

# Taxonomy of Impressions on Political Ecology Among Abrenian Youth: A Challenge to Academic Integrity and Future Voter Education Program

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the taxonomy of impressions on political ecology among the Abrenian Youth: a challenge to academic integrity and future voter education program. Specifically, it aims to determine the respondents' concept of a clean and honest election; respondents' experiences, impressions and observations in the political ecology of Abra; respondents' targeted participation in the 2019 Midterm election and their corresponding expectations from the elected officials; and, the areas in the curriculum where topics and electoral-related activities focused on voter education are integrated.

This study utilized the quantitative-qualitative method and is descriptive in nature. There are 103 respondents whose ages range from 18 – 22, comprised of 22 males and 81 females and are first-time electorates. The gathering of data was conducted from March 11 – 27, 2019, few weeks before the election time.

This study utilized a researcher-made questionnaire to elicit answers from respondents. Focus group discussion was done during the conduct of the survey. Frequency counts and computed percentages were used in presenting the data.

The following are the findings: 1). The following are the definitions of the respondents of a clean and honest election: A clean and honest election is when there is NO vote buying and NO vote selling; when vote is casted without being dictated and without pressure; when one can freely vote for the candidate who is honest, humble, dedicated qualified for the position, and, who can be of help to the people; When during the election period, there are NO killings, threatening, harassment/coercion, fraud/cheating during canvassing nor blackmailing; When the candidates humbly accept defeat and respect and support the one who wins, do not destroy other candidates' reputation during campaign, fulfill platforms presented during the campaign period, follow COMELEC guidelines, and, practice healthy competition; and, when the people in the community are united and of healthy relationships, disciplined, not divided according to political affiliations, and are honest, understanding, and loving; 2). A negative impression on the political ecology of Abra is posed by the respondents. They consider Abra not peaceful during election due to rampant vote buying; and siblings, relatives and neighborhood are found forming rivalries due to differences in political views; 3). The respondents posed positive actions to be undertaken in the attainment of a clean and honest election like exercising their right of suffrage, protecting the sanctity of the election, and serving the best way they can. In like manner, they expect the elected officials of an excellent leadership, strict implementation of peace and order, and a model of good behavior as public servant; and, 4). Very few respondents cited

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subjects undertaken in high school that included voter education and other election-related topics being discussed.

It is concluded that: 1. The respondents reflected in their definitions of clean and honest election their feelings of the cases of fraud observed and experienced during election time; 2. Abra needs rehabilitation through the concerted effort of different line agencies including schools resulting to an improved political ecology; 3. When given proper venue, the respondents would be active participants in activities resulting to the attainment of a clean and honest election. Moreover, they are to emulate good leadership and governance from the elected public servants; and, 4). There is a need for the respondents to be informed of election-related topics focused on voter education.

It is hereby recommended that: 1). A voter education and other election-related topics and activities should be initiated and undertaken in school; 2). Long term school-based activities through the concerted effort of the different line agencies of the government should be undertaken resulting to an improved political ecology of the province; 3). The school through the student SKs to participate in year-round activities of the LGUs in coordination with the different line agencies thereby providing experiences for students to actively participate in the observance of good leadership and governance among the elective public servants accompanied with MOU, and, 4. To revisit the K-12 curriculum for the inclusion of election-related topics focused on voter education; and, 6. To design an extension program in the conduct of a voter education in the school adopted barangay or institution where students will be empowered by respective line agencies to participate in the extension program of the college.

## INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions are essential in shaping students become responsible and useful citizens, as they are the hope of the nation. It is timely that through the curriculum, they learn to become responsible voters and active participants of democracy. There must be areas in the curriculum crafted to enhance the students' political learning and involvement thus, equipping them with sufficient knowledge leading them to contribute in the attainment of a clean and honest election. Several activities had been undertaken to help remove the stigma that Abra is a "scary" place most especially during the election season. One significant activity is the Peace Covenant signing recently concluded at Camp Juan Villamor, Bangued, Abra headed by the newly-installed director of the Police Regional Office Cordillera (PROCOR). The event marks the first engagement of almost all politicians, together with the different stakeholders, including the police and the military (Agoot, 2019). This is an annual activity by the Police Regional Office Cordillera (PROCOR), the Philippine Army (PA) and religious organizations and the Commission of Elections (COMELEC) in the province started few years back.

processes. Experiential learning for such activities intensifies their values which later on practiced every election time and every election thereafter. This will be

Candidates also signed a covenant for "truthful, responsible, upright, transparent, and honest" polls during a Mass led by Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle at the Manila Cathedral last May 2, 2018. In signing the covenant, led by Catholic Church leaders, the candidates promised to upkeep people's right to vote and to "refrain from using guns, goons and gold." The candidates were asked to "strongly caution families, friends, and supporters to abstain from using violence, deceit, fraud and other unfair and dishonest practices." Aforementioned institutions and line agencies are engaged actively in conducting activities campaigning for a clean and honest election practices. The Abra State Institute of Sciences and Technology (ASIST) had not yet pioneered a school-based involvement in promoting and creating avenues for students' participation in the attainment of clean and honest elections. With that, students are not only knowledgeable about electoral processes, but /they will also feel more personally engaged in public policy issues and will prompt their desire to participate actively in democratic

made easier, as technology advances so fast, where students can utilize the knowledge attained in the

academe – and through technology – in attaining a clean and honest election.

