



الممارسات العالمية في سياق إدارة ومراقبة الانتخابات

Global Practices In The Context Of Managing And Monitoring Elections

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رام الله - فلسطين - 2023

**Global Practices in Context
of Managing and Monitoring
Elections**

**الممارسات العالمية في سياق إدارة
ومراقبة الانتخابات حول العالم**

**منشورات مركز العصرية للدراسات والبحوث
الكلية العصرية الجامعية
جميع الحقوق محفوظة للناشر**

الطبعة الأولى 2023

ISBN: 978-9950-427-01-3

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The Influence of Citizens' Political Culture on Electoral Participatio

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1. Introduction :

Political culture significantly influences voters' electoral behavior, shaping their positions and attitudes toward participation. Political culture extends beyond voting in elections; it encompasses higher levels of political engagement, media consumption, and knowledge acquisition. Voter culture reflects their understanding of rights, responsibilities, and guides their behavior. It is a fundamental component of democratic political culture, and this naturally manifests in citizens' exercise of their right to vote.

Importance of the Research:

The research is crucial for fostering a democratic political culture across society. Democracy seeks the participation of the broadest spectrum of citizens in public life, and it necessitates elevating citizens' cultural, educational, and living standards to enable informed decision-making in public affairs.

Furthermore, this topic gains added importance in striving for a democratic system that encourages political participation across all segments of society and addresses voter illiteracy. The ultimate goal is to ensure a robust implementation of the democratic system, making this research topic vital and relevant.

Research Objective:

The research aims to enhance political awareness among voters, address illiteracy, and ensure a minimum standard of living for the population, thereby promoting electoral participation.

Research Problem:

The research problem centers on how to stimulate electoral participation despite voters' reluctance, which stems from a deficient political culture among citizens, high levels of illiteracy, and prevailing economic and social challenges. These factors contribute to mounting life pressures on the majority of citizens, ultimately resulting in low electoral participation.

Research Methodology:

For this study, I employed a descriptive analytical approach. This approach serves as a foundational step in gaining a comprehensive understanding of citizens' political culture and its role in facilitating electoral participation.

Scope of the research:

The research focuses on examining the extent of citizens' weak political awareness and its impact on hindering the effective implementation of a proper democratic system and its associated outcomes, which are essential for fostering active electoral participation.

Research Plan:

The research consists of an introduction, two main sections, and a conclusion:

- a. The Relationship Between Political Culture and Electoral Participation
 - Section One: Understanding Political Culture.
 - Section Two: Prerequisites for Electoral Participation.
- b. The Jurisprudential Dispute Concerning Illiterate Voter Participation in Elections.

2. The Relationship Between Political Culture and Electoral Participation

Political culture plays an influential role in political life, as it is an integral part of society's overall culture, both influencing and being influenced by it. The significance of political culture and its impact on citizens, society, and the political system at large stems from its prominent role in shaping electoral participation.

2.1. The concept of political culture

We will discuss culture before delving into the concept of political culture. Culture is understood as an integrated and interrelated set of information, beliefs, ideas, ways of thinking and expression, recreational activities, livelihood practices, child-rearing methods, handicrafts, and other prevailing phenomena among members of society. These cultural elements are transmitted from one generation to another and acquired by individuals through communication and social interaction, rather than through biological genetics (Al-Sayed, 1987).

Political culture is one of the branches of culture, encompassing all aspects related to politics, including political values, political systems, ideology, elections, democracy, and other political terminology. It represents the collective knowledge, symbols, intellectual resources, theories, and academic disciplines that explore political affairs. Additionally, it can be regarded as the distinct societal approach to political practice and state affairs, both domestically and internationally (Oulama & Misbah, 2017).

Furthermore, political culture has been defined as the sum of enduring values tied to how voters perceive authorities, which significantly impacts the legitimacy of the existing system. Consequently, political culture shapes the voter's interactions with authorities, influencing their expectations of authority roles and activities, as well as the civic duties citizens must perform. Political culture also encompasses individual and group identities (Neuer, 2022).

It is essential to recognize that no political system can flourish or remain coherent unless information and knowledge about political affairs, along with the set of political values and societal beliefs, are disseminated among society's members.

