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DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS



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**POPULARITY-BASED DECISION-MAKING AND ITS EFFECTS
ON THE ELECTORAL CHOICES OF SAN BEDA UNIVERSITY–
MANILA COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES STUDENT
VOTERS**

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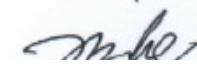
APPROVAL SHEET

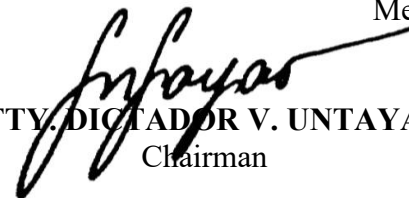
This undergraduate thesis entitled **“Popularity-Based Decision-Making and Its Effects on the Electoral Choices of San Beda University-Manila College of Arts and Sciences Student Voters”**, prepared and submitted by **CARLOS GABRIEL B. CRUZ**, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Bachelor of Science in Economics and Public Policy**, has been accepted and approved, after examination during the final oral defense.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of popularity-based decision-making on the voting behavior of student voters from the College of Arts and Sciences of San Beda University–Manila. Guided by the Elaboration Likelihood Model and Dual Process Theory, the researchers investigated how intuition, emotionality, likability, social influences, and trust shape voting decisions, and whether socio-demographic characteristics relate to such tendencies. Using a quantitative descriptive and correlational research design, data were collected from 300 student voters through a structured questionnaire. Statistical analyses included descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, independent samples t-test, one-way ANOVA, reliability testing, and an ordinal logistic regression model.

Findings revealed that respondents expressed moderate reliance on popularity-based decision-making across all five dimensions. No significant differences were found in popularity reliance when grouped according to age, gender, family income, or academic year, leading to the acceptance of the first two null hypotheses. However, a very strong positive correlation ($r = 0.95$, $p < .001$) between Popularity Score and Voting Influence indicated that popularity-based decision-making is highly associated with students' final voting behavior. The ordinal logistic regression model further demonstrated that Popularity Score is



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the strongest and only meaningful predictor of voting influence, resulting in the rejection of the third and fourth null hypotheses. Demographic variables did not significantly contribute to the model.

These results demonstrate that popularity-driven heuristics, rather than demographic characteristics, play a dominant role in shaping electoral decisions among student voters. The study recommends implementing structured voter education programs, enhancing political and media literacy, strengthening student election guidelines, and supporting student-led civic engagement initiatives to promote informed and critical voting behavior.

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This chapter consists of the problem and setting of this study. It also includes the purpose of conducting the paper as its background of the study, statement of the problem, the significance of the study, scope and delimitations, and definition of terms.

Introduction

Elections in the Philippines are fundamental to democratic governance as they provide citizens the opportunity to select leaders who represent their values, address pressing issues, and defend their interests. However, voting behavior is shaped by multiple factors beyond policy competence and track record. One of the most prominent influences is candidate popularity. Teehankee (2019) asserts that popularity often overshadows platforms in shaping voter choice, while David and Atun (2015) highlight the roles of media exposure and name recall in determining electoral outcomes. These findings suggest that elections in the Philippines are frequently shaped not by rational policy evaluations but by personality-driven dynamics.



The rise of digital media has amplified these patterns, transforming the political landscape into one where visibility, likability, and emotional resonance are as critical as policy platforms. Social media in particular has become central to campaigning strategies. Tapsell (2020) emphasizes that online platforms allow candidates to curate appealing public personas that resonate with younger voters, while Arugay (2022) stresses that social media significantly influenced the 2022 Philippine elections, not only amplifying popularity but also fostering misinformation. The significance of this shift is reinforced by statistics: as of 2024, the Philippines had 86.75 million social media users, representing 73.4% of the total population of 118.2 million (Howe, 2024). The Philippines has also been labeled the "social media capital of the world" (Caparas, 2024), underscoring the magnitude of digital influence in electoral processes.

Research on youth electoral behavior highlights the importance of popularity-based decision-making. A review of studies from 2000 to 2023 shows that young Filipino voters are often influenced by candidate characteristics, peer and family opinions, and online engagement, in addition to socio-economic background (Amante, Tabigue, & Lumintao, 2023). Similarly, Mori (2025) found that Facebook and TikTok significantly shaped the preferences of first-time voters in Maasin City, demonstrating how digital popularity directly influences



political choices. Gen Z voters, in particular, are deeply embedded in digital culture; as shown by a 2024 study, they are exposed to both empowering and misleading political content online, which impacts their voting decisions (Cadayday, et.al, 2024). These findings align with research on disinformation and political polarization, which indicates that emotionally charged and popularity-driven narratives mobilize and divide voters (Arugay & Baquisal, 2022).

Popularity-based decision-making is not only about visibility but also about deeper factors such as likability, trust, intuition, and emotional connection. A study using conjoint analysis on candidate attributes in the Philippines revealed that student voters often value competence, accomplishments, and professional background, but these can be overshadowed by name recognition and personal appeal when amplified by media exposure (Anabo, 2022). This suggests that rational evaluation of political qualifications can be compromised when popularity becomes the dominant heuristic for decision-making.

Recent research underscores this shift. Young Filipino voters are frequently influenced by candidate characteristics, peer and family opinions, and online engagement, which often overshadow policy evaluation and political ideology. The digital environment reinforces the appeal of likability, intuition, trust, and social influence, making popularity a dominant factor in decision-



making. This becomes especially evident during election seasons, where viral content, endorsements, and social media trends shape public conversations and political preferences.

Within this context, the decision-making behavior of student voters becomes a crucial area of study. Students represent a significant portion of the Philippine voting population and play an increasingly influential role in shaping electoral outcomes. However, despite access to education and information, student voters remain vulnerable to personality-driven politics, emotional appeals, and digital influence. Their voting decisions may rely less on critical evaluation of platforms and more on popularity-based heuristics, mirroring broader national voting patterns.

Given these realities, this study focuses on student voters from the San Beda University–Manila College of Arts and Sciences. The research examines how popularity influences their electoral decision-making by analyzing variables such as intuition, emotion-driven responses, candidate likability, social influence, and public trust. It also explores how these factors intersect with socio-economic attributes such as age, gender, family background, and academic standing. By identifying patterns and correlations, the study aims to provide insights into the psychology and sociology of voting among young Filipinos. Ultimately, it seeks



to propose policy recommendations that encourage critical engagement, reduce overreliance on personality politics, and strengthen the democratic participation of student voters.

Statement of the Problem

The main objective of the study is to determine the correlation of Popularity and the Decision Making of voters on the upcoming election, the study also aims to answer the following question in order to attain the study's main objective:

1. What is the socio economic profile of selected SBU student voters in terms of:
 - A. Age
 - B. Gender
 - C. Family Background
 - D. Academic Background
2. How is popularity-based decision making is expressed by student in terms of the following factors
 - A. Intuition
 - B. Emotionally driven
 - C. Likability
 - D. Influences
 - E. Trust
3. Is there a significant relationship between the respondents' socio-demographic profile and their popularity-based decision-making?



4. To what extent does popularity influence the overall decision-making behavior of San Beda University-Manila College of Arts and Sciences student voters during Philippine elections?

5. What is the policy recommendation?

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to examine the effect of popularity on the decision making process of student voters at San Beda University Manila on the upcoming 2025 midterm elections.

1. To identify the socio economic profile of San Beda University student voters in terms of
 - a. Age
 - b. Gender
 - c. Family Background
 - d. Academic Background
2. To measure the dimensions of “popularity based decision making” by assessing the influence of
 - a. Intuition
 - b. Emotion-driven responses
 - c. Likability
 - d. Social Influences
 - e. Trust
3. To determine the relationship between the socio-demographic profile of the respondents and their popularity-based decision-making.



4. To evaluate the extent to which popularity influences the decision-making behavior of student voters during Philippine elections.
5. To propose policy recommendations that promote informed and critical voter behavior among student voters.

Significance of the Study

In a democratic country, elections are not merely a political activity but a reflection of a nation's collective will. However, voter behavior is shaped by various factors. According to Teehankee (2019), candidates' popularity often overshadows their political competence as name recall and media exposure dominate voters' decision making process. The significance of this study lies in its potential to shed light on the critical relationship between popularity and voter decision making.



