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Ph.D. Program in International Political Economy



**Political Economic and Social Factors Affecting the Electoral
Behavior of the Palestinian Voter**

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The Political, Economic and Social Factors Affecting the Electoral
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Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is substantially my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the Arab American University or any other institution.

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Dedication

To the memory of my father, whose enduring presence continues to guide and inspire me.
May he rest in eternal peace.

To my mother, whose patience, strength, and unwavering prayers have been the foundation of this journey. This achievement stands as a humble reflection of her sacrifices and unconditional support.

To my family, for their constant encouragement and companionship throughout every stage of this path.

To my teachers and mentors, whose knowledge, guidance, and generosity shaped both this work and my academic growth.

And to those whose quiet support and sincere presence offered strength during the most challenging moments — my deepest gratitude.

This work is dedicated with appreciation to all who believed, supported, and persevered alongside me.

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Hamdi Mohammad Mahmoud Abu Kamel

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the impact of political, economic, and social variables on the electoral behavior of Palestinian voters in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip within the context of occupation, political division, and the disruption of the democratic process during the period 2006–2025. The study adopts a descriptive–analytical approach and employs an online questionnaire as the primary data collection tool, administered to a sample of Palestinian voters. Electoral behavior represents the dependent variable, while political, economic, and social factors constitute the independent variables, alongside demographic variables including age, political affiliation, and place of residence. Statistical analysis was conducted to examine relationships and differences among the variables. The findings indicate that political factors constitute the most influential determinant of Palestinian electoral behavior, surpassing economic and social factors, and that statistically significant relationships exist between the studied variables and voting behavior. The results also reveal significant differences attributable to age and political affiliation, while no statistically significant differences were found with respect to place of residence, suggesting that the general political and economic context outweighs traditional geographical distinctions. Additionally, variations in voting behavior patterns were observed between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, reflecting differences in political environments and experiences. Based on these findings, the study recommends the development of electoral policies that take generational and contextual specificities into account, the enhancement of trust in political and electoral institutions, and the expansion of future research through comparative and longitudinal studies to deepen scholarly understanding of Palestinian electoral behavior within a non-sovereign political reality.

Keywords: Electoral Behavior, Political Participation, Political Variables, Economic Variables, Social Variables.

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Chapter One: Identifying the Problem of the Study

1.1 Introduction

Elections are a key aspect of political participation for modern political regimes. Elections can be seen as the most legitimate channel for expressing popular will, replacing political elites, and ensuring a peaceful transfer of political power. Apart from being a mere formality for appointing representatives, elections have developed as a key manifestation of political consciousness and citizens' political engagement as well as a degree to which a political regime adheres to democratic standards and human rights (Rahal, 2010, p. 17). Within this framework, international and regional institutions have placed greater emphasis on the electoral process as a tool to support political development, in order to consolidate institutions of good governance, in view of their significance in promoting political legitimacy and upholding values of participation and accountability. The experience in Palestine is considered to be a special case, in view of its early attempt to include the electoral process within its national framework of state-building. Such an attempt was in response to the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, which resulted in the passing of the "Presidential and Legislative Elections Law No. (13) of 1995," in addition to the formation of "the Palestinian Central Elections Commission to supervise the electoral process in accordance with principles of integrity and transparency" (Central Elections Commission, 2006). The first general elections in the Palestinian territories took place in 1996, under exceptional political circumstances, including Israeli occupation, sovereignty limitations, and challenges of the transition period. These elections represented a real test of the viability of democracy in an incomplete state. The second legislative elections took place in Palestine in 2006, leading to radical change in the Palestinian political arena, ultimately resulting in Hamas's majority in parliament, along with the division between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Abu Rabi', 2008).

Ever since, the electoral behavior of the Palestinian people has become one of the main areas of academic interest due to the complex politics that underlie this behavior. Palestinian electoral behavior cannot be explained by inter-party competition because it is influenced by an outstanding reality that is characterized by occupation, fragmentation, economic instability, and lack of trust in politics (Masmar, 2017).

Current research suggests that voting patterns among the Palestinians are the result of complex considerations. The most significant of these are factional affiliation, familial and tribal bonds, socioeconomic and educational factors, and territorial considerations, as well as the level of trust in the political system and the sense of political and social justice (Suwaid, 2019; Luay, 2017). There are also arguments made by some researches suggesting that voting among the Palestinians may not represent the democratization process but can represent the national identity or the resistance vote due to division and occupation (Mass, 2020).

This uniqueness in Palestinian election trends is further underscored by the large gaps that exist between the West Bank and Gaza in terms of political and economic circumstances that influence the motivations of voters in the region. As cited in the Central Elections Commission (2022), the dynamics of elections, including voter turnout, differ depending on the region.

Academically, there has been growing interest in the topic of electoral behavior in conflict and transformation environments, such as in the Palestinian context. Some studies have shown that voting behavior in such environments is associated with levels of institutional trust, social pressure, and perceptions of the effectiveness of the political process (Jamal, 2019; Milton Edwards & Farrell, 2020). Other studies have found that lack of trust in the voting process and the need for change in the political process have influenced voting and non-voting behavior in the Palestinian context (Hilal, 2021; Brynen, 2023).

Indeed, the Palestinian experience can be said to be exceptional in the sense that the electoral behavior in the country can be attributed to the combination of national and political elements. The vote in this particular context goes beyond the assessment of electoral programs and the performance of the candidates but also involves the stance in matters of national liberation and the construction of the Palestinian identity and the Palestinian State (Milton-Edwards, 2021).

With the political developments that have marked the Palestinian arena since 2021, starting from the postponement of the general elections and up to the ongoing debate regarding the future of the democratic process in the Palestinian arena, a relevant and compelling academic imperative has arisen to re-examine the Palestinian voter behavior in relation to these developments. The aim of the study is to clarify the political, economic, and social factors that interact within the Palestinian voter consciousness within the time framework of 2006 to 2025.

The knowledge gap is filled by this study as it explores Palestinian electoral behavior in a wide framework including political, social, and economic factors, and focuses on geographic and demographic factors in particular. The aim of this study is to gain an exact and scientific knowledge about electoral participation in Palestine.

1.2 Problem of the Study

The act of electoral participation is considered a key indicator of the effectiveness of a political system and political engagement by its citizens. However, electoral participation does not have a standard form and standard motives for all instances. Electoral participation is rather contingent upon the political and economic environment within which a person finds himself or herself. The aforementioned problem is further complicated by a unique political scenario that Palestine finds itself within, with Israeli occupation and a lack of economic and political stability.

In spite of this, and in spite of the Palestinian legislative and presidential elections held in 1996 and 2006, and in spite of the great political and societal shifts that accompanied these elections, Palestinian electoral politics continue to be conditioned by factors that go beyond traditional democratic frameworks. Such factors include factional affiliations, kinship/tribal affiliations, economic pressures, as well as national issues related to Palestinian identity and occupation. It is these factors combined which produce a variety of electoral practices in voting as well as abstaining.

Variations that have been discovered in previous research and reports regarding voting behavior within the Palestinian framework include incentives and voting behavior itself. Nevertheless, it is apparent that previous research and studies have covered the phenomenon in a partial way or have concentrated on a specific point, without having a complete analysis that encompasses various components within a specific framework. This is especially relevant, considering that there have been changes within the Palestinian framework since 2006, and further changes that led to the postponement of elections in 2021.

Therefore, the problem addressed by this study lies in the lack of a comprehensive analytical understanding of the nature of Palestinian voter behavior and how political, social, and economic factors interact to shape this behavior within a timeframe extending from 2006 to 2025, while taking into account the geographical and demographic differences between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Based on this, this study seeks to address this problem through a specific and systematic analysis of the impact of these factors combined, which contributes to bridging a knowledge gap in Palestinian and Arab literature on electoral behavior in unstable political environments, and provides a more accurate explanation of the particularity of the Palestinian electoral experience.

1.3 Questions of the Study

The problem of the study is represented in the following major questions:

What is the impact of political, economic and social factors on shaping the electoral behavior of the Palestinian voter in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip during the period (2006–2025)?

The major question has the following Sub-questions:

1. What is the nature of the impact of political factors, particularly the Israeli occupation, the performance of the Palestinian Authority, and the political division, on the electoral behavior of the Palestinian voter?
2. To what extent do socioeconomic factors, such as family and tribal affiliation, educational level, and economic status, influence the voting choices of the Palestinian voter?
3. Are there statistically significant differences in the impact of political, social, and economic factors on electoral behavior attributable to demographic variables (gender, age, educational level, place of residence, and political affiliation)?
4. What are the similarities and differences in electoral behavior patterns between voters in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, given the different political and social contexts?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The following study has many objectives. However, the main goal of this study is Analyzing the impact of political, social and economic factors on shaping the electoral behavior of the Palestinian voter, in the context of occupation and political division, during the period from 2006 to 2025. The most important of them are:

1. To identify the most prominent political factors influencing the electoral behavior of Palestinian voters, with a focus on the Israeli occupation, the performance of the Palestinian Authority, and internal divisions.

2. To examine the impact of socioeconomic variables such as family or tribal background, level of education attained, and living standards on voting choices.
3. To analyze differences in voting behavior due to demographic differences among voters such as gender, age, educational attainment, geographic area of residency, and political ideology.
4. In order to compare voting behavior trends in the West Bank and Gaza, as an example of how different settings impact voter mentality.
5. To add to the construction of an analytical framework that can improve the understanding of the unique features of the election patterns among the Palestinians in the unconventional political environment.

1.5 Importance of the Study

This study holds importance because it looks into one of the most crucial questions present within the Palestinian political arena: determining what contributes to the electoral behavior of Palestinian voters within a political, social, and economic framework that is inherently complex. This study holds importance not only because it aims to point to the significance of electoral politics within a framework of democracy but also because it looks into the underlying reasons for electoral politics due to the changing consciousness of Palestinian voters. The importance of the study is realized in the following two aspects:

1.5.1 Scientific Importance (Theoretical)

The scientific importance of the present study lies in its role in the development of theoretical understanding of voting behavior in an unstable political setting, with special attention paid to the specific Palestinian situation that emerges as a result of occupation and partial sovereignty. Unlike most theoretical frameworks that have been developed in stable Western democracies (Downs, 1957; Campbell et al., 1960; Lazarsfeld et al., 1944), this study contributes to testing the applicability and limits of these classical theories in a non-sovereign context. It also engages with emerging literature on electoral behavior in conflict zones (Collier & Vicente, 2014; Blattman, 2009), offering a critical examination of how concepts such as "rational choice" and "social affiliation" must be reconceptualized under conditions of occupation and political fragmentation. The importance is achieved through the following points:

1. Filling a knowledge gap in Palestinian and Arab literature: The research presented here is a response to the need for a comprehensive analysis of the Palestinian elections that take into consideration the multidimensionality of the subject matter.
2. Building a framework of interpretation adapted to the Palestinian reality: This work helps to reinvest theoretical approaches to voting behavior into the specificities of Palestinian reality, rather than relying only on Western approaches, which do not address the reality of occupation and division.
3. Enhancing the theoretical comprehension of the interrelation between the identity of the nation and the voting behavior of its citizens: This research work helps to clarify that the act of voting in the Palestinian case involves not only a political act but a form of identity, belongingness, and conflict views as well.
4. Adding value to the literature on the subject of election behavior: This research provides the means for a comparison between the case of the Palestinians and the case of states that are under similar political and economic conditions.
5. Providing a Scientific Basis for Future Research: This research paper provides a theoretical foundation for scientists studying the issues of electoral behavior, political participation, and democracy in transition countries.

1.5.2 The Scientific Importance (Practical)

The relevance of this study lies in its nature as a field study and the possible implications of its findings in the development of electoral and institutional policies in Palestine. This relevance is ensured by the following considerations:

1. Aiding decision-making and official bodies: The research provides scientific markers that help the Central Elections Commission and other government bodies identify the reasons behind the voters' choices, hence optimizing the design of the electoral process.
2. Strengthening Civil Society Organizations: The research helps improve the capacity of civil society organizations and institutions for civic education to develop and implement more effective programs based on a better understanding of factors influencing voting behavior, especially among young voters.
3. Electoral and Media Discourse Building: The results of this study can serve as a basis for building a rational electoral discourse for political parties and media outlets in order to counteract extreme polarization and mobilization rhetoric.

4. Adding Value to the Analysis and Projection of Future Electoral Tendencies: The variables considered in the paper offer the opportunity to carry out analyses that could help to reveal future trends in elections and rates of election boycotting in Palestinian elections.
5. Maintaining and enhancing political stability and trust: A better understanding of the determinants of voting behavior enables the formulation of policies that better correspond with people's expectations and thus improve trust in the political system and reduce tensions in society.

1.6 Study Limitations and Restrictions

This study has been prone to a number of limitations and constraints in light of the topic and nature of the research. These limitations and constraints are explained in the light of the study and the implications of the results in the scientific framework. The limitations and constraints can be explained as follows:

First: Study Limitations

1. **Thematic Limitations:** The thematic limitations of this study relate to the focus on Palestinian election patterns, which will be investigated using a predetermined list of themes, identified below:

- Political factors: such as Israeli occupation, performance of the Palestinian Authority, political division, political culture, political awareness, and electoral campaigns.
- Socioeconomic factors: Such as family/tribal affiliation, education, poverty, unemployment, employment type, and income levels.

The study does not consider other variables, for instance, the deep-seated psychological factors of individuals or media analysis, except where they influence the whole analytical framework.

2. **Human Limitations:** The study will only focus on the sample of qualified voting Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This sample will come from the electronic survey conducted in order to ensure representation in terms of demographics such as gender, age, level of education, and political affiliation.

3. **Spatial Limitations:** This is because this study is being conducted in the Palestinian territories (the West Bank and Gaza), without including those in the 1948 occupied territories or those in the diaspora, due to different legal and political considerations.

4. Temporal Limitations: The study covers the period from 2006 to 2025, a pivotal period that witnessed:

- The last Palestinian legislative elections.
- The internal political division.
- The stalled electoral process and the postponement of elections beyond 2021.

The reason for choosing this period is its relevance to the subject matter of the research. It aims to reflect the changes that have occurred in the Palestinian election behavior. The research instrument was applied during the academic year of 2024-2025.

Second: Study Restrictions

In relation to the limitations already mentioned, there are other methodological constraints that should also be taken into consideration for purposes of interpreting this study's results:

- 1. Political Environment:** The political setting in the Palestinian Territories, particularly due to occupation and division, has influenced the practicality of having elections on a regular basis. The challenge to the validity of elections has led to an emphasis on trends, attitudes, and perceptions related to elections.
- 2. Data Collection:** The use of an electronic questionnaire may lead to:
 - Underrepresentation of some groups with lower technology usage.
 - The potential for bias in responses due to the sensitivity of the political topic.
- 3. Political Disclosure:** Some participants might feel apprehensive about expressing their political beliefs freely because of censorship or future implications. Such apprehensiveness might impair the integrity of some of the responses, despite the guarantee of privacy and confidentiality.
- 4. Methodological and Analytical Limitations:** This study focuses on the correlation and explanatory relationships existing between the variables and does not aim to determine the definite causal links because of the complex political, social, and economic Palestinian circumstances.
- 5. Generalization:** The results will be interpreted within the context of the population that has been sampled, as well as the specific spatial and temporal context that has been defined for this study. As Babbie (2020) emphasizes, generalization in social research is always limited by the characteristics of the sample and the specific context of data collection. Therefore, any projection that goes beyond the Palestinian context

or beyond the time span that has been defined should be treated with scientific circumspection.

1.7 Conceptual and Operational Definitions

The definitions and terms of the study are specified in the following:

1-Behavior: A physical, mental, social, or an emotional action that is released by a living thing or organism due to the dynamic relation and the interaction with the surrounding environment (Abo Jado, 2008,429).

The researcher defines it as: All practices released by the individual that can be noticed and measured such as the movements, or actions that cannot be noticed such as mental operations, psychological and social emotions or excitements.

2.Election

It is an expression issued or expressed by citizens about what they expect from the political system that is expected to meet their expectations and hopes through decisions applied on the governed subjects and causing reactions embodied in new expectations (Denis, 2010).

The researcher defines it as the choice of the individual of a candidate or a list of candidates that will represent him her in the ballot box in the election process.

3- Electoral Behavior

It is the process of voting and the different attitudes that accompany it. It a means to approve consensus opinion and to preserve it in democratic societies (Abdl-Kafi,2006, p.243).

Shlager defines it as a unit of consequent and directed behavior towards achieving a specific objective and ends up in an integrated way for the benefit of a party or a candidate (Shlager,2006,126). The researcher defines it as: All forms of behavior, actions and decisions taken by the voter in a specific electoral occasion, and which is a result of the effect of the political, economic and social factors that determine his attitude in choosing names on election lists.

4-Political Factors

These are a group of factors (political culture, political education, electoral campaign), including also the effect of the Israeli occupation policies of political features which interfere in deciding and formulating the electoral behavior and influencing it. This

conceptualization draws on the framework developed by Almond and Verba (1963) regarding political culture and political socialization.

5-Social and Economic Factors

These are factors decided by tribal intimacy, illiteracy, poverty, ratio of unemployment, the labor sector and daily wages. They all have a social and economic feature that influence the formation of electoral behavior and affect it as well. This understanding is consistent with the sociological approach to electoral behavior (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944) and economic voting theory (Powell & Whitten, 1993).

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework and Previous Studies

2.1 Introduction

Electoral behavior is a central concept in contemporary political science (Dalton, 2018), given its direct connection to understanding patterns of political participation, levels of legitimacy, and the nature of the relationship between citizens and the political system. It is more than just a reflection of individual opinions at a given time; it is the sum of the results of socialization, systems of beliefs, and economic currents reflected in mass media. Therefore, understanding the factors influencing electoral behavior is a fundamental step in analyzing democratic systems and assessing the dynamics of political participation in different societies (Kolachay et al., 2023). In this context, while all electoral democracies worldwide are structured around elections, the rules governing elections vary considerably from country to country. These electoral rules, such as mandatory voting or the electoral system employed, are believed to significantly influence voter behavior and choices. If electoral rules do indeed shape citizens' electoral behavior, then the theories explaining voter choices also differ from country to country (Dassonville et al., 2017). The growing interest in issue voting, which was part of a broader wave of revision in voting research in the late 1960s and 1970s, was also based on a distinctly different source of intellectual turmoil, the emerging rational choice model, which applied the utility maximization hypothesis developed in economics to political decision making (Bartels, 2008, p16). Currently, based on an analysis of voting behavior or the factors influencing voters, voter behavior can be divided into three groups: Socio demographic factors or socioeconomic status (deterministic factors) and Psychological factors and. Economic models or conscious rational theories (Bhothisawang, 2018)

2.1 Concept of Electoral Behavior

Electoral behavior is a central concept in contemporary political science, given its direct connection to understanding patterns of political participation, levels of legitimacy, and the nature of the relationship between citizens and the political system. This phenomenon goes further than the mere act of voting in a technical way and refers instead to a series of more complex attitudes, perceptions, and positions that people adopt in relation to the

electoral process itself, the institutions that oversee it, and the political actors involved in it, including the decision of whether or not to take part in it, abstain from it, or make a protest vote (Dalton, 2018). The interest in electoral behavior has traditionally developed in tandem with the establishment of modern democracy in general, in which the practice of voting has been considered the most apparent manifestation of citizens' entry into politics in general (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944). However, this very limited conception of electoral behavior quickly expanded in scope in order to include a behavioral-analytical approach in which the practice of voting is considered the product of a very complex interaction of psychological, social, economic, and political variables (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944; Campbell et al., 1960). The existing comparative literature reveals that electoral behavior is very heavily determined by the nature of the political context in which it takes place (Bratton et al., 2012). In other words, in consolidated systems, electoral behavior is often considered in relation to political platforms and governmental performance in particular, whereas in situations of transition or in non-sovereign systems in general, electoral behavior takes on a symbolically charged significance that goes far beyond the mere functional rationale (Bratton et al., 2012). This makes the study of electoral behavior in the Palestinian context analytically distinctive in relation to the realities of occupation, limited sovereignty, division, and weak institutionalization in particular.

In this context, the Palestinian electoral behavior cannot be explained in a vacuum, away from the experience of the Palestinian political community, in which elections often represent the vehicle for the expression of national stands, the mechanism for the reproduction of legitimacy, or even the form of tacit political protest (Hilal, 2009). Furthermore, the limited capability of the elected bodies to bring about effective changes, determined by the imposed structural constraints, significantly affects the citizens' attitude towards the importance of participating in elections. Recent studies have confirmed that electoral behavior represents an important indicator for the degrees of political trust, political integration, and satisfaction with the performance (Norris, 2011). Therefore, the examination of the Palestinian electoral behavior aims not only to explain the voting behavior but also to achieve a better understanding of the relationship between the Palestinian citizens and the political system in the context of the transitional reality and the incomplete sovereignty.

This paper uses an analytical framework that conceives of electoral conduct as a complex phenomenon, shaped at the nexus of political, social, and economic variables, and

affected by the level of political trust, the context of governance, and the constraints that affect the Palestinian political process.

2.1.1 The Concept of Behavior

Behavior in the social sciences is described as the sum of actions and responses, both manifest and latent, exhibited by an individual as a result of interactions within the surrounding environment in a specific temporal and spatial framework (Abu Asaad, 2011). Behavior is seen not merely as a reaction to a particular stimulus, but as a result of a value system, a motivational pattern, a socialization process, and past experiences.

The modern behavioral approach asserts that any attempt to clarify a given human behavior should focus on a given dynamic between a person as a cognitive and psychological agent and his/her given social and political context (Mustafa, 2011). The approach appears to have a significant bearing within a political context where behavior is viewed as a given individual's understanding of his/her role within a given political system and his/her sense of efficacy and ability to make a difference (Dalton, 2016). Thus, electoral behavior should not be viewed as a lone act by a given individual but within a given context of various social and political factors that determine a given consciousness of a citizen and determine a given range of action (Dalton, 2016).

In the Palestinian situation, behavior takes on a complex form in the sense that the Palestinian as a character is produced in a unique political environment characterized by occupation, factionalism, and the lack of institutional frameworks. This environment brings about a transformation in the patterns of behavior in the sense that some acts, such as voting and boycotting, take on a political and symbolic meaning that goes beyond the mere procedure (Jamal, 2019). Therefore, this research will utilize the procedural understanding of electoral behavior in the sense that it will be defined as the result of the interaction between the individual and the political and economic environment in which they find themselves.

2.1.2 Political Behavior and Political Trust

Political behavior represents the wide range of interactions that exist between citizens, social groups, and the political system, and these include participation, compliance, protests, and withdrawal (Al-Ezzi, 1992). Electoral behavior is considered to be the most

noticeable form of political behavior because of its direct implications for the government's legitimacy and the process of power transition. Based on the above framework, political trust is identified as a key explanatory factor in the study of electoral behavior, specifically in societies that are faced with institutional weakness and a governance crisis. The definition of political trust is the degree to which citizens trust the integrity and efficiency of the political institutions and the responsiveness of these institutions to the citizens' demands and expectations (Easton, 1975; Norris, 2011). The existing body of research has indicated that a lack of political trust is a factor that leads to a decrease in electoral participation, as well as the development of a pattern of either protest behavior or punitive voting (Hetherington, 2005). In the case of transitional democracies, electoral abstinence does not necessarily imply a lack of political enthusiasm but rather a deliberate and critical attitude towards the existing political order (Schedler, 2006).

2.1.3 Concepts Related to Electoral Behavior in Non-Sovereign Contexts

Electoral behavior is a phenomenon that links to a number of conceptual frameworks attempting to explain its features, namely abstention, protest voting, and political alienation. The latter concepts are of heightened importance in the context of transitional and non-sovereign environments, in which the ability of the electoral process to cause institutional change is diminished (Bruter & Harrison, 2020). Abstention is a type of electoral behavior that may indicate a critical attitude towards the electoral process and the conditions set by the latter, specifically in instances where the electoral process is associated with a lack of trust in the institutions and a failure to provide equal opportunities (Abd Al-Hayali, 2021). By contrast, political alienation is the subjective feeling of powerlessness and marginalization, a phenomenon that tends to escalate in a political stalemate and a condition of reduced levels of political participation (Seeman, 1997). In the Palestinian case, these concepts are intertwined in a non-sovereign political condition in which the electoral process is exercised within a set of international constraints and local divisions, creating a complex pattern of electoral behavior that may vary from a symbolic to a protest-based abstention (Hilal, 2009; Central Elections Commission, 2022). Schedler (2006) explains this pattern of abstention in transitional systems not as passive behavior, but as a conscious act expressing rejection of the ruling elite or loss of faith in the efficacy of the electoral process. Norris (2011) also emphasizes

that declining trust in political institutions leads to the emergence of the "critical citizen" who may abstain from voting as a form of political protest. Therefore, this study seeks to employ these concepts within an analytical framework that links electoral behavior, political trust, and the Palestinian structural context, serving the research objectives and helping to explain the differences in voting patterns between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

2.1.4 Historical Development of Elections in Palestine

The election process has greatly developed since it starts up to now. election has become the most prominent feature of the democratic process and one of the human rights. This is because it ensures the peaceful transfer of the political authority, rights and freedoms, and grants citizens the chance to make decisions through choosing their representatives, and having the right of questioning and holding them accountable according to correct legal principles.