In essence, political culture represents a social phenomenon characterized by the shared political beliefs and practical behaviors of a society. It offers insights into the foundations of state authorities and their competencies, as well as all the components of the political system.

From the above, it becomes evident that political culture is an integral part of society's overall orientation, reflecting the past, present, and perhaps future aspirations. It is a variable intertwined with numerous societal factors,

where the influence of economic, social, cultural, and ideological conditions becomes apparent. Political culture also shapes the governance style, determining the nature of political actions and affecting the scope of democracy, the volume and types of political practices, and the resulting specific characteristics of decision-makers.

2.2 Requirements for Electoral Participation

The successful implementation of democratic governance necessitates two key factors: first, the elevation of citizens' political awareness, which holds significant importance, and second, favorable economic conditions that contribute positively to creating an appropriate environment for electoral participation.

2.2.1 The Citizens' Political Culture

Maurice Duverger, a renowned French jurist, defined political culture as an integral part of the prevailing culture within a specific society. However, within the collective framework of its elements, it takes on an organized structure with a distinct political nature (Sadiq, 1990). The political awareness of voters and their enthusiasm to exercise their political rights are the primary assurances for the integrity and fairness of the electoral process. Additionally, in addition to citizens' political culture, the availability of other rights is considered necessary to ensure electoral participation. These rights include freedom of opinion, expression, and assembly, without fear of reprisal due to the expression of one's opinions.

Effective electoral participation is a vital pillar of democracy in contemporary societies. For instance, societies like France exhibit a high level of cultural and political awareness. Politics is so ingrained in their culture that it can be likened to a "popular sport," with its nuances mastered by various segments of society. Over centuries, French society has cultivated and passed down this culture through generations, resulting in significant developments in governance, politics, and culture. This maturity in the French national character and political upbringing has led conscious French voters to make political choices based on their affiliations, beliefs, or perceived solutions to economic and social issues.

This cultural and political awareness had a profound impact on the Third and Fourth Republics (Sadiq, 1990). Despite the presence

of multiparty political pluralism and a multitude of affiliations and loyalties among various parties, obtaining a parliamentary majority proved challenging, leading to political instability. It was this instability that prompted Charles de Gaulle to establish political blocs that engaged in electoral processes to restore political stability.

The Evolution of French Political Culture:

Subsequently, due to the failure of both the left and the right to address the concerns of the French voter effectively, there was a shift towards the extreme right. This movement capitalized on the prevailing issues, advocating for a return to French national culture, values, and identity. It opposed globalization and the perceived American cultural invasion while advocating for the preservation of French identity through measures like expelling foreigners. This stance garnered increasing support in recent times.

The increase in participation rates in presidential elections, reaching approximately 85%, and legislative elections, ranging between 70-80% (Hegazy, 2005), reflects the presence of substantial political awareness among French voters compared to many other contemporary societies.

Awareness and Culture of Iraqi Voters:

Iraq experienced elections in 2005, primarily based on a closed list system. Nevertheless, the level of awareness and political culture among citizens holds paramount importance in determining the recognition of individual rights and freedoms, especially in the political sphere. A citizen with a high level of awareness and understanding is more likely to engage and participate actively in political life. Achieving this goal necessitates elevating the standards of the majority of citizens through education, improved living conditions, and enhanced economic opportunities. This, in turn, requires the development of educational institutions, universities, cultural centers, publishing houses, the press, the media, political parties, and civil society organizations. Moreover, stability and social and political security are crucial in creating an environment conducive to fostering political awareness and culture (Sadiq, 1990).

It is essential to consider the social reality of Iraq post the 2003 United States occupation. The proliferation of ethnic, religious, sectarian, and

regional loyalties and affiliations, driven by international and regional factors and forces, has often come at the expense of national unity.

In light of the above, democratic transformation goes beyond the mere enactment of laws, conducting elections, and establishing arrangements and procedures. It also necessitates concerted efforts to disseminate and solidify a democratic political culture across all segments of society. The goal is to create a shared political culture that respects the rights of every individual.

