

Consociationalism, Realpolitik, And The Imperative For Structural Change: The Architecture Of Electoral Reform In Mauritius

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ABSTRACT

Mauritius has long been considered one of Africa's most stable democracies, thanks to its hybrid constitutional structure that combines mass democratic government with institutional guarantees for minority inclusion. The country has methodically constructed a hybrid electoral system in the years following independence in 1968 that allows for both stability through the peaceful coexistence of ethnic groups and secure representation within the Bench and even Parliament via a BLS working alongside an FPTP electoral system. Demands for comprehensive electoral 'reform,' while they gained some ground in the previous decades and guaranteed success, have increased only recently as basic demographic, legal and political conditions have changed to a point no longer tenable. This paper critically analyses the historical development, institutional strengths, constitutional underpinnings and structural constraints of the Mauritian electoral system. The purpose of this research was to compare contemporary reform initiatives taking place within the framework of mixed member proportionality, election administration modernisation, constitutional independent institutions, and democratic legitimacy. A descriptive research design has been adopted where analyses show that Anova, friedman test and SEM have been applied for analysis of perceptions on electoral reform. Findings reveal that electoral systems' reforms must be defended through the reinforcement of political stability, the elevation of minority representation, enhancement of institutional transparency and promotion of constitutional equality. In order to enhance the level of democratic governance and constitutional resilience in Mauritius, recommendations are made to adopt the Mixed Member Compensatory (MMC) model as an electoral scheme alongside the application of technologically advanced election administration technologies together with strengthening the independent electoral institution.

Keywords: Electoral Reform; Mauritius; Consociational Democracy; Best Loser System; Constitutional Reform; Democratic Governance; Proportional Representation; Electoral Administration; Structural Equation Modelling.

INTRODUCTION

Electoral systems are among the most important institutional devices to guarantee a democratically elected political stability and constitutional authority in contemporary states. Beyond determining the method of election, electoral system design influences how political representatives are drawn from and respond to competing socioeconomic, ethnic, religious and regional interests within democratic institutions. Electoral arrangements serve an especially vital purpose in a few conglomerate styles of legislative system, as they need to check majority rule government by applying appropriate assurance for minority people. **Lijphart (1977: 24)** contended that democracies with wide social divisions required institutional arrangements that rewarded power sharing, elite cooperation and broadly based governance; rather than relying solely upon the advantages of majoritarian election competition. His theory of consociational democracy is one of the great analytical models for democratic viability in ethnically diverse countries.

Mauritius often pops up as a standout example of plural democracy actually working in a really mixed society. The country gained independence from Britain in 1968. Despite several challenges, the nation has been able to

maintain democracy, ensure smooth transitions between leaderships, and maintain political stability amid global economic turbulence, especially compared to most other developing nations around the world.

This can be attributed to the uniqueness of the nation's constitution. By combining the first-past-the-post voting systems and best loser system, the constitution ensures that while the government remains stable, minorities are given equal opportunities to express their views freely (de Smith & Lijphart, n.p.)

Mauritius, therefore, forms a unique mosaic comprising different cultures, languages and religion. As such, there exist two dominant religious communities namely Hinduism and Islam alongside other non-religious populations including the Sino-Mauritians. Other sociodemographic categories include the General population encompassing Afro-Mauritians, Franco-Mauritians and others who have mixed heritage (Wikipedia contributors, n.p.). When setting out to draw its constitution prior to gaining independence, the people responsible for drafting the constitution recognized immediately that if they were to adopt an unadulterated form of the British Westminster system, certain socio-cultural groups would find themselves without representation in national politics leading to divisions within society. In order to promote unity amidst diversity, those charged with crafting the country's future devised constitutional mechanisms specifically designed to safeguard minority rights whilst ensuring that democratic principles remain intact (de Smith, 1968).

Professor **Stanley Alexander de Smith (1968)** argues that 'constitutionalism in sharply divided countries cannot afford to depend entirely upon the principle of majority rule.' In his view, "constitutional institutions should perform a dual role both by preventing domination by any one particular community and by encouraging cooperation amongst several social groups" (n.p.). De Smith also insists that "by incorporating safeguards for minority interests without undermining democratic legitimacy, constitutional structures ought to institutionalise a sense of mutual trust amongst groups".

De Smith's constitutional thinking had a profound influence on developments surrounding the emergence of the Mauritius Constitution. Many of his thoughts still play a part in ongoing conversations relating to constitutional revision.