The election procession in Palestine is a very complicated issue compared to other countries of the world. This is due to historical, political, and social factors that prevail in the region (Central Elections Commission, 2022).

It was in the Ottoman Empire when the Palestinians first ran their electoral experiments; They voted to choose their representatives of the governorate of Jerusalem in the Ottoman Parliament in 1908 (Kayali, 1995). The parliamentary elections continued till the British forces entered Palestine and the withdrawal of the Ottomans. The British authorities tried to form a legislative council in Palestine in 1922, which gave the Palestinians the hope to win a greater number of elected representatives. Although they formed the majority, Britain announced the ratio of seats of the Arabs of Palestine is only 43% of the council. This led Palestinians, Christians and Muslims, to boycott it. As a result, the elections failed and the high commissioner canceled it (Palestine Legislative Council, 2006).

Following the Israeli occupation's control of both the Gaza Strip and West Bank in 1967, there have been two municipal elections conducted during military occupation. These included the first election, which was held in 1972 through Military Order No. 454, written and signed by the Israeli military official for affairs inside the West Bank in 1971. Military Order No. 454 required that municipal elections be held no later than April 1972 for the Jenin, Tulkarm, and Qalqilya, as well as the city of Jericho (Al-Karmi, 2021). turn-

out was about 85% of all eligible voters, and this election yielded a victory for the Traditional Palestinian Elite, who won because of their superior connections and resources (As carceral states, such as Israel, wield significant influence, its occupation authorities considered this election a success (Bader, 2022).

Municipal elections took place for the second time in 1976. By this means, the Israeli occupation attempted to weaken the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) by creating a kind of collaborator faction loyal to the military occupation, thereby facilitating easier administration of the West Bank. Moreover, these elections aimed at demonstrating that this occupation is a democratic model on the international scene, while keeping its grip on population control and refraining from being deeply entangled in any secret political activities. Consequently, these elections took place only within the West Bank, while, on the other hand, mayors of municipalities in the Gaza Strip directly took orders from the military authorities (Badr, 2022). Nevertheless, this attempt was met with some candidates belonging to the PLO, running within these elections and adopting political platforms that aimed at generating a Palestinian state and supporting the PLO, resulting finally in their success and election victories. But after this failure of establishment through elections, Israeli occupation authorities developed a differently managed local governance called “Village Leagues” in 1978 as an alternative system of governance, but these leagues received strong opposition and dislike from Palestinians, who considered them as a means of occupation, as they duly reacted accordingly.

The occupation is used for observation and control. Despite that, the Israeli authorities were able to establish these leagues through cooperation with some individuals and pressuring the heads of villages in various cities of the West Bank. The presence of these leagues evoked tribal strife between cities and villages, and increased violence and oppression against Palestinians, especially after arming the heads of these leagues (Palestine Encyclopedia, 2014).

Later in 1993, Yasser Arafat, representative of the O.L.O., signed the Oslo Accords with the Israeli government, which arranged for self-determination. Article (3) of the Accord designated that: in order for the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip be able to rule itself according to democratic principles, general direct and free elections will be held to the council under an agreed supervision and interaction observation the Palestinian police have to keep the general system (Palestine News and Information Agency, 2021). As a result, and after establishing the Palestinian National Authority, the first general elections were held in Palestine in 1996. The presidential and legislative

elections have been held twice in that time. Moreover, elections of local bodies have been held almost regularly since 2004.

2.1.5 Trends and Analytical Models of Electoral Behavior

Studies of electoral behavior have witnessed significant theoretical development, resulting in a range of analytical approaches and models that seek to explain how voters' decisions are formed and their motivations for participating or abstaining from voting. These models vary according to their theoretical foundations and the political contexts in which they arose, and can be broadly classified into three main approaches: the rational choice model, the sociological model, and the ecological model. Even so, while these theories have some level of explanatory power, their validity depends on the level of political and social stability in which they are being used, and thus demand some level of critical interpretation, especially in politically volatile environments such as in the Palestinian context. The rational choice model is based on the assumption that the voter is a rational agent who seeks to maximize their expected benefit from the electoral process by weighing potential costs and gains and evaluating the performance of parties or candidates and their political and economic programs (Downs, 1957). According to this model, voting is viewed as a strategic decision subject to clear calculations of self-interest. This trend was later developed through the “vote counting” model, which added non-material dimensions such as a sense of civic duty or the psychological satisfaction derived from political participation to explain why individuals vote despite the limited impact of a single vote (Riker & Ordeshook, 1968).

However, applying the rational model in politically unstable contexts faces clear explanatory limitations. In the Palestinian case, elections are not conducted within a fully sovereign system, and their results do not always lead to an actual transfer of power or a direct improvement in economic and social conditions. Thus, the assumption of the pure utilitarian rationality does not suffice to explain the electoral behavior of the Palestinian voter, who is often led by symbolic and national motivations, as well as by the orientations of protest in reaction to the distrust of political institutions and the postponement of the elections (Norris, 2011; Brown, 2010). By contrast, the sociological school, also known as the Columbia School, assumes that the electoral behavior of the voter is determined by the social structures to which the voter belongs, namely the family, the clan, and the class or the political party (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944). The Michigan School further developed

this trend by emphasizing the importance of psychological dispositions and pre-electoral affiliations in the decision of the voter (Campbell et al., 1960).

This approach is considered one of the most relevant in understanding electoral conduct in the Palestinian society, where tribal affiliations and factional loyalties continue to have a major influence on the mobilization of voters and electoral conduct (Shikaki, 2006; Hilal, 2006). However, this approach may overlook changes in patterns of political participation, including the rising importance of youth participation, the role of social media, as well as rising instances of protest voting or political boycotts (Dalton, 2017). The ecological approach concentrates on the role of geographical features in determining electoral conduct. This approach argues that electoral conduct is conditioned by the environment in which an individual is situated. This environment is seen to include the level of economic development in the area, the social relations in the area, as well as historical relations of power in the area. The literature indicates this approach is very relevant in understanding variations in electoral conduct in different regions of the same country (Franklin, 2004). This approach is also very relevant in the context of the Palestinian society due to the major disparities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in terms of economic development as well as the different political histories of these regions in relation to political power (Roy, 2007).

Recent studies on elections in conflict-ridden and violence-torn regions show that electoral conduct cannot be separated from security and political aspects. Elections can be tools of conflict resolution or symbolic expressions of political stance, rather than the usual democratic means of transferring power (Dunning, 2011; Höglund, 2009). In the case of Palestine, the factors of occupation, fragmentation, and political legitimacy are intertwined with the phenomenon of electoral conduct in a manner which demands their integration into any framework of explanation of said conduct. Therefore, it is clear that none of the aforementioned analytical models can, on its own, provide a comprehensive explanation of Palestinian electoral behavior. The complexity of the political and social context requires an integrated analytical approach that combines rational, sociological, and environmental dimensions, while taking into account the specificities of the Palestinian context, characterized by occupation, political division, and weak institutional stability. Accordingly, this study adopts a composite interpretive framework that views Palestinian electoral behavior as a product of the interaction of political, economic, and social factors, which justifies the choice of the study variables and its analytical tools in the following chapters.

The analysis of electoral behavior has developed over the years with the emergence of different theoretical ideas that try to explain the process of how and why electorates are voting in particular ways. To start with, the analysis was dominated by the different psychological ideas, which looked into the structural makeup of the person, both collectively and individually, with particular focus on the emotional side of electorates' voting behavior. The main thrust of these ideas is that the process of electorates taking part in the electoral process is the result of their own collective human makeup, influenced by the process of extended socialization, with particular focus on the structural makeup of the different political parties, according to Abbassi, "the vote is the result of the voter's own emotional response" (Abbassi, 2007). The different notions on the phenomenon of electoral behavior also developed, with some ideas emphasizing the geographical aspects surrounding the electorates, particularly the different regional aspects that have the potential to influence the electorates' voting behavior, according to Marshall, "voters' choices are often conditioned by the surrounding environment, characterized by regional aspects" (Marshall, p695). All these ideas developed on the phenomenon of electoral behavior lay the groundwork for current ideas, with three major approaches having emerged, these ideas being the strategic or rational choice, ecological, and the sociological approaches, with each of these ideas mostly working on the strategic or cognitive aspects surrounding the electorates' behavior in the electoral process, with the rational choice model, based on the economic model developed by Downs, "the voter is seen as the rational man seeking the maximization of his or her own gain," with particular focus on the potential risks involved in the electoral process itself, according to Saleh, "the Downs' economic theory perceives the voter's rationality" (Saleh, 2005, p75).

Explanatory models of electoral behavior are a cornerstone of comparative political science, seeking to answer the fundamental question of how voters make their political decisions and why they choose to participate, abstain, or vote for a particular candidate or party list. These theories have developed in stable democratic settings, such as Western Europe and the United States, leaving room for questioning their viability or transferability to situations of instability or non-sovereignty, such as in the case of Palestine. Of all these theories, the rational choice theory is unique in being one of the most prominent in explaining electoral conduct, along with the voting theory and environmental/social theories. However, the validity of all these theories is to be considered neither theoretical axioms nor subject to scrutiny in view of the inherent characteristics of society being studied. The next section will undertake such scrutiny:

2.1.5.1 The Rational Choice Model (The Rational Voter)

The rational choice approach is founded on the basic assumption that the voter behaves like a rational actor seeking to maximize anticipated returns by choosing the political alternative that provides maximum returns and incurs minimum costs. The rational choice approach is associated with Anthony Downs, who, in his work "The Economic Theory of Democracy" in 1957, outlined his version of the voter as an "economic man" who behaves in political choices much as he does in economic choices. Later, Riker and Ordeshook (1968) developed this approach by constructing what is known as the "voting equation" that incorporated "civic duty" to explain political participation, which, although yielding little direct return to the voter, is associated with casting one's vote. Aldrich (1993) further developed this approach by including "the role of organizations and political parties" and arguing that rationality is bounded by "institutions and rules" that govern the calculations of these actors.

Recent studies show that the rational choice model is not only capable of explaining voting behavior but also strategic, punitive, and coalition-making in pluralist settings (Palfrey, 2009; Geys, 2006). While the rational choice model performs well in stable democracies, its relevance to Palestinian reality faces significant structural barriers. The assumption that there is a rational political actor with sufficient information and living in a political system where preferences are translated into public policy is in conflict with political reality characterized by occupation, lack of sovereignty, and division.

Within the framework of the Palestinian case, elections take place in a situation of being in a politically constrained system rather than in a sovereign state. The ability to implement programs through elected institutions is limited; therefore, this directly challenges the idea of utility maximization in the rational choice model (Brynen, 2023). The act of voter choice is more than simply direct material-political gain; rather, it is intricately tied to issues of symbolism in relation to national identity and feelings towards the occupation (Hilal, 2009). Additionally, trust in institutions, which is considered implicit in rational-choice theory, is shown to be surprisingly vulnerable in Palestine. According to polls conducted by PCPSR (2023), trust in elected institutions is low; therefore, whether to take part in elections or to abstain is often considered more of a protest act than anything else in conventional rational thought processes. Therefore, it might be safely argued that while the rational choice model is able to explain certain aspects of electoral behavior in Palestine, such as punitive votes or strategic abstention,

it is unable to properly address non-instrumental aspects such as votes of symbolic protest or votes based upon national identity (Jamal, 2019).

However, in the context of existing literature regarding the conflict, there have been significant critical revisions of rational choice theory. Although it is not completely negated, the concept of “rationality” is currently being reconstructed. In conflict situations, voters do not necessarily seek maximum benefits in terms of material or services. However, they can act in accordance with a type of collective or symbolic rationality in which the preservation of identity or resistance against occupation is part of the benefits (Kalyvas, 2006). In the context of the Palestinian conflict, the act of voting or abstention from voting appears to have a political significance that transcends mere material benefits. The voters in Palestine understand that the legislative authority of the Legislative Council or other local institutions has little real capability for change in the context of occupation. However, taking part in the electoral process can have different meanings in terms of restoring national legitimacy or serving as a form of political resistance or a means of holding the local elite accountable within very tight boundaries of political maneuver (Jamal, 2019). In this way, it is possible to say that rational choice theory is partially relevant in the context of Palestine, provided that the term “benefit” is given a broader scope in terms of including symbolic identity-related benefits in addition to material gains.

2.1.5.2 Voting as an Act of Resistance and Political Symbolism

However, the study of electoral behavior in conflict or occupied territories has seen considerable development in the realm of comparative politics in recent years. This is because it is increasingly acknowledged that there are limitations in the traditional approach in terms of explaining electoral behavior in territories where political violence, sovereignty challenges, state weakness, and lack of institutional trust are prevalent. In conflict or occupied territories, the electoral process is not a well-established democracy; instead, it is part of a complex challenge for legitimacy, identity, and political representation (Birnir & Gohdes, 2018). Theories of electoral behavior in conflict territories are founded upon the underlying assumption that conflict violence and occupation have altered electoral behavior in terms of changed electoral incentives and altered logics of political engagement. In other words, in contrast to the Western approach that assumes a risk-free and stable context in which voters can exercise informed choices

in terms of electoral performance and public policy, conflict territories involve voters who make decisions in terms of personal security, group identity, political loyalty, and national symbolism (Collier & Vicente, 2014). Empirical research work reveals two contrasting types of electoral behavior in conflict territories: political mobilization in terms of a community reaction against conflict threats, and political apathy or withdrawal in terms of conflict-related fear, lack of trust, and political stalemate (Blattman, 2009). This configurational variability is a theoretical challenge in terms of requiring analysis in terms of conflict type, political organization type, and the impact of non-state actors.

The literature on voting in conflict zones indicates that political violence and occupation reshape electoral behavior by altering voter incentives and the logic of political engagement. Collier and Vicente (2014) emphasize that voters in conflict zones make decisions in contexts related to personal security, collective identity, and political loyalty, not just based on evaluating government performance. Blattman's (2009) research reveals two contrasting patterns of electoral behavior in conflict zones: political mobilization as a community reaction against conflict threats, and political apathy or withdrawal due to conflict-related fear and lack of trust.

The literature on voting during occupation highlights the importance of "voting as resistance," where voting is a symbolic tool of expression of political existence for societies living under foreign rule (Beinin & Vairel, 2013). In this respect, voting success is no longer measured according to its ability to deliver public policy outcomes, as it is measured according to its ability to reproduce political identity. This is, for the most part, relevant within the Palestinian scenario, where voting has become a mechanism of redefining societal relationships with power and formulating a stand on the Oslo Accords, the political rift, and the performance of ruling elites (Hilal, 2009). Finally, field studies have shown that voting behavior within Palestine does not necessarily operate according to a logic of trust in institutions; instead, voting can occur despite a lack of trust. This defies Western models of voting behavior, which presuppose a direct correlation between voting and satisfaction with institutions (PCPSR, 2023).

2.1.5.3 Environmental (Ecological) Models

Ecological models study the impact of geographical, historical, and structural factors on electoral behavior. The origin of ecological models is traced back to the French geographical school; they focused on the link between electoral behavior and the socio-

spatial context (Siegfried, 1913). The ecological approach has since been developed using spatial analysis methods and multilevel analysis (Rodden, 2019). Franklin (2004) emphasizes that this approach is highly relevant in understanding variations in electoral conduct in different regions of the same country, especially when there are disparities in levels of economic development and social relations. However, the use of this approach in the context of Palestine requires some caution because it is difficult to distinguish between geography and the politics of coercion in the context of occupation. The territorial distinction between the West Bank and Gaza, or between cities, villages, and refugee camps, is determined not by natural social development but by the politics of coercive borders.

2.1.5.4 The Sociological Model

The sociological paradigm proposed by the Columbia School and developed by the Michigan model highlights the role of social affiliations, including class, religion, family, and identification, in explaining electoral behavior (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944; Campbell et al., 1960). Such a paradigm is much more applicable to the Palestinian reality, where familial and factional loyalties are strong. However, there is a need for critical modification of this paradigm since, in Palestine, social belonging transcends traditional societal frameworks to include political division, rentier economy, and patronage system. Thus, certain electoral behaviors are transformed into expressions of power relations rather than expressions of autonomous political ideology (Hilal, 2009).

In view of the above, Western models of electoral behavior, whether rational, sociological, or environmental, cannot be considered fully valid tools for explaining the Palestinian experience. Rather, there is a need for a critical adaptation based on:

1. Redefining rationality in terms of symbolic and national aspects.
2. The inclusion of occupational structure in the framework of analysis, rather than being considered as an environmental variable.
3. Defining political trust as a variable that changes in a non-linear fashion.
4. Viewing the lack of voting as a political act rather than just passive behavior.

As a result, this research will utilize a compound interpretive framework that combines the classical theories of voting behavior with the literature on voting studies in conflict zones, thereby allowing for a more complex interpretation of Palestinian voting behavior under a transitional, yet non-sovereign, political reality.

2.1.6 Factors Affecting Electoral Behavior

2.1.6.1 Political Factors

Among these political factors, there are several that define the broad framework in which electoral behavior is situated. Such factors include the nature of the political system, freedoms, performance, and expressions of protest in Poland, and their roles in occupation and division in Somalia. For Palestinians, electoral behavior cannot be separated from the limited powers of the ruling authority, nor from the nature of the occupation to bring about a diminution of confidence in the democratic process per se (Brynen, 2023).

The Palestinian political culture, as defined by Almond and Verba (1963), is made up of cognitive (political consciousness), affective (sense of belonging and identity), and relational (sense of evaluation of performance) components. However, these components have a distinct shape in Palestine, where the values of democratic participation are interwoven with values of resistance and steadfastness. At other times, these values may be expressed in a symbolic form or a clear-cut choice rather than subscribing to a rationale of a nationalistic kind (Milton Edwards, 2021). Economic institutions also play a significant role in shaping electoral behavior. Studies of the liberal revolution and the Palestinian liberation movement (PCPSR, 2023) point to a decline in trust in the legal system and the repressive movement, which calls for the philosophy of voter apathy or protest voting. This phenomenon cannot be understood in isolation from the continued perpetuation of political maneuvering within the political system (Al-Hilal, 2009).

2.1.6.1.1 Political Culture

Political culture is described to be the “psychological or emotional basis of political institutions” (Global Policy Center, 2023). Political culture is represented by the “relationship between citizens and the state” because it is influential in the explanation of the levels of political participation, political trust, or the reinforcement of the democratic system itself (Center for the Study of Federalism, n.d.; Liber Texts, 2019). Political culture is a central concept in political science, reflecting the sum of attitudes, beliefs, and values that members of a society hold toward their political system (Almond and Verba, 1963; Winkler, 2025, p1). Political culture is defined as the set of attitudes, beliefs, and feelings that give meaning to the political process (Winkler, 2025). It is defined as the set

of knowledge, opinions, and attitudes prevalent toward political affairs, government, the state, authority, loyalty and belonging, legitimacy, and participation. It also refers to the system of beliefs, figures, and norms that determine how a society views the appropriate role and limits of government and the proper relationship between the ruler and the ruled. This means that political culture develops around long-established norms, attitudes, and beliefs about political phenomena. Every society transmits its figures, norms, and traditions to its members, who in turn form a set of beliefs about the role of the political system with all its formal and informal institutions, and their rights and duties toward that political system. Since political culture is part of general culture, it is therefore composed of several subcultures: the culture of the ruling elite, youth, workers, women, and so on (Hilal, 2015, p. 235). Consequently, political culture can be defined as the set of attitudes, beliefs, and emotions that provide order and meaning to the political process and the established rules that govern the behavior of individuals within the political system. Thus, it focuses on the political ideals and norms to which members of the political community adhere, which define the framework within which political behavior takes place (Mao, 2016, p28). Researchers (Almond and Verba, 1963; Ray, 2025) distinguish between three basic orientations: cognitive (knowledge of political systems), affective (emotional attachment), and evaluative (judging performance). Social values, norms, and traditions also shape collective political behaviors (Jorge, 2010). Researchers (Almond and Verba, 1963; Ray, 2025) distinguish between three basic orientations: cognitive (knowledge of political systems), affective (emotional attachment), and evaluative (judging performance).

The Palestinian situation is marked by occupation, national fragmentation, and limited sovereignty. The political culture of Palestine is shaped by identity politics, modes of resistance, and the long struggle for self-determination (Hilal, 2009). According to a report by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR, 2023), the voter turnout in East Jerusalem is less than 10%, and confidence in political institutions is among the lowest in the world. The political culture of Palestine is marked by a strong national identity, a strong ideological rejection of political leadership, and a strong divide between the two main parties: Fatah and Hamas. In addition, there is a divide across generations because of the use of social networking technology by youth, which has resulted in a divergence in political awareness and degrees of political engagement (Habashi, 2017). The political culture of the Palestinians shapes their political voter behavior in three main ways: political knowledge, emotional belief in national identity,

and judgment of political performance. The lack of trust between the citizens and the state, coupled with the political divide, leads to voter abstention, but the values of resistance, patriotism, shape their voting behavior (PCPSR, 2024). In this context, Palestinian political culture faces a range of challenges, most notably weak trust in institutions and the transparency of elections (PCPSR, 2023); a deep political and geographical division (Hilal, 2009); the impact of the Israeli occupation on political life and civil liberties (Arab Center, Washington, D.C., 2021); the generation gap and the influence of social media (Habashi, 2017); and the conflation of democratic participation and national resistance as forms of political engagement (Electronic Intifada, 2003).

2.1.6.1.2 Political Awareness

Political awareness is defined as knowledge and skills of political features that guarantee an advanced performance while practicing politics as it contains information and experiences that make the holder of it cope with what is happening in the political scene (Yaminah, p.54). Political awareness results from the interaction between the individual and socializing institutions. The family, school, social media, parties and societies all are responsible in forming the political awareness, producing and re-producing it in accordance with one level or another (Al-Jawnaei, 2000, p41). The political work and the formation of organizations and groups are deeply rooted in the Palestinian history despite what the Israeli occupation exposed and is still exposing of restrictions and oppression. Political awareness has a great effect on the individual's relationship with the political process. Some societies are characterized by their strong feeling of national intimacy and sense of responsible citizenship. In this case, the individual is expected to participate in public life, and voluntarily contribute in developing his society. In other countries, individuals are characterized of being careless and alienated and the lack of the sense of responsibility towards any person outside his family. Sometimes, the citizen visualizes the political system as that takes care of him from the cradle to the grave, and takes over the responsibility instead of him, and works to ensure the prosperity of the community. On the other hand, the individual might doubt the sincerity and faithfulness of the political authority, considering it just a mere tool for realizing benefits for those hold in it (Awwad, 2018, p17).

the researcher finds that there are limitations that contribute in changing the level of political awareness of the individual such as, media and communications, tools of digital

technologies with all its forms that are used in most aspects of life. This made receiving news and photos easier than by tradition means.

Moreover, political awareness changes in elections in accordance with electoral campaigns presented by the voters, which, in turn, supports electing them or changing his electoral decisions. Most individuals who are in favor of and support democracy, as pointed out by some researchers, do not do that due to having or enjoying democratic freedom in its essence. This was revealed in the world values Questionnaire which ensures that the collective liberal values differ from one country to another. If targets value and beliefs are weak, individuals prefer strong authorities and leaderships to having the freedom and political participation. The absence of these values may lead the individual to prefer the dictatorship system (Ghalyoon, 2015, p11). and when modernity came, it made some individuals change their beliefs and caused the refer democracy to dictatorship. In this context, (Znglehart & Weils) clarified the theory change of values in generations. It points out that everyone admires freedom and likes to have it, but it is not necessarily a top priority. Individuals' priorities have been divided into (priorities that reflect their economic and social needs, and the other urgent needs. The materials security is more important for existence especially in cases of lack of resources, which makes availability of material a top priority for individuals. When systems prosper, the other type of priorities appear, where the individuals have more freedom to express themselves and enjoy the freedom values, the changes in the vocational structure, and an increase in expressing public opinion. This led to a change in the individuals' beliefs themselves, leading to the dissemination of freedom values of (equality, tolerance, participation and freedom). Consequently, the spread of these values will expose dictatorship systems to a revolution by its people in order to maintain democracy and enjoy all rights and freedoms (Glalyoon,2015, p13). So, any Palestinian political developmental process depends on what the Palestinian law provides freedom to the citizen. This freedom includes the freedom of opinion and self-expression and political participation in his right of voting or candidacy, and his right in parliamentary reorientation and holding official and political positions. It is worth mentioning to point out the weakness of the Palestinian legal structure related to political freedoms since the ottoman era, to the British mandates, then to the Egyptian administration of Gaza strip. The Jordanian administration to the West bank, leading to the Israeli occupation which imposed its military laws, and supervised running people's needs in Palestine, and finally reaching the establishment of the

Palestinian Authority, which assumed the administration of those regions (Al-Sayed, 2013).

