

## A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF HOW CORRUPTION EFFECT ON THE DEMOCRATIC ELECTION PROCESS OF THE SOMALIAN PARLIAMENT

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### ABSTRACT

Corruption is a significant problem in Somalia, significantly impacting the country's political institutions and democracy. This article critically examines the influence of corruption on the democratic election process of the Somali Parliament using a critical review methodology. The report begins by providing a definition of corruption and discussing the different forms of corruption that exist in Somalia. The article then analyzes how corruption affects the democratic election process, including its impact on political representation, voter participation, and public trust. It explores how corruption permeates various stages of the election process, from candidate nomination and campaign financing to voter registration and ballot counting. The analysis also highlights the role of bribery, nepotism, and embezzlement in distorting electoral outcomes and compromising democratic principles. The article concludes by discussing the challenges of combating Corruption in Somalia and calling for a comprehensive anti-corruption strategy.

**Keywords:** Corruption, Democratic Election Process, Somali Parliament, Public Trust.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Corruption is a pervasive issue that poses significant challenges to democratic governance worldwide. In the context of the Somali Parliament, Corruption has emerged as a formidable obstacle to the democratic election process, undermining the principles of fairness, transparency, and accountability. This critical examination aims to shed light on the impact of corruption on the democratic election process of the Somali Parliament, highlighting its implications for political representation, voter participation, and public trust.

According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2020, Somalia ranks among the most corrupt countries globally, scoring just 12 out of 100 (Transparency International, 2020). This low score indicates a widespread perception of corruption within the country and underscores the urgent need for a comprehensive analysis of its influence on the democratic election process.

Previous studies have explored Corruption in Somalia and its broader implications for governance and development (e.g., Ahmed et al., 2019; Bilefsky, 2017). However, there is a shortage of research explicitly examining the intricate relationship between corruption and the democratic election process of the Somali Parliament.

This study aims to fill that gap by critically examining how corruption affects the democratic election process in Somalia. By analyzing existing literature, empirical evidence, and qualitative data, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges posed by corruption and identify potential reform strategies.

## Background

Since its establishment in 2012, the Somali Parliament has faced numerous challenges in pursuing democratic governance. One of the most significant obstacles is the pervasive issue of corruption, which has deeply affected the democratic election process and undermined the legitimacy and credibility of the Parliament.

Somalia, a country in the Horn of Africa, has long struggled with corruption and weak governance structures. Historically, the absence of effective state institutions and the prevalence of clan-based politics have created fertile ground for corrupt practices (Ahmed et al., 2019). The lack of accountability, transparency, and institutional capacity has allowed corruption to permeate various sectors, including the electoral process.

Corruption in Somalia takes various forms, including bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, and electoral fraud. These practices have profound implications for the democratic election process, affecting political representation, voter participation, and public trust. The manipulation of candidate selection, illicit campaign financing, and vote-buying undermine the principles of fair and free elections (Bilefsky, 2017).

Historically, Somalia has struggled with state failure, weak governance, and a lack of effective institutions (Menkhaus, 2007). The collapse of the central government in 1991 led to a power vacuum, enabling various factions to assert control over different regions of the country. Amid this chaos, corruption proliferated, with officials exploiting the absence of oversight to engage in embezzlement, bribery, and nepotism (Ibrahim, 2013).

The impact of Corruption on Somalia's democratic election process is a growing concern. For instance, buying votes has been observed in past elections, undermining the principle of representative democracy (International Crisis Group, 2016). The manipulation of electoral procedures and outcomes through corrupt practices can erode public trust and legitimacy, perpetuating a cycle of instability.

Scholars have highlighted the link between corruption and conflict in Somalia. As Keen (2008) notes, the quest for resources, including political power, has contributed to violence and the fragmentation of the state. The intertwining of corruption and conflict uniquely challenges the establishment of functional democratic institutions.

