

**Assessing the Contexts Affecting the Financial Costs of  
Parliamentary Elections Iran (Focusing on the Tenth Term of the  
Islamic Consultative Assembly Elections Rasht Township)**

Mohammad Baqer Heshmatzadeh<sup>1\*</sup>, Javad Etaat<sup>2</sup>, Seyed Sohrab Teymourifar<sup>3</sup>

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Article history:</i> Date of submission: 27-02-2021 Date of acceptance: 08-09-2021</p> <hr/> <p><i>JEL Classification:</i> D72</p> <p><i>Keywords:</i> Campaign Finance Election, Parliament Iran</p>	<p>The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors affecting the Election Campaign Finance of parliamentary elections in Iran. The spatial scope of this study was the financial expenses of the candidates for the Islamic Consultative Assembly in the tenth election of Rasht Township in Guilan province. This study was conducted in the period of spring 2020 to the end of spring 2021. The main question that the researcher sought to answer is: What are the factors affecting the financial costs of the parliamentary elections in Iran? The mixed method was used to achieve the research objectives - distributed a questionnaire with a sample size of 379 people and semi-in-depth interviews with ten activists and parliamentary candidates. The results of the study showed that the most important factors influencing the methods of financing parliamentary elections in Iran are. This factors are historical contexts and political culture, political knowledge of voters, MP-citizen linkage, citizens' attitudes toward the electoral system, number and variety of sponsors and their motives, the type of political system, social and political divisions, and the economic situation of society. Among the mentioned factors, the MP-citizen linkage and the type of political system have the most impact on how the parliamentary elections are financed.</p>

## 1. Introduction

*I*ran is one of the countries that started the movement towards democratization in the early twentieth century with the launch of the Constitutional Revolution, and during the period of the oil nationalization

- 
1. Associate Professor of Political Science, Faculty of Economics and Politics, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran
  2. Associate Professor of Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran, E-mail address: heshmat@sbu.ac.ir (Corresponding Author)
  3. Ph.D Student of Political Science, Faculty of Economics and Politics, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran. This article is an excerpt from the doctoral dissertation at Shahid Beheshti University.

movement, this movement was revived, but in the following decades the Pahlavi regime did not allow it. That the Iranian nation would achieve its long-held desire for democracy, and as a result the nation saw the only way out was to launch a revolution. The Islamic Revolution of 1979 was in fact a collective action to achieve democracy. According to the promises made in the days of the revolution and the establishment of new institutions, the people expected that part of their dreams would come true, but because of the war, sanctions and mismanagement the efforts of the Iranian people have not yielded the desired results. Of course, it must be admitted that good steps have been taken, but there is a long way to go to reach the desired goal.

One of the questions that has always occupied the mind of the author of these lines is what is the structure and function of the parliament in Iran that has not been able to reduce the conflict between the government and the people? In order to answer this question, the researcher, considering his scientific wealth, has turned this concern into a research question and an academic project and wants to examine how the financial expenses of the elections of the members of the Islamic Consultative Assembly in Iran are provided?. It is not possible to search all Iranians (ideal population), the researcher examines the opinions of the citizens of Rasht Township (realistic population) on how to finance the elections of the 10th term members of parliament. The Islamic Council is enough.

Money has played an important role in elections since ancient times, and today it has become more colorful due to changes in values and the disqualification of popular candidates. Money and its role in elections has become one of the central roles in politics. Although in the elections that have been held since the beginning of the Islamic Revolution, the role of glamorous propaganda expenses did not have a special place, but over time, due to the diversity of audiences and easier presentation to Audience, candidates spend more on advertising. Nevertheless, there are still exceptions who do not consider themselves in need of advertising and spend the least money during election campaigns (Misic, 2018: 8).

Obviously, money can not be separated from the political and electoral process and campaign costs, because achieving the wishes and aspirations of candidates requires a lot of money. It takes a lot of money to print brochures, leaflets, conduct radio and television interviews, and rent places to run a campaign (Dehghani, 2016: 205). Of course, the amount and manner of spending money varies from time to time and depends on the constituency and how it is run. In short, it can be said that nowhere in the world can you campaign without spending money (Foreman, 2018). In addition, when discussing the costs and benefits of money, it should be emphasized that the misuse of money in politics can create major problems for a political regime. There is even a danger that the misuse of money in elections, especially vote buying and selling as a form of political-economic corruption, will challenge the legitimacy of the government (Raisi, 2020).

The influence of wealth and power, especially the buying and selling of votes in elections, leads to a democratic setback (Ms. Nancy Bermeo (2017). Authoritarian leaders and elected dictators are increasingly on the path of abusing the law to achieve their goals in the form of seemingly legitimate cover (Perzorski, 2014). Both groups do seek to undermine democracy, but modern backers seek to manipulate elections rather than abandon them (Bremo, 2017). The group is trying to change the election law in their favor. For example, change the rules to increase their chances of winning (Blumer, 2015), or manipulate the electoral system on a large scale. Any way democracy is pushed back has negative consequences, including increasing the power of government officials, reducing legal oversight of government officials, weakening the independence of the judiciary and the media, and abusing the state of emergency. They pass laws that restrict the guaranteed rights of the nation and arrest or weaken dissident groups and the opposition. Another important consequence of election manipulation is that citizens become disinterested or opposed to democracy (Dobratz, 2018: 71).

Holding clean elections is one of the necessities of any government. The need for the slightest violation of which will create a wave of social protests and distrust of the people of a society to the system of government. Therefore, one of the serious tasks of government officials is to hold elections with the

necessary preparations, along with financial transparency and disclosure of specific positions of the candidates, and to avoid any abuse.

On the other hand, the Iranian electoral system, which is a majority system and a kind of win-lose game, defeat in the Iranian elections means severe damage to political life, because the winner of the election wins everything and the loser costs it suffers a lot. Election losers are not invited to participate in the political process for a variety of reasons and are sometimes treated hostilely. This is why candidates spend a lot of money on campaigning to win.

