



Title	Entanglements of Personal Experience, Identification, and Mistrust : Views of Filipinos in Osaka and Kyoto on the 2022 Philippine Presidential Elections
Author(s)	Ruiz, Frieda Joy Angelica Olay
Citation	アジア太平洋論叢. 2023, 25, p. 39-53
Version Type	VoR
URL	https://hdl.handle.net/11094/95101
rights	
Note	

The University of Osaka Institutional Knowledge Archive : OUKA

<https://ir.library.osaka-u.ac.jp/>

The University of Osaka

Entanglements of Personal Experience, Identification, and Mistrust: Views of Filipinos in Osaka and Kyoto on the 2022 Philippine Presidential Elections

個人的経験、アイデンティティ、不信感の絡み合い
—2022 年フィリピン大統領選挙に関する大阪と京都のフィリピン人の見解—

RUIZ, Frieda Joy Angelica Olay*
ルイズ フリーダ・ジョイ・アンジェリカ・オライ

Abstract

This paper aims to explore how personal experiences, identification with electoral candidates and other Filipinos in Japan, and mistrust are located in the decision making of Filipinos in Osaka and Kyoto, Japan to prefer for Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos, Jr. to be the 17th president of the Philippines. This was despite various issues hurled, constant “fact-checking” and voter “education” campaigns by Marcos Jr.’s political rivals, members of the Catholic Church, civil society groups, “professionals,” very rich business leaders with considerable political influence, and intellectual elites.

Qualitative research methods were used to gather data for this paper. Data gathering, which involved observation of Philippine election-related activities and interviews with Marcos Jr.’s supporters in Japan were conducted four months prior to the election from December 2021 to April 2022. Results show that Patricia B. Licuanan’s categorization of Extreme Personalism, “Kanya-kanya” Syndrome, and Lack of Self-analysis and Self-reflection as weak Filipino values do not resonate with the personal narratives of Filipinos in Osaka and Kyoto. For them, the election is not just a race to the presidency among the presidential aspirants but is also a personal battle of having had experienced oppression and their quest for redemption. Their individual experiences intersect in their preference for a leader. The way that Filipinos in Japan weave their personal experiences in their preference for a leader enables them to ponder about their lives and take control of their situation.

要旨

本稿は、大阪と京都に居住するフィリピン出身者が、第 17 代大統領年としてフェルディナンド “ボンボン” マルコス・ジュニアを選ぶかどうかの意思決定に個人的経験、アイデンティティ、不信感がどのような位置を占めるかを探ることを目的としたものである。マルコス・ジュニアの政敵であるカトリック教会のメンバー、市民社会団体や「専門家」、政治に大きな影響力を持つ富裕層のビジネスマン、知識人などがさまざまな問題を投げかけ、絶えず「ファクトチェック」と有権者の「教育」活動を行ってきたにもかかわらず、マルコス・ジュニアを選ぶ人が多数を占めていた。

本稿のデータ収集には、質的研究手法を用いた。フィリピンの選挙に関連する活動の観察と日本におけるマルコス・ジュニアの支持者へのインタビューを含むデータ収集は、選挙の 4 ヶ月前の 2021 年 12 月から 2022 年 4 月にかけて行った。その結果、パトリシア・リクアナンがフィリピン人の弱い価値観として分類する「極端な個人主義」や「カニヤカニヤ症候群」、「自己分析・内省の欠如」などが、大阪と京都のフィリピン人の個人的な語りには必ずしもみられないことが明らかになった。彼らにとって、今回の選挙は大統領候補者同士の競争というだけでなく、個人的な戦いでもあるのだ。彼らの個人的な経験は、リーダーを選ぶ際に交錯する。在日フィリピン人が選挙を個人化する術は、自分たちの生活について熟考し、自分たちの状況を管理することを可能にしている。

* 大阪大学大学院人文学研究科・特任講師 (Osaka University Graduate School of Humanities, Special Appointed Lecturer)

Keywords: 2022 Philippine Elections, Marcos Jr., personal experiences, voter preference

