

Factors Affecting Generation Z in Choosing Political Candidate

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the factors that affected Generation Z in choosing political candidates within Infanta, Quezon. Employing phenomenological qualitative design, the researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with thirty (30) Generation Z registered voter as participants and gained in- depth insights into their political decision-making processes. Through thematic analysis, several key themes emerged, including the importance of personal qualities of candidates, platforms, policies and advocacy, campaign strategies and voter engagement and social and environmental influences.

The findings revealed that Generation Z voters highly valued candidates with integrity and clean record, compassion and empathy, diligence and leadership, education and knowledge and experience and tract record. They favored platforms that were clear and realistic programs, focuses to the goodness of the people especially for the youth like special programs that is relevant to what the community needs. They rejected unethical practices such as vote-buying. Authentic engagement through personal interaction such as house-to-house visits seen as a sign of sincerity and genuine public service. Moreover, the study found that external influences including family discussions, peer recommendations and exposure to social and digital media played a significant role in shaping political preferences. The study recommended that the Generation Z voters should exercise caution and refrain from placing their trust solely in rumors or hearsay, instead, they should conduct thorough background checks and verify the authenticity of information before forming opinions in making decisions. Educators and local leaders were encouraged to strengthen voter education, political literacy and civic engagement programs that cultivate critical thinking and ethical awareness. In line with this, the researchers proposed a voter education initiative entitled “Navigating the Ballot: A Generation Z Voter’s Guide”, conducted in partnership with the Sangguniang Kabataan Federation of Infanta. The program aims to promote media literacy, responsible political participation, and continuous civic involvement through discussions, interactive activities and engagement with young political advocates, thereby empowering generation Z as informed agent of change.

Keywords: factors, generation z, politics, choice, civic

INTRODUCTION

The younger generation is often regarded as lacking familiarity with the political landscape, and some young individuals who are first-time voters appear to show a diminished interest in politics, displaying a passive attitude while prioritizing economic issues (Oyedemi & Mahlatji, 2016).

Generation Z are defined as generations born between the year (1997-2012) (PSA, 2024). The composition of the Philippine population based on the Philippine Statistics Authority Quick Survey (2019) mostly belonged to age 15 to 64 years old with a total of 64,035,924. To further emphasize the age bracket where majority of the population lies, the Population Commission (2010) reported that the age bracket of 15 to 35 years old had the highest percentage of the entire population. This proves that Generation Z has an enormous participation in election. Infanta, Quezon has a greater number of Generation Z voters, which is advantageous, but it is also concerning, because they frequently exhibit a passive attitude toward politics and mostly rely on peers, family conversations, and social media for information. They are more vulnerable to false information, populist rhetoric, and transactional politics as a result of this dependence, which could impair their capacity for autonomous and

knowledgeable decision-making. As a result, it's critical to comprehend and carefully examine the factors which are affecting Generation Z voters in choosing political candidate. It is important to examine the elements influencing Generation Z in choosing their political candidates. This will greatly help policy makers, political analysts, and campaign strategists to create an effective strategy to attract the younger voters and promote informed political engagement by having a better understanding of these impacts. In order to understand how younger voters make decision, this study will examine how social media, political consciousness, peer pressure, and economic considerations affects Generation Z in choosing political candidate. In recent years, younger generation, particularly Generation Z, have built enormous power on the political stage. Their preference and decision-making processes for peaking political candidates are complex and evolving. Unlike previous generation, their political preferences are shaped by a combination of traditional factor such as, family, education, and modern ones, such as social media, digital activism, and online exposure to a different political ideology.

Being generation that had grown up in the digital age and greatly familiar with communication, media, and digital technology, it greatly influenced in molding political attitude by the use of social media platform. In this way, candidates can directly engage themselves to the voters. However, it can also be a tool in spreading misinformation and fake news that can potentially influence voter's impression. Therefore, topic such as, economic stability, social fairness, and government transparency can also have significant impact on how young voters connect with the political contenders.