The experience of the past decades shows the fact that one of the harms facing the elections is the issue of the sources and the way of financing the candidates' election campaigns and the lack of a ceiling for the candidates' election campaign expenses. So that in the current law of presidential elections, the Islamic Consultative Assembly, etc., there is no specific limit or limit for the source of income and how to spend the candidates' campaigns financially (Mushfaq, 2017: 15). Therefore, in the current situation, each of the candidates and political currents and their supporting and supporting parties, to a large extent, help to finance the candidates' advertisements, and the so-called whoever has more, can better and more affect the audience's vote. Hence, the lack of clear rules for revealing the sources of funding for candidates' campaigns and the lack of a clear ceiling for the spending of candidates' campaigns has led to a highly unequal and unfair campaign environment, and in fact there are no limits on election expenses and low advertising costs in the current laws. In particular, it is not clear where and how the candidates' advertising expenses were obtained from, and whether these revenues, which are spent, were not collected from public revenues or the treasury in suspicious forms. There can be no doubt that the source of the money that the candidates are spending is, of course, ambiguous and in most cases dubious, and there have been fewer candidates who have so far made a list of the costs and sources of funding for public opinion. It has been disclosed to find out who the sponsors and sponsors of a candidate were, and if so, will the sponsors be safe and secure from prosecution, and will their actions not be considered a special crime for them tomorrow?

Given the above explanations, it should be clear that the initial question that the researcher seeks to answer can be formulated as follows:

*"What are the factors affecting the methods of financing the Islamic Consultative Assembly elections in Iran?"*

**Main Hypothesis:** *It seems that the characteristics of political actors (masses and elites) and social, political and economic structures are among the most important factors influencing the methods of financing the elections of the Islamic Consultative Assembly.*

## **2. Literature of Research**

### **2-1. Election Campaign Finance literature**

Money is an integral part of politics. Such a link between money and politics is recognized as political finance and has both positive and negative effects on the nature of democracy and the effectiveness of politics (Keefer and Vlaicu, 2017).

Certainly, the availability of big money and spending it on the campaign is a new phenomenon. The rise of corruption in politics, vote-rigging, and vote-buying has doubled the need to pay attention to financial costs and ways to secure them. In general, the financial costs of elections are covered in three main ways: government agencies and budgets, individuals, companies and private enterprises. In addition, "hard money" has a large amount of "soft money" in the election and affects the election results. Soft money refers to financial aid that is injected opaque into the realm of politics and has no control over it. Such as the entry of dirty money of drug traffickers and big cartels into the election campaign (Mirzaei Rajaouni, Volume 2, 2020: 84).

The goals that donors pursue can be divided into two categories: practical and ideological. Practical aid refers to aid that individuals give to candidates regardless of ideological affiliation and want to gain access to candidates to solve their problems or give points. According to Marcel Mouss, there is a kind of "gift relationship" between voters and candidates. In the case of a gift, there is a possibility that the other party will not compensate. Ideological aid is given because donors want to change the composition of government. The main concern of the donors is to change the existing political arrangement.

Quantitative and qualitative studies show that the amount of practical assistance is much higher than ideological assistance (Klauson et al., 1989).

Money enables political participation and helps candidates gain access to clients and organize supporters while promoting their ideas. This funding is especially important for new parties or competitors. However, money can also hinder participation by eliminating people with limited financial resources from the competition. When the financial costs of competition in politics are high, access to adequate financial resources severely limits competition. Women, youth and minority groups often do not have sufficient financial resources. Lack of necessary financial resources is also one of the major barriers that prevent individuals belonging to minority and indigenous groups from accessing politics (Manza et al., 2005).

Outlaws can also buy votes and strengthen patronage and gangsterism systems. In such systems, voters are encouraged to exchange votes in exchange for concessions (Falgora et al., 2014).

One of the concepts that has been examined as an independent variable in relation to the influence of money in the election process is social and political cleavages. The social cleavage is the division between political parties and social class, religion, geographical areas, urban and rural areas, and interest groups. In addition, gender becomes another gap, especially in receiving and maintaining a salaried job (Mohammadzadeh, 2013: 380). Social cleavages refer to criteria and boundaries that separate or pose different social groups against each other. In other words, social cleavages are divisions that are deep in public opinion and social life and completely away from party politics, but political divisions, unlike social divisions, refer to group orientations or differences in the form of competitions and activities. A party is formed and appears (Mirzaei Rajaoni, 2013:43).

## **2-2. Theoretical framework of research**

Studies on the contexts affecting campaign expenditures focus on two categories of factors: a) factors that affect campaign finance, b) factors that affect election tax. Each of these factors is briefly described here.

**Factors that affect the election finance**

A. Characteristics of the candidate: Regarding the characteristics of a particular candidate that can affect election costs, most researchers emphasize the "dynamism of the incumbent versus the challenger." An incumbent is a candidate who holds a parliamentary seat (previously a member of parliament) before the start of the campaign, but a challenger is a candidate who has not yet entered parliament as a representative and is trying to enter parliament as an elected representative (Maleki, 2019:192). Jacobsen (1985) argued that challenging costs have a greater impact on elections than the costs of incumbents. Green and Krasno (1988) challenged this finding based on methodological backgrounds and instead concluded that the marginal cost effect of the incumbent is substantial and sometimes as large as the cost of challenging costs. Why are the expenses incurred by the challengers in the elections less effective? Johnson (2012) offers a theoretical explanation of this and argues that the "simplification and negligence" of electoral systems encourages challengers to spend large sums of money during elections. In addition to being a leader or challenger, characteristics such as the candidate's independence or party affiliation, managerial experience, level of education, gender, and ethnicity also affect funding and spending.

Type of system and level of elections: In addition to the specific characteristics of the candidates, some institutional factors such as the level of elections (national or local) and the type of electoral system (majority, party, list) can have a great impact on election costs. . Most theoretical literature shows the fact that the effects of costs vary according to the characteristics of the electoral system. The effects of costs in majority systems are different from quota systems, and it is necessary to specify the mechanisms for influencing costs in both systems. In countries with efficient democracies and political parties, for example, candidate spending is controlled through the party itself and the extent of abuse of financial power is minimized.