Students

The findings of the study will empower student voters by raising awareness of the factors that may unconsciously influence their electoral decisions. This study aims to help and encourage student voters to think critically about their chosen candidates, ensuring that their votes are informed by a candidate's qualification, platforms, and policies rather than mere public appeal.

Educators and Academic Institutions

The results of the study will provide valuable insights for professors and academic institutions seeking to strengthen voter education programs. This study will help professors and academic institutions by understanding how popularity affects student decision making. Hence, it will allow schools to design and implement more effective initiatives and programs to promote critical thinking and civic responsibility among students.

Policy Makers

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The study findings of the study can serve as a basis for developing such policies that enhance voter education particularly in the digital age. The study also serves as a basis on how popularity and political dynasties can affect a voters decision making process which will allow policy makers to amend such laws.

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Future Researchers

The results of the study will contribute to the growing body of knowledge on voter behavior. This study will also serve as a foundation for future studies that may explore other factors influencing electoral choices. As it is a quantitative research, the study would be a credible source for related studies that will enable future researchers to fill in gaps and conflicts in the study. In line with this, it will help future researchers have an in-depth analysis on the effects of popular vote on the decision making process of voters.

Political Scientists, Educators, and Researchers

This study adds to the literature on electoral behavior, personality politics, and youth participation in Philippine democracy. It may serve as a reference for future research and academic discussions on how social, cultural, and digital factors influence voter psychology.



Commission on Elections (COMELEC)

As the primary government body tasked with overseeing elections, COMELEC can use the findings to strengthen voter education campaigns, particularly those aimed at the youth sector. Understanding how popularity affects voting decisions may help COMELEC design more effective programs that promote policy-based and informed voting rather than personality-driven choices.

Scope and Delimitations

This study is primarily concerned with examining the relationship between candidate popularity and the decision-making behavior of student voters in San Beda University–Manila, College of Arts and Sciences within the broader context of Philippine elections. It specifically focuses on enrolled students who are registered voters, recognizing that the findings reflect the perspectives of a particular segment of youth voters and may not be generalized to the entire student population nationwide.



The research is limited to exploring popularity-based decision-making, operationalized through intuition, emotion-driven responses, likability, social influences, and trust, while also considering the socio-economic profile of respondents such as age, gender, family background, and academic background to determine whether these factors correlate with popularity-driven voting behavior. Although the study acknowledges the role of electoral institutions such as COMELEC in shaping voter education, it does not directly assess the effectiveness of these institutions, the platforms of individual candidates, or the legal frameworks of elections. Instead, the focus remains on the perceptions and behaviors of student voters.

Data collection will be conducted during the academic year 2025, ensuring that responses are timely and reflective of the current political climate, particularly in light of the growing influence of social media on electoral engagement. By setting these boundaries, the study maintains precision and manageability while pursuing its primary objective of analyzing the relationship between popularity and decision-making behavior among San Beda University student voters, with the ultimate goal of contributing insights that may strengthen youth voter education and democratic participation in the Philippines.



Definition of Terms

Popularity

The state of being well-liked or admired by many people that is often reflected in public image or social media presence.

Popularity-Based Decision-Making

This refers to the tendency of voters to base their electoral choices on the perceived fame, appeal, or public image of candidates rather than on their qualifications or policy platforms. Operationally, in this study, it is measured through the respondents' agreement with survey statements reflecting intuition, emotion-driven choices, candidate likability, social influence, and trust.



Voting Behavior

Conceptually, it refers to the patterns, motivations, and decision-making processes that guide how individuals cast their votes during elections. Operationally, in this study, it pertains to the students' actual or intended voting choices, influenced by popularity-related factors.

Intuition

Gut feeling or instinct used in decision making without extensive reasoning.

Emotion Driven

Voting influenced by emotional reactions such as hope fear, or empathy

Likability

The personal appeal or charm of a candidate that makes them favorable to voters



Social Influences

External factors such as peer pressure, media, or group norms affecting an individual's voting behavior

Trust

The level of confidence a voter has in a candidate's integrity and competence



CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

This chapter includes reviews of literature that supports the study. Furthermore, a summary of all reviews is presented below to understand the study further. Many researchers have already conducted studies regarding the effects of popularity to the decision making of voters.

Factors Influencing Voting Decisions

Age

Age is a critical factor that significantly influences individuals' voting decisions with distinct patterns emerging across different age groups. Numerous studies have consistently highlighted the relationship between age and political preferences which shows that younger and older voters have distinct contrasting voting behaviors. Younger voters, in the age group of those in their late teens to



early thirties tend to favor left leaning parties and candidates. This demographic often prioritizes issues such as climate change, social justice, and generational concerns, which aligns with progressive policies (Kulachai et al., 2023). The study also pointed out that younger voters are generally more receptive to social change and less bound by traditional institutions and values, their openness to reform and advocacy for progressive causes often translates into higher support for candidates who embody these ideas.

Philippine research confirms similar patterns. Amante, Tabigue, and Lumintao (2023) reported that Filipino youth voting behavior is profoundly shaped by peer influence, social media exposure, and candidate familiarity, rather than ideological alignment. This indicates that Filipino youth often rely on image-based or intuitive judgments, which closely correspond to popularity-based decision-making.

Furthermore, Hylton et al. (2023) found that youth civic engagement rises when educational institutions incorporate civic literacy and political participation efforts, implying that age-linked differences in political knowledge may shape decision-making pathways. This supports the need for stronger voter education programs within academic institutions. Additionally, the study also pointed out



the influence of age on voting behavior that supported the studies aforementioned. Younger voters, particularly those aged 18-29 have supported democratic candidates, maintaining a trend seen in previous elections. Voters aged 30-44 also leaned Democratic by a narrow margin while older voters particularly aged 65 and above demonstrated strong support for republican candidates. These voting patterns can be attributed to generational differences in issue priorities, political ideologies, and experiences where younger voters prioritize progressive issues such as climate change and social justice while older individuals prioritise economic stability and national security. Moreover, younger age groups often show lower voter turnout compared to older demographics that contributes to the overall influence of older voters in shaping national outcomes.

Gender

Gender is a significant factor that shapes an individual's voting decision. Numerous studies have established a relationship between gender and political references with notable and distinct voting patterns between genders. A research review by Kulachai et al., (2023) states that women are more likely to support left leaning and progressive candidates compared to men. This inclination can be attributed to the prioritization of issues such as healthcare, education, social



welfare, and gender equality concerns that are often aligned with progressive policies. Additionally, women's political attitudes and voting behaviors are influenced by their lived experiences, including societal expectations, traditional gender roles, and experiences of discrimination. These factors contribute to the tendency of women to advocate for policies that address social equity and inclusivity.

Additionally, a study made by Hartig et al., (2023) supported these claims where gender gap and voting preferences remained consistent with the previous elections done in the United States. Men were more likely to support Republican candidates with a 54% voting share from the Grand Old Party (GOP) in 2022 compared to 44% for Democrats while women predominantly supported Democrats with a voting share of 51%. However, Philippine studies challenge the universality of gender effects. Buscato, Entong, and Bacang (2024) found that gender had limited correlation with political participation and decision-making among Filipino youth. Their findings demonstrate that gender differences are not strong predictors of voting choices in the Philippines, as cultural and social contexts weigh more heavily on youth political behavior.



Popularity and its Influence on Voter Decision-Making

Teehankee (2019) stated that name recall and media exposure often overshadow a candidate's qualification and policy platforms rather than its credibility and background, this leads to electoral outcomes that are based more on the candidate's visibility and engagement rather than its competency. This phenomenon is further emphasized by David and Atun (2015) who found that celebrity status and media exposure strongly influence voters, particularly young demographics. Media exposure from television and social media platforms truly enhances the visibility and appeal of candidates despite their qualifications, this often creates a bandwagon effect where voters align with popular figures due to perceived widespread support. Moreover, celebrities can shift public perception by leveraging their massive followers, making it easier for them to secure voter support.