Furthermore, political socialization shaped by family discussion, peer influence, and educational exposure remains a critical factor in voters' decision. While some people develop political choices based on family tradition, others based it onto their personal experiences and shifting society standards. The issue over party loyalty and candidate personality remains an important factor, as many young voters choose authenticity and policy over conventional partisan connection.

The problem being addressed in this study is the lack of understanding on the factors affecting Generation Z in choosing political candidate. While there is limited research on this topic, ample information and understanding is known about the factors Generation Z consider in choosing a political candidate. This research problem is significant for voters, academic establishments, political parties, community, and future researchers, who seek to engage civically in a more justified and humane system.

This paper aimed to explore and analyze the factors affecting Generation Z, who are registered voters, currently residing in Infanta, Quezon, and willing to participate in choosing political candidate. This research will utilize qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews to obtain rich and detailed insight on the subject matter.

Statement of the Problem

This research aims to explore the factors affecting Generation Z in choosing political candidate;

1. What are the factors affecting Generation Z in choosing political candidate?
2. Based on the results of the study, what program can be proposed to guide Generation Z voters in making informed political choices?

Conceptual Framework

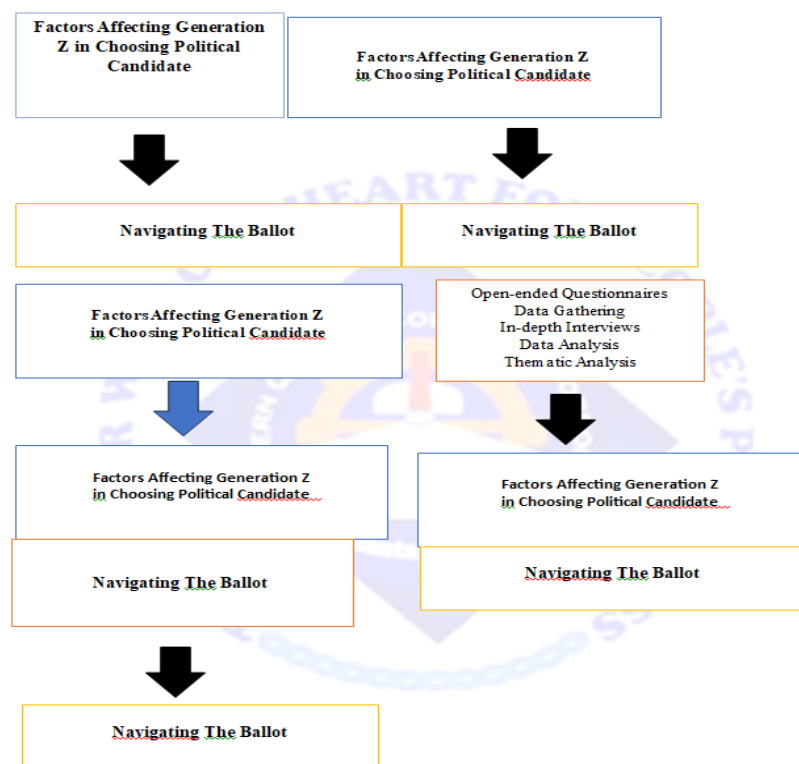


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework examines the factors affecting Generation Z in choosing political candidate by focusing on three main components: input, process, and output. The input includes the factors affecting Generation Z in choosing political candidate. The process includes the methodologies utilized by the researchers in the study. The output includes the “Navigating the Ballot”, a voter’s education program, at the end of the study.

Scope and Limitation

The factors influencing Generation Z (1997-2012) in selecting their political candidates are the main focus of this study which will also examine the factors affecting these generations’ political preferences and candidate selection in detail. This was conducted using phenomenological method with fifteen (15) participants, who are registered voters, currently residing at Infanta, Quezon and willing to participate in the study. Additionally, how this new generation can be influenced by their preferences and ideas when selecting the worthy candidate for them.

The study focused on how Generation Z are affected by candidate selection for the upcoming election. Generation Z provided valuable insights into voting behavior and the decision-making process, in choosing a political candidate. The data gathering started last June 12, 2025 and ended in June 18, 2025.