C. The diversity of donors and their goals, election costs are like a dime coin: one is benefits and the other is destructive effects. Therefore, it must be said with certainty that election expenses have negative and positive functions, and it is necessary to define the conditions well and show how election

expenses have a positive function and under what conditions have negative effects.

-If donors come from a diverse range of societies and groups and pursue different motivations, election spending will increase citizens' political awareness and, in turn, strengthen democracy.

-If the donors are not a diverse range of sections and groups of society and do not pursue different motives, election expenses will not increase the political awareness of citizens and in turn will weaken democracy.

D. Citizen's relationship with the candidate (representative): By focusing on clientelism as a way to electoral mobilization, we define it as giving material goods in exchange for receiving electoral support (Dormagen et al., 2014: 82). In many Asian political systems, patronizing networks connect politicians with voters through the exchange of gifts or political aid (Ataat, 2008: 75). Such patronage relations not only undermine the institutionalization of political parties and prevent horizontal communication based on shared political interests; rather, they encourage rent-seeking strategies.

The candidate or party gives the voter money or material goods and expects him to support and vote for him during the election. One of the hallmarks of political clinting is buying votes and gaining support. The buying of exchanged votes is very limited, but in clientelism the scope of exchanging goods and gaining support is wider. For example, in clientelism, it is possible for a candidate to hold a government position or job and have been able to provide support for a number of jobs and for himself before the election, but in the purchase of this vote, this transaction is limited and is done only on the exchange vote (Oudra, 2011: 6).

### **Factors affecting campaign finance**

A. The population participating in the elections: In relation to the population participating in the elections, one of the consistent findings is that the expenses incurred by the candidates in the campaigns have a mobilizing effect on the voters. While most studies show a positive relationship between costs and the participating population, others have argued that under certain conditions, costs can have negative effects and reduce contributors. As election



campaigns move toward deterioration and suspicion, they have a negative impact on elections (Ansolabehere et al., 1994: 835). The ultimate way that election spending can affect the participating population is through "lawyer-client" or "vote-buying" behaviors, which are very common in third world and developing countries and where citizens are likely to be paid or received. Some material goods to vote for a particular candidate or be asked not to vote for a particular candidate.

B. Voters' political knowledge: Also, election expenses can improve and increase citizens' political awareness and knowledge (Kaid and Holtz-Bacha, 2008: 543). Two alternative mechanisms have been proposed to explain this effect. First, some have argued that advertising spending can directly inform and influence citizens about a candidate or his or her opponents. In addition, in the second view, some have argued that any awareness-raising effect of election spending is due to indirect effects. One of the effects of training and learning about election costs on voter recognition is that he or she becomes aware of the problems and issues of the community and realizes what the serious threats are.

C. Vote selection: A set of findings seems to emphasize that lesser-known people benefit more than well-known candidates through high costs. Another set of findings underscores the fact that both lesser-known and well-known candidates receive little benefit from election costs. The third category of findings basically questions the relationship between costs and vote choice. Thus, it seems that there is no one-to-one correspondence between spending more money and no more votes, and that large sums of money may be spent wisely or unreasonably (Mirzaei Rajaoni, *ibid.* 97).

It should be noted that the approach adopted in the present study is a step forward from previous approaches, because the previous approaches focused only on revenue, ie the ways in which parties and candidates obtained resources, and they sought to establish a link between donors and political interests and to explain the root causes of corruption. In addition, we emphasize here that campaign taxes also include expenses. Expenditure refers to the way in which parties and candidates spend resources, and corruption also occurs through the expenditure of resources.

### **2-3. Background research**

In terms of research background, the study of electoral behavior in Iran does not have a long history and is limited to the period after the victory of the Islamic Revolution and the formation of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Hajar Dorsti writes in an article entitled "The pathology of election campaign propaganda in the light of the legal principles governing advertising" (2014), regarding the monitoring of advertising costs and how to apply it: "The most important option to prevent "Extravagance and prevention of the creation of grounds for affiliation of candidates and parties with influential financial gangs or foreign powers is the provision of detailed financial regulations for election and propaganda activities".

Ahmadvand and Saber Mahani in an article entitled "Comparative income on the financial resources of the election campaign (study of the electoral systems of Iran, France, Russia and the United States" (2015), emphasize that in the laws of the Islamic Republic of Iran compared to comparable countries. There is a ceiling on costs, sources of funding, how to spend, and the Guardian Council does not pay attention to this issue, and the Guardian Council's main concern is approving oversight and factional and ideological conflicts and as a result harms democracy.

Zamani Zadeh in an article entitled "The optimal system of financing election campaigns in Iran in the light of international standards" (2019). In this article, the results of the study show that Iran's electoral laws show a significant gap in the field of campaign finance, and although Iran's electoral laws have been amended many times, this area has always been neglected, while the role of money in Iran's electoral processes has become more important than ever.

Money, Participation, and Voting: Social cleavages and Electoral Politics (2005) by Jeff Manza, Cabbage Brooks, and Michael Soder is a political sociological study of the impact of money on elections in American society. The authors have tried to answer the question of how social divisions affect

the electoral process and how wealthy individuals and companies are pushing the democratization process toward personal or factional goals.

The article "Buying votes and election promises" written by Philip Kiefer and Rezvan Velaiko (2017). Researchers in this article have studied the manner and amount of buying and selling votes in different countries of the world and have reached this conclusion. In Western European countries with strong parties and laws, the figure is around 12 percent, and in Third World countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, sometimes as high as 75 percent.

When Money Cannot Encourage Participation: Election Expenses and Non-Participation in Low-Visibility Judicial Elections, by Matthew J. Starb and Brian Frederick (2011). In this article, the debate is over whether spending more money can increase people's political participation. The authors of the article have come to the conclusion that a definite verdict cannot be issued in this regard, because the elections were diverse and in some types of elections, money has increased the turnout and in some cases it has not been able to encourage more people to participate (Foreman, 2018).