So, how do we promote and support participation? There are numerous methods, means, and suggestions, but one crucial aspect is educating people on how to exercise their right to vote and their public and political freedoms. This requires the collaboration of all state agencies, civil society organizations, and human rights groups in culturally, intellectually, and socially educating the populace. This multifaceted approach ensures that citizens can exercise their right to vote, as electoral participation is closely linked to the economic and overall societal conditions.

In conclusion, the key to encouraging electoral participation lies in elevating the political awareness of citizens. Political awareness leads many voters to move beyond indifference toward political life and public affairs. Voters with a strong political culture can differentiate between candidates and are less likely to be deceived by false electoral propaganda. They protect their electoral votes from manipulation, forgery, distortion, or sale, going to great lengths to safeguard their democratic rights. The development of political awareness among citizens is a collective responsibility (Georgi, 2002).

2.2.2. The Economic Factors:

Economic conditions can have either a positive or negative impact on creating a conducive environment for electoral participation. The better the living conditions of citizens, the more equipped they are to exercise their political rights and freedoms, beginning with the selection of the right representatives for governance. As a result, economic stability and development are crucial tools for achieving political and social stability in any country.

France stands out as an economically distinguished nation from an early stage. It ranks among the eight developed countries, with its citizens

enjoying high- and converging-income levels. This economic prosperity has had a significant impact on the country's political development and stability.

In developed countries, voters often seek candidates who can provide solutions to their economic challenges. This trend is evident in France, where political parties, ranging from the Gaullist and centrist right advocating economic liberalism to the French left with its various factions promoting nationalization and state ownership of production means, have successfully attracted voters by addressing economic issues (Hegazy, 2005). Thus, the economic factor plays a pivotal role in appealing to French voters, shaping the core of political discourse for political parties vying for seats in the French National Assembly.

Conversely, the Arab Republic of Egypt grapples with citizens' reluctance to participate in elections, largely attributed to the escalating economic and social challenges. These challenges have placed increased life pressures on the majority of citizens, causing a decline in electoral participation as they prioritize pressing concerns such as poverty, rising prices, unemployment, education, healthcare, and housing (Ibrahim, 2006). These conditions hinder the establishment of a favorable environment for effective electoral participation.

Hence, it becomes evident that an individual's improved standard of living, coupled with the preservation of their freedoms, enables even the economically disadvantaged citizen to exercise their political rights (Sharqawi, 1979). Furthermore, individuals' pursuit of political rights is consistently intertwined with the level of economic and social progress. This connection is rooted in the fact that a citizen's attachment to their homeland tends to grow as their financial well-being improves, fostering greater interest in political participation to safeguard their personal interests.

Furthermore, a higher economic status consistently motivates individuals to seek safeguards for their political freedoms as a means to protect their economic well-being. This stands in contrast to those experiencing poverty and economic hardship, who often focus solely on their daily survival without allocating even a fraction of their attention to exercising their political rights, such as the right to vote. They may not actively seek to protect this granted right. Ultimately, a democratic system

cannot thrive when based in a society plagued by poverty and low literacy rates, even if the constitutional laws have been meticulously designed to enable citizen participation in governance.

Iraqi society grapples with significant economic and social challenges, including poverty, disease, and unemployment. These issues manifest in low economic growth rates, declining human development indicators, and soaring unemployment rates, leading to a stifling social crisis. In 2021, unemployment rates reached 16.5%. Concurrently, rising crime rates have eroded the citizens' sense of security.

The Iraqi voter's focus on securing their livelihood has diminished due to the worsening economic problems. They are burdened by concerns related to poverty, lack of education, illness, and the absence of essential services. These challenges serve as significant obstacles to electoral participation.

In conclusion, a relationship exists between electoral participation and the combined impact of citizens' political culture and economic factors, which are environmental factors intertwined with voters' lives. The higher a voter's standard of living and levels of awareness, the greater the likelihood of their interest, participation, and influence in the democratic process through active engagement in political life.