It is in this premise that this study is conducted to determine the present-day impressions of the first-time electorates together with their election experiences and pose these as challenge in the academic integrity. As a learning institution, there is a need to fill the gap in educating the students in the attainment of a clean, honest and democratic elections through their participation.

The Commission on Elections has suggested the inclusion of voter education in the college curriculum. The move, according to COMELEC officials, will not only educate students about the electoral process as they prepare to vote for the first time, but also about the importance of making informed choices (Orosa, 2014). According to her, the COMELEC is supporting a bill filed at the House of Representatives, which seeks to make voter education compulsory in schools. Informed voters are helpful in preventing vote-buying, fraud, and violations of campaign regulations and other practices that undermine elections. If Filipinos want democracy, everyone is enjoined to vote honestly. Creating an informed electorate is best started in school, and these are crucial component in fighting corruption and improved governance. Hence, schools must sufficiently prepare students to exercise their right of suffrage appropriately. The successful citizen-voter education is expectedly result to a more credible electoral process laying the foundation for stabilizing democracy as it strives to bring the broad participation of the people in the political and electoral processes.

These are some of the starting point where voter education should start from the school where students are enrolled. Voter education that include legal bases like the 1987 Constitution and the Omnibus Election Code among others. Article V, Sec. 1-2 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution states: Suffrage may be exercised by all citizens of the Philippines not otherwise disqualified by law. Therefore, the students should be informed of this. Suffrage means no vote buying and no vote selling.

In addition, the principle of rationalism, under which it is argued that humans are creatures of reason. It is argued that humans are able to identify their own interests and their own opinions, and are aware of the wider claims of the community. Therefore, according to this argument, the individual will use his vote in an intelligent fashion, and is consequently entitled to share in the selection of qualified candidates.

## **OBJECTIVES**

### **General:**

To determine the taxonomy of impressions on political ecology among the Abrenian Youth: a challenge to academic integrity and future voter education program.

are directed to answer in the most dominant dialect (Iloko) to express exactly what they felt and what they mean.

### **Specific:**

1. To determine the respondents' concept of a clean and honest election;
2. To determine the respondents' experiences, impressions and observations in the political ecology of Abra;
3. To determine the respondents' targeted participation in the 2019 Midterm election and their corresponding expectations from the elected officials;
4. To determine areas in the curriculum where voter education topics and other electoral-related activities are integrated.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Method**

This study utilized the quantitative-qualitative method of research in determining the impressions on political ecology among the Abrenian youth, and descriptive in nature. Quantitative because it utilized a researcher-made questionnaire in eliciting answers from the respondents where frequency count is further presented in tables. Qualitative because it considered answers of respondents elicited during the focus group discussions. It is descriptive in nature, because it describes the respondents' impressions of the targeted topic.

### **Participants**

The study targets the 103 first-time electorates from the province of Abra whose ages range from 18 – 22 comprised of 22 males and 81 females. Gathering of data was conducted from March 11 – 27, 2019, few weeks before the election day.

### **Data Gathering instruments**

This study utilized a researcher-made questionnaire to elicit answers from respondents on their concept of a clean and honest election; their experiences, impressions and observations in the political ecology of Abra.

There are also questions probing the subjects or courses where election-related topics focus on voter education were tackled; their intended involvement and participation in attaining a clean and honest election; and their expectations from the elected officials. Focus group discussion was done during the conduct of the survey.

### **Data Gathering Procedure**

Questions were explained item by item for a clearer understanding by the respondents. Focus group discussion was undertaken to supplement answers provided in the questionnaire. Some items were provided with choices, where respondents check as many as those that are true to them. Some items are open-ended, where the respondents

### **Statistical Treatment of Data**

For the open-ended questions, answers were individually read, tallied and further analyzed and categorized in themes and common denominators, and

are presented in tabular form of frequency counts and computed percentages. For items with given choices, scores of each choice were likewise tallied and are presented in tabular form of frequency counts and computed percentages.

The data is not submitted for further statistical treatment because there is no relationship or differences being correlated, merely descriptions of quantity and of qualitative identities. Impressions given by the respondents are unanimously and qualitatively considered in the discussions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The result of this study is presented in the succeeding pages in both tabular and textual presentation.

### Respondents' definition of a clean and honest election

Table 1 in the succeeding page presents the respondents' definition of a clean and honest election given in bulleted form, categorized in themes and common denominators, and are presented in tabular form of frequency counts and computed percentages.

