

# Corruption Disclosure and Electoral Accountability System: Reducing Political Corruption

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## Abstract

This literature review explores how corruption exposure affects voter behavior, political dynamics, and the fate of current political parties and politicians. This demonstrates the importance of strengthening electoral accountability in maintaining democracy, combating corruption, and improving political systems. Research has found that the disclosure of corrupt practices significantly impacts voter behavior, as it may lead to a decrease in support for current political parties and politicians affected by corruption. In addition, exposing dereliction of duty is an important tool in combating political corruption, making the election process more transparent and accountable. Therefore, this review emphasizes the crucial role of exposing corrupt behavior in shaping voter behavior, holding politicians accountable, and maintaining the integrity of democratic systems under electoral accountability systems. This proves that strengthening electoral accountability plays an important role in maintaining democratic integrity and promoting responsive political models and provides an important foundation for future research in this field. Promote transparency in the election process and strengthen the implementation of accountability policies.

**Keywords:** Corruption disclosure; Electoral accountability system; Voter support; Political corruption

## 1. Introduction

Electoral accountability is a fundamental pillar of democratic governance, serving as the mechanism through which citizens hold their representatives and leaders responsible for their actions and decisions. In a democratic society, the ability of voters to make informed choices and demand transparency and accountability from their elected officials is essential for maintaining a well-functioning political system. At the heart of electoral accountability lies the idea that elected representatives, whether politicians, government officials, or public servants, should be answerable for their actions and decisions to the electorate.

Electoral accountability plays a pivotal role in ensuring that elected representatives act in the public's best interests, make decisions that align with their promises, and refrain from engaging in corrupt or unethical behavior. This concept is critical for fostering trust in political institutions, promoting good governance, and safeguarding the principles of democracy. It is the primary means through which voters can influence the behavior of their elected officials and, when necessary, hold them accountable through the power of the ballot.

This literature review delves into a specific aspect of electoral accountability: disclosing the impact of corruption

on voter support and its impact on broader electoral accountability. The central theme of this review is to explore how the exposure of corrupt behavior affects voter behavior and electoral accountability, shapes election dynamics, affects the fate of current political parties and politicians, and contributes to the broader goal of reducing political corruption. This article explores the key interactions between corruption disclosure, voter support, and electoral accountability and comprehensively analyzes these studies. Its purpose is to elucidate complex relationships and dynamics, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of the role of electoral accountability in democratic systems.

## 2. Corruption Disclosure and Electoral Accountability System

Arias<sup>[1]</sup> and his colleagues aimed to explore the conditions under which the disclosure of misconduct or corrupt behavior benefits or harms incumbent political parties. Accordingly, these researchers conducted a field experiment in Mexico during the 2015 municipal elections. They examined how voters responded to leaflets that revealed the extent to which municipal governments correctly spent federal transfers earmarked for social infrastructure projects benefiting the poor. They also employed intervention measures to conduct more convincing research.

Specifically, they introduced the first clear evidence of the Bayesian interaction between the provision of non-partisan information and prior beliefs for understanding voting behavior in a developing country. Their focus on voters' prior beliefs in the context of non-partisan information provision complements previous studies that highlight the significance of prior beliefs in understanding voter responses to partisan campaign messages. They offered an alternative interpretation of extant results, suggesting that revelations of malfeasance motivate voters to disengage from the political system and reduce turnout.

Their conclusions are as follows. The intervention increased incumbent vote share when voters possessed unfavorable prior beliefs, and audit reports caused voters to update their prior beliefs about an incumbent's malfeasance favorably. They also found that low and, especially, high malfeasance revelations increased turnout while less surprising information reduced turnout. They believe that the attitude of voters toward candidates is not a simple linear relationship. When candidates perform well in dereliction of duty, voters support them. On the other hand, when candidates do not perform well in dereliction of duty, voters object. On the contrary, their relationship is complex.

