

Navigating Power and Politics: Strategic Competence as a Predictor of Women's Electoral Success in the Philippines

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Abstract

This study examined the strategic competence of women in Philippine politics that contributed to success in electoral campaigns, focusing on former Presidents Corazon Cojuangco Aquino and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Anchored on Longwe's Women Empowerment framework, the study analyzed women's leadership in terms of welfare, access, conscientization, participation, and control, particularly in relation to political representation, electoral strategy, governance, and empowerment. Using a qualitative historical research design, the study relied on secondary sources such as electronic articles, e-books, speeches, e-journals, related studies, literature books, news recordings, and other documented materials. No respondents or participant sampling were involved. Data were examined through historical data analysis, content analysis, and document review. Findings showed that both Aquino and Arroyo met the constitutional qualifications for the presidency and demonstrated strategic competence through advocacy, personal attributes, political participation, execution of campaign functions, and electoral mechanisms. Aquino's success was linked to democratic restoration, moral integrity, human rights advocacy, coalition building, symbolism, grassroots engagement, and mass mobilization. Arroyo's success was associated with strategic coalition building, pragmatic policy agenda-setting, political machinery, unity and stability messaging, economic development, voter outreach, media management, and policy advocacy. The study concludes that women's success in Philippine electoral politics depends not only on formal qualifications but also on strategic campaign competence and the ability to connect leadership identity with public needs and voter aspirations. The study is most directly aligned with SDG 5 on Gender Equality and SDG 16 on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, with related connections to education, health, economic growth, communities, and partnerships. Its sustainability impact lies in strengthening understanding of women's leadership, democratic participation, institutional reform, and inclusive governance.

Keywords: Aquino, Arroyo, Electoral Campaigns, Gender Equality, Longwe's Women Empowerment Framework, Philippine Politics, Political Participation, Strategic Competence, Women's Leadership

1. Introduction

This study examines the strategic competence of women in Philippine politics that leads to success in electoral campaigns, focusing on former Presidents Corazon Cojuangco Aquino and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. It situates their leadership within gender representation, executive governance, women's empowerment, and electoral strategy. Although the Philippines has achieved notable progress in women's political participation, women still face structural barriers such as elite-male political dominance, unequal access to resources, and limited influence in decision-making. Thus, the study analyzes the qualifications, advocacy, personal attributes, political participation, execution of functions, and electoral mechanisms of the two former female presidents.

1.1 Background of Women's Strategic Competence in Philippine Electoral Politics

The Philippines has been recognized for female political representation and leadership, particularly in education, health, economic participation, and political empowerment. Women constitute nearly half of the Philippine population, yet their social and political status remains marked by both progress and inequality. While women occupy professional, managerial, and legislative roles, they continue to encounter discrimination, underrepresentation, and limited access to political and economic power. Filipinas have served as legislators, mayors, council members, voters, campaigners, and political organizers. The presidencies of Corazon C. Aquino and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo show that women can succeed in a political field historically dominated by men. However, women's rise in Philippine politics is often connected to political dynasties, family ties, media visibility, and access to resources. From a baseline of 11.3% in 1992 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 1995), women's representation in the national parliament increased to 27%, but this remained below the national target of 50%, making women's strategic competence in electoral campaigns a relevant area of study.

1.2 Literature Themes on Women's Executive Leadership, Presidential Functions, and Electoral Campaign Competence

The related literature explains that Philippine executive leadership is grounded in constitutional authority, institutional power, and electoral legitimacy. Article VII, Section 1 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution vests executive power in the President, who serves as both Head of State and Head of Government. Executive power refers to the authority to implement laws, while the legislature creates laws and the judiciary interprets them. The President also controls the executive branch, appoints officials, and influences other branches through constitutional appointments. The President is elected by direct vote for a six-year term and is ineligible for reelection. Presidential authority also extends beyond explicitly listed powers because the President is required to ensure that laws are faithfully executed. Under the Administrative Code of 1987, the President exercises powers such as control over the executive branch, ordinance power, appointment, supervision over local governments, authority over aliens, eminent domain, and recovery of ill-gotten wealth. Executive issuances, including executive orders and administrative orders, are part of this authority; during Aquino's early administration, executive orders continued to carry the force and effect of law until the ratification of the 1987 Constitution. Presidential supervision over local governments is exercised through the Department of the Interior and Local Government.