**Table 1.** Respondents' Definition of a Clean and Honest Election.

Basis of the Views of Respondents	Respondents' Definition What is clean and honest election?	Frequency	Percentage
In View of Voting	1. When there is:		
	a. NO vote buying	85	82.52
	b. NO vote selling	18	17.47
	2. When vote is casted:		
	a. without being dictated	49	47.57
	b. without pressure	39	37.86
In view of incidents during election period	3. When one can freely vote for the candidate:		
	a. qualified for the position	23	22.33
	b. who is honest, humble and committed	9	8.74
	c. who can be of help to the people	5	4.85
	4. When during the election period, there are NO:	39	37.86
	a. killings	25	24.27
In view of candidates' practices	b. threatening	15	14.56
	c. harassment/coercion	14	13.59
	d. fraud/cheating during canvassing	3	2.91
	e. blackmailing		
	5. When the candidates:		
	a. humbly accept defeat and respect and support the one who wins	14	13.59
In view of candidates' practices	b. does not destroy other candidates' reputation during campaign	10	9.71
	c. fulfills platforms presented during the campaign period	10	9.71
	d. follow COMELEC guidelines	6	5.83
	e. practice healthy competition	5	4.85
	6. When the people in the community are:		
	a. united and of healthy relationships	18	17.48
In view of candidates' practices	b. disciplined	13	12.62
	c. not divided according to political affiliations	12	11.65
	d. honest, understanding, loving	7	6.80

Table 1 shows the varied responses of the respondents' definitions of a clean and honest election and categorized accordingly as based on their views: on and during the voting; of incidents during election period; of candidates' practices and of the peoples' practices during the election.

Based on their views related to voting, the respondents consider an election to be clean and honest when there is no vote buying (82.52%) and no vote selling of the time, it is not the candidate who will personally give money, materials or other forms like rice, blanket or farm implements, but someone of the same political affiliation, or a follower). This claim was seconded by another respondent who mentioned "basta adda latta

(17.47%). For them, vote buying take place when candidates, their followers or allies offer cash, material or other forms in exchange of a vote, or promise for a vote. As one respondent cited his family's experience during the last election and claims, "kaadwan na, saan nga mismo nga diay kandidato ti mangted iti kwarta, wenno ania man a banag, kas koma bagas, ules wenno kasapulan iti kataltalunan, no di ket mangibaon kadagiti kakadwa na, wenno pasurot na."(Most immay idiy balayen, adda iggem na a listaan ti nagnagan mi nga agkagalugaran, ibaga da wenno ikampanya da diay kandidato da, sada nangiyawat iti sobre, a para kano pagmeryenda, uray dimi inawat, imparabaw da lattan iti tugaw sada nagpakadan."

(Somebody came holding a list of voters in our barangay, convinced us to vote for their candidate then left something in an envelope – according to them , something to buy for a snack – even if we did not accept it, they just put on the chair, then just went off).

On the other hand, vote selling for them are the voters who accept cash, materials or some other forms in exchange of their votes. Usually, vote selling is done secretly by groups in the same political affiliations, based from the stories of the respondents. In their observations, these people usually go together in accord. They commonly convene in one place, usually in a house, to receive money – for their maintenance. Meaning, something to spend during the election day. The respondents live in the countryside, and election precinct is in the town proper. The respondents conclude the clustering as indication of commonality in affinity to a certain political party. They are bound to the idea that this scenario manifests solidarity.

The respondents consider an election clean and honest election when they can cast their vote without being dictated (47.57%) and without pressure (37.86%). “In my case,” a respondent said, *“adda inted ni tatang nga listaan ti ibotos ko a naisurat iti bassit laeng nga papel. Binilin nakami nga inton agbotos kami, suruten mi a naminpinsan ti porma ken panagsasaganad ti nagnagan nga isurat mi. Dinamag ko no apay, kunana ket dayta kano ti naited a kontra senia para kadakami nga pamilya. Ti kontra senia ket naited iti tunggal pamilya a masurot nga maisurat segun iti panagsasaganad ken porma ti nagnagan tapno pagilasinan nga dakami a sangapamilya ken nagtalinaed kami a napudno iti grupo a panpanigan mi.”* (My father gave me a list of names of candidates written in a small piece of paper. He instructed us to strictly follow the format and chronological order of the names written on it when we cast our votes. I asked him why, he told me that the order and format given was specifically designed as identity given to our family. From there, the group can easily notice whether our family strictly casted a straight vote for the candidates with whom we are politically affiliated). When further questioned about the format being referred to, the respondent bluntly said *“adda naited nga urnos ti nagnagan ti kandidato. Idiay papel nga naited kanyak, ti nagan ti para kapitan nga naisurat ket palayaw na ket naipasaruno diay initial ti apelyido na. Kasta pay metten nga dagidiay nagnagan ti para kagawad, naduma duma nga urnos ti nagnagan. Kayat ko a sawen Ma’am, saan nga eksakto a nagan ti kandidato a naisurat iti balota ti masurot. Mabalina nga diay kusto a first name ti kandidato, maipasaruno ti initial ti apelyido na. Kadagidiay dadduma a nagnagan, initial ti first name, ken kumpleto nga apelyido met iti masurot.* (The names On the other hand, the respondents claim of a clean and honest election when a vote is casted without pressure. When asked of their thoughts about this, one responded this. *“Iti kapadasak Ma’am, gapu ta timmaray ti kabsat ko a para SK chairman, ken inkari ni mayor mi nga isunto ti suportaran na nga agbalin nga SK federated president, masapul nga ibotos mi a sangapamilya amin a kalinya na iti SK, ken kalinya na iti barangay, uray diak koma kayat*