キーワード: 2022 年フィリピン選挙、マルコス・ジュニア、個人的な経験、有権者の選択

I INTRODUCTION

With only less than a month to go before the Philippine general elections on May 9, 2022, survey firms, such as Social Weather Stations (SWS), Laylo and Pulse Asia Research Inc., have reported a wide margin between the leading presidential candidate, Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. (popularly known as “BBM” and “Bongbong”; hereafter, Marcos Jr.) and the other presidential aspirants, namely Vice President Maria Leonor Robredo (popularly known as “Leni”; hereafter, Robredo), Manila Mayor Francisco Domagoso (popularly known as “Isko Moreno”; hereafter, Domagoso), Senator Panfilo Lacson, and boxing champion Emmanuel Pacquiao (popularly known as “Manny Pacquiao”). In a survey report released in January 2022, SWS showed that Marcos Jr. received 50% support from respondents, while Robredo received 19%⁽¹⁾. In a nationwide survey conducted by Laylo from March 19 to 22, 2022, Marcos Jr. posted 61% voter preference, while Robredo posted 19%⁽²⁾. Results of Pulse Asia’s Pulso ng Bayan Pre-Electoral national survey conducted from February 18 to 23, 2022 report of Marcos Jr. having 60% and Robredo getting 15%⁽³⁾. There were many who claimed that the consistent wide margin that Marcos Jr. enjoyed already ensured his victory in the presidential race. However, the first week of April has shown Robredo finally gaining momentum. In a Pulse Asia pre-election survey⁽⁴⁾ that was released on April 6, 2022, Robredo showed a 9% increase in her voter preference.

As the general elections drew near, political campaigns and sorties were held daily to woo undecided and sway voters. Filipinos in Japan also actively participated in the electoral process. Voter turnout among the Japanese during elections are low. The turnout for Japan’s October 31, 2021 House of Representatives election was estimated at 55.33%⁽⁵⁾. In comparison, according to the Philippine Commission on Elections (COMELEC), voter turnout during the 2016 Philippine general elections was 81.95%⁽⁶⁾. In the 2016 elections, Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Japan recorded a 37.78% voter turnout. While it seems lackluster, this number is the highest ever since Overseas Absentee Voting (OAV) started. According to a study conducted on overseas Filipino votes in Japan in the 2016 elections by Jaca and Torneo (2019), increased dissemination of voting information and the use of automated election systems contributed to this increase.

Filipinos in Japan actively participated in the election-related activities. Supporters of Marcos Jr. and Robredo organized activities and held them in public venues around Japan. They regularly commented, posted, and shared politics-related content in Facebook, held parades/walks, *hanami*⁽⁷⁾ viewing, online *miting de avance*⁽⁸⁾, movie watching, placard making, and online *tao sa*

tao⁽⁹⁾ campaigns. There were also nano-*vloggers*⁽¹⁰⁾ who covered these activities and posted them in “real-time” in Facebook and YouTube apart from the candidates’ supporters themselves documenting their participation and sharing them in Facebook.

When Marcos Jr. and Robredo were both candidates for the vice presidency in 2016, Marcos Jr. obtained 176,669 votes among overseas Filipino voters, while Robredo received 89,935 votes. According to the breakdown of votes from overseas, Marcos won over Robredo in 49 out of 59 Philippine posts abroad. The vice presidential race was eventually won by Robredo through a small margin of 218,039 votes.

As the 2022 campaign season heated up for the second time that Marcos Jr. and Robredo faced each other, allegations such as faking academic and professional credentials, tax-evasion, previous illegal drug use, and associating Marcos Jr. to corruption and human rights abuses under the dictatorship of his father, former President Ferdinand E. Marcos, among others have been hurled at Marcos Jr. in the intention that he be disqualified from running or, at least, that his popularity would wane. Mainstream and social media covered these allegations many times during the day. Even as media, civil society groups and political rivals regularly reported about fake news and issued statements to “fact-check” statements given by Marcos Jr. and his supporters, majority of those who have said that they would vote for Marcos Jr. seemed to have already made up their minds and continued their support. This was observed in the slight change of voter preference numbers reported in the pre-election surveys conducted from December 2021 to April 2022.

This paper aims to examine how personal experiences, identification with electoral candidates and other Filipinos in Japan and mistrust are located in decision making of Filipinos in Osaka and Kyoto, Japan on preferring Marcos Jr. to be the 17th president of the Philippines. This was despite various issues hurled, constant “fact-checking” and voter “education” campaigns by Marcos Jr.’s political rivals, members of the Catholic Church, civil society groups, “professionals,” very rich business leaders with considerable political influence, and intellectual elites. Studies conducted on “Filipino values” during the post-1986 EDSA People Power Revolution seemed not to have given much consideration to personal experiences in exploring the matter because the focus was more on viewing “Filipino character” as in need for “moral reconstruction.” These kinds of studies, Jocano (1997, 2) argues, “while intended to enlighten us about ourselves as Filipinos, have not provided helpful in broadening our appreciation of our traditional lifeways.”

This paper examines the electoral race as a personal battle. It focuses on how political supporters weave personal experiences into how they rationalize, which may open opportunities for understanding of them by those who do not necessarily agree with their presidential preferences. Disregarding the facet of elections as an individual pursuit may have resulted to campaigns being “non-inclusive” to a big section of potential voters. The widely practiced and observed categorizing of Marcos Jr.’s supporters as a group with no “values and morals,” trolls, paid supporters, socio-economically poor, dumb and uneducated seem to have also stemmed from the absence of looking

at the undercurrents of personal experiences, identification and mistrust.