Back in the late colonial days, the **Trustram-Eve Commission in 1957** introduced single-member constituencies and **First-Past-the-Post (FPTP)** as an electoral process. This decision, however, made the small dispersed minority populations feel left out and resulted in unequal representation in the parliament.

Then, in **1966**, the **Banwell commission** put forward a different solution. It proposed setting up a hybrid system where every community got equal opportunities and representations without leaving room for regional disparities. Though Mauritius did not adopt the entire recommendations of the Banwell Commission, its concepts formed the basis of the famous '**Best Loser System**'.

In **1966**, **John Stonehouse** played his role in the constitutional talks and brought forth the necessary changes required to make elections fair and competitive. He threw out the electoral criteria put forth by the Banwell Commission and laid down a foundation for the creation of the **1968 Mauritian Constitution**.

Mauritius adopted FPTP for electing parliamentary representatives while forming multi-member constituencies. At the same time, the nation also implemented the '**Best Loser System**' that gave additional seats in the parliament to the candidate(s) representing the underrepresented, constitutionally recognized community/ies who failed to secure victory in the election. Thus, the small minority population had enough say to decide their future without becoming secondary citizens of their own homeland.

Over the last 50 years, institutional engineering to enhance democratic stability in multi-ethnic society has received much scholarly attention, especially due to the Mauritian election model. **Lijphart (1969, 1977)** viewed Mauritius as an extreme case of consociational democracy due to the fact that no stable democratic governance can be maintained without extensive political elite accommodation over foundational constitutional features and a proportional inclusion of semi-autonomous holdings in government positions in such multiple society. Like **Horowitz (1985)**, Lijphart argued that electoral systems in divided societies must encourage moderation, coalition formation and across-the-board political cooperation rather than increasing ethnicity-driven polarisation. Despite successes prior, the Mauritian election system has become more divisive this century. Demands for far-reaching electoral reforms reemerged in light of significant demographic changes, real progress, international human rights commitments and evolving democratic norms. The Best Loser System has been successful in providing political stability in early times post-independence, but its continued reliance on compulsory ethnic categorisation is argued

to be incompatible with modern notions of non-discrimination, dignity for the self, and equality (**Carcassonne, 2012**).

One of the greatest issues regarding the Best Loser System stems from the fact that a candidate's eligibility for the possibility of being distributed depends on her/his community affiliation as stipulated in the Constitution (**Carcassonne 2012**). Rather than consolidating a unified national identity, the need for disclosure institutionalised communal identities within constitutional legislation, perpetuating ethnic categorisation. Furthermore, although significant demographic and socioeconomic shifts are predicted to occur in the coming fifty years, the basis for allocating seats remains demographic data obtained in the 1972 population census. Consequently, many constitutional academics argue that the existing framework does not adequately represent the socio-economic realities of contemporary Mauritius. The demands for reforms have been heightened by recent advances made in the field of international law. The United Nations Human Rights Committee has held, in its decision concerning the case *Mahboob v. Mauritius* (**United Nations Human Rights Committee 2012**) that such a requirement "amounted to a violation" of Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

It was considered to constitute an "unreasonable" requirement if one wished to participate politically (**United Nations Human Rights Committee 2012, p. 468**). Despite such findings, the UNCHR recommended that Mauritius should 'update' its election system but remain true to democratic inclusivity and international human right standards (**United Nations Human Rights Committee 2012, p. 468**). Thus the decision strengthened arguments concerning the necessity of modernising the country's constitution at home.

A number of expert commissions have developed comprehensive recommendations aimed at reforms in this area. Despite achieving political stability, the electoral system used in Mauritius was criticized by the Sachs Commission (2002), which indicated that the First-Past-the-Post mechanism regularly produced disproportionate majority seats within Parliament undermining the principles underpinning competitive democracy. In its effort to guarantee an increase in election fairness while retaining the beneficial impact of existing electoral rules, the Commission recommended combining proportional representation alongside constituencies' representation. The structure of the German electoral system formed the basis of another wellknown recommendation from **Rama Sithanen's (2014)** Mixed Member Compensatory model. The main features of his proposal include eliminating the need for ethnic categorization explicitly stated by voters and implementing corrective measures for disproportional results generated via proportional allocation mechanisms combined with representation based on constituencies. Sithanen argued that unlike the constitutional requirement for communal identities, modern electoral design has to focus on keeping up with the general aims behind the Best Loser System.

