
EXPLORING ROLE CONGRUITY IN POLITICAL PROCESSES: MALE VOTER PERCEPTIONS OF FEMALE CANDIDATES IN PHILIPPINE ELECTIONS

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Abstract: *This article explores persistent notions regarding women in the Philippines, especially concerning executive positions historically dominated by male incumbents. The article delves into the historical and influences that possibly leads to the underrepresentation of women in executive roles. This also prompts questions about the underlying perceptions guiding Filipino voting choices. Using qualitative interviews with ten male voters, the study probes gender stereotypes' their impact on evaluating candidates. The participants are divided into two categories: male Filipino voters who support female candidates (VFF) and those who do not (NVFF). Findings reveal that both groups associate male figures with agentic attributes and female figures with communal qualities. Notably, their criteria for an ideal leader differ. VFFs prioritize candidates displaying a blend of agentic and communal traits, advocating for gender-neutral inclusive leadership. Conversely, NVFFs display a bias favoring male candidates, as they link agentic attributes with leadership and predominantly assign these traits to males. VFFs' viewpoints stem from experiences with capable female leaders, whereas NVFFs' preferences draw from religious and historical influences. This study enhances understanding of Filipino male voters' perspectives, serving as a foundation for future research. Furthermore, insights gained address and rectify unjust perceptions, fostering an environment that evaluates male and female candidates on equitable terms.*

Keywords: *Filipino male voters, female candidates, elections, gender stereotypes, leadership qualities, perceptions, Philippines, role congruity*

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Introduction

In the Philippines the public plays a pivotal role in selecting its political leaders who shape the country's course for a period of six years. Research has underscored the significance of how voters perceive candidates, a decisive factor in their voting choices. Voters evaluate candidates based on factors including gender, character, and qualifications. However, male dominance persists among the leaders elected to positions within the Philippine government. This historical trend stretches back to a time predating modernity, when men held sway over the political landscape, wielding authority, and power within society. Furthermore, exclusive male suffrage rights persisted until 1937. Given the Philippines' historical roots in conservatism and patriarchal notions (Bernad, 1974; Rodriguez, 1990), a candidate's gender could conceivably influence a voter's perception of a political figure. The representation of women in politics remains a modest fraction of the country's total representatives, with reports indicating that approximately 23% of elected politicians in the Philippines are women (Villavecer, 2022). While factors influencing women's political participation likely abound, these dynamics have yet to be thoroughly investigated.

The World Economic Forum (2023) affirms the persistence of gender imbalances in political empowerment worldwide, extending even to the most socially and economically advanced countries. Among the primary factors frequently discussed are women's hesitance to seek office, voter bias, and party-based biases. Further exploration is warranted to comprehensively grasp these multifaceted factors influencing women's engagement in politics. While research in the global north suggests that sex might not significantly sway how voters perceive candidates and that biases might no longer greatly hinder women's pursuit of office (Dolan & Lynch, 2016), the situation in developing countries like the Philippines differs. Gender stereotyping remains entrenched, particularly in the global south. In the Philippines, colonization's lasting impact has propagated a prevailing patriarchal mindset among Filipinos. This outlook is evident in modern contexts, where women often find themselves marginalized as homemakers, victims of domestic violence, or relegated to low-status work. A study involving 232 participants highlighted enduring traditional gender roles related to unpaid care work and household leadership (Oxfam Philippines, 2022). Even amid full-time employment, women shoulder disproportionate housework and childcare responsibilities, while men continue as primary providers.

Gender bias pervasive in Philippine society, with 99.5% of the population harboring prejudice against females, including around 75% holding political biases against women (CNN Philippines, 2023). Notably, former President Rodrigo Duterte has asserted that the presidency is not fit for women due to perceived emotional differences (Lema, 2023). Despite some progress, women's representation in national government remains disproportionately low, compared to their male counterparts (Valente & Moreno, 2014). The increased presence of women in such roles may owe more to political dynasties than to broader opportunities and acceptance of female empowerment (Labonne et al., 2021). In essence, female candidates might face a disadvantage not solely due to their sex, but because certain qualities they possess can be construed as either feminine or masculine by voters.

In light of the limited representation of women in politics, societal conservatism, and deeply ingrained traditional views about women in the Philippines, this study seeks to examine whether gender stereotyping and sexism persist in the perceptions of Filipino voters, particularly among male voters. Notably, the subject of Filipino male voters' perceptions of female candidates in elections remains uncharted territory in the Philippine context. Existing studies on this subject have predominantly employed quantitative methodologies, setting this qualitative investigation apart.