The freedom of opinion and expression is considered as rights and public freedoms in the Palestinian basic law. Article 19 of the basic law stipulate freedom of expression shall not be infringed upon. Everyone has the right to express his opinion and publish it orally or written or by any means of expression and art, while considering the provisions of law (Palestinian Authority, Article 19). So, we can say the Palestinian basic law guaranteed the freedom of expression, and prevented any infringement of it, gave all the freedom to express their opinion the way they like. However, the work of freedom of expression and opinion got weaker due to the Israeli occupation and the Palestinian interior partition as confirmed by a study run by the Palestinian center for Human Rights (2022). It is possible to say that the political culture affects the electoral behavior through the following : (kabouj, 2010)

- Makes the individual possess a degree of awareness, knowledge, perceptions and political convictions which enable the elector to take a rational choice away from enticement and intimidation.
- Political culture affects the individuals' electoral behavior through making him all the time work on creating a balance between standards imposed on him and his values and political beliefs.
- Make the citizen free from all political, economic, social and even party or side affiliation (Tribal Affiliation and etc.) when casting his vote.

The term political upbringing is a recent term and appeared after the term of social upbringing. It started to develop from the social upbringing as any concept or definition of political upbringing stems out from the concept of upbringing, in general. It is defined as process of fusing and melting in the group in a way that enables him to interact positively and in harmony with its members (Ismael, 2016).

The literature of political economy indicates that prolonged economic crises either lead to increased politicization among individuals or to the production of patterns of apathy and political alienation, depending on the nature of the prevailing political discourse and its ability to interpret lived reality (Jamal, 2019). In the Palestinian case, political awareness often takes on a protest or symbolic character, where economic suffering is reframed within national narratives related to steadfastness and resistance. This imbues electoral decisions with political significance that transcends immediate self-interest. Furthermore, high unemployment rates, particularly among youth and graduates, have

contributed to a critical political awareness of elites and institutions, manifested in declining trust in the electoral process, or in a tendency towards protest voting or deliberate abstention. World Bank reports (2022) confirm that the fragility of the Palestinian labor market and the lack of economic prospects reinforce the feeling that traditional political channels are blocked, which is directly reflected in patterns of electoral participation.

Therefore, political awareness in Palestine takes a dual form: a cognitive awareness that holds the authorities responsible for economic failures, and an emotional awareness that reproduces national belonging as a symbolic compensation mechanism. This overlap makes political awareness an intermediary factor linking the economy to electoral behavior within a non-linear, interactive logic.

2.1.6.1.3 Political Upbringing

Despite the fact the political upbringing or education forms one of the core principles and concepts in research works, theories and political and social writings and contemporary education, and is in the focus of psycho political and socio-political sciences who work on establishing a special theory for it, the concept is still in its early stages of analytical and methodical development. The terms and concepts of political education varied due to the variety of views and opinions. One of the definitions of political upbringing is that it is a group of social patterns which the individual learns from the institutions of the society and helps in coexistence with it. On the individual level, (Richard Dawson) defines it as the processes through which the individual acquires his political attitudes, knowledge, emotions, his own environmental evaluations, his political atmosphere. Moreover, political education is a developmental process through which the citizen developed himself politically, and through it the individuals gain information, feelings and beliefs that help him understand, evaluate and join the political environment surrounding him. The individual's political attitudes are considered part of him social ones. The feelings towards the political life are mostly connected with economic, cultural and religion views (Al-Tabeeb,2007, p159).

Political upbringing is the process of developing the youth awareness of the problem of the government and the ability to participate in the political life through various means as discussions, lectures and taking over any political activity (Hoogh,2004). Therefore, we can say that political upbringing has a personal dimension and a social dimension, too,

and it is linked to political values as it instructs it with knowledge, standards, and political attitudes. Moreover, it contributes in enhancing the national and political affiliation, and works on social values so as to have a coherent and congruous society.

Political upbringing also has a vital role in enhancing methods of adaptation, co-existence, and the continuity of social the social and political system. This is because of its basic mission in bringing up the individuals physically, mentally, psychologically, and socially in a perfect manner, and preparing them to undertake and assume social and political roles that serve the citizen as well as the society, enabling it to survive and cope with dangers that he faces (Powel & Cowart, 2003) and (Tarabiyah, 2007, p308). Political upbringing has also a vital role in cultivating and enhancing the national identity that is based on loyalty, faithfulness, solidarity, commitment and sincerity, and the continuous work on fostering these values by all available means via institutions, and create a state of national integration which will also lead to acquiring reciprocal respect, and a positive look towards others. This will lead to realize a state of unity and social agreement among all divisions and affiliations under the umbrella of national allegiance (Van Deth, Abendshon, & Vollmar, 2011). There are various means of creating political upbringing. They vary between official means and non-official ones. But they all work to equip the citizen with the ability to positively deal with the surrounding environment of social patterns such as the (family, school, educational institutions, political parties, business groups, and other means of business communication). There is a strong relationship between citizenship and political upbringing responsibilities, in general, and with elections, in particular. It is not expected that a citizen will participate in electoral process unless he acknowledges the importance and necessity of political participation. For example, a citizen who grows up in a culture of submission will realize that he is part of the political system and his view is always affected by the actions of the government, though he does not have any role in forming it. It is also possible that the individual might possess a positive or a negative attitude and opinion towards the political process. He might develop a feeling of legality or aversion to the regime or political authority, making him always have a negative attitude towards electoral participation (Al- Hayyali, 2021). But in a strong and clear political upbringing environment and involvement in participation, individuals vote in elections so as to express their opinions and desires. Elections in such a situation or culture, the votes of electors are considered an important component of the inputs of the political system. This is because they express the needs of citizens, who may also abstain from voting, a behavior that is based on awareness and

expresses the rejection of the political system or dissatisfaction with its outcomes (Loa'y,2017, p139).

Political upbringing in Palestine must be based on democracy and must work on fostering and instilling the values of tolerance among the citizens of the country, and establishing the values of democracy through the concerned institutions in political upbringing in order to be reflected in a positive way on the Palestinian society as well as on the individual and the mass behavior. As this enhances the concept of good citizenship, respect of others, recognition of him, cooperation with others and increasing the ratio of social and political participation in a way that realizes the shares interest. However, the concept of social upbringing is confused with other concepts that are very important factors in forming and building the character of the individual like: education, teaching and learning, cultural adaptation and civil upbringing (Khalifah,2023)

political upbringing is a long-term social process influenced by the economic environment in which an individual grows up, particularly in societies suffering from ongoing structural crises. In Palestine, political socialization is inseparable from the reality of poverty, dependency on aid, and precarious employment, which is reflected in the political values individuals acquire from an early age. The Palestinian family, as one of the most important institutions of socialization, transmits to its children not only political stances but also economic experiences linked to instability and economic disadvantage. This contributes to an early awareness of the limited effectiveness of formal political participation. Schools and universities also play a contradictory role; on the one hand, they raise the level of political awareness, while on the other, they clash with the experience of economic frustration after graduation, creating a gap between expectations and reality (Hilal, 2021). Inglehart's theory of shifting values indicates that individuals in economically insecure societies tend to prioritize survival and stability over political participation and expression. This argument applies particularly to the Palestinian situation, where basic needs take precedence over political engagement, or political participation is redefined as a means to improve the economic situation rather than to achieve genuine democratic representation. In this context, political economic socialization contributes to the production of pragmatic voting patterns that may tend to support forces perceived as better equipped to provide services or social protection, even if these forces are less committed to democratic standards. Thus, political socialization becomes a primary channel for transmitting the influence of economics into the electoral sphere.

2.1.6.1.4 Electoral Campaign

It is the well organized and planned process of propaganda that is meticulously carried out by the candidate himself, the party or the political entity through using all the available and various persuasive methods and means to deliver a specific message (Al –Bayan Electoral Program) to the targeted group or crowd (the electors) and influencing the process of voting for the benefit of the candidate's electoral list that he represents (Hejab ,207, p16). Denis Maxwell defines the electoral campaign from a theoretical perspective as: All communicative efforts that continue for a specific period of time and which is based on an institutional and a collective behavior that matches with the prevailing standards for directing and supporting the attitude of the crowd towards objectives that are socially accepted such as voting (Agheer,2004, p12). It is also defined by another researcher as a process that contains a group of procedures and perceptions such as political campaigns, electoral campaigns, general information, some forms of teaching, and the use of social media in developing countries, or in the fields of publishing challenging and has specific objectives that are usually brief but condensed and targets a relatively big crowds, and mostly depends on general set of common values (Hejab,2007, p16) . It is also defined as an effective means or tool to know and identify the personality of the candidate, his electoral program that he suggests or presents to the people through an open electoral campaign. The election law undertakes the procedural aspects through using public media and information, and shows the way of advertising and the method of electoral gatherings and festivals, and the allocated public places within electoral districts to publish the lists and distribute them in equal areas. Electoral campaign is also defined as the well organized and carefully planned communicative patterns which are subject to follow up process and assessment, practiced by the candidate or the party in a specific electoral case and extends for a specific period of time preceding the official pointed time of elections, aiming at winning the elections through getting and using the effective means of communication and enticement that target the voting public (Sagheer,2004,p15). The electoral campaign and political marketing are considered means of communication through which the political party or candidate presents his political commodity consisting of ideas and programs to persuade the elector and encourage him to have an electoral behavior that calls for having this product or that one according to the ability of the marketing administrative power to persuade the elector or to be used at the election stations through electoral campaign which may enhance the participation of the elector

and reduce the concerns about abstention in order to increase and widen the participation of voters (Renoldz,2011,p463) .

In the light of what has been introduced, we can say that the electoral campaign is one of the most political factors that has an influence on the electoral behavior. It plays a major and vital role in directing and identifying the behaviors of the individuals. The individual can read the electoral program, get the necessary information about the political party or the candidate, then induct the positives and the negatives in accordance with the individual's own insights and expectations.

In a case study conducted by the Central Elections Commission (2022) on local elections in the city of Nablus, the mechanism of advertising and promotion for the electoral programs was service oriented, in general. Many visits were paid to Dewans as Nablus is known for the variety of influential families, holding big and small meetings, visiting various institutions, and the inclusion of individuals who live in outskirts of the city or those who are not originally belong to families of Nablus, in addition to resorting to social media sites, banners across streets, brochures, audio visual aids and etc. The concept of geography was in focus as well as the attempt to reach all categories and classes of the society in all regions via the means of electoral propaganda. Election campaigns are one of the most important mechanisms through which the interaction between economics and politics manifests in electoral behavior. In the Palestinian context, the economic programs of election campaigns acquire particular importance, but at the same time, they face the problem of credibility due to the structural constraints imposed on the Palestinian economy. Most election campaigns focus on issues of unemployment, poverty, and improving services. However, the Palestinian voter tends to assess these promises in light of their understanding of the constraints of economic sovereignty and the occupation's control over resources and border crossings. This does not mean a dismissal of the economic discourse but rather an attempt at a reinterpretation of the discourse in a political national context, where the programs are to be assessed in terms of their ability to resist the effects of the crisis rather than in terms of the potential for development. The economic resources of the campaign itself also play a part in the electoral behavior of the voter, as the disparities in resources create an asymmetry in voter access, particularly in poor areas. This reflects the voting behavior in relation to aid and direct service distribution, indicating the persistence of political clientelism in the absence of a welfare state (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007). The Palestinian local electoral context specifically reveals the campaign as a field of socio-economic competition, where the ability to

competently administer local resources and services is the key selection factor, reflecting a significant intersection of economic and social affiliation considerations.

2.1.6.2 Social Factors Affecting Electoral Behavior

The socioeconomic status emerges as a key determinant in the social framework because of its positive correlation with the practice of voting. The social conditions include a set of demographic story variables, age, gender, ethnicity, occupation, as well as the social context, social class, religion, racial, and linguistic community. Socioeconomic status is considered the most important factor, as it correlates with more frequent voter participation (castro, 2015 p101). Social and cultural factors are crucial in shaping voters' attitudes. Family, friends, and religious or ethnic affiliation all play a role in shaping political orientations from the earliest stages of socialization. Furthermore, the prevailing political culture determines the nature of the relationship between the citizen and the state, and the extent of an individual's willingness to participate politically. In collectivist societies, for example, voters tend to vote according to social or tribal affiliation, while in individualistic cultures, the decision is more independent (Kulachai et al., 2023, p4). There are several factors of social nature that affect the electoral behavior. The most important of them are:

2.1.6.2.1 Tribal Affiliation

The concept of the tribe and tribal affiliation has got great and wide usage by the learners and students. Despite that, it does not have the agreement on the connotation and the meaning of it. It is often confused with ethnicity. The term ethnicity means as it is commonly used a cultural group of specific size, while the term tribe points out to the groups that are small and weak (Bu Taleb ,2002, p167). Tribal allegiance as described Ibn Khaldoun is considered as the relationship that transcends the idea of blood kinship. Rather, it is the affiliation that forms between a group of individuals due to a common and s hared interest between them (Al- Jaberi, p172). The issue of tribalism got the attention and interest of most researchers who were interested in the ideology and thought of Ibn Khaldoun. The tribe for him is not specified or identified as a group branching from the first grandfather, nor it is only defined by what the members of it have in common of blood kinship. For him, the real meaning of tribalism is the ancestry in its

wide and symbolic meaning, and what it represents of forms of coalition, loyalty and affiliation (Bu Taleb,2002, p56).

Patronage is a pattern where the head or the leader works personally or by his allies or agents on exchanging economic, social, administrative and healthcare services for political support by those who follow the party. This follows the following equation: Loyalty =services =voting authority. And in order the candidate can realize or embody his equation, he must enjoy a wide influence in the political, administrative, economic, religious and sectarian fields, in addition to familial, tribal, regional and geographical rallying (Marmooqah, 2011, p205).

The society which is characterized by its old and traditional structure and is controlled by family relationships, following a certain party or dominated by localism and favoritism which control the growth and progress of the society and development of contemporary political culture and prevent the appearance of political and ideological elite that are well trained and highly experienced in institutional and political practices in an objective manner ,controlled and guided by public interest of the society and the state instead of individual desires or interests of a certain party or entity in a certain condition or narrow minded individual whims (Bleih & Belgheith,2018, p482) .These features are directly connected with the absence of the concept of citizenship as it is a practice and a value that characterize modern politics. The individual here is considered an active component having and enjoying his rights and doing his duties with full awareness and willingness, and participate in public affairs through belonging to entities and civil social organizations, and received the same treatment by the institutions of the government. We find these bodies and institutions very careful to enable him enjoy his political and social rights in a perfect way and complete in providing services to him and get his satisfaction. As for Arab societies, the individual is still controlled by the old –fashioned and out of date habits which deny his presence away from the parameters of these traditions and relationships. The institutions of the government also treat him in the same way, considering him a member of the family or a tribe and provide him services according to his position in the group he belongs to and the position of that group in the network of the entities that govern the country, and which creates a balance of powers among the various sides of the society (Onsoor,1995, p83) .

In contemporary European and other countries, the political role and effect of the tribe has come to an end, whereas in some Arab and African countries the role of the tribe continued especially in most important and effective positions of power and authority,

and moral and financial distribution of fortunes. The view towards resources and revenues in the collective mind of the state made by some tribes in most African and Arab countries is considered as a loot or pillage (Al –Koot, 2018, p92).

The electoral behavior in some Arab countries is never based on political inputs that are related to electoral programs, political ideologies and the real relationships. Rather, it is decided by the traditional social affiliations such as belonging to a tribe, sect, family or religion. Voting does not relate to political affiliation, or an institutional party, or an electoral program of clear features and plans (Mohammad, 2014, p286).

In Palestine, and after the local elections of (2021), particularly in the West Bank, the central elections commission has identified a number of factors connected to the family dimension. One who monitors or observes the names in candidates lists In Al –Mazra' Al- Sharqiya, Ramallah, will find that the familial factor has the greater role in electing candidates. Every family has chosen a number of representatives to be within the list of the 25 candidates. Due to the absence of lists, disputes were not attributed to the ranking or order of the persons in the list. Rather, the disputes were due to the attempts of choosing the best of each family to be in these elections. After this, the winners in elections disagreed on whom will be the head of local body. In Hebron (Beit Ummar), we find the names that came first in the list were names from families which have a greater power in the town. This is important in public mobilization for elections in a certain list as in a town like Beit Ummar. The extended family occupies an important position. A list may win or lose due to the influence of the available families and the ranking of the candidates in the lists. However, the presence of family influence was weaker in women's lists. This is because the female candidate in the list was a refugee of a small family, and the voters from other families preferred voting for a male in other lists rather than voting for a female in the same family (Cent Family and clan affiliations continue to play a pivotal role in shaping Palestinian voting behavior, particularly given the weakness of modern state institutions. In societies suffering from a lack of distributive justice and low trust in institutions, the family and clan become an alternative representative framework that provides the individual with social and economic protection and support (Hilal, 2009).

In this context, family voting is understood not merely as a traditional behavior, but as a rational response to a structural reality, where a candidate capable of representing the family is seen as a conduit for accessing resources and services. Studies of political clientelism confirm that this voting pattern is prevalent in environments where the welfare state is absent and the principle of equal opportunity is weak (Kitschelt & Wilkinson,

2007). In the Palestinian case, this pattern is clearly evident in local elections, where political programs are sidelined in favor of kinship and mediation criteria. However, this effect does not operate in isolation from politics, but rather intersects with the partisan divide, so that families reposition themselves within existing political alignments, not outside of them (Central Elections Commission, 2022). Tribal affiliation is one of the most stable forms of social organization that shapes political conduct in Arab countries, including Palestine. The importance of the tribe in the political sphere cannot be overemphasized, especially in areas that lack strong state structures, according to Barakat, “the historical roots of the Middle East lie in the 'tribe,' which is based on equality, friendship, or common identity (Barakat, 1993, p58, also in reference to Al-Khalidi, 2008, p113). The tribe is sometimes mistakenly used in the same meaning as ethnicity, but is, in context, actually the opposite, with “ethnocentrism” focusing on “membership in the community, while tribalism focuses on solidarity based on kin.

The traditional explanation of ‘asabiyya or “group solidarity” by Ibn Khaldun is the starting point for the interpretation of the meaning of affiliation with the tribes today. “Ibn Khaldun explained ‘asabiyya, or group solidarity, as the summation of the forces of those who are held together by some tie, be it the force of their kinship, or their common interest, or their defense” (Ibn Khaldun, 1967, p98). Also, contemporaneous literature on the phenomenon continues to use the concept of the importance of ‘asabiyya, portraying the affiliation with the tribes as both “a social capital resource” or “the mode of political clientelism” (Lust-Okar, 2005, p72). The affiliation with the political system often relies on

In the case of Palestine, especially the West Bank, the phenomenon of tribes or familial affiliations plays an important role in shaping the vote in the country’s elections. The Central Elections Commission, according to the 2022 report, found that in the 2021 local elections, the familial based lists won the majority of the seats in the local councils of the town of Al-Mazra’a Al-Sharqiya, the town of Beit Ummar, and others, with citizens choosing familial affiliation over the political or ideological stance of the list.

Such an occurrence is consistent with the regional dynamics in which tribalism remains a shaping force of political conduct due to the non-institutionalized nature of political parties, combined with the lack of civic based citizenship channels (Hudson, 1977, p. 44, Cammett & Diwan, 2019, p214). In these political structures, the tribe serves as an “intermediary institution” between the citizens and the state, regulating their access to resources, representation, or authority (Joseph, 1999, p123). Therefore, voting behaviors

are characterized by the “moral economy” of political conduct, based on the ideals of commitment, duty, or community, rather than on the rational, policy driven selection process of the political decision making process.

Within a Palestinian scenario, the loyalty to tribes represents a body that maintains a sense of stability within a society that lacks a strong state (Heydemann, 2000). At the same time, this dynamic can also create a problem for a modern democratic mentality within a society that prioritizes lineage as opposed to merit and ideas (Robins & Schwedler, 2013, p. 97). The double standard that exists within the use of tribes also illustrates that while these bodies are essential for encouraging levels of participation, their use within Palestinian politics also represents a problem that exists between traditional and modern politics.

2.1.6.2.2 Social Media

Social media has altered the news environment in electoral politics by acting as a platform for the distribution of information and a platform for public discourse for the citizenry. In the State of Palestine, the role of social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and other platforms like Instagram and TikTok has become important in the distribution of news and the response of the citizenry to electoral politics. Rather than traditional mass media, social networking platforms reduce the barrier to entry for those voices that are neither within the political establishment nor enjoy the same political resources, leading to the reshaping of the voters’ information environment or heuristics (Tufekci, 2017, p. 45).

There are two analytical approaches that help reveal the role of social media in shaping electoral behavior. Firstly, social media serves as an information platform, which impacts the voters’ knowledge structures, influencing their updates about the political actors’ profiles in the process (Sharma, 2017, p34). The functionality dynamics, ranking, sharing, or multimodalities on the platform promote emotionally engaging messages, which are often prioritized over accuracy, with the propensity to mobilize voters quickly but also putting them at the risk of being misled on electoral decisions, framed by disinformation (Chadwick, 2013, p7).

Second, the social dynamics of political participation are shaped by social media platforms. The platforms spread connective actions, which are personally tailored political acts that form bigger political movements on the basis of shared content, without

the need for organizational structures (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013, p23). For youth in Palestine, who lack adequate political avenues, in addition to geographical limitations on freedom of association, these platforms create virtual realms for shaping youth political identities, exploring political narratives, and signaling, which shape the vote or support for political lists on the part of the youth vote (Loader, Vromen, & Xenos, 2014, p18). Research on the electoral experiences of the Palestinian people illustrates these considerations in operation on the ground. In the latest round of local elections, citizenship-focused actors involved in the electoral process made use of social media platforms to disseminate procedural information, debunk rumors, or conduct citizens' educational campaigns, while others with vested political interests made use of these same platforms to disseminate appeal or reputation information about political contestants (Central Elections Commission, 2021, p34). The paradoxical character of these platforms, with both state actors and citizens on the same platform, indicates how social media platforms are capable both of raising the number of voters if information resources are dominant, while being capable of heightening ideological cuts if ideological actors are setting the ideological zeitgeist on these platforms (Mediatized politics in Palestine, 2024, p5).

Analyzing the mechanism, information provision becomes clearer: "the availability of information is the crucial mechanism to explain voting" (Blumenreich, 2017, p124). Social media decreases the cost of information transactions, allowing citizens to access election dates, candidate lists, and voting stations faster than other channels, such as printed or broadcast news, which has positively influenced youth voters in those areas (Vaccari, 2015, p102). The second mechanism is social approval: "liking, sharing, and commenting are social cues that communicate viability, popularity, or approval from the community," influencing the undecided voter who uses social heuristics instead of analyzing complex policy arguments (Tufekci, 2017, p78). The third one is emotional framing: social media platforms "use visual, narrative, framing, or other mechanisms that rely on identity based appeals, or narratives, including national narratives, narratives of victimhood, or calls to resist, to shape vote choices" in areas of conflict, Palestine, for instance, highly effectively (Howard & Hussain, 2011, p39).

However, the correlation between social media use and voting is conditional on trust in institutions, levels of digital literacy, and structures of social networking. A high degree of digital literacy offsets the probability of disinformation, hence increasing the chances that social media will be conducive to deliberative participation rather than cynicism

(Loader et al., 2014, p65). However, if there is lack of trust in the institution, the dominance by political actors on social networking platforms, then instead of the platforms being conducive to the creation of a public sphere, then the platforms instead work to create an echo chamber reinforcing existing allegiances with the view to inhibiting cross cutting electoral participation (Chadwick, 2013, p152).

In terms of policy, three interventions are identified. Firstly, electoral commissions, along with civil society, must target their sharing friendly content, ranging from graphical displays to mobile messages, before election dates to improve certainty rather than defaulting to rumornormalized abstentions (Central Elections Commission, 2021, p56). Second, educational programs for digital literacy must be directed toward university campus groups, along with youth NGOs, to beef up the signal to noise ratio for political material on the Web (Loader et al., 2014, p120). Lastly, fact checking on these Web platforms is crucial for halting the coordination involved with the production of false information before, during, or shortly after election periods (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013, p201).

To conclude, social media is neither the solution to, nor the problem with, democratic participation in Palestine. The influence of social media on electoral conduct is contingent on the shape of information structures, the players who dominate narrative structures, and the will of institutional players to leverage these platforms to inform and build trust with their citizens. Social media, if practiced with greater transparency on the part of the citizens, along with greater digital literacy, can result in expanded levels of participation, but left on its own, could result in the proliferation of polarization and misinformation that shape the voter preferences of citizens.

Social media sites provide the means for the citizens of Palestine to engage in politics beyond the normal geographical and political constraints. Noting the impact of social media on the political mobilization of citizens during the 2021 local elections in Palestine, the Central Elections Commission states that over 70% of the younger generation of voters relied on social media sites to provide them with information on the elections (Central Elections Commission, 2021, p. 34). However, despite the benefits that can be realized through the use of social media sites in the political mobilization of citizens, there are challenges that come into play. These include the possibility of using these sites to confuse the voters. Social media sites also provide the means for political actors to appeal to the emotional aspects of the citizens' political agendas. Therefore, the use of social media sites in the political mobilization of citizens presents the issue of the availability

of political actors or political parties to the emotional appeal of the citizens. This can be seen in the example of the Fatah political faction that has been seen to distance itself from the citizens of Palestine while concentrating on its political programs. Social media sites provide a means for political actors to develop these programs that appeal to the emotional aspects of citizens.