1.3 Philippine Context of Aquino and Arroyo's Political Leadership and Governance Contributions

This study focuses on Corazon Cojuangco Aquino and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as the two former female presidents of the Philippines. Aquino became the first woman president after the contested 1986 election and the People Power Revolution. Her political background was shaped by her family's prominence, her connection to the Cojuangco and Sumulong clans, and her role as the wife of Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino Jr., a leading critic of Ferdinand Marcos (Quinlan, 1992). Although she initially remained outside formal politics, she later became a central figure in the opposition movement during martial law, exile, and the campaign against Marcos. Aquino's administration is associated with democratic restoration, constitutional reform, education, health, family policy, and civil society participation. Her contributions included the Family Code, education reforms emphasizing literacy and basic skills (Aquino, 1987), programs for out-of-school youth and adults ("The Aquino Management of the Presidency", 1992), and health initiatives such as Multi-Drug Therapy, Short-Course Chemotherapy, the Philippine National Drug Policy, and the Generics Act. Politically, she restored democratic rights, freedom of expression, electoral choice, peace initiatives, and Go-NGO partnership. Economically, however, her administration faced foreign debt, poverty, land reform issues, and legislative constraints (countrystudies.us, n.d.; Hays, 2015). Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, the second female president, had strong academic, professional, and political credentials. She studied economics, taught at higher education institutions, served in the Department of Trade and Industry, became senator, vice president, social welfare secretary, president, and later a member of the House of Representatives. Her administration supported women's economic empowerment, gender-responsive governance, anti-trafficking measures, and migrant women's concerns through the NCRFW and related policies. It also advanced textbook distribution, school building construction, science and mathematics instruction, teacher training, distance learning, and technology-supported education. Economically, her administration managed growth amid political instability and global shocks, supported housing reforms, and expanded socialized housing and land tenure programs. Her electoral reform efforts included support for automation to reduce cheating and improve the speed and credibility of election results.

1.4 Longwe's Women Empowerment Framework and the Strategic Competence Concept

The study is anchored on Longwe's Women Empowerment framework, which explains women's empowerment through five levels: welfare, access, conscientization, participation, and control. Welfare refers to women's material well-being; access concerns equal access to resources and opportunities; conscientization refers to awareness of fair gender relations; participation involves involvement in decision-making and governance; and control refers to balanced authority over decisions and resources. This framework supports the study because women's political leadership is examined not only as representation but also as access to power, participation in governance, and control over decision-making. The study links women in Philippine politics, specifically Pres. Corazon C. Aquino and Pres. Gloria M. Arroyo, to strategic competence and success in electoral campaigns. Strategic competence refers to the leaders' proficiency in electoral mechanisms, advocacy, personal attributes, political participation, and execution of functions.

1.5 Research Gaps and Rationale on Women's Electoral Success in Philippine Politics

The study responds to the need for further research on women's strategic competence in Philippine politics, particularly in successful presidential campaigns. Although women's political representation has improved, leadership remains shaped by male dominance, dynastic politics, unequal resources, and limited access to decision-making. The study therefore examines how Aquino and Arroyo's qualifications, advocacy, personal attributes, political participation, and execution of functions contributed to electoral success. Aquino's strategic competence was shown in her ability to unite diverse opposition groups against the Marcos regime, including liberals, leftists, and some military factions. Her campaign used democratic principles, human rights, social justice, grassroots mobilization, alternative communication strategies, and international attention to gain public support, contributing to the fall of the Marcos regime and the restoration of democracy. Arroyo's strategic competence was reflected in coalition-building, alliance formation, policy agenda-setting, and political machinery. Her alliances strengthened her leadership base during the 2001 transition (Almonte, 2015), while her focus on economic

growth, poverty reduction, and infrastructure development helped her appeal to broad voter concerns (Almonte, 2015). Coalition building requires coordination, shared platforms, resource pooling, and unified messaging. Arroyo also relied on grassroots mobilization, local networks, targeted outreach, and organized campaign operations (Almonte, 2015).

1.6 SDG Alignment of Women's Political Participation, Governance, Education, Health, and Socio-Economic Development

The study aligns most directly with SDG 5 – Gender Equality because it examines women's political participation, access to leadership, and capacity for decision-making. It also aligns with SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions because it addresses democratic restoration, constitutional governance, electoral mechanisms, political participation, freedom of expression, peace initiatives, and institutional leadership. SDG 4 – Quality Education is relevant because both administrations are discussed in relation to education access, teacher training, curriculum reform, distance learning, and technology-based learning. SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-Being applies through health programs, disease control, drug policy, and access to medicine. SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth is reflected in discussions of economic policy, poverty reduction, women's economic empowerment, and micro-enterprises. SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities applies to housing reforms and socialized housing, while SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals is reflected in Go-NGO partnerships and government-civil society cooperation.

