

ELECTORAL POLITICS AND CLIENTELISM IN THE 3RD DISTRICT OF PALAWAN, PHILIPPINES: CHANGES, CONSISTENCIES, AND CONTROVERSIES

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ABSTRACT

In a democratic country such as the Philippines, campaign strategies and political parties in an electoral process plays a crucial role in engaging an elected position in the government. This study aims to provide an insight in the behavior mapping of political strategies performed by local candidates and their campaign team. It utilizes the principal-agent theory or agency theory which discusses a conflict of interest in any relationship where one party is expected to act in another's best interest. The study was conducted in the City of Puerto Princesa and the Municipality of Aborlan, 3rd Legislative District of Palawan in April 2016. Semi-structured interview questionnaire were employed to key informants. Ocular observations on the manner of endorsing themselves to its constituents were documented. Results showed that popularity, face-to-face meeting, political party affiliation, and attractive platform of government influences the decisions of the voters. Effective community interrelation and creative incentive systems of the campaign teams being political machinery was imperative, but might lead to a candidate's defeat if not well trained. Election campaign strategies differ depending on the candidate's access to workforce as resources. A self-proclaimed mechanism enables the importance of having a competitive financial resource for the success of political campaign and electoral positions. The inclusion of the influence of political parties to a candidate campaign strategy is recommended for further study.

Keywords: Elections, Principal-agent theory, Patronage politics, Electoral dynamics, Campaign strategies.

INTRODUCTION

In a country that is a republic and democratic like Philippines, it is considered that citizens are the most powerful people during election period. One of the reasons to consider why elections have a huge part among Filipinos is because of the candidates' amount of effort to capture their voters. It is in the best interest of the Filipino people to be interested in being involved with politics and our government officials. Popularity plays a factor in the decision making of citizens, which is why so many television personalities are now elected as government officials. Citizens look to familiar faces and familiar family backgrounds in electing celebrities, which happens that Philippine politics is also tied up to show businesses hence, 'may gain a considerable amount of votes from his or her proposed platform' (Cariño, Cruz, & Navarrete, 2016). This is why unique strategies are present during the electoral campaigns; fiestas like, campaign posters, leaflets, different jingles, vehicles patrolling around, television commercials, does presenting a 'fascinating blend of both traditional and modern political patronage' (Perron, 2009; 2011) where in during the campaign period, elections are planned even in its tiniest detail that will make a bigger impact among voters. In fact Kasuya (2009) implied that the 3P's strategy: policy, personality and patronage among politicians are among the most effective and important way of winning in an election. It is also during the campaign period,

that in order to effectively influence their campaign strategy candidates utilizes competition, laws, and the character of its voters. A tactic giving citizens the decision to create the type of government leaders and policy changes they want to see in their constituency that serves as an actual manifestation of the public's perception to initiate why they should participate in voting and propose their needs to the candidates (Tiquia & Carianga, 2000). Similarly, politicians' focuses on developing a message that create and disseminate campaign paraphernalia. Like Philippines, law, governance, and politics within a society cannot be separated and has been considered as a part of their daily lives (Tatel, 2013).

In 2012, the province of Palawan was separated into three legislative districts, wherein the City of Puerto Princesa and the Municipality of Aborlan constitutes the third district. The peaceful and honest election was known in 35 urban and 33 rural barangays of Puerto Princesa City. The Municipality of Aborlan as first class municipality, considers its 19 barangays practicing a patronage election. The implication of behavioral changes in election strategies of candidates and campaign team as political machinery in these local government units requires an informed knowledge platform to obtain high probability of winning. Thus, this study aims to provide an insight in the behavior mapping of political strategies performed by local candidates and their campaign team in the 3rd legislative district of Palawan.

METHODOLOGY

Theoretical Background

Miller's (2005) proposed the principal-agent (PA) theory or simply known as agency theory which was originally came from an economic theory which is all about insurance, credit markets, and theories of the firm particularly between the relationship of an employee and agent which will serve as the theoretical framework for this study. According to Maggetti & Papodolopoulos (2016), PA perspective was first applied to the study of public administrations to analyze the control mechanisms the US Congress exerts over bureaucrats. Today, this framework has become inescapable when studying delegation relations and, in particular, the interactions between elected politicians – the principal – and public officials – the agent. It is frequently used to make sense of the issues at stake when power is delegated, and it is almost invariably invoked as a background concept to frame politico-administrative relations. The relationship between the voters and the candidates may be related to the principal-agency theory with the candidates as the principal and the campaign team as its agent.