Lauder, Fromen, and Zenos describe participatory action when they state that it is “individual participation in political processes, driven by personal involvement in a particular issue, not by collective belonging to a political group” (Lauder, Fromen, and Zenos, 2014, p. 115). The importance of participatory action can be seen by examining its function in relation to how social networks affect Palestinian elections, specifically for youth who support independent candidates or what are termed “groups” in social networks. The function of social networks in Palestinian elections, specifically in regard to the recognition and representation of minority groups, such as women, continues to be important. Mismar notes that “online advocacy networks have allowed women to extend their outreach to a broader audience outside their tribes or families, resulting in more women being elected to local offices” (Mismar, 2018, p. 66). Thus, social networks can be utilized to promote democracy in the community, specifically when established power structures are forced to cede control of election outcomes, as seen in the Palestinian example.

However, the potential inherent in social networks, particularly due to internet related illiteracy, also suggests that the proportion of informed voters will be a crucial factor. Furthermore, the impact of social media on the electoral practices among the Palestinians must be examined in the context of the national identity paradigm itself. Howard & Hussain state, “The Arab world is experiencing not just a technological revolution, but also one that is socio politically transformative, with the potential to empower citizens to construct their own narratives about self-determination” (2011, p.39). The impact of social media in the Palestinian case is based on the ability to connect the voting process to the idea of national self-determination. This changes the political landscape in line with the intended goals.

The phenomenon of social media is bringing a change in the electoral practices of the Palestinian citizens, as it influences the process of gaining information, shaping an opinion, and participating in the political process. The influence of social media is complex, as it has a multifaceted role in the process of communication, as well as the

process of creating a change in the political involvement of citizens, creating an element of innovation in the political involvement of citizens.

2.1.6.2.3 Education and Educational Institutions

Education and educational institutions are particularly significant in building political culture and voter behavior, especially in countries that are experiencing the process of democratic transformation, like Palestine. Education is generally acknowledged to be one of the basic foundations of civic formation and nation building, because educational experiences provide the necessary cognitive, moral, and participatory capabilities on the foundations of which active citizenship is established (Dewey, 1916, p118; Gutmann, 1999, p42). Educational institutions, whether formal or informal, notably schools and universities, help establish civic consciousness, political efficacy, and the necessary democratized value system of political behavior, impacting straightforwardly the individualized electoral behavior of citizens (Banks, 2008, p137).

Regarding the context of Palestine, the role played by the educational system is even more crucial due to the complexity involved in the socio politics, which affect the involvement of the people in the political process. The educational system in Palestine is involved in the transfer of knowledge but also serves as the socio politics involved in shaping the perceptions held by the students on the citizenship, national, and political front (Assaf, 2013, p56).

Universities offer rather prominent settings for political socialization, thereby introducing students to multiple ideological speech acts, as well as election processes, debates, and campaigns (Al-Khatib, 2018, p. 233). Such settings play a crucial role in turning the education system into an empowering context that promotes critical thinking, reflections, and active civic engagement (Freire, 2000, p. 81). It has also been observed that higher education plays an important role in improving the political activism of students and their feelings of civic responsibility (Galston, 2001, p219). This is because universities are involved in the cultivation of skills, apart from instilling the value of tolerance, dialogue, or pluralism, which is crucial for acting on the political front (Torney-Purta et al., 2001, p133). However, the politicized aspects of the educational system, aside from the split ideological stances taken by student movements, play the role of instilling mixed feelings about the development of the political culture in Palestine today (Dweikat, 2016, p102). The Sharek Youth Forum study, among others, conducted in Palestine, has observed the

following with regards to political ideals of the citizens, even if the literacy rate is seen to be high in the country, meaning that the political consciousness of the students is characterized by modest levels, meaning their activism, even inside the universities, is inspired by the politics of factionalism rather than the politics of civic duties on the national front or inside the universities on the Arab state context.

Such fragmentation is also indicative of the wider problem of the political culture, which is linked to the dualism of the educational politics paradigm. In the words of Saqr, “the lack of consistency in the civic educational programs, in addition to the domination of ideological orientations in the universities, has generated the gap between the educational process and the civic reality” (Saqr, 2010, p214). The result is the paradoxical phenomenon, wherein the universities, acting as the centers of intellectual development, sometimes overlook the reinforcement of the critical consciousness necessary for democratized involvement, which is also recognized in the context of other developing democracies, whose educational structures are largely impacted by the phenomenon of political polarization, as pointed out by Heyneman, “in many developing countries, the educational system is highly politicized, with the result that the quality of educational outcomes is highly correlated with the quality of political outcomes” (Heyneman, 2003, p335).

Evidence also indicates that civic education can reduce political alienation and improve election participation if the civic educational process is aimed at developing experiential learning, debate, and involvement in real political problems (Print & Milner, 2009, p96). Civic educational interventions, which provide university students with community experiences, electoral consciousness, and involvement in the governance structures, have had favorable impacts on the development of political efficacy perceptions (Branson & Quigley, 1998, 44).

In this context, the campaign conducted by the Palestine Central Elections Commission to encourage electoral education in universities since 2007 has played an important role in creating awareness among youth, with over 400,000 students in the West Bank and Gaza Strip having been reached (Palestine Central Elections Commission, 2007). Education also plays an indirect role in shaping the elections’ behaviors, primarily due to its effect on literacy levels, which are extremely high in Palestine, having exceeded 97% (Barah, 2007, p149, UNESCO, 2020, p17).

Research in political psychology also indicates that those who are better educated are more engaged with the political process cognitively, and are less likely to be influenced

by populist or clientelist politicians (Nie, Junn, & Stehlik-Barry, 1996, p205). The value of education, therefore, in bringing about rational voter behavior is clear, but in addition, its role in creating a bridge between tradition and modernity is also crucial in developing political preferences.

Education is also transformative in its approach to conventional bonds like family, sect, or tribe in favor of the overall ideal of will and equality (Al-Qusbi, 2019, p. 87). In the context of the political environment in Palestine, political education has a significant role in offsetting the impact of family or regional loyalties in many elections. Alongside the development of education, the need to develop a politically aware citizenry who make voting choices irrespective of family or sect loyalties acquires critical importance in the political environment in Palestine.

Education and educational institutions form the strategic base for promoting a democratic citizenship and a new politics of elections within Palestine. Education raises civic awareness and inspires a sense of politics and active citizenship by producing an enlightened and active citizenry that is well-informed and equipped to participate constructively within politics. The main problem lies within extending these gains within education to politics and moving beyond politics of factions to a politics of democratic ideal and practice.

2.1.6.3 Economic Factors Affecting Electoral Behavior

Economic factors rank among the most powerful factors in identifying voting behavior. Modern approaches to explanation would start with a presumption that voters behave as rational actors, to a greater or lesser extent, trying to maximize their potential gains within a political process. This approach relies on a traditional approach presented in Downs' work, "The Economic Theory of Democracy," in 1957. This approach was a revolution in using economic rationality as a tool in understanding political behavior. Voters make their voting decisions using a cost-benefit analysis.

In this theory, the act of voting is not seen as an ideological or emotional exercise but rather as a relatively rational act, based on the voter's evaluation of his or her own economic performance, as well as the economic performance of the ruling authority. This theory was later developed into what is now referred to as the Economic Voting Theory, where voters tend to reward the government when the economy is doing well and punish the government when the economy is not doing well, especially in terms of economic

factors such as income, unemployment, and inflation (Powell & Whitten, 1993; Duch & Stevenson, 2008; Upward et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, its application within the Palestinian framework requires a deep analysis and a higher degree of caution, because of the distinct features of the Palestinian economic system. This is a system characterized by a lack of economic sovereignty, structural dependency within the occupation economy, and dominance of restrictions over resources as well as over the movement of people and resources. In this respect, Palestinian voters do not judge economic performance based on growth or welfare; rather, it is based on their ability to resist and overcome adversity, reduce daily hardship, and cope with emergencies within a coercive external framework (MAS, 2023; MAS, 2024). In this respect, it can be ascertained that within the Palestinian framework, the economic element itself does not operate as a completely independent variable; instead, it is organically and directly embedded within its political and national aspects, where economic decisions become a barometer of political wisdom and competence in managing the occupation.

2.1.6.3.1 Income Level and Economic Inequality

Income level and economic inequality are key variables that determine voting preferences, as they directly relate to views on social justice and equity. It has been suggested in cross-national literature that people with high incomes tend to support liberal economic policies like tax cuts and the encouragement of free markets, while people with lower incomes tend to support policies that place more emphasis on social protection and services (Pontusson & Rueda, 2010). Meltzer and Richard (1981) developed an extremely prominent approach in this area in explaining how an individual's location in the stratification structure of society affects their preferences for public policies. They suggested that people with lower incomes tend to support redistribution, while people with higher incomes tend to oppose it.

However, follow-up studies suggest that rising levels of inequality could actually have a negative effect on political trust and lower electoral turnout by marginalized communities, who view political efforts as pointless (Solt, 2008; Alesina & Giuliano, 2011). In the Palestinian context, the relationship becomes further complicated by the confluence of economic inequality and the underlying structures of settler colonialism, political fragmentation, and disparities in governance structures in the West Bank and Gaza. The evidence cited by the MAS Institute (2024) reveals the existence of economic

disparities in the Palestinian territory that are not confined to disparities in earnings but include disparities in employment opportunities, services, and resources, thereby directly affecting electoral behavior and voting outcomes. Thus, in the Palestinian electoral process, two seemingly paradoxical electoral trends could manifest simultaneously: (i) punitive voting directed at the ruling political elite for the deteriorating standard of living, and (ii) electoral apathy reflecting political disaffection and a loss of political trust in the ability of electoral change to bring any positive outcomes.

2.1.6.3.2 Unemployment and Job Insecurity

Unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, is one of the most important economic indicators affecting electoral behavior because it creates feelings of exclusion, hopelessness, and lack of confidence in the future. The literature is in agreement that unemployment is a factor affecting not only electoral behavior but also overall levels of political participation because it is related to feelings of marginalization and lack of political efficacy (Scheve & Slaughter, 2004).

In the Palestinian case, the phenomenon of unemployment has had a structural rather than a cyclical pattern, as a result of constraints on the labor market, the destruction of productive sectors, and reliance on the Israeli labor market or foreign aid. This reality leads to a redefinition of the relationship between economics and politics, where voters evaluate economic programs not based on their ability to generate inclusive growth, but rather on their capacity to manage the crisis and minimize losses. Opinion polls also show that unemployment is driving some groups, especially young people, either to support forces that put forward a radically transformative discourse, or to adopt protest positions, including electoral boycotts or punitive voting, in a clear expression of a loss of confidence in the existing political course (Milton Edwards, 2021; PCPSR, 2023).

2.1.6.3.3 Inflation and Cost of Living

Inflation, on the other hand, affects the voters' perceptions with respect to the efficiency of economic management by creating dissatisfaction with the policies due to reduction in real income caused by inflation (Duch & Stevenson, 2008, p145). For instance, according to Hibbs, inflation acts as "pocketbook" politics, wherein the political outcomes are influenced by the economic experiences of the voters (Hibbs, 2006, p565). A rapid

increase in inflation leads to the voters rallying around the opposition politicians who pledge to stabilize the economy (Powell & Whitten, 1993, p. 393). Research indicates that even with moderate levels of inflation, there is the potential for incumbents to face lower levels of electoral support, particularly in those countries with prominent living cost concerns reported by the news media (Kayser & Wlezien, 2011, p. 723). Furthermore, inflation tends to target the lowest earners, meaning the economy molds the preferences of citizens, creating ideas about the ideal political ideology (Scheve & Slaughter, 2004, p.660). Inflation, or the cost of living, is one of the decisive factors influencing the electoral behavior of the Palestinians, who then evaluate the effectiveness of the government in these matters. “During periods of price increases, especially with respect to basic commodities such as food, fuel, or housing, the average voter is likely to be disgruntled, staying away from the polls or voting for opposition candidates who promise short term solutions” (World Bank, 2024, p. 3- 4). However, opinion polls show that the main worry of the average Palestinian is the high cost of living, even more so than other concerns, including political matters. Empirical studies conducted by the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute illustrate the consequences of inflation on the real income of the population, thereby fueling the perceptions of economic mishandling, particularly for those employed in the public service and from poorer backgrounds (MAS, 2023, p. 5-7). Consequently, inflation becomes a 'pocketbook' politics issue, wherein the practical experiences of daily economic challenges are articulated with political evaluations, wherein voters in areas most adversely affected by price inflation are likely to realign their support from the existing authorities (Hibbs, 2006, p. 570). Notably, the phenomenon was even more manifest in the local elections conducted in the West Bank, wherein the municipalities with the greatest rises in the average consumer price responded with their greatest support for reformers running for election (Carter Center, 2022, p. 6). Thus, inflation, the cost of living, or the changes therein, contribute neither to economic stability nor to the crucial prediction of electoral participation or political affiliation in the Palestinian context.

Two Topic: Previous Studies

2.2 Introduction

A scan of the international and regional literature revealed that there are numerous studies that have investigated the issue of voting behavior with different orientations. Reflecting the purpose of the study at hand, the identification of the factors that affect the behavior of the Palestinian voting system, the literature on the issue under investigation by this study incorporates both Arab and foreign research. After widespread searches through the major conventional libraries and an examination of the various research engines accessible on the internet, there appears to be a lack of direct research exploration of the issues that affect the voting behavior of the Palestinian voting system.

To ease the comparison and analysis, these studies could be divided into two dimensions: Arab studies and foreign studies. These studies will be discussed at the country level so that the context of each country can be understood properly, and the results of the study conducted on Palestine could then be set aside. A study critique will be considered on the objectivity of the research, the methodology used, the target group studied, the sampling instruments applied during the study, and the results of the study. This critique will further point out the similarities in the major aspects of the study with the prior works and how these works have benefited this study. Finally, this critique will point out the scientific significance of this study with respect to filling the gaps in the knowledge of the topic of this study.

2.2.1 First Dimension: Arabic Literature

The Arab studies examined within this section demonstrate different perspectives on electoral behavior, ranging from different settings as well as different paradigms. However, these studies share common ground with regard to their need for political settings that are different from the Palestinian setting with regard to structure.

The research conducted by Watfa in 2012 focused on the determinants of parliamentary election behavior in Kuwait using a descriptive approach through questionnaires among students at Kuwait University. It concluded that tribal affiliation is the strongest determinant of election behavior compared to election programs. The main research methodology shortcoming is the fact that the research sample is too small and is

conducted among students only in a politically stable environment. When comparing the findings to the Palestinian case, there is a certain overlap in the weight of the first affiliation categories, but their importance is marginal. The Palestinian election behavior is affected by the coercion of the political occupation and the division within the Palestinian society.

Regarding the context of Algeria, Aisha in 2013 adopted a descriptive-analytical methodology in order to analyze the effect of division in politics and partisanship on voting behavior in Algeria. This study led to the conclusion that internal division in politics affects the erosion of trust in the voting process among citizens. This study takes on relative significance in comparison with the context of Palestine because division in politics is a common factor in this scenario. Nevertheless, this study does not consider the existence of the dominant factor of occupation.

Likewise, Belya and Belghith (2018) analyzed the factors influencing electoral behavior in Algeria through a descriptive methodology that emphasized traditional social and political factors. The results of the study demonstrate the continued importance of social factors in influencing voters' decisions. A major weakness of the above study is its restrictive focus on traditional factors without contextualizing them within a constantly changing framework of political shifts, thus losing their applicability in the context of Palestine, which is witnessing fast-paced political change.

Zaaf (2022) utilized a case study methodology in analyzing the phenomenon of electoral behavior in Algeria in the aftermath of the popular movement, asserting that the latter led to a certain transition in the manner of voting, which shifted from a 'tribal' manner toward a 'citizenship' manner of voting. These findings are of major theoretical importance in Palestine, as they illustrate the possibility of a change in the culture of electoral behavior in the aftermath of political shifts. However, the specific nature of the Palestinian occupation makes it difficult for a similar change to take place at a similar rate.

In the comparative analysis, Fathi (2017) uses the comparative method in analyzing electoral behavior in Algeria and France. The author argues that basic differences in electoral participation trends emerge as a result of differences in the political and institutional environments. The paper points out that generalization based on Western or even Arab experiences is not possible in the Palestinian case and that there is a need for the development of an explanation model that is relevant in the Palestinian context.

In the Egyptian setting, the study by Abdel Rahman (2017) used the theory of rational choice to analyze the 2015 parliamentary elections, finding that the participation in

elections is the result of rational calculations, while the non-participation in elections is based on emotional motivations. However, the general applicability of the results is limited in the Palestinian setting, since the participation in elections is not based only on rational calculations, but also on national factors related to the political conflict.

This is because Haikal (2022) examines tribalism in relation to electoral participation in rural Egypt using an anthropological perspective. The conclusion is that tribalism nullifies the content of democracy in elections. Though partially similar to what happens in some areas in Palestine, this is secondary to the impact of occupation in general.

Mohammad (2021) examines the impact of social media on the attitude of Egyptian youth towards the election using a quantitative descriptive approach. The study shows that social media has a stronger impact on political positions than on choosing a candidate. The study has relative significance for Palestine, given the limitations imposed on election campaigns.

In a Palestinian scenario, the methodologies of Mismar (2018) and Yaghi (2018) were descriptive, and their subject matter was the role of social media in local elections. Both of their findings have a direct application to a Palestinian scenario; however, their limitation is that they only focused on one tool without combining it with a political framework.

Alomary, AlShrouf, and Ajouz (2023) used a quantitative approach in conducting a survey study together with the analysis of behavioral theories in examining the factors underlying the decision of female students in seeking candidacy in the student council election in Palestinian universities. The study focuses on university-level student council elections instead of general or local elections in Palestine, thus limiting the study's ability to interpret the factors underlying the youth's decision in general elections in Palestine. The significance of the study lies in the underlying factors that contribute to political participation among educated youth in Palestine, which can help in explaining the youth's decision in general elections in Palestine. However, the study's context is limited in explaining the political and work-related environment of voters in Palestine since it is conducted in a university setting where voters are students. The study's theoretical framework is unable to interpret the political factors that contribute towards the decision of voters in Palestine since it focuses on internal factors of the voters.

Lastly, Al-Issa (2023) examined the impact of political alienation on electoral turnout through the use of an analytical approach. The paper finds that the more alienation there is, the less people participate in the electoral process. Although this study is very relevant

within the context of the Palestinian cause, it is imperative that the relationships between alienation, occupation, and political fragmentation are spelled out clearly.

The research titled 'Effects of the Lack of Elections on the Youth of Gaza' carried out by Pal-Think in 2024 involves a political strategic analysis of the impact of the absence of elections on the youth of the Gaza Strip. The research uses party and organization documents as well as field observations carried out during a capacity-building project among the youth. This research does not involve a statistical design but acts as a political report that highlights the social/political impact of compelled election abstention. The research reveals that the absence of elections creates a sense of discontent among the youth regarding their representation within the political sphere while concurrently forcing them into contemplating the impact of the split between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Despite the research not qualifying as a statistical behaviorist study, the research provides a crucial understanding of the influence of the absence of democratic space on the youth.

Youth attitude surveys in local elections (AWRAD, 2017). The Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR) regularly carries out public opinion polls to examine Palestinian views on elections, the rates of voter turnout, and the confidence in the election process. These studies use the standardized random sampling technique, in which the research relies on representative samples. These polls represent public opinion rather than in-depth studies, for instance, the difference in the motivations to take part in the election and the motivations to abstain. Additionally, the polls can be affected by rapid political changes, such as the postponement of elections. The polls show the confidence in the election process to be related to the intention to take part in the elections.

The results of these surveys are important inasmuch as they provide a conventional gauge of overarching trends in Palestinian society. However, they fail to explain the underlying dynamics which drive people to either participate in or boycott the elections, as well as the overarching impact of the occupation and division.

Peirce Center polls and the principle of confidence in elections (PCPSR). The Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR) runs opinion polls concerning the views of Palestinians on elections and their turnout, in addition to confidence in the electoral process. Such opinion polls rely on random sampling. Their purpose is not necessarily in-depth analysis of voting behavior, such as the motives for voting or not voting in elections, but rather serve to gauge public opinion. Furthermore, the data may be affected by sudden political changes, such as the postponement of elections. The Center's polls reveal that

trust in the electoral process is directly related to the willingness to participate. They also demonstrate the ability to measure the readiness to participate among youth and the general public.

The results of these polls are important inasmuch as they provide a yardstick measure of the trends in Palestinian society. However, these polls do not reveal the factors behind people's voting or boycotting behavior. They also do not provide an in-depth analysis of the impact of the occupation. The above analysis has shown that the field of Arab studies is afflicted with:

- A predominance of descriptive approaches
- Fragmentation of variables
- Limited consideration of exceptional political contexts. This highlights a clear scientific gap that the current study seeks to bridge through an integrated approach to Palestinian electoral behavior.

Palestinian studies indicate that they:

- Contribute to a deeper understanding of youth participation and trends, whether through opinion polls or extensive analytical reports.
- Highlight youth apathy and its motivations in some local elections, reflecting the relationship between trust in the electoral process and the desire to participate.
- Remain limited in measuring major structural variables such as the occupation, the political division, and national identity, which profoundly shape voting behavior in Palestine, highlighting a research gap that requires a comprehensive analysis of Palestinian voter behavior.

2.2.2 Second Dimension: Foreign Literature

The scholarly research on electoral behavior has approached the matter from different theoretical and analytical angles. These studies have shown considerable analytical sophistication and have utilized different models of interpreting the data. However, these studies have generally been carried out in a stable political environment that is rooted in a sovereign nation and a well-established democratic order. This makes it less relevant for direct application in the Palestinian environment.

Aldrich (1993) performed a quantitative study based on the theory of rational choice to examine the factors underlying election participation. The study finds that the decision to participate in an election is made through the rational calculation of the costs and benefits

of election participation. While the study is of great theoretical importance in explaining election participation in stable democracies, its practical application in Palestine faces one major problem. Election participation in Palestine cannot be explained from the perspective of rational calculation because of the presence of various factors in the region. It is interwoven with national and symbolic considerations that go beyond the bounds of private self-interest.

Similarly, Anderson (2007) examined the linkages between economic outcomes and electoral choice using a comparison analytical approach. The findings showed that citizens punish governments during times of deteriorating economics. However, this finding is less applicable in the Palestinian situation, as there is limited capability for the Palestinian voter to punish an authority with complete sovereignty in economics. Therefore, voting is less dependent upon economics and more related to the forced political reality.

The research by Anderson & Beramendi (2012) also investigated the relationship between income inequality and electoral participation, using comparative data. The research reveals that lower-income groups have lower levels of political participation. Although this research has some theoretical importance for Palestine, it has limitations in not considering occupation-related variables or political deprivation. Poverty in Palestine is not only due to policy failures but also due to the colonial structure that limits political will.

The research conducted by Anderson and Hecht in 2012 examined the relationship between economic crises and electoral behavior through the application of a longitudinal quantitative approach. This research reached the conclusion that economic crises have an effect on the pattern of voting. However, this research is not generalizable to the Palestinian setting because economic crises do not always cause electoral realignment. Instead, these crises may cause either alienation or apathy because of the lack of any political horizon. In the aspect of political culture, the research conducted by Almond and Verba in 1963 is considered to be the classic theoretical approach in the examination of the relationship between political culture and democratic participation through the application of the comparative method. However, this research is not generalizable to the Palestinian setting because it considers the political culture of an independent state, whereas the Palestinian political culture is shaped by resistance and the denial of sovereignty.

Schuld (2013) investigates the relationship between violence and the electoral process in conflict zones in a post-conflict area of South Africa, using qualitative research methods to analyze conflict and elections in “no-go” areas. While it is a case study on a transition in a post-conflict situation within a political system that tries to identify norms for the electoral process rather than being a study on foreign occupation, as is the case with Palestine, it is relevant to the extent that it might be dealing with some issues related to Palestine during its time of ambitious transition to democracy but is not a study on foreign occupation. The relevance of the research is its ability to show that the electoral process is vulnerable to violence even when a conflict appears to be ended by armed means. However, its different context from occupation makes its application to Palestine only partially explanatory.

Gutiérrez-Romero & LeBas (2020) study employed a conjoint analysis experimental design within a national survey in Kenya, where long standing electoral violence was documented. Participants chose between candidates with random characteristics (including a reputation for violence), allowing for the isolation of the effect of electoral violence on choice and voting. The study focuses on electoral violence within a national election in a relatively stable country, rather than in a context of military occupation or protracted conflict, and it relies on a hypothetical experiment not limited to specific cultural and political contexts. The study demonstrates that electoral violence reduces voter turnout and modifies voter choice even when candidates belong to the same ethnic or party group. In the Palestinian context, where violence (from occupation and internal divisions) is part of daily life, the impact of violence on participation may be more complex because voters may not forcibly punish candidates associated with violence if this is linked to deep national or symbolic factors not examined in generalized studies. The study provides an important experimental framework for understanding how violence affects voting behavior, but it does not encompass the complex colonial or occupational conditions of Palestine, thus limiting its ability to explain Palestinian electoral behavior under these circumstances.

Using an empirical approach, Allcott et al. (2024) investigated the effect of social media on electoral behavior in the United States, finding that social media influences the emergence of political trends. The results have a moderate level of applicability to the Palestinian scenario, specifically in view of the ban on conventional electioneering campaigns; yet, various factors limit their direct applicability.