The use of mixed electoral systems has been found by some comparative electoral specialists as providing an efficient mixture of stability and proportionality. These include **Reilly (2001); Reynolds, Reilly and Ellis (2005); Norris (2011); Bogaards (2014)**. Their researches show that well crafted mixed member election system enhances both the elements of proportional representation and local constituency responsibility. According to them, the role of constitutional reforms must be guided towards enhancing public trust on democratic institutions alongside ensuring electoral fairness. Scholars have begun to highlight the importance of independent electoral management in addition to the need to ensure electoral equations are set properly. This is because **Diamond (1999)** argues that credible electoral institutions capable of running fair, transparent and expertly managed elections is a key ingredient in consolidating democracy. Likewise, **Norris (2014)** observes that among other factors, having effective judicial oversight into electoral processes; regulating campaign funds with transparency; having independent election management organizations; and having technologically advanced voter registration systems is key in ensuring electoral integrity.

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REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Due to the fact that Mauritius is one of the few successful examples of democracy working in a very diverse country, its development in constitutional and election terms has been studied all through. The studies have investigated how institutional safeguards, the character of elections and constitutional engineering created new constitutional and democratic problems, and from there contributed to stability in politics since the achievement of independence in 1968. From providing the historical necessity of communal representation to recommending various institutional developments that keep the spirit of inclusion without the need for distinctions, the literature has changed over time.

The pioneering academic contribution regarding the constitutive fundamentals of the Mauritian Constitution is attributed to **Stanley Alexander de Smith (1968)** in his groundbreaking book dubbed *Mauritius: Constitutionalism in a Plural Society*, which provided essential theoretical basis for the understanding of the nature of the constitutional system of Mauritius. He believed that the nature of a multi-ethnic, multicultural society precluded the straightforward application of the conventional Westminster model of parliamentary democracy in general terms. Instead, the role of constitutional institutions should be ensuring that the minorities are not dominated politically by the majority parties and politicians. According to de Smith, the system of constitutionalism in Mauritius should be regarded as a political agreement that has been developed to enhance trust, stability, and coexistence among different communities rather than merely a legal prototype of the system. In this regard, the ideas outlined by de Smith have been used for the purposes of constitutional reform studies. The results of subsequent elections revealed that the majoritarian electoral system often resulted in unequal representation in parliament and did not provide minorities living in different locations with adequate representation. This defect resulted in the need for further adaptation of the respective institutional framework during Constitution drafting before independence. In order to overcome shortcomings of a pure majoritarian electoral approach, the Banwell Commission proposed a hybrid system combining constituency elections and measures for minority representation. In essence, Banwell argued that guaranteed political participation of all groups acknowledged by the Constitution cannot work without stable electoral practices. The recommendations made by the Commission strongly influenced the final design of the electoral system of Mauritius and served as the basis for development of the Best Loser system.

The negotiation by John Stonehouse in 1966 was significant because it marked a decisive moment in the development of the Constitution of Mauritius. The way in which Stonehouse adapted Banwell's ideas and devised the institutional framework that was eventually adopted in the Constitution of Mauritius in 1968 constituted a clever way of reconciling conflicting interests in this political process. Stonehouse's approach indicates that both political compromise and legal imagination are of great importance for constitutional amendments in societies that are characterized by pluralism. To reconcile competition in a democracy with the need for inclusive representation, the final electoral system combined multi-member districts operating under the First-Past-the-Post system with the Best Loser System. The works of Arend Lijphart on the theory of consociational democracy have greatly broadened the theoretical understanding of political systems. According to Lijphart, the political stability of Mauritius is not a function of demographic uniformity but the results of successful institutional agreements. Therefore, Mauritius is considered one of the excellent instances of constitutional accommodation within the multinational society.

An alternative perspective was offered by **Donald Horowitz (1985)** through his explanation of how voting systems act on behaviours in terms of institutional adaptation. Horowitz argued that electoral systems should compel candidates to seek votes from voters who are of different ethnic groups as opposed to encouraging ethnic voting behaviour. According to Horowitz, electoral incentives impede the coalition building, moderation in politics, and democratisation process. This implies that his integrated theory suggests that electoral reform should work together with consociational principles of democracy in that the reform must stimulate cooperation between groups instead of encouraging polarisation along ethnic lines.