Significance of the Study

In essence, the goal of this study is to bridge the gap between understanding Generation Z political inclinations and turning that information into practical insights for diverse stakeholders. By identifying the important elements that influence their voting decisions, our research helps to create a more informed and active voter, thereby strengthening the democratic process. This study adds to a better knowledge of the changing political scene and has substantial relevance for a number of important stakeholders.

Generation Z: Generation Z can learn more about the variables affecting their peers and their own political decision-making processes from this study. They may also become better informed voters as a result.

Political Candidates and Parties: Developing successful campaign strategy requires an understanding of the precise factors influencing the voting behavior of Generation Z. Candidates can better target their messaging and outreach efforts by using the insights this research offers regarding the topics, communication channels, and values that appeal to these groups. It can assist political parties in recognizing and resolving the issues that these younger generations face, which could boost their turnout and encourage sustained political involvement.

Academic Institution: This study can help build curricula for programs in media literacy, political science, and social studies. It can give teachers useful tools to start conversations with children on civic duty and political engagement.

To the Public at Large: In a world that is changing quickly, this study clarifies the changing dynamics of political activity. It encourages informed civic debate and intergenerational interaction by fostering a deeper awareness of the goals and viewpoints of younger generations.

Future Researchers: This study lays the groundwork for future investigations on the political behavior of young people. It may stimulate further research on how social media, digital platforms, and new technology affect younger people's political participation. Data from various geographical places can be compared and contrasted using this study, which also helps to get a more global perspective on the subject.

Definition of Terms

Factor – a variable that has an influence on Generation Z's choice of political candidate.

Generation Z – an individual born between years 1997-2012, who is eligible to vote in the election at the time of data collection. (PSA, 2024)

Navigating The Ballot – a comprehensive voter's education program designed to empower and equip the Generation Z a deeper understanding on civic engagement.

Political candidate - one likely or suited to undergo be chosen for something specified and that aspires to or is nominated or qualified for an office. (Merriam Webster 2025)

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presented the methodology which was employed during the study. In light of this, the areas of the study, and reasons which underpin the choice of area are explained. This chapter included the research design, locale, participant, instrument, data gathering procedure, data analysis, specialist informant, and ethical consideration used during the study.

Research Design

The researchers utilized the phenomenological method in conducting the study. Phenomenological method is employed to determine the factors affecting Generation Z in choosing political candidates. Phenomenological research is a method that provides a detailed and nuanced understanding of people's experiences, helping researchers to gain a deeper insight into the phenomenon being studied. In this case, this design is a suitable method to describe Generation Z perspective in choosing political candidates. In addition, the objective of phenomenological research is to identify the essential structure underlying in human experiences and to understand the phenomenon being studied, ultimately informing theory and practice in various field through semi-structured interviews.

Research Locale

This study was conducted in Infanta, Quezon. According to Philippine Statistics Authority, there are 76,186 registered voters in Infanta, Quezon and 46.6 % (47,668) were aged 15 to 64 and most of them are Generation Z. The participants were interviewed in their respective home. Infanta, Quezon is the most suitable location for

us to conduct this interview for the reason that the researchers also reside within the same community. The researchers had a collaborative coordination with the community, fostering a closer partnership with stakeholders that enhanced the data gathering effectively and ensure the study's outcome was relevant and beneficial to the community.

