

THE CURRENT POLITICAL LIFE (POLITICAL CULTURE) IN IRAN

***Amene Sedighian Bidgoli**

*Department of Women Studies, Institute of Social and Cultural Studies,
Ministry of Science, Research and Technology*

**Author for Correspondence*

ABSTRACT

Political lifestyle is in a political cultured society which is dominant over the whole society, and the people behave accordingly. The main purpose of this research was to study the current cultural political in Iran. So by Cochran formula 400 University students were randomly selected from Tehran University, Sharif, KN Toosi University, Allameh Tabatabai, and Sanandaj University. The method used in this study is based on quantity and documentary study and survey techniques have been used in the field study sector. The tool for measuring variables is questionnaire and SPSS software was used to extract and analyze data. The results showed political value and knowledge have achieved a very low score, and the two dimensions of political belief and participation has achieved a higher score. This political participation along with low political knowledge and vision will unfortunately cause wrong political choosing and participation in the country's management process and commons struck political behavior.

Keywords: *Political Life, Political Culture, Iran*

INTRODUCTION

Political lifestyle is in a political cultured society which is dominant over the whole society, and the people behave accordingly. Political culture consists of the people's perception and orientation towards the political system and its functions, which in this field, the ideas and attitudes towards the power, governmental responsibilities and related patterns to political socialization are paid attention to (Robertson, 1993). Political culture is from the perception and way of belief, plus the result of historical and social conditions of a nation. Many factors affect it till it reaches the current form of political culture that exists in every society. Many obstacles are active in order to prevent the transfer between a traditional and out of date political culture to an appropriate and up to date one. There are also many factors that are effective in traversing the road to reaching a dynamic and up to date political culture.

Political culture is considered as one of the important patterns in reviewing and analyzing the political development process in various societies. A society's public and elite's attitude towards politics is their perception of the political system's behavior and as a result, the mass orientation coordinates as a function of cultural and political socialization process.

The quality and quantity of socialization by method of employing symbols and familiarity with contents of political culture, plays a big role in strengthening or weakening democracy and dictatorship and will lead to an increase or decrease of the mutual trust between the people and the government. And so the lack of knowledge about the values, symbols and the belief system will cause some parts of the political culture which does not desire to be politicized, to become it, in which case the political system will face a crisis of meeting the growing expectations and will have to answer. On the other hand if we, unknowingly, leave those elements of culture that have the desire to become politicized, in the state of not politicized, then we have not benefited from the potential facilities of culture to strengthen political participation and the society's cultural and political extraction capabilities will still remain unused. This condition will, in the long run, reduce the efficiency of the political system, resulting in a widespread crisis of legitimacy. Based on this, the analysis of various aspects of the political culture will paint the real picture of the relationship between political authority and the values obtained and enable us to assess the degree of legitimacy of the political system. Since environment is a system of value, political culture will specify the public's orientation towards institutions, structures and also political performances. The quality and quantity of political participation, methods of voting, support or indifference towards the regime depends on the institutionalized values, beliefs, ideas and symbols to a considerable extent.

Research Article

The study of political culture has put various steps behind, and in each period, the emphasis was on certain variables and was viewed from certain angles. During the 1960's the Parsons variable model, Almond functionalism and some of the Marxist perspectives were largely emphasized. From the Marxists point of view, the political culture is a dependent variable while others consider it an independent variable. Systematic theorists and functionalism have assumed culture as part of society's political environment. Since then not much consensus on definitions and theories for the study of patterns have been observed. In the definition sector, a psychological approach to political culture focuses primarily on the person's orientation towards political objectives, and in the other sector this concept is defined in terms of values and governing norms. Sometimes political culture within the national culture is either described as political identity and the governing ideology or portrayed as a form of moral order of society. Common models for explaining political culture are:

- Functionalist approach
- Systematic approach
- Marxist approach
- Hegemonic approach
- Political culture geopolitical analysis

In presenting the theoretical framework of the theories of political culture, a modulation is achieved. Almond and Verba's theories are amongst the contemporary and effective theories. Almond and Verba expand the theory of political culture in their book of civil culture. They define political culture as political attitudes towards the political system and its various parts and also the individual roles in this system. On the subject of the relationship between culture and behavior, they believe that the same way their attitudes affect their behavior, the political culture of a nation also affects the behavior of citizens and leaders across the political system. They call the orientations as intrinsic aspects of issues and relationships and mention three basic orientations:

Cognitive orientation: a person's knowledge and ideas in relation to the political system and the roles and authorities managing these roles, political input and outputs.