The primary objective of this research is to elucidate the viewpoints of Filipino male voters concerning female candidates contesting the positions of President and Vice President in elections. The study further contrasts the perspectives of male voters who have previously supported female candidates with those who have not voted for candidates of the opposite gender. Additionally, various factors are explored to comprehensively understand the perceptions of Filipino male voters. By unpacking any latent negative biases, this research aims to examine unjust systemic biases. Moreover, by shedding light on the perceptions of male voters, society can aspire to encourage increased female participation and representation in the realm of politics. This study thus addresses a critical gap in research, offering valuable insights that can drive progress towards a more equitable political landscape.

This study is informed by role congruity theory, which is rooted in social role theory established by Eagly (1987). Social role theory asserts that behavioral disparities linked to sex largely emerge from social constructs, where perceptions of a group's typical roles correlate with stereotypes concerning their competence and communion. Bias against women in positions of power stems from entrenched gender roles that often position females as subservient and inferior to males. This bias not only arises from stereotypes but is also influenced by an idealized notion of femininity (Hendrickson, 1987), reinforced by associations of women with nurturing and gentleness, juxtaposed with men's association with assertiveness and leadership. Gender becomes a fundamental criterion for categorizing individuals.

Role congruity theory goes beyond social role theory. Specifically, role congruity examines the alignment between leadership roles and societal norms, identifying factors that shape perceptions and prejudice outcomes. It implies that individuals tend to form favorable opinions about groups whose characteristics align with established norms (Eagly & Diekmann, 2005). Expanding on this, the theory emphasizes the discrepancy between women and leadership roles (Hogue, 2016). This implies that even when women possess the requisite attributes and competencies for leadership roles, gender stereotypes hinder their acceptance of positions traditionally viewed as masculine. Thus, the role congruity theory illuminates the complex interplay between societal expectations, gender roles, and leadership opportunities.

Examining the perception of exceptional leadership, it becomes evident that leadership prototypes, as illustrated by Paris et al. (2009), predominantly embody masculine traits, reflecting cultural bias (Early & Carly, 2007). Traits like confidence, independence, and dominance are affiliated with men, while communal attributes are linked with women. As corroborated by previous findings (Vial & Napier, 2018), leadership and management roles demand agentic characteristics more than communal ones, primarily

associated with males. These discrepancies underline the role congruity theory's premise that incongruence between leadership prototypes and societal gender roles breeds prejudice against female leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2022). The wider the gap between these roles, the stronger the prejudice women encounter, hampering their ascent to higher leadership positions.

In this context, role congruity theory posits that the perceptions of male voters concerning female candidates in elections are molded by the harmony or discord between their leadership prototypes and gender roles. Employing this theory, the study delves into how these perceptions take shape, the factors shaping male voters' perception of women and leadership, and how society can bridge the gender-role leadership divide. A review studies from 2010 to 2018 affirmed this congruity, revealing that mismatches between perceived female traits and leadership roles foster prejudiced judgments rooted in gender inequalities and a lack of leadership development programs (Korbutay et al., 2019). Bias remains ingrained, particularly in environments emphasizing distinct gender roles for men and women. By elucidating the role congruity theory's applicability and effects, this study uncovers insights crucial for dismantling gender-based biases and advancing gender equality in leadership realms.

Materials and Methods

This study employed a phenomenological research design, which aims to delve into the lived experiences of individuals. It entails analyzing observable events to understand how humans perceive phenomena. This study, we explored how personal perceptions of selected male voters towards women impact their voting preferences. The study also sought to examine whether sexism is discernible in participants' detailed responses and gender role perceptions. To facilitate this investigation, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted through Zoom, providing comprehensive insights into participants' views on female candidates and related topics.

Purposive sampling was utilized to select ten male voter participants. This sample size of ten or more informants was chosen to ensure richness and depth in the information obtained, aligning with the study's focus. Eligible male participants needed to meet specific criteria:

- Identify as male.
- Be Filipino
- Be of legal age (18 years old or above), without an upper age limit
Have voted in both the 2016 and 2022 Philippine Elections
- For NVFFs (Never Voted for Female candidates): Have never voted for female candidates in presidential and vice-presidential positions.
- For VFFs (Voted for Female candidates): Have voted for female candidates in presidential and vice-presidential positions.

Participants were recruited through a call for participants on the researchers' social media accounts, a Google Forms screening questionnaire, and referrals from various sources. This comprehensive approach aimed to ensure a diverse and representative participant pool for the in-depth interviews.