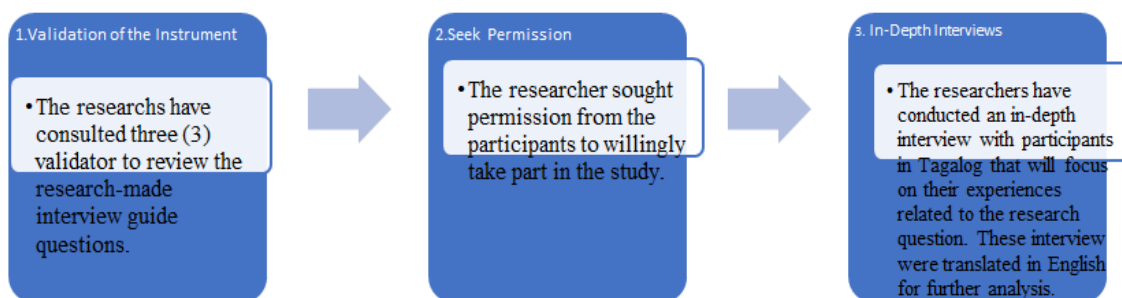
Research Participant

The participants of this research were chosen utilizing purposive sampling to gather information needed. Purposive Sampling, also known as judgmental or selective sampling, entails choosing research participants or units purposefully, as opposed to at random, depending on particular traits, expertise, or experiences that are pertinent to the study's goals. Participants were chosen purposefully within the study's goals. The researchers used the purposive sampling to the reason that this method is applicable to gather participants and conduct an interview. The researchers selected fifteen (15) Generation Z who are registered voters, currently residing at Infanta, Quezon and willing to participate in the study.

Research Instrument

In this study, the researchers used interview guide to gather the data that is needed for the study. The Interview is the way to get information from person by asking questions and hearing their answers (Bhay, A 2024, January 25). In conducting the interview, the format that the researcher utilized is semi-structured interview guide or non-standardize interview. Semi-structured interview guide, also called an informal interview, usually gets underway with few pre-planned interview questionnaires (Barangas, k. 2023, July 25). The interview was conducted at the participants' convenience to avoid disrupting their schedules. The researchers have ensured the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants by keeping their information confidential without obtaining their consent. The interview guide consists of open-ended questions that described the experiences of the participants from different angles. The researchers conducted a face-to-face interview with the participants in a private and comfortable.

Data Gathering Procedure



The researchers have followed these stages in conducting this qualitative study. The aim is to ensure that participants answer all research questions and provide significant details. To achieve this, a research process was designed to facilitate a smooth and interactive interview experience.

1. Validation of Instrument

The researchers have consulted three (3) validators to review the research-made interview guide questions.

2. Seeking Permission

The researcher sought permission from the participants to willingly take part in the study.

3. In-depth Interviews

The researchers have conducted an in-depth interview with participants in Tagalog that will focus on their experiences related to the research question. These interviews were translated in English for further analysis.

4. Interpretating Data

The researchers made an in-depth analysis and interpretation of the research findings that provided insights into the factors affecting Generation Z in choosing political candidate.

5. Thematic Analysis

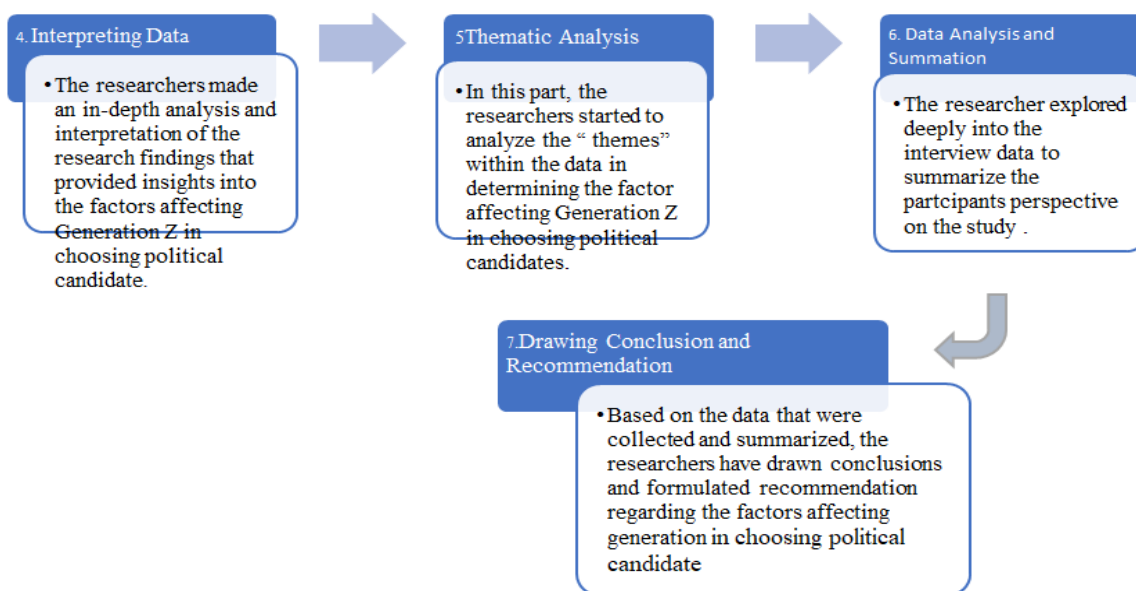
In this part, the researchers started to analyze the “themes” within the data in determining the factor affecting Generation Z in choosing political candidates.