Qualitative research methods were used to gather data for this paper. I observed Philippine election-related activities and conducted interviews with Marcos Jr. supporters in Osaka and Kyoto Prefectures in Japan four months prior to the May 9, 2022 elections from December 2021 to April 2022. Participant observation was conducted in work places, Christian and Catholic churches, and other places in Osaka and Kyoto where Filipinos frequent. Prior to the formal start of the presidential and vice-presidential election campaign in the Philippines on February 8, 2022, Filipinos in Osaka and Kyoto have already been talking about their preferred candidates when they gathered. In the factories that I have been, Filipino technical intern trainees discussed about politics during their lunch break. Many Filipinos in Osaka and Kyoto regularly go to mass during Sundays. They also frequently communicate with each other in Facebook. With the threat of COVID-19 easing and vaccinations already rolled out, Filipinos started to go to masses again and hang out after. I am also a member of online community of Filipinos in Facebook in which politics-related content are regularly posted and shared in public mode. I have obtained informed consent from my informants, and they obliged for their narratives to be reported in this paper. I assign pseudonyms to the names of my informants in this study in order to protect their privacy.

II ORGANIZATION OF THE PAPER

In the Introduction, I paint the current situation surrounding the presidential elections in the Philippines. It is on this background that I examine how political supporters weave personal experiences into their preference for a leader. Through this, I attempt to go beyond labelling and name-calling, but instead, attempt to unravel how personalization is made during election campaigns using my informants' narratives.

After giving the present background to serve as context, I briefly present what have been written about Filipino values after the 1986 EDSA People Power Revolution. Then, I propose the importance of looking at how individuals use their experiences to reflect about themselves and how they use their narratives to alter their situation. This may lead us to better understand communities in general and political preferences of people, in particular.

The third part shows how informants relate themselves to the 2022 elections and how their individual experiences intersect in their support for a candidate and preferences for a leader. It is from these cases that I attempt to show that the way that Filipino migrants in Japan do personalizing enables them to ponder about their lives and take control of their situation.

III STUDIES ON FILIPINO VALUES AFTER 1986

Post-1986 EDSA People Power Revolution has seen an increase on scholars talking about Filipino values. The general discourse during this period was that before 1986, Filipino values was in a

moral crisis. Many of what have been written came as a response to happenings during the administration of former President Ferdinand E. Marcos which is described to be rampant in graft and corruption. During this period, according to Dy (1994, 9), “graft and corruption have become an accepted way of life for most of our countrymen.” Academics and politicians have sought for a moral reconstruction of the Filipino character. Furthermore, Dy argues that moral reconstruction of the Filipino character is as urgent as any economic and political reform because a nation is only as good as the people who are part of it. In 1987, Senator Leticia Ramos Shahani authored the Moral Recovery Program which is a law aimed to integrate ethical values in nation building.

Raul J. Bonoan, S.J. (1994, 33) challenges teachers of the humanities, social sciences, and of all other disciplines to reflect in their own lives the values they seek to impart. He adds that identification to parents and teachers “serve as unique vehicle for the transmission of ... political values.” However, this seems not wholly applicable to the case of Filipinos in Japan among whom “traditional relationships” among those superior in age and position may have already been remade by virtue of them not being in the Philippines, among other circumstances. Also, it may be possible that different criteria may have already been set in terms of looking up on a person.

Patricia B. Licuanan (1994) describes the Filipino character to be made up of strengths and weaknesses. She argues that there is a need to “build ourselves” as people. In order to do so, it is crucial to eliminate weaknesses and develop the strengths. She categorizes the Filipino character into strengths and weaknesses (See Table 1).

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Pakikipagkapwa-tao</i> (regard for others) • Family Orientation • Joy and Humor • Flexibility, Adaptability, and Creativity • Hard Work and Industry • Faith and Religiosity • Ability to Survive
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extreme Personalism • Extreme Family Centeredness • Lack of Discipline • Passivity and Lack of Initiative • Colonial Mentality • <i>Kanya-kanya</i> Syndrome • Lack of Self-analysis and Self-reflection

Table 1: Category of the Filipino character based on strengths and weaknesses (Licuanan 1994)

Licuanan explains that many of the strong points of the Filipino are also the sources of their weaknesses. Among those that relate more directly to the self are: a) Extreme Personalism, b) *Kanya-kanya* Syndrome, and c) Lack of Self-analysis and Self-reflection. Licuanan defines Extreme Personalism to be when the world is viewed in terms of personal relationships. “The extent to which one is able to personally relate to things and people determines our recognition of their existence and value” (38). *Kanya-kanya* Syndrome is the selfish, self-serving attitude of Filipinos. It is described as having feelings of envy and competitiveness with peers who have achieved some status of prestige. Lastly, Lack of Self-analysis and Self-reflection are the tendencies of Filipinos to be shallow and flighty. For example, lacking analysis or reflection in the midst of either personal or social problems.