In a nutshell, it can be said that very little research has been done in the country academically and scientifically on the factors influencing the election campaign finance of MPs. Spending money is a missing link in these studies.

#### **4. Research Methods**

The research method in the present study is a mixed method. In addition to using the researcher-made questionnaire, to increase the validity of the research findings, the researcher also used the semi-in-depth interview technique and interviewed candidates and political activists of different eras, ordinary citizens and officials involved in the elections in Rasht Township. The interviews were conducted purposefully by the researcher himself in the Rasht Township. In this study, ten people (three women and seven men) of parliamentary candidates, heads of election campaigns and political activists were interviewed in a semi-focused manner. Given the complexity of political

behavior, the qualitative method was used, because we believe that dialogue should take place between researchers and the subjects under study, and these dialogues reduce prejudice and overcome the limitations of personal cognition. These conversations can be a basis for understanding the lived experience from the perspective of the participants (Ebrahimi and Mirzaei, 2017: 349).

#### 4-1. Statistical population and sample size

The statistical population in this study includes all citizens over the age of 20 living in Rasht, whose number is approximately equal to 625,500 people. In this study, Cochran's formula was used to estimate the sample size and the sample size was 384 people. In order to increase the degree of trust and confidence, the final sample size of 400 people was considered. After collecting the questionnaire and removing the distorted questionnaires, 379 questionnaires were analyzed. In the first step, the probabilistic cluster sampling method was used to select the weekly areas. In the next step, purposive non-probability sampling method was used. In the final step, the non-probabilistic random method was used. Table (1-1) shows how the questionnaires were distributed in Rasht Township. The share of each region is considered according to the population over 20 years.

**Table 1.** How to distribute sampling questionnaires in Rasht Township

name of the region	Rasht	Khoshkbijar	Sangar	Lashonsha	Kucheshāhan	Lookaman	Khomam	Total
Number of questionnaires	344	10	6	6	5	4	4	379

### 5. Description and analysis of research findings

#### 5-1. Description and analysis of quantitative findings

The constituency of Rasht Township had 3 representatives in the tenth term. Gholam-Ali Jafarzadeh reformist 90921 first round, Jabbar Kouchaki nejad

58922 fundamentalist second, Mohammad Sadegh Hassani Joriabi reformist 43602 second.

Prioritization of ways of financing the elections: The data obtained from the present study show the ways of financing the elections in order of priority: borrowing from the state budget with an average of 7.48 in the first place; Use of facilities, equipment and spaces of government agencies with an average of 6.79 in the second rank; Real persons in the form of private sector investors (in the form of cash payments or the use of commercial property for advertising) with an average of 5.04 in the third place; Stakeholders (in the form of political parties and individuals) with an average of 4.79 in fourth place; Private economic companies and firms with an average of 3.57 in the fifth place; Candidate's personal wealth with an average of 3.72 in sixth place; Free donations from fans with an average of 2.29 in seventh place; Financing through dirty money (drugs and smuggling) ranks eighth with an average of 2.28.

Motivations of Candidates' Supporters: In answer to the question, what is the motivation of sponsors to help candidates? According to the data obtained, 116 people (30.6%) agree and 225 people (67.3%) strongly agree, the involvement of personal motives in election funding and only 2.1% to some extent or against the involvement of personal incentives in election funding Are. Thus, it can be said that the main motivation of sponsors for candidates is the pursuit of personal and ethnic interests, and national interests or party and political affiliations have little effect on the financial support of candidates.

Characteristics of electoral systems: 93.4 the respondents emphasized that the type of electoral systems has a great impact on the way of financing and election expenses of the candidates. For example, in non-democratic systems, votes are more likely to be bought and sold than in democratic systems.

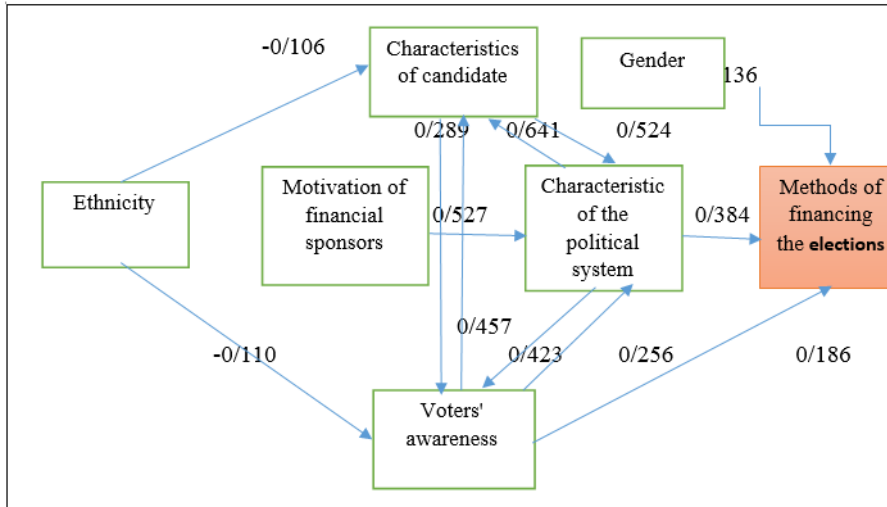
Characteristics of the candidates: Characteristics such as being a candidate or challenger, ethnic affiliation, level of education, gender, independence and having a management background were examined. Among these characteristics, the respondents emphasized more on the candidate being in charge and believed that a former member of parliament can more easily

provide the necessary financial resources for the elections due to his position. 96% of the respondents believe that having influence in the government apparatus is an important factor in financing and most of the candidates do not have the necessary qualifications to enter the parliament.

**Expenses for Parliamentary Candidates:** Expenses related to advertising posters, headquarters expenses, buying the votes of the lower classes, catering in the form of feeding the fans, helping some institutions or institutions, etc. were announced as important expenses. 79.8% of the respondents believe that in order to win the elections in Rasht metropolis, at least one billion Tomans must be spent.