6. Data Analysis and Summation

The researcher explored deeply into the interview data to summarize the participants’ perspective on the study.

7. Drawing Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the data that were collected and summarized, the researchers have drawn conclusions and formulated recommendation regarding the factors affecting generation in choosing political candidate



Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed and coded using the inductive approach. Inductive coding applied to categorize the results from the survey where the codes emerge from the data itself. With inductive coding, the researchers utilized the process and grounded the actual language and perspective of the participants. The classified information is linked together into cohesive and overarching themes. Thematic analysis is applied to the transcription of data which explored the recurring patterns and themes that emerge from the interviews and survey. The researchers utilized this process for the reason that the aim of thematic analysis is to create a comprehensive record of the coding and themes that were uncovered in interviews. It is most applicable in the study since the researchers are expecting a large volume of qualitative data and needed this to distill into manageable themes for deeper and better analysis of the factors affecting generation z and millennial in choosing political candidates.

Specialist Informant

A specialist informant consulted on the study to guaranteed the validity and coherence of the themes identified. The specialist informant examined and evaluated the data, and confirmed if the theme classification were accurate. This procedure increased the validity of the study’s findings and reduced potential biases. The study was approved by one Qualitative researcher specular with an extreme educational background. A Social Studies

major, was selected as our specialist informant. He graduated with a degree in Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in Social Studies year 2015, at Northern Quezon College Incorporated. After passing the September LET 2015, he chose to pursue an additional education in order to become eligible for higher jobs after years of commitment and tenacity in the teaching industry. He then studied for masteral at Northern Quezon College Incorporated and graduated with Masters of Arts in Educational Management year 2020. Due to his knowledge, perseverance, and diligence, he obtained Doctor of Education Major in Educational Management at National University of the Philippines year 2024. His vast teaching experience, particularly in areas like political systems and governance, made him an invaluable and contextually relevant resource for our study. His years of experience in teaching and conducting numerous qualitative research, provided valuable insights into the study's themes. His role ensured that the findings were grounded in real-world educational practices and interpretation of the data gathered adhered to ethical standard. Through his involvement, this study gained a deeper level of credibility and relevance within the academic and educational community.

Ethical Consideration

The participants fully understand the nature of the study rest assured that there was no revealing of identifiable information. This research study honored the ethical standards set by generic research ethics. The Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173) in the Philippines intends to preserve the fundamental right of privacy by regulating how personal data is processed in both government and private sectors, guaranteeing conformity with international standards and developing a culture of data protection. The participants were notified prior to the interview that their participation did not affect their academic schedules and fully voluntary. To ensure compliance with ethical considerations in conducting this research study, all of the participants were asked verbally and written for their consent to participate in the study. Moreover, the researchers have considered the participants' code names were closely related to the title. The purpose and process of this research were explained to the participants. The confidentiality was provided, as the participants identifiable information were not sought. Anonymity was applied. The researchers have assured that all the collected data and material was protected upon the completion of the research study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This part provided the summary of findings along with the conclusions and the recommendations that had been drawn based on the data which was evaluated and interpreted.

This research aimed to explore the factors affecting Generation Z in choosing political candidate within Infanta, Quezon. Specifically, it sought to describe how Generation Z are influenced by the factors in choosing political candidates. The researchers conducted a semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis, which allowed the emergence of key themes reflecting the preferences in choosing political candidates of the participants.