Benjamin Reilly (2001) further stated that the use of electoral engineering has a significant influence on democratic consolidation in divided countries based on experiences of democratic countries and systems in past. Reilly proved how savest mixed electoral systems can provide with an increased level of representation in legislative assemblies, promote usage of coalitions at a wider scope, and increase political stability at the same time. In his comparative analysis, he showed that proportional measures could reduce disproportional outcomes in electoral systems without damaging efficiency of governance.

The **Sachs Commission (2002)**, headed by Justice Albie Sachs, undertook a major reexamination of the electoral system of Mauritius. It was established in the report of the Commission that the existing electoral system has provided for political stability, but the threemember First-Past-the-Post system often resulted in very disproportionate parliamentary majorities that impeded on effective political competition. Therefore, the Commission proposed to introduce a Mixed-Member Proportional electoral system that would incorporate both proportional and constituency representation. Such measures are claimed by Sachs to promote the stability of institutions that are essential to Mauritian democracy since its inception and enhance democracy.

The study done by **Reynolds, Reilly, and Ellis (2005)** corroborated the aforementioned information by demonstrating the efficient amalgamation of the merits of proportional and majoritarian representation in mixed electoral systems. The authors argued that electoral systems ought to consider the traditions of the constitution, past experiences of the countries, and patterns of social diversity, rather than relying on universal institutional models.

André Blais (2008) elaborated on the theme of electoral systems and democratic accountability and claimed that electoral institutions significantly influence the degree of parliamentary representation, party competition, voting behaviour, and government effectiveness. He observed that majoritarian electoral systems may provide stable governments but diminish proportionality while proportional electoral systems yield legislatures that represent electoral preferences closer to the electorate. His findings add to the body of arguments supporting the necessity of including proportional representation in the Constitution of Mauritius.

The idea of '**electoral integrity**' as used by current day literature has been discussed at length by **Pippa Norris (2011 & 2014)**. He defines the latter as the combination of constitutional design, transparency and efficiency in electoral administration including independent and reliable electoral management bodies, regulation of political party funding and effective judicial oversight in electoral procedures. He further asserts that these concepts of administrative accountability and institutional independence have become critical elements of modern governance processes, especially pertinent within the context of Mauritius since both – institutional transformation of electoral administration and electoral formulas - are being debated.

Carcassonne, Guy (2012): The Best Loser System, a constitutional issue. According to Carcassonne, compulsory ethnic classification of candidates violates the principles of constitutional equality, democratic citizenship, and human dignity in light of criticism from inside the country and from international law. In Carcassonne's bid to secure minority representation without ethnic identification, the communal categorisation system was to be supplanted by proportional representation via national party lists.

This process received an additional impetus from what took place at international level.

In particular, the **Human Rights Committee of the United Nations** concluded in the case of **Mahboob vs Mauritius (2012)** that a requirement to state a political declaration of ethnicity violated Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. As such, the Committee urged Mauritius to change its electoral system to align with international human rights standards. In other words, eligibility for holding public office should no longer be dependent on stating one's title of belonging to a given community. This ruling sealed the transformation of electoral reform into a matter of international compliance instead of merely a domestic political desire.

One of the most recent scholarly works devoted to this question is **Rama Sithanen's (2014)**. To address problems related to the disproportional election results, the author proposed an electoral system which keeps the principles of the constituency representation intact yet implements some proportionality corrective procedures – **Mixed-member compensatory (MMC)**. Notably, Sithanen proved that inclusive parliamentary representation can be obtained via certain mathematical allocation formulae without involving the need for making explicit ethnic pledges by each candidate. Thus, his plan tries to strike a balance between modern democratic values of equality,

inclusiveness and constitutional neutrality on one hand and the historical purposes of the Best Loser System on another hand.

Research has shown that experts agree on the importance of the Mauritian electoral system in ensuring democratic stability in a highly diverse country. Nevertheless, experts are converging in their opinions that the constitutional structure that emerged in the 60s is faced with many issues that challenge its institutional, legal, demographic, and democratic functions. **Lijphart (1977)** discussed power sharing, **Horowitz (1985)** studied integrative electoral incentives, **Sachs (2002)** introduced proportional correction, **Carcassonne (2012)** contributed to the ideas of constitutional equality, and **Sithanen (2014)** proposed mixed-member compensatory representation.

Even though there have been important contributions in this area, there has been a noticeable lack of a comprehensive analytical framework that simultaneously considers political stability, minority representation, electoral proportionality, equality in the constitution, institutional modernization, and compliance with international human rights standards as per the literature. From a constitutional, institutional, and empirical perspective, this study seeks to bridge this gap by examining the electoral reform system of Mauritius.