1.7 Multidisciplinary Sustainability Significance of Women's Strategic Competence in Philippine Electoral Politics

The study contributes to socio-economic, institutional, educational, public health, governance, and community sustainability by examining how women leaders use strategic competence in elections and governance. It highlights women's access to leadership, empowerment, democratic participation, institutional reform, and policy responses to public needs. The study also supports educational sustainability through education reforms, public health sustainability through disease-control and medicine policies, and community sustainability through housing, family policy, peace-building, and civil society participation. Overall, it connects gender equality, political strategy, and women's leadership to broader sustainability concerns in governance, education, health, economy, and community development.

1.8 Scope and Delimitation of the Historical Qualitative Inquiry on Aquino and Arroyo

The study focuses on the strategic competence of women in Philippine politics that leads to success in electoral campaigns, specifically the cases of former Presidents Corazon Cojuangco Aquino and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. It uses qualitative historical research and thematic analysis to examine patterns in secondary data from electronic articles, e-books, speeches, and e-journals. The study is limited by time constraints, available secondary sources, and the researcher's developing research experience. Within these limits, it compares literature on women in Philippine politics with concepts of strategic competence in successful electoral campaigns.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study used a qualitative historical research design. It is a systematic process of examining historical events to provide a comprehensive account of what occurred. It goes beyond the collection of dates and facts by interpreting events, people, and ideas that shaped the present. Berg (2000) distinguishes historical inquiry from nostalgia, explaining that nostalgia merely recalls pleasant memories without following strict research standards, while historical research reconstructs past details, figures, events, meanings, and concepts that continue to influence the present. This design was appropriate because the study required a broad understanding of leadership and power within the social and political context of the Philippines. Since Philippine society involves overlapping class, economic, social, and political structures, the study used historical analysis and insights from related disciplines such as history, sociology, and economics to provide a deeper understanding of the research problem.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in the Philippines, a sovereign archipelagic country in Southeast Asia located in the Western Pacific Ocean. As a republic with a presidential form of government, the Philippines has three branches of government: executive, legislative, and judicial. The country served as the study locale because of the continuing political issues related to women as aspiring leaders of the state. The researcher selected this locale because it was accessible, practical, manageable, and broad enough to provide relevant data for the study.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The study did not require respondents because it relied on secondary data from existing references. Since the research followed a qualitative historical approach, the needed information was obtained from documented sources rather than direct participants.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

No participant sampling was conducted because the study did not involve respondents or primary data collection. Instead, the study used secondary sources relevant to the topic, including theories, approaches, investigations, journal articles, related studies, literature books, news recordings, papers, and other available materials. These sources served as the basis for examining women's strategic competence in Philippine politics.

2.5 Research Instrument

The study used secondary sources of data as the main research instrument. These sources allowed the researcher to gather trustworthy information relevant to the study's objectives. The secondary data included indirectly obtained materials such as journal articles, related research, literature books, news recordings, papers, and other references used to support the historical and qualitative inquiry.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher followed a systematic process in gathering data. Written permission was first secured from the Thesis Adviser, Program Chairperson, Campus Dean, and Campus Director. After approval, the researcher identified the theoretical foundations of the study and gathered supporting materials related to the research problem. The researcher also sought guidance from the thesis adviser in selecting appropriate research approaches and methods for handling and analyzing data. Once the thesis proposal, research tool, and other important study components were approved, the researcher collected data from credible secondary sources. These materials were categorized as secondary data to establish the basis of the data collection method. The researcher then organized the information according to the study objectives and identified similarities and differences among the relevant inputs.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The gathered data were processed through historical data analysis, content analysis, and document review. Guided by the research design, research instrument, and data procedures, the researcher categorized the information according to the objectives of the study. The data were then examined to develop the discussion of findings and their implications. Afterward, the researcher summarized the discussion, identified key points for conclusion, and presented the results in the completed manuscript.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Qualifications of the Former Female Presidents for Entry into Philippine Politics

