

The Effect of Electoral Systems on Fluid Party System in sub-Saharan Africa

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Received: 17 May 2022; Revised: 18 September 2022; Accepted: 19 September 2022

Abstract

The article, based on a literature review, examines the impact of electoral systems on the fluidity party system in sub-Saharan Africa. Most authors identify institutional and social factors influencing the change in party systems. At the same time, they use the indices Laakso and Taagepera and Rae to operationalize variable parties. However, there is a lack of research in the literature on electoral systems regarding its impact on stability or change of interparty competition patterns. This is due to, firstly, the relative novelty of the recently developed index of fluidity, and secondly, the desire of scholars to use already widely tested, established measures of measurement. We believe that, in contrast to previous studies, where the unit of analysis is the party and not the party system. The Index of Fluidity will allow us to predict how majoritarian or proportional systems and WGI scores will affect the structure or fluidity of party systems in 49 sub-Saharan African countries. The results of study indicate that the changes taking place in electoral systems have significantly affected the fluidity of party systems. The results of the study indicate that measures of WGI and ethnicity negatively affected fluidity of party systems in 49 sub-Saharan African countries. This suggests that the more unstable the party system, the more ineffective the government becomes. Whereas the results of the main hypothesis indicate a statistically significant effect of changing electoral systems on the fluidity of party systems. In other words, the more often political reforms are carried out in the electoral sphere, the higher the indicators of instability of party system, which, according to the typology of party system of Sartori, will change either radically from one-party to polarized pluralism or atomised party system or slightly from one-party to hegemonistic or predominant.

Keywords: Index of Fluidity; Electoral Systems; Sartori's Typology of Party Systems; Duverger's Law

How to Cite: Bekenova, A. (2022). The Effect of Electoral Systems on Fluid Party System in sub-Saharan Africa. *Otoritas : Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan*, 12(2), 95-107.

Permalink/DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26618/ojip.v12i2.7723>

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INTRODUCTION

The issues of the electoral system and the party system have been given much attention, exploring them in different contextual and theoretical frameworks. The principal scholars are distinguished by party system, Sartori (2005), Pasquino (2005), Lipset & Rokkan (1967), Bogaards (2008), Kuenzi & Lambright (2001), Erdmann & Basedau (2008), Mozaffar & Scarritt (2005), Nwokora & Pelizzo (2018), and Bértoa & Enyedi (2021) contributed to the consistent development of the classification of party systems, and the development of measures to measure the stability and instability of party systems. At the same time, there was a large amount of literature on the topic of electoral influence on party systems, it was studied either from the perspective of influence of both factors on democratic processes (Hoffman, 2005; Lijphart, 1990, 2017; Stockton, 2001), or from the perspective of studying the advantages or disadvantages the electoral systems themselves (Norris, 1997), and Authoritarian origins of term limit trajectories (Hartmann, 2022). However, in more detail, Duverger undertook to cover the electoral system by dividing it into majoritarian and proportional systems, thus establishing Duverger's law stating that "majority systems will lead to two parties, while proportional representation will affect the establishment of a multiparty system" (Taagepera & Shugart, 1993). As it turned out, this law was popular among scholars who subsequently developed measures to measure the "effective number of parties" (Laakso & Taagepera, 1979; Taagepera & Grofman, 2006; Taagepera & Shugart, 1993).

In subsequent work, Taagepera & Grofman (2006) tried to explain the number of parties, seemingly through two incompatible things. On the one hand, through "institutionalization", i.e., electoral systems, on the other hand through

"ideology", types of cleavages (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967; Sartori, 2005).

Meanwhile, the significance of study of electoral system does not cease to be relevant for the structuring of political power, the appointment of seats in the legislature, the transformation of the forces of parties. The implications of electoral changes are especially significant for reflecting the needs of society, including for reflecting deeply rooted conflicts (Kinyondo & Pelizzo, 2022). Likewise, Mair argued that change in party systems is associated with electoral change if there are shifts from one type of party system to another. But even such changes in the party system are not sufficient unless they include the breadth of ideological polarization (Kinyondo & Pelizzo, 2022).