of the candidates are specifically written in a unique order. In the list given to me, the name of the candidate for the barangay chairman was written with the alias followed by the initial of the family name. Same is through with the names of the barangay councilors. What I mean Ma’am, we will not write the full registered name of candidates as they appeared in the ballot. It could be the correct given name of the candidate followed by the initial letter of the family name. For the other candidates, it could be the initial of the first name with a complete family name). The respondents further explained, *“inton ngamin panagbibiliang ti botos Ma’am, adu ti tattao nga agi-tally kadagidiay maibasa nga balota. Mabalina nga dagitay watchers iti politico, wenna watchers ti grupo, mapa administrasyon wenna opposition. Isurat da eksakto dagidiay maibasa, nicknames man ken initials. Ket inton malpas ti panagbibiliang, makita danton kadagidiay kontrasenia a naited iti tunggal pamilya no nasurot wenna saan. No kas pagarigan, innem ti bumutos iti maysa a bubong, masapul nga innem met iti maibasa a kontrasenia segun iti naituding nga urnos iti nagnagan iti kandidato a naited iti listaan iti tunggal pamilya. Ditan a makita no nag straight vote iti maysa a pamilya wenna saan. Aglalo ta saan met nga counting machine iti nausar idi panagbobotos iti kapitan. Maammuan no sinno iti napudno iti grupo na ken dagiti saan”* (During the counting Ma’am, some of the expectators present during the canvassing of votes will tally the result based on what is read written in the ballot. These may be the watchers of a candidate, or a political group, in the administration or opposition. They will write exactly how the names were written, first names or initials. After the canvassing, they can inspect, based on the ballot identity given in each family, whether it was really strictly followed or not. For example, if there are six voters in a household, expectedly, 6 followed strictly the ballot identity given to that household. From there, they can easily determine whether the family strictly casted a straight vote for that party or not. Most especially that during the local election, a counting machine was not used. A family can be easily identified whether they were loyal or not to the political party where they are being affiliated).

From this point of view, it can be deducted that a family may have received something in exchange of their votes as evidenced by the ballot identity given to voters and the instruction of the household leader to his family members to strictly follow how names are written in the identity ballot when casting their votes. In this case, the respondent had not casted his vote according to his will, but according to what the household head imposed as influenced by the affiliations to such partisan group. *nga ibotos amin ida. Ngamin segun iti panagkitak, saan da nga amin ket makabael nga agbalin nga opisyal. Kayat ko a sawen, Ma’am, kasla mas kabaalan dagiti dadduma a kandidato iti kabangibang nga grupo gapu ta nangatangato ti nagadalan da, ken ad adu iti kapadasan da ngem dagitoy kalinya ti kabsat ko. Ngem gapu ta kayat ko met a mangabak ti kabsat ko, kasapulan nga ibotos ko amin ida. Dagitoy a linya ket pinili ni mayor mi,*

isu nga tinulungan na ida iti pagkampanya da a kwarta. (In my experience Ma'am, because my sibling ran as SK chairman, and the mayor promised that she will support her in the race for SK federated presidency, our family need to cast a straight vote in her line-up, including those candidates in the barangay level though I don't want some of them. In my own point of view, some don't have the capability to stay in the position they desired. What I mean Ma'am, some of the candidates in the opposing party are more deserving because they have higher educational attainment and of more exposure than those of my sibling's line up. However, because I wanted my sister to win also, I need to vote for them too. These are the candidates whom our mayor had chosen, besides, they have been provided by the mayor of a campaign fund).

This is the prior experience of the respondent during their first-time casting of votes, a revelation pointing out a feeling of being dictated and pressured. Due to loyalty, support and love to family, he obeys parents even to the point of giving up their right to suffrage. It can also be deducted from this that needs and necessities of the family is a major source of pressure, not necessarily direct from the elective officials neither the candidates.

Moreover, in view of voting, the respondents view an election to be clean and honest when one can freely vote for the candidate who: is qualified for the position (22.33%); is honest, humble and committed (8.74%); and, can be of help to the people (4.85%).

