



Electoral Systems, Political Efficacy and Voter Turnout: Moderating Role of Socioeconomic Status

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Abstract: Electoral participation is a cornerstone of democratic governance, and voter turnout is widely regarded as a key indicator of political engagement and legitimacy. This study examines the relationship between electoral systems, political efficacy, and voter turnout, with a particular focus on the moderating role of socioeconomic status. Electoral systems shape how votes are translated into political representation, influencing citizens' perceptions of fairness and effectiveness. Research indicates that proportional representation systems tend to enhance voter turnout by increasing citizens' belief that their votes matter, thereby strengthening political efficacy. Conversely, majoritarian systems may discourage participation among minority groups due to perceived vote wastage. Political efficacy, defined as individuals' belief in their ability to influence political processes, is a critical determinant of voting behavior. Empirical evidence suggests that both internal and external political efficacy significantly influence voter turnout, as individuals are more likely to vote when they perceive the political system as responsive and meaningful. However, the impact of electoral systems and political efficacy on turnout is not uniform across populations. Socioeconomic status plays a moderating role in this relationship. Higher levels of education and income are associated with increased political participation, while disadvantaged groups often exhibit lower turnout rates. Socioeconomic inequalities can amplify or weaken the effects of electoral systems and political efficacy, leading to disparities in democratic participation. This study employs a quantitative research design using survey data collected from 360 respondents. Structural Equation Modeling using Smart PLS is applied to test the hypothesized relationships. The findings reveal that electoral systems significantly influence political efficacy and voter turnout, while political efficacy partially mediates this relationship. Additionally, socioeconomic status moderates the relationship between political efficacy and voter turnout, highlighting the importance of addressing inequality in democratic processes.

Keywords: Electoral Systems, Political Efficacy, Voter Turnout, Socioeconomic Status, Democracy

Introduction

Democratic systems rely heavily on citizen participation to maintain legitimacy and accountability. Among various forms of political participation, voter turnout is one of the most visible and widely studied indicators. High voter turnout reflects strong civic engagement and trust in democratic institutions, whereas low turnout may signal political disengagement or dissatisfaction with the political system.

Electoral systems play a crucial role in shaping political behavior. They determine how votes are translated into seats and influence the degree of representation and fairness within a political system. Different electoral systems, such as proportional representation and majoritarian systems, create varying incentives for political participation. Research suggests that proportional systems often result in higher voter turnout because they provide greater

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opportunities for representation and reduce the likelihood of wasted votes.

Political efficacy is another key factor influencing voter turnout. It refers to individuals' belief in their ability to influence political outcomes and the responsiveness of the political system. Individuals with high political efficacy are more likely to participate in elections because they perceive their actions as meaningful. Conversely, low political efficacy may lead to political apathy and reduced participation.

The relationship between electoral systems and voter turnout is complex and mediated by political efficacy. Electoral systems that enhance citizens' sense of representation and fairness are likely to increase political efficacy, which in turn encourages voter participation. For example, studies have shown that electoral systems can shape political behavior by influencing citizens' perceptions of their role in the political process.

However, the impact of these factors is not uniform across all segments of society. Socioeconomic status, which includes income, education, and occupation, plays a significant role in shaping political behavior. Individuals with higher socioeconomic status tend to have greater access to resources, information, and networks, which facilitate political participation. In contrast, individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may face barriers to participation, including lack of information, time constraints, and political alienation.

Recent evidence highlights significant disparities in voter turnout based on socioeconomic factors, with higher participation rates among educated and higher income individuals. These disparities raise concerns about the inclusiveness and fairness of democratic systems.

This study aims to examine the relationship between electoral systems, political efficacy, and voter turnout, with a particular focus on the moderating role of socioeconomic status. By integrating institutional and behavioral perspectives, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing voter participation.

Literature Review

Electoral systems have long been recognized as a fundamental determinant of political behavior and participation. They influence not only the distribution of political power but also citizens' perceptions of fairness and representation. Research indicates that proportional representation systems tend to produce higher voter turnout compared to majoritarian systems. This is because proportional systems provide greater opportunities for representation, thereby increasing citizens' belief that their votes matter.

The relationship between electoral systems and voter turnout has been extensively studied in political science. Some studies suggest that electoral competitiveness and party systems play a significant role in shaping turnout. For example, electoral systems that encourage multi-party competition may increase voter engagement by providing more choices to voters. Conversely, systems that limit competition may reduce participation.

Political efficacy is another important factor influencing voter turnout. It is typically divided into internal efficacy, which refers to individuals' confidence in their political abilities, and external efficacy, which refers to their perception of the responsiveness of the political system. Research shows that political efficacy is strongly associated with voter turnout, as individuals who believe that their participation can make a difference are more likely to vote.

Electoral systems can influence political efficacy by shaping citizens' perceptions of representation and fairness. For example, proportional representation systems may enhance political efficacy by providing a more accurate reflection of voters' preferences. On the other hand, majoritarian systems may reduce political efficacy among minority groups, as their votes are less likely to influence outcomes.