Considering that majority of literature has focused on different levels of fragmentation in African party systems using the simple tools of measuring the "effective number of parties" of Laakso & Taagepera (1979), and applying the Pederson Volatility Index, which also does not recognize dominant systems. The current study argues for the importance of investigating the impact of electoral systems on the fluidity or stability of party systems in sub-Saharan Africa, and this is especially important in the context of the least developed countries in order to maintain effective legislative oversight and effective government (Aydogan, 2021; Botha, 1996; Mukhtarova, 2020).

The purpose of this study is to test Duverger's law whether majoritarian systems are indeed associated with less turnover, while proportional systems are associated with more party systems.

The objectives of the study include, firstly, a literature review on electoral and party systems. Secondly, to answer the question why the index of fluidity of party system developed by Nwokora & Pelizzo (2018); Pelizzo & Nwokora (2018) is the best tool for measuring changes in party

systems and, finally, to analyze the influence of majoritarian and proportional, i.e., mixed systems on the fluidity of party systems in sub-Saharan Africa.

In addition, a number of hypotheses have been proposed suggesting that, other things being equal, the World Governance Indicators and ethnicity have a negative impact on the fluidity of party systems (instability). Whereas the change in electoral system positively affects the fluidity (instability) of party systems.

The study uses a quantitative analysis method to test the above hypotheses based on data taken from reliable sources and kindly provided by (Nwokora & Pelizzo, 2018).

In addition, a contribution to existing sources on electoral and party systems is the first of its kind to conduct an empirical-theoretical test of Duverger's law with the help of a previously unused index of fluidity party systems. Secondly, the study combines previously unused datasets from IDEA, a manually calculated «ethnicity» and Score of fluidity index in sub-Saharan Africa, thirdly, the valuable insights generated from the analysis results will provide a better understanding of the nature of advantages and disadvantages electoral systems.

The article is divided into the following sections. In first section, literature review of both systems; in second section, consider the cases and consequences of index of fluidity party system. In third section, conduct an empirical analysis of econometric models. Finally, draw conclusions from the study and discuss their limitations.

RESEARCH METHODS

The study applies a quantitative regression analysis method using credible data sources used to develop the Sub-Saharan Africa fluidity index and data collected from IDEA electoral design, as well as WGI scores and ethnicity. The data are 49 observation countries, starting from

the first days of elections.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Electoral and Party System

Classical institutional theory says that the electoral system determines what the party system of countries will depend on. Meanwhile, there are different views regarding changes in party systems. Erdmann & Basedau (2008), believe that “non-proportional electoral systems contribute to the dominance of single party”, Giannetti & Laver (2001) argue that with the reform of the electoral system, i.e. with introduction of single-member majoritarian elections with 75% of seats and proportional representation with the remaining 25% of the seats in the different chambers of Italy gave rise to fragmented party systems. Bochsler (2009) is of similar opinion, arguing that mixed electoral systems impede the stabilization of party systems. While another group of scholars believe that in simple electoral systems there is stability of party systems, low fluidity and low disproportionality (Bakke & Sitter, 2005; Taagepera, 1999). However, illustrative country examples show that India had a multi-party system under FPTP, while South Africa's PR elections favored a strong one-party government (Idea, 2012). These examples point to dubious assumptions regarding Duverger's law, but nevertheless, despite this, the importance of influence of electoral systems on governance issues is clear, regardless of which system the state belongs to, a presidential form of government or a parliamentary one.