In psychological literature, Bruter (2020) investigated the unconscious aspects of electoral behavior using methods of political psychology and found that electoral behavior is not based on rational consciousness. The above findings are particularly significant in the Palestinian context, as emotions such as frustration, alienation, and identity are intertwined in shaping electoral behavior, despite the fact that this study did not focus on the occupation situation.

A quantitative study was carried out by Gingerich et al. (2020) on election data in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1990 to 2014, utilizing the spatial variation in civil violence intensity to assess its impact on election turnout. This study finds civil violence to be a major factor determining election turnout, specifically voter apathy, in a post-civil war setting, where there is little emphasis placed on the effects of occupation and/or ongoing injustice within the judicial framework, as seen in the Palestinian scenario. This study indicates that election turnout is affected negatively by increasing intensity of civil violence, and it may have some application within the Palestinian scenario, where there has been a significant effect on political participation because of the ongoing occupation and civil violence. This study, however, is unique in that it is based on an ongoing conflict scenario, rather than a post-internal conflict scenario, as seen in Palestine. This study offers conclusive evidence regarding the negative relationship between civil violence and election turnout, but it is relatively less informative regarding the symbolic or nationalist underpinnings that may be driving Palestinian election turnout, either in spite of or because of the civil war scenario.

The paper by Kurella et al. (2024) reviews the literature on economic inequality and voting and finds that representation differentials benefit those who are more affluent. This is significant but the specific nature of the economy of the Palestinians as a dependent economy affects the analysis of voting behavior from a purely economic perspective.

Within a study that has a direct political outlook, the Arab Center, Washington DC (2021) examined the difficulties of having elections in Palestine under occupation using an analytical framework. The research is one of the most relevant foreign studies on the issue of Palestine, considering that Israeli constraints affect not only the formality of elections but also their content, providing great explanatory power in comparison to other foreign studies.

2.2.3 Literature Comparison

It is apparent from the study of comparative literature that the voting behavior in the Palestinian situation is vastly different from what is found in the Arab countries surrounding the region, regardless of the fact that the Arab countries either enjoy sovereignty (Jordan and Egypt) or are in the midst of political transformation (Lebanon and Iraq). While voting behavior in the Arab countries can largely be accounted for by the usual variables of government performance, political affiliation, and economic considerations, the situation in Palestine is far more complex.

According to comparative research (Bratton et al., 2012; Norris, 2011), elections in sovereign nations are tools of political accountability and elite rotation. The Palestinian situation is different regarding elections, which tend to develop a symbolic and politically resisting quality. Voting is not conceptualized as a means for direct change but as a means for reproducing national legitimacy or articulating attitudes toward the occupation and internal division. The Palestinian voting practice is different from voting practices in neighboring nations since there is no dichotomy between occupation and sovereignty there.

According to the literature, the voters have a prior conception of the limited power of the elected bodies due to the structural constraints of the occupation. This explains why punitive voting, protest voting, or strategic abstention emerges as a significant feature of the electoral process that has less prevalence in other relatively stable regimes of the Arab states (Jamal, 2019; Hilal, 2009).

It is repeatedly stated in the scholarly literature that the voting patterns of Palestinians are the result of the combination of different interrelated factors, which can be listed as follows:

1. **The Role of Occupation and the Lack of Sovereignty:** The Israeli occupation represents the most important structural factor that determines the unique features of Palestinian electoral culture, as it directly affects the citizens' confidence in the effectiveness of elections and in the ability of the political system to respond to the election results. Research conducted by Brown (2010), as well as by Brynen (2023), suggests that the lack of sovereignty causes elections to be perceived as a symbol rather than a tool for transferring power.

2. Internal Political Division

The separation between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is a crucial variable for understanding geographical differences in voting and participation trends. Palestinian voters have not been voting for parties due to their political programs, but because of their attitudes towards separation or rejection of the dominant authority. This explains why there has been a rise in abstinence and protest votes (PCPSR, 2023).

3. National Identity and the Symbolic Dimension of Voting

The literature shows that electoral participation in Palestine is closely linked to both identity and a sense of belonging. Voting is seen as a way of belonging and resisting, despite a lack of political outcome (Milton Edwards, 2021).

4. Socioeconomic Factors

Contrary to the crucial importance of economic factors, their role in the case of Palestinians is different from that of other Arabs in terms of impact. Voting patterns are not only based on improvements in living conditions but are also based on the political actor's ability to counteract the impact of the crisis or provide other safety nets in a limited economy (Roy, 2007).

5. Clan and Political Faction

According to local studies, family and faction remain significant factors in local elections. However, it is also a fact that family/faction is linked to other factors in a manner that does not occur in traditional Arab societies (Shikaki, 2006).

Recent literature regards the Palestinian electoral behavior as a specific explanatory model in the realm of electoral behavior studies in non-sovereign or conflict zones. The model does not deny classical theories (rational choice, sociological), but it reinterprets them through the use of concepts such as voting as an act of resistance, abstention as a deliberate act of politics, and symbolic rationality instead of pragmatic rationality (Jamal, 2019; Kalyvas, 2006).

From this viewpoint, it is possible that the case of Palestinians may be conceptualized as providing a theoretical framework that has the potential of being generalized in part to other situations that are not entirely different from the situation that pertains in the case of Palestinians.

The Palestinian electoral process is subject to the General Elections Law, which has undergone significant changes, particularly with the adoption of the mixed electoral system in the 2006 elections. The adopted method combined both proportional representation and party lists along with single-member constituencies. The literature on

this subject has shown that this method influenced voting patterns by increasing factional voting at party list constituencies while maintaining clan influences at constituencies (CEC, 2006). The lack of regularity in conducting elections, and their repeated postponement since 2006, has weakened citizens' confidence in the legal framework itself, and has contributed to consolidating patterns of apathy and doubt in the democratic process, which distinguishes the Palestinian situation from most Arab countries that witness, even if only formally, regular election cycles.

Table (2.1): Comparison of previous studies

Comparative dimension	Palestinian situation	neighboring Arab countries	Arabic studies	Foreign studies
General political context	Occupation, diminished sovereignty, internal political division	Fully sovereign states or stable/transitional regimes	Brown (2010) ؛ Hilal (2006)	Jamal (2019) ؛ Norris (2011)
The function of elections	A symbolic tool for reproducing legitimacy and national expression	A procedural mechanism for the transfer of power or the granting of legitimacy	CEC (2006) ؛ Hilal (2009)	Bratton et al. (2012)
Voting motives	National identity, stance towards the occupation, division	Government performance, programs, economic interests	Roy (2007)	Jamal (2019) ؛ Hilal (2009)
Electoral rationality	Symbolic and identity based rationality (voting as an act of resistance/protest)	Traditional pragmatic rationality	—	Kalyvas (2006) ؛ Jamal (2019)
Trust in elected institutions	Low due to limited actual impact	Relatively high, with variations between countries.	Brown (2010)	Norris (2011) ؛ PCPSR (2023)
Voter apathy	A conscious and politically motivated abstention that reflects a political stance	Apathy resulting from indifference or frustration	Hilal (2009)	Jamal (2019) ؛ PCPSR (2023)
The role of family and clan	Locally influential and intertwined with	Social influencer without a unifying	CEC (2022)	Shikaki (2006)

	faction and national identity	national dimension		
The impact of economic factors	Indirect and politically reinterpreted	Directly influencing the electoral decision	Roy (2007)	Brynen (2023)
electoral system	A mixed system and irregular elections	Stable systems and regular cycles	CEC (2006)	Norris (2011)
explanatory model	A model specific to electoral behavior under occupation	Traditional models ((rational/sociological	—	Jamal (2019) ؛ Hilal (2009)

The table shows that paragraph Arabic studies relied on historical and institutional studies that aimed to describe the development of the Palestinian electoral process, while paragraph foreign studies was based on comparative analytical and theoretical studies that focused on interpreting the uniqueness of Palestinian electoral behavior as a distinctive model in the context of conflict and lack of sovereignty.

2.2.4 Comments on Previous Studies

A glance at the foreign and Arabic literature on voting behavior evidently points out the growing interests of researchers on the phenomenon over the last two decades. But this growth hasn't occurred evenly with regard to the methodology used and the themes studied. While the foreign literature on the phenomenon displays an openness to various theoretical orientations with regard to its interpretation, the Arabic language literature on the phenomenon still remained bound by its descriptive approach and the partial study of variables.

On the academic level of Arabic Studies, the majority of the works conducted so far revolve around the traditional variables of the society, whether of tribal, familial, or sectarian affiliation. This area of study lacks the investigation of new structure variables and their effects on the group's behavior. Despite the fact that there are certain works that tried the approach of the theoretical 'Rational Choices' approach (see Abdul Rahman, 2017) or the 'Cultural Approach' (see Blih and Balqith, 2018), these theoretical approaches have not yet advanced ahead of an easy application on the topic. Additionally,

these works lack the spatial and the correlates of time that could evaluate the changes that occurred over certain numbers of time outside the specific case study of an election.

By contrast, foreign research has indicated an openness toward the psychological study of voting behavior and behavior. Porter (2020), for instance, examined the unconscious part of the voting behavior decision making process, whereas other researchers like Kurella et al. (2024) investigated the issue of different levels of economics as the structural explanation of voting behavior participation. This methodological approach certainly brings an educational dimension that can serve the Palestinian context well because of the intertwining of the psychological (alienation and political frustration) with the material issues (poverty and unemployment), although the method of statistical foreign research usually omits the very complex contexts of the places of the world with situations of occupation and divisions amongst them as well as the Palestinian context.

Methodologically, it may be stated that the descriptive analytic method constitutes the general approach used by the majority of the research; this can be attributed to the fact that this method utilizes the questionnaire method as the principal instrument of investigation; this methodology displays a quantitative approach over the qualitative approach of analysis. At the same time, the method may lack an explanation of the reasons that lie beneath the voting behavior.

The author highlights that there seems to lack sufficient research that adopts a mix of methods that incorporate the quantitative and qualitative elements together. This lack of research makes it weak on the association of variables that are of a sociological and psychological nature. At the same time, other researchers may have gone ahead with the danger of sampling biases by focusing on particular groups of individuals, say students or government employees.

At the theoretical or academic level, it might be argued that there is still a lack of an integrated explanation regarding Palestinian voting behavior. Some analyses have examined variables independently of one other without considering the relationship that might exist between the variables. This study assumes that Palestinian voting behavior cannot be explained with the help of either the logic of action approach or the culture of action approach but requires the formulation of an integrated approach based on the variables of the logic of action approach and the logic of action approach.

The author insists that the Palestinian reality differs significantly from other Arab and world realities that have investigated voting behavior. The Palestinian reality is marked by its lack of political stability on permanent levels due to external occupation and

internal divisions. This renders voting an action that extends well beyond its strictly democratic meaning and becomes a form of nationwide declaration. This renders the explanation of voting behavior amongst the Palestinians dependent on this particular structural meaning that brings together the national, the political, and the social at the same time.

From the researcher's perspective, the most significant methodological shortcomings in previous studies can be summarized as follows:

- The absence of integration between political, social, and economic variables within a single explanatory model.
- An excessive reliance on the descriptive approach without causal or explanatory analysis of the relationships between variables.
- The limited use of comparative methodologies that link election results across time or between different geographical areas.
- The limited number of Palestinian studies focusing on general elections compared to local or university elections.
- The absence of qualitative analysis that can explain the psychological or symbolic motivations for voter participation or abstention.
- Most foreign studies, and some Arab studies, have started from the assumption of a sovereign nation state and a stable political system capable of holding periodic elections (Aldrich, 1993; Almond & Verba, 1963). Indeed, this assumption is a major constraint in any analysis of electoral behavior in Palestine, as it is characterized as being in a state of military occupation if there is an election at all. All of this has not been considered in previous explanations.
- Many studies on Arab and Palestinian electoral behavior examine different variables, such as social, economic, or media-related aspects, but do not build a holistic frame of reference to position these variables in a larger political context. This fragmentation of studies makes them less useful in explaining Palestinian electoral behavior, which takes place in a complex environment in which different aspects, such as the nation, economy, and society, are intertwined.
- Most Palestinian research, particularly that conducted using opinion poll research, was descriptive and limited to examining voting and non-voting trends and did not investigate the political factors that determine such trends. Other international research regarding violence and conflict was also limited to examining the direct effect of

violence on voting and did not investigate the symbolic factors that might encourage people to vote despite the dangers accompanying such voting.

- Despite research being conducted regarding voting within conflict zones, there are relatively few that examine extended occupation as a structural factor that transforms the definition of voting itself. Violence or conflict has been viewed as a situational factor rather than a framework that defines voting intentions, the nature of voting decisions, and voting itself. 5. The symbolic and national aspects of voting have not received much attention.
- Most of the literature to date has been concerned with voting as a rational action or a response to government performance, to the exclusion of the more symbolic aspects of voting, which can be understood as a political protest action, a tool of reproducing legitimacy, or a statement of national identity, all of which are highly relevant to the Palestinian case.
- Limited comparative studies within the Palestinian context itself, although studies have addressed local elections or youth, they have not conducted systematic comparisons between patterns of electoral behavior at different levels (general/local), between social groups (youth non youth), or between different political periods. This has limited the ability to generalize their findings or link them to shifts in the political context.

The researcher concludes that these observations underscore the need for a comprehensive and integrated study that combines quantitative and qualitative analysis and links the three fundamental variables (political, economic, and social) within a unique Palestinian context.

2.2.5 Theoretical Divergences in Explaining Electoral Behavior

After reviewing the foreign and Arabic literature on the topic of the explanation of voting behavior, it became clear that there are different theoretical views with different philosophical foundations and different constructions of the actor. The most well-known of these theoretical views can be abstracted and condensed into the following five theoretical schools closely linked with the Palestinian reality:

1. Rational Choice Theory

This theory assumes that the decision of the voter depends on an attempt to maximize the electoral gain with the least costs (Downs, 1957). This theory stipulates that voting is an

activity that resembles an economics calculation that the voter undertakes by calculating the potential gain of voting a specific candidate or party vis a vis the costs of that voting decision. This theory of voting behavior has a number of practical applications by researchers like Abdul Rahman (2017) and Qorri (2018), but the contention of the researcher with this theory is that this theory may not apply well within the Palestinian context due to the fact that the Palestinian environment lacks certainty and institutions of great esteem.

2. Political Culture Theory

This theory focuses on casting the vote based on the system of values, customs, and perceptions that shape the relationship of the individual with the state and with the world at large (Almond & Verba, 1963). Within the context of the Arab world at large, there are studies that confirm the importance of the relationship of the voter with their families or tribes when casting their votes during elections (Haykal, 2022; Beleih & Belgeith, 2018). The particular study finds the above theory applicable within the context of Palestinian culture because voting becomes an issue of the relationship of the individual with the state on the premise of their belonging to the Palestinian community.

3. Political Clientelism Theory

This phenomenon understands the relationship between the voter and the candidate as an exchange of material or symbolic interests, in which the voter expects rewards of certain services or privileges as an incentive for casting their votes (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007). Kitschelt and Wilkinson's (2007) study confirms that this voting pattern is prevalent in environments where the welfare state is absent and the principle of equal opportunity is weak. Observations made by researchers like Watfa (2012) in Kuwait and Glatte et al. (2024) in Ghana show that this phenomenon still persists with low transparency when it comes to party affairs. The researcher argues that there are instances of clientelism that appear at the Palestinian local elections, specifically at the villages and refugee camps due to the interests of the candidates.

4. Modernization Theory

This theory relies on the degree of development of the economics and education system as well as the openness of the mass media (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005) because the more that knowledge and education are disseminated through various forms of mass communication, the more the individual citizen can make decisions on their own without the pressure of their community. This theory was made clear through the study of Miara et al. (2024) that the younger generations of the Arabs of 1948 lean more toward issues

of civic character and programs than toward their families. But the author of the study finds this theory applicable only if the younger generations of Palestine have been more open to the world of the Internet and local participation after the year 2021.

5. Psychological or Symbolic Interactionism

This method draws on political psychology and argues that voting behavior can be affected by group emotions and feelings of fear, hope, and symbolism. Porter's research (2020) revealed that just under a third of the voting populace make decisions at the very last minute out of psychological motives. Regarding the Palestinian context, the researcher argues that the psychological factor should not be discounted because voting participation or abstention may not only stem from frustration but may also symbolize the group's feelings of resistance.

2.2.5.1 Comparative Analysis

By the comparison of these patterns, the author concludes that there cannot exist only one explanation applicable to Palestinian electoral behavior. This is because "material interest" might be explained by the concept of rationality; "collective belonging" might be explained by the concept of the politicization of culture; "generational shift" might be explained by the concept of modernization; and the concept of symbolism might be used to explain "national identity." This study adopts the multilevel integrative approach that integrates the four different patterns of explanation. The author believes that this form of methodological integration generates the proper depth of an academic analysis.

2.2.6 Research Gap

Through the comparison and analysis of the preceding research on the topic of the relevance of the electoral system of Palestinian Arabs with other variables that affect voting behavior across nations, the knowledge gap appears clearly. Epistemologically speaking, there appears not to have been a single study that considered the relationship between the variables of the system of voting behavior across countries that explain the Palestinian voting behavior phenomenon as a unified system of factors on the Palestinian equation during this modern age of research. Additionally, the preceding research on the topic seems only concerned with the significance of the effect of a single factor on voting behavior within the Palestinian context. For instance, there appears to have been only one

study on the topic that examined the significance of the role of the factor of SM on voting behavior; there appeared to have been only one study on the topic that examined the significance of the factor of the TP on voting behavior; there appeared to have been only one study on the topic that examined the significance of the factor of the PD on voting behavior; there appeared to have been only one study that examined.

The methodological gap manifests itself in several key points:

- **The absence of integrated, multi factor models:** As yet, there hasn't existed a study that incorporates the dimensions of political trust, affiliation, and economics into a convergent model that can explain the voting behavior of the Palestinian citizens. The study believes that there must exist an integration of these three dimensions if the Palestinian voting behavior is to be accurately understood.
- **Weak Link Between Theory and Practice:** Several works have employed the notions of 'political apathy' or 'tribal loyalty' without focusing on them as variables that could actually be measured and investigated through field observations. This study intends to address this limitation by attempting to convert theoretical notions into tangible variables during field investigation.
- **Inadequate Analysis of Economic Factors:** Much of the literature that focuses on this issue seems only to address the political and social dimensions of the phenomenon while ignoring the effects of variables like unemployment and income disparities that contribute immensely to voting behavior in the Palestinian context.
- **Lack of Comparative Time Based Analysis:** Electoral behavior as an area of Palestinian studies has not considered the different phases of electoral behavior (1996, 2006, and 2021), thus highlighting the need for this study because there is a lack of knowledge regarding the changes that might occur due to different variables.
- **Weakness in Integrated Theoretical Application:** Although other theories like the theory of choice and the theory of culture were mentioned, they were not integrated or used as a theoretical approach. This study adopts an integrated approach that brings together the rational dimension (politics and economics of interests), the cultural dimension (identity and belonging), and the institutional dimension that focuses on the trust of the political system.

As a scholar, this knowledge gap signifies more than just the lack of knowledge; it signifies the potential of filling this gap with a new Palestinian mode of exploration of

voting behavior that incorporates the hybrid Palestinian reality of being at the same time modern with aspects of modernization like the voting process and the institution system on the one hand and traditional Palestinian institutions like the Palestinian family and the Palestinian tribe on the other. Finally, the study serves the critical Palestinian need of knowing the Palestinian voting orientation with the new debate over the possibility of new Palestinian general elections that occurred after the great Palestinian division.

As a result, the purpose of this study will seek to address the above dual gap by designing an analytical approach that sufficiently explains Palestinian voting behavior on the bases of the above stated factors of the political variable (trust, participation, and division), the sociological variable (family ties, affiliation, and the mass media), and the economic variable (income levels, unemployment levels, and levels of poverty).

2.2.7 Aspects of Benefiting from Previous Studies

The current study benefited from previous studies as follows:

- Previous studies contributed in determining the sample of the study which is individuals of the Palestinian society who are able to practice election in Palestinian electoral processes.
- The researcher benefited from the previous studies in determining the aspects and dimensions of economic, political and social factors that influence the electoral behavior, and he also benefited in determining the ways of elaborating each of the previous aspects.
- The researcher benefited from previous studies in supporting the researcher's cognitive input.
- The researcher benefited from previous studies that focused on the effect or influence of some determinants so as to offer suggestions and procedures that help in different aspects of the study.
- The previous studies helped in determining the statistical approaches used in this study.
- The previous studies benefited in building the theoretical framework.
- The researcher benefited from previous studies in reviewing the steps and procedures followed by these studies and how to design the study tool.

- The researcher benefited from previous studies in explaining the results of the current study in a scientific way.
- Identifying the position of this study compared to previous studies through clarifying similarities and differences.
- Guiding the researcher to use and benefit from many references in an easy way.

2.2.8 Distinctive Features of the Current Study

Within the limits of the researcher's knowledge and information, the current study is distinguished in:

1. It is the only study that dealt with electoral behavior and combined the political, economic, and social factors together, and to study their effect on the electoral behavior. As a matter of fact, in the Palestinian environment, the factors influencing the electoral behavior are of intertwined nature since the Palestinian society combines between tribalism, family and urban features, and combines between different economic levels, in addition to the variation in businesses and social differences.
2. Preparing a questionnaire to survey the impact of political, economic and social factors on electoral behavior.
3. Highlighting an important Palestinian political issue which is elections and the study of electoral behavior and its determinants in Palestine. There is no doubt that Palestine has a unique nature that requires studying those determinants.
4. The study presented recommendations that might constitute a scientific and practical addition to its subject and contribute to strengthening sound electoral practice in Palestine.
5. Redefining Electoral Behavior Under Occupation: This study examines voting in Palestine not merely as a procedural democratic practice, but as a multidimensional political act where the rational intersects with the symbolic, the economic with the national, and the voluntary with the coercive. In doing so, it transcends traditional models that assume the neutrality of the political context.
6. Building the Integrated Analytical Framework: This research is unique in its application of the integrated analytical framework, which combines the political variables of occupation, division, and legitimacy, economic variables, social variables, and media variables into the analysis. This allows for a level of complexity and reality

in the analysis of the voting patterns of Palestinians which would not be attainable through the separate analysis of each of these variables.

7. This research moves from description to explanation by focusing on the relationship between variables and placing these relationships in a larger structural political context. This means that this research has improved explanatory and scientific value.
8. This research makes a theoretical contribution by pointing out the voting mechanism for political expression in a non-sovereign environment, a point not fully covered in the previous literature on the topic, whether in Arabic or foreign studies.
9. Improving political and practical relevance: The relevance of research extends beyond academic interest because it provides findings that can be used by decision-makers, election institutions, and civil society organizations to understand participation and abstention motives, as well as more appropriately design election policies within the Palestinian reality.

2.2.9 The Conceptual Model

Based on the various theoretical schools presented, and drawing on the researcher's analysis of the Palestinian environment and its political, social, and economic context, an integrated conceptual model can be formulated. This approach synthesizes the theoretical models of Palestinian electoral behavior that have been discussed above (rational choice approach, cultural approach, clientelism approach, modernization approach, and psycho symbolic approach) according to the specifics of the Palestinian context. This approach consists of three major axes that form a circular system with connections between them that cannot be cut. These axes are the following:

1. The Political Dimension

The politicism dimension serves as the motivational system of voting behavior among the Palestinian polls. This system relates to the community's expectations of the performance of institutions and the extent of divisions within factions. On the part of the theory of reason, the voter's decision depends on the voter's estimation of the potential gains that may result, like the improvement of the common condition or the application of the principle of politicism. On the part of the psycho symbolic theory, voting might result as an emotive reaction due to the nationalist feeling of resistance or affiliation with factions. On the part of clientelism theory, voting might result as an activity of an exchange of interests between the voter and the candidate.

As an individual who carries out the research study regarding the Palestinian phenomenon of voting, this dimension of the poll's results seems the most critical and decisive one because it clearly expresses the relationship of the Palestinian individual with the system of government that surrounds them under conditions of occupation and division.

2. The Socio-Cultural Dimension

This dimension deals with variables that are concerned with the structure of society and the type of political culture that prevails there. Family and tribal ties, religious and national affiliations, and the degree of democracy awareness are variables that pertain to this dimension. As according to the theory of political culture, this dimension forms the value system that underlies the behavior of individuals and groups. On the other hand, under modernization theory, its power diminishes with the progression of education and freedom of the mass media; hence the growing autonomy of voting behavior. This dimension of the symbolic theory implies the group's identity, which serves the motive of voting action.

As the researcher points out, the Palestinian phenomenon, with its unique mix of modernity and tradition, offers a special kind of model that combines the values of the traditional culture with the modern expectations of the new generations. This dimension of Palestinian life is thus an active factor that incessantly merges with other aspects of Palestinian reality.

3. The Economic Dimension

This dimension deals with the effects of the individual's and the wider community's economic conditions on voting choices. The theory of rational choice posits that the voting decision depends on the expected gain the individual can get if the particular party or candidate wins the elections. On the other hand, modernization theory explains the increase of participation in the voting process due to the gain of more confidence in the system with the improvement of the country's economy. Current research (Kurella et al., 2024) finds that the poor conditions of the economy might result in abstention or protest voting.