Orzal et al. (2023), in their study of student voters in Biliran, found that young Filipino voters prioritize candidate visibility, personality, and social media presence, even when evaluating presidential candidates. Their findings confirm that popularity, especially when amplified online, shapes youth preferences more strongly than platform knowledge.



A study by Llorca (2024) reinforced this, revealing that millennials in Tarlac City were influenced by name recall, family political background, perceived likability, and social pressure, all of which are central components of popularity-driven voting behavior.

Batara (2021) found that pre-election surveys in the Philippines create a **bandwagon effect**, where voters tend to support candidates who appear to be leading. This supports the idea that **survey popularity = perceived viability**, influencing voter decisions.

Political Dynasties and Their Influence on Voter Choice

Political dynasties remain a dominant feature of Philippine politics with over 70% of congressional seats controlled by dynastic families (Mendoza et al., 2016). By leveraging their established names, wealth, and political machinery, these politicians maintain their power across generations, influence voters behavior, and through familiarity and perceived competence. Politicians with generational dynasties often enjoy significant name recognition that gives them an advantage over candidates that are non-dynastic, especially in areas where political patronage is deeply embedded.



Moreover, Mendoza et al., (2016) emphasizes that dynastic politicians utilize their established networks and resources, particularly in rural and impoverished areas to influence public perception and secure electoral success. Additionally, in regions where poverty and limited political literacy prevail, dynastic families exploit patron-client relationships, offering material incentives and service in exchange of electoral support. These relationships create a cycle of dependency where voters perceive dynastic candidates as providers of stability and resources.

The Role of Celebrity Endorsement in Voter Behavior

Celebrity endorsements play a crucial role in shaping voter behavior by influencing public perception, increasing candidates engagement through established followers and fans. According to Majic et al., (2020) Celebrities leverage their widespread recognition and social influence to promote political candidates or causes that often leads to increased voter interest and turnout. This phenomenon is attributed to the parasocial relationships that fans develop with



celebrities that leads them to view celebrity endorsement as credible and a trustworthy source of information.

Moreover, the study also emphasizes on how celebrity endorsements are particularly effective among young and less politically engaged voters as they often rely on familiar public figures to guide their electoral choices. It is also important to note that celebrities with strong social media following can mobilize younger demographics by making political participation more relatable and accessible.

Social Media as a Platform for Political Influence

Social Media has become a dominant force in shaping public opinion that influences political behavior especially during elections. Popular platforms including Facebook, Tiktok, and Instagram have made it easy for political candidates to reach certain audiences that allows them to communicate directly and freely, bypassing traditional and expensive media channels. According to Boulianne et al., (2020) Social media has a profound impact on political engagement by providing spaces where citizens can discuss, react, share political



views and content. This interaction increases civic participation among voters who consume most of their news from online sources.

Amante et al. (2023) and Cadayday et al. (2024) documented that Filipino youth are highly exposed to political content on social media, both factual and misleading. This leads to increased vulnerability to popularity-driven, emotional, and intuitive cues. Mori (2025) noted that first-time Filipino voters in Maasin City were significantly influenced by TikTok content, demonstrating a direct link between digital popularity and actual voting preference.

Psychological and Sociological Theories of Voter Behavior

Psychological theories of voter behavior focus on the internal cognitive processes that influence electoral choices. These theories suggest that individual attitudes, emotions, and perceptions shape how people decide whom to vote for. According to Bolsen and Palm (2019) Strong partisan identity reinforces motivated reasoning where voters interpret political information in ways that align with their pre-existing beliefs, this process limits openness to alternative



viewpoints and encourages confirmation bias that ultimately reinforce party allegiance.

Decision making theories in voter behavior often emphasize the interaction between cognitive and emotional processes. According to Crivelli et al., (2024). Emotional processing is often linked with system 1 in dual process models which triggers intuitive, fast and emotionally influenced decisions that may lead voters to rely on heuristics or party identification. Conversely, system 2 that is associated with rational analysis may lead voters to systematically evaluate candidates and policies.

Additionally, voters with high emotional stability and self awareness may favor emotional decision routes that show increased acceptance of their own biases. On the other hand, individuals that demonstrate openness tend to follow rational and intuitive pathways which incorporate logical assessments on their voting choices; this phenomenon corresponds with the motivated reasoning theory where voters selectively interpret political information to reinforce pre-existing beliefs, thus influencing electoral preferences.



Youth Voter Engagement and Social Media

Youth voter engagement has become an increasingly studied phenomenon as democracies worldwide aim to enhance civic participation among younger generations. Most researchers have studied the psychological, sociological, and technological factors that influence the political engagement of youth voters. According to Hylton et al., (2023) The voter engagement model employed in social work education has shown promising outcomes by increasing the perceived importance of voting and encouraging students to engage others in the electoral process. This model emphasizes the relationship between civil literacy, social justice, and the role of social work in advocating for democratic participation.

Additionally, Social Media platforms have transformed political discourse and mobilized youth voters by providing accessible channels for political expression and information dissemination. Moreover, these platforms facilitate political engagement by enabling young voters to connect with causes, candidates, and peer networks that fosters participatory culture where youth voters can amplify political messages and mobilize others to vote.



Political Branding and Voter Perception

Political branding has emerged as a strategic tool used by political parties to shape their image, influence voter perceptions, and help them gain electoral support. According to Risberg & Varga (2024) Political branding involves creating a consistent and appealing identity that resonates with voters' value and aspiration. Political brands seek to establish emotional connections with their target audience, making trust a cornerstone of effective political branding.

Additionally, Risber & Varga (2024) discussed how trust plays a critical role in shaping voter perceptions of political brands. According to the study, consistency in political messaging, keeping promises, and maintaining alignment with voters fosters trust and long term loyalty. Moreover, the study suggests that political branding can obscure the true intentions of political parties that leads to uninformed or manipulated voting choice.



Economic and structural determinants of youth electoral participation

Obciana (2023) provided an economic analysis of youth electoral participation in the Philippines, focusing on why young people vote or abstain in local and national elections. Using two-stage logistic regression and data from youth voters in Cavite, the study combined Downs' Rational Theory of Voter Behavior and the Socioeconomic Status Model to explain voter turnout. Results highlighted the importance of registration costs, ease of registration, and socioeconomic status in shaping youth participation.

Political psychology and the bandwagon effect in Philippine presidential elections

Mabulay (2023) analyzed voting patterns and election trends in the past two presidential elections in the Philippines from a political psychology perspective. The study highlighted how voter preferences are shaped by personalities, campaign strategies, party affiliation, and perceptions of candidate reliability and future performance. It explicitly noted that the growing support for



Duterte in 2016 illustrated the bandwagon effect, where voters select candidates based on rising popularity and perceived momentum.

Psychographic profiling of Filipino voters

The Philippine Office of the Ombudsman and the Institute for Political and Electoral Reform conducted a landmark study updating the psychographic profile of the Filipino voter, using a mix of quantitative surveys and qualitative approaches. The study emphasized that understanding Filipino voters requires going beyond demographics into attitudes, values, and psychological tendencies, and highlighted how clientelism, media exposure, and perceptions of candidates influence electoral choices.

College students and youth as a decisive voting bloc

The FEU Public Policy Center's "U Vote" insights report discussed survey findings from college students and youth voters, noting that first-time voters constitute an important demographic capable of influencing electoral outcomes. The report emphasized social media use, voter registration trends, and



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youth concerns, and suggested that student voters are a key audience for voter education and political engagement initiatives.

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CHAPTER 3

FRAMEWORK

This chapter presents the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that serve as the foundation of the study. These frameworks provide the lens through which the research problem is examined and analyzed.