3.1.1 Qualifications of Corazon Cojuangco Aquino

The findings showed that Corazon Cojuangco Aquino met the qualifications for the presidency. She was a natural-born Filipino citizen, born on January 25, 1933, in Paniqui, Tarlac, and came from the prominent Cojuangco and Sumulong families. She was a registered voter in Paniqui, Tarlac, was able to read and write, and had studied at St. Scholastica's College, Assumption Convent, Notre Dame Convent School, the College of Mount Saint Vincent, and Far Eastern University. She was 53 years old when she assumed the presidency and had lived in the Philippines for more than ten years prior to her candidacy. These findings indicate that Aquino satisfied the constitutional requirements for presidential eligibility under the Philippine Constitution, including citizenship, voter registration, literacy, age, and residency (Official Gazette). Her educational background supports her literacy and competence, as noted by (Szczepanski, 2018). Her entry into national leadership was also shaped by the anti-Marcos opposition, the assassination of her husband, the support of the Filipino people and the Catholic Church, and the 1986 EDSA People Power Revolution. Her statement, "It would have been the end of our efforts at restoring democracy," reflects the democratic purpose associated with her political rise (Corazon C. Aquino, 1986).

3.1.2 Qualifications of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo

The findings showed that Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo also met the qualifications for the presidency. She was a natural-born Filipino citizen, born on April 5, 1947, in San Juan, Manila, to former President Diosdado Macapagal and Dr. Evangelina Macaraeg-Macapagal. She was a registered voter in Lubao, Pampanga, was able to read and write, and had completed her education at Assumption Convent, Georgetown University, Assumption College, Ateneo de Manila University, and the University of the Philippines. She was 57 years old when elected to a full presidential term and had resided in the Philippines for the required period. These findings show that Arroyo fulfilled the constitutional requirements under the 1987 Philippine Constitution for natural-born citizenship, voter registration, literacy, age, and residency (Official Gazette). Her academic background and professional experience strengthened her political qualifications, particularly her training in economics and her work as a professor and public official. According to senate.gov.ph, her education and public service prepared her for higher political office. Her rise to the presidency followed the Second EDSA Revolution of 2001 and her later election to a full term in 2004, although her presidency was also associated with controversy and political instability. Her statement, "I will follow my father's footsteps in doing what is right, and God will take care of the rest. My father is my role model. My living role model is Cory Aquino. I am prepared," reflects the political identity she presented during her rise to national leadership.

3.2 Electoral Mechanisms Used in Electoral Campaigns

3.2.1 Electoral Mechanisms of Corazon Cojuangco Aquino

The findings showed that Aquino's electoral mechanisms included mass mobilization, coalition building, symbolism, and grassroots engagement. These mechanisms were expressed through her advocacy for democracy restoration, human rights, intersectoral collaboration, broad-based support, united front creation, direct engagement, public mobilization, and empowerment-focused advocacy. Her personal attributes included moral integrity, a sympathetic public image, relationship-building and negotiation skills, courage, influence, personal connection, genuine concern, and grassroots support. These findings suggest that Aquino's campaign success was strongly linked to her ability to unite opposition groups, mobilize citizens, and transform public frustration into collective democratic action. Her coalition-building brought together liberals, leftists, civil society groups, and even some military factions against the Marcos regime. Her campaign also used alternative communication channels, grassroots mobilization, and word-of-mouth strategies to counter government-controlled media. The success of these mechanisms was evident in her victory in the 1986 snap election and the restoration of democracy in the Philippines. The literature supports the importance of mass mobilization, democracy restoration, human rights advocacy, moral integrity, coalition building, intersectoral collaboration, broad-based support, united front creation, negotiation skills (Van Wart, 2003; Fisher et al., 1983), symbolism, resistance against authoritarian rule (Linz, 1990; McDermott, 1998), courageous leadership, and grassroots engagement.

3.2.2 Electoral Mechanisms of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo

The findings showed that Arroyo's electoral mechanisms included strategic coalition building, pragmatic policy agenda-setting, and utilization of political machinery. These were reflected in her advocacy for unity and stability, economic development, poverty alleviation, infrastructure projects, good governance, and anti-corruption. Her personal attributes included being collaborative, persuasive, practical, results-oriented, strategic, and influential. These findings indicate that Arroyo's campaign competence was grounded in political calculation, alliance formation, policy positioning, and organized campaign machinery. Her coalition-building widened her support base and provided political backing during her rise to the presidency in 2001 (Almonte, 2015). Strategic coordination among political actors strengthened her campaign through shared platforms, resource pooling, and unified political messaging (Ansolabehere et al., 2005). Her emphasis on unity and stability appealed to voters seeking secure governance, while her collaborative and persuasive qualities supported alliance-building and voter persuasion. Her pragmatic policy agenda focused on economic growth, poverty reduction, infrastructure, and practical results (Almonte, 2015). Her political machinery further strengthened voter mobilization, regional targeting, and support from local networks (Almonte, 2015). Her good governance and anti-corruption stance also positioned her as a reformist candidate, while her strategic and influential qualities supported her capacity to form alliances and communicate her vision.