The scholar submits that the economic side of the Palestinian context has increasingly played an important role over the last few years (2020-2025), with the standard of living being considered the decisive factor during voting due to the crisis of salaries and the lack of job prospects in the government and the private sector.

4. Interaction of the Three Dimensions

- This proposed conceptual framework rests on the assumption that Palestinian voting behavior is the result of an intricate relationship between the political, sociological, and economic realms of an exceptional national context. Voting decision cannot possibly remain an individual decision but must be understood as a complicated result of the accumulation of effects generated by the following levels of influence of Palestinian voting behavior:
- **Structure Level:** This corresponds with the global politico economic order that shapes the conditions of participation and decisions (like politicization, economic crisis and occupation).
- **Social Level:** This pertains to the nature of the relationships that affect voting behavior. Examples of these relationships are the family or tribe affiliation, religious affiliations, and area affiliations.
- **The Individual Psychological Level:** This particular level captures the voter's outlook on their own political identity, their feelings about the voting system, the degree of their confidence regarding the significance of voting participation, and their emotive reasons regarding voting and abstention.

The author argues that these three levels do not exist independently but have interactions that occur on a mutually dependent relationship that could result in a shift from one state of affairs to the other. This could result because a reduction in the state of voting that results due to the lack of trust could make the voting incentive due to the state of the economy unimportant.

5. Theoretical Summary of the Conceptual Model

Based on the preceding analysis, the internal logic of the model can be represented as follows:

This implies that the nature of the environment impacts the structure of community and feelings of belonging among individuals; these further shapes the individual's psychological experience of voting and ultimately manifests as Palestinian voting behavior with respect to either participation or abstention. This study therefore believes that voting behavior amongst the Palestinian community cannot be viewed as an individual's reaction based on one variable; it arises out of an interlinked system of various variables that define the nature of the Palestinian community that finds its home under the conditions of democracy under occupation.

2.2.10 Conclusion

Based on an analysis of the preceding literature on the topic, it could well be presumed that voting behavior is an intricate phenomenon that depends on various interconnected variables within the context of the Arabs as well as that of the Palestinian experience. This phenomenon cannot adequately be explained based on a singular point of view or on the premise of a single variable. These variables include the politologic variables of trust and the divisions within factions; the variables of identity, including those based on the familial and tribal structures of Palestinian society; and the variables of economics that create conditions of poverty and unemployment.

Indeed, the literature revealed that these issues have traditionally been studied in a fragmented manner. As the research hypothesis assumes that Palestinian voting behavior might still have its unique context which needs an integrated analysis of these variables based on the practical context of the Palestinian population; therefore, the researcher believes there must be an immediate need for developing an integrated theoretical approach that brings both the structural and the functional aspects of voting behavior together.

Indeed, the Palestinian experience requires an alternative mode of thinking that differs significantly from that of the Western and Arab literary experience. Electoral politics should not merely be considered from the perspective of democracy; it also serves as a way of asserting Palestinian identity and affinity with the Palestinian experience of occupation and division. The argument of the researcher thus introduces the concept that the Palestinian experience of elections is a manifestation of dual socio-political practice. The methodological framework for this research will follow the same analytical framework as described above. In this regard, it will be seen how the theoretical shortcomings in the literature will be converted to hypotheses to test in this research by means of a field instrument designed to capture exactly how the different aspects of politics impact voting in Palestine. This will enable the identification of the factor that significantly affects the voting behavior of the Palestinian populace.

The researcher expects that with this methodology approach, he will contribute significantly toward the enrichment of scientific knowledge regarding the study of the topic of electoral behavior not only within the context of Palestinian reality but within the Arab context that faces the same conditions of transition within the realms of the political and the social.

Chapter Three: Methodology of the Study and Procedures

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodological and procedural framework used in conducting research on the political, social, and economic determinants that influence Palestinian election behavior. The importance of this chapter lies in its ability to explain the scientific tenets that underlie data collection and analysis, align research methodology with research problems, questions, and objectives, and provide an opportunity to assess the scientific validity of research findings.

3.2 Study Methodology

In this research, a descriptive-analytic approach is used. This is considered the most suitable approach in dealing with the problem under investigation. The goal is to describe the voting behavior among Palestinians, analyze the political, social, and economic factors surrounding it, as well as find the disparities among the varied demographics. This approach is appropriate for a number of scholarly reasons. Firstly, the research questions are not aimed at determining a strict causal relationship or evaluating the impact of an experimental treatment but are instead concerned with recording trends, attitudes, and perceptions of voters as they emerge in today's Palestinian political environment. This corresponds to the nature of research in behavioral studies in transitional settings (Dalton, 2018). Secondly, this phenomenon being researched occurs in an environment of political instability characterized by occupation, divisions, and electoral process interruptions, making it impossible to apply an experimental design (Hilal, 2021; Norris, 2018). Thirdly, this descriptive-analytical research design allows for the synthesis of quantitative descriptions and analytical interpretations in terms of a conflict zone electoral behavior paradigm (Milton Edwards, 2021).

Besides the above-mentioned methodological alternatives, other methodologies were considered, such as qualitative and mixed methodologies. Nonetheless, qualitative methodologies lack the ability to generalize research outcomes for a wide representation of voters, while mixed methodologies face challenges in terms of time constraints in carrying out fieldwork in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Brynen, 2023). Therefore, the

choice for the descriptive-analytic method was considered, taking into consideration the limitation in establishing cause-and-effect relations.

3.3 Study Population and Sample

The study population includes all Palestinian voters who are eligible to cast their votes during legislative, presidential, and municipal elections within the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This study community is considered an intricate and unorthodox form of politics due to the presence of various determinants that influence politics within this community. These determinants include the national dimension that is linked to the presence of an occupation, the internal dimension that is associated with politics and division, and the socio-economic dimension that is characterized by structural instability (Hilal, 2021). Various studies have found that Palestinian electoral politics cannot be viewed independently of these various dimensions and thus cannot be associated with electoral politics found within established democracies (Milton Edwards, 2021; Brynen, 2023).

The research used a sample population of 756 participants from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The sample size was determined in a manner consistent with statistical standards that govern social scientific studies. A minimum of 384 participants is considered sufficient to represent large populations in statistical studies, and any number beyond that increases the level of accuracy and lowers the level of error (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). The sample size used in the study not only meets the required minimum to represent the population but also provides a reliable database that allows for accurate subgroup comparison.

Proportional stratified sampling was used in the study to ensure that key variables that relate to voting behavior, such as gender, age, level of education, residence, affiliation, and geographic area (West Bank/Gaza Strip), are well represented. This method is considered very suitable for studying political behavior in plural societies because it eliminates bias and prevents domination by a particular group (Babbie, 2020). This method involves dividing the population into homogeneous subgroups (strata) based on specific variables, and then selecting a random sample from each stratum in proportion to its size in the target population.

This was implemented by using an electric distribution of the questionnaire on the basis of proportional quotas for the above variables, which is a describable process using methodology termed “quota stratification.” Though this process does not allow for

complete randomness from an analytical standpoint, it is an acceptable methodology under the constraints of research in the Palestinian setting, which have been outlined in research reports by research institutions in Palestine and internationally (PCPSR, 2024; Norris, 2018). Below this point is the demographic information of the study sample presented.

Table (3.1): Distribution of the Sample by Demographic Variables

Statement	Variable	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	561	74.20%
	Female	195	25.80%
Age Group	18 to under 30 years	105	13.90%
	30 to under 40 years	187	24.70%
	40 to under 50 years	232	30.70%
	50 years and above	232	30.70%
Place of Residence	City	366	48.40%
	Village	327	43.30%
	Camp	63	8.30%
Occupation	Government employee	606	80.20%
	Private Sector	87	11.50%
	Freelance Self employed	63	8.30%
Academic Qualification	B.A.	477	63.10%
	Postgraduate Higher Studies	224	29.60%
	Secondary School or below	55	7.30%
Work Status	Full-time worker	683	90.30%
	Part-time worker	46	6.10%
	Unemployed	27	3.60%
Geographical Location	West Bank	635	83.90%
	Gaza Strip	121	16.10%
Political Party Membership	Currently joins a party	424	56.10%
	Does not join a party	273	36.10%
	Was joining a political party	59	7.80%

Table 3.1 shows the demographic characteristics of the sample, revealing a diverse and active cross-section of Palestinian society, which accurately reflects the socio-political realities related to electoral behavior. This sample represented roughly three-fourths of the male and roughly one-fourth of the female population. This disparity may go unobserved at first glance, but the fact that there is considerable female representation assumes significance when considering the fact that Palestinian females have recently increased their active role as voting citizens and not just passive recipients of the voting process as indicated by the results of the municipal and legislative elections of 2005.

Turning to age groups, the sample represented well the more politicized part of the community (40 years of age or older), who have voted in the elections and know the history of the changes that took place. This further reinforces the results of this study because this group of people's know-how of the issues at hand is not generated out of emotion or the campaign of the party but out of their experience with the government and their potential experience with the party during the elections. On the other hand, the sample of the study contained the youngest adults aged 18-30 years so that the study could examine the contrast between the "experiential" and the "digital" generations.

Concerning their residence location, the sample group could be divided according to the citizens' place of residence being cities, villages, or refugee camps. This is because the sample group consists of more inhabitants of cities. This makes the study more reliable regarding the distinction that may exist between the citizens of cities who tend to live near institutions and voting occasions and the citizens of villages or refugee camps who tend to live according to their relatives and the community's interests. The subjects who live in the refugee camps have the most sensitive political part regarding their identity and right of return.

As regards occupation, there appears to be a considerable proportion of the sample who are government or semi-government employees representing the group that owes the most allegiance to the party system due to their susceptibility to the influence of the polity and their knowledge of the performance of the government. Besides this group of state and semi-state employees, the sample comprises other categories of workers too, such as the employed in the corporate sector and the jobless. This makes the sample economically representative because the effects of their economic condition on their voting behavior can be examined.

As for the employment status variable, the overwhelming majority of the sample comprises full-time workers. This adds a solid sociological community base to the study.

People who are full-time workers tend to make more calculated voting decisions based on their responsibilities and financial security. As for the educational attainment variable, the sample comprises a very strong proportion of individuals with university and advanced degrees. This is an important factor that adds great value to this study, since people with higher levels of education are likely to carefully study party programs and make informed decisions. The study acquires greater validity while examining voting trends and awareness.

The table below shows the distribution of the sample among the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Despite the existence of disparities, the distribution of the sample is based on the realities of data collection in the Palestinian context, particularly considering the political and security restrictions in the Gaza Strip. However, the distribution of the sample from the two regions is crucial as it gives the study a comparative element considering the differences in the two regions' political and administrative environment (Brynen, 2023). The distribution of the sample according to the "party affiliation" variable reveals a diversity in the political backgrounds of the participants, who fall into the following categories: current members (424 individuals, representing 56.1%), non-members (273 individuals, representing 36.1%), or former members (59 individuals, representing 7.8%). It is important to clarify that this distribution reflects the actual composition of the collected sample and does not represent a standard or criterion adopted in the sample selection process.

The study employed stratified sampling to ensure the representation of the key variables that most significantly influence the representation of the target population: gender, age groups, and place of residence (city, village, camp). The proportions of these variables were determined based on data from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics to guarantee accurate representation. Subsequently, data were collected via an electronic questionnaire using proportional quotas for these variables, a methodologically acceptable approach in challenging research contexts such as the Palestinian context (Babi, 2020).

The distribution of the party affiliation variable, as shown in the table, is a natural consequence of applying these criteria. This means that the observed diversity in the political affiliations of the sample reflects the true diversity within Palestinian society and strengthens the study's ability to analyze the impact of this variable as an independent factor on electoral behavior, which will be discussed in detail in the results and discussion chapter. This diversity enriches the study analytically, allowing for a comparison of

electoral behavior patterns among different voter groups according to their party affiliation, without implying that the sample was selected based solely on this affiliation.

3.4 Study Tools

The research made use of a questionnaire as its major tool for gathering data, based on its wide usage and relevance in studying voting patterns, especially in determining trends, attitudes, and perceptions on a large population (Creswell, 2014; Babbie, 2020). The tool was designed in line with the research theoretical framework and based on previous studies on the factors that influence voting patterns in a Palestinian setting and other countries under transition and conflict (Hilal, 2021; Jamal, 2019; Milton-Edwards, 2021). The tool is divided into two sections:

Section 1: It is about personal data (sex, age group, place of residence, occupation, academic qualifications, work status, geographical location, membership in political parties).

Section 2: The items of the questionnaire consist of 33 items and of three main axes: axis one: political factors and include 17 items; axis two: economic and social factors and include 16 items. The following table (3.2) shows the distribution of the questionnaire across the fields.

Table (3.2) Distribution of Items Across the Questionnaire Fields

Field	Number of items	Item number
Political Factors	17	1 - 17
Economic and Social Factors	16	18 - 33

Table (3.2) illustrates the distribution of questionnaire items across the study's themes. The table shows that the political theme comprised the 17 of items, a deliberate distribution reflecting the centrality of political factors in explaining Palestinian electoral behavior, particularly in light of the occupation, political division, and the disruption of the electoral process. Items within this theme included topics related to the impact of the occupation, the performance of the governing authority, trust in political institutions, internal division, election campaigns, and the role of political factions. The socio-economic sphere included questions about economic situation, unemployment, family connections, educational attainment, social influence, and social media use. The representation reflects a balance between the structural and situational components of

electoral behavior and is consistent with findings suggesting that voting in the Palestinian context is a resultant process of politics, economics, and societal structures (Mas, 2020; Brynen, 2023). Recent research has confirmed this claim and demonstrated that economic variables do not operate as independent predictors of political actions but are interlinked with a conflict context and national circumstances (e.g., a research entitled “Should I Trade or Should I Go to War?”). The research has demonstrated that people living in conflict-affected areas might find preferable political and conflict-related alternatives despite them contradicting economic goals and therefore reduce the significance of economic explanations for voting decision-making in conflict-affected areas.

The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." This scale is commonly used in political trend research due to its statistical flexibility and the ability to conduct accurate comparative analyses of means (Field, 2013).

The respondent's score on the same questionnaire is calculated by adding up his scores to each domain and adding up the scores for all domains to calculate the total score for the factors influencing electoral behavior. The score on the questionnaire as a whole range from 33 to 165 points, with a low score indicating weak factors influencing electoral behavior, while a high score indicates strong factors influencing electoral behavior.

3.5 Study Adopted Criterion:

As the five-point sample Likert scale was used in preparing the tool of the study, it adopted the Criterion shown in the table (3.3) so as to judge the direction of each item when using the five-point Likert scale, and basically depending on the arithmetic mean value and the relative weight to determine the level of agreement with the items and dimensions of the study. The length of the period for the arithmetic mean was calculated by dividing the range by the minimum number of levels of answers to be classified, taking into consideration that the range is the maximum value in the five-point Likert scale minus the minimum value ($5 - 1 = 4$). As a result, the length of the period for the arithmetic means equals ($4 \text{ divided by } 5 = 0.8$). This gives the longest periods of the arithmetic means and through which the result of each item of the study will be determined, the result of each dimension will also be finally determined. The following table shows these levels:

Table (3.3): Levels of Assessment Adopted in the Study

Availability degree	Corresponding relative weight	Cell length
Strongly disagree	From 0.36 and below	From 1.00 – 1.80
Disagree	From 0.36 - 0.52	From 1.81 – 2.60
Neutral	From 0.52 - 0.68	From 2.61-3.40
Agree	From 0.68 to 0.84	From 3.41 – 4.20
Strongly agree	From 0.84 - 1:00	From 4.21 – 5.00

The table shows a statistical significance where the means less than 1.80 shows a strong disagreement on the item or the dimension as a variable. The means between (1.80 - 2.59) shows a level of low agreement on the item or the dimension as a whole. The means between (3.40- 4.19) shows a great agreement on the item or the dimension, as a whole. Means above (4.30) shows strong agreement on the item or the dimension as a whole.

3.6 Questionnaire Validity

The verification of the validity of a research instrument is a basic methodological requirement in quantitative research, particularly in studies that involve complex and interconnected constructs in politics and behavior. A mere logical ordering of items is not sufficient; the research instrument needs to be rigorously validated to ensure that it measures the desired constructs (DeVellis, 2017). In this study, two methods of validity verification were used: expert validity and internal consistency.

First: Expert Validity (Face Validity and Content Validity).

In the preliminary stage, the questionnaire was conducted among the pool of experts who specialized in the fields of political science, methodology, research methods, and statistics. This was done to ensure the language used was precise, the items were clear and appropriate in the context of the Palestinian political and social setting, and the questionnaire was complete in covering the aspects of election behaviors as outlined in the theoretical framework and existing research. The feedback from the reviewers was focused on various aspects, which included minimizing overlap in the items, ensuring uniform wording, and avoiding words or phrases open to interpretation or embedding bias.

The suggested changes were implemented in a careful manner, which resulted in increased conceptual unity and enhanced content validity. The items are more precise in capturing the political, societal, and economic factors that influence electoral behavior among Palestinians, which corresponds with the criteria of the construction of instruments of social measurement (Creswell, 2014).

Second: Internal Consistency Validity.

Internal consistency validity was established using Pearson's correlation coefficient to determine the correlation between each item score and the overall score for its respective axis. The value measures how well each item is a determinant of the overall score for its respective axis. Table 3.4 shows the correlation coefficients for items forming the political factors axis:

Table (3.4): Correlation Coefficient between the score of each item in the first axis (Political factors) and the total score of the axis

First Axis: Political Factors		Correlation coefficient	significance level
1	The electoral behavior of the Palestinian voter is affected by the ruling authority or the party that represents it	0.340	0.001
2	The values of toleration adopted by the individual affect his electoral behavior	0.515	0.001
3	The values of affiliation adopted by the individual affect his electoral behavior	0.408	0.001
4	Thinking in the future of Palestine influences the electoral behavior of the Palestinian voter	0.556	0.001
5	Ideological attitude towards pluralism and public participation in politics affect electoral behavior	0.540	0.001
6	The citizen's understanding of national laws and legislations affects his electoral practices	0.552	0.001
7	The historical reading of policies and the political figures affect the electoral practices of the Palestinian voter	0.563	0.001

8	The status and the realism of the electoral program of parties and receiving it by the citizens influence his electoral behaviors	0.627	0.001
9	The electoral behavior of the Palestinian voter is supported by the nature of the electoral campaign of political parties.	0.562	0.001
10	The political and historical commitment of political parties in their electoral programs affect the electoral behavior of the Palestinian voters.	0.577	0.001
11	The individual's analysis of Political News plays an important role in forming his electoral behavior.	0.558	0.001
12	Opinion polls on political affairs that are widespread during contribute in shaping the political behavior of voters.	0.526	0.001
13	The ideology of coexistence with political pluralism represents a fundamental pillar in understanding the behaviors of the Palestinian elector.	0.597	0.001
14	The citizens' opinion about the political parties' stand towards the Israeli occupation plays a role in determining their choice of the candidates of the parties.	0.574	0.001
15	Personal ideas about the issues of negotiations and the political compromise with the Israeli occupation direct the behavior of the Palestinian voter.	0.571	0.001
16	The stand of political parties and their relationships with neighboring countries are considered an important determinant of the behavior of the Palestinian voter.	0.486	0.001

17	The Crisis of confidence that the Palestinian citizens are experiencing towards political elites contributes in forming their electoral behavior.	0.383	0.001
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The data shown in Table 3.4 indicate that the value of all correlation coefficients is positive and significant at the 0.001 level, which is above the minimum acceptable level of 0.30. This is evidence of strong internal consistency among the items defining the political dimension. This is further evidence that the political questions answered by the mentioned items, which include the effects of the occupation, political division, performance of the ruling authority, trust in the institution, and the viability of the election process, collectively represent a comprehensive conceptual framework in the collective consciousness of the Palestinian voter.

It is also noteworthy that the items related to major structural issues (occupation, division, and political legitimacy) recorded relatively higher correlation coefficients than those related to procedural or circumstantial aspects of the electoral process. This can be explained by the fact that the Palestinian voter tends to evaluate elections from a comprehensive political perspective related to the nature of the political system and the general context of the conflict, rather than focusing on procedural details, as confirmed by multiple studies that dealt with political behavior in unstable environments (Hilal, 2021; Milton-Edwards, 2021).

Table (3.5): The Correlation Coefficient Between the Score of Each Item in the Second Axis (Economic And Social Factors) With The Total Score Of The Axis

	Second Axis (economic and social factors)	Correlation coefficient	Significance level
18	The economic status in the Palestinian region affects the electoral behavior of the electors there	0.569	0.001
19	Money paid by political parties' forms factors of pressure on the behavior of voters.	0.515	0.001
20	The Palestinian voters respond to the candidate of economic insight in his electoral program.	0.581	0.001
21	The Palestinian voter is interested in candidates of family or geographical influence.	0.431	0.001
22	Life circumstances of voters affect the voter's choices and decisions in elections.	0.601	0.001

23	The degree of accepting the party by the public and the continuous dialogue with them affect their behaviors and decisions.	0.593	0.001
24	The parties interest in social issues plays an important role in directing and determining his electoral behavior and ethics.	0.597	0.001
25	The cultural factors including values, and habits and tradition influence the behaviors of the Palestinian voter.	0.556	0.001
26	Social and charitable work initiatives of the Palestinian parties play an important role in forming the behaviors of voters.	0.574	0.001
27	The Palestinian citizens' emancipation from tribal affiliation is considered a major factor in determining his electoral behavior and decision.	0.487	0.001
28	Political dialogues within family groups affect voter practices.	0.568	0.001
29	Educational level affects the electoral behavior and practices.	0.496	0.001
30	Social media is a fundamental driver in forming the Palestinian voter behavior.	0.578	0.001
31	Citizen's opinion about the ways parties deal with and manage international aids in Palestine contribute in determining the electoral choices.	0.626	0.001
32	The comparison that Palestinians witness in both parts of the homeland between the management of geographical areas, Gaza Strip and the West Bank, is reflected in the choices of the voters.	0.596	0.001
33	Citizens opinions about the economic priorities suggested by the parties' electoral program and confidence in them are reflected in their electoral behavior.	0.640	0.001

Table (3.5) presents the correlation coefficients for the items within the socioeconomic factors axis. The results show that all items achieved statistically significant correlation coefficients exceeding the minimum acceptable threshold. However, the magnitudes of the correlations showed greater variability in relation to the political dimension. This is what is expected from the methodology, due to the multidimensional nature of the political dimension, which includes economic situation, unemployment, ties of family, level of education, social influence, and patterns of communication.

These results indicate that there are diverse patterns of voting influenced by these factors according to the voter's socioeconomic characteristics. The findings are also consistent with current research conducted in the Palestinian setting, which has demonstrated that economic factors and social assistance can alter voting patterns and political affiliation not as manifestations of political ideology but as reactions to a particular socioeconomic context. Under this aspect, research entitled "Aid and Radicalization: The Case of Hamas in the West Bank and Gaza" has demonstrated that "social assistance programs in fragile settings may influence people's political ideologies through notions of social dependency and basic needs satisfaction, but this is not necessarily a manifestation of holding inflexible ideological stances." Nevertheless, the magnitude of the correlation coefficients also highlights that these variables are linked to a similar conceptual framework, the socioeconomic context surrounding the voter. This is consistent with current theories regarding these variables as contexts explaining political phenomena instead of as determining factors (Dalton, 2018).

Table (3.6): The Correlation Coefficient between the score of each axis of the questionnaire and the total score of the questionnaire

Electoral Behavior Questionnaire	Number of items	Correlation Coefficient	Significance Level
first axis (political factors)	17	0.961	0.001
Second axis (Economic and Social factors)	16	0.896	0.001

Table (3.6) shows the correlation coefficients between each of the study's two axes and the total questionnaire score. The results show that there is a strong correlation between the political dimension and total scores, but not as strong as that found for the socio-economic dimension. The implication of this result is that while political factors provide the underlying structure for voting behavior in Palestine, socio-economic factors have a supplementary role to play in influencing this behavior but only to a limited extent.

This result is of particular theoretical importance, as it confirms that voting in the Palestinian context cannot be explained solely by rational economic logic, as in some voting models in established democracies. Rather, it is more closely linked to considerations of national legitimacy, stance on the conflict, and evaluation of overall political performance. This aligns with the literature on electoral behavior in societies under occupation or in situations of political division (Hilal, 2021; Brynen, 2023).

3.7 Questionnaire Reliability

Reliability is an indicator of the consistency and stability of an instrument in measuring the phenomenon under study; that is, its ability to produce similar results when re-administered under similar conditions. To enhance the reliability of the results, the reliability of the questionnaire was verified using two complementary methods: split-half reliability and Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

First: Split-half Methods

The split-half method was used to test the reliability of the questionnaire. The questionnaire is divided into two parts, and through calculating Pearson's correlation coefficient between the scores of the items of the two parts of the questionnaire as a whole and the two axes, and then an adjustment was tested by using the Gitman's equation for the two unequal parts. The table below shows this.