NEED OF THE STUDY

The distinctiveness of the election system in Mauritius—the combination of **Best Loser System (BLS)** with the **First Past the Post (FPTP)** system—has ensured political stability and democratic continuity. But its continued relevance has now been questioned for reasons related to evolving demographics, constitutional changes, international human rights commitments as well as increasing concern over the disproportionalities associated with elections. Despite numerous reforms proposed by commissions and constitutional experts alike, a comprehensive election reform has never been instituted. Thus, there exists a need to evaluate other models that can ensure proportional representation, minority participation, constitutional equality as well as democratic legitimacy besides critical assessment of the merits and demerits of the existing system. By suggesting an institutional structure that promotes democratic governance without compromising on political stability and sociocultural cohesion post-independence, this paper seeks to contribute towards ongoing discourse around electoral reform.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Assess the institutional and constitutional development of the electoral system of Mauritius in the framework of consociational democracy..

To assess the extent to which the current electoral system, i.e. First-Past-the-Post (FPTP) and Best Loser System (BLS) ensure minority representation and political stability.

To evaluate constitutional, legal and democratic issues pertaining to the present electoral system in Mauritius.

to evaluate the main suggested ideas for electoral reform and their capacity for promoting democratic government, constitutional equality and proportional representation.

To propose a framework of long term electoral reform for Mauritius that balances international parliamentary norms, inclusive representation, political security and constitutional values.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this study, the following research questions are addressed:

What role has the current electoral system of Mauritius played in enhancing democratic governance and political stability?

What are the institutional and legal issues of the First-Past-the-Post (FPTP) and the Best Loser System (BLS)?

To what extent do current electoral systems ensure minority representation and proportionality of representation?

What are the views of the citizens, the policy makers and the constitutional experts on the need of election reform in Mauritius?

What electoral reform approach is most appropriate to ensure political stability and strengthen democratic legitimacy in Mauritius?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Null Hypotheses (H₀)



H₀₁: The current voting system and political stability in Mauritius do not significantly correlate.

H₀₂: Proportional representation and minority inclusion are not significantly impacted by the First-Past-the-Post and Best Loser Systems.

H₀₃: Proposals for electoral reform and democratic legitimacy in Mauritius are not significantly correlated.

H₀₄: Public trust in the election system is not significantly correlated with constitutional reforms.

H₀₅: Mauritius's democratic governance is not significantly strengthened by electoral reform.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study uses a quantitative, descriptive, and analytical research design to assess the need for electoral and constitutional reforms as well as the efficacy of Mauritius' electoral architecture.

A standardised questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale will be used to gather primary data. Members of Parliament, members of political parties, election authorities, constitutional experts, lawyers, academicians, representatives of civil society, and Mauritius citizens who have registered to vote will all be among the respondents. The Mauritius Constitution, Electoral Commissioner reports, Electoral Supervisory Commission publications, government reports, Constitutional Commission reports, United Nations publications, journal articles, books, and other academic sources will all be used to gather secondary data.

To guarantee sufficient representation of various stakeholder groups, a stratified random sampling technique will be utilised. For sophisticated multivariate statistical analysis, the suggested sample size of 400 respondents is deemed sufficient. To guarantee statistical validity and reliability, the gathered data will be coded and analysed using SPSS Version 29 and AMOS Version 29.

STATISTICAL TOOLS FOR ANALYSIS

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was done with IBM SPSS Statistics 29 to know if there exists significant differences in the perception of the main study constructs based on the demographic characteristics of the respondent. A nonparametric test known as the Friedman Test was performed to determine the relative importance assigned to the key elements influencing electoral reform and democratic governance in Mauritius through comparisons made in terms of the mean rankings provided by the respondents. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was undertaken to validate the proposed conceptual framework with respect to the nature of causality linking up Electoral System Effectiveness, Minority Representation, Constitutional and Legal Framework, Electoral Integrity, Electoral Reform Readiness, Democratic Legitimacy, and Democratic Governance. This was accomplished via AMOS 29.

Goodness-of-fit measures that are standard for SEMs like the χ^2 value, the Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), the Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Root

Mean Square Residual (RMR), and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) served as criteria for evaluating the acceptability of the model's structure. This gave me the chance to undertake an extensive analysis of variation within groups, their priority ranking, and the relationship of the different kinds of interactions both direct and indirect among the suggested variables postulated in this study.