Our study concurs with Erdmann & Basedau (2008) in that despite the vast literature on electoral systems, few have conducted empirical-theoretical analyzes to determine the relationship between electoral systems and party systems, especially with regard to the dominant party systems that exist in some Sub-Saharan Africa countries (Pelizzo & Nwokora,

2016). Meanwhile, dominant systems can be used both with Dominant systems characterized by democratic practices, but also with one-party systems combined with authoritarian systems (Erdmann & Basedau, 2008), therefore, in order to eliminate this mixture of systems, we apply a more sensitive measurement developed by (Nwokora & Pelizzo, 2018). Our study shows how the stability or fluidity of party systems is affected by electoral systems, based on the developed typology of Sartori (2005). It is important to note, however, that some changes in the party system are more destabilizing than others, i.e., the transition from a one-party system from extreme concentration of power to dispersed power. Therefore, the importance of using the fluidity index is further enhanced in view of the fact that not all previously used indices can summarize "party size data" (Gaines & Taagepera, 2013). Shugart & Taagepera (2018) were in agreement about the lack of unambiguity in the counts between two-party and multiparty, as a party system may be seen as two-party but may actually have 3 parties.

Unlike Shugart & Taagepera (2018), who first started with fragmentation of seats, which in our opinion is the logical Duverger's law because the relationship between electoral and party systems starts with "number of seats" and then with predicting vote fragmentation, other Neto & Cox (1997), Powell (1982) evaluated the contributions of different factors, i.e. electoral system, which included "strength of electoral system" and dummy variable of presidentialism system, as well as social diversity as independent variables. While other authors conducted a study with a larger sample of countries, including 20 and 23 Western democracies, in the periods from 1945-1985-1990 (Lijphart, 1990), as well as four dependent variables, "the effective number of elected parties", "the effective number of parties in the legislature", "the number of

parties receiving less than 1% of vote" and "the number of parties securing one or more seats in two or more successive elections" (Ordeshook & Shvetsova, 1994).

Thus, the main part of authors studying the relationship between electoral and party systems tended, firstly, to a quantitative analysis of party systems through the "effective number of parties" and "deviations from proportionality", and secondly, their views were focused on the formation of party system by the electoral system through the "size of district". In addition, intuitive conclusions show that a strong electoral system leads to two-party, as well as the presence of fewer cleavages and vice versa for a multiparty system. If the conclusions of above authors concerned only two electoral systems parallel to each other, then Kostadinova (2002), and Bochsler (2009), drew attention to mixed electoral systems, the development of which falls on 90s of the beginning of the 21st century (Blais & Massicotte, 1996; Bochsler, 2009). If in a proportional system, strategies of parties should be radically different from the strategies of competitors so that voters can easily identify them, and votes can easily be transformed into seats. In a majoritarian system, parties must enter into coalitions to obtain a majority of the popular vote and seats.

Author concludes that single-member constituencies will experience low fragmentation, while mixed electoral systems will create moderately fragmented party systems, and proportional systems will have more factional party systems (Kostadinova, 2002). This conclusion is supported by Bochsler (2009), who believes that mixed electoral systems have moderate party systems. Moreover, under mixed systems, party systems are not in the middle ground between proportional and majoritarian systems, which means that the trend towards mixed electoral systems in central and

eastern Europe may be short-lived. Given the unequivocal position of both authors, it can be assumed that the development, but also the change of party systems, depends on the electoral systems established in different countries in different ways, however, the frequent change of electoral system is detrimental to anticipating the electoral rules by the parties. In these studies, the operationalization of variables as “multi-party” was used by Laakso and Taagapera’s effective number of parties, ranging from 1.31 to 10.9.

Causes and Consequences of Index of Fluidity Party System

The reason for appearance of index of fluidity party system is the existence of disagreement between qualitative and quantitative scholars on how to analyze and compare the attributes of party systems. Some scholars considered that qualitative criteria are the most appropriate in the classification of party systems (Bogaards, 2004; Sartori, 2005, 2016), while others used quantitative analysis, namely the metrics of fixing fragmentation (Rae, 1967), polarization and volatility (Dalton, 2008; Pedersen, 1979). Thus, for the last six decades in the theory of party systems, the classification of types of party systems has occupied a central place. As stated above, Sartori’s (1976) typology of party systems is the most significant study, emphasizing the “number of relevant parties,” that is, parties that have coalitional (characterized by the number of seats in parliament that encourages party participation in a government coalition) and blackmailing potential (allowing party blocking coalition formation). More commonly known as the criteria for level of competition in the party system, while another criterion according to Sartori (1976) is based on the level of direction of party competition.