3. The Jurisprudential Debate Regarding Illiterate Voter Participation in Elections.

Some political systems have imposed conditions for the exercise of the right to vote, specifically requiring voters to be literate (able to read and write). However, since democracy upholds the principle of equal political rights for all citizens based on their citizenship status, without discrimination between the educated and the illiterate, participation in political life serves as a means to achieve political stability and safeguard the state's public interest.

The literacy requirement for voters is deemed necessary and does not contradict the principle of universal suffrage, provided that the legislator can address this requirement in the preparations. Simultaneously, it is essential to acknowledge that the task of eradicating illiteracy is both a national and patriotic responsibility for which governments are held accountable. (Fawzi, 2000)

3.1 Demanding the Exclusion of Illiterate Individuals from Electoral Participation.

Some, like Sabry (1949), have advocated for the exclusion of illiterate individuals from electoral participation. They argue that illiterate participation runs counter to the fundamental purpose of elections, which requires a certain level of awareness and understanding of the electoral process. To make informed choices among candidates and select the most competent and qualified members of parliament, voters need a sufficient level of education. In their view, permitting individuals without education to participate in governance leads to a lack of clarity and disorder within the system.

John Stuart Mill shared a similar perspective, asserting that 'it is not permissible at all to allow participation in the election of any person who is unable to read, write, and perform basic arithmetic tasks.' He contended that the disqualification from voting is not imposed by society but is a result of an individual's own lack of effort.

Additionally, within contemporary jurisprudence in Egypt, there is a current demand that the voter must be literate, considering it a necessary condition based on several arguments, the most important of which are:

Electoral participation is a matter to be regulated by the legislator as required by the public interest. The legislator may or may not restrict such participation, according to the legislator's view, in the public interest, and not contravene the principle of universal suffrage (Fawzi, 2000).

Granting the right to vote imposes certain duties on the citizen who enjoys this right, which justify the granting of this privilege. Among these duties is the ability to distinguish and understand the actions attributed to them. There is no benefit in allowing individuals to vote if they do not know the names of the candidates, as they can easily be influenced by a small group. All of this practically leads to the undermining of people's sovereignty in favor of an oligarchic class, which consists of a small group of individuals (Al-Sharqawi & Nasif, Electoral Systems Worldwide and in Egypt, 1984)

Some argue (Abu Zeid, 1976) that granting illiterate individuals the right to vote needs careful reconsideration. They contend that illiterate individuals, who cannot read or write, may not significantly contribute to the political life. To suggest that giving illiterates the right to vote would elevate the political

awareness of the people is met with counterarguments. Allowing illiterates to vote may discourage the literate population from participating, as they may perceive themselves as a powerless minority in the elections, leading to a situation where the nation appears to lose what it gained.

There is no contradiction between the principle of equality and the exclusion of illiterate individuals from the voting process (Fahmy, *Elections and Their Impact on Political and Party Life*, 1998). Absolute equality cannot be practically enforced, as treating all individuals as completely equal without considering their specific circumstances and conditions would, in fact, be a violation of the principle of equality. Consequently, the distinction between an educated voter and an illiterate voter upholds the principle of equality rather than contradicting it (Al-Baz, *The Right to Political Participation*, 2002). In this regard, Allah (SWT) differentiated between individuals based on knowledge and piety, as stated in the Almighty's verse, 'Are those equal, those who know and those who do not know?'

It is argued that illiterate individuals are more susceptible to the influence of bribery, as well as threats and intimidation (Afifi, 2000). Moreover, the unemployed among them may be inclined to exploit the election season for personal gain. They are susceptible to deception through slogans and propaganda often employed in electoral campaigns. Consequently, they may lack the ability to make informed judgments concerning public affairs within the state, making them easy targets for manipulation despite the strict secrecy of the voting process. Conversely, individuals with an education are less likely to be deceived (Sheeha, 2006)

It is noteworthy that countries that have made significant progress in adopting democracy did not impose scientific competence as a requirement for voters to the extent that illiteracy has become almost non-existent, thanks to their long-standing advancements in education and culture (Fahmy, 1998). Furthermore, the transition from restricted voting to universal suffrage occurred gradually in stages. In countries like France and England, the issue of illiteracy holds little significance due to the widespread availability of education among voters and their high levels of intellectual and political awareness (Eid, 1941)

It is suggested that the role of the voter in the process of selecting between candidates is analogous to that of a judge in the process of resolving cases and ruling on litigants (Al-Baz, 2002). Consequently, it is argued that the voter should possess a good level of education, with a minimum requirement

being the ability to read and write, in order to ensure that voters make informed choices when selecting their representatives (Metwally, *The Issue of Electoral System Reform in Egypt*, 1948).