**Factors Affecting Campaign Finance:** According to the research results, it can be said that the characteristics of the candidate, the type of electoral system, the number and variety of sponsors and their motivations, the citizen-relationship with the representative, the type of political system and the economic situation are the most important factors. Among the mentioned factors, 95.7 of the respondents emphasized that the citizen's relationship with the representative is very important. For example, when a candidate is a military commander or director general of an organization or the head of a financial and support foundation related to the affairs of the underprivileged, and thousands owe him or her some debt for his or her help or signature, the candidate's relationship with the voter. In fact, it has become a lawyer-client relationship and a kind of institutionalized patronage that is a major obstacle to the development of democracy.

Using regression analysis, we tried to determine the amount of variance of the variable Y, which is explained based on the variable X. According to the obtained data, it can be said that in total 18% of the variance of the methods of providing election resources is explained by research variables and 81% is related to unexplained variance. The existence of unexplained variance is due to the fact that the amount of methods of providing election resources is not only dependent on the variables of this study and is related to other variables that are not addressed in this study.



**Figure 1.** a model for analyzing the path of factors affecting the methods of financing elections

**Commentary:** Based on the model of path analysis of the factors affecting the methods of financing the elections, it can be said:

1. The methods of financing the elections are directly affected by the level of voter awareness (0.384) and the characteristics of the political system (0.186), and the gender variable (-0.136).

2. The variable of the characteristic of the political system is directly affected by the characteristic of the candidate to the extent of (0.524) and the awareness of the voters to the extent of (0.256) and the motivation of the sponsors to the extent of (0.527).

3. The candidate variable is directly affected by the characteristics of the political system (0.641), voters' awareness (0.289) and ethnicity (-0.106).

4. Voters' awareness variable is directly affected by the characteristics of the political system (0.457), the characteristics of the candidate (0.423) and ethnicity (-0.101).

5. The variable of motivation of financial sponsors is directly influenced by the characteristics of the political system (0.527).

6. The methods of financing the elections are indirectly influenced by the ethnicity variable through the voter awareness variable.

7. The methods of financing the elections are indirectly influenced by the variable of the motivation of the sponsors through the variable characteristic of the political system.

8. The methods of financing the elections are indirectly influenced by the variable of voters' awareness through the variable characteristic of the political system.

9. The methods of financing the elections are indirectly influenced by the variable of the candidate's characteristic through the variable of the characteristic of the political system.

10. The methods of financing the elections are indirectly influenced by the ethnic variable through the candidate characteristic variable and the political system characteristic.

## **5-2. Description of the qualitative findings extracted from the interviews**

### **A) The amount of election expenses and how to provide it**

How much does it cost for a person to enter the Islamic Consultative Assembly as a representative of the people of Rasht?" In response to the question, the interviewees announced amounts between 200 million tomans to five billion tomans. Gholam-Ali Jafarzadeh, a 57-year-old electronic doctor representing the ninth and tenth courses in Rasht, answered:

*"Considering that the position of parties among the common people is not well defined and in small cities people vote more ethnically and tribally in a metropolis like Rasht Township, if a candidate wants to provide all the conditions for himself, an amount of about two billion tomans must be spent. "Slow".*

Ms. A.F. The 42-year-old master and executive director of one of the representatives of Rasht city, in response to the mentioned question, said:

*"It can be said that a candidate in Rasht Township should normally spend between 500 million to one billion tomans".*

### **B) Motives of the candidates' sponsors**

Where does this cost come from and who (s) sponsors them?



One of the political activists and the head of the office of a member of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of Rasht named J. She, 52, with a bachelor's degree in political science, replied:

*"As usual, these expenses are covered by those around us, companies and profiteers who have planned programs, and this in turn is a kind of investment in the political sphere, through which the sponsors hope to receive significant profits".*

Ms. N. C., a 44-year bachelor of geography and political activist, replied: *"In general, in any election, there are people who go to the polls for personal gain in order to achieve their own interests. "Therefore, the costs can be covered by the candidate's companies, profiteers, relatives and personal wealth".*

C) How to provide and spend the election money of parliamentary candidates

\*In what cases is this amount spent and what is the purpose of this cost?

One of the candidates in the 10th parliamentary elections, A, S, 52, said in response to the question:

*"A lot of money is spent on advertising posters, headquarters expenses, buying the votes of the lower classes, catering to the fans, helping some institutions or institutions, etc., and the purpose of these expenses can be to win the elections of this period, or to pave the way for later periods." "Or, if he could not get into parliament, he could at least get a significant post later, as well as gain some kind of social status."*

M .P, A. 48-year-old political activist and a member of the small office of a race with a bachelor's degree in business, said:

*"Parliamentary candidates have to pay a lot of money, which can be mentioned in these items. Expenses related to headquarters, printing and distribution of election posters, transportation, food, salaries of think tank members, political activists, distribution of some goods in different parts of the city and buying votes, etc. "The purpose of these expenses is to win the elections and run for parliament".*

Q: In your opinion, what effect do these funding methods have on people's rights, democracy and social justice?

Regarding the consequences of unfavorable methods of financing the elections of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, Ms. L. AH, 37 years old, in charge of the Rasht People's Representative Office (Jafarzadeh) and has a master's degree, answered:

*"I have no doubt that these behaviors have undermined the rights of the people and that a large part of a society is losing its rights, and that civil rights and democracy have a weak and superficial meaning here".*

She, 42, has a master's degree in management and is one of the planners of a small office in Rasht.

*"Part of the capabilities of individuals and legal entities who worked for the candidates in the elections will be lost, because they promised the people that they should be served through rent routes, and this would violate the rights of other sections of society and, consequently, the rights." "Citizenship, the foundations and components of democracy, the administration of social justice are seriously damaged, and from a more specialized point of view, the candidate, instead of legislating, helps to expand and strengthen advocacy and law-breaking as much as possible".*

Q: In your opinion, in what ways and how can the expenses of the Islamic Consultative Assembly elections be managed?