In Filipino Value System, F. Landa Jocano (1997, 17) clarifies that there are no negative Filipino values, but only wrong uses of the values. He adds that values are best expressed in the actions we do and understood in the events we experience. This means that people’s assumptions and beliefs affect the way that people see things the way that they do. Furthermore, we are reminded by Jocano that numerous individual and group decision-making activities are involved in the process of valuing. Values go beyond them being strong or weak. They should not be seen in a narrow scope because this only brings about intolerance, bigotry, and biased judgements. Looking at values in a broader manner gives people a wider scope in making choices and interpreting behaviour. This makes individuals more tolerant and understanding of each other.

IV FILIPINOS IN URBAN KANSAI

In a previous study on Filipinos in Urban Kansai⁽¹¹⁾, I have noted practices of reflexivity and the relevance of participating in shared and communal activities by Filipinos in Urban Kansai. Filipino migrants exhibit making personal choices. They are knowledgeable about what their options are and the possibilities of taking a particular option. They are able to comprehend the choices available in relation to understanding one’s self and of self-improvement.

These findings seem to diverge from findings of Licuanan, specifically in her conclusion that Extreme Personalism, *Kanya-kanya* Syndrome, and Lack of Self-analysis and Self-reflection are weak Filipino characteristics. Filipinos in Urban Kansai show more than just awareness and responses to external and structural forces. They are observed to be able to use such awareness for them to alter external and structural forces and their situation. Filipino migrants are able to comprehend choices in relation to understanding one’s self and for self-improvement.

I would like to revisit and supplement the results of my previous study about Filipinos in Japan through making inquiries beyond the restricted view of values and morality. I do so by focusing on how situations are understood and how choices are made by Filipinos by examining how the personal comes into play in one’s presidential preferences.

V RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Data gathered from election-related activities observed and interviews conducted with Marcos Jr.'s supporters in Osaka and Kyoto Prefectures from December 2021 to April 2022 revealed the importance of connecting individual experiences in deciding for a candidate to vote for. This revelation seems to point toward supporters being able to identify with a candidate by them weaving their own personal narratives to be in a similar trajectory as their favored presidential aspirant. They also identified with other Filipinos who highlighted and shared with them some form of comparable life occurrences. Feelings of mistrust were ignited among individuals and groups who did not resonate with these experiences. Mistrust was also fostered when expectations on other fellow Filipinos in Japan and politicians in the Philippines were not met.

The categorization of Extreme Personalism, *Kanya-kanya* Syndrome, and Lack of Self-analysis and Self-reflection as weaknesses by Licuanan do not resonate with the narratives of Filipinos in Osaka and Kyoto. For them, the election is not just a race for the presidency between Marcos Jr. and Robredo but is also a personal battle. Marcos Jr.'s supporters weave personal experiences into how they rationalize.

1. Personalizing the campaign

Supporters of Marcos Jr. showed some form ownership in campaigning for their candidate. This was observed through what they did in online activities in Facebook and gatherings in popular spots (ex. Osaka Castle Park and Dotonbori in Osaka, Kyoto Gyoen National Garden and Kamogawa Riverbank in Kyoto). Some online activities of Marcos Jr. and Robredo camps include *miting de avance* and *tao sa tao* campaigns. Face-to-face activities of *hanami* viewing, Lenten Season⁽¹²⁾-related movie viewing, and placard-making were interspersed with election-related activities. Nano-*vloggers* documented these activities and posted them in “real-time” in Facebook and YouTube. Some supporters, themselves, took pictures and videos of their participation and shared them in Facebook. Election-related activities of Filipinos in Japan were held in public venues.

The personal experiences of Filipinos in Japan figure mainly in their narrative for preferring for Marcos Jr. One informant, Lito, a technical intern trainee in Osaka referred to the *laglag bala*⁽¹³⁾ scandal in the Ninoy Aquino International Airport and cited this as an inconvenience for overseas Filipinos departing the Philippines after vacation. The *laglag bala* scandal was at its height from 2015 to 2016 during the administration of former President Benigno Simeon Aquino III. Lito lauded former President Rodrigo Duterte's stern warning to *laglag bala* perpetrators that they will be caught and punished as one of the reasons that brought an end to this fiasco.