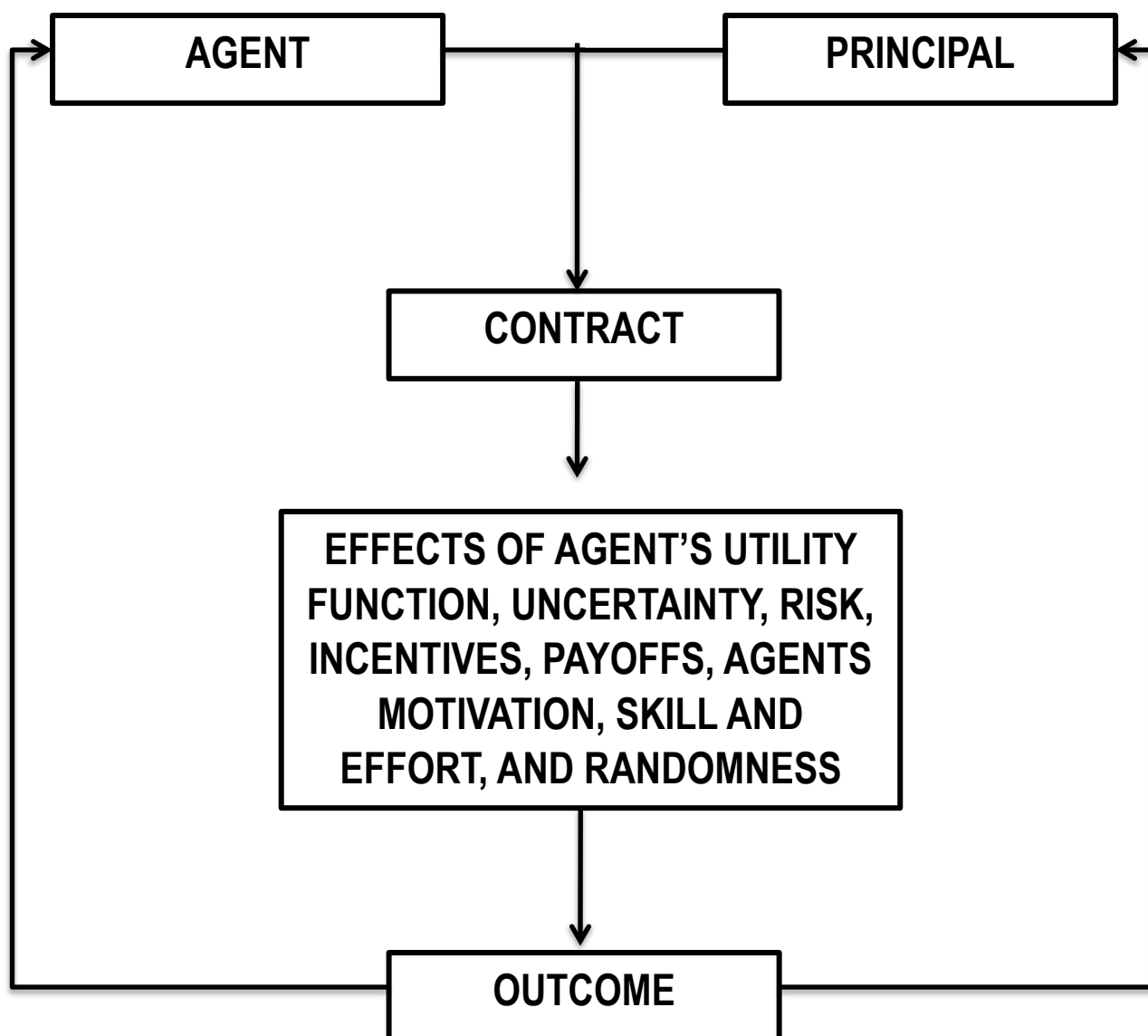


Figure 1 The principal-agency theory

This Principal-agent approach, derived from such extensive disciplines such as accounting and finance, law, and even economics that served as a framework for creating a large set of studies in relation to elections and bureaucracy (Mitnick 1973, 1975, and 1980; Moe 1982, 1984, and 1985; Wood 1988; Wood and Waterman 1991, 1993, and 1994; Scholz and Wei 1986). With the use of agency theory, one can say that the campaign team enters a contract with its candidate to ensure utility function (to win) and get more benefits if the goal has been attained. This validates the simplest form of PA theory as described by Perrow (1986) which he stated:

'Agency theory assumes that social life is a series of contracts. Conventionally, one member, the 'buyer' of goods or services is designated the 'principal,' and the other, who provides the goods or service is the 'agent'—hence the term 'agency theory.' The principal-agent relationship is governed by a contract specifying what the agent should do and what the principal must do in return'

The Principal-Agency theory was created by using new institutional economics as a framework (Williamson, 1975; 1985; Moe, 1984; Miller, 1992). It is also adopted by other disciplines such as Political Science and was said to reformulate in many ways. This implies to say that PA

theory deals with the specific relations, in which the two actors are involved in the exchange of resources. Arguably, Coleman (1999) as cited by Braun and Guston (2003) stated that the principals are the ones who disregard a number of resources but not if the person has some other purpose (*for example, has money but not the appropriate skills*). A standard PA models consists of the underlying hypothesis to provide a general opportunistic behavior of the agency crafted by the creation of asymmetric information (Niskanen, 1971; Ross, 1971; & Vaubel, 2006). Meaning the autonomy granted was mandate and carried by control mechanism of the principal. Clearly, this principal-agent relationship is an interaction of “mixed-motive game.” It has been stated that (the principal: to trust or to monitor; the agent: to comply or not comply) implying both relationships is influenced by the way it is organized by the other party.

Location of the Study