3.3 Strategic Competence in Electoral Campaigns

3.3.1 Aquino's Execution of Campaign Functions

The findings showed that Aquino's strategic competence in executing campaign functions involved public speeches, political advertisements, debates and forums, campaign staff and volunteers, and media engagement. Her public speeches communicated democratic ideals and inspired public action, while her political advertisements used emotional appeals and democratic messaging. Her debates and forums demonstrated competence and conviction, and her management of campaign staff and volunteers helped organize a coordinated campaign. Her communication strategies helped mobilize support during the 1986 electoral struggle and the People Power Revolution. These results show that Aquino's execution of functions was effective because she combined public communication, symbolic messaging, organizational coordination, and mass participation. Her ability to engage voters and build broad-based support demonstrated the role of strategic competence in campaign success. The People Power Revolution became the strongest expression of her campaign's execution of function because nonviolent resistance and mass protest helped remove Marcos and install Aquino as president. Her speeches influenced public emotion and action, her advertisements shaped public opinion, and her debates strengthened voter perceptions of her leadership capacity. Her ability to mobilize campaign workers and volunteers reflected strong leadership and organization. Her use of media engagement also showed adaptability to changing communication platforms.

3.3.2 Aquino's Political Participation

The findings showed that Aquino's political participation involved grassroots mobilization, party building, political networking, and voter outreach. She collaborated with interest groups, formed alliances, empowered marginalized communities, and expanded her support base. Her campaign involved demonstrations, direct engagement with citizens, party organization, political partnerships, voter education, and public communication. These results indicate that Aquino's political participation strengthened democratic participation and expanded political inclusion. Her approach helped consolidate democratic institutions and encouraged future leaders to prioritize people's participation and democratic governance. Grassroots mobilization allowed her campaign to activate citizens at the local level and create inclusivity among voters. Party building strengthened her campaign organization through PDP-Laban and reinforced the value of

organized political parties in elections. Political networking helped her gain support from influential individuals and groups, consistent with the value of social capital in electoral success. Voter outreach further strengthened voter participation through communication, information dissemination, and voter registration.

3.3.3 Arroyo's Execution of Campaign Functions

The findings showed that Arroyo's execution of campaign functions involved organizational skills, public speaking ability, decision-making capabilities, and fundraising proficiency. Her campaigns emphasized economic policies, infrastructure, social welfare programs, alliances, and direct voter engagement. Her organizational skills supported campaign management and resource allocation, while her public speaking helped communicate her platform. Her decision-making supported strategic adaptation, and her fundraising helped sustain campaign operations. These findings show that Arroyo's campaign execution was closely tied to her experience, technical background, and political networks. Her emphasis on economic development, foreign investment, job creation, infrastructure, and social welfare helped present her as a competent leader. Organizational skills were important in ensuring that campaign messages reached target audiences and resources were used efficiently. Public speaking strengthened voter engagement and influenced perceptions of leadership. Decision-making ability enabled strategic responses to political challenges, particularly given Arroyo's long political experience. Fundraising proficiency also strengthened campaign viability by securing resources through political and business networks.

3.3.4 Arroyo's Political Participation

The findings showed that Arroyo's political participation involved grassroots mobilization, coalition building, voter outreach, media management, and policy advocacy. Her political participation was visible in her assumption of the presidency in 2001, her victory in the 2004 election, her alliance-building, and her policy-centered campaigning. However, her political career was also affected by allegations of corruption and human rights abuses. These findings indicate that Arroyo's political participation helped shape her long-term influence in Philippine politics, despite controversy. Her campaigns allowed her to establish alliances, mobilize support, and advocate for her policy agenda. Grassroots mobilization helped her connect with local communities and build political support. Coalition building strengthened her support among diverse interest groups and political parties. Voter outreach allowed her to engage constituents through town hall meetings, door-to-door campaigns, and consultations. Media management enabled her to shape public perception through press conferences, interviews, and social media engagement. Policy advocacy also strengthened her credibility by presenting clear platforms and policy proposals.