One informant, a long-time resident of Kyoto named Karen, cited another bad incidence against

overseas Filipinos. This was the opening of sealed *balikbayan* boxes⁽¹⁴⁾ that overseas Filipinos send to the Philippines. Packages were opened by the Philippine Customs for inspection and were subjected to tax if found to have high monetary value. However, aside from the possible additional costs that may be added and paid for by the receiver of the box, some goods in the package could also be stolen during inspection. Many overseas Filipinos not only in Japan, but in various parts of the world decried the added difficulty and anxiety this brought to them on top of the hardships that they are already facing because of being away from their families. When former President Duterte ordered that the opening of *balikbayan* boxes for inspection be stopped, many overseas Filipinos felt relieved and thankful.

Lito and Karen connected these two problems that Filipinos overseas faced to the Aquino administration, on the other hand they applauded the positive and quick response to these issues by former President Duterte. They related the quick response and amendment of customs regulations to have easily taken place because former President Duterte was a leader with strong political will. Lito and Karen said that they have personally felt *ginhawa*. In the Filipino language, *ginhawa* means ease of breath which eventually may also mean having an ease of life.

Although Robredo has tried to distance herself to the Liberal Party (of which former President Benigno Simeon Aquino III is part of) in the 2022 elections by opting to use the color pink instead of the party color yellow, and run as an independent candidate instead of being a candidate of the Liberal Party, many Filipinos continued to associate her to Aquino and the Liberal Party. My informants revealed that the personalities who ran the Robredo campaign were the very same people that were part of the Aquino administration. On the other hand, Marcos Jr.'s Vice Presidential partner is Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio, the daughter of former President Duterte. While there was no formal endorsement by President Duterte of Marcos Jr., many Filipinos in Osaka and Kyoto believed that Marcos Jr. would continue the work that President Duterte did to uplift the lives overseas Filipinos. Furthermore, informants who have lived through the administration of former president Ferdinand E. Marcos and those with parents who did, imagine an economically prosperous Philippines of which momentum for development halted when he was ousted in the 1986 EDSA People Power Revolution. Filipinos in Osaka and Kyoto were hopeful that Marcos Jr. would follow the footsteps of his father in leading the Philippine to what they perceive as the Philippines' former glory.

2. Experiencing *pang-aapi* and the quest for *tagumpay*

Joan, another long-term resident of Japan who voted in the general elections in 2016 through Overseas Absentee Voting (OAV) related to Marcos Jr. as having a similar life trajectory as hers. She used the words *pang-aapi* and *tagumpay* to describe her difficulties in Japan and being triumphant. In Filipino language, *pang-aapi* is defined as oppression, while *tagumpay* means

success. Joan is a single-mother with two Japanese-Filipino children. Her Japanese partner left her after the birth of her second child. When it became difficult to manage working and taking care of her children in Japan at the same time, she decided to bring her children to Mindanao in the Philippines and be under the care of her mother and mother's relatives until she might be able to save enough and bring them back to Japan. Her children arrived in Kyoto in 2015 after seven years in the Philippines and were issued their Japan passports after a long legal battle. Joan sees this as a moment of redemption in midst of her difficult past.

Joan voted for Marcos Jr. in the 2016 elections. She believes that Marcos Jr. was cheated of the Vice Presidential position by Robredo. Joan's voice became angry and emotional while narrating this. She expressed her disbelief in watching the election results on TV. She recalled Marcos Jr. having a huge lead before going to bed in the evening, but this all changed when she woke up in the morning. Robredo was able to erase Marcos Jr.'s lead and eventually won the race.

This led Marcos Jr. to lodge a complaint for election irregularities and the case was escalated to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court junked Marcos Jr.'s complaint and upheld Robredo's victory. Joan revealed that she empathized with Marcos Jr. on this predicament. She said that they both have similar experiences of being demeaned and cheated on. She shared that she empathizes with Marcos Jr. especially when she hears that individuals and groups, made up of political rivals and their supporters, hurl accusations at him and his family. Joan described political rivals and their supporters as "*dilawans*," "oligarchs," and anti-poor. She admitted that she feels that the attacks thrown at Marcos Jr. are also attacks at her.

Joan is aware of the names that political rivals use to call Marcos Jr. supporters, such as being tagged as uneducated, unthinking, and *bobo* (stupid). She said these are hurtful words coming from people who barely know her and what she has been through in life. Joan divulged that while she is happy that she was able to overcome citizenship and resident issues of her and her children in Japan, she realized that there are groups of people who will always look down on her, and people similar to her, with disgust. She compared this to how Marcos Jr. is constantly being dragged down by mainstream media and his political opponents. Joan cited Marcos Jr.'s not resorting to counter attacks against his oppressors as a good trait that she tries to also emulate. She believes that the majority's preference of Marcos Jr. in pre-election surveys and his election as president of the Philippines on May 9 will give her a feeling of vindication.