F.M.A, 46 years old, has a bachelor's degree in law and is a political activist.

*"The law must be approved by the representatives of the same people. On the other hand, the cost of each parliamentary candidate can be estimated and determined according to the city or province in question. "At the beginning of the election, it is necessary for the Court of Audit or the supervisory board to monitor the total expenses of the deputies from the beginning of the election until the end of the election, and at the end of the process, if there is a violation, the violator will be dealt with".*

Gholam Ali Jafarzadeh, the representative of the ninth and tenth term of Rasht Township, answered as follows:

*"1. Politics must be accompanied by honesty, which, unfortunately, in Iran, politics is defined by lies. 2. The purpose and vision must be properly defined.*

*3. The parties and their functions must be properly defined. "People should vote for the parties, not the person, and the parties themselves should be accountable to the people, and the people should follow their demands through the relevant party. 5. The parties should leave the status quo."*

## **6. Conclusion**

The issue of election finance costs and the role of money in politics is examined by political sociologists in the form of "political money" or "political finance". In the course of the election campaign and by resorting to monetary policy, the challengers or rivals try to gain a position or position in government and governmental institutions while mobilizing the votes of the masses and their support. However, unequal access to political spending helps to create an uneven political playing field. The rapid growth of campaign spending in the country has exacerbated this problem. The sheer volume of money spent on some campaigns makes political competition difficult or impossible for those who do not have access to large private ballot boxes. In financing parliamentary elections in Iran, most candidates, especially women, face an obstacle called the glass ceiling.

The findings of the present study show that the parliamentary election system in Iran as a machine on the one hand is in the hands of the government, which seeks to build a state and on the other hand is a channel for political participation and strengthening the process of democratization in society. This political machine operates in two ways. At the level of the capital, ie in the city of Tehran, it is mostly influenced by political parties and tendencies, but at the level of provincial and local areas, it is strongly influenced by the relations between the citizen and the politician (member of parliament).

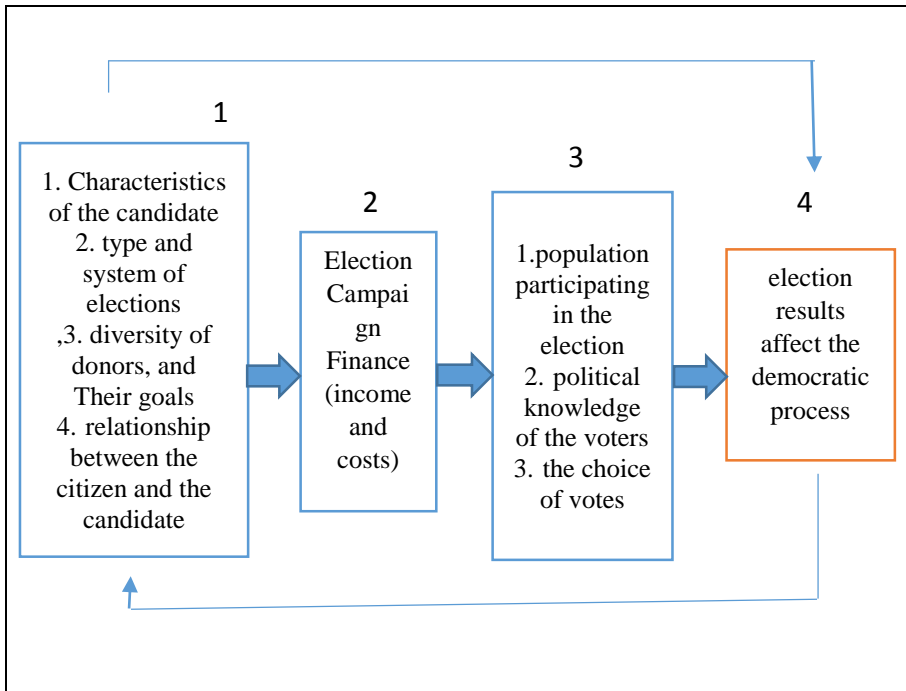
Also, the findings of the present study indicate that in local areas, the institutional situation of Iran, especially the election law, the personal specific demands of local voters are compatible with the MP-citizen link. In exercising enormous voluntary power in the daily lives of provincial citizens, the local government machine influences the policy of the Iranian parliament. This situation, which has developed over a long period of time, mediates the

influence of structural variables such as socio-economic indicators on Iran's parliamentary participation and creates broader institutional channels than the electoral system to determine mobilization in electoral authoritarianism. The findings of this study are consistent with the theories that highlight the role of state-building in shaping the Basij model (Schaeffer, 2007), Bakhtiari (1996), Blaydes (2011), Langster (2019), Jedi (2019) and Raisi (2020).

Regarding the contexts affecting the methods of financing and how to spend them, we emphasize that the costs of election campaigns in any society are influenced by several factors, the most important of which are: the characteristics of electoral systems, the citizen-relationship with the representative, Diversity of donors and their goals. Election costs are like a coin in two ways: they have both positive and negative effects. Therefore, it cannot be said with certainty that election expenses have a negative or positive function, and it is necessary to define the conditions well and show in which cases election expenses have a positive function and under what conditions have a negative effect. The data of this study show that 178 people (47%) agree and 183 people (48.3%) strongly agree that the current methods of financing and spending money in parliamentary elections have adverse consequences on the democratic process and only 4.8% of the respondents disagree or on average, they have the negative consequences of these practices on the democratic process. Respondents all believe that in order to get out of this dilemma, it is necessary to use the experiences of other countries to formulate the necessary regulations in this field, and the last point is that the formulation of such regulations was not left to the parliament itself, because it is firmly believed that "The master will not destroy the master's house"!

These findings are consistent with studies by Gary Jacobsen (1985), Menza et al. (2005), Evans (2007), Johnson (2012), Hogan (2013), Larja (2015) and Parsa (2016).

