# Election Awareness of Centro Escolar University-Malolos Students: An Indicator of Social Responsibility

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## Introduction

Election allows the Filipino people to exercise their powerful right in choosing the kind of government, leaders, and policies for state adoption and modification. Through this process, their aspirations are demonstrated.[1]

The decision to choose leaders during election time creates a great impact among the lives of the people. Election time serves as an opportunity to take part in selecting the leaders who will then, work towards the progress of the nation.

As election comes closer, different groups of people such as running candidates, campaign managers, and supporters engage in various activities that add excitement during election time. Various mechanisms and strategies for campaign are launched highlighting the significance of voting, which further arouses the interests of the people to participate. The Filipino youth, in particular, are perceived to be the group that demonstrates higher level of excitement towards election. As beginners in the field of selecting future leaders, they manifest deep concerns in promoting peace and honesty during election.

Through the years, the youth have shown greater participation in the conduct of Philippine election, not only as voters but also as poll watchers and endorsers of political candidates and campaign movements. In 2010 election, specifically for the launching of automated system, a lot of youth participated actively as vigilant volunteers monitoring the electoral process nationwide.

Acknowledging the aforementioned vital role of the youth, the researchers conceptualized the study to determine extent to which students of Centro Escolar University at Malolos, particularly third and fourth year levels, were conscious of the election process and activities, signify their social responsibility as matured citizens of the country.

Furthermore, this research would also determine the extent to which the CEU CORE values, specifically social responsibility have been imbibed by the CEU students.

## Objectives of the Study

This research undertaking had the following objectives:

1. To determine the profile of students by college who responded to the nation-wide call for registration;
2. To recognize the students' reasons behind the non-registration to Commission on Elections (COMELEC);
3. To assess the quality of COMELEC registration system as perceived by students;
4. To find out the perceptions of students towards: qualifications and traits of effective leaders; platform priorities; and effective election campaign.

## Methodology

Essentially, this is a descriptive-survey that involved a total of 704 third and fourth year students from the different colleges and departments in CEU-Malolos, namely: College of Education, Liberal Arts and Science (CELAS), College of Hospitality Management (CHM), College of Management and Technology (CMT), Departments of Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy.

A locally-constructed instrument was used to gather data that were processed statistically using frequency, percentage, and rank.

## Results and Discussions

1. Respondents' Profile According to Classification

The research instruments were administered to respondents, regardless of their response to the national call for registration at COMELEC. Respondents' profile according to classification of their response is exhibited in table 1. As shown, seventy-one (71) percent of the qualified students registered for election 2010. Bigger representatives come from the College of Hospitality Management (CHM) and College of Management and Technology (CMT).

Data signify that CHM and CMT students responded more positively to the COMELEC's call for registration.

**Table 1. Respondents' Profile According to Classification by College**

| College | Registered | Non-Registered | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| CELAS | 50 | 33 | 83 |
| CHM | 184 | 24 | 208 |
| CMT | 131 | 92 | 223 |
| Dentistry | 7 | 6 | 13 |
| Nursing | 94 | 34 | 128 |
| Pharmacy | 35 | 14 | 49 |
| Total | 501 | 203 | 704 |
| Percentage (%) | 71 | 29 | 100 |

2. Respondents' Reasons for Non-Registration to COMELEC

Among the 203 respondents who did not register for election, "lack of time" was disclosed as top reason for non-registration. This could be accounted to their activities as college students with class schedule from Monday to Saturday. The registration date and time, which was set during Saturdays, did not give them ample time to visit the COMELEC designated precincts.

**Table 2. Respondents' Reasons for Non-Registration to COMELEC**

| Reasons | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Lack of Time | 120 | 59 |
| Expatriate (Foreigner) | 6 | 3 |
| Proximity | 11 | 5 |
| Lack of Interest | 44 | 22 |
| Others | 22 | 11 |
| Total | 203 | 100 |

3. Assessment of the COMELEC Registration System

COMELEC-registered respondents were asked to assess the agency's registration process based on their experiences. As reported, majority of the respondents rated the COMELEC system as "Fair to Very Good". However, more respondents (45 percent) rated the system as "Good".

This finding implies that the students demonstrated sensitivity to the manner and nature of services they encountered as new voters.

**Table 3: Respondents' Rating towards the COMELEC Registration System**

| Rating | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Excellent | 21 | 4 |
| Very Good | 92 | 18 |
| Good | 225 | 45 |
| Fair | 99 | 20 |
| Poor | 64 | 13 |
| Total | 501 | 100 |

4. Qualifications Considered in Choosing Political Leaders

In terms of qualifications for political leaders, the respondents considered character, track record as public servant, and educational preparation as top three essential bases in choosing candidates to vote. On the other hand, the least taken into consideration is financial capability.

These data suggest that the students are not after the personal resources of the candidates but rather perceive that leadership is beyond wealth and inherent on the professional well-being of leaders.