This study was conducted in the City of Puerto Princesa and the Municipality of Aborlan, 3rd Legislative District of Palawan. Puerto Princesa City is the second largest city next to Davao City with an average area of 919.32 sq mi. while the Municipality of Aborlan has an area of 311.71 sq mi. The 3rd Legislative District of Palawan was created through the implementation of the Republic Act 10171 in the year 2012.



Figure 2 Map of the 3rd District of Palawan (highlighted in yellow)

Data Gathering Procedures

Historical accounts regarding electoral process in Puerto Princesa and Aborlan was done through literature review and focus group discussions. In conjunction with the month of April campaign period of the 2016 Philippines National Election, a semi-structured interview questionnaire was employed to key informants. Ocular observations on the manner of endorsing themselves to its constituents were documented.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Historical Accounts

The city of Puerto Princesa was under the administration of a same government official for 2 decades since 1992, with the turnouts of the last 2013 elections the changes in the city's development status was shifted. It is according to some respondents that this outcome has changed the City from having a peaceful election to slowly having violence in it. Several reports and rumors from the residents state that there is a continuing harassment of the constituents by outsiders coming from the municipalities within the city. While the municipality of Aborlan who had few changes in administration and was still under a first class municipality to which the local government of the municipality is pursuing its plan for Aborlan to become an independent city just like Puerto Princesa.

Candidates

The majority of the respondents stated that the most important factor and crucial strategy is to be seen and felt by the constituents as this the means of getting their attention and letting them get to know the candidate itself. These factors are made up of Popularity, Party, Affiliation, and the Needs of the constituents to which according to them are the key to winning the 2016 Local Elections. The candidates and their campaign team belong to a political ideology between conservatives and the liberals. Popularity is an important factor because this is where candidates get to know their constituents themselves and serves as an advantage due to having political machinery beforehand.