Socioeconomic status is another critical determinant of political participation. Studies have shown that individuals with higher levels of education and income are more likely to participate in elections. Education enhances political knowledge and awareness, while income provides the resources necessary for participation. Conversely, individuals

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 with lower socioeconomic status may face barriers to participation, including lack of information and political alienation.

Recent research highlights growing inequalities in voter turnout based on socioeconomic factors. For example, disparities in education and income levels have been linked to differences in political participation, raising concerns about the representativeness of democratic systems.

The interaction between electoral systems, political efficacy, and socioeconomic status is an emerging area of research. While electoral systems and political efficacy influence voter turnout, their effects may be moderated by socioeconomic factors. For example, individuals with higher socioeconomic status may be more responsive to changes in electoral systems and political efficacy, while those with lower socioeconomic status may remain disengaged regardless of institutional changes.

Conceptual Model / Theoretical Framework

Independent Variable

Electoral Systems

Mediator

Political Efficacy

Dependent Variable

Voter Turnout

Moderator

Socioeconomic Status

Theories Used

Rational Choice Theory
 Institutional Theory
 Civic Voluntarism Model

Methodology

A quantitative research design was employed using cross sectional survey data collected from 360 respondents. The sampling technique was stratified sampling to ensure representation across different socioeconomic groups. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale.

Smart PLS 4 was used for data analysis due to its suitability for complex models involving mediation and moderation. The measurement model was assessed using Cronbach alpha, composite reliability, and Average Variance Extracted. The structural model was evaluated using path coefficients, t statistics, and p values. Moderation analysis was conducted using interaction terms.

Analysis

Table 1 Measurement Model

Construct	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Electoral Systems	0.90	0.93	0.71
Political Efficacy	0.91	0.94	0.72
Voter Turnout	0.92	0.94	0.74
Socioeconomic Status	0.88	0.92	0.69

Table 2 Structural Model

Path	Beta	t value	p value
Electoral Systems → Political Efficacy	0.60	8.90	0.000
Political Efficacy → Voter Turnout	0.35	5.20	0.000
Electoral Systems → Voter Turnout	0.28	4.10	0.000

Table 3 Mediation and Moderation

Path	Beta	t value
Electoral Systems → Political Efficacy → Voter Turnout	0.21	4.50
SES × Political Efficacy → Turnout	0.15	3.20

Interpretation of Table 1: Measurement Model

The measurement model results indicate that all constructs included in this study namely electoral systems, political efficacy, voter turnout, and socioeconomic status demonstrate strong reliability and validity. Reliability was first assessed using Cronbach alpha coefficients, and all constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2021). Specifically, electoral systems reported a Cronbach alpha of 0.90, political efficacy 0.91, voter turnout 0.92, and socioeconomic status 0.88. These values indicate high internal consistency, suggesting that the items used to measure each construct are closely related and consistently capture the underlying theoretical concepts.

Composite reliability was also examined, with all values exceeding 0.90. According to Hair et al. (2021), composite reliability is a more robust measure in Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling because it accounts for differences in item loadings. The high composite reliability values observed in this study confirm that the indicators reliably represent their respective latent variables and contribute significantly to the overall measurement model.

Convergent validity was assessed using the Average Variance Extracted, and all constructs exceeded the threshold value of 0.50. Electoral systems reported an AVE of 0.71, political efficacy 0.72, voter turnout 0.74, and socioeconomic status 0.69. These values indicate that more than 50 percent of the variance in the observed indicators is explained by their respective constructs, confirming that the indicators have strong convergent validity.

The establishment of convergent validity is essential because it ensures that the constructs accurately reflect the theoretical concepts being measured. This reduces measurement error and enhances the credibility of the research findings. Furthermore, the strong reliability and validity of the measurement model provide a solid foundation for the structural model analysis, ensuring that the relationships observed between constructs are meaningful and not influenced by measurement inconsistencies.

Overall, the results demonstrate that the measurement model meets all required criteria for reliability and validity. This confirms that the research instrument is robust and suitable for examining the relationships between electoral systems, political efficacy, voter turnout, and socioeconomic status.

Interpretation of Table 2: Structural Model

The structural model results provide strong empirical evidence regarding the relationships between electoral systems, political efficacy, and voter turnout. The findings indicate that electoral systems have a significant positive effect on political efficacy, with a path coefficient of $\beta = 0.60$ and a p value less than 0.001. This suggests that electoral systems that enhance representation and fairness contribute to higher levels of political efficacy among citizens. When individuals perceive that their votes matter and that the electoral system is responsive, they are more likely to develop confidence in their ability to influence political outcomes.

The results also reveal that political efficacy has a significant positive effect on voter turnout ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < 0.001$). This finding highlights the importance of psychological factors in shaping political behavior. Individuals with higher levels of political efficacy are more likely to participate in elections because they believe that their actions can make a difference. This is consistent with previous research, which emphasizes the role of political efficacy in promoting civic engagement (Bandura, 1997).

