaded by their religious leaders to support the candidates that their particular churches endorse (the majority of Filipinos are Catholic, and the Catholic Church in the nation has no history of block voting). Young Filipinos have more voting independence because parents and some religious organizations do not have as much of an influence over their decision to vote. As a result, voting decisions are influenced by information they find online and in traditional media. So that young voters are factually directed in their independence, it is necessary to step up efforts to verify, uphold, and promote truth of information in these platforms. Furthermore, significant difference was also found in their level of participation when the youth were grouped according to gender highest educational attainment, and community activities participated in, but not when grouped according to estimated monthly family income.

Conferring to Kwan, (2022) participation from young people included a blend of traditional and non-traditional activities with smooth digital transitions. Given that awareness, activism, and action are seen as mutually reinforcing motivations, youth resolve to continue or expand their engagement beyond general election 2020 as a result of their involvement in any capacity during the election has implications for future political behaviors, activities, and issues in which they are involved.

Table 3: Differences in the Level of Participation of the Youth when Grouped according to Profile.

Variables	t-value/F-value	p-value	Remarks
Gender	37.117	0.000	s
Highest Educational Attainment	2.472	0.032	s

Estimated Monthly Family Income	2.531	0.057	ns
Community Activities Participated In	2.904	0.006	s

p-value >0.05 = not significant

p-value <0.05 = significant

Source: Data from the researcher

It was established in the study that the level of participation by the youth in protecting the electoral integrity of the municipality of Dumarao, Capiz was highly influenced by their level of challenges encountered, necessitating intervention to lower the level of challenges encountered, which can increase the level of participation.

The result implies that when the level of challenges encountered by the youth increases, their level of participation decreases and vice versa. This result infers that since the p-value of 0.000 denotes a very high correlation and the level of participation was also very high, the youth of the municipality of Dumarao experience a great amount of challenge because they are very actively involved in the political activities in their barangays and the municipality as a whole.

Although the challenges they encountered was very challenging, these did not hinder in their active participation. This further shows that they possess the good attribute of not giving up their rights despite the challenges they encountered. This is a very good indicator that requires government and political leaders' support for the youth to mature and become good and highly motivated citizens who can play as role models to other youths in other barangays and municipalities. The result agreed to that of Kwan's, (2022) that the kinds of participation and its ways influences one's subsequent involvement in politics. The results entail that young people in Singapore were driven to increase their activism and knowledge and to take up causes both before and after the 2020 general election.

Table 4: Influence of the Challenges Encountered by the Youth in their Level of Participation in Protecting the Electoral Integrity of the Municipality of Dumarao.

Variable	N	Mean	Pearson Correlation	Degree of Relationship	P-value	Probability
Level of Participation	388	4.80				
			0.697	High to very high relationship	0.000	s
Level of Challenges Encountered	388	4.82				

Level of significance at 0.05

Source: Data from the researcher

Insights to Enhance Contribution to Voter Education

The attributes present in the youth of the municipality of Dumarao during the election in terms of competence, confidence, and connection were identified in this study. As a whole, the challenges encountered by the youth in terms of education and training, registration, and voting practices were found very challenging but their participation during the election in protecting the electoral integrity of the municipality of Dumarao as a whole and in terms of these variables was also very high. The researcher, as a youth worker and a government employee agrees with the result of the study. The youth may have encountered very

challenging situations but remained steadfast in their quest for better governance by participating in the different electoral activities during the last elections and by voting the political leaders they believe could help their barangay and municipality to attain these goals. It is good to note that the youth of Dumarao value friendship, patience, helping others, learning new skills, listening to other's ideas, analyzing the situation first before making decisions, and aiming to better themselves among other attributes. On the other hand, they recognize that they need to improve themselves in the aspect of timeliness, writing letters, speaking in

large audience, dressing up properly, communicating in English and Pilipino, improving their relationship with other leaders and also working with other political groups. To attain the objective of this study towards enhancing voters' education particularly to the youth of Dumarao, the following may be considered:

The youth organization in the municipal level maybe encouraged to design and distribute voters' education flyers containing election information, important dates, voting tips, frequently asked questions (FAQs), and contact information such as mobile numbers or hotlines, websites and other social media sites of agencies to contact in cases of emergency and queries. Invite non-partisan groups to conduct voter's education training and seminars that will enhance the youth's understanding of the purpose of voting, getting to know candidates better, improving the nature of their participation to the different activities they engage in before, during and after election time and disseminating the same information to their families and friends. Prepare and release information videos that the youth can watch online. The use of this media is current and well received especially among young people. This may contain dialogues, enactment of some voting incidents to show how the public may react or address these situations.

For Loader *et al.* (2014), there are several theoretical frameworks that can be used to analyze civic and political engagement in addition to a continuum of traditional and non-conventional participation modalities. Because of the widespread use of the Internet, there are now more and varied ways to participate on websites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. In a study of young adults in Britain, Keating and Melis, (2017) discovered that while new youth were not mobilized, political interest predicted higher levels of online political engagement among those who were already active. Likewise, a meta-analysis of survey-based research of Boulianne and Theocharis, (2020) discovered an advantageous association between using digital media and participating in civic and political life. Pajayon-Berse, (2022) argued that good governance, sustainability and inclusivity, education, healthcare, and social services are among the goals and issues that many of young people worry about, even though this list is not all-inclusive. Deeper political and UniversePG | www.universepg.com

civic engagement from those who are applying for government jobs requires a commitment to these varied requirements.

CONCLUSION:

The youth's attributes present during election time, their challenges encountered and level of participation in protecting the electoral integrity of their municipality were determined towards providing insights to enhanced contribution to voters' education. The youth possesses good attributes that can develop into qualities and character of being good citizens when they mature. These qualities are essential in molding good leaders and public servants, patriotic, and law abiding citizens. The youth encountered some degree of difficulty in engaging in activities that will protect their votes' integrity and voting procedure, in general. Despite their challenges, the youth persevered and are able to exercise their right of suffrage, and engage in election activities that enabled them to experience and appreciate community service, leadership, patriotism, loyalty, and friendship. The challenges encountered by the youth in protecting the electoral integrity of the municipality of Dumarao and their participation in the different election activities are mutually dependent. A high level of challenges encountered could result to low level of participation depending on the capability of the youth to surpass them. Alternately, when level of challenges is kept at a controlled level, increased participation can be expected since the youth can be easily motivated and are willing to learn.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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