**Table 4: Qualifications Considered by the Respondents in Choosing Political Leaders**

| Qualifications | Frequency | Rank |
|---|---|---|
| Character | 321 | 1 |
| Educational Preparation | 213 | 3 |
| Popularity / Charisma | 59 | 7 |
| Family Background | 127 | 5 |
| Social Life | 97 | 6 |
| Track Record as Public Servant | 280 | 2 |
| Accomplishments | 173 | 4 |
| Financial Capability | 14 | 8 |
| Others | 8 | 9 |
| Total | 1,292 | |

5.  Perception on Traits of an Effective Leader

Relative to personal traits, the respondents perceived that honest, God-fearing, nationalistic/patriotic, thinker/intuitive, determined and competent individuals would make up an effective leader.

This finding supports the qualifications considered by the respondents in choosing leaders. Indeed, it could be stated that the students demonstrate high regard to ethical and moral values to be possessed by political leaders. Likewise, data denote that the students consider the "inner" being of the leaders.

**Table 5: Traits of an Effective Leader as Perceived by the Respondents**

| Traits | Frequency | Rank |
|---|---|---|
| Honest | 349 | 1 |
| God-Fearing | 302 | 2 |
| Nationalistic / Patriotic | 181 | 3 |
| Determined | 132 | 5.5 |
| Thinker / Intuitive | 143 | 4 |
| Visionary | 117 | 8 |
| Prudent | 66 | 10 |
| Practical | 121 | 7 |
| Competent | 132 | 5.5 |
| Transformative | 112 | 9 |
| Others | 12 | 11 |
| Total | 1,667 | |

6. Platform Priorities Recommended by the Respondents

Relative to platform priorities, the respondents suggested the following areas as top five priorities: education (rank 1), labor and employment (rank 2), social justice/human rights (rank 3), calamity and disaster management (rank 4), and social welfare (rank 5).

Secondary identified areas include tourism, national security, industrialization, public works, transportation, information and communication technology, and diversity.

**Table 6: Respondents' Recommendations on Political Leaders Platform Priorities**

| Priority Areas | Frequency | Rank |
|---|---|---|
| Education | 424 | 1 |
| Social Welfare | 136 | 5 |
| Transportation | 84 | 10 |
| National Security | 99 | 7 |
| Industrialization | 96 | 8.5 |
| Labor and Employment | 266 | 2 |
| Information and Communication Technology | 69 | 11 |
| Tourism | 117 | 6 |
| Social Justice / Human Rights | 174 | 3 |
| Biodiversity | 66 | 12 |
| Public Works | 96 | 8.5 |
| Calamity and Disaster Management | 139 | 4 |
| Total | 1,766 | |

This finding indicates that the respondents perceive the present key areas affecting the entire society should be the top priority of political leaders. These areas, if addressed properly, would infer a spiral mechanism wherein the primary identified priorities would lead to handling secondary priorities.

With this, it could be claimed that CEU students manifest concrete awareness on the country's major problems, thereby reflecting that the value of social responsibility is indeed inculcated among CEU students.

7. Perception on the Effective Election Campaign

In terms of the varying election campaign strategies adopted by political candidates, the respondents viewed the top three effective strategies include TV (rank 1), assemblies and conferences (rank 2), and family influence (rank 3).

The foregoing data further reveal that respondents consider social factors as influential in keeping the public informed about the candidates' whereabouts. Visual and personal interaction with the candidates help voters remember more information about the candidates, thus aiding them in their decision whom to elect. It is also evident that respondents acknowledge the role of family in decision-making, thus convincing them to vote their parents' preferred political candidates.

**Table 7: Effective Election Campaign as Perceived by the Respondents**

| Medium | Frequency | Rank |
|---|---|---|
| TV | 353 | 1 |
| Radio | 53 | 5 |
| Print Media | 101 | 4 |
| Assemblies / Conferences | 181 | 2 |
| Family Influence | 105 | 3 |
| Peer Pressure | 21 | 6 |
| Others | 16 | 7 |
| Total | 830 | |

## *Conclusion*

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that generally, CEU-Malolos students manifest positive responses toward societal concerns like election. Their perceptions on different issues further signify the degree of their social consciousness, which is reflective of social responsibility as highlighted in the CEU core values and school's philosophy on virtues.

## Recommendations

With the findings and conclusions arrived at, the following recommendations are offered:

1. The management can look into the inclusion of social responsibility as a key performance indicator of community outreach program. Concrete community involvement of students as members of committees, barangay officials, and other related participation in their own communities is reflective of social responsibility in their own little way. Integration of their community participation and National Skills Training Program (NSTP) can also be considered.
2. The University Student Council and Social Science Department can enhance the students' sense of social responsibility through the conduct of various activities that stimulate the social consciousness of the students.
3. The Commission on Elections can further review the schedule and manner of registration for election in order to accommodate college students who have regular classes from Mondays to Saturdays. Innovations like on-line registration system or extension hours beyond 5:00 p.m. can be practical alternatives.
4. The different political parties need to be cautious in selecting and endorsing their running candidates. The personal and professional well being of the candidates must be taken into consideration.
5. Further research on social responsibility using other group of respondents is highly recommended.

## Reference

Isagani Cruz, <u>Philippine Political Law</u>. Manila: National Bookstore Inc., 2004