3. Japan as the backdrop to one's personal experience

The preference for Marcos Jr. as president by senior high school students that I interviewed was not just because of their parents' vocal support for Marcos Jr.. The students showed interest in social issues and knew what they wanted for themselves. The male students, Alex and Ryo, were

mainly concerned with the creation of more jobs in the Philippines. On the other hand the female students, Aika and Yuka, were more interested in matters pertaining to control of one's own body

All my student informants cited their move to Japan as one of which they did not have a decision of. They have good memories with their family and friends back in the Philippines and they were not ready to be uprooted and brought to a place that they were not familiar of. After a few years of being in Japan, Alex and Ryo realized the advantage and practicality of their move. They began to understand that staying in Japan offers more financial stability. All of them agreed that if the Philippines had the same employment opportunities as Japan, they would not think twice of returning.

The first presidential interviews were conducted separately by talk show hosts Jessica Sojo and Boy Abunda in January 2022 and the students were able to watch them. The students answered that they preferred Abunda's interview over Soho's because they were able to learn more about what the presidential candidates had to offer. All students were specifically interested on issues related to the economy, criminality, and women's rights. Alex agreed with Marcos Jr.'s plan for developing the agricultural sector. He added that one advantage that the Philippines has over other countries lies in agricultural sector. He said that because Marcos Jr.'s projects are in agricultural development, his support lies with Marcos Jr.

The female students, Aika and Yuka, were more concerned of gender issues and women having control of their bodies. The question on legalizing abortion especially for women who became pregnant from rape was a particular issue that made them swing their preference to Marcos Jr. Before watching the presidential interviews, they preferred Robredo because of her being woman, then they shifted to Domagoso because they thought that he looked good and could use his looks to inspire the citizenry. After listening to the negative stance of Domagoso on abortion, they were put off. In the end, they decided that Marcos Jr.'s plans were the closest to their interests.

Aika and Yuka's ideas about women having control of their bodies can be seen as influenced by their living in Japan. Abortion is legal in Japan (in limited circumstances) according to the conditions of the Maternal Protection Law. Yuka wished that something similar to this option should also be available to women in the Philippines.

The agreeable experiences that Filipinos currently enjoy in Japan is a benchmark of what the Philippines can be. This was noticed in the narrations of my informants. The Filipinos in my study show being able to make choices of their own. This is also true of the students who admitted that they did not have a choice in their move to Japan when they were young. However, later they are able to reflect on both the good and bad occurrences in their lives and use this in analyzing what they want in future. Their changing opinions is an indication that they think about what has happened to them. They also think about previous occurrences and refer to this for understanding

one's self and of self-improvement. They are knowledgeable about what is available to them and the possibilities of deciding for a particular choice. This diverges from what Licuanan suggests that the Filipinos lack of self-analysis and self-reflection.

4. Positioning, identification, and formation of mistrust

My informants divulged that they will not change their support for Marcos Jr. For them, a Marcos Jr. win in 2022 is a revenge from the results of the 2016 elections. It is also a revenge from what they claim as *pang-aapi* or oppression from supporters of other presidential candidates. They divulged that they are often called as a group with no “values and morals,” trolls, paid supporters, poor, *bobo* (stupid) and uneducated by the supporters of Robredo. My informants felt demeaned by this name-calling. In addition, I was told that they do not like the style of campaigning by the Robredo camp, particularly that of negative campaigning (ex. Attacking not just Marcos Jr. but also his supporters) and how the *tao sa tao* campaigns were conducted. It seems that the gap between the Marcos Jr. and Robredo camp has further widened. Marcos Jr. supporters see themselves as oppressed by individuals and groups who self-proclaim themselves as being more economically advantaged, morally upright, and among the intellectual elites.

Where one is positioned seems to be solidified further when Robredo supporters often refer to their credentials. This behavior by Robredo supporters is construed by Marcos Jr.'s supporters as an arrogant way to give them an edge when they assert themselves. In my other study on Filipinos in Japan, I found out that Filipinos in Urban Kansai do not like to be reminded of their differences with each other. A Filipino woman who serves in a Catholic Church in Kyoto, Lila, once told me that “*Lahat tayo ay pantay-pantay dito sa Japan.*” (“We are all equal here in Japan.”). This is in reference to everybody's similar experience of migration as one that connects individuals to each other regardless if one has a stable job or is engaged in various part-time jobs. In general Filipinos think that uplifting one's self (“*pagbubuhay ng sariling bangko*”) is a flaw in character. Therefore, Robredo's supporters who use their being morally upright, being economically advantaged, holding professional occupations, and having higher educational achievements are seen as exclusionary and creating animosity among individuals and groups.