What contribution does this research make to the study of political finance? Based on the data analysis, the researcher proposes a conceptual model drawn in the form of Figure 2. To help researchers in investigating election costs and related social factors.



**Figure 2.** Conceptual model of research

As you can see in Figure (1-1), from left to right, there is a set of independent variables in Box 1 entitled Factors Affecting Campaign Finance (such as candidate characteristics, type and system of elections, diversity of donors, and their goals, the relationship between the citizen and the candidate) affect the mediator variable of the election campaign finance (how and how much the election expenses are financed and their expenses) (Box No. 2) and the campaign variable finance also in turn, the variables of the population participating in the election affect the political knowledge of the voters and the choice of votes (Box3). The variables in Box 3 ultimately affect the election results, and these election results affect the democratic process. The results obtained from the elections and manifested in the form of public policies ultimately affect the variables in Box 1 in the form of feedback effects (bottom arrow) and here the dynamics of the election process and the

influencing factors are well illustrated. Also, from box number 1, an arrow is drawn directly to box number 4, which shows the effects of these factors on the election results and the democratic process. This socio-political model emphasizes that there are reciprocal relations between social phenomena and many and varied phenomena act in cycles.

In addition, the contribution of this study in studying the methods of financing in electoral authoritarian regimes is three points. In the first stage, this study adds a new dimension to the role of institutional arrangements and conditions in shaping the pattern of participation and mobilization in electoral authoritarianism. Although several studies have examined the process of institutional development in transitional societies, existing studies generally emphasize the impact of electoral law on legislators and voter incentives. This study examines the important role of local power hierarchy in shaping the preferences of Iranian citizens and political elites in parliamentary politics. Second, this study contributes to this area by drawing on the literature on electoral institutions and advocacy policies to address the origins of participation in electoral authoritarianism. That is, this study examines competitive approaches in the study of participation in the specific context of Iran (Rasht Township). This study concludes that the effect of institutional and socio-economic variables on the citizen-politician relationship and the pattern of mutual participation is not. Institutional arrangements may widen or limit the scope of intangible (such as personal) ties between citizens and politicians to address specific socio-economic concerns or ethnic and kinship ties. This effect is illustrated in the theoretical model of the research. Finally, the findings of this study deal with the relationship between citizen and politician in Iran and can be considered as a stepping stone to study the relationship between citizenship and politician in electoral authoritarianism. Instead of customer orientation in this exchange, the wider role of specific personal demands in the formation of citizenship and politician ties in the regions of the province is highlighted.

Research suggestions are presented in two parts: practical suggestions based on the study and experiences of other countries and research suggestions. Now each one is explained. The following suggestions describe

ways to better combat the negative effects of money on politics and power. It promoted the resistance of democracies to corruption and influence in politics.

- Adopt systems that promote political cohesion and decision-making, and that the government can fight corruption by coordinating legislators and public and private sector institutions.

- Targeting international mechanisms that facilitate political corruption and the flow of dirty money into the political arena.
- Promote and support independent oversight mechanisms that assist in enforcing anti-corruption regulations and laws related to political finance expenditures, including the right to have access to information in a clear and timely Internet search form in a credible and timely manner.
- The relentless pursuit of political rationality, political rationality is subject to tolerance, self-control, long-term thinking, the originality of processivism and de-individualization.
- Develop the necessary laws to prevent the influence of policy-making and the fight against corruption and to avoid drafting regulations that impose exceptions.
- Consider executive guarantees, rewards, training, and safeguards to enhance party accountability.
- Strengthen and improve regulations that pave the way for better political competition between men and women and the distribution of financial resources in campaigns that avoid gender inequality.

Facilitate, promote and support journalists who fight corruption. Supporting the lives and well-being of journalists. Governments should not create obstacles in this direction and undermine the independence of journalists.

- Including anti-corruption mechanisms in the form of principles of conduct that declare the property of party representatives and clarify the norms that create conflict. Such practices can protect political parties from private sector influence and the risk of bribery and discrediting the party.
- Collaborate with other mass media outlets on sensitive topics, share information and publish news simultaneously, and protect journalists from the dangers they pose when reporting on important topics. Also, these outputs should provide the necessary security for the staff of news

headquarters and should not be an obstacle in the way of their education and life.

Given that the field of political finance and its impact on the political behavior of actors is a new topic in political sociology, it is recommended that researchers in the fields of social sciences and political science, especially graduate students, research the following areas: :

1. A comparative study of the effect of election expenses in different countries, especially developing countries, which are plagued by high levels of political corruption.
2. A comparative study of the effect of election expenses on different levels of presidential, parliamentary and urban and rural council elections.
3. Studying the effect of election expenses on the process of democracy in Iran using qualitative methods proposed in social sciences.
4. Studying the effect of election expenses on the process of democracy in different provinces of the country in order to provide empirical data and develop grounded theories.



## References

- Ahmadvand, Shoja, Saber Mahani, Ferdows (2015), "Comparative income on campaign finance (study of electoral systems in Iran, France, Russia and the United States)", *Quarterly Journal of Public Law Research*, Year 17, No. 49, Winter. [In Persian]
- Ansolabehere, Stephen, Shanto Iyengar, Adam Simon, and Nicholas Valentino. (1994) 'Does Attack Advertising Demobilize the Electorate?' *The American Political Science Review* 88.4: 829–838.
- Baktiari, B. (1996). *Parliamentary politics in revolutionary Iran: The institutionalization of factional politics*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.
- Blaydes, L. (2011). *Elections and distributive politics in Mubarak's Egypt*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Bermeo, N., 'On democratic backsliding', *Journal of Democracy*, 27/1 (2017), pp. 5–19.
- Bulmer, E. W., (2015), *Presidential Veto Powers*, International IDEA Constitution-Building Primer No. 14, May 2015, <<http://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/presidential-veto-powers?lang=en>>, accessed 1 August.
- Clawson, Dan, and Alan Neustadtl. 1989. "Interlocks, PACs and corporate conservatism." *American Journal of Sociology* 94:749–73.
- Degan, A. (2013) 'Civic Duty and Political Advertising'. *Economic Theory* 52.2: 531–540.
- Dehghani, Hamid (2016), *From Election Campaigns to Election Behavior*, Tehran: Sociologists Publications. [In Persian]
- Dobratz, Betty A. (2018), *Power, politics, and society: an introduction to political sociology*, Published by Routledge.
- Dormagen, Jean-Yves, Daniel Moushar (2014), *Fundamentals of Political Sociology*, translated by Abdolhossein Nikgozar, Tehran: Ad. [In Persian]
- Dorsti, Hajar (2014), "Pathology of the Islamic Consultative Assembly Election Campaign in the Light of Legal Principles Governing Campaigning", *Quarterly Journal of the Assembly and Strategy*, Year 21, Issue Eighty, Winter 2014, pp. 89-110. [In Persian]