Data Collection and Analysis

In ensuring adherence to ethical research processes, the researchers followed these protocols prior to data collection: (1) Prospective participants who met the study's criteria received an informed consent form through Google Forms, outlining the study's purpose, procedures, duration, voluntary participation, risks, benefits, confidentiality, and contact information. Participants were encouraged to address any queries or concerns via provided researcher emails. (2) Once the informed consent form was signed and submitted, the researchers arranged an online Zoom interview at the participant's convenience. The informants were allowed to use either Filipino or English. For this research, all interviews were translated to English.

The interview comprised three sections, wherein participants could respond in English or Filipino. The initial section covered general inquiries, including basic participant details and their voting history in Philippine national elections. The second section explored participants' perceptions of the two sexes and societal gender roles, aiming to establish a foundation for identifying sexism in their responses. The final section delved into leadership, querying male voters on sought-after leadership qualities and their views on men and women aspiring to national leadership roles. Follow-up questions were posed based on participants' prior responses.

Thematic analysis served as the way make sense of the data, The researchers applied Braun and Clarke's six key phases to interpret data from conducted interviews and extract themes aligned with the study's objectives (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Specifically, the study employed the data analysis software Taguette. The six phases of analysis involve: familiarization with the data, coding, generating themes, defining themes, and producing the report.

Results and Discussion

The Perception of VFFs

Table 1. VFF Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Age	City of Residence	Number of times voted
V1	37	Quezon City	5 times
V2	29	General Santos City	3 times
V3	26	Manila City	3 times
V4	37	Valenzuela City	2 times
V5	42	Rizal Province	2 times

Equal View on Males and Females in Society

To understand how VFFs (male voters who have voted for female candidates) perceive female candidates in elections, it is important to establish their overarching perceptions of females and males within society. VFFs consistently maintain an egalitarian perspective on the sexes, considering both genders as equals. They champion the notion that neither gender is superior and advocate for equal opportunities and prospects across diverse domains. When queried about gender-specific roles, VFFs unanimously refute such distinctions, asserting that tasks should not be allocated based on gender.

Participant V4 articulated this stance, stating, "I believe that whatever one can do, another can do also." Similarly, V2 emphasized, "I hold no biases because I firmly believe in equal opportunities for everyone, irrespective of being male or female. Equal chances should be based on capabilities and skills, not gender." Notably, VFFs unanimously reject the notion of exclusive roles for either gender in society. Excessive masculinity and machismo find no place in their perspectives, as they do not perceive themselves as superior due to their gender. As V4 elaborated, "I view them the same as before, as equals to all, regardless of status, because we are all humans."

While VFFs shun gender-specific role assignments and advocate inclusivity, they acknowledge the persistence of societal norms that still segregate roles by gender, fostering a male-centric environment. Nonetheless, this does not sway their equitable perception of females vis-à-vis males. The participants candidly acknowledged that societal norms sometimes dictate gender-specific roles, perpetuating stereotypical practices ingrained in Philippine society. Consequently, VFFs recognize that the male-centric societal fabric hinders women from being perceived as equal in various domains, owing to the pro-male bias entrenched within the Filipino public. Reflecting on this, V4 shared, "Given that we reside in a primarily—even toxic—masculine society, deeply rooted in patriarchy, these realities are widely accepted. Factors such as history and culture within the Filipino context contribute. Consequently, the additional weight carried by females within our society is substantial." As noted by Bernad (1974) and Rodriguez (1990), the Philippines is deeply influenced by conservative and male-centric ideologies. These ingrained beliefs likely account for the prevailing gender divide in the nation, illuminating the persistent disparity between males and females in society.

Agentic and Communal Perspectives on Male and Female Candidates

When characterizing male and female candidates, a prevailing theme emerged: participants consistently linked agentic traits with male candidates and communal attributes with female candidates. Male candidates were described as assertive, firm, tough, and physically active. As V1 pointed out, "Men tend to be assertive, regardless of the decision they make; for instance, in debates about divorce, they would automatically say no." V3 added, "They capitalize on projecting firmness and unquestionable decision-making." However, these agentic qualities could have either advantages or drawbacks. For instance, while they reflect a resolute stance, they might also prove

detrimental during crises. V2 highlighted this by noting, "Male presidents historically tend to engage in warfare, uptightness, and unnecessary brutality towards citizens."

