

Explaining and Identifying the Role of Elections in the Governance of the Islamic Republic of Iran: A Study of the Electoral System of the Islamic Consultative Assembly

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The introduction (paragraph 2) discusses the Iranian electoral system's challenges but does not clearly state the research gap. Consider explicitly stating how your study fills a gap in existing literature. For example, what aspects of electoral governance in Iran have been understudied?

In the findings, you mention that "the Guardian Council plays a decisive role in screening candidates." Could you elaborate on how this affects political competition and whether there are any mechanisms in place to challenge disqualifications?

You mention "ensuring inclusivity and representation is another critical challenge," but it is unclear which groups are most affected. Are women, religious minorities, or political dissidents disproportionately impacted? Including specific examples would enhance the discussion.

While you discuss general electoral governance principles, the article would benefit from a comparison with similar systems in other countries (e.g., Indonesia, Turkey, or hybrid regimes). This would contextualize the Iranian case study.

The conclusion states that electoral reforms are necessary but does not provide specific recommendations. Could you propose practical steps for increasing transparency or inclusivity in the Iranian electoral system?

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In the methodology section, you mention that "latent content analysis after qualitative coding" was conducted. Could you provide an example of how themes were identified in the qualitative coding process? This would enhance transparency in your methodological approach.

The study utilizes qualitative interviews, but the selection criteria for participants are not clear. Were the participants policymakers, academics, or election officials? Clarifying this would enhance the credibility of the study.

While you mention pilot testing and expert validation, the methodology could benefit from a more detailed explanation of reliability measures. How was coding consistency ensured across different interviews?

MAXQDA 2020 is mentioned as the software used, but the rationale for choosing this tool over other qualitative analysis software (e.g., NVivo) is not provided. A brief justification could strengthen the methodological transparency.

The distinction between procedural democracy and substantive democracy is mentioned but not clearly defined. A brief explanation (perhaps with an example) would help readers unfamiliar with these concepts.

In the section discussing "Political Polarization and Governance Dynamics," claims about polarization are made, but no supporting data (e.g., election turnout rates, party dominance trends) is provided. Can you incorporate empirical evidence?

The study presents multiple challenges but does not consolidate them into overarching themes. Consider structuring the discussion around key dimensions, such as accountability, transparency, and fairness to improve coherence.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor's decision: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.