Namely, movement on the scale of ideology to the right-left-center, the so-called centrifugal and centripetal. Mean-

while, Sartori (1976) criticized Duverger (1951) for lacking a theory of political parties. Despite this, Duverger (1951) was one of the first to propose a quantitative classification of party systems. This classification was based on the scale of inter-party competition, where a certain number of parties compete for power. He singled out authoritarian one-party systems and democratic two-party and multi-party systems. However, such a division into authoritarian and democratic systems did not suit Duverger, because he believed that one-party systems could exist in non-authoritarian systems with a democratic ideology. An example is the Turkish one-party Peoples’ Republican Party before World War II, which supported a democratic ideology. Conversely, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, originally created to support the ideology of socialism and communism, later turned into the power of usurpers.

Unlike Duverger (1951) and Blondel (1968) applied quantitative-qualitative criteria. The essence of his classification lies not only in the number of competing parties, but also in the indicator “strength of party.” Namely, in the share of votes gained by the parties and the place of party in the party system, they differ in large, more than > 40% of votes in elections, average about 20% of votes, reduced average about 15% of votes, and small <10% of votes. Blondel (1968), based on qualitative criteria, expanded Duverger’s classification by adding two and a half parties and dominant parties. However, these criteria were not without the use of a quantitative criterion. Thus, Sartori (1976), based on the expanded new criteria of Duverger (1951), singled out one-party, two-party and multi-party (pluralistic) systems, where, depending on the ideological distance, he divided into “small-moderate” from 3 to 5 parties and “large-polarized” from 6 to 8 parties, as well as an atomized party system.

However, less and less scholars

Table 1. Fluidity Party System and WGI/Ethnicity
 Source: Processed by the Author (2021)

	Fluidity Index
Voice and Accountability	0.211 (0.15)
Political Stability and Absence of Violence	-1.746 (-1.71)
Government Effectiveness	-7.784* (-2.63)
Regulatory Quality	-0.0848 (-0.04)
Rule of Law	8.304* (2.42)
Control of Corruption	-1.399 (-0.89)
Ethnicity	-0.103 (-0.57)
_cons	3.113** (3.37)
N	49
R2	0.316
t Statistics in Parentheses	
*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001	

Table 2. Mean Fluidity Index and Electoral System Family
 Source: Processed by the Author (2021)

Electoral System Family	(Mean) Fluidity Index Score
Mixed	4.95
No Direct Election	2.20
PR (Proportional)	3.99
Plurality/Majority	4.46
Plurality/Majority/Mixed	9.38
Plurality/Majority/PR	5.73
No Information	0.80

tended to qualitative analysis in the classification of party systems due to the emergence of new measurement tools. These tools were "fragmentation" and "polarization", as Taylor & Herman (1971) state, "the quantitative structure of party system is a determinant of the stability of cabinet", in other words, with an excessively fragmented party system, cabinet instability is expected. These tools, namely Rae's index of party system fragmentation, were used to test MAIN-Waring's (1993) claim that the combination of a multi-party system and a presidential system is unfavorable for the stability of democracy.

Whereas Tsebelis (1999) used quantitative measures to test the claim that the number of veto players, i.e. the number of parties in government and the separation of party ideologies from each other, reduces government and parliamentary ability to pass effective laws. Meanwhile, similarly to Mainwaring (1993), Kinyondo & Pelizzo (2022) explained by means of

fragmentation index and the effective number of parties why reducing the fragmentation party system is important for the stabilization of constitutional order and divided the levels of fragmentation party system into parliamentary and presidential elections (Kinyondo & Pelizzo, 2022).