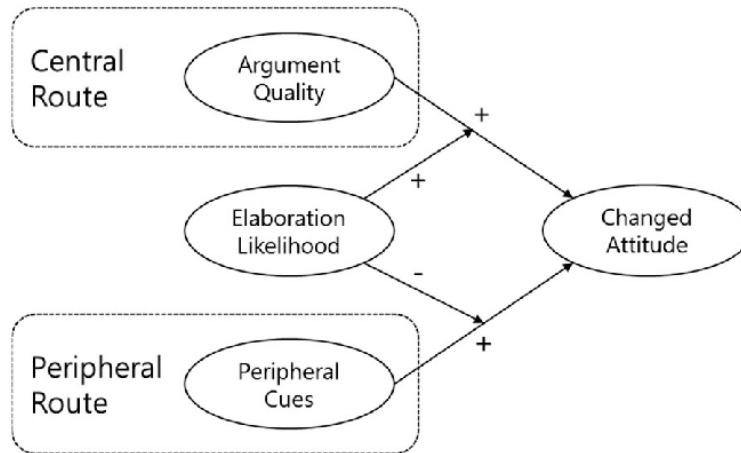
Theoretical Framework

The study of the Effect of Popularity on Voter Decision Making is grounded in a combination of psychological and sociological theories that explain voter behavior and decision making processes. One of the foundational theories that support this claims is Kahneman & Tversky Dual-Process Theory of Cognition (1979) It explains that decision making occurs through two cognitive systems, System 1, which is fast, intuitive, and emotionally driven while System 2 is a slower, more deliberate and analytical decision making. In the context of elections, voter decision is often influenced by system 1 which is the candidates



popularity, where name recognition, celebrity endorsements, and media exposure shape preferences without in depth policy, platforms, and background evaluation.

Complementing the first theory with Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) by Petty & Cacioppo (1986) that explains individuals process political information through two routes, the central route and peripheral route. The central route involves thoughtful consideration of arguments or on how voters engage in careful valuation of candidates qualification and policies while the peripheral route relies on superficial cues and heuristics such as physical attractiveness of the candidate, likeability, and popularity influenced decisions. With the increasing prevalence of social media in political discourse, many young voters engage with political content through peripheral routes, making popularity a dominant factor in shaping their voting preferences.



Figure

1.

Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) by Petty & Cacioppo. 1986

Kelman's Social Influence Theory (1958) explains how voters adopt attitudes and behaviors through compliance, identification, and internalization. Compliance occurs when voters align with popular choices to gain social approval. Identification happens when voters emulate admired public figures. Internalization takes place when individuals genuinely accept ideas. In the studies' context, social media reinforces identification and compliance by amplifying the popularity of candidates that promotes trending opinions

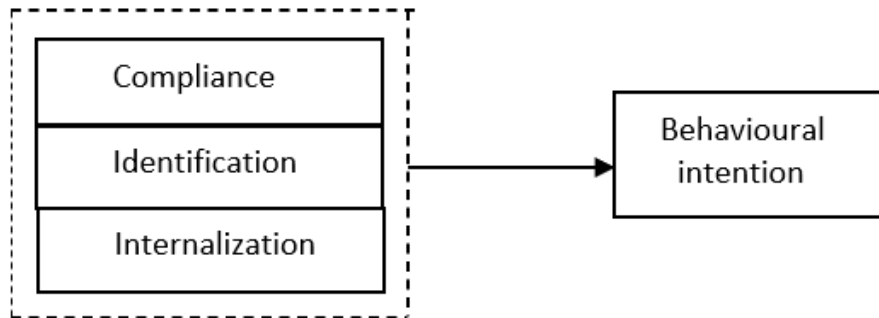


Figure 2. Social Influence Theory (SIT) by Kelman H. 1958

Conceptual Framework

The effect of popularity on voter decision making is a significant factor in electoral behavior. According to the literature gathered, it is said that voter preferences may not always be based on policy competence or qualifications but are instead influenced by a candidate's public appeal and media presence. As Teehankee (2019) and David & Atun (2015) explained how voters often lean towards candidates with high name recall which can be a result of a familial political ties, entertainment background, or strategic social media presence.



The study will utilize an operational model where popular voting factors such as Intuition, Emotional Driven, Likability, Influences, and Trust, are analyzed in relation to their impact on voter decision making. The study will also consider socio economic characteristics such as age, gender, family background, and academic background as potential moderating factors that could influence how popularity affects voter choices.

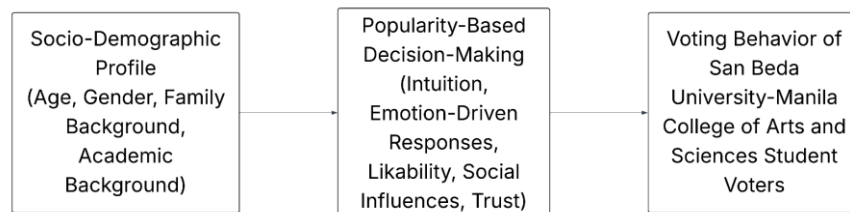


Figure 3. Conceptual Model by Cruz C. 2025



Assumptions of the Study

1. The study assumes that San Beda University (SBU) student voters have a basic awareness of political processes, candidates, and electoral dynamics in the upcoming 2025 Philippine midterm elections.
2. It is assumed that the respondents have been exposed to various forms of political information including political content on social media, celebrity endorsement or candidates, and political dynasties.
3. The researchers will maintain objectivity in analyzing and interpreting data, minimizing bias to ensure that the results reflect the actual response of the participants.
4. It is assumed that all respondents will participate voluntarily and their responses will be free from any form of coercion or external influence. This ensures the authenticity of the study.



Hypothesis of the Study

In examining the effect of popularity on voter decision making, the study proposes a hypothesis to establish the relationship between factors. The researcher aims to challenge the null hypotheses to validate the study's objective.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between the socio economic profile of SBU student voters and their decision making behavior related to popularity-based decision-making.

H₀₂: Popularity has no significant influence on the decision-making behavior of San Beda University–Manila student voters during Philippine elections.

H₀₃: Popularity-based decision-making does not significantly predict the overall voting influence of student voters.



CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research design, data collection methods, sampling procedures and analytical tools employed to investigate the correlation between variables. Furthermore, the location on where the study was conducted and how the data has been gathered are also discussed in this chapter

Correlational Research Design

The researchers employed a quantitative-descriptive and correlational research design to examine the relationship between popularity-based decision-making and the voting behavior of student voters from the College of Arts and Sciences of San Beda University–Manila. According to McCombes (2020), a correlational research design is a relationship of two variables with the researcher controlling none of them. It aims to find out between the variables if there's



Positive, Negative, and Zero Correlation. In line with this, the researchers used correlational study to help understand the relationship between variables and grasp the idea behind the study's definition and meaning.

Furthermore, correlational study was utilized for the study because a specific group was used. The descriptive component enabled the researchers to present the socio-economic profile of respondents and determine their levels of intuition, emotionality, likability, influence, and trust—five dimensions that collectively measure popularity-based decision-making. This design was necessary to establish the behavioral tendencies of student voters and the general pattern of their decision-making processes using numerical data.

The correlational aspect of the study sought to identify whether significant associations exist between socio-demographic variables (age, gender, academic background, and family income) and the respondents' Popularity Score. Furthermore, this component examined the strength and direction of the relationship between popularity-based decision-making and the extent to which popularity influences the respondents' final voting behavior, using Pearson correlation analysis.

In addition, the study adopted an econometric component through the use of Ordinal Logistic Regression (Ordered Logit Model) to determine whether



popularity-based decision-making significantly predicts the level of voting influence. The dependent variable, Voting_Influenced, was measured on a four-point ordinal scale, making ordered logit regression the most appropriate analytical tool. This component allowed the researchers to assess the probability of a respondent moving across increasing levels of voting influence based on popularity-related cues, while controlling for demographic factors.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study consisted of 300 students enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) of San Beda University–Manila during the Academic Year 2023–2024. The sample included students from all four year levels first year to fourth year to ensure representation across varying levels of academic maturity. Respondents also came from diverse family income backgrounds, ranging from below ₱60,000 to above ₱100,000 monthly income brackets.

To be included in the study, respondents were required to meet the following criteria:

- (1) they must be currently enrolled in the CAS department;



- (2) they must be at least 18 years old; and
- (3) they must have participated in a national or student council election.

These criteria ensured that all participants had actual or meaningful exposure to voting behavior, making their responses relevant to the study's objectives.