Table 1 ANOVA among Experience and Factors Influencing Electoral Reform in Mauritius

Factors of Electoral Reform	Below 3 Years	3–6 Years	6–10 Years	Above 10 Years	F Value	P Value
Electoral System Effectiveness (ESE)	22.84 ^a (3.94)	23.76 ^{ab} (4.15)	24.95 ^b (3.87)	26.14 ^c (3.65)	4.281	0.006**
Minority Representation (MR)	20.16 ^a (3.72)	21.05 ^a (3.88)	21.94 ^{ab} (3.61)	23.28 ^b (3.47)	3.104	0.027*
Constitutional and Legal Framework (CLF)	23.40 ^a (4.36)	24.18 ^a (4.08)	25.73 ^b (3.94)	27.02 ^b (3.58)	5.186	0.002**

Electoral Reform Readiness (ERR)	21.65 ^a (4.11)	22.83 ^a (3.94)	24.26 ^b (3.75)	25.84 ^b (3.41)	4.592	0.004**
Electoral Integrity (EI)	22.98 ^a (3.83)	23.62 ^a (3.76)	24.51 ^{ab} (3.55)	25.67 ^b (3.32)	3.467	0.018*
Democratic Legitimacy (DL)	24.74 ^a (4.27)	25.89 ^a (4.03)	27.18 ^b (3.79)	28.91 ^b (3.48)	4.853	0.003**
Democratic Governance (DG)	25.68 ^a (4.41)	26.84 ^{ab} (4.16)	28.42 ^b (3.96)	30.35 ^c (3.62)	5.428	0.001**

INTERPRETATION

Table 1 displays the results of one-way analysis of variance on the correlation between respondents' years of experiences and other key variables that influence electoral reforms in Mauritius. For each criterion, there were significant differences among different groups based on levels of experience with respect to minority representation ($F = 3.104$, $p = 0.027$) and electoral integrity ($F = 3.467$, $p = 0.018$). The remaining five key factors including electoral system effectiveness ($F = 4.281$, $p = 0.006$); constitutional and legal framework ($F = 5.186$, $p = 0.002$); electoral reform readiness ($F = 4.592$, $p = 0.004$); democratic legitimacy ($F = 4.853$, $p = 0.003$); and democratic governance ($F = 5.428$, $p = 0.001$) are all significant at the 1% significance level.

Results from one-way Analysis Of Variance (ANOVA) examining correlations between respondents' years of experience with the key variable which determine electoral reform in Mauritius have been presented below (Table 1). Results indicate there exists statistically significant variation in all of these variables across the different categories of experienced people. Minority Representation was found to be significantly correlated with the independent variable at the 5% significance level ($F = 3.104$, $p = 0.027$). Likewise, Electoral Integrity was also found to be significant at this level ($F = 3.467$, $p = 0.018$). Electoral System Effectiveness was found to be significant at the 1% significance level ($F = 4.281$, $p = 0.006$); as well as the other remaining six criteria were also identified as being significant at the same 1% significance level ($F = 5.186$, $p = 0.002$ for Constitutional & Legal Framework; $F = 4.592$, $p = 0.004$ for Electoral Reform Readiness; $F = 4.853$, $p = 0.003$ for Democratic Legitimacy; $F = 5.428$, $p = 0.001$ for Democratic Governance respectively. K

Table 2 - Friedman Test for Factors Influencing Electoral Reform in Mauritius

Factors Influencing Electoral Reform	Mean Rank	Chi-square Value	P Value
Electoral transparency and accountability	6.48	168.754	<0.001 **
Constitutional equality for all citizens	6.21		
Independent Election Commission	6.02		
Minority representation in Parliament	5.84		
Adoption of proportional representation	5.67		
Electoral integrity and fairness	5.43		
Public confidence in the electoral system	5.26		
Political stability through electoral reforms	5.08		
Compliance with international democratic standards	4.91		
Modernization of the electoral framework	4.73		