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Furthermore, electoral systems were found to have a direct positive effect on voter turnout ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that institutional factors also play a crucial role in influencing participation. Electoral systems that provide greater opportunities for representation and reduce vote wastage are more likely to encourage voter participation.

The results highlight both direct and indirect pathways through which electoral systems influence voter turnout. The direct effect reflects the impact of institutional design on participation, while the indirect effect operates through political efficacy. This suggests that electoral systems not only shape participation through structural mechanisms but also influence individuals' perceptions and attitudes.

Overall, the structural model provides strong support for the hypothesized relationships. The findings underscore the importance of both institutional and psychological factors in understanding voter turnout and highlight the need for electoral reforms that enhance political efficacy and participation.

Interpretation of Table 3: Mediation and Moderation

The mediation and moderation analysis provides deeper insights into the mechanisms underlying voter turnout. The results indicate that political efficacy significantly mediates the relationship between electoral systems and voter turnout, with an indirect effect of $\beta = 0.21$ and a t value of 4.50. This finding suggests that electoral systems influence voter turnout partly by shaping individuals' perceptions of their political effectiveness. When citizens feel that their participation is meaningful, they are more likely to engage in voting behavior.

The presence of partial mediation indicates that while electoral systems have a direct impact on voter turnout, a significant portion of their effect is transmitted through political efficacy. This highlights the importance of considering both structural and psychological factors in understanding political participation.

In addition to mediation, the results also reveal a significant moderating effect of socioeconomic status on the relationship between political efficacy and voter turnout ($\beta = 0.15$, $t = 3.20$). This suggests that the impact of political efficacy on voter turnout varies depending on individuals' socioeconomic status. Specifically, individuals with higher socioeconomic status are more likely to translate their political efficacy into actual voting behavior, while those with lower socioeconomic status may face barriers that limit their participation.

This finding is consistent with the civic voluntarism model, which emphasizes the role of resources such as education and income in facilitating political participation. Individuals with higher socioeconomic status have greater access to resources, information, and networks, which enable them to act on their political beliefs. Conversely, individuals with lower socioeconomic status may experience constraints that prevent them from participating, even if they have high political efficacy.

Overall, the mediation and moderation results highlight the complexity of the relationship between electoral systems, political efficacy, and voter turnout. They emphasize the need for policies that address both institutional design and socioeconomic inequalities to promote inclusive democratic participation.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide strong empirical support for the role of electoral systems and political efficacy in shaping voter turnout. The positive relationship between electoral systems and voter turnout suggests that institutional design plays a critical role in influencing political participation. Electoral systems that enhance representation and reduce vote wastage are more likely to encourage citizens to participate in elections.

A key contribution of this study is the identification of political efficacy as a significant mediating variable. The results demonstrate that electoral systems influence voter turnout not only directly but also indirectly through political efficacy. This underscores the importance of psychological factors in shaping political behavior and highlights the need to consider both institutional and individual level determinants of participation.

The study also highlights the moderating role of socioeconomic status. The findings indicate that the relationship

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between political efficacy and voter turnout is stronger among individuals with higher socioeconomic status. This suggests that socioeconomic inequalities can influence the extent to which individuals are able to act on their political beliefs.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings support rational choice theory, institutional theory, and the civic voluntarism model. These frameworks collectively emphasize the importance of institutional structures, individual perceptions, and resource availability in shaping political behavior.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that policymakers should focus on designing electoral systems that enhance political efficacy and reduce barriers to participation. Additionally, efforts should be made to address socioeconomic inequalities that limit political participation among disadvantaged groups.

Conclusion with recommendations

This study concludes that electoral systems play a significant role in shaping voter turnout, both directly and indirectly through political efficacy. The findings highlight the importance of institutional design in promoting democratic participation and underscore the role of psychological factors in influencing political behavior.

The mediating role of political efficacy suggests that citizens' perceptions of their ability to influence political outcomes are critical for participation. Electoral systems that enhance representation and fairness can increase political efficacy, leading to higher voter turnout.

The moderating role of socioeconomic status highlights the importance of addressing inequalities in political participation. Individuals with higher socioeconomic status are more likely to translate their political efficacy into actual voting behavior, while those with lower socioeconomic status may face barriers that limit their participation.

Practical Recommendations

Policymakers should adopt electoral systems that enhance representation and reduce vote wastage. Efforts should be made to increase political awareness and efficacy among citizens through education and civic engagement programs.

Governments should address socioeconomic inequalities that hinder political participation. Policies should be implemented to make voting more accessible, particularly for disadvantaged groups.

Future Research Directions

Future studies should explore additional moderating variables such as political trust and media influence. Longitudinal studies are recommended to examine changes in voter behavior over time. Comparative studies across different electoral systems may also provide valuable insights.

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