After reviewing the key arguments and justifications presented by jurisprudence advocating the exclusion of illiterates from the voting process, it is evident that a voter who possesses reading and writing skills is better equipped to comprehend the nation's problems and issues. Allowing illiterate individuals to participate in elections could potentially compromise the genuine expression of the people's will. Therefore, we align with the viewpoint that advocates for the literacy requirement for voter participation in elections

3.2 Responding to arguments for excluding illiterate people from electoral participation.

Supporters of universal suffrage defended the principle of the universality of the ballot, objected to the division of voters and their defense did not stand at the limit of resisting the distinction between the educated voter and the illiterate voter, but called for the participation of all citizens in the elections (Al-Tamawi, *Political Systems and Constitutional Law*, 1988) which is considered a school for political education, and accordingly, they responded to the previous arguments as follows:

- The regulation of participation through legislation, aligned with the public interest, sometimes involved depriving a significant sector of peasants and workers - the backbone of society's production - of their natural right. Excluding them from participating in elections would lead to a lack of interest from elected representatives in addressing the concerns and interests of this disenfranchised group. The absence of involvement from this substantial portion of society could have detrimental effects on production and the spirit of collective action. Consequently, there is a strong argument against denying the right to vote, especially given that the majority of citizens are illiterate. It may be more prudent to wait until illiteracy is eradicated before considering such.
- Regarding the duties assigned to citizens, the act of voting amounts to nothing more than granting the voter their vote, a straightforward task that requires only a basic understanding. Repeated political

engagement is the sole means to cultivate the affection of illiterate individuals for their country and enhance their political consciousness and sense of nationality (Ali, 1977).

- The late Youssef Ahmed El-Gendy defended the right to vote (Al-Dawla, 1976) He mentioned that it is absolutely incorrect to claim that we are promoting democracy while imposing restrictions on the illiterate. Regrettably, the majority of our nation falls into this category of illiteracy, and it is not their fault ; rather, it reflects a societal failing or a lack of attention from past governments in providing them with education. Moreover, the government mandates all citizens, whether illiterate or educated, to fulfill their duty of military service in defense of their country, without making any distinction between the two groups as attackers or defenders.
- Stating that there is no contradiction between denying the illiterate the right to vote and upholding the principle of equality merely serves to deviate from reality in an attempt to justify the deprivation of political rights guaranteed to the illiterate by the constitution and international agreements. Hence, it is impermissible for a legislator to strip any group or community of their voting rights based on economic circumstances. The law should remain uniform, treating all individuals equally without any form of discrimination.
- It is not proven that the illiterate voter response to the influences and means of electoral propaganda is more than that of the educated voter because participation is related to education. Rather, the matter is due to the social and psychological composition of the voter's personality and his experiences in political life.
- In jurisprudence (Al-Tamawi, 1988), the prevailing opinion is that the application aims to open the way for all citizens to participate in political life, irrespective of the distinction between illiterate and educated voters. It is recognized that some uneducated individuals may possess a higher level of political awareness and a better understanding of public events than certain educated individuals. Furthermore, age, life experience, modern developments in communication, and extensive cultural exposure can help rectify the potential shortcomings in the choices made by illiterate individuals. Additionally, the presence of educated offspring can play a significant role in enlightening and rationalizing illiterate voters (Fouda, 2000).

- When some individuals argue that the role of a voter in candidate selection is akin to that of a judge who must meet specific qualifications to hold office, it's important to highlight a crucial distinction. The roles of a judge and a voter differ significantly in terms of their responsibilities and the criteria they apply. A judge's primary objective is to pursue justice and uphold the law, while a voter primarily considers their own interests before other considerations.