Emotional orientation: emotional relationship with the political system, its roles, personnel and employees, and its executives. **Evaluative orientation:** judging and commenting on political issues that typically involves a combination of criteria and valuable standards with knowledge and emotions.

According to their views, orientation and its variants are related to the following assumptions:

The whole political system: includes historical development, dimensions, power and its legal characteristics. **Input or the political system's internals:** meaning the forces affecting the decision, such as parties, pressure groups, media. **Political outputs:** meaning the work of the legislative branch, the executive, judicial, or the decision making of the governance and the political system. **The existence of a person or the person himself:** Individual assessment of their role in the political arena. Dimensions and orientations associated with the three types form the political culture.

Parochial-Incomplete or limited political culture: This type of culture is seen in primitive and traditional societies where expertise is low and the structures are traditional. In such societies, the player has a combination of political, social, religious and roles.

Although the people of a government are aware of the society as a whole, but they have no awareness of the political system they are under, or don't show it. The person has no orientation concerning the 4-fold political parties. There is no political participation either.

Subjective-consequential political culture: the people have an orientation towards the political system and its outputs but their orientation towards the inputs of the system and their own role has not yet been formed. In such a culture a person may feel pride or be reluctant towards the political system. You can judge but the relationship with the political system is general and this relationship is concentrated more on the outputs of the political system.

The flow recognized is downwards or from the government towards the citizens of the state. Thus the relationship between the community and the government is one-way and from up to down (Almond and Verba, 1974).

Research Article

Participant-Participatory political culture: people are oriented towards the 4 issues. This is not necessarily a positive orientation, but can also be a negative one. Citizens have an active role in the political system. High participation is especially for developed countries. They are aware of the inputs and outputs of the political community, which means they are informed of their rights and responsibilities (Almond and Verba, 1974).

About the compatibility of the political system's structure, Almond and Verba believe that it is possible for the structure of the political system to be either proportional or non proportional to the political culture. They believe that flawed political culture and traditional political system, consequential political culture and authoritarian system and also participatory political culture and democratic and responsive system are compatible. What is meant by a compatible culture is a culture in which there is coordination between its political orientation (cognitive, emotional and normative), political system and its institutions. The variable definition of political culture: from all topics, we shall consider political culture as aspects of society's general culture, the subjects and aspects of which are political issues – political institutions, leaders and mechanisms and so forth. These aspects include a system of knowledge, values, beliefs and attitudes of the people of the society towards political issues. This system gives meaning to the political actions. Political orientation defines actors and makes political behaviors understandable to them.

Political knowledge: the amount of people's knowledge and understanding of the political system which has the two dimensions of knowledge about people and knowledge of laws and political mechanisms.

Political value: people's ideal politics, in other words what people consider politically ideal.

Political belief: they are a basic set of ideas on what worlds, including the social world, are? These beliefs have been accepted as an almost indisputable fact (Shelby, 1996). What the people of the community imagine about the political system, not what characteristics it actually has. This issue is measured by the following 3 characteristics:

- 1- People's perceptions of political activists
- 2- The cost of political activity
- 3- Belief in the amount of self effectiveness

Political participation: the amount of people's participation in various political activities.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Method

The gathering of information is made valuable and scientific by regarding certain conditions. To gather information, appropriate and adequate methods must be used for each stage of the study.

On the other hand, the data must have the least error rate possible, because the lack of scientific and polluted spirit in the researcher's bias, lack of researching spirit in the population within the research, depletion of resources can easily cause the research to have a high error rate.

Thus, in order to proceed with the research the goal must be completely identified in each section, and then select methods and tools in accordance with that goal. The method used in this study is based on quantity, and documentary study and survey techniques have been used in the field study sector. The tool for measuring variables is questionnaire and SPSS software was used to extract and analyze data.

Statistical Population, Sample Size and Sampling Method

The statistical population is the university students who have been selected from the provinces of Tehran and Kurdistan.

The two provinces were chosen for reasons of social policy. Tehran was chosen as the capital of the country, having the highest rate of students and Kurdistan was chosen due to the existence of the greatest social divide with the central government.