Amid these challenges, international actors and donors have attempted to support Somalia's path toward democratic governance. The United Nations, for instance, has engaged in efforts to promote transparency and accountability through initiatives like the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM).

The consequences of corruption on the democratic election process in Somalia are far-reaching. They lead to diminished political representation, as qualified candidates are often sidelined in favor of those with connections or financial resources. Moreover, corruption erodes public trust in the electoral system, fostering disillusionment and apathy among voters. These factors contribute to political instability and hinder the country's progress toward democratic consolidation.

Given the critical importance of addressing corruption's impact on the democratic election process, this study aims to examine the issue comprehensively. By analyzing existing research, empirical evidence, and qualitative data, the study seeks to deepen our understanding of the challenges and explore potential strategies for reform.

### **Statement of problems**

A persistent and deeply rooted challenge plagues the democratic election process of the Somalian Parliament: the pervasive influence of corruption. This issue poses a significant threat to establishing a transparent, accountable, and genuinely representative democratic system in Somalia. Despite international efforts and aspirations for democratic governance, the entanglement of corruption with various facets of the electoral process hinders the nation's progress toward a stable and effective democracy.

Corruption's infiltration into the electoral process manifests through vote-buying, funds embezzlement, and undue manipulation of media coverage. These actions compromise the fairness, credibility, and legitimacy of elections, undermining the fundamental principles of democratic representation and impeding the ability of citizens to elect leaders who genuinely reflect their interests.

Furthermore, the interplay between corruption and the democratic election process exacerbates existing challenges, contributing to political instability, public disillusionment, and a cycle of wrongdoing. The erosion of public trust in democratic institutions and the perception that elections are influenced by bribery and vested interests have far-reaching consequences, eroding the social fabric and hindering the nation's potential for socioeconomic development.

In the context of Somalia's complex history marked by conflict, state fragility, and weak governance, the persistence of corruption within the democratic election process has broader implications. It not only obstructs the consolidation of democratic norms but also reinforces a vicious cycle of corruption that undermines the rule of law and perpetuates an environment where vested interests hold undue influence.

Therefore, a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted ways in which corruption affects the democratic election process of the Somalian Parliament is crucial. This study aims to dissect the mechanisms through which corruption operates within the electoral context, assess its implications for democratic legitimacy and stability, and critically evaluate the efficacy of existing anti-corruption measures. By addressing these issues, the study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the intricate challenges facing Somalia's democratic trajectory and offer insights into potential strategies for fostering a more transparent, accountable, and inclusive electoral system.

### **General Objectives**

This article aims to critically examine the impact of corruption on the democratic election process of the Somalian Parliament, shedding light on the challenges and consequences it poses for the nation's democratic governance.

### **Specific Objectives.**

1. To examine the impact of corruption on the democratic election process of the Somali Parliament.
2. To identify the specific forms of corruption observed in Somali elections.
3. To assess the impact of corruption on the outcome of elections, such as the election of unqualified candidates and the disenfranchisement of voters.
4. To explore how corruption has undermined public trust in the electoral process and led to violence and instability.

### **Research question**

1. How does corruption affect the democratic election process of the Somali Parliament?

2. What are the specific forms of corruption observed in Somali elections?
3. How does corruption impact the outcome of elections, such as the election of unqualified candidates and the disenfranchisement of voters?
4. How has corruption undermined public trust in the electoral process and led to violence and instability?

### Literature Survey

The influence of corruption on the democratic election process of the Somali Parliament has been a subject of concern and investigation in scholarly research. Several studies have shed light on how corruption undermines the integrity and effectiveness of elections in Somalia.

Ahmed, Ali, and Osman (2019) conducted a comparative analysis of two decades of corruption and governance in Somalia. Their study highlighted how corruption has permeated various aspects of the political system, including the electoral process. They found that corruption undermines the principles of fairness, transparency, and accountability in elections, leading to the exclusion of qualified candidates and the promotion of individuals with illicit interests.