- Ebrahimi, Adel and Soleiman Mirzaei Rajeouni (2017), *Qualitative Research in Social Sciences*, Tehran: Loya Publishing. [In Persian]
- Etaat, Javad (2008), "The Nature of Government in Iran (6)", *Quarterly Journal of Political-Economic Information*, No. 249-250, Year 22, June and July, 2008, pp. 68-79. [In Persian]
- Evans, Thomas A. (2007) 'An Empirical Test of Why Incumbents Adopt Campaign Spending Limits'. *Public Choice* 132.3-4: 437-456.
- Falguera, Elin and et.al. 2014. *Funding of Political Parties and Election Campaigns, A Handbook on Political Finance*, International IDEA.
- Foreman, Conrad (2018), *Money in Politics: Campaign Finance and Its Influence over the Political Process and Public Policy*, *The John Marshall Law Review*. 185.
- Green, Donald Philip, and Jonathan S. Krasno. (1988) 'Salvation for the Spendthrift Incumbent: Reestimating the Effects of Campaign Spending in House Elections'. *American Journal of Political Science* 32.4: 884-907.
- Hogan, Robert E. (2013) 'Campaign Spending and Voter Participation in State Legislative Elections'. *Social Science Quarterly* 94.3: 840-864.
- Jacobson, Gary C. (1985) 'Money and Votes Reconsidered: Congressional Elections, 1972-1982'. *Public Choice* 47.1: 7-62.
- Jedi, Hossein (2019), "Study of the effect of the structure of the Islamic Republic of Iran on its political structure with emphasis on the process of democracy", *Quarterly Journal of Transcendental Politics*, Volume 7, Number 25, Summer, pp. 195-221. [In Persian]
- Johnson, J.W. (2012) 'Campaign Spending in Proportional Electoral Systems: Incumbents Versus Challengers Revisited'. *Comparative Political Studies* 46.8.
- Kaid, Lynda Lee and Christina Holtz-Bacha, editors. (2008), *Encyclopedia of political communication*, SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Keefer, Philip and Razvan Vlaicu, (2017), *Vote Buying and Campaign Promises*, *Journal of Comparative Economics*, doi: 10.1016/j.jce.2017.07.001.

- Langsæther, Peter Egge. (2019). *Cleavage Politics in the 21 st Century: How and why social background affects political preferences*. PhD. Thesis, Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Oslo.
- La Raja Raymond, J., and Brian F. Schaffner. (2015) *Campaign Finance and Political Polarization: When Purists Prevail*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Maleki, Ali (2020), "Fundamentals of Political Participation in the Islamic Republic of Iran", *Quarterly Journal of Transcendental Politics*, Volume 8, Number 30, Fall, pp. 187-206. [In Persian]
- Manza, Jeff, Clem Brooks, and Michael Sauder. (2005) "Money, Participation and Votes: Social Cleavages and Electoral Politics." Pp. 201–226 in *The Handbook of Political Sociology: States, Civil Societies, and Globalization*, edited by T. Janoski, Cambridge University Press.
- Mirzaei Rajeouni, Soleiman (2013), *A Study of the Divergence Trend among Iranian Religious Forces in the Establishment Period (1979-1988)*, PhD Thesis, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran. [In Persian]
- Mirzaei Rajeouni, Soleiman (2020), *Political Sociology (two volumes)*, Tehran: Loya Publications. [In Persian]
- Misic, Gorana (2018), *Do Regulation Matter? Impacts of political Financing Regulations on Party Corruption in Croati and Serbia*, Budapest.
- Mohammadzadeh, Hussein. (2013). *A Historical Trend of Ethnic Cleavages in ContemporaryIran*, *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, October 2013, Vol. 3, No. 10.
- Mushfaq, Mohammad Ali (2017), *Pathological Excavation in the Electoral System*, Tehran: Kavir. [In Persian]
- Odera, Levy C. 2011. *Citizen-Politician Linkages in the Informal Sector in Kenya: When are Politicians Most Likely to be Responsive to Citizens?* Paper prepared for APSA annual meeting, Seattle, 1 – 4 September 2011.
- Parsa, Misagh (2016), *Democracy in Iran: why it failed and how it might succeed*, Harvard University Press.

- Przeworski, A. (2014), 'Ruling against rules', in T. Ginsburg and A. Simpser (eds), *Constitutions in Authoritarian Regimes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Raisi, A. 2019. The Puzzle of Populism in Iran's Electoral Arena. *Democratization*, 26(6), 916–934.
- Raisi, A. (2020). *Electoral Participation in Iran's Parliamentary Politics: Between Two Competing Explanations*, Springer Science+Business Media, LLC, part of Springer Nature 2020.
- Schaffer, Frederic Charles (2007), *Clean Elections and the Great Unwashed: Vote Buying and Voter Education in the Philippines*.
- Zamani Zadeh, Mostafa (2019), "The optimal system of financing election campaigns in Iran in the light of international standards", *Quarterly Journal of Comparative Law Studies*, Volume 10, Number, Fall and Winter, pp. 467-483. [In Persian].