Conversely, female candidates were associated with communal traits like being compassionate, gentle, nurturing, and empathetic. V1 suggested, "Women are linked with traits such as motherliness, care, femininity, artistic qualities." Similar to agentic traits, participants emphasized that these communal characteristics could have both positive and negative implications in leadership. While they promote adaptability and understanding, they might also make candidates susceptible to persuasion or manipulation. These findings align with studies by Bem (1974), Carli et al. (2016), and Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001), which affirm that societal expectations link agentic qualities with men and communal traits with women. These researchers observed that attributes like assertiveness, ambition, and independence were perceived as masculine, while characteristics such as affection, kindness, and nurturance were associated with femininity. These observations substantiate established research findings, indicating that societal gender norms play a significant role in shaping perceptions of leadership qualities.

Male and Female Candidates for the Executive Position are Equally Capable

Sex is not a determinant in evaluating male and female candidates; rather, it's their qualities and leadership capabilities that hold significance. The belief in societal gender equality extends to the perception of both male and female candidates being equally suitable for leading the nation. Their sex is not the focal point; instead, it's their skillsets that matter. V2 emphasized, "Everyone should be represented, regardless of gender or even the third gender. If capable and fit, there should be no gender bias in holding leadership positions." As expressed by V5, qualifications such as quality education, experience, and competency in governing hold more weight than gender. The responses reflect progressive ideologies and emphasize that today's opportunities enable women to assume leadership roles.

Regarding the attributes they seek in leaders, VFFs prioritize track record, credibility, effective communication, loyalty, trustworthiness, sincerity, responsibility, decisiveness, political acumen, and confidence. Some of these traits align with agentic characteristics, while others correspond to communal qualities. Notably, VFFs value a blend of both agentic and communal traits, demonstrating openness to voting for candidates irrespective of gender. This contrasts with previous research findings suggesting the dominance of agentic traits in leadership.

Through the lens of role-congruity theory, VFFs associate agentic attributes with males and communal attributes with females, while their leadership prototypes encompass a mix of both. Consequently, both genders are perceived positively, without superiority or inferiority. V4 emphasized that these qualities are inherent to all individuals, regardless of sex. Similarly, V3 asserted that various candidates, whether male or female, possess the requisite attributes and qualifications. For V1, sex holds no sway; as long as candidates prove their capabilities, they deserve the role. These perceptions

align with studies by Dolan and Lynch (2016) and de Geus et al. (2021) asserting that a candidate's sex minimally impacts voting decisions. In essence, the viewpoint of VFFs aligns with a liberal perspective, emphasizing qualities and platforms as primary factors for candidate selection. Gender equality and the recognition of qualities over sex drive their voting preferences.

The Perceptions of NVFFs

Table 2. VFF Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Age	City of Residence	Number of times voted
NV1	40	Pasig City	2 times
NV2	46	Ozamis City	2 times
NV3	49	Tuguegarao	Many times
NV4	53	Pampanga	Many times
NV5	55	Cebu City	Many times

Traditional View on Males and Females in Society

NVFFs adhere to traditional beliefs both in their personal lives and voting preferences. They hold that men typically lead across various domains, while women assume supporting roles. For instance, within households, fathers are providers, while mothers are caregivers. NVFFs consistently affirmed these traditional roles and attributes. NV2 expressed that women are the ought to nurture children, while NV4 characterized women as modest and reserved. NV4 emphasized men's roles as strong and supportive figures. Such beliefs align with Bernad (1974) and Rodriguez's (1990) observations that historical patriarchal and conservative influences, rooted in religion and colonialism, persist in contemporary Philippines. While NVFFs acknowledge changing times, they refrain from adapting these evolving gender roles to their lives. NV5 acknowledged women's expanding roles beyond the home but rejected the notion. NV3 shared similar sentiments, asserting that women as providers is unacceptable, and men should serve as role models.

Guerrero's (2022) findings of unpaid care work's persistence resonate in these perceptions. These views also extend to attitudes. Women are often seen as more honest and trustworthy, whereas men are perceived as less trustworthy and prone to vices due to shorter self-control. However, men are also viewed as brave, direct, strong, and firm. NVFFs adhere to traditional gender roles and attributes. They perceive women as better suited for non-leadership roles, while men are considered better suited for leadership. This perspective reflects a power dynamic, positioning men in leadership roles and women in subordinate positions. Despite these perceptions, NVFFs assert that roles are not inherently superior or inferior. NV5 suggests coexistence, and NV3 highlights that females are provided opportunities, even when considered unfit. Unlike VFFs, NVFFs view these perceptions as personal preferences rather than byproducts of conservatism and patriarchy. NV1 aptly states, "Women are capable of doing better than men, and men are able to do something better for both."