The respondents picture out an elective candidate to be of help to the people. When asked of their opinions for this, one claimed: *"idi ngamin nagsakit ni tatang ket masapul nga maitaray iti ospital, napan kami nagpatulong iti maysa nga politiko idiyay lugar mi nga adda lugan na. Gapu ta ammo na nga dimi imbotos idi napalabas nga eleksiyon, kunana nga kayat na tumulong ngem perdi kano ti lugan na. Isu nga kapilitan nga napan kami nagpatulong ken mayor ta isu da ti adda lugan na. Awan met kabaelan mi a mangarkila. Kabigatan na, adda met nakakita a nagpa Bangued diay politiko a nangibaga nga perdi lugan na.* (When my father got sick and needs immediate medical attention, we asked for help from a politician nearby who owns a car. Because he knows we did not vote for him last election time, he claimed of his desire to help, but his vehicle is damaged so we ran to seek help from the mayor, as we cannot afford to hire. The following day, somebody sighted him in Bangued). From this claim, it is noted that people are reliant from politicians even for their personal or family interests and needs. For them, it is a clean and honest As a whole, the respondents have a wide definition of a clean and honest election, including a variety of factors contributory to it. This means that they are dedicated to stand for to the principles of the Constitution, election procedures and systems, respect the sanctity of electoral implementation and stay away from engaging

election when they can ask help from those whom they voted for. Further, it can be deducted that people too, take advantage of the elective officials, they vote for they can have something in return, not for once, twice, but many times after the election. This can be shown in the Filipino value called "utang na loob". This too could be observed vice versa.

The respondents also view an election to be clean and honest in view of incidents during election period. For them, an election is clean and honest when, during the election period, there are no killings (37.86%); threatening (24.27%); harassment/coercion (14.56%); fraud/cheating during canvassing (13.59%); and, blackmailing (2.91%). The respondents believe that killings during election period are likely to be politically motivated. This claim shows that the young respondents are not deaf nor innocent of shooting incidents in the province that are correlated with political motives. Though no incident had been recorded as a solved crime to prove these allegations to be true, most of the people believe this is so. This problem could hardly be unveiled as nobody like to reveal what had witnessed although incidentally around the crime scene when shooting was made - obviously, to save own life too.

The respondents consider in their definition of a clean and honest election in view of the candidates' practices during election. According them, there is a clean and honest election when the candidates: humbly accept defeat and respect and support the one who wins (13.59%); do not destroy other candidates' reputation when campaigning (9.71%); fulfill platforms presented during the campaign period (9.71%); follow COMELEC guidelines (5.83%); and, practice healthy competition (4.85%). Respondents picture a very ideal, orderly and peaceful election.

The respondents' definition of a clean and honest election is also influenced by their view of the peoples' practices during the election period. For them, the election is clean and honest election when the people in the community are: united and of healthy relationships (17.48%); disciplined (12.62%); not divided according to political affiliations (11.65%); and, honest, loving and understanding (6.80%). The respondents consider unhealthy relationships when they see their barangay mates' divisiveness due to opposing political affiliations. This for them is not a clean and healthy election. This further implies that relationship among the people in the barangay is very significant. Despite differences, they still find each other in the help of each other.

any form of violence, force, or threat that may unduly influence the people's right of suffrage.

### The respondents' experiences, impressions and observations in the political ecology of Abra

Table 2. The respondents' experiences, impressions, and observations on the political ecology of Abra.

Experiences	Frequency	Percentage
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Is there vote buying/vote selling during the local election?			
YES		83	80.58
No		12	11.68
Did not answer/No answer		8	7.77
2. If your answer is yes, which among the following did you receive or experienced?	1,000 and below	26	25.25
a. cash, how much?	1,001 – 5,000	20	19.42
b. in kind/material, what is it?	5,001 – 10,000	2	1.94
c. promised of something, in what form?	10,001 – 15,000	1	0.97
d. threatened, in what way?	15,001 and above	4	3.88
	Goods for the kitchen	9	8.73
	Food, snacks	5	4.85
	Rice	4	3.88
	Farm implements	3	2.91
	cap, shirt, bag	2	1.94
	ball, ring	2	1.94
	road improvement	8	7.77
	barangay project	7	6.80
	job offering	5	4.85
	removal in the 4Ps	1	0.97
	removal of brother (JO)	1	0.97
<b>Impressions</b>			
Very peaceful, no serious election-related issues are affecting the people		5	4.85
It is peaceful, only simple election-related issues are affecting the people		29	28.15
Not peaceful, serious election-related issues are affecting are affecting the people		47	45.63
It is not really peaceful, very serious election-related issues are affecting the people		16	15.53
Did not give comment//Did not answer		6	5.83
<b>Observations</b>			
A. Some barangay mates are not in good terms due to politics/ political issues		73	70.87
B. During election time, people in the barangay organized themselves according to political affiliation		54	52.43
C. Some barangay mates isolate themselves from the from the barangay/barangay mates until election period is finished		37	35.92
D. Activities like farming, carpentry and other related activities are offered only to barangay mates of the same political affiliations		32	31.07
E. Family events like birthdays, hospitalization or even death of a family member is oftentimes influenced by political affiliations		31	30.10