And I agree with certain viewpoints (Al-Ghawil, 1996) that argue in favor of the requirement for voters to possess literacy skills, which has its merits. However, it's essential to recognize that true democracy cannot be realized by imposing this condition, especially in the face of rising illiteracy rates. Addressing illiteracy is a pivotal responsibility of the government, particularly as it advances on the path of democracy. Democracy itself takes on the crucial role of politically educating its citizens (Metwally, 1952). Some have also pointed to the successful experience of India (Sharqawi, 2007), a nation with a significant illiterate population, in conducting fair elections.

Hence, the matter of political culture assumes paramount importance in the context of democratization. It is crucial to empower and fortify this culture through three key policy areas: education, media, and culture. These policies should focus on the dissemination of political culture, with a prerequisite being a concerted effort to eradicate illiteracy, whether in Egypt or Iraq.

From the foregoing, it becomes evident that permitting illiterate individuals to participate in elections, without establishing the appropriate groundwork and conducive environment for democratic engagement, may result in the distortion of the people's will. It can provide a pretext for repressive regimes, which ostensibly govern in the name of the people, to exert control while, in reality, perpetrating severe injustices and tyranny under the guise of democracy. Such repressive regimes often resort to a range of tactics, including coercion, enticement, intimidation, vote-buying, and the manipulation of election results. This is primarily due to the limited political awareness among illiterate individuals, rendering them more susceptible to seduction, deception, bribery, threats, and promises.

Any government can secure the majority of the electorate's votes by relying on two key factors: the backing of the administration's supporters

and a significant fleet of vehicles to transport voters to polling stations (Al-Baz, the right to participate in political life, 2002). This ensures that voters cast their ballots in favor of the candidates, whose names have been widely circulated and repeatedly emphasized to them, preventing them from forgetting. Consequently, it is imperative to address the risk of illiterate individuals potentially influencing election outcomes by prioritizing the development and enhancement of political awareness among all citizens.

Conclusion:

First: Results:

1. There exists a correlation between electoral participation and the impact of citizens' political culture and economic factors, including environmental aspects linked to voters' lives. The higher a citizen's quality of life, level of awareness, and perception, the greater the likelihood of their engagement, interest, and influence in the democratic process through active participation in political life.
2. The key factor in nurturing political culture is to create a supportive sociocultural environment that is receptive to the concept of democracy and capable of translating it into a functional system of governance. This involves ensuring that citizens are well-informed about their rights and freedoms, as democracy is a fundamental human principle and a political practice that grants everyone a role in participating in the electoral process and contributing to the establishment of a democratic system of government.
3. It has been unquestionably demonstrated that heightened citizen consciousness and awareness lead to increased participation in political life. To achieve this, it is essential to elevate the levels of awareness among a majority of citizens through education and upbringing. Additionally, there is a need to enhance their living standards and improve economic conditions, enabling the establishment of educational institutions, universities, cultural centers, publishing houses, media outlets, political parties, and civil society organizations. All this should be fostered within an environment of stability, coupled with social and political security.

Recommendations:

1. Formal attention to political education and general education in all schools, institutes, colleges, and universities is of paramount importance. It is crucial to encourage these educational institutions to be closely engaged with the nation's issues and concerns, fostering discussions on societal problems to enhance political awareness among students. This approach can motivate them to be attentive to their political rights and actively participate in elections, ultimately contributing to the pursuit of good governance
2. Practical solutions need to be found to address the deficiencies in citizens' political culture and the escalating economic and social issues in society, such as corruption, unemployment, illiteracy, poverty, and others. These solutions can have a positive impact on electoral participation.
3. The importance of educating people on how to exercise their right to vote and their general and political freedoms cannot be overstated. This duty falls upon all state bodies, civil society, and human rights organizations to elevate cultural, intellectual, economic, and social awareness, ultimately ensuring active electoral participation.
4. The necessity of literacy among voters is paramount because a literate voter is significantly more equipped to comprehend the nation's problems and issues. Allowing illiterate individuals to vote could potentially distort the will of the people. Therefore, we endorse the perspective that literacy should be a requirement for electoral participation.

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