NVFFs Generally Perceive Males as Better Candidates

NVFFs acknowledged societal progress and evolving gender roles but held traditional preferences when it comes to political leadership. While recognizing changes for women, NV4 highlighted that exclusivity is diminishing. Yet, in politics, their responses indicated a preference for male candidates, evident in their focus on agentic qualities. NV5 sought strength and firm governance, while NV2, NV3, and NV4 desired strong willpower—coinciding with their associated "agentic qualities." These align with Vial and Napier's (2018) notion that agentic traits hold greater value, stemming from religious beliefs, where God created Adam first and men are biblical leaders.

Their religion influences their preference, perceiving men as heads and women as supporters. In politics, NVFFs were open to women in lesser positions, suggesting women lack the aptitude for national roles. This perception connects with Adams (1975), Burrell (2008), and Dolan and Lynch's (2016) findings, implying men suit higher positions, and women are suited for local roles. When asked about a hypothetical election, NVFFs favored male candidates except NV1, who is undecided. This preference roots in their traditional views, believing men excel in decision-making, leadership, and handling responsibilities. Applying role congruity theory, NVFFs associate leadership with agentic qualities, believing men innately possess them. Mismatched communal traits and agentic leadership prototypes lead to negative evaluations of female candidates. This aligns with Eagly and Diekmann's (2005) theory, where incongruence between women and leadership roles affects perception. It also parallels Mukarram et al.'s (2018) findings that women primarily assume supporting roles.

Political Dynasties, Past Presidencies, and Double Standards

Male presidents received acclaim for their leadership, while female presidents faced criticism and underestimated governance. The Philippines had only two female presidents in the past century, with NVFFs perceiving their performance as lackluster or unchanged. This shaped the belief that future female candidates would replicate this underperformance. The notion that women lack firm decision-making skills persisted, hindering their political success. NV4 attributed male presidents' success to their gender, while NV3 highlighted the role of family connections. Biases against women are pervasive in the Philippines, with around 75% holding political biases. These biases align with the study's findings that political biases against women persist. NVFFs often stated that women's qualities were insufficient for leadership. Stereotypically male traits, such as strength, assertiveness, and decisiveness, were deemed necessary. NV2 emphasized the need for women to exhibit bravery and directness. Additionally, NV4 preferred women to remain in local positions and required agentic qualities to consider them for higher roles.

Double standards in evaluating female candidates corroborated previous research showing women's disadvantages in voting. NVFFs' beliefs stemmed from personal experiences and perceptions in their households and workplaces. NV1 introduced a

unique perspective—the scarcity of female politicians. Despite recognizing women's honesty and integrity, the limited availability of female candidates prompted NV1 to lean toward male candidates. Villacever's (2022) point showing women constituting only 23% of elected politicians in the Philippines supported this perspective.

Table 3. Summarized perceptions of VFFs and NVFFs on women electoral candidates

Category	Perception of VFFs	Perception of NVFFs
View on Females and Males in Society	They have an equal view on males and females in society. They recognize that society still associates different roles to each sex, but they move towards inclusivity in all fields.	Traditional stereotypes are present in their views, with males usually leading in different fields and the women being their subordinates.
Perception on Male Candidates	Male candidates are associated with agentic characteristics such as being firm, aggressive, and assertive. They acknowledge that males are given more leniency to mess up. Males can lead the country.	Male candidates are associated with agentic characteristics such as having a hand of iron, firmness, aggressiveness, and assertiveness. Male candidates are the rightful leaders of the country.
Perception on Female Candidates	Female candidates are associated with more communal characteristics such as being soft-hearted and gentle. Female candidates are applauded because they make the most of what society has given them despite the system being pro-male. Females can lead the country.	Female candidates are associated with communal characteristics like being motherly, caring, and full of love. They do not hold anything against female candidates, but they believe that they should not enter national politics. Female candidates are held to double standards where they must have agentic characteristics which the NVFFs have associated with males.
Leadership Qualities	Balance of agentic and communal characteristics – good communicator, credibility, good listener, trustworthy, decisive, assertive, willful, and responsible.	More on agentic characteristics – makes hard choices, ready to take arms, strong, assertive, powerful, confrontational, and has an iron hand.
Role Congruity	As they are looking for a balance of agentic and communal characteristics in a leader (which they associate to both sexes), they perceive both sexes as capable of leading.	As they are looking for more agentic characteristics in a leader (which they associate with males), they perceive males as capable of leading. Females are not seen as leaders because the characteristics NVFFs have assigned to their sex do not match their leadership prototypes.
Main Factors in their Perceptions	Presence of strong and capable females in their past and daily experiences.	Religion, teachings in the Bible, past male/female presidents, family name.