The issue of not having a university diploma and its misrepresentation by Marcos Jr. is not an issue for my informants especially since many of them have low levels of education. What is more important for them is a person's ability to lead and strong political will. When they look at themselves and other Filipinos who they know in Japan, what they see are individuals who have had difficult lives and who were not able to finish schooling; but they had the strength to pick themselves up and continue surviving.

The Robredo house to house campaigns where “Let me educate you” has become a starting

phrase does not sound well for Filipinos in Japan. This is similar to what I have said earlier that equality is preferred. Being told “Let me educate you” by someone gives an impression that Marcos Jr. supporters need educating because they are not able to decide for themselves, or if they do, they do not have the capability to make sound decisions because of their being “*bobo*.”

Robredo supporters in Osaka and Kyoto are not able to do the house and house campaigns like in the Philippines. Therefore, Robredo supporters in Osaka and other parts of Japan do the *tao sa tao* campaigns online through Facebook Messenger. Robredo supporters are put-off by disengaging replies by Marcos Jr. supporters such as “Respect my opinion *nalang po*.” (“Just respect my opinion, please.”). For some Robredo supporters, this disengagement to discuss about their political preference, hesitance to defend Marcos Jr., and the inability to answer in detail solidifies their perceptions that Marcos Jr. voters are indeed uneducated voters who do not have the intellectual capability to distinguish between what is real or fake news. However, it is also important to note that the wide lead that Marcos Jr. enjoyed in the pre-election surveys enabled his supporters to have the choice of not to respond if they do not want to. For them, there seemed to be no need to campaign hard and waste time arguing because of Marcos Jr.’s comfortable lead in the surveys.

VI CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper discussed how political supporters weave personal experiences into how they rationalize their preference for Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. as the next president of the Philippines despite various issues hurled at him. The personal narratives of Marcos Jr.’s supporters showed that they are able to relate to Marcos Jr. because of their impression of Marcos Jr. as having similarities with them in experiencing oppression. They see Marcos Jr. as being subjected to *pang-aapi* which many of them have also experienced in the past. They see a Marcos Jr. win in the 2022 elections as a form of redemption. It was found out that Robredo does not appeal to them due to three main reasons. First, because of Robredo’s association to the Aquino administration and Liberal Party; second, because of the numerous insults received from Robredo supporters; and, third, because of the non-inclusive campaigns by the Robredo camp.

Furthermore, it was observed that Filipino supporters of Marcos Jr. in Osaka and Kyoto connect their life stories in decision-making. This means that Filipino migrants in Japan ponder about their lives and do so to manage their situation. The findings in this report deviate from popular post-1986 EDSA People Power Revolution discourse about the Filipino character which labelled Extreme Personalism, *Kanya-kanya* Syndrome, and Lack of Self-analysis and Self-reflection as weaknesses. Being able to do self-analysis and self-reflection were seen not only among older Marcos Jr. supporters, but also among senior high school students.

In the course of this study, I have also observed that supporters of Robredo also use personalizing

in their campaigns. Many narrate past stories involving honesty and fairness. Further research on elections as a personal battle may be conducted to promote deeper awareness of one another. In the light of heated arguments between Marcos Jr. and Robredo supporters in the 2022 Philippine elections, I remind fellow scholars not to forget our basic critical thinking skills that we may be able to have a broader understanding of groups despite differences of political leanings.

Notes

- (1) ABS-CBN News. Bongbong Marcos Keeps Lead in 2022 Presidential Race: SWS January Poll.
<https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/02/16/22/bongbong-marcos-keeps-lead-in-sws-january-presl-survey>
- (2) Manila Standard. Laylo: BBM Still Man to Beat. <https://manilastandard.net/news/314217935/laylo-bbm-still-man-to-beat.html>
- (3) Pulse Asia Research Inc. February 2022 Nationwide Survey on the May 2022 Elections.
<https://www.pulseasia.ph/february-2022-nationwide-survey-on-the-may-2022-elections/>
- (4) Pulse Asia Research Inc. March 2022 Nationwide Survey on the May 2022 Elections.
<https://www.pulseasia.ph/march-2022-nationwide-survey-on-the-may-2022-elections/>
- (5) The Mainichi. Japan's General Election Turnout Estimated at 55.33%, above 2014's Record Low.
<https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20211101/p2a/oom/ona/020000c>
- (6) Commission on Elections. Number of Registered Voters, Voters who Actually Voted and Voters' Turnout.
<https://comelec.gov.ph/index.html?r=2016NLE/Statistics/VotersTurnout2016NLE>
- (7) When cherry blossoms bloom, Filipinos in Japan gather together with friends, organization members, and family members. They lay mats and picnic under cherry blossoms trees in parks. Filipinos also use this gathering to welcome Filipino newcomers or returnees to their community.
- (8) *Miting de avance* is an event held by candidates and their political party to inform and reiterate their platforms to voters before the day of the election. Supporters of candidates gather together for this final rally. On April 2, 2022, the UniTeam tandem of Ferdinand Marcos Jr. (Partido Federal ng Pilipinas) and his running mate Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio (Lakas CMD) held an online *miting de avance* with Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in the Philippines and in 35 countries abroad. The program was held through a virtual conference wherein Marcos and Duterte-Carpio discussed their platform for OFWs. Overseas Absentee Voting (OAV) started on April 10, 2022.
- (9) On April 2, 2022, the *tao sa tao* (house to house) campaign was launched by Robrero supporters. According to actress, Agot Isidro, a celebrity-supporter of Robrero, the initiative “enables supporters to have conversations with people, learn more about their personal experiences and share with them what the Vice President has to offer if she becomes president.” (PhilStar Global. Robredo Supporters Launch House-to-House Campaigning. <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2022/04/03/2171882/robredo-supporters-launch-house-house-campaigning> .Accessed April 15, 2022.
- (10) Nano-vloggers are defined as everyday social media users, with anywhere from 100 to 10,000 followers. They are not considered as professional “influencers.” Majority of their posts feature typical content about their daily lives, family, friends, memes, food and travel, and recently in the Philippines, election-related content.