The above shows that quantitative indicators can analyze party systems in detail and these tools can improve the classification than typologies based on qualitative characteristics. However, advocates of qualitative measures (Bogaards, 2004; Ware, 2009), argue that quantitative indicators, as well as analysis based on the party count method, cannot capture the emergence of dominant parties in African countries. Instead, the counting rule by Sartori is considered a useful tool for drawing conclusions about the classification of party systems (Bogaards, 2004).

It follows from this that the debate between quantitative and qualitative sup-

Table 3. Fluidity Party System and Electoral System
 Source: Processed by the Author (2021)

	Fluidity Index
dum_electoralsystem3	0.219
dum_electoralsystem4	0.684 (0.36)
dum_electoralsystem5	5.602*
dum_electoralsystem6	1.959
dum_electoralsystem7	-2.973
_cons	3.773**
N	49
R2	0.135
t statistics in parentheses	

porters is considered fertile ground for the development of fluidity party system index, and that this index developed by Nwokora & Pelizzo (2018) allows you to calculate the frequency of change, scope of change and variety on three indicators at once, which together gives a general idea of the fluidity party system.

It is also clear that index is not often used in the analysis of party systems, due to its relative newness, in contrast to Rae fragmentation index or “effective party number” index (Laakso & Taagepera, 1979), which calculate the weighted average number of political parties based on % of votes or seats cast. Whether this fact can be considered a disadvantage if not an advantage remains obvious, since index of fluidity includes both fragmentation and polarization, as well as power alternation, which allows analysts to detect whether models of inter-party competition are fluid or structured.

Actually, from a literature review on electoral systems and party systems, as well as the index of fluidity party system, it is noticeable that some scholars studied the causes, while others looked at the consequences of influence using widely used indices, however, this article is aimed at studying the area, these are alternative a measure that has been neglected and which, according to Shugart & Taagepera (2018), has not been as popular, but which requires special attention. Therefore, the next part is aimed at eliminating this shortcoming, where the influence of electoral system on the fluidity or stability of party system will be analyzed. Based on the discussion above, we infer the following hypotheses: Hypothesis -1, World Governance Indicators and ethnicity negatively affect fluidity of party systems (instability). Whereas Hypothesis - 2 states that in those countries where there is a frequent change in the electoral system, it contributes to the high fluidity of party systems.

Research Design

The main model of fluidity of party system includes two main explanations - institutional and social. The above literature review suggests that the more ethnically diverse, the more fluid the party system will be, and therefore, following Lipset & Rokkan (1967) and Neto & Cox (1997), there is a relationship between social cleavages and change of party system. Therefore, we include ethnic diversity in the model. In addition, given the importance of 2012, WGI governance indicators for sub-Saharan Africa highlighted by Mukhtarova (2020), we include them in our regression model.

To test the hypotheses, we used index of fluidity data kindly provided by Nwokora & Pelizzo (2018), the WGI scores for sub-Saharan Africa taken from official data sources, and calculated “ethnicity” variable, which we operationalized based on similar to the calculation made by Kostadinova (2002), which, in turn, is based on data from the Minorities at risk project. In other words, the unit of analysis is the minority group. Meanwhile, it is worth noting that there are several ethnic groups in each country, thus, we first calculated the weighted average for the aggregate level of analysis. For example, in order to receive the final Ethnicity value for Angola, we recognized three ethnic minorities: bakongo - 10.68% of the total population and a concentration index value of 3; ovimbundu - 37.0% and a concentration value of 3, and cabinada - 2.39% of the population with a concentration value of 3. The weighted average is $(0.1068/0.5007) * 3 + (0.37/0.5007) * 3 + (0.00239/0.5007) * 3 = 4.29$. Then 4.29 is minus three ethnic groups, which gives us an effective number of ethnic groups of 1.29, and only then 1.29 is multiplied by 4.29, which equals the value of 5.53.