Category	Perception of VFFs	Perception of NVFFs
Sex as a basis for their voting preference	No. It is their qualities and capabilities to lead the country that matter.	When asked directly, they answered no. But their other answers indicate that they do use sex as a basis and whether the candidate has the agentic characteristics they are looking for in a leader.

Table 3 provides a summary of the differing perceptions of Voter Female Feminists (VFFs) and Non-Voter Female Feminists (NVFFs) regarding gender roles, candidate attributes, and leadership qualities. While VFFs embrace an equitable view of males and females in society, NVFFs adhere to traditional stereotypes. VFFs applaud both sexes' potential in various fields, promoting inclusivity, while NVFFs tend to assign distinct roles to each gender. In evaluating male candidates, both groups associate agentic qualities like assertiveness and firmness. VFFs acknowledge the male candidates' room for error, while NVFFs hold males as natural leaders. Regarding female candidates, VFFs recognize communal traits like soft-heartedness and acknowledge their efforts within a pro-male system. In contrast, NVFFs view female candidates through double standards, believing they must adopt agentic attributes usually assigned to males.

In terms of leadership qualities, VFFs seek a balance of agentic and communal characteristics in leaders, enabling them to perceive both sexes as potential leaders. Meanwhile, NVFFs emphasize agentic characteristics, attributing strength, assertiveness, and an "iron hand" to male leaders. This discrepancy in perceived leadership attributes corresponds to the groups' preferences for male leaders based on religious teachings, past experiences, and male-dominated leadership history. While both groups claim not to use sex as a basis for voting, their answers suggest otherwise. VFFs emphasize qualities and capabilities for leadership, while NVFFs unconsciously lean toward using sex and agentic attributes as decisive factors. This study highlights the role of past experiences, religious beliefs, and societal norms in shaping these contrasting perceptions and voting preferences between VFFs and NVFFs.

Conclusion

This study examined how historical perceptions of females, influenced by colonialism and religion, affect male voters' attitudes toward female candidates in politics. The objective is to uncover how male voters perceive female candidates. Through in-depth interviews, the researchers engaged ten male participants, divided into VFFs and NVFFs, to gain insights. The findings reveal a connection between agentic features with males, while communal traits align with females, consistent across both VFF and NVFF groups. This is supported by research by Carli et al. (2016), and Eagly and Johanssen-Schmidt (2001), indicating that agentic characteristics are more associated with men, and communal attributes with women. The study also uncovers distinct candidate assessment criteria between the two groups. VFFs value communal and agentic leaders, indicating openness to both sexes in leadership roles, while strong female role models significantly influence their perspectives. These findings align with

studies by Dolan and Lynch (2016), and de Geus et al. (2021), showing that voters' perspectives on a candidate's gender have minimal impact on voting decisions. Conversely, NVFFs evaluate candidates based on gender, preferring male candidates due to their perceived agentic attributes, inherently associated with men. Religion and history play a crucial role in shaping this preference, resonating with Vial and Napier's (2018) assertion that agentic qualities hold greater value for leadership roles.

However, the study has limitations. With a sample of only ten participants, five each of VFFs and NVFFs, the diversity of Filipino male voters' opinions might not be fully represented. The study does not seek to provide generalization, rather, offers a unique insight on the thought process of Filipino male voters vis-à-vis female candidates. Additionally, the study solely focuses on Filipino men who participated in the 2016 and 2022 Presidential and Vice-Presidential elections, excluding viewpoints of nonvoters and first-time voters. The study is also unable to control external variables like participants' political biases, potentially introducing bias into the results.

Nevertheless, this study suggests that male voters' perceptions of female candidates remain influenced by societal gender stereotypes and traditional norms. NVFFs' preference for male candidates reinforces gender bias in leadership positions, attributed to the belief that males possess the agentic qualities needed for such roles. This bias might limit women's opportunities for high-ranking roles in politics. Additionally, VFFs' preference for communal and agentic leaders, shaped by strong female role models, emphasizes the importance of female representation in leadership to counteract these biases.

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Declaration of conflicting interests

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