When the respondents are asked of their experiences, impressions and observations on the political ecology of the province, most of them have many things to say. As to their experiences during the election, they mentioned countless stories. As to the question whether vote buying or vote selling happened in their place during the last local election as they already had participated, 83 out of 103 (80.58%) respondents answered YES; 12 out of 103 (11.65%) answered NO; and, 8 out of 103 (7.77%) did not pose answer/no answer. But not all who answered yes gave a specific answer. Like when asked of their experience in vote buying and vote selling, many answers were elicited and were categorized as

cash, in kind/material, promised of something, and cases of threatening. Those who mentioned vote buying and vote selling, respondents mentioned of amount ranging from PhP50.00 the lowest, and PhP20,000 the highest amount and is presented in the table in an ascending order. As presented in the table, 26 out of 103 (25.25%) claim that they receive PhP1,000 and below; 20 out of 103 (19.42%) claim to receive an amount range from 1,001 – 5,000; 2 out 103 (1.94%) claim of receiving an amount range from PhP5001 – PhP10,000; one claims to have received an amount ranging from PhP10,001 – PhP15,000; and 4 out of 103

(3.88%) claim to receive an amount ranges from PhP15,001 and above.

Other respondents mentioned of their experiences during the recently concluded local elections. Some revealed of the kitchen needs, foods, snacks, rice from one kilo to 1 ganta, farm implements and the familiar caps, t-shirts, grocery bags where names of the candidates are imprinted and they they were favored of. Two respondents revealed that a candidate had granted their request of a basketball ring and a ball.

The preceding situations show opposite scenario. The former is voluntarily given away while the latter is requested in response to an enquiry of the farmers' needs by the elective candidates. This means that voters are both active and passive. They accept what is given them, and in like manner, they request for something they need. They do not refuse even a kilo of rice, as mentioned by respondents, or a quarter kilo of sugar and a small size of coffee, how much more to a cash which admittedly received by respondents at PhP 1,000, PhP2,000, PhP3,000 or even higher. This is supported by the study conducted by Aguilar, et al (2017). His group conducted a research that focused on the sphere of electoral strategy and how the poor perceive the tactics of candidates. The study focused on the various electoral tactics of politicians, from vote-buying, violent coercion, to the formation of alliance between national and local politicians. They found out that the use of manageable electioneering such as the giving away of cakes or free movie passes are found effective strategies in convincing the poor to vote for certain politicians.

Other respondents mentioned that candidates promised them of road improvement, barangay projects and job offerings should they win in their barangay. In contrast, 2 mentioned of experienced threats like removing their name as 4Ps recipient; and, removal of the of a brother a job order municipal employee.

When asked about their impression of the political ecology of the province, only 5 out of 103 respondents (4.85%) said it is very peaceful, no serious election-related issues are affecting the people in the barangay. Meanwhile, 29 of 103 respondents (28.15%) claim that it is peaceful, only simple election-related issues are affecting the people in the barangay. These are the respondents who experienced peaceful elections, whose

candidates were unopposed; hence, no electoral pressure was felt in their community. This means that not all areas in the province are dangerous and scary during the election period. Further, 47 out of 103 respondents (45.63%) claim that the 2019 Midterm election is not peaceful, serious election-related issues are affecting the barangay. Out of 103 respondents, 16 (15.53%) said that the 2019 Midterm election is not really peaceful, very serious election-related issues are affecting the barangay. A total of 63 respondents (61.16%) believe that the forthcoming is not peaceful. This means that election-related violence influences this political ecology. This implies that the respondents have heard of some violence during election.

As to the respondents' observations during the election, they are presented as follows in descending order according to percentage. These are: some barangay mates are not in good terms due to politics/ political issues (70.87%); during election time, people in the barangay organized themselves according to political affiliation (52.43%); some barangay mates isolate themselves from the barangay/barangay mates until election period is finished (35.92%); activities like farming, carpentry and other related activities are offered only to barangay mates of the same political affiliations (31.07%); and, family events like birthdays, hospitalization or even death of a family member is oftentimes influenced by political affiliations (30.10%). The following observations of the young voters bear significant influence to the next generations to come. As these are practiced and observed within families, there is no doubt these will also be practiced by them every election and elections thereafter up to generations. This shows a need for a voter education given in school, so that in the coming elections, these respondents will become wise voters – and will influence others in their communities. It is very significant, because there is a significant number from the respondents who are SK officials, and will probably continue their political career in the future. Honorarium, though is attractive.