The findings of the study revealed that Generation Z voters highly prioritize personal qualities of candidates, platforms, policies, advocacy, campaign strategies, voter engagement, social and environmental influence. In assessing personal qualities, integrity and clean record, seeing them as crucial for avoiding corruption and ensuring public trust. Generation Z also value compassion and empathy, seeking leaders who genuinely help people beyond election period. Diligence, leadership quality, education, proven experience and track record are considered reliable markers of effective governance. Regarding platforms, Generation Z voters seek clear and realistic programs that are youth- and people-centered that demonstrate a relevance to community needs. In terms of campaign strategies, Generation Z favors direct, authentic engagement, such as personal interaction through house-to-house visits, seeing it as sign of sincerity and dedication. There is a strong rejection of unethical practice like vote buying, which is viewed as threat to election integrity. Visibility through public service and scholarship programs as a demonstration of real impact. Lastly, Generation Z values social and environmental influence, including family influence, peer influence, the performance of local community environment and exposure to media and public opinions. Generation Z tends to be highly politically aware and actively researches candidates, suggesting they prefer competence and substance over popularity. They are also drawn to fresh perspectives and new ideas, though they still value the stability that an experienced candidate can bring.

Theme 1	Personal Qualities of Candidates
Theme 2	Platforms, Policies, and Advocacy
Theme 3	Campaign Strategies and Voter Engagement
Theme 4	Social and Environmental Influences

Figure 1

One of the most prominent topics to emerge from the interviews is the significance of the personal qualities of political candidates. It is true that moral and ethical character are just as significant markers of leadership as position.

The importance of youth- and people-focused lobbying was emphasized by participant G25, who called on leaders to demonstrate their real concern for children and the community as a whole. This illustrates the way in which Generation Z seeks out political figures who advocate for social inclusiveness and sustained societal progress.

The importance of campaign strategy was also emphasized by the participants, who noted that they serve as markers of the candidate's sincerity and dedication to public service in addition to being tools for increasing visibility. House-to-house campaigning was frequently cited as an effective strategy, participant G30 and G27 believed it demonstrated a candidate's desire to establish sincere relationships with voters.

Although individual judgment is important, the interviews also showed that social and contextual factors have a significant influence on voting behavior. With participant G19 acknowledging that their parents' background checks on candidates influenced their choice, family influence stood out as being very relevant. This illustrates how young voters' political choices are still influenced by intergenerational influences.

CONCLUSIONS

It is concluded that Generation Z place high value to leaders who possess high moral character (integrity, compassion) and competence (experience, diligence, knowledge) as reliable indicators of effective public service. Generation Z prioritizes a candidate's substantive vision, demanding platforms that are feasible, relevant to the community, and sincerely focused on the welfare and progress of the people, particularly the youth. This ethics-focused mindset is further reflected in their strong preference for genuine, high-effort campaign strategies like house-to-house visits and a clear rejection of vote buying, viewing authenticity and ethical practice as eminent. While seeking genuine, capable leaders, their final choice is also affected by external factors such as family and peers, local community, and the information consumed through social media platforms. This highlights that this voting, while digitally native and individually discerning, remains affected by family, peers, and surrounding political environment. Generation Z recognizes the long-term benefits of wise voting, associating it with better governance, accountability, and the empowerment of future generations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study's conclusion produced extensive and important insights. Following a comprehensive data analysis, the researchers recommended the following:

Generation Z Voters

They ought to exercise caution and refrain from placing their trust solely in rumors or hearsay shared by those in their vicinity. Instead, it is crucial for them to conduct thorough background checks and verify the authenticity of the information before forming opinions or making decisions. When it comes to selecting a leader, they should prioritize candidates who possess not only extensive experience and knowledge but also demonstrate a deep

understanding of legal frameworks and the practical implementation of laws and ordinances, rather than merely relying on political credentials.

Parents

They should actively engage in guiding Generation Z as they navigate the complexities of evaluating political candidates, ensuring that they develop a thorough and critical mindset toward this important responsibility. They should demonstrate ethical decision-making practices, illustrating how to prioritize integrity, accountability, and principled stances that will serve as a powerful lesson for the Generation Z. It is crucial for them to respect and acknowledge Generation Z's own preference and values.