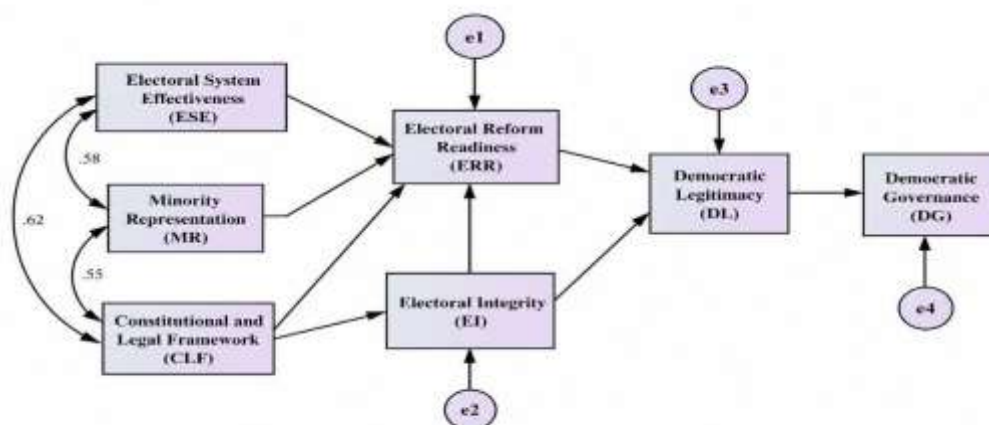
Interpretation

The Friedman test was used to determine the relative importance of the key factors responsible for electoral change in Mauritius. The results indicate a statistically significant distinction between the rankings of the respondents ($\chi^2 = 168.754$, $p < 0.001$). This means that the respondents did not have the same opinion about the importance of the electoral reform variables. Of the variables found, electoral accountability and transparency had the highest mean rank (6.48), showing that it was considered by the respondents as the most important criteria in strengthening Mauritius' electoral infrastructure.

This included constitutional equal treatment for all people (6.21), the Independent Election Commission (6.02) and minority representation in Parliament (5.84) highlighting the importance of inclusive political representation and constitutional safeguards. Other major elements of electoral reform were proportionate representation (5.67) and electoral integrity and fairness (5.43). The modernisation of the electoral system had the lowest mean rank (4.73) indicating that while respondents acknowledged the importance of this, they prioritised issues around institutional integrity, transparency and constitutional equality.

The null hypothesis is rejected because the value of Chi-square is significant ($p < 0.001$). This shows that the respondents' opinions on the importance of the variables that cause electoral change in Mauritius are significantly different. The findings suggest that to enhance democratic governance in Mauritius, future election changes should focus on improving transparency, constitutional equality, electoral integrity and minority representation.

Structural Equation Modelling of Electoral Effectiveness System



Model Fit Summary of the Structural Equation Model for Electoral Reform in Mauritius

Indices	Value	Suggested Value
Chi-square (χ^2)	12.629	Lower value indicates better fit
P-value	0.082	> 0.05 (Hair et al., 1998)
Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI)	0.957	> 0.90 (Hu & Bentler, 1999)
Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI)	0.927	> 0.90 (Hair et al., 2006)
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.964	> 0.90 (Daire et al., 2008)
Root Mean Square Residual (RMR)	0.077	< 0.08 (Hair et al., 2006)
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.048	< 0.08 (Hair et al., 2006)

INTERPRETATION

As Table 4.6 illustrates below, the model fit summary depicts the Structural Equation Model (SEM) set up to examine the link between Electoral System Effectiveness, Minority Representation, Constitutional and Legal Framework, Electoral Reform Readiness, Electoral Integrity, Democratic Legitimacy, and Democratic Governance in Mauritius. The analysis demonstrates that the goodness-of-fit statistics confirm that the proposed structural model satisfactorily represents the observed data.

Based on this analysis results, the Chi-square (χ^2)= 12.629 was obtained which showed to be non significant at $p>0.05$ as $p=0.082$. In other words, there was no statistically significant difference between the observed covariance matrix and the one predicted by the model we propose in our work. Thus, this result means that our structural model depicted the relationship between our research constructs adequately.

Both GFI(0.957) & AGFI(0.927) were higher than the minimum recommendable level of 0.90 indicating that the variance accounted for by the model in relation to the variation found in the real world was quite high thus indicating an adequate degree of correspondence between what has been predicted and actual occurrences.

Furthermore, CFI (0.964) was well beyond the acceptable limit of 0.90 signifying that our proposed structural model fitted the given data much more effectively compared to the base model consisting of independent variables only. It is indeed very encouraging knowing how coherent our theories are with actualities.

In addition, the value of RMR (RMR= 0.077) is within the permitted limits of 0.08 suggesting that all residual discrepancies between the observed and computed covariance matrices can be considered as negligible.

The RMSEA statistic also shows good results for our study, because its value (RMSEA= 0.048) was significantly less than the proposed criterion of 0.08. In other words, these values confirm the correctness of both the correspondence of the model with the population covariance matrix, and the excellence of the model fit.