Participation was voluntary and anonymous. The researchers selected respondents using purposive sampling to ensure that only students with actual voting experience were included. This approach was appropriate because the research sought to gather insights specifically from individuals who had previously made voting decisions influenced by personal, emotional, intuitive, or popularity-related factors. The sample size of 300 respondents was considered adequate for reliability testing, correlational analysis, and ordinal regression modeling, providing the study with strong statistical power and representativeness within the CAS population.



Research Locale

The study will be conducted at San Beda University (SBU), located at 638 Mendiola St, San Miguel, Manila, 1005 Metro Manila. The researcher will focus on undergraduate students enrolled in the department of College of Arts and Sciences (CAS). SBU is a private Roman Catholic institution known for its strong academic programs in liberal arts, social sciences and law. With the CAS department being one of the university's core departments, it offers a diverse range of programs and houses a significant number of students who are eligible voters.

The choice of this locale is based on the accessibility of respondents who fit the study's criteria. Moreover, the familiarity of the researcher with the institution also allows for a more efficient data gathering through various platforms.



Sampling Design

The study will utilize a purposive convenience sampling method. The target population of this study consists of the undergraduate students from the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) department of San Beda University (SBU) who are registered voters and are eligible to vote in the upcoming 2025 Philippine Midterm Elections.

Participants will be purposively selected based on the following criteria:

- Must be enrolled in the CAS department of SBU
- Must be a registered voter of the 2025 Philippine Midterm Election

Among the eligible CAS students, the participants of the study will be chosen based on convenience sampling wherein the researcher prioritizes who are readily accessible through the academic departments, class organizations, and online student groups.



Sample Size

The sample size for this study was determined using Slovin's Formula to ensure that the data collected would be statistically representative of the target population within a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n

= Sample Size

N

= Estimated Population Size

e

= Margin of error (0.05)

As the study focuses on undergraduate students from the College of Arts and



Sciences of San Beda University that are registered voters, an estimated population size will be used based on the available enrollment data and voter registration statistics. This sample size will allow the researchers to draw meaningful conclusions for the study.

Instrumentation

The study will employ a self-constructed survey questionnaire as the primary research instrument to gather data from selected student voters of San Beda University - College of Arts and Sciences department. The questionnaire was developed based on the conceptual framework and research questions of the study. The questionnaire is designed to measure both the socio-economic profile of the respondents and their decision-making behavior related to popular voting. To ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument, a pilot test was conducted with 10 non-participant students from the same university to refine item wording and structure.



The feedback from the pilot testing were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha to determine internal consistency with a threshold of $\alpha \geq 0.70$ considered acceptable for reliability. The instrument tested was administered digitally through a secure online platform to ensure ease of access, data privacy, and wider reach among target respondents.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire consisting of four parts:

Part I: Socio-Demographic Profile

Included questions on:

- Age
- Gender
- Family background (monthly income)
- Academic background (year level)

Part II: Popularity-Based Decision-Making

Contained 11 Likert-scale items measuring:

- Intuition



- Emotionality
- Likability
- Influences
- Trust

Part III: Voting Approach

Determined whether respondents leaned toward policy-based, popularity-based, or mixed voting approaches.

Part IV: Voting Influence

Included the question measuring the extent to which popularity influenced the respondent's vote on a 4-point ordinal scale

1	—	Very	Low
2		—	Low
3		—	Moderate
4	High		



The questionnaire underwent content validation by Mr Zoleta's cronbach alpha test to ensure relevance, clarity, and accuracy. A pilot test was administered to 30 students not included in the main study. Reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.898, indicating excellent internal consistency among the 11 popularity-based decision-making items.

Research Procedures of Data Collection

The data collection procedure for this study was conducted in a systematic and ethical manner to ensure the reliability and integrity of the data gathered from respondents.

• Approval and Coordination

Prior to data collection, formal approval was secured from the San Beda University Research Ethics Committee. The researchers also coordinated with the College of Arts and Sciences administration to identify and access eligible student voters from different year levels and academic programs.



● **Pilot Testing of the Instrument**

A pilot test of the self-constructed questionnaire was conducted with 30 non-participating SBU students to evaluate the clarity, appropriateness, and reliability of the survey items. Based on the feedback received, necessary revisions were made to improve the wording and structure of certain questions. The reliability of the instrument was confirmed through a Cronbach's Alpha test, with a value of 0.898, indicating high internal consistency.

● **Survey Distribution**

The validated questionnaire was distributed through online platforms, primarily via Google Forms, to ensure convenience and accessibility for respondents. The survey link was shared through official university channels, such as student group chats, class email lists, and university social media platforms. Participants were also given clear instructions and a consent form explaining the study's purpose, their rights as respondents, and assurances of confidentiality and anonymity.

● **Respondent Selection**

The study utilized purposive sampling to select respondents who met the



inclusion criteria: (1) currently enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences of San Beda University, (2) aged 18 years and above, and (3) registered or intending to vote in the 2025 Philippine midterm elections. The target sample size was determined based on the university's student population and confidence level requirements for statistical analysis.

- **Monitoring and Follow-Up**

To ensure sufficient response rates, regular follow-ups and reminders were sent to prospective respondents through digital communication channels. The survey remained open for a two-week period, from April 13 to May 3, during which participation was completely voluntary.

- **Data Screening and Storage**

After the survey period, all responses were screened to remove duplicates or incomplete entries. The final data set was stored securely in password-protected digital files accessible only to the researchers. Personally identifiable information was not collected to maintain full anonymity of respondents.



• **Data Preparation for Analysis**

The cleaned and finalized data were coded and entered into statistical software for quantitative analysis. Frequency counts, descriptive statistics, and inferential tests such as Ordinal Regression were used to analyze the relationship between socio-economic profiles and voting behavior based on popularity-related factors.

Ethical Consideration

The researchers have given the respondents a consent letter prior to answering the survey questionnaire. The consent letter contains the information that is needed to be obtained from the respondents to ensure the study's efficacy, for the protection of their data, and the risks involved in participating in the study. Moreover, the data that will be retrieved from the respondents are being treated with utmost confidentiality and with the implementation of Republic Act No. 10173 "The Data Privacy Act".

The researchers will ensure the data collected would be protected with the necessary measures implemented by law and will not subject the respondents to any forms of harm and harassment. All the information gathered is solely for



research purposes. The researcher will also value and protect the dignity of every respondent involved and will take full responsibility for the data collected.

Descriptive Statistics

As mentioned by Trochim (2020), Descriptive Statistics are a type of statistical treatment that summarizes the data collected by the researchers and enables the researchers to interpret the gathered results and measure the data's central tendency variability. The most effective way to calculate vast amounts of data is to use descriptive statistics. With this, the study will utilize descriptive statistics as part of the study in order to describe and summarize the relationship of Popularity and Voters decision making, data's central tendency, variability, and reliability. Thus, the study will utilize descriptive statistics to compute for the mean and standard deviation

Mean

Mean is the standard measure of central tendency and refers to the average value of a group of numbers (Sykes et al., 2016). The researchers utilized this as a statistical treatment to determine the average of the data gathered. The adopted questionnaire was based on a 5 point likert scale. With the help of the Mean, it



will determine the average of the data gathered and the certainty of relationship between Popular Vote and the Decision making of voters. According to Kalla (2009), one of its essential properties is that it minimizes error in the prediction of any value in your data set. This indicates that the mean is essential to the study.

Standard Deviation

The researchers utilized standard deviation as one of its statistical treatments. According to Hargrave (2021), a standard deviation is a statistical treatment that measures the dispersion of a dataset relative to its Mean. Furthermore, if the data points are further from the Mean, there is a higher deviation within the data set; thus, the more spread out the data, the higher the standard deviation. The researchers used this as a statistical treatment because the researchers want to see each mean's accuracy in the data gathered. Furthermore, the standard deviation essentiality is to help the ranking of the average scores in a certain dimension to solidify the mean and validation of each spreadness and the summary of the study. Furthermore, it is also used to measure the reliability of the data.



Inferential Statistics

The study will use Inferential statistics to analyze and generate inferential interpretation on the collected data. According to Kuhar (2010) Inferential statistics are used to compare treatment groups and to form generalizations about the broader population of subjects based on the collected data. The study will utilize the Pearson correlation coefficient, hypothesis testing, Chi-square analysis and Spearman-rho as inferential statistics.