Table (3.7): Additional Reliability Analysis

The Questionnaire	Even Item	Odd Item	Correlation Coefficient	Reliability Coefficient
First axis (political factors)	8	9	0.734	0.843
Second axis (economic and Social factors)	8	8	0.776	0.873
The questionnaire as a whole	16	17	0.838	0.912

Table (3.7) shows the results of the split-half test, where the questionnaire was divided into two parts (even and odd items). Correlation coefficients between the two parts were calculated and then adjusted using Spearman–Brown equations to convert the correlation coefficient into a reliability index equivalent to Cronbach's alpha. Based on the above,

the results show that the correlation coefficient between the two parts for the first axis is approximately 0.734, which translates to a reliability coefficient of 0.843. For the second axis, the correlation coefficient was 0.776 with a reliability coefficient of 0.873. For the questionnaire as a whole, a high reliability coefficient of 0.912 was recorded. These values indicate a high degree of reliability for the instrument, especially when considering the questionnaire as a whole, which confirms that the measurement is consistent across the split and yields consistent results regardless of the item sequence.

On the other hand, the split-half test is useful for determining the stability of the instrument when split, and the Spearman-Brown is used to correct for the effect of splitting the measurement along the scale; the results here are consistent with what psychometric books recommend, that stability values above 0.8 are considered good for applied research (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Streiner, 2003).

Second: Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient

The Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was used to calculate the reliability of the measurement.

Cronbach's Alpha is a statistical tool that is sensitive to mistakes in the sample and the scale, and expresses one content. The reliability of Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was calculated as shown in the following tables:

Table (3.8): Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient

The Questionnaire	Number of Items	Reliability Coefficient
First axis (political factors)	17	0.853
Second axis (economic and Social factors)	16	0.881
The questionnaire as a whole	33	0.775

Table (3.8) presents Cronbach's Alpha values for the first axis (0.853), the second axis (0.881), and the overall questionnaire value (0.775). These figures provide a measure of internal consistency for each dimension; the sub-values for each axis are considered good to strong and indicate adequate internal consistency within the substructures. The relatively lower overall value (0.775) is still higher than the traditional acceptance threshold ($\alpha \geq 0.70$) and is therefore acceptable for research purposes, but it is lower than

the overall split-half value (0.912) reported in Table (3.7). This difference warrants a methodological explanation: the discrepancy may be due to the fact that the Spearman-Brown split-half coefficients represent a corrected estimate of the scale's brevity, while Cronbach's Alpha estimates consistency across all items without adjustment. Further, different item order or grouping procedures may affect the values.

As the alpha value of every sub-dimension exceeds 0.85, it could safely be inferred that every dimension of the study is well-designed and reliable with internal consistency that could accurately predict performance on later test results (George and Mallery, 2003).

Based on the above, it can be said that the study instrument has a high degree of validity and reliability, which justifies its use in analyzing Palestinian electoral behavior and enhances the reliability of the results and conclusions reached by the study.

3.8 Statistical Treatments

Based on the study's problem statement, objectives, and research questions, and in accordance with the descriptive-analytical approach adopted, statistical analyses were systematically and carefully selected to suit the nature of the data and its measurement level. These analyses aim to describe the respondents' attitudes and analyze the differences between them, without claiming to prove definitive causal relationships. The analyses were determined according to the following axes:

First: Statistical Analysis Software

- Data were entered and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), given its scientific reliability and widespread use in social and political science research.
- The software enabled the necessary descriptive and inferential analyses, verification of the instrument's validity and reliability, and testing of differences between groups with high statistical efficiency.

Second: Descriptive Statistics

- Arithmetic means were used to determine the general trend in the respondents' answers regarding the questionnaire items and its main themes.
- Standard deviations were used to measure the degree of dispersion of responses around the means, which helps to explain the level of homogeneity or variability in the respondents' attitudes.

- These procedures are appropriate for the nature of the data in the five-point Likert scale used in the questionnaire, which is one of the most common scales used in studies of political attitudes and behavior (Field, 2013).

Third: Testing Differences Between Groups

- The independent samples t-test was used to examine differences in the mean responses of respondents based on binary variables, such as gender or geographic location (West Bank/Gaza Strip).
- One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to determine differences among more than two groups based on age, educational level, employment status, location of residence, and political affiliation.
- The selection of these tests matched the aims of this research, which were to determine statistically significant differences existing in Palestinian voting patterns according to different variables.

Fourth: Post-tests

- Since statistically significant differences were found among the groups in the one-way ANOVA test, the least significant difference test was used for post hoc comparisons.
- This made it possible to identify the direction and sources of the differences as well as the groups of respondents that were most different from one another in the assessment of the factors influencing voting behavior.

Fifth: Statistical Significance Level

- The level of significance for the test ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) was used as a measure for determining the significance of the results obtained.
- This threshold is in line with the methodological standards of social research as it balances the minimization of Type I error and the preservation of the result's explanatory power.

Sixth: Justification for Using Parametric Statistical Tests

The use of parametric tests for statistics was dependent on the relatively large sample size, which as indicated in methodological literature, makes it possible to use such tests even if there are minor irregularities in the normal distribution of the data. Furthermore, the nature of the data and the limited overlap of the distribution among groups also make it appropriate to use such tests in determining the differences and trends in the data (Field, 2013).

Therefore, this research's statistical methods are in consonance with the theoretical framework, research objectives, research questions, as well as the descriptive analytical

method used in this research, which helps to improve reliability and explanatory powers of this research's findings in understanding Palestinian electoral behavior trends in relation to the identified political, social, and economic variables.

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Chapter Four: Study Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to discuss the findings of the field study, as it relates to the objectives and research questions, and sheds light on the effect of the political, economic, and social variables upon the voting behavior of the Palestinian voter. This study uses data from the questionnaire, which were analyzed by employing the appropriate statistical analysis techniques, as indicated by the descriptive analysis study framework.

This chapter explains the methodological framework underpinning the research. To begin with, the chapter explores the impact of the independent variables: political, economic, and social factors on the dependent variable: Electoral Behavior. Moreover, the chapter explores the existence of significant differences in Electoral Behavior based on demographic variables and political affiliation with a focus on improving understanding of Electoral Behavior in Palestine.

This chapter is not limited to presenting the statistical results, but goes beyond that to interpreting and discussing them in light of the theoretical framework and previous studies that dealt with electoral behavior, taking into account the specificity of the Palestinian case and the limits of the sample and the tool used.

4.2 Results Related to the First Question

Which states: What is the level of the effect of political factors on the electoral behavior of the Palestinian voter?

This table aims to identify the extent to which the sample group perceives the importance of political factors and their influence on the electoral behavior of the Palestinian voter. These factors include: political culture, political awareness, trust in institutions, political socialization, and election campaigns.

Table (4.1) Arithmetic Averages, Standard Deviations, Relative Weights and Availability Degree to the items of the Political Factors

n.	Items of the First Axis (Political Factors)	Average	Standard Deviation	Relative weight	Order
1	The electoral behavior of the Palestinian voter is affected by the ruling authority and the party representing it.	4.21	0.822	0.84	1
2	Values of tolerance adopted by the individual affect his electoral behavior	3.87	0.865	0.77	7
3	Values of affiliation adopted by the individual affect his electoral behavior	4.25	0.723	0.58	17
4	Thinking of the future of Palestine affects the electoral behavior of the Palestinian voter	3.84	0.917	0.77	9
5	Ideological attitudes about pluralism and community political participation affect the electoral behavior	3.84	0.776	0.77	8
6	Citizen's understanding of national laws and legislations affects his electoral practices	3.76	0.959	0.75	11
7	Historical readings on the policies and political figures affects Palestinian electoral practices	3.91	0.842	0.78	4
8	The status and realism of the electoral program of the parties and reading it by the citizen influences his electoral behavior	3.54	0.979	0.71	13
9	The electoral behavior of the Palestinian voter is affected by	3.55	0.955	0.71	12

	the nature of the electoral campaign of political parties				
10	The political and historical commitment of political parties to their electoral programs affect the electoral behavior of the Palestinian voter	3.82	0.854	0.76	10
11	The individual's analysis of political news plays an important role in forming his electoral behavior	3.90	0.784	0.78	5
12	Opinion polls on political affairs that are widespread contribute in shaping the political behavior of the voters	3.40	0.973	0.68	16
13	The ideology of coexistence with political pluralism represents a fundamental pillar in understanding the behavior of the Palestinian voter	3.47	0.963	0.69	14
14	The citizens' opinions about the stand of parties taken towards the Israeli occupation play an important role in determining their choice of the candidates of the parties	4.06	0.812	0.81	3
15	Personal ideas about the issues of negotiations and the political compromise with the Israeli occupation direct the behavior of the Palestinian voter	3.19	0.826	0.78	6
16	The stand of political parties and their relationships with	3.45	0.973	0.69	15

	neighboring countries are considered an important determinant of the behavior of the Palestinian voter				
17	The crisis of confidence that the Palestinian citizen has towards political elites contributes to forming his electoral behavior	4.18	0.751	0.84	2

Table (4.1) shows that political factors play a prominent role in shaping the electoral behavior of Palestinian voters, with relatively high mean scores. This is evidence of a strong political awareness among the group regarding the nature of the political context in which election processes take place. This high score means that election decision-making is not made in a vacuum or without considering the political context but is immediately affected by the nature of the political system, the nature of the dominant authority, and the level of polarization and instability.

The most mentioned part is related to the effect of the ruling authority and their representative party on voting behavior. This could be attributed to the specific situation in the Palestinian case, where the ruling authority is yet considered the major political player because of the weakness of the intermediary institutions and the absence of normal democratic channels. This explanation is supported by Al-Awaji (2010), who argued that in unstable political surroundings, a voter would automatically link their vote to their attitude towards the ruling authority either positively or negatively.

The findings revealed a very high average score for items related to national identity and future concerns over Palestine. This result shows that electoral behavior has been integrated with issues of a national nature in such a way that elections are not just seen as a technical process but are part of a wider political and national struggle. This argument is supported by Mismar (2018), who found that Palestinians do vote on the basis of wider national issues that go beyond electoral manifestos.

Conversely, those concerning electoral program compliance and media campaigns scored relatively lower. This indicates an inconsistency between the proclaimed political rhetoric and citizen trust in its ability to bring about effective change. This is consistent with Abdel-Hayali (2021), who observes that the trust of citizens in electoral rhetoric has decreased in transition nations due to promises that do not culminate in practical results.

On the other hand, from the viewpoint of the critical methodological approach, the tendency of the average scores to be high may be due, to some extent, to the national consensus regarding the political questions. This may limit the ability of the instrument to capture the differences among the respondents, hence the need for caution in generalizing the findings.

4.3 Results Related to The Second Question, Which States

How strong is the impact that economic and societal variables have on the voting behavior among Palestinian voters? This is shown in Table 4.2 below, which presents the findings of a test that was conducted to identify the impact made by various variables such as income, unemployment, poverty, affiliation, and education.

Table (4.2) Arithmetic averages, standard deviations, relative weights, and availability degree of the items of the Economic and Social Factors

n	Items of the Second Axis (Economic and social factors)	Average	Standard Deviation	Relative Weight	Order
1	The economic status in the different Palestinian regions affects the electoral behavior of the Palestinian voter	4.18	0.741	0.84	1
2	Money paid by political party's forms factors of pressure on the behavior of voters	3.88	0.940	0.78	11
3	The Palestinian voter responds to the candidate of economic insight in his electoral program	3.69	0.868	0.74	16
4	The Palestinian voter is more interested in candidates of family or geographical relations	4.04	0.833	0.81	2
5	Life circumstances of voters affect the voters' choices and decisions in elections	4.02	0.762	0.80	3
6	The degree of accepting the party by the public and the	3.88	0.770	0.78	10

	continuous dialogues with them affect their behavior and decisions				
7	The parties' interest in social issues play an important role in directing and determining the behavior and the choices of the Palestinian voter	3.91	0.786	0.78	9
8	The cultural factors (including values, habits and traditions) influence the behavior of the Palestinian voter	3.91	0.754	0.78	8
9	Social and charitable work initiatives play an important role in forming the behavior of the Palestinian voter	3.92	0.771	0.78	6
10	The Palestinian citizen's emancipation from tribal affiliation is considered a major factor in determining his electoral behavior and decision	3.83	0.842	0.77	14
11	Political dialogues within family groups affect voters' practices	3.86	0.763	0.77	13
12	Education level affects the electoral behavior and practices	3.96	0.830	0.79	5
13	Social media sites are considered a fundamental driver in forming the electoral behavior of the Palestinian voter	4.00	0.821	0.80	4
14	Citizen's opinion about the ways parties deal with and	3.87	0.802	0.77	12

	manage international aid in Palestine contributes in determining his electoral choices				
15	The comparison that Palestinians witness in both parts of the homeland between the management of geographical areas, Gaza Strip and the West Bank, is reflected in the choices of the voters	3.91	0.813	0.78	7
16	Citizen's opinions about the economic priorities suggested by the parties' electoral program and confidence in them are reflected in his electoral behavior	3.81	0.821	0.76	15

The findings from the data shown in Table 4.2 suggest that economic and societal issues are important determining factors of the electoral behavior of voters in Palestine. The high scores of the mean value reflect the sensitivity of the population to issues of an economic nature. The sensitivity of the population supports the argument that voters have become more aware of the impact of economic policies on their livelihood due to the deteriorating economic situation.

This result can be explained from the perspective of Rational Choice Theory, according to which people make voting decisions based on cost-benefit calculations (Aldrich, 1993), with voters being more likely to support those whom they consider able to improve their economic situation. This finding is consistent with that of Bliya and Balghith (2018), who found that economic duress reshapes the voter agenda in structurally challenged societies. In the Palestinian situation, the economic dimension cannot be distinguished from the political dimension because economic crises are perceived as direct consequences of the occupation and division. Thus, electoral behavior becomes a simultaneous combination of both political protest and the search for better living conditions. According to Wafaa

(2012), this combination increases the complexity of analyzing electoral behavior in a society that faces both political and economic pressures.

From a critical perspective, it is also likely that the higher means represent characteristics of the sample, which contains an important proportion of public sector employees, who are themselves affected by government economic policies, thus underlining the importance of this variable in their answers.

Table 4.3 attempts to gauge the importance of the two main axes, whose results form the basis of the interpretation of elections for Palestinians.

Table (4.3) Arithmetic Mean and Relative weights for each axis of the questionnaire and the questionnaire as a whole

Axis	Questionnaire of Electoral Behavior	Average	Standard Deviation	Relative Weight
First Axis	Political Factors	64.96	7.818	0.764
Second Axis	Economic and Social Factors	62.67	7.26	0.783
Total Score	Total Score	127.63	13.63	0.774

Table (4.3) shows that both the political and socio-economic axes received high and similar relative weights, with a slight bias towards the socio-economic axis. This result indicates the complexity of the voting pattern of Palestinians, which is not driven by one major variable. The observed convergence represents the ongoing evolution of the voting pattern, in which the voter is no longer driven by either purely ideal or purely political considerations but combines these with more realistic considerations. This interpretation aligns with what Wafaa (2012) pointed out regarding the shift in electoral behavior in Arab societies from ideological voting to performance-based voting.

This result can also be explained in light of Anderson's (2007) assertion that concurrent economic and political crises drive voters to adopt more pragmatic electoral stances, a phenomenon clearly evident in the Palestinian context.

4.4 Results Related to Third Question, Which States

Are there differences of statistical significance in the effects of political and social factors on the electoral behavior of the Palestinian voter that are attributed to the variables of the study (sex, age group, place of residence, occupation, academic qualification, work status, geographical location and membership in political parties)?

The third question has many sub-questions that are answered as follows:

- Question one

Are there differences of statistical significance that can be attributed to effects of political, economic and social factors on the electoral behavior of the Palestinian voter that are caused by the variable of sex (male or female)?

To address the first research question, and to determine whether there are statistically significant differences in the effects of political, economic, and social factors on the electoral behavior of the Palestinian voter attributable to sex (male or female), an Independent Samples T-Test was applied. This test was chosen because it is a parametric method suitable for comparing the means of two independent groups, assuming moderate distribution of scores in both groups and a sample size exceeding 30 participants per group (AlLam, 2005, 2010).

The analysis compared the mean scores of male respondents (N=561) and female respondents (N=195) for each axis of the questionnaire and for the total questionnaire score. Results are summarized in Table (4.4).

Table (4.4): Significance level in the degrees of the means of the study sample due to sex in the questionnaire as a whole and by each axis of the questionnaire

Axis / Total Score	Sex	Mean	Std. Deviation	T-Value	Sig. (p-value)	Statistical Significance
Political Factors	Male	64.76	7.51	-1.202	0.230	Not significant
	Female	65.54	8.63			
Economic & Social Factors	Male	62.54	7.18	-0.816	0.414	Not significant
	Female	63.03	7.47			
Questionnaire Total Score	Male	127.31	13.40	-1.124	>0.05	Not significant
	Female	128.58	14.25			

The results in Table (4.4) indicate no statistically significant differences in electoral behavior attributable to gender, whether in the political or socio-economic factors. This finding can be explained by the unique nature of the Palestinian political experience, characterized by a collective character in which the interests of men and women intersect within a shared national framework.

This supports the findings of Al-Awaji (2010), who states: "The effect of traditional demographic variables diminishes when there is a long-standing political conflict, where national concerns take precedence over differences of gender." This is also supported by

Mismar (2018), who finds that views of politics among women and men in West Bank are becoming more similar.

From a critical perspective, the absence of differences may also stem from the nature of the questionnaire items, which focused on general issues enjoying national consensus. This reduces the likelihood of revealing clear gender disparities, thus warranting caution in interpreting this result.

- **Question Two**

Are there differences of statistical significance in the effects of political, economic and social factors on the electoral behavior of the Palestinian voter that are attributed to age group variable?

To answer this question, a single analysis of variance was conducted to test the effect of the age group (18 - less than 30); and from 30 to less than 40; and from 40 to less than 50 and from 50 and above) on the political, economic and social factors that affect the electoral behavior. The table (4.5) shows that:

Table (4.5): The difference between the average scores of the members of the study sample on the study tool according to the age group for the questionnaire as a whole and for each of the questionnaire's axes (One-way ANOVA Test).

Axis	Source of variance	Sum squares	Degree of freedom	Means of square	F value	Significance level
Political Factors	Between groups	1699.42	3.00	566.47	9.59	0.000
	Within groups	44444.61	752.00	59.10		
	total	46144.04	755.00			
Economic And Social Factors	Between groups	601.14	3.00	200.38	3.85	0.009
	Within groups	39151.85	752.00	52.06		
	total	39752.99	755.00			
The questionnaire as a whole	Between groups	3982.38	3.00	1327.46	7.33	0.000
	Within groups	136276.86	752.00	181.22		
	total	140259.24	755.00			

Table (4.5) shows statistically significant differences between age groups in their perception of political, economic, and social factors. This indicates that age is one of the most important factors influencing political participation and the use of modern media to express their electoral positions.

This finding supports the findings of Jamal (2019) and Alcott et al. (2024) regarding the growing role of social media in stimulating political awareness among young people. It also aligns with Hilal's (2021) assertion that the Palestinian youth generation represents the driving force for political change and demonstrates a high level of national awareness in their participation. It can be concluded that age is the primary driver of Palestinian electoral behavior, and that strengthening political education programs targeting them contributes to increasing the level of public participation.

To identify the most influential age group, the LCD test, means, and standard deviation were used.

Table (4.6): The Arithmetic Means and Standard Deviations of The Fields of the Questionnaire

Axis	Age group	Number	Mean	Standard deviation
Political Factors	18 to less than 30 years	105	65.9238	9.84758
	30 to less than 40 years	187	66.8877	7.72882
	40 to less than 50 years	232	64.9612	6.80611
	Over 50 years	232	62.9828	7.37021
Economic And Social Factors	18 to less than 30 years	105	62.6190	8.89116
	30 to less than 40 years	187	63.3850	7.22313
	40 to less than 50 years	232	63.4009	6.62336
	Over 50 years	232	61.3879	6.87712
The questionnaire as a whole	18 to less than 30 years	105	128.5429	17.25879
	30 to less than 40 years	187	130.2727	13.398.58
	40 to less than 50 years	232	128.3621	12.10159
	Over 50 years	232	124.0707	12.83902

Table (4.7): The Results of LCD For Post-Comparison Differences in The Questionnaire of Electoral Behavior in Accordance to The Variables of Age Group.

Axis		Less than 30 years	Less than 40 years	Less than 50 years	Over 50 years
Political factors	Less than 30 years		-0.9639	0.9626	2.941
	Less than 40 years	-0.9639		1.9265	3.9049
	Less than 50 years	0.9626	1.9265		1.9784
	Over 50 years	2.941	3.9049	1.9784	
Economic And Social Factors	Less than 30 years		-0.7659	-0.7818	1.2311
	Less than 40 years	-0.7659		-0.0158	1.9971
	Less than 50 years	-0.7818	-0.0158		2.0129
	Over 50 years	1.2311	1.9971	2.0129	
The questionnaire as a whole	Less than 30 years		-1.7248	0.1808	4.1722
	Less than 40 years	-1.7298		1.9107	5.9020
	Less than 50 years	0.1808	1.9107		3.9914
	Over 50 years	4.1722	5.9020	3.9914	

It is clear from the above two tables (4.6) and (4.7) that:

- There are statistically significant differences at a significance level of (0.001) between the means of Assessment of the study for the age groups in the first axis (Political Factors) and these differences are in favor of the age group (less than 40 years) over the other age groups (less than 30 years, less than 50 years, older than 50 years).
- There are statistically significant differences at a significance level of (0.001) between the mean estimates of the study sample group in the second axis (Economic and Social factors) and these differences are in favor of the age group (less than 50 years) over the other age groups (less than 30 years, less than 50 years, older than 50 years).
- There are statistically significant differences at a significance level of (0.001) between the mean estimates of the study sample according to age group in the questionnaire as a whole. These differences are in favor of the category (less than 40 years old) over the age groups (less than 30 years old, less than 50 years old, older than 50 years).

The researcher, as these results show, believes that the members of the sample of the questionnaire differ in their knowledge about the factors that influence the electoral

behavior because of age differences. This result reflects the nature and the characteristics of each age group category. Every category has its own political interests as well as its social and economic interests which do not resemble any other category. Moreover, their social and political needs and meeting what is missing or not available according to the insights of the age group is different from that of any other age group. Perhaps, the category of the age group from 30 to less than 40 years old might have the most powerful and effective in the society as it combines between the youth physical energy, and the mentality of the adults. It is also natural that the category (40-50 years) has the most stability in governmental jobs and in the private sector, as well. This is because it has already economically and socially settled, which, in turn, is reflected on the process of thinking of its members, and judging daily life issues in an objective and stable manner. And this is why the differences were in favor of it.

The researcher also points out that, based on this result, it is necessary to invest in all the categories of age groups so as to form the electoral behavior and find out about factors that affect all age groups. This benefits decision makers in election processes in a coherent society. However, this result disagrees with Ali's (2015) study which revealed that there are no differences that can be attributed to the age group category in the effects of social factors on the electoral behavior. It also partially differs with Mohammad's (2021) study which showed that there are no differences in favor of the category of the age group from 18 to less than 30 years.

- Question Three

Are there statistically significant differences in the effects of political, economic and social factors on the electoral behavior of the Palestinian voter that can be attributed to the place of residence variable?

To answer this question, a one-way analysis of variance was conducted to examine the effect of the place of residence variable (village/city/camp) on the political, economic and social factors affecting electoral behavior. The following table shows this:

Table (4.8): The difference between the average scores of the study sample members on the tool of the study according to their place of residence for the questionnaire as a whole and for each axis of the questionnaire (One-Way ANOVA Test)

Axis	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean of Squares	F Value	Significance Level
Political Factors	Between Groups	136.599	2	68.3	1.118	0.328
	Within Groups	46007.44	753	61.099		
	Total	46144.04	755			
Economic and Social Factors	Between Groups	200.898	2	100.44	1.912	0.148
	Within Groups	39552.09	753	52.526		
	Total	39752.99	755			
The Questionnaire as a Whole	Between Groups	661.447	2	330.724	1.784	0.169
	Within Groups	139597.8	753	185.389		
	Total	140259.2	755			

The results in Table (4.8) show no statistically significant differences attributable to the variable of place of residence, whether in urban areas, rural areas, or refugee camps. This homogeneity indicates that Palestinian electoral behavior is influenced by a general political and economic context that transcends traditional geographical differences.

This result can be explained by the unity of the Palestinian political experience, where citizens in different areas face similar political and economic challenges, namely occupation, political division, and deteriorating living conditions. Mismar's study (2018) confirmed that spatial differences in Palestinian electoral behavior are less pronounced compared to other societies due to the dominance of overarching national issues.

However, the possibility that the nature of the sample or its geographical distribution may have contributed to reducing potential differences, especially if some residential groups are underrepresented, cannot be ruled out. This necessitates caution in generalizing these results.

- Question Four

Are there statistically significant differences in the effects of political and economic factors on the electoral behavior of the Palestinian voter that can be attributed to occupation/job variable?