3.4 Outcomes of Strategic Competence in Electoral Campaigns

3.4.1 Outcomes of Aquino's Strategic Competence

The findings showed that Aquino's strategic competence produced three major outcomes: mass support through grassroots organizing, public identification with democratic restoration and human rights, and effective use of media and public relations. Her campaign connected with communities, empowered marginalized sectors, used democratic symbolism, and presented her as a champion of democracy. These outcomes helped build a strong support base among ordinary citizens and marginalized groups. These results show that Aquino's success was strongly connected to her ability to transform democratic advocacy into mass political action. Her grassroots organizing enabled her campaign to listen to local concerns and mobilize community leaders. Her emphasis on marginalized sectors reflected empowerment, inclusion, and social justice. Her use of symbolism strengthened her image as a democratic leader and advocate of civil liberties (McDermott, 1998). Her use of media and public relations also helped shape public opinion, communicate democratic values, and expand her connection with voters.

3.4.2 Outcomes of Arroyo's Strategic Competence

The findings showed that Arroyo's strategic competence produced two major outcomes: the effective deployment of political machinery and the promotion of economic development and poverty alleviation. Her political machinery helped cultivate alliances, overcome structural inequalities, and secure broad voter backing. Her policy agenda focused on economic growth, fiscal stability, infrastructure, poverty reduction, and social welfare improvement. However, the findings also recognized that her presidency was marked by allegations of corruption and electoral irregularities, which affected public trust. These findings indicate that Arroyo's electoral success was linked to organized political networks, alliance-building, policy-centered messaging, and appeal to voter aspirations. Political machinery enabled her to mobilize resources and voters through coordinated networks (Smith, 2010). Strong alliances helped women leaders expand political influence and overcome structural barriers. Her economic policies and social programs helped secure voter support by addressing growth, employment, infrastructure, and social welfare. Her pragmatic policy agenda also connected with voter aspirations by promising development, poverty reduction, and visible improvements, although the long-term impact remained debated.

3.5 Synthesis of the Results

The results show that Aquino and Arroyo both achieved electoral success through strategic competence, but their approaches differed. Aquino's success was anchored in democratic restoration, moral legitimacy, mass mobilization,

symbolism, grassroots engagement, and empowerment of marginalized sectors. Arroyo's success was anchored in coalition-building, pragmatic policy agenda-setting, political machinery, economic development messaging, voter outreach, media management, and policy advocacy. Overall, the findings suggest that women's success in Philippine electoral politics depends not only on constitutional qualifications but also on strategic campaign competence. Aquino's case highlights the power of moral leadership, democratic advocacy, and mass participation, while Arroyo's case highlights the role of political networks, policy pragmatism, and organized campaign operations. Together, the two cases show that women's strategic competence in electoral campaigns is shaped by advocacy, personal attributes, execution of campaign functions, political participation, and the ability to connect leadership identity with voter aspirations.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concludes that Corazon C. Aquino and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo both demonstrated strategic competence that contributed to their success in Philippine electoral campaigns. Aquino's success was shaped by mass mobilization, democracy restoration, human rights advocacy, moral integrity, coalition building, symbolism, grassroots engagement, and her ability to connect personally with the Filipino people. Arroyo's success was influenced by strategic coalition building, advocacy for unity and stability, pragmatic policy agenda-setting, use of political machinery, good governance and anti-corruption messaging, and her strategic and influential leadership qualities. Overall, the findings show that women's success in Philippine politics depends not only on constitutional qualifications but also on effective electoral mechanisms, personal attributes, political participation, and the ability to align campaign strategies with public needs and aspirations.

The study recommends that women in the community continue to recognize the importance of women's leadership, women empowerment, gender equality, and equal opportunities in order to challenge traditional beliefs that classify leadership roles according to gender. It also recommends that future administrations use the study as a guide in assessing leadership practices, developing agendas, and improving leadership styles. For the academe, the study may support deeper understanding of the administrations of Corazon C. Aquino and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and contribute to political science discussions on women's leadership. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct similar studies to further explore women's strategic competence in politics and strengthen understanding of women's participation in electoral campaigns.

Compliance with ethical standards

The study used a qualitative historical research design and relied on secondary data from documented sources, including journal articles, related studies, literature books, news recordings, papers, and other reference materials. Written permission was secured from the Thesis Adviser, Program Chairperson, Campus Dean, and Campus Director before the collection and analysis of credible secondary sources.

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