Political Candidate and Parties

They should prioritize the development and implementation of programmatic and youth-centered policies that effectively tackle critical issues such as education, livelihood opportunities, and community development. In doing so, they must consciously steer clear of transactional politics—such as vote buying—since these practices not only degrade the democratic process but also significantly undermine their credibility among younger voters who seek genuine engagement and accountability in political endeavors.

Academic Institution

They need to establish and carry out several supplementary awareness-raising operations aimed at effectively enhancing the capacity of Generation Z to inform their decision-making in a responsible and critical way when voting. In this regard, political dialogue platforms should be created where debates or discussions can take place among Generation Z where they will critically look at even candidates' manifestos and programs in the best of the ability and not subject them to the dubious integrity of social media and other mainstream media sources.

Future Researchers

They should gather a considerable size of Generation Z participants from various parts of the country, not just from a few towns and thus, the directions investigated have to be greater and explore the possible regional specifications for better understanding the situation. Generation Z should be aware of the presence of distortion of messages on the net with the objective of realizing the power it holds, especially on their minds.

Research Output: Navigating The Ballot: A Generation Z Voter's Guide

The researchers will conduct a comprehensive voter's education program designed to empower the Generation Z. The program will be conducted at Infanta Social Center (Plaza) in partnership with the Infanta, Quezon Sangguniang Kabataan Federation. The program's goal is to move beyond simply explaining election mechanics by fostering critical thinking, media literacy, and a deeper understanding of civic responsibility. It aims to equip Generation Z with the tools to make informed decisions, engage constructively in political discourse, and recognize their significant role in shaping the future. This program is specifically designed to address their unique characteristics by engaging on their terms, focusing on issues, not just politics and promoting media literacy. The floor will be open for any questions about the registration and voting process.

The resource speaker for the said program, is a young and dynamic political analyst with a strong social media presence. Her relatability and authentic voice would immediately resonate with the audience. She will share personal stories about her journey into civic engagement and provide practical advice on how Generation Z can make a tangible impact beyond just voting. Her role is to inspire and validate the audience's role as powerful agents of change.

After the discussion of the resource speaker, there will be an activity entitled "The Echo Chamber Effect". This activity will explore how social media algorithms and social environment can create "echo chambers" that reinforce existing beliefs. Participants will be paired and will learn strategies to seek out diverse perspectives and engage respectfully with differing viewpoints. Encourage participants to share what they have learned with

friends and family. Remind them that civic engagement is more than just voting, it includes volunteering and staying informed.

After the activity, the researchers will ask participants to share the most important thing they have learned. This will help everyone consolidate what they have learned and hear different perspectives. The program will end with a message of encouragement and empowerment, reminding participants that their voice matters and that civic engagement is a continuous process from the President of Infanta, Quezon SK Federation.

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INTERVIEW GUIDE

Standard English Translation:

1. What are the factors that affects you in choosing political candidate?
 - 1.1 How did you come up in considering this factor when choosing a political candidate?
 - 1.2 Do you think those factors greatly affects your personal choice in political candidates?
2. Why do you think it is important to consider these factors in choosing political candidate?
 - 2.1 What are the benefits that these factors may bring in choosing political candidate?
3. Based on the results of the study, what program can be proposed to guide Generation Z voters in making informed political choices?

Filipino Translation:

1. Ano ang mga salik na nakakaapekto sa iyong pagpili ng isang kandidato sa politika?
 - 1.1 Paano mo isinasaalang-alang ang mga salik ito sa pagpili ng isang kandidato ?

1.2 Sa iyong palagay, ang mga salik na ito ba ay malaki ang epekto sa iyong personal na pagpili ng mga kandidato?

2. Sa iyong palagay bakit mahalaga na isaalang-alang mo ang mga salik na ito sa pagpili ng mga kandidato?

2.1 Ano ang mga benepisyo na maaaring maidulot ng mga salik na ito sa pagpili ng isang kandidato sa politika?

3. Batay sa mga resulta ng pag-aaral, anong programa ang maaaring ipanukala upang gabayan ang mga botante ng Generation Z sa paggawa ng matalinong pagpili sa pulitika?

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