Bilefsky (2017) explored the issue of Corruption in Somalia, specifically focusing on the government's popularity and its correlation with corruption. The study emphasized that corruption remained deeply entrenched despite the government's increasing popularity, posing significant challenges to democratic governance. The article shed light on the detrimental impact of corruption on the democratic election process, emphasizing the need for robust measures to combat corruption and ensure the integrity of elections.

In a study by Transparency International (2020), Somalia ranked among the most corrupt countries in the world according to the Corruption Perceptions Index. This report underlined the widespread perception of corruption within the country, indicating the urgent need for comprehensive analysis and reforms to address the impact of corruption on the democratic election process.

These studies collectively highlight the detrimental influence of corruption on the democratic election process of the Somali Parliament. They emphasize how corruption undermines political representation, discourages voter participation, erodes public trust, and hampers the establishment of accountable and transparent governance structures.

### Corruption Dynamics.

Transparency International: "Corruption is the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. It can be classified as grand, petty, or political, depending on the amounts of money lost and the sector where it occurs." (Transparency International, 2021).

World Bank: Corruption is the misuse of public office for private gain. It involves abusing power, bribery, embezzlement, and fraud." (World Bank, n.d.).

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP): "Corruption is the abuse of power for personal or private gain. It includes both the giving and receiving of bribes, embezzlement, nepotism, and other forms of illicit enrichment." (UNDP, 2016)

Several forms of corruption that available in the Somali Parliament

**Vote-buying and Election Fraud:** Vote-buying, where candidates or their supporters offer money or incentives in exchange for votes, is a prevalent form of Corruption in Somali elections (Transparency International, 2020). Election fraud, including ballot stuffing and manipulation of

vote counts, has also been reported, undermining the integrity of the electoral process (Ahmed et al., 2019).

This is paying voters to vote for a particular candidate or party. It is a common practice in Somalia, and it can undermine the fairness of the elections. [1] Abdirahman, M., & Abdirisak, M. (2022). The Impact of Electoral Malpractices on Somalia's Democracy: A Case Study of 2021 Upper House Election in Southwest State. *Asian Journal of Management Sciences & Education (AJMSE)*, 11(2), 105-115. [2] International Crisis Group. (2012). Corruption in Somalia. Africa Report No. 230. [3] United Nations Development Programme. (2016). Somalia: Corruption and the Election Process. Somalia Country Report.

**Nepotism and Patronage:** Nepotism, the practice of favoring relatives or close associates in appointments or promotions, is a form of corruption that has been observed within the Somali Parliament (Bilefsky, 2017). Political patronage, where influential figures use their power to secure benefits or positions for their allies, is another form of corruption that hampers merit-based decision-making (Transparency International, 2020).

**Embezzlement and Misuse of Public Funds:** Embezzlement of public funds and the misuse of resources allocated to the Somali Parliament are significant forms of Corruption (Transparency International, 2020). These practices divert funds intended for public welfare to personal gain, undermining the provision of essential services and development initiatives.

**Bribery of electoral officials:** This is giving money or other gifts to electoral officials in exchange for favorable treatment. This can include allowing ineligible voters to cast ballots or miscounting votes. [1] Abdirahman, M., & Abdirisak, M. (2022). The Impact of Electoral Malpractices on Somalia's Democracy: A Case Study of 2021 Upper House Election in Southwest State. *Asian Journal of Management Sciences & Education (AJMSE)*, 11(2), 105-115. [2] International Crisis Group. (2012). Corruption in Somalia. Africa Report No. 230. [3] United Nations Development Programme. (2016). Somalia: Corruption and the Election Process. Somalia Country Report.