Independent Samples t-Test

The independent samples t-test is a statistical procedure used to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the means of two independent groups on a continuous dependent variable. This test assesses whether the observed difference in sample means is large enough to conclude that the groups come from populations with different true means, rather than the difference occurring by random sampling variation alone. According to KentState University (n.d), the independent t-test compares the average scores of two unrelated groups to determine whether the difference is likely to reflect a real effect or is due to chance variations in the data.



The test is appropriate when the following assumptions are met: (a) the dependent variable is measured at the interval or ratio level, (b) the two groups being compared are independent of one another, (c) the data follow an approximately normal distribution, and (d) the variances of the groups are relatively equal.

In the context of the present study, the independent samples t-test was utilized to determine whether male and female students significantly differ in their level of popularity-based decision-making, as measured by the composite Popularity Score. Because gender consists of exactly two independent groups, and the Popularity Score is a continuous index derived from multiple Likert-scale items, the independent t-test is the most statistically appropriate analysis for this comparison. The results revealed no significant difference between males and females, indicating that gender does not meaningfully influence how much students rely on intuitive, emotional, likability-based, or influence-based cues when selecting candidates. This finding suggests that popularity-based decision-making is a consistent behavioral pattern across both male and female student voters.



One-Way ANOVA

The one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) is a statistical technique used to determine whether there are significant mean differences among three or more independent groups on a continuous dependent variable. ANOVA evaluates whether the variability between group means is sufficiently large compared to the variability within groups, such that the differences are unlikely to have occurred by chance. As Gravetter and Wallnau (2017) explain, ANOVA partitions the total variability in the data into “between-group” variance and “within-group” variance, and then compares these through an F-ratio to determine whether at least one group mean differs significantly from the others.

One-way ANOVA is appropriate under conditions where: (a) the dependent variable is continuous, (b) the groups are independent, (c) the observations are randomly sampled, and (d) the data demonstrate approximate normality and homogeneity of variances.

In the present study, one-way ANOVA was performed twice—first to determine whether academic background (year level) significantly influences popularity-based decision-making, and second to assess whether family monthly



income has an effect on the same variable. Since both academic year and income consist of more than two independent categories, ANOVA is the most appropriate inferential tool for identifying potential group differences.

Pearson Correlation Coefficient

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient is an inferential statistical technique most used in a quantitative research study. It evaluates the relationship between the two variables Popular voting and Voters Decision Making. This statistical technique measures the strength and degree where the two variables correspond to the changes that happen to the other variable. This relationship between the variables can be either positive or negative. The P-value will be used to identify the null hypothesis of the study. Thus, it will help the researchers to determine the significant relationship of Popular voting and Voters Decision Making. Moreover, the lesser the P-value based on the results, the more accurate the null hypothesis. Hence, it will determine whether there is a relationship between the said variables.



Ordinal Regression Model

Ordinal regression model is a statistical method used to model the relationship between an ordinal dependent variable and one or more independent variables. The dependent variable in ordinal regression is measured on an ordered scale where categories have a meaningful ranking but the intervals between them are not necessarily equal (Statistics Solutions, n.d). The primary goal of ordinal regression is to estimate the likelihood of an outcome falling into one of the ordered categories based on predictor variables.

Ordinal Regression Formula

$$Y_j = \beta_0 + \beta_j X_j + e_j$$

Where:

Y = Popular vote (Intuition, Emotional driven, Likability, Influences, Trust)

X = Age, Gender coded as 1 (Male) and 0 (Female), Family background 1 (politically active) 0 (not politically active)



β_0

= intercept

β_j

= coefficient in the regression model

e_j

= error term

The subscript j stands for jth individual in the regression model.



CHAPTER 5

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

This chapter presents the results of the data gathered from the respondents. It also shows the analysis and interpretation of the data by the researchers based on statistical analysis.

Introduction

The analyses include the socio-economic profile of the respondents, the expression of popularity-based decision-making across five psychological factors, the relationship between socio-demographic variables and popularity-based decision-making, the extent to which popularity influences overall decision-making, and the results of the ordinal regression model. All results were generated from the actual responses of 300 San Beda University–Manila College of Arts and Sciences student voters.



Respondents Profile

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18	53	17.67
19	96	32
20	42	14
21	43	14.33
22	26	8.67
23	18	6
24	22	7.33
Total	300	100

Table 1. Age

The respondents ranged from 18 to 24 years old. The largest group was 19 year olds (32%), followed by those aged 18 (17.67%) and 20 (14%). This age distribution reflects the typical demographic makeup of undergraduate students.



The age distribution indicates that most respondents are in the early stages of adulthood. This is relevant because younger voters are known to rely more heavily on intuitive and impression-based decision-making, as supported by dual-process theory (Kahneman, 2011). Student voters within this age bracket may have less experience evaluating platform-based information compared to older, more politically mature adults. This helps explain later results showing strong influence from popularity cues.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	135	45
Female	165	55
Total	300	100

Table 2. Gender

The sample consisted of 55% female (165) and 45% male (135) respondents. The slight female majority is consistent with typical gender distributions in many Philippine colleges. However, gender was later tested for statistical significance in relation to popularity-based decision-making and was found to have no significant effect. This suggests that male and female students



rely on popularity cues at similar levels, and gender does not meaningfully shape intuitive voting tendencies.

Academic Background	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1st year	70	23.33
2nd year	82	27.33
3rd year	73	24.33
4th year	75	25
Total	300	100

Table 3. Academic Background

The balanced distribution across year levels indicates that the study captured perspectives from both new and experienced students. However, ANOVA results revealed no significant difference in popularity-based decision-making across year levels suggesting that reliance on popularity cues does not change as students progress through college.



Family Monthly Income	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below Php 60,000	71	23.67
60,000 - 70,000	85	28.33
70,001 - 80,000	60	20
80,001 - 90,000	46	15.33
100,000 and above	38	12.67
Total	300	100

Table 4. Family Monthly Income

The majority of respondents fall within the lower-middle to middle-income brackets. Despite these differences in income categories, statistical analysis later shows that family income has no significant relationship with popularity-based decision-making. This means the tendency to rely on popularity cues is not driven by socio-economic class among SBU students.



Expression of Popularity-Based Decision Making

Factor	Items	Mean Score
Intuition	PB1-2	2.50
Emotionally Driven	PB3-4	2.50
Likability	PB5-6	2.50
Influences	PB7-PB8	2.50
Trust	PB9-PB11	2.50

Table 5. Expression of Popularity-Based Decision Making

Popularity-based decision-making was measured using 11 Likert-scale items (PB_Item_1 to PB_Item_11), rated from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree).

Descriptive analysis revealed that all items had a mean of 2.50 and a standard deviation of approximately 1.12, indicating moderate levels of agreement with considerable variability in responses. A composite Popularity_Score, computed as the mean of the 11 items, yielded:



- Mean (M) = 2.50
- Standard Deviation (SD) = 0.79

This reflects a moderate level of popularity-based decision-making among the respondents. On average, student voters neither strongly reject nor fully rely on intuition, emotions, likability, social influence, and trust as bases for their voting decisions, but these factors are clearly present.

Relationship between Socio-Demographic Profile and Popularity-Based Decision Making

This section examines whether age, gender, family background (monthly income), and academic background (year level) are significantly related to popularity-based decision-making. Popularity-based decision-making was measured through the composite Popularity Score, derived from items assessing intuition, emotionality, likability, influence, and trust.

Pearson Correlation - Age

T-test - Gender

Anova - Academic Background



Age vs Popularity Score

$$R = 0.025, P = 0.67$$

Not Significant

Age does not influence how students rely on popularity cues when voting. Younger students (18–19) and older students (20–24) show similar levels of intuitive, emotion-driven, likability-based, and influence-based thinking.

This suggests that the tendency to use popularity as a decision-making heuristic is not age-dependent, reinforcing that popularity cues are appealing across the typical college age range.

Gender vs Popularity Score

$$T = 0.28, P = 0.78$$

Not Significant

Male and female students do not differ in their reliance on popularity cues.