To answer this question, a one-way analysis of variance was conducted to examine the effect of job (governmental job - private sector - freelance work) on the political, economic and social factors that influence the electoral behavior. The following table (4.9) shows that:

Table (4.9): The difference between the average scores of the study sample members on the tool of the study according to the job for the questionnaire as a whole and for each axis of the questionnaire (One - Way ANOVA Test)

Axis	Source of variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean of Squares	F-Value	Significance Level
Political factors	Between groups	59.845	2	29.923	0.489	0.613
	Within groups	46084.191	753	61.201		
	Total	46144.036	755			
Economic And Social Factors	Between groups	263.986	2	131.993	2.517	0.081
	Within groups	39752.002	753	52.442		
	Total	39752.988	755			
The questionnaire as a whole	Between groups	563.516	2	281.758	1.817	0.181
	Within groups	139695.72	753	185.519		
	Total	140259.24	755			

The results in Table (4.9) indicate no statistically significant differences attributable to the employment variable. This can be explained by the similarity of economic challenges faced by different categories of workers, especially given the unstable economic conditions and high unemployment rates.

This result can also be explained by the nature of the sample, which is predominantly composed of public sector employees. This group shares similar working and economic

conditions, thus reducing the likelihood of clear differences in voting behavior. Wafaa (2012) noted that the homogeneity of the sample in terms of employment status may diminish the impact of this variable in the statistical analysis.

From a critical perspective, the absence of differences does not necessarily mean that the employment variable is ineffective in voting behavior. Rather, it may reflect the limitations of the instrument or the low variance within the sample. This necessitates re-examining this variable in subsequent studies with more diverse samples.

- Question Five

Are there statistically significant differences in the effects of political, economic & social factors on the electoral behavior of the Palestinian voter due to the Academic Qualification?

To answer this question, a one-way analysis of variance was conducted to examine the effect of the Academic Qualification on the political, economic and social factors that influence the electoral behavior. The following table (4.10) shows that:

Table (4.10): The difference between the average scores of the study sample members on the tool of the study according to the Academic Qualification for the questionnaire as a whole and for each axis of the questionnaire (One - way ANOVA Test)

Axis	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean of Squares	F-Value	Significance Level
Political Factors	between groups	29.328	2	14.664	0.239	0.787
	within groups	46114.71	753	61.241		
	Total	46144.04	755			
Economic and Social factors	between groups	50.159	2	25.08	0.476	0.622
	within groups	39702.83	753	52.726		
	Total	39752.99	755			
The questionnaire as a whole	between groups	101.441	2	50.72	0.272	0.762
	within groups	140157.8	753	186.133		
	Total	140259.2	755			

The results in Table (4.10) indicate no statistically significant differences in electoral behavior attributable to the educational level variable, whether in the political or economic and social factors. This result suggests a similar level of political and electoral awareness among the sample members, regardless of their educational levels.

This can be explained by the widespread use of traditional media and social media, which have contributed to the generalization of political discourse and transcended traditional educational differences, making political information accessible to broad segments of society. Mismar (2018) noted that sources of political education in Palestinian society are no longer limited to educational institutions but are now produced in the public media sphere.

However, the absence of differences may also reflect the nature of the questionnaire items, which focused on general issues that enjoy relative consensus, thus limiting their ability to detect the qualitative impact of educational level on patterns of political thinking. Wafaa (2012) pointed out that quantitative tools can sometimes fail to capture subtle cognitive differences related to education, especially in politically charged contexts.

Therefore, this result should be interpreted with caution and not considered as conclusive evidence of the absence of the role of education in shaping electoral behavior, but rather as an indication of the limitations of the instrument or the specificity of the sample.

- Question Six

Are there statistically significant differences in the effects of political, economic, and social factors on the electoral behavior of the Palestinian voter due to Work status?

To answer this question, a one-way analysis of variance was conducted to examine the effect of work status (unemployed, temporary worker, regular worker) on economic, political, and social factors that influence the electoral behavior. The following table shows that (4.11):

Table (4.11): Differences between the average scores of the study sample members on the tool of the study according to the status of work for the questionnaire as a whole and for each axis of the questionnaire separately (One-Way ANOVA Test)

Axis	Source of Variation	Sum Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean of Squares	F-Value	Significance Level
Political Factors	between groups	17.428	2	8.714	0.142	0.867
	within groups	46126.61	753	61.257		
	Total	46144.04	755			
Economic and political factors	between groups	39.953	2	19.976	0.379	0.685
	within groups	39713.04	753	52.74		
	Total	39752.99	755			
The questionnaire as a whole	between groups	28.93	2	14.465	0.078	0.925
	within groups	140230.3	753	186.229		
	Total	140259.2	755			

The results in Table (4.11) indicate no statistically significant differences attributable to the employment variable. This can be explained by the similarity of economic challenges faced by different categories of workers, especially given the unstable economic conditions and high unemployment rates.

This result can also be explained by the nature of the sample, which is predominantly composed of public sector employees. This group shares similar working and economic conditions, thus reducing the likelihood of clear differences in voting behavior. Wafaa (2012) noted that the homogeneity of the sample in terms of employment status may diminish the impact of this variable in the statistical analysis.

From a critical perspective, the absence of differences does not necessarily mean that the employment variable is ineffective in voting behavior. Rather, it may reflect the limitations of the instrument or the low variance within the sample. This necessitates re-examining this variable in subsequent studies with more diverse samples.

- Question Seven

Are there statistically significant differences in the effects of political, economic and social factors on the electoral behavior of the Palestinian voter which can be attributed to the geographical location?

To answer this question, a comparison has been held between the mean of scores of the West Bank (N = 635) and the mean of Scores of Gaza Strip (N=121) on the questionnaire of political, economic and social factors that influence the electoral behavior – the topic of the study- by using the T-Test for measuring the differences between the means of two independent samples. The researcher used this parametric statistical test due to the normality of the distributions of the scores in each of the two application groups, adding to the fact that the number of the sample members exceeds thirty individuals (ALLam,2005:2010). The following table (4.12) shows that:

Table (4.12) Significance of the difference in geographical location averages of the scores of the study sample in the questionnaire as a whole and of each axis of the questionnaire (Independent Sample T-Test)

Axis	West Bank Mean	Standard Deviation	Gaza Mean	Standard Deviation	T-Value	Significance Level
Political Factors	64.86	7.83	68.54	6.76	-2.19	0.03 significant at (0.05)
Economic and Social Factors	62.55	7.28	66.68	4.92	-2.64	0.008 significant at (0.01)
The questionnaire as a whole	127.41	13.65	135.23	10.64	-2.66	0.008 significant at (0.01)

It is clear from the table (4.12) that:

- There are statistically significant differences at (0.05) significance level between the assessment of the means of the study sample in the first axis (Political factors) which are attributed to the geographical location for the benefit of Gaza residents.
- There are statistically significant differences at (0.01) significance level between the assessment of the two means of the study sample in the second axis (economic and social factors) that are attributed to the geographical location for the benefit of Gaza residents.

- There are statistically significant differences at (0.01) significance level between the assessment of the two means of the study sample in the questionnaire as a whole that are attributed to the geographical location for the benefit of Gaza Strip residents.

This result is natural due to the life circumstances the residents of Gaza Strip survive, taking into consideration that the tool of the study had been applied at a genocide war that the world had never witnessed before, and the people of Gaza are surviving catastrophic and serious life situations. The symptoms of the economic crisis are very clear and they are manifested in the absence of food security and in the economic destruction of commercial and economic facilities, and in the mass destruction of educational, health and social institutions, and of homes and residential buildings. All of this, along with other causes, has a great impact on social and economic factors that affect the electoral behavior and makes it viewed differently by citizens in the West Bank. Moreover, the Gaza society survives a crisis of confidence in all political elites as proved in the study as shown in the first axis. Thus, we can say that the results of the study are consistent with each other. Moreover, the study results are consistent with the results of the study by Abdullah and Abdullah (2019), which showed that there are differences in the area of residence in the effect of political upbringing on the electoral behavior.

Therefore, these differences cannot be explained as a direct reflection of fundamental differences in political culture or electoral awareness between the inhabitants of the two regions, but rather as a reflection of the different political, economic, and social contexts in which individuals live in each region. Furthermore, the varying response rates may contribute to amplifying the statistical differences, which necessitates treating these results as analytical indicators linked to the sample context, not as generalizations about Palestinian society as a whole. Thus, the geographical differences are explained within the framework of differing objective circumstances, not by differences in political awareness or national affiliation.

- Question Eight

Are there statistically significant differences in the effects of political, economic and social factors on the electoral behavior that can be attributed to political membership in political parties' variable?

To answer this question, a one-way analysis of variance was conducted to examine the effect of membership in political parties (joining a political party – was joining a political party – not joining a political party) on the political, economic and social factors that influence the electoral behavior. The table (4.13) shows that:

Table (4.13): The difference between the average scores of the study sample members on the study tool according to their affiliation with political parties for the questionnaire as a whole and for each of the questionnaire's axes (One-Way ANOVA) Test.

Axis	Source of Variance	Sum Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean of Squares	F Value	Significance Level
Political Factors	Between groups	271.339	2	135.669	2.227	0.109
	Within groups	45872.7	753	60.92		
	Total	46144.04	755			
Economic and Social Factors	Between groups	671.246	2	335.623	6.467	0.002
	Within groups	39081.74	753	51.901		
	Total	39752.99	755			
The questionnaire as a whole	Between groups	1750.748	2	875.374	4.759	0.009
	Within groups	138508.5	753	183.942		
	Total	140259.2	755			

The results in Table (4.13) showed that political factors did not produce statistically significant differences between party members and non-members, while statistically significant differences were found in economic and social factors, as well as in the overall dimensions, favoring party members.

This result means that party affiliation does not create differences in general political positions, but it does enhance awareness of economic and social issues as a result of participation in organizational discussions and internal education. This result is consistent with what Hilal (2015) and Lo'ay (2017) indicated, namely that partisanship in Palestine is more of a national mobilization than an ideological one, but it does provide members with opportunities for interaction and education on societal issues. It also supports the party identity theory (Campbell et al., 1960), which posits that party affiliation gives individuals a particular perspective for interpreting economic and social reality, without necessarily changing their general political positions.

To identify the most influential group, arithmetic means and standard deviations were used, in addition to a post-test (LSD). The results showed the following:

Table (4.14): the arithmetic means and the standard deviations for the degrees of the study according to joining a political party variable for the questionnaire as a whole and for each of the questionnaire's axes

Axis	joining a political party Group	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation
Political Factors	Joining	424	65.4269	7.421141
	Not Joining	273	64.5788	8.28326
	Was Joining	59	63.4237	8.21312
Economic and Social Factors	Joining	424	63.4906	6.96733
	Not Joining	273	61.7436	7.34448
	Was Joining	59	61.0678	8.17453
The questionnaire as a whole	Joining	424	128.9175	12.90446
	Not Joining	273	126.3223	14.11216
	Was Joining	59	124.4915	15.4801

Table (4.15): LCD Test for the Post comparison in the differences of the questionnaire of the electoral behavior of the Palestinian voter according to joining political party's variable.

Axis		joining	Not joining	Was joining
Economic and Social Factors	joining		1.7469	2.4228
	Not joining	1.7469		0.6758
	Was joining	2.4228	0.6758	
The questionnaire as a whole	joining		2.5951	4.4259
	Not joining	2.5951		1.83.8
	Was joining	4.4259	1.83.8	

The table (4.15) shows that:

- There are no statistically significant differences between the two means of the assessment of the sample study in the first axis (Political factors) that are attributed to joining political parties.
- There are statistically significant differences at significance level (0.001) between the two means of the assessment of the study sample in the second axis (economic and social factors) that are attributed to the variable of joining a political party for the benefit of those who are joining a political party.

- There are statistically significant differences at (0.001) significance level between the two means of the assessment of the study sample in the questionnaire as a whole that are attributed to the variable of joining political parties for the benefit of those who are joining political parties.

It is possible to say that the political parties have several mobilization means and they care much for a special political upbringing. Moreover, those who follow or join a political party have political as well as electoral awareness more than others. As for the political and social factors, this results from the electoral programs that each party has, and due to the ideas and approaches they offer to change and improve the social and economic aspects, which is reflected on the individual's electoral behavior.

Chapter Five: Results and recommendations

5.1 Discussion of the Results

- First: The Main Question

What is the impact of political, economic, and social variables on the electoral behavior of Palestinian voters in the West Bank and Gaza Strip from 2006 to 2025?

Findings show that Palestinian electoral behavior is a result of a combination of a variety of factors, including political, economic, and social determinants in a non-sovereign Palestinian state. None of these factors works independently in a system where every factor is interconnected in a unique manner in a non-sovereign Palestinian state. The findings of this study support a theory that argues that electoral behavior in a non-sovereign state like Palestine cannot be explained by traditional electoral behavior theory (Hilal, 2009; Norris, 2011).

The results show that political factors, specifically occupation and division, form the macro-culture in which economic and social factors are revalued. This supports Jamal (2019) and Milton-Edwards (2021), who argue that voting in the Palestinian case goes beyond a rational-choice behavior and becomes a symbolic or protest vote. Furthermore, the results also show that economic deterioration or unemployment does not necessarily lead to apathy towards voting but may also result in punitive or socially loyal voting behavior, consistent with the findings of PCPSR (2023) and Brynen (2023).

- Second: Sub-question 1

The results show that political considerations have been the primary determinant of voting patterns in Palestine. The protracted Israeli occupation has led to a loss of voters' confidence in the very process of elections, which is manifested in their higher tendency to abstain from voting or engage in protest voting. The result is consistent with the claims of Hilal (2009) and Brown (2010) that elections in Palestine take place in a limited arena of sovereignty, which has further weakened voters' feelings of ability to bring about change.

The results show that the deficiencies of performance of the PA, along with the continued division of the Palestinians, have led to an increase in political alienation, particularly for young generations. The above interpretation is supported by data from PCPSR (2023) surveys, according to which there is little trust in representative institutions. Taken

together, they support Schedler (2006)'s interpretation of voting abstention in transitional systems not to be understood as passive, but active in expressing disapproval of the prevailing political regime.

- Third: Sub-Question Two

From these findings, it is clear that societal variables, specifically family and clan affiliation, are still crucial in determining election behavior, particularly in local and legislative elections. This is in line with the sociological approach to election behavior (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944; Campbell et al., 1960). Additionally, it supports the findings made by Shikaki (2006) and Hilal (2006) on the significance of such variables.

In regard to educational attainment, the data shows that there is no direct positive relationship between education and voter turnout. However, there may be an indirect relationship between education and more critical attitudes toward the political system, as postulated in Dalton (2017)'s "critical citizen." Turning to the economic aspect, the effect of unemployment and the deterioration of the standard of living is an indirect one because it affects protest voting or conscious abstention, as supported by the World Bank (2022) and the PCPSRR (2024) reports.

- Third: Sub-Question Three

The results show significant differences in voting patterns based on age, political affiliation, and geographical location but not with respect to other attributes like gender or level of education. This outcome is highly explanatorily relevant because it indicates that voting patterns in Palestine tend to be more politicized than being driven by the usual demographic attributes.

1. Age-Related Differences

The results make it clear that age is an essential variable in explaining electoral behavior variation. The younger generations display low levels of electoral process trust and display unconventional patterns of electoral participation, such as strategic abstention or critical attitudes toward elections. This finding is related to Dalton (2016), who points out the appearance of the "critical citizen" typical voter, characterized by high levels of political awareness and low levels of institutional trust.

In the Palestinian setting, the generation gap is further exacerbated by the accumulation of political experience. The older generation has a political memory rooted in the perception of elections as a tool of national legitimacy building, specifically in the context of the 1996 and 2006 election cycles. The younger generation, on the other hand, was socialized in an environment characterized by polarization in the political arena and the

derailment of the democratic process, causing it to reappraise the role of elections as an instrument of limited efficacy (Hilal, 2009; Jamal, 2019). Thus, the intergenerational differences in election-related behaviors tend to be less about the manifestation of differing levels of political interest and more about the differences in perceptions of the election process's efficacy.

2. Differences Related to Political Affiliation

The data show that there are significant differences that can be attributed to political affiliation, which verifies that the voting patterns of Palestinians are still influenced by factional frameworks. This verifies the sociological assumption that political affiliation serves as a frame of reference for interpreting voting patterns, especially in societies that have strong political divisions (Campbell et al., 1960).

In the Palestinian case, party affiliation is not only an ideological position but is also related to patterns of loyalty, delivery, and representation. Therefore, voting behavior is related to the balance of power in this fragmented political system (Hilal, 2009; Shikaki, 2006). The results also show that independent voters are more likely to abstain or use voting as a form of protest, which is consistent with the findings of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR, 2023), which showed high levels of political alienation among independent voters.

3. Differences Related to Geographic Location

These findings showed that there are statistically significant differences in voting behavior by geographic location, which correspond to the specific spatial and political contexts in which West Bank and Gaza Strip voters are situated. This is consistent with the ecological inference, where individuals' geographical, political, and economic contexts are linked to their voting behavior (Franklin, 2004; Roy, 2007).

In the context of the Palestinians, the geographical location is not only a spatial characteristic but also constitutes a unique political and economic environment. The people of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are under different administrative and economic circumstances, which immediately affect their attitude towards elections and the effectiveness of the election outcome (Central Elections Commission, 2022; PCPSR, 2023).

4. Significance of the Absence of Differences in Other Variables

The absence of statistically significant differences on other demographic variables shows that the voting behavior of Palestinians overcomes traditional individual characteristics and is primarily influenced by a collective political environment. This supports Norris's

argument that "the effect of demographic variables is weakened in situations characterized by a legitimacy crisis and political stalemate, where structural factors take precedence over individual explanations" (Norris 2011).

- Fourth: Sub-Question Four

The results show that there are different voting patterns in the West Bank compared to those in the Gaza Strip. This is reflected in the number of voters who turned up to vote and their voting preferences. This is due to the large differences in their political and economic environments. For instance, the Gaza Strip has been suffering from a blockade, economic deterioration, and limited political freedoms. This has led to increased political frustration and disillusionment with the electoral process itself (Roy, 2007; PCPSR, 2023).

Conversely, the voting patterns in the West Bank were more pragmatic, particularly in the local elections, in which service and kinship ties were of major importance, as indicated in the report of the Central Elections Commission (2022). Such a disparity reinforces the view that the voting patterns in Palestinian elections are highly influenced by the prevailing political and administrative system in each region.

Nonetheless, this finding requires careful analysis with respect to the representation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip because it may partially influence the extent of the statistically significant differences due to the possible exaggeration of the role of geographical representation as an explanation of these differences. However, this does not deny the existence of real disparities based on the variation of the political and social context.

Therefore, the results concerning geographical comparison should be considered as an indication of general trends, but not absolute differences. Future studies should use balanced sampling or multilevel analysis in order to improve causal inference about these differences, as is the case in modern studies about electoral behavior in a divided environment (Dalton, 2017; Bruter & Harrison, 2020).

The current study's results are mainly placed in the public sector, specifically among the public servants, since the public sector includes all political affiliations in Palestinian society.

5.2 Recommendations

In consideration of these findings, specifically the significance of political considerations and differences identified for age, political affiliation, and location, it is recommended that a reconstruction of the electoral context for Palestinians should take place upon a set of values aimed at increasing trust within politics and expanding the level of informed participation. This means that electoral policies should be developed by the Central Elections Commission and government institutions to take into consideration the specificity of each generation, for example, programs to sensitize youth regarding their distrust of the political system and viewing election cycles not simply as rituals but rather opportunities for change.

This study further recommends that the electoral process be insulated from strong factional polarization by enhancing the independence of election monitoring institutions and increasing participation rates for free election lists. This is expected to reduce punitive voting and protest abstentions, especially among persons who are not politically affiliated. It is within this context that the need to reform election discourse and focus on issues and services that have practical relevance is underscored.

The report underlines the need for differentiated geographic strategies in addressing the electoral process, with due consideration of the structural differences that exist between the West Bank and Gaza in both political and economic terms. The report also aims to minimize differences in the chances of participation and representation in both regions. Furthermore, it recommends that the civil society groups play a more enhanced role in the promotion of electoral culture and that there should be a shift from time-specific election mobilization to the development of political awareness.

5.3 Suggestions

Based on the findings and methodological limitations of the current study, future studies should focus on a more in-depth analysis regarding the generation gap in Palestinian electoral behavior. This could be achieved through qualitative studies that investigate the views of the younger generation regarding elections, representation, and political legitimacy, which would allow a more in-depth analysis regarding the scope of political alienation that cannot be quantitatively measured.

The study also suggests that comparative research studies using multilevel analysis models should be done in order to separate the impact of individual features from that of geographical and political environment, especially in comparisons between the West Bank and Gaza. The study also suggests that more research should be done concerning the election behavior of persons who are politically independent, as they now represent a rising and important sector.

Moreover, the research recommends the consideration of other variables in future research, such as the importance of new media and social media, the influence of informal political discourse, and trust in unelected bodies (security forces and the judiciary) on voting patterns. Finally, the research recommends future research be done longitudinally to examine the development of voting patterns in Palestine amidst division and the disruption of the democratic system.

5.4 Conclusion

This research explores the effect of political, social, and economic variables upon the voting behavior of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip from 2006 to 2025, in the political environment of occupation, division, and the interrupted democratic process. This research uses a set of independent variables representing political, social, and economic variables, while the demographic variables include age, political affiliation, and region. The voting behavior is the dependent variable.

This study contributes to filling a significant knowledge gap in the Arab electoral behavior literature by presenting an integrated explanatory model for the Palestinian case, characterized by a non-sovereign political context. Its scientific importance extends beyond testing theoretical hypotheses in a new environment to offering a critical perspective on classical Western models (such as rational choice and the sociological school) and reformulating them to suit the specificity of societies under occupation.

The substantive scientific contribution of the study lies in its discovery that "symbolic rationality" and the "logic of resistance" dominate Palestinian electoral behavior, transcending the "instrumental rationality" assumed by traditional models. The findings demonstrate that political variables (such as stance towards occupation and division) do not only function as independent variables but also frame and reinterpret the impact of economic and social variables. Economic deterioration does not necessarily translate into punitive voting against the ruling authority alone; it may instead translate into support for

forces offering a resistance discourse, or into conscious abstention read as a political message. This means that the Palestinian voter behaves according to a "moral economy" of politics, where survival calculations intertwine with the demands of identity and belonging.

Furthermore, the research offers a theoretical contribution to understanding generational dynamics in electoral behavior. The results revealed a clear generational gap, with the age group (30-40 years) adopting electoral patterns different from older age groups, reflecting a shift in political socialization and the adoption of "critical citizenship" values discussed by Dalton (2016). The absence of statistically significant differences attributable to gender and educational level supports the hypothesis that the repressive political structure (occupation and division) cancels the effect of individual differences, making the general political condition the strongest explanatory factor for behavior.

Finally, the comparative analysis between the West Bank and Gaza Strip contributes to developing the "ecological model" of electoral behavior by demonstrating that differences in the political and economic environment produce divergent electoral patterns, even within the same national framework. These findings open new research horizons and call for developing intermediate theories capable of capturing the complexities of political behavior in non-sovereign states and hybrid societies.

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العوامل السياسية والاقتصادية والاجتماعية المؤثرة على السلوك الانتخابي للناخب الفلسطيني.

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ملخص

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل أثر المتغيرات السياسية والاقتصادية والاجتماعية في السلوك الانتخابي للناخب الفلسطيني في كلٍّ من الضفة الغربية وقطاع غزة، وذلك في ظل خصوصية الواقع السياسي الفلسطيني الذي يتسم بالاحتلال والانقسام وتعطل العملية الديمقراطية خلال الفترة (2006-2025). واعتمدت الدراسة المنهج الوصفي التحليلي، مستخدمة الاستبانة الإلكترونية أداة لجمع البيانات من عينة من الناخبين الفلسطينيين، حيث تم تحليل البيانات إحصائياً للكشف عن طبيعة العلاقات والفروق بين المتغيرات. وتمثل السلوك الانتخابي المتغير التابع، في حين شملت المتغيرات المستقلة العوامل السياسية والاقتصادية والاجتماعية، إلى جانب متغيرات ديموغرافية تمثلت في العمر والانتماء السياسي ومكان السكن. وأظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن المتغيرات السياسية كانت الأكثر تأثيراً في السلوك الانتخابي مقارنة ببقية المتغيرات، مع وجود علاقات ذات دلالة إحصائية بين مجمل المتغيرات المدروسة والسلوك الانتخابي، كما كشفت النتائج عن فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية تعزى لمتغيري العمر والانتماء السياسي، في حين لم تظهر فروق تعزى لمتغير مكان السكن، الأمر الذي يشير إلى هيمنة السياق السياسي والاقتصادي العام على اختلاف البيئات الجغرافية. كما بيّنت النتائج وجود تباينات في أنماط السلوك الانتخابي بين الضفة الغربية وقطاع غزة تبعاً لاختلاف السياق السياسي في كل منهما. وفي ضوء هذه النتائج، أوصت الدراسة بضرورة تطوير سياسات انتخابية تراعي الخصوصية العمرية والجغرافية، وتعزيز الثقة بالمؤسسات السياسية والانتخابية، وتوسيع نطاق الدراسات المستقبلية لتشمل متغيرات إضافية، واعتماد دراسات مقارنة وطولية تسهم في تعميق الفهم العلمي للسلوك الانتخابي الفلسطيني في ظل واقع سياسي غير سيادي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: السلوك الانتخابي، المشاركة السياسية، المتغيرات السياسية، المتغيرات الاقتصادية، المتغيرات الاجتماعية.