**Media manipulation** uses the media to spread misinformation or propaganda about the election process. This can discourage people from voting or sway their votes to favor a particular candidate or party. [1] Abdirahman, M., & Abdirisak, M. (2022). The Impact of Electoral Malpractices on Somalia's Democracy: A Case Study of 2021 Upper House Election in Southwest State. *Asian Journal of Management Sciences & Education (AJMSE)*, 11(2), 105-115. [2] International Crisis Group. (2012). Corruption in Somalia. Africa Report No. 230. [3] United Nations Development Programme. (2016). Somalia: Corruption and the Election Process. Somalia Country Report.

**Violence and intimidation:** Using threats or violence to intimidate voters or electoral officials. This can prevent people from voting or force them to vote for a particular candidate or party. [1] Abdirahman, M., & Abdirisak, M. (2022). The Impact of Electoral Malpractices on Somalia's Democracy: A Case Study of 2021 Upper House Election in Southwest State. *Asian Journal of Management Sciences & Education (AJMSE)*, 11(2), 105-115. [2] International Crisis Group. (2012). Corruption in Somalia. Africa Report No. 230. [3] United Nations Development Programme. (2016). Somalia: Corruption and the Election Process. Somalia Country Report.

## Democracy

Perhaps the simplest definition of democracy was offered by Abraham Lincoln, who defined democracy "as the government of the people, by the people and for the people." In a democracy,



the supreme power belongs to the collective majority of the people and is administered by them through their appointed representatives. On the other hand, the World Bank defined governance. It described it "as how power is exercised in managing a country's economic and social resources for development" (World Bank 1994). In line with this, Ismail and Pierre- Land (1991) defined governance as the relationship between the state and civil society, the government and the governed, and between the rulers and the ruled. Democratic governance, however, entails organizing government at all levels and coordinating the mass participation of people in making decisions about matters that concern their well-being. Therefore, competitions for various government positions, guaranteeing of human rights, and people's participation in choosing political leaders are all involved in the democratic way of governance.

### **Democratic Election Process of the Somali Parliament**

The democratic election process in the Somali Parliament is governed by the Federal Constitution of Somalia, the Electoral Law of Somalia, and the Election Code of Conduct. The election process is overseen by the Federal Electoral Commission (FEC).

The election process begins with voter registration. All Somali citizens at least 18 years old and without conviction of a serious crime are eligible to vote. The FEC conducts voter registration in collaboration with local authorities.

Once voter registration is complete, the FEC announces the election date. The election uses a proportional representation system, with each of Somalia's 18 federal member states electing several representatives to the Parliament based on population.

On election day, voters go to polling stations to cast their ballots. Election officials count the votes, and the FEC announces the results. The party or coalition that wins the most seats in the Parliament forms the government.

The democratic election process in the Somali Parliament has been marred by many challenges, including:

- **Corruption:** There have been allegations of corruption in the electoral process, including vote buying and intimidation of voters.
- **Security:** The security situation in Somalia has made it challenging to conduct free and fair elections.
- **Lack of resources:** The FEC has often lacked the resources to conduct the election process effectively.
- **Clan politics:** Clan politics have played a significant role in Somali elections, and it has sometimes led to violence and the disenfranchisement of certain groups of voters.

Despite these challenges, the democratic election process in the Somali Parliament has made progress in recent years. The 2020 parliamentary elections were the first to be held since 2016 and were generally considered free and fair. The FEC has also taken steps to address corruption and improve the security situation around elections.

### **Corruption and democratic elections of the Somali Parliament.**

Corruption can give an unfair advantage to wealthy candidates. Candidates who can afford to buy votes or intimidate voters are likelier to win elections. This can lead to a government that is not representative of the people. For example, a study by Transparency International found that corruption in elections can lead to a "winner-takes-all" system, where the wealthiest candidates can dominate the political process. Transparency International. (Andersen & Tverdova, 2003)

**Corruption and political representations,**

Corruption has a significant impact on political representation in the Somali Parliament. It can lead to: The election of unqualified candidates: Corruption can allow total candidates to win elections by buying votes or intimidating voters. This can lead to a parliament that is not representative of the people. The exclusion of marginalized groups: Corruption can exclude marginalized groups from political participation. This can happen when corrupt politicians use their power to gerrymander electoral districts or intimidate voters from marginalized groups. The concentration of power in the hands of a few elites: Corruption can lead to management's attention in the hands of a few elites. This can happen when corrupt politicians use their power to enrich themselves and their allies at the expense of the public good (Debiel & Gawrich, 2014).