In addition, we used IDEA data on electoral systems for sub-Saharan Africa between 1992–2022. Electoral system

family is a dummy variable that has 7 values for a mixed system (*dum_electoralsystem1*), for countries that do not have direct election (*dum_electoralsystem2*), proportional representation (*dum_electoralsystem3*), plurality and majority (*dum_electoralsystem4*), for those African countries that switch from plurality and majority to mixed system (*dum_electoralsystem5*), and those who change electoral system from plurality and majority to proportional system (*dum_electoralsystem6*).

The regression model results in Table 1 show a negative correlation between fluidity of party system and WGI indicators as well as ethnicity. However, unlike the earlier study by Mukhtarova (2020), we added the variable “ethnicity”. Significance is observed only in the parameters of government effectiveness and rule of law. This means that in unstable party systems, the effectiveness of government in states is reduced, which in turn undermines the development of democracy (Nwokora & Pelizzo, 2015; Pelizzo & Stapenhurst, 2013).

Next, before testing the second hypothesis, we will analyze the mean values of fluidity index over the categories of electoral system family in Table 2. African countries with a mixed electoral system on average have 4.95 fluidity of party system. Proportional representation system has 3.99 and majoritarian 4.46. Whereas high values of the fluidity index are observed in countries where political reforms took place related to the transition from a majoritarian system to a mixed system, as in Sudan and Zimbabwe, and to a proportional electoral system, as in Togo, which amounted to 9.38 and 5.73, respectively.

The second hypothesis argued that change electoral systems could affect the fluidity of party systems. The results of the regression show a positive correlation between proportional, majoritarian, as

well as transitions from majoritarian to mixed and proportional systems and fluidity party systems (Table 3). This means that the lower change in the family of the electoral system, the lower the fluidity (stability) of party systems. Statistical significance is shown only by the effect of transition from majoritarian to mixed (*dum_electoralsystem5*) on the fluidity of party systems. This is supported by the examples of Sudan, which has a high fluidity index (20) and Mauritania (12.0), which were preceded by frequent changes in the electoral system between 1992 and 2006 (Idea, 2012; Nwokora & Pelizzo, 2015, 2018; Pelizzo & Nwokora, 2016). Thus, the results indicate that the frequent change of electoral systems is an important condition for the fluidity of party systems.

CONCLUSION

Based on literature review between electoral and party systems, an index of fluidity, and an empirical study conducted in sub-Saharan Africa, the aim of this article is to investigate the impact of change electoral systems on fluidity of party system, namely, to test Duverger’s law. However, as the results of study showed, neither one nor the other had a statistically significant effect on fluidity of party systems. On the contrary, how the electoral system changed significantly influenced the transitions from one type of party system to another. An example is Sudan, which in the years of election changed from a two-party system to moderate pluralism, one-party, atomized, hegemonic and finally predominant, and which was characterized by a change from a majoritarian electoral system to a mixed one.

Moreover, stability in inter-party competition patterns observed in Mozambique, Botswana and Tanzania, characterized by stable electoral systems over time. It can be said that parties with enough power to exert pressure will introduce changes to electoral systems, otherwise

there is a possibility that such changes could be promoted by rising opposition parties. In this regard, in predominant, hegemonic and one-party systems, in order to gain the support of the majority of voters, they will retain and choose the rules of restriction based on the requirements of the majority, since it is this type of electoral system that will make such party systems the absolute winners. Or, in predominant and hegemonic party systems other than single-party systems, there may be uncertainty about sufficient electoral support and there may be a risk of votes being split among several smaller parties. Therefore, these party systems will introduce changes to less risky electoral systems with inclusive rules like mixed and proportional systems.

Our analysis showed that by introducing a tool to measure the stability of inter-party competition patterns, and based on it, the researcher can draw conclusions about its relationship with electoral systems, since the index has already been tested in measuring actual election data in Sub-Saharan Africa, and also has information about the autocratic and democratic regimes to which certain types are assigned, which can already give clues to which system, majoritarian or proportional, states will aspire to.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In general, I dedicate this article to all PhD supervisors who open the world of science to young scholars and awaken interest to research. Special thanks to my mentor for encouragement and inspiration to write this article.

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