### Respondents' Targeted Participation in the 2019 Midterm Election and Their Corresponding Expectations from the Elected Officials

**Table 3.** The Respondents' Targeted Participation in the 2019 Midterm Election and their Corresponding Expectations from the Elected Officials

	Participation by the respondents	Frequency	Percentage
To exercise my right of suffrage	1. To vote wisely without being dictated	53	51.46
	2. Not to receive money or goods from candidates	33	32.04
	3. Not to engage in vote buying	16	15.54
To protect the sanctity of election	4. To report irregularities by taking pictures using my phone	16	15.54
	5. To convince friends not to sell them votes	15	14.56
	6. To respect the election result and support whoever wins	4	3.88
To serve willingly	7. To serve as watcher without bias	13	12.62
	8. To help maintain orderliness in the premises of the voting center	10	9.71
	9. Assist oldies and first timers in any way I can	9	8.74
	<b>Expectations from elected officials</b>		



On performance of duty	1. implement platforms presented during campaign	82	79.61
	2. practice good leadership	45	43.69
	3. observe transparency, no corruption	22	21.36
	4. perform duties with dedication	14	13.59
On peace and order	1. maintenance of a drug-free community	15	14.56
	2. maintenance of a violence-free community, no killings	12	11.65
On behavior	1. remain friendly and approachable	17	16.50
	2. respect the result of election and support those who won	16	15.54

Table 4 shows the targeted participation of the respondents in the attainment of clean and honest 2019 elections. They optimistically reiterated 3 major actions: to exercise their right of suffrage, to protect the sanctity of election, and, to serve willingly. In expressing their idea of exercising their right of suffrage, they aim to vote wisely without being dictated (51.46%); not to receive money or goods from candidates (32.04%), and, not to engage in vote buying (15.54%). These are the noble aims of the respondents. The conduct of the study culminated 2 days before the start of local candidates' election period. These ideas from the respondents were their intents few days before the campaign period. It can be deduced from the respondents' views of their participation of clean and honest participation. These can be views when vote buying and vote selling are discredited or totally had not been witnessed yet, and this could be strengthened through a timely voter education conducted in the school. This could elevate their ardent desire not to sell their votes in cash or in any form nor engage themselves in vote buying activities. These responses show the aspiration of the youth not to engage in the mockery of election. This means that there is a need to strengthen their good intentions. This implies that when these aspirations are scaffold with voter education, for them and for the other adults in their barangay, it is not far that election fraud in whatever form could be eliminated.

As to their desire to protect the sanctity of election, the respondents enumerated the following activities to be undertaken: to report irregularities by taking pictures using my phone (15.54%); to convince friends not to sell their votes (14.56%); and, to respect the election result and support whoever wins (3.88%). The and order specifically in the premises of the voting area. This shows that respondents claim social responsibility within their level. This implies that they could be of help to some social issues in their own way within their level of capacity. These ideals when supported with voter education, will develop into values, and later on passed to the younger generation and the next generations, and later on become established.

As to the respondents' expectations from elected officials, they insinuated that they expect from them based on their: performance of duty, implementation of peace and order; and, behavior. Their expectations from the elected officials based on performance of duty are the following: to implement presented during campaign (79.61%); practice good leadership (43.69%); observe transparency, no corruption (21.36%); and, perform

respondents' ideals are worth emulating. This means that they are set to participate in up keeping a clean and honest election within their level. This implies their willingness to end election fraud and deceit. Their answers given here are views of an active and passive mind. This implies that some of them are willing to actively participate, and some are passive. The passive is those who do not have enough personality to stand by themselves. They need support, or self-esteem, or more encouragement to do such things. This could be in the form of support from family, friends or peers, more knowledgeable others around the individual, in addition to the education, and voter education attained in school. If this is provided to them, they will become more active and useful citizens.

The respondents also aim to serve willingly as they accounted the following: to serve as watcher without bias (12.62%); to help maintain orderliness in the premises of the voting center (9.71%); assist seniors and first-timers in any way they can (8.74%). The number of respondents who accounted for these are not that high but is significant. This means that their number can be capitalized when empowered. This implies that the respondents already reached maturity and are at this time ready to intersperse with societal issues and problems and are ready to offer help in any way they can. Aside from their willingness to volunteer as watcher, they promised to be a watcher without bias. This means they will not keep irregularities by themselves but to stand as witness of truth regardless of political affiliation of the candidate being watched. They also promise to engage themselves in the maintenance of peace

duties with dedication (13.59%). The respondents wanted the elected officials to do immediately what is promised during the campaign period. This means that promises to them is very essential, they expect a lot from them. This implies that "word of mouth" is dignity, and dignity must be kept by these elective officials. The respondents also crave for transparent governance and a dedicated servant.

#### **The respondents' answers when asked of voter education and election-related topics taken**

The responses of respondents when asked whether voter education and other election related topics were tackled in subjects taken prior to the conduct of this study or not is presented in the preceding table below.