Kurdistan with the Kurdish ethnicity (vs. mostly Fars or Turk rulers), Islam Sunni religion (vs. Shiite rulers), being close to the western borders of Iraq and Turkey, the activities of the independent seekers of the Kurds of the three countries, political differences with the central government, a place of illegal entry of goods and commodities etc. have a high level of political, religious, and economic and social gaps with Tehran. In this study the Cochran formula has been used for sampling. Existing examples in Tehran have

Research Article

been completed in Tehran University, Sharif, KN Toosi University, AllamehTabatabai, and in the Kurdistan province the State University of Sanandaj.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The sample population consisted of 200 students residing in Tehran and 200 students residing in Kurdistan, of which 60 percent are women and 40 percent men. From this number, 68% are studying as undergraduates, 26% postgraduate and 6% doctoral, which means the average years of education of 15.38 years. They are between the ages of 18 to 57 and an average of 24.4 years. 81% single and 15% married and, others are in other sub states. Concerning their race groups, 39% are Fars and 46% are Kurds, and 15% belong to other races most of which are Turks. 58% are Shiite Muslims, 40% Sunni Muslims Shiite and the rest believed in other religions.

Showing respondents in terms of Place of education, gender and education

Education, gender and education			Grade			Total
			B. A, B.S	M. A, M. S	PhD	
Tehran	gender	female	15.0%	37.0%	10.0%	62.0%
		Male	25.0%	11.0%	2.0%	38.0%
	Total		40.0%	48.0%	12.0%	100.0%
Kordestan	gender	female	58.0%	1.0%		59.0%
		Male	38.0%	2.5%	0.5%	41.0%
	Total		96.0%	3.5%	0.5%	100.0%
Total	gender	female	36.5%	19.0%	5.0%	60.5%
		Male	31.5%	6.8%	1.3%	39.5%
	Total		68.0%	25.8%	6.3%	100.0%

Political Culture (Current Political Life)

As mentioned, the political lifestyle are aspects of the community’s popular culture subjects and the subjects of which are politics, political institutions, political leaders and political activists, and political mechanisms ... and includes a system of knowledge, values, beliefs and attitudes of the population towards political issues. This system gives meaning to political actions, defines the behavior of political activists for their understanding. The 4 dimensions are used for the assessment and the results are displayed in each dimension.

Political knowledge: people’s knowledge and understanding of the political system, which has two dimensions of knowledge towards political activists in 3 branches of government and other government agencies and knowledge about laws and political mechanisms, which has been measured by 16 questions but has reached the average of below 28. As has been found, about 60% of the population has low political knowledge. In the statement survey is becomes clear that the most knowledge of the students is of the chairman of the parliament and the foreign minister, and the reason for knowledge of Dr. Zarif was his presence in face book and the size of the news on Iran’s nuclear negotiations.

Values: are the kinds of cultural norms that indicate the overall goals which are deemed desirable for social life and political values are people’s utmost political desires. 10 Likert statements have been used to measure these dimensions. This index has an alpha cronbach of 87%. Valuable social and political freedom, equality and the importance of human rights, tolerance of critics, and importance of the environment in this area is surveyed and the average achieved is low. 60% of the students have little faith in political values, and it should be noted that, due to the fear of the political circumstances, some students may have given a low score to this question.

In evaluating the examined statements it is determined that only 9% do not believe in compromising with political opponents. Only 4% do not believe in protecting the rights of the minorities. And this option has been achieved from half of the sample from the Kurdistan province. The principle of freedom of belief

Research Article

and freedom of expression is fully accredited by the respondents, and only 3% of respondents do not believe in this principle. Gender equality is also agreed by a virtually substantial majority. 6% opposed it, and 4/17% had a certain degree of tendency towards it. The statistics shown in other statements also indicate positive values of acceptance of criticism by the rulers, opposition leaders, consideration of human rights, and environmental protection for the respondents.

Political belief: is the notion that people having towards the reigning political system, not necessarily what is available. These beliefs include the people’s perceptions towards political activists and their political interactions, and are with 7 Likert statements, cost campaigns with 4 Likert statements, and finally the belief in the self effectiveness in the political system is with a 4 Likert statements, and has an alpha cronbach of 80%.