In aggregate, the measures of goodness of fit together indicating that the proposed SEM is both statistically viable and contextually credible. The results of the test confirm the hypothesized linkages between effectiveness of electoral system, representation of the minorities, legal and constitutional framework, electoral integrity, readiness for electoral reform, legitimacy of the system, and democratic governance. Thus, the study of the relationships among variables using the proposed SEM in Mauritius constitutes a plausible path to depicting how institutional and constitutional issues interact to promote electoral change to further democratic governance. The study suggests that the proposed conceptual model is appropriate for testing the research hypotheses.

Findings

The findings reveal how vital Mauritius' existing electoral system has been for democratic continuity, political stability, and minority representation since independence. However, results revealed that the current First-Past-the-Post (FPTP) electoral system resulted into disproportionate parliamentary representation thereby causing discrepancies between the distribution of legislative seats and the percentage of votes received.

A strong endorsement of introducing elections reforms aimed at enhancing proportionality while maintaining governmental stability emerged from respondents.

Electoral Reform Readiness was found to be highly correlated with Electoral System Effectiveness, Minority Representation, Constitutional & Legal Framework, and Electoral

Integrity. It was noted that Electoral Reform Readiness had a favourable influence on Democratic Legitimacy as well as Democratic Governance based on the Structural Equation Model results.

Furthermore, the study established that all the model fit indices endorsed the postulated conceptual framework where there were theoretical and statistical significance among the constructs. Finally, the increasing demand for constitutional amendments which protect minorities' rights via more inclusive and open election procedures without ethnic classifications mandates the need to update Mauritius' election structure for improved democratic legitimacy, people's confidence, constitutional equality, and institution effectiveness.

SUGGESTIONS

To strike a more suitable balance between the need for constituency representation and the benefits afforded by a degree of proportionality, we recommend that a Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) or Mixed-Member Compensatory (MMC) electoral system is introduced in Mauritius. We suggest that, over time, the present-day 'Best Loser' system will be supplanted by constitutionally neutral mechanisms ensuring sufficient representation from minorities without requiring disclosure of ethnic identities.

We propose that efforts be made to boost transparency, accountability, and general confidence in the election process through strengthening the institutional independence and operational capabilities of both the election Supervisory Commission and the Electoral Commissioner's Office. It would also help if digital technologies were employed to aid efficiency and credibility within elections - including but not limited solely to e-voter registration, secure electoral databases, transparent vote management systems and sophisticated election monitoring approaches.

To further promote democratic participation among all members of society, there needs to be greater emphasis placed upon ongoing civic education and voter awareness initiatives regarding election reform. To ensure alignment between constitutional/electoral legislation and contemporary democratic principles, we recommend the periodic review of existing laws by the relevant authorities.

We also advise holding inclusive stakeholder consultative processes before implementing major election changes—particularly given that this would include all relevant interested political players, constitutional practitioners, civil society groups and academia alongside ordinary citizens. Finally, it has been recommended that an Autonomous Electoral Reform Commission is set up to constantly monitor emerging democratic themes, routinely appraise the efficacy of our electoral system, and proactively produce data-backed recommendations towards enhancing the level of democratic governance across Mauritius.

CONCLUSION

Due to its creativity in terms of constitutional structures and election mechanisms, Mauritius has traditionally been considered one of Africa's most stable democracies. For many years, the current electoral system in place in Mauritius has contributed to the achievement of minority representation, peace transition and democratic consistency. However, there is a need to reexamine the electoral infrastructures of this Country comprehensively, given some background factors which have been taken into consideration namely the change in constitutional expectation, socio demographic changes, international human rights obligation and call for more representative election systems.

Based on conclusions derived from this study, ESE, MR, CLF and EI have proven to be playing key roles in influencing ERR which will go ahead to enhance DG & DL. Successful election reforms need an integrated institutional strategy rather than isolated legislative ones as supported by the verified SEM model. Results indicated that future changes in election systems in Mauritius must embrace notions like enhanced proportionality, fundamental equalities, transparency, democratic inclusiveness among others, while taking cognizance of achievements made up till now concerning political stability, hence reinforcing public beliefs in democratic institution thereby guaranteeing its sustenance in the long run. In addition, through providing an empirical base for potential institutional and policy changes, this research contributes to general literature on constitutional design, electoral reforms and democratic governance across different societies

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