- Males are not more likely than females to vote based on popularity



- Females are not more likely than males to rely on intuition or emotions when selecting candidates

Both genders demonstrate equivalent decision-making styles, highlighting that popularity-based voting is a universal behavioral tendency among student voters.

Academic Background vs Popularity Score

$F = 0.48, P = 0.70$

Not Significant

Freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors all rely on popularity cues at similar levels. Even though academic maturity increases with each year level, the data show, Increased educational exposure, More experience in student elections, Greater cognitive development do not reduce reliance on intuitive or likability cues. This implies that popularity-based reasoning persists throughout college, regardless of academic year.

Family Monthly Income vs Popularity Score

"That In All Things, God May Be Glorified"



$F = 1.29, P = 0.27$

Not Significant

Students from different income brackets show no significant difference in popularity-based decision making. The results indicate that students from lower income households are not more likely to vote based on popularity and students from higher income families are also not less likely to rely on intuitive or emotional cues.

The findings show that none of the socio-demographic variables age, gender, family monthly income, and academic year have a significant relationship with popularity-based decision-making. This means that the tendency to rely on intuitive impressions, emotional responses, likability, social influence, and trust is consistent across all types of students. Regardless of demographic background, students demonstrate similar levels of popularity-driven thinking. These results indicate that popularity-based decision-making is a universal behavioral pattern among San Beda University students, not dependent on personal characteristics or socio-economic circumstances.

Extent of Popularity on Overall Decision Making

"That In All Things, God May Be Glorified"



Level	Frequency	Interpretation
Very Low	114	More than 1 in 3 students rarely vote based on popularity
Low	70	Somewhat Influenced
Moderate	56	Quite Influenced
High	60	Strongly Influenced

Table 6. Extent of Popularity on Overall Decision Making

About 38.67% (Moderate + High) experience significant popularity influence.

Most respondents (61.33%) show low influence, but the correlation gives the real answer



Correlation Matrix

Correlation Matrix

		Popularity_Score	Voting_Influenced
Popularity_Score	Pearson's r	—	
	df	—	
	p-value	—	
Voting_Influenced	Pearson's r	0.946	—
	df	298	—
	p-value	< .001	—

Table 7. Correlation Matrix

The findings revealed that popularity significantly influences the overall decision-making behavior of SBU student voters. Although a majority reported low direct influence from popularity cues, a substantial 38.67% admitted moderate to high influence. This subjective report is reinforced by objective measures showing that Popularity Score and Voting Influence exhibit an extremely strong correlation ($r = 0.95$, $p < .001$), indicating that students who rely on intuitive, emotional, likability-based, or trust-based judgments are almost always the same individuals whose votes are shaped by popularity.



Ordinal Regression Model

Predictor	Coefficient	Interpretation
Popularity Score	+264.42	Massive impact, strongest predictor
Age	-1.33	No meaningful influence
Gender	+64.24	Unstable, not substantive
Income	+29.89	Not meaningful
Year	-6.65	Not meaningful

Table 8. Ordinal Regression Model

Threshold coefficients (cut-points)

cut1 = -528.31

cut2 = -522.48

cut3 = -513.73

The ordinal regression analysis revealed that popularity-based decision-

"That In All Things, God May Be Glorified"



making is the strongest and most substantial predictor of voting influence among student voters. The extremely large positive coefficient for Popularity Score ($\beta = 264.42$) indicates that increases in reliance on intuitive, emotional, and likability-based cues dramatically heighten the likelihood that respondents fall into higher levels of popularity influence.

The model exhibited quasi-complete separation, meaning that Popularity Score almost perfectly distinguishes between low and high influence categories. This further confirms the overwhelming role of popularity in shaping decision-making. In contrast, socio-demographic variables such as age, gender, family income, and academic year did not show meaningful predictive power, suggesting that popularity influences all student groups similarly.

These results support the Elaboration Likelihood Model and Dual Process Theory, showing that student voters predominantly rely on peripheral-route processing and intuitive judgments when selecting candidates.



CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

This study examined the relationship between popularity-based decision-making and the voting behavior of selected student voters from the College of Arts and Sciences of San Beda University–Manila. Using a quantitative-descriptive and correlational research design, data were gathered from 300 respondents through a structured questionnaire measuring intuition, emotional drivers, likability, influences, trust, demographic factors, and voting influence.

The socio-economic profile showed that most respondents were 18–21 years old, with a slight female majority, belonging primarily to the ₱60,000–₱70,000 family income bracket, and evenly distributed across academic year levels. These demographic variables were used in subsequent analyses to determine their relationship with popularity-based decision-making.



In terms of how popularity-based decision-making is expressed, the respondents demonstrated moderate reliance on intuitive impressions, emotional responses, likability judgments, social influences, and trust cues. Each factor yielded a mean score of 2.50 on a 4-point Likert scale, suggesting that students neither rely heavily nor ignore popularity-based cues; rather, they use them to a moderate extent.

Findings revealed no significant relationship between socio-demographic profile (age, gender, family background, academic year) and popularity-based decision-making. This indicates that the tendency to rely on popularity cues is not shaped by personal background but appears to be a shared behavioral trait among student voters.

The extent of popularity influence on overall decision-making showed that 38.67% of respondents experienced moderate to high influence from popularity when deciding whom to vote for. While the majority reported low influence, the correlation analysis showed a very strong positive relationship ($r = 0.95$, $p < .001$) between Popularity Score and Voting Influence. This means students with stronger popularity-based thinking were almost always those whose votes were influenced by popularity.



To validate this further, an ordinal logistic regression model was conducted using Voting Influence as the dependent variable and Popularity Score and demographics as predictors. The model encountered quasi-complete separation, indicating that Popularity Score acts as an almost perfect predictor of voting influence. The coefficient for Popularity Score ($\beta = 264.42$) was extremely large, confirming its overwhelming predictive power. Meanwhile, demographic variables showed no meaningful or significant effect.

Overall, the results demonstrate that popularity-based decision-making is the dominant factor shaping student voting behavior, with demographic characteristics playing no significant role.

In summary, the study accepted the null hypotheses concerning demographic variables (H_01 and H_02) after finding no significant relationships or differences in popularity-based decision-making across age, gender, academic year, or family income. Conversely, the study rejected the hypotheses stating no association or predictive effect between popularity-based decision-making and voting influence (H_03 and H_04). Both correlation analysis and ordinal regression results confirmed that popularity-based decision-making has a substantial and statistically significant impact on students' voting influence. These findings emphasize that popularity is an influential and dominant factor in student voting



behavior, whereas demographic characteristics do not meaningfully affect decision-making tendencies.

Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Popularity-based decision-making is moderately present among SBU students, reflected consistently across intuition, emotionality, likability, influence, and trust. Students do not fully depend on these cues but incorporate them meaningfully into their voting decisions.
2. Demographic characteristics do not influence popularity-based decision-making. Regardless of age, gender, family income, or academic year, students exhibit similar tendencies in how much they rely on popularity cues.
3. Popularity has a substantial impact on the voting behavior of student voters. Nearly four in ten students consciously recognize that popularity affects their choice of candidates. Even those who report low influence display strong statistical patterns linking popularity thinking with their



voting

action.

4. Popularity Score is the strongest predictor of voting influence, as evidenced by the extremely strong correlation and the ordinal logistic regression model. The regression results indicate that popularity almost perfectly distinguishes between low, moderate, and high influence categories.
5. Theories of intuitive and peripheral-route processing are strongly supported. The dominance of popularity-based cues aligns with the Elaboration Likelihood Model and Dual Process Theory, suggesting that students rely more on emotional, intuitive, and surface-level cues rather than analytical evaluation of platforms.
6. Popularity influences all types of students equally, confirming that intuitive and peripheral decision-making tendencies are universal tendencies within the student population.

Recommendations

"That In All Things, God May Be Glorified"



For Students

1. Engage more actively in evaluating candidate platforms and qualifications to reduce reliance on impression-based decision-making.
2. Attend forums, debates, or organized discussions to gain a deeper understanding of candidate policies.