A recurring candidate will have his/her popularity and will have no problem with regards to endorsing himself to the public because he is already known in the constituents to his area. Basically, the personality of a candidate will also showcase his popularity because the candidate must be able to know the programs and/or necessities are needed for a certain community. It also important that they need to get in touch with the constituents directly and personally because this will ensure the constituents that the candidate is approachable and does not only appear during the time of elections this strategy because this will ensure the winning votes for the candidate. Furthermore, if candidate is an incumbent official them he/she has a higher chance of getting the position that he is running for because he/she has already established his personality in the public, and contributed quality service to the people as noted by an incumbent candidate. However, a few independent candidates admitted that they are at the disadvantage when it comes to popularity as they do not have the machinery to do so and they lack resources as compared to those who belong in political parties.

The political party that the candidate is associated with provides a good advantage to them because it provides them some of the resources they need to perform an effective campaign team may or (such as calling caucus, rallies, seminars). An incumbent candidate notes that the campaign team may or may not help the candidate depending on their principles and also says that they do not provide much help which is contrary to what rookie candidates would imply, but both agreed that the political party served as a campaign machinery for the candidates which will help them maximize time and resources for campaigning. Independent candidates emphasized that having a non-party affiliation gives a big disadvantage because it will be very difficult for a candidates to win if he/she has no party affiliation. Likewise, the party affiliation of the candidate will largely influence the outcome of the elections. According to majority of the candidates, the project/platforms that they are representing also influence the decision of the voters for them. For recurring candidates, it is important to let the constituents know what

he/she has done to the area or the constituents either in the form of policy or programs that will provide long-term solutions and development for their community. A Former Mayor considered himself as winning candidates because of the platforms/projects that he has done in the city for the past two decades, especially for the tourism sector. This type of strategy will enable a candidate to win because the constituents already know what the candidate has done for them. In order to fully gather the support of a constituent the consistent public service by an incumbent official must be present. Although the candidates (including those running independently) are receiving donations of any kind such as campaign posters, stickers, flyers, and other paraphernalia that will help them endorse themselves to the constituents. There are donations in form of money but this has to be checked as they also bounded by laws and that the lack of fund of a candidate will lower the chances of winning. This can be avoided if the candidate is popular and has a large campaign team that will endorse and help the candidates. But then again, according to a campaign manager, no political will run for office if he/she does not have any sources of funds, whether this would come from friends or relatives.

Campaign Teams

Respondents connotes that the campaign team (aside from the party of affiliation) plays a large role for a candidates' success in the elections. The campaign team serves as the political machinery of the candidates which will him/her reach far-flung areas and endorsement through the campaign team members who are willing to help the candidates whether volunteer or paid. It was implied that the most important part of a campaign team is the relatives of the candidate as they are the first to provide support for them even if they do not establish that much networks to the constituents. The campaign team divided into different tasks and assignments but usually flexible in order for them to multitask in cases of having a low number of campaign team member. Recruitment of the teams for the team is based on their personality, loyalty, and their reliability to do their responsibilities in endorsing their candidates. Respondents also noted that a campaign team must be knowledgeable and responsible when it comes to a campaigning because the campaign team also reflects the image of the candidate that they are endorsing with which means that if something is done wrong by a campaign member it will greatly affect the view of constituents to their candidates.

Members of the campaign team are doing a responsibility that might even affect their daily lives. For example, members are expected to be available twenty-four hours a day seven days a week for the whole campaign period because they will never know about the opportunities that might be available every day. Campaign teams should maintain a good relationship for the formal and informal institutions because it will further help them in explaining their platforms for the development of the electoral constituency. Additionally, the campaign officials state that these institutions might provide both an advantage and disadvantage to the candidates depending on their biases. However, a campaign team for an independent candidate would be hard to find since due to their lack of resources, specifically manpower. As result, these independent candidates mostly depend to their friends and family relatives who are willing to help them attain a position in the government without expecting anything in return. While it is true that the campaign team serves as the machinery of the candidates for endorsement, it will also lead to the downfall of the candidate if their campaign team is not well-trained. Campaign members must not only endorse the candidates that they are voting for but they must also educate the constituents about the election processes (e.g. how to properly vote, shading a ballot, what are the requirements when voting etc.) so that they will be ensured that their efforts of campaigning their candidate will not go to waste. The campaign activities of the competing political parties are almost the same, but this is the part wherein money plays a big role for the

candidates and the constituents. Actual giving of cash and distribution of snack in campaign rallies of both political parties are done, meaning that it is common for them to do this as a compensation for the efforts of the constituents in attending their campaign rallies. There was even a situation wherein both of these political parties' vehicles cross each other's path along a major highway, although no incidents occurred as both of the parties' campaign officials are taught to do work and ignore their competitors. It was observed that some independent candidates were being endorsed by an 'affiliated' political party's campaign team due to their lack of manpower.