All three dimensions have obtained an average score of 48 at a distance of 90.0, and 64.5% of respondents moderately have political belief in political activists, cost of political activities and the effectiveness of their own activities. The 69% majority have a moderately positive impression of the political activists. 60% of respondents have evaluated the cost of political activities as high, and that constitutes a significant part of the population, and only 5% have mentioned the costs as low. Regarding the effectiveness of political activities, 61% have identified the effectiveness of their own activities as average.

Political participation: the person’s participation in a collection of his own country’s political activities which has been reviewed by 9 Likert statements, and using a spectrum of political participation by Michael Rush (Rush, 1992), participation in voting or standing for election, participating in discussions and political circles, to participating in supporting and opposing government demonstrations, and also participating in parties and organizations and encouraging others to participate.

The Cronbach alpha calculated is 80% and the average of 25 has been earned. 42% moderately, and half of the population is largely involved in political activities.

Some interesting points were obtained in reviewing the statements. The first and second statements focus on participation in government programs and various government opposition programs, and what’s interesting is that participation in both programs are completely opposite to one ratio. In both cases, 27 participate and 47 do not participate.

Participation in informal discussions is a lot more than formal discussion, to the extent that there is a 77% chance of participation in informal discussions and a 47% chance of participation in formal programs. This indicates the presence of the politicization of the Iranian society.

The display of different aspects of the political culture.

		Political values	Political belief	Political participation	Political knowledge
N	Valid	400	400	400	400
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		15.8650	48.2075	25.2600	28.4800
Median		14.0000	49.0000	26.5000	26.0000
Std. Deviation		7.05309	12.14860	8.11122	15.05344
Minimum		.00	.00	.00	.00
Maximum		45.00	72.00	40.00	71.00

Research Article

Political participation	Political belief the belief in them self effectiveness	political interactions in the political system	people’s perceptions towards political activists	Total	Political values	Political knowledge	
8.3	6.8	4.8	4.5	4	56.5	59.3	Low
41.8	60.8	34.8	68.8	64.5	40.5	7	middle
50	32.5	60.5	26.8	13.5	3	33.8	high
100	100	100	100	100	100	100	total

Conclusion

The concept of political culture is as one of the most important areas of the formation of political development. In other words, it is completely clear today that in order to establish and accelerate political development in the region, it is first critical and necessary to recognize its political culture. Many sociologists and anthropologists have theorized the evolution of the human society. In developing countries, including Iran, the transition from traditional to modern society has not quite happened and both traditional and modern culture exists together. In other words, in spite of the adoption of the modern political culture, elements of traditional political culture still remain in Iran. A large part of the Iranian civilization has been taken over by tribal conflict. The special continuity of political culture has kind of increased the distance of society with political development. It is in the form of this political culture that the political development process can be predicted. Political culture is particularly directs people’s political behavior. Political culture shows people’s reactions when faced with political elements. Alongside reviewing political culture, identifying barriers faced in order to achieve a modern political culture in a society is also of special significance. Thus, in the existing conditions of Iran’s society, reviewing the type of Iranian student’s political culture as a symbol of Iranian youth, and reviewing the effective factors and conditions over this type political culture is of significant importance. In reviewing this issue amongst students in Tehran and Kurdish universities, interesting results have been achieved. As is visible, political value and knowledge has achieved a very low score, and the two dimensions of political belief and participation have achieved a higher score. This political participation along with low political knowledge and vision will unfortunately cause wrong political choosing and participation in the country’s management process and commons struck political behavior.

REFERENCES

Almond G Sidney (1972). *The Civic Culture* (Newjersi Princeton University Press).
Almond Gabriel (1990). *A Discipline Divided* (Sage publication).
Duyvendak Jan Willem (1995). *The Power of Politics, New Social Movements in an Oldpolity*.
Gibbins Jon R (1990). *Contemporary Political Culture* (Sage).
Morley David (1992). *Television, Audiences & Cultural Studies* (Rutledge) London, New York.
Rosenbaum Walter (1975). *Political Culture* (Preayer Publishers).
Sochoou Chry/brianoux, Diakolam/EE, Kakkou M, Marinoums barkas D Goula and Griva (2009). Factors influencing participation in collective action: An analysis based on students and immigrants in Gerece, Paris.