**Table 5.** The respondents' answers when asked on the inclusion of voter education and election-related topics in given subject/s

Responses	Subject	Frequency	Percentage
1. There are topics discussed	1. Social Science	21	20.39
	2. Readings in Phil. History	11	10.68
	3. Values Ed.	2	1.94
	4. Understanding Culture & Politics	1	0.97
	5. Answered YES but did not indicate subject	1	0.97
There are NO topics discussed		6	5.83
Did not Answer/No Answer		57	55.34
		25	24.27

The table shows the responses of students as to whether voter education and other election related topics were tackled in the different subjects in the high school, junior or senior level. There are 11 out of 103 (10.68%) respondents claim that voter education and other election related topics were tackled in their social science subject. 2 out of 103 (1.94%) said they tackled in their subject in Readings in Phil. History, while one (0.97%) answered Values Education and Understanding Culture and Politics respectively. Out of 103 respondents, 57 of them (55.34%) said that the subject matter was not tackled in any of their high school subjects. Further, 25 (24.27%) did not give any answer whether the aforementioned topic was undertaken in class or not.

The result as shown in the table is a good basis that a revisit of the K-12 curriculum be undertaken for inclusion of voter education and other election-related topics leading to the attainment of a clean and honest election. This inclusion is very significant because it will enhance the respondents' awareness of their rights and duties as a citizen of the Philippines most especially in the execution of their right to suffrage. Moreover, values will be formed as a result of this and ultimately will be

### FINDINGS

1. The following are the definitions of the respondents of a clean and honest election. A clean and honest election is

- when there is NO vote buying and NO vote selling;
- when vote is casted without being dictated and without pressure;
- when one can freely vote for the candidate who is honest, humble, dedicated qualified for the position, and, who can be of help to the people;
- When during the election period, there are NO killings, threatening, harassment/coercion, fraud/cheating during canvassing nor blackmailing;
- When the candidates humbly accept defeat and respect and support the one who wins, do not destroy other candidates' reputation during campaign, fulfill platforms presented during the

emulated by their families, future students and other members of the community.

In conclusion, when asked about their general impression of the 2019 Midterm Election, the respondents presented two opposing views. One respondent says: *ti eleksiyon ket isu ti*

*kaalasan nga aldaw. Isu ti aldaw nga saan agguurnos dagiti agkakabsat, agkakabagyan ken agkakaarruba gapu iti panagsisinnupadi iti kapanunutan iti politika. Nagdakes!*" (Election day is the worst day. It is the day when siblings, relatives and neighbors are not united due to differences in political views. It is really worst!). The respondents want to emphasize that blood should be thicker than water. Another respondent exclaimed, *"kanayon koma nga election. Adu ngamin iti kwarta dagiti tattao, adu ti maawat. adu pay malakwan mi diay store mi.* (I wish every day is election day. People have lots of money to receive. We also have higher sales in our sari sari store). This shows that there is vote buying and vote selling, which, in this response made by respondents is disturbing and very alarming. Ultimately, the need for voter education is needed.

### FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

campaign period, follow COMELEC guidelines, and, practice healthy competition; and,

- When the people in the community are united and of healthy relationships, disciplined, not divided according to political affiliations, and are honest, understanding, and loving.

2. A negative impression on the political ecology of Abra is posed by the respondents. They consider Abra not peaceful during election due to rampant vote buying and siblings, relatives and neighborhood are found forming rivalries due to differences in political views.

3. The respondents posed positive actions to be undertaken in the attainment of a clean and honest election like exercising their right of suffrage, protecting the sanctity of the election, and serving the best way they can. In like manner, they expect the elected officials of an excellent leadership, strict implementation of peace and order, and a model of good behavior as public servant.

4. Very few respondents cited subjects undertaken in high school that included voter education and other election-related topics being discussed.

### CONCLUSIONS

1. The respondents reflected in their definitions of clean and honest election their feelings of the cases of fraud observed and experienced during election time.
2. Abra needs rehabilitation through the concerted effort of different line agencies including schools resulting to an improved political ecology.
3. When given proper venue, the respondents would be active participants in activities resulting to the attainment of a clean and honest election. Moreover, they are to emulate good leadership and governance from the elected public servants.
4. There is a need for the respondents to be informed of election-related topics focused on voter education.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A voter education and other election-related topics and activities should be initiated and undertaken in school.
2. Long term school-based activities through the concerted effort of the different line agencies of the government should be undertaken resulting to an improved political ecology of the province.
3. The school to participate in year-round activities of the LGUs in coordination with the different line agencies thereby providing experiences for students to actively participate in the observance of good leadership and governance among the elective public servants accompanied with MOU.
4. To revisit the K-12 curriculum for the inclusion of election-related topics focused on voter education.
5. An extension program of the college can be designed from this study in relation to voter education where faculty, students, alumni and other stakeholders will be involved.

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