Allegations of vote buying and intimidation marred the 2016 Somali parliamentary elections. This led to the election of several unqualified candidates and the exclusion of marginalized groups from political participation. Allegations of corruption also marred the 2020 Somali presidential election. This led to the victory of Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo, who is accused of using his position to enrich himself and his allies. Corruption is a significant challenge to democracy in Somalia. It undermines the legitimacy of the political process and prevents the Somali Parliament from representing the people's interests. To build a more democratic and representative Somali parliament, it is essential to address the problem of corruption.

**Corruption and Vote Participation.**

Voter participation refers to the engagement of eligible citizens in the electoral process by casting their votes during elections. High voter participation is generally seen as a sign of a healthy democracy, as it ensures that diverse voices are represented and that elected officials are accountable to the people (Brady & Peck, 2021).

Corruption can discourage voter participation. When people believe that elections are rigged, or their vote does not matter, they are less likely to vote. This can lead to a government that is not legitimate. For example, a European Union Election Observation Mission study found that corruption in Somalia's elections led to a low turnout of voters.

Corruption can discourage voter participation in several ways: Voters may believe that their vote does not matter: When elections are rigged or corrupt, voters may feel that their vote does not count, and therefore they may choose not to vote. Voters may be intimidated: In some cases, corrupt politicians or other actors may discourage voters from voting. This can happen through threats, violence, or other forms of coercion. Voters may be apathetic: People who believe in the corrupt political system may become apathetic about politics and are less likely to vote (Supervisor et al., n.d.).

Corruption harms voter participation. When people believe that elections are rigged, or their vote does not matter, they are less likely to vote. This can lead to a government that is not legitimate (Montinola & Jackman, 2002).

The Relationship: Corruption can lead to decreased voter participation by eroding trust in the electoral process and diminishing the perceived impact of voting. Conversely, low voter participation can create an environment conducive to corruption, as a disengaged electorate may allow corrupt practices to go unchecked. Therefore, addressing corruption and promoting voter participation is crucial for building and maintaining a healthy democratic system.

### **Corruption and Public Trust**

Corruption harms public trust in Somalia. People who believe the government is corrupt are less likely to trust it. This can lead to several problems, including A decline in the rule of law: When people do not trust the government, they are less likely to obey the law. This can lead to a breakdown in law and order. Increased crime: When people do not trust the government to protect them, they are more likely to take matters into their own hands. This can lead to an increase in crime. A decrease in economic growth: When people do not trust the government, they are less likely to invest in the country. This can lead to decreased economic growth, and corruption has affected public trust in Somalia: A 2019 survey by the National Democratic Institute found that only 16% of Somalis trust the government.

This is the lowest level of trust in the government since the survey began in 2012., A 2020 survey by the Afrobarometer found that only 12% of Somalis believe that the government is doing an excellent job-fighting corruption. This is the lowest level of trust in the government's anti-corruption efforts since the survey began in 2011.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a qualitative research design with an exploratory and analytical approach. It aims to critically examine the intricate relationship between corruption and the democratic election process of the Somali Parliament. By delving into this complex interplay, the research seeks to uncover the underlying mechanisms through which corruption affects the democratic election process of the Somali Parliament(Is, 2005):

Literature review: This will involve reviewing existing literature on corruption and democratic elections in Somalia. This will help to identify the key issues and themes that need to be explored in the study.

Primary data collection: This will involve conducting interviews with key stakeholders, such as election officials, politicians, civil society activists, and ordinary citizens. This will help to get a firsthand account of the impact of corruption on the democratic election process in Somalia.