For Student Organizations & Election Committees

1. Implement structured debates, platform presentations, and transparent candidate profiling to reduce the bias toward popularity.
2. Adopt standardized campaign guidelines ensuring equal exposure for all candidates.
3. Develop awareness campaigns encouraging voters to evaluate candidates based on merit and vision.



For School Administrators

1. Integrate critical thinking, media literacy, and responsible political engagement programs within student leadership courses or GEC subjects.
2. Encourage the institution of formal voter education initiatives every election period.

For Future Researchers

1. Conduct qualitative research to explore how students interpret popularity cues during elections.
2. Expand the study to other departments or universities for broader generalization.
3. Investigate the role of social media exposure or online presence as modern extensions of popularity-based influence.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

The dominance of popularity-based decision-making highlights the need for institutions to address intuitive, emotional, and impression-driven voting. The findings suggest that student elections risk being shaped by peripheral cues rather



than informed democratic reasoning. As such, universities must promote structured and evidence-based political engagement among young voters.

The strong econometric evidence supporting popularity influence also opens pathways for future behavioral research, particularly in understanding subconscious decision-making biases among Generation Z voters.

Policy Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers propose the following policy recommendations to strengthen informed voter decision-making, reduce overreliance on popularity cues, and enhance civic awareness among student voters



Institutionalize Voter Education Programs in the College of Arts and Sciences

Given that popularity-based decision-making was found to be the *strongest and only significant predictor* of voting influence, it is recommended that the College of Arts and Sciences adopt structured voter education initiatives. These programs should focus on critical evaluation of political platforms, understanding candidate qualifications, and analyzing evidence-based policy proposals.

Workshops and seminars led by political scientists, legal experts, and civic organizations can help students transition from popularity-driven to issue-based decision-making. Such programs may be integrated within the General Education Curriculum, student leadership development courses, or campus-wide civic engagement events.



Strengthen Political Literacy Through Curriculum Integration

The results showed that socio-demographic factors such as age, gender, family income, and academic standing do not influence popularity-based decision-making. This implies that all student groups—regardless of year level or background—require equal access to political literacy development.

The University may consider embedding modules on political literacy, media literacy, and democratic participation within existing courses such as Purposive Communication, Ethics, Understanding the Self, and Social Sciences subjects. Doing so aligns with national calls for a more politically informed Filipino youth.

Implement Regulated and Transparent Student Election Campaign Guidelines

Because popularity impacts voting decisions heavily, student governing bodies such as the COMELEC-CAS and the Supreme Student Government should implement more transparent, platform-focused, and regulated campaign guidelines. These may include:

- Mandatory platform presentations



- Equal screen time for all candidates during election events
- Prohibition of excessive promotional materials
- Requirement to publish project plans and experience profiles
- Clear sanctions for candidates who rely on misleading or purely image-based campaigning

Such reforms will help minimize the influence of superficial popularity cues in student elections.

Encourage Evidence-Based Political Engagement Through University Media and Events

The study highlights that students are significantly influenced by likability, social pressure, and trust-based judgments. To counter this, the University may provide structured opportunities for evidence-based encounters with candidates, such as:

- Formal debates
- Issue-centered discussions
- Candidate interviews hosted by campus publications
- Expert-led fact-checking events
- Public forums comparing candidate platforms



These initiatives promote a culture of informed discourse rather than personality-driven politics.

Foster Critical Media Literacy to Address Digital Popularity Bias

With Philippine elections heavily influenced by social media trends, it is essential that the University strengthen students' ability to detect emotional manipulation, misinformation, and popularity bias online. The institution may collaborate with organizations such as Rappler MovePH, COMELEC, PPCRV, and FEU Public Policy Center to conduct training on:

- Recognizing digital persuasion
- Understanding algorithmic bias
- Verifying the credibility of political content
- Identifying propaganda and deceptive popularity-building tactics

This aligns with research showing that digital popularity cues—such as viral videos, influencer endorsements, and celebrity associations—heavily shape youth decision-making.

Support the Development of Student-Led Civic Engagement Groups



Because social influence significantly predicts voting patterns, the University may support student-led groups that advocate for:

- non-partisan civic engagement
- political education
- youth participation in local governance
- anti-disinformation initiatives

Encouraging peer-to-peer civic education helps counteract popularity-based judgment by empowering students to become responsible sources of political information within their social circles.

Promote Research and Institutional Partnerships on Youth Voting Behavior

The strong predictive power of popularity-based decision-making demonstrated in this study highlights the importance of continued research on student voting psychology. The University may establish partnerships with:

- COMELEC
- NAMFREL
- PPCRV



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- FEU Public Policy Center
- UP National College of Public Administration and Governance

These partnerships may support longitudinal studies, deeper behavioral analyses, and evidence-based policy discussions within the academic community.

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202101221

"That In All Things, God May Be Glorified"



**Effects of Popularity-Based Decision Making on the Voting Behavior of
San Beda University-Manila College of Arts and Sciences Student Voters**

QUESTIONNAIRE

Instruction: Please answer the following by checking the appropriate box.

I. Consent

1. Consent to participate: I have read the information about this study and I
voluntarily agree to participate

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

2. You are a registered voter

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

II. Demographics

3. Age ____



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4. Gender

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

5. Year Level

- ☐ 1st Year
- ☐ 2nd Year
- ☐ 3rd Year
- ☐ 4th Year

6. Program/Course _____

7. Family Monthly Income

- ☐ Below 10,000
- ☐ 10,000-30,000
- ☐ 30,001-60,000
- ☐ 60,001-100,000
- ☐ Above 100,000

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III. Popularity-Based Decision-Making

For each statement below, indicate your level of agreement: **1 = Strong Disagree,**
2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree.

	1	2	3	4
I often rely on my gut feeling when choosing a candidate				
I decide quickly about candidates without researching their platforms/platform.				
I am more likely to support a candidate who makes me feel excited or inspired				



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Emotional appeal (e.g., stories, speeches) plays a big role in my voting choices				
I would vote for a candidate who appears friendly and relatable, even if I know little about their policies				
A candidate's charisma affects my perception of their capability to lead				
The opinions of my friends influence my choice of candidate				
I often see political posts on social media that shape my views about candidates				

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I tend to trust candidates who are frequently discussed or recommended in my social circle				
I trust candidates who show consistency between their words and actions				
I believe that popular candidates are more likely to keep their campaign promises				

IV. Voting Behavior

19. Which best describes your usual voting approach

- ☐ Popularity-Based
- ☐ Policy-Based
- ☐ Mixed (both popularity & policy)
- ☐ Other: _____

20. In the last national election, did you vote?

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☐ Yes

☐ No

21. If you voted, did you vote for a candidate primarily because of their popularity?

☐ Yes

☐ No

22. How likely are you to research candidate platforms before voting?

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

Thank you for participating. Your responses will remain anonymous and will only be used for academic research. If you have questions about this study kindly contact: 2021-01221@sanbeda.edu.ph.

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Summary:

A dedicated and hardworking person who is knowledgeable in analytics, policies. A fast learner, can adjust easily to any environment, and can manage time efficiently which can contribute to the overall process and success of the company.

Education:

August 2021 - Present **San Beda University – Manila**

Bachelor of Science in Economics and Public Policy

Dean's Lister 2020-2021, 2024-2025

June 2019 - 2021 **San Beda University – Manila**

Senior High School—ABM

Academic Distinction 2020-2021

June 2015 - 2019 **Saint Paul University at San Miguel – Bulacan**

Junior High School

June 2007 - 2015 **Saint Paul University at San Ildefonso –Bulacan**

Grade School



Personal & Technical Skills:

- Proficient in Microsoft Office
- Can communicate very effectively (Written and Oral)
- Strong Analytical and problem solving skills
- Software Tools Experiences:
 - R studio
 - Gretl
 - SPSS
 - Jamovi
- Can work under pressure and multi-task

Seminars & Workshops:

- Anvil Publishing: Professional and Enhancement Certificate Program in Economics (Pro-ECP) – Aug 2021
- Prince of Songkla University: 9th International Virtual Conference of Regional Network on Poverty Education (RENPER) – Sept 2021

Eligibility

&

Certifications

Civil Service Professional Eligible (Rating: 86.31) - August 10, 2025