Face to face meeting with the constituents are the most common when it comes to the campaign team of the independent candidates. Personal contact with the constituents will enable them to establish networks and endorse their platforms through means of handshake and talking to them personally. However, is different for the candidates who are affiliated with political parties because some of them are asking for feedbacks from the acquaintances that they had in certain community in order to ensure if they were able to do an effective campaign as such. On the other hand, some candidates (even those who belong in the same political party) are giving out money during their campaign rallies because the money serves as the "allowance" of the constituents as compensation for attending their rallies. A respondent connotes that this is the start of corruption in the area because most of the candidates are shelling out their own money in order to give some for the constituents.

Ocular Observations and Analysis

Government platforms are usually what candidates endorse during campaign period, votes from the constituents can be gathered through the promotion of these projects. However, some candidates would use incentive systems in the form of financial or material resources in order to gather votes. They tend to 'buy' the time and efforts of their constituents to hear them out in stating their proposed governance should they be elected in office.

Government Platform	Policy	Personality	Patronage	Creative Incentive Systems
Basic needs	×	×	✓	✓
Quality public services	✓	×	×	✓
Win swing voters	✓	✓	×	✓
Prioritization of issues	✓	×	✓	✓
Equality and Equity	✓	×	✓	×
Lasting peace	✓	×	×	✓
Anti-corrupt	✓	✓	✓	×
Effective disaster management	✓	×	✓	×
Pro-poor	✓	×	✓	×
Quick emergency assistance	✓	×	✓	✓
Good governance	✓	×	✓	×
Does not defame others	×	✓	×	×

Table 1. Comparison of different campaign strategies to the publicize candidates government platform

Table 1 reflects the government platforms proposed by the candidates through their campaign rallies within their constituents. It shows if 3Ps Kasuya (2009) mentioned together with a

creative incentive systems that are applicable to the different platforms of the candidates. It can be said that 4 out of the 12 platforms got the highest score namely: winning swing voters, prioritization of pressing issues, anti-corrupt, and quick emergency assistance. However, non-defamation of others got the lowest score which would mean that this is a common problem during elections. The role of policy making is present in almost every government platform proposed, while personality is the least since it is only applicable during campaign period and that some candidates change especially if they got elected. This could also mean that just like any person, some elected politicians have different interests in policies that will promote the lives of their constituents however they are not willing to give more than what is expected. The reason behind this is that political coalitions and actors slowly change and tend to create their different interests through foreign investments thus creating conflicts when their objectives tend to collide with one another (Waterman & Meier, 1998). Specifically, an individual can have his/her choices constrained by its affiliated institution in order for their ideal mechanism to act efficiently in solving a collective problem through a collective action. With which the actors are selfish enough only to be more concerned with their personal interests. They tend to do this through self-interest methods like cheating, lying, and stealing (Williamson, 1985). As agents seek their self-interest they may hide this information from the principal to reduce their work load or to be hired in the first place.

CONCLUSIONS

The election behavior in the 3rd District of Palawan has changed during the past years. Respondents validated that there are people coming from outside of the 3rd district of the Province in order to harass the constituents. Television news also states that violence is occurring in the City, usually during nighttime and that those crimes are involved with the local elections in the city. The outcome of the election in Puerto Princesa is surprising because all of the candidates who won are under the Conservatives. It cannot be stated that they do not have enough manpower for this because according to their rivals they have access to government's resources (the candidates for mayor of NPC is also the incumbent mayor of the city). Clashes between people who supported the opposite party are also common and even reached to the point where two people died. This is the first time in the history of elections in the 3rd District that a citizen died during election period. Although almost every respondents are into patronage and clientelism but they also emphasized the importance of having huge funds for the success of their campaign and electoral positions that they wanted to attain.

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