- (11) Urban Kansai is comprised of Metro Osaka and its suburbs and Kyoto City and its suburbs in Kansai Region, Japan.
- (12) Filipinos regard the Lenten Season as one of the most important religious events. It is during this time that Filipino religiosity is at its high as depicted in various traditions that are practiced in remembrance of Christ's journey to the cross.
- (13) *Laglag-bala* ("drop bullet") or bullet-planting scandal, was a scandal in the Philippines which involved airport security personnel at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) in Metro Manila. The modus was to plant bullets in the luggage of passengers in order to extort money from them.
- (14) Balikbayan box is a carton shipped to the Philippines from another country by a Filipino who has been living overseas, typically containing items such as food, clothing, toys, and household products.

References

- ABS-CBN News. Bongbong Marcos Keeps Lead in 2022 Presidential Race: SWS January Poll.
<https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/02/16/22/bongbong-marcos-keeps-lead-in-sws-january-presl-survey> .Accessed April 12, 2022.
- Bonoan, Raul J. 1994. Values Education and Philippine Society. In, *Values in Philippine Culture and Education* edited by Manuel B. Dy, Jr., 28-34. Washington D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy.
- Commission on Elections. Number of Registered Voters, Voters who Actually Voted and Voters' Turnout.
<https://comelec.gov.ph/index.html?r=2016NLE/Statistics/VotersTurnout2016NLE> .Accessed April 12, 2022.
- Dy, Jr., Manuel B. 1994. The Philosophy of Value, the Value of Philosophy. In, *Values in Philippine Culture and Education* edited by Manuel B. Dy, Jr., 9-17. Washington D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy.
- Jaca, Georgeline B. and Ador R. Torneo. 2019. Explaining (Non) Participation in Overseas Voting: The Case of Overseas Filipino Voters in Japan in the 2016 Elections. *Diaspora Studies*, 14 (1): 45-74.
- Jocano, F. Landa. 1997. *Filipino Value System: A Cultural Definition*. Metro Manila: Punlad Research House, Inc.
- Licuanan, Patricia B. 1994. A Moral Recovery Program: Building a People – Building a Nation. In, *Values in Philippine Culture and Education* edited by Manuel B. Dy, Jr., 35-54. Washington D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy.
- Manila Standard. Laylo: BBM Still Man to Beat.
<https://manilastandard.net/news/314217935/laylo-bbm-still-man-to-beat.html> .Accessed April 12, 2022.
- PhilStar Global. Robredo Supporters Launch House-to-House Campaigning.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2022/04/03/2171882/robredo-supporters-launch-house-house-campaigning> .Accessed April 15, 2022.

Pulse Asia Research Inc. February 2022 Nationwide Survey on the May 2022 Elections.

<https://www.pulseasia.ph/february-2022-nationwide-survey-on-the-may-2022-elections/> .Accessed April 12, 2022.

Pulse Asia Research Inc. March 2022 Nationwide Survey on the May 2022 Elections.

<https://www.pulseasia.ph/march-2022-nationwide-survey-on-the-may-2022-elections/> .Accessed April 12, 2022.

Ruiz, Frieda Joy Angelica Olay. 2021. The Ethnography of Connections of Filipinos in Urban Kansai. Doctoral Dissertation. Graduate School of Human Sciences. Osaka University, Japan.
<https://doi.org/10.18910/81988>

The Mainichi. Japan's General Election Turnout Estimated at 55.33%, Above 2014's Record Low.
<https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20211101/p2a/oom/ona/o20000oc> .Accessed April 12, 2022.