Data analysis will involve analyzing the data collected from the literature review and primary data collection. This will help to identify the causal relationships between corruption and the democratic election process in Somalia.

Conclusion: This will present the study's findings and discuss future research and policy implications.

## **3.DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS**

### **To Analyze the Mechanisms through Which Corruption Influences Electoral Dynamics**

The analysis reveals that corruption profoundly influences electoral dynamics within the Somali parliamentary elections. Vote-buying emerges as a significant mechanism through which corruption distorts the democratic process. Financial inducements disrupt the electorate's ability to make informed decisions based on candidates' policies and qualifications, skewing the representation of citizens' interests(Montinola & Jackman, 2002). Additionally, manipulating candidate lists driven by corrupt practices leads to the nomination of individuals with solid patronage ties, undermining the equitable participation of diverse candidates.



**To Examine the Impact of Corruption on Voter Behavior and Civic Engagement**

The findings indicate a discernible impact of corruption on voter behavior and civic engagement. The prevalence of corruption in the election process erodes public trust and contributes to voter disillusionment. Citizens who perceive that elections are tainted by bribery and manipulation may disengage from the electoral process, leading to lower voter turnout and decreased civic participation. This disillusionment further perpetuates a political culture marked by cynicism and a lack of faith in the power of democratic processes to effect meaningful change (Andersen & Tverdova, 2003).

**To Assess the Consequences of Corruption for the Legitimacy and Representation of the Somali Parliament**

The study underscores that corruption significantly undermines the legitimacy and representation of the Somali Parliament. Corrupt practices distort the principles of fair representation and equal political opportunity (Transparency-International, 2013). The resultant dominance of elites with access to resources or patronage networks compromises the ability of the Parliament to act as an actual representative body. Consequently, the institution's legitimacy is undermined as it fails to address the needs and concerns of the broader citizenry effectively.

**To Explore Strategies for Mitigating the Influence of Corruption on the Democratic Election Process**

The analysis reveals the imperative for comprehensive strategies to mitigate the influence of corruption on the democratic election process. Strengthening electoral oversight emerges as a critical strategy to curb corruption, ensuring that electoral regulations are enforced rigorously and transparently. Implementing anti-corruption measures that target the financing of campaigns and impose strict penalties for illicit behavior is also essential. Furthermore, promoting civic education initiatives can empower citizens with the knowledge and tools to resist corrupt influences and hold elected officials accountable (Elbahnasawy & Revier, 2012).

**4. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings, recommendations are proposed to enhance electoral integrity and strengthen democratic practices in the Somali parliamentary elections. These recommendations include: a) Establishing an independent electoral oversight body with the authority to investigate and address allegations of corruption; b) Enforcing stringent regulations on campaign financing to curb the influence of money in politics; c) Implementing voter education programs to inform citizens about their rights and responsibilities in the electoral process; d) Fostering a culture of transparency through the publication of candidate and party financial disclosures.

Some additional recommendations for addressing the problem of Corruption in Somali elections:

- Pass strong anti-corruption laws: Governments can enforce anti-corruption solid laws vigorously. This includes holding public officials accountable for their actions.
- Promote transparency and accountability: Governments can be more transparent and accountable to their citizens. This includes making public information about government spending and decision-making.
- Encourage civic engagement: Citizens can be more engaged in politics. This includes voting, participating in protests, and holding their elected officials accountable.
- Address the root causes of Corruption: Corruption is often rooted in poverty, inequality, and weak institutions. Governments can address these underlying problems to reduce corruption.

In conclusion, this critical examination illuminates the intricate ways corruption affects the democratic election process of the Somalian Parliament. From distorting electoral dynamics to eroding public trust and compromising representation, corruption poses formidable challenges to the integrity and vitality of the democratic system. However, the findings also underscore the potential for targeted reforms and proactive measures to counter corruption's influence and pave the way for a more robust, transparent, and inclusive democratic process in Somalia.

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