The study by Arias et al. (2022) revealed how disclosure of corrupt information is influenced by voters' previous beliefs, highlighting the importance of voters' previous views, which can affect the effectiveness of corrupt information. This research contributes to our understanding of electoral accountability by highlighting the nuanced and context-dependent nature of the impact of corruption disclosures on voter behavior. It challenges the conventional wisdom that corruption exposure uniformly hurts incumbents and emphasizes the role of voters' prior beliefs in shaping outcomes.

Chong<sup>[2]</sup> and his collaborators sought to investigate how corruption information influences voter turnout, choices, and party identification. They chose to intervene in voters' voting considerations and results by providing information about the corruption of all mayors. It is worth mentioning that they set up an experimental group and a control group for comparison and analysis. Due to budget considerations, they researched three representative states in Mexico. In total, 150 voting precincts were randomly assigned to each of the three interventions for 450 treatment and 1,910 control precincts. They collected four types of data: electoral results at the precinct level from state electoral institutes, demographic baseline characteristics from census data originally reported at the village and block levels, a survey approximately two weeks after the interventions, and data on candidates' jobs before the 2009 election. They spread information about the electors' dereliction

of duty in the community, including garbage collection, sewage treatment, electricity, local road construction and maintenance, and public safety, to voters in advance.

They concluded that corruption information decreases incumbent party support in local elections in Mexico, decreases voter turnout and support for the challenger party, and erodes partisan attachments. Chong et al.'s research emphasizes the role of corruption disclosure in shaping voter behavior and political dynamics. It underscores how corruption information can influence various aspects of the electoral process, from turnout to party identification.

Ferraz<sup>[3]</sup> and Finan explored the impact of publicly releasing audit data regarding corrupt politicians on election results in Brazil. Their research focused on the release of audit data by the Brazilian federal government; after analyzing a large amount of data, they came to the following conclusions. The public dissemination of corruption data in local governments significantly affected incumbents' electoral performance. When politicians' corruption audit data are disclosed, their reelection is affected to a certain extent. Their support rate decreases to a certain extent as a result.

In addition, this research proves that the media significantly influences election results. When the media collaborates with the federal government to disclose corrupt audit report data on politicians to all members of the public, voters seriously consider whether these politicians are still qualified to remain in power. Moreover, radio notably strengthens anti-corruption efforts and further expands the dissemination of information about corruption. In closing, the researchers constructed data models to demonstrate the importance of corruption information disclosure to voters in making correct election decisions, proving that corruption information disclosure can help the federal government promote the development of anti-corruption work and highlighting that corruption information disclosure can sound an alarm for politicians with voting ideas.

Ferraz<sup>[4]</sup> and Finan used audit data from local governments in Brazil to conduct in-depth research on the relationship between the electoral accountability system and corruption. Researchers have found that the level of corruption in city mayors with reelection incentives is significantly lower. Their research demonstrates the positive impact of accountability on reducing corrupt behavior. This study emphasizes the important role of the electoral accountability system in reducing political corruption, especially when elected officials face reelection pressure and may comply with moral and legal regulations, encouraging politicians to act with integrity, which is crucial for the democratic process.

### 3. Comprehensive analysis

The four papers discussed center on whether disclosing corruption information about government officials affects election results. Different researchers have adopted different research methods. For example, some actively spread corruption information to corresponding voters and then draw conclusions based on observation results. Others mainly conclude by analyzing existing corruption information and observing election results. Different research perspectives and intervention methods can produce different or similar results.

These studies collectively articulate the crucial role of corruption information disclosure in promoting an electoral accountability system. Firstly, corruption information disclosure brings the corrupt behavior of politicians into the public domain, thereby reducing their chances of re-election and encouraging politicians to act more lawfully and honestly. This contributes to establishing an effective electoral accountability system, compelling politicians to abide by moral and legal guidelines. Secondly, these studies demonstrate that the electoral accountability system works in diverse settings, whether in national or local government elections. This highlights the diversity and adaptability of the electoral accountability system, making it a potent tool against political corruption. These studies also offer insights into the context-specific effects and underlying mechanisms of corruption information disclosure. They emphasize how factors such as voters' prior beliefs, electoral systems, and political backgrounds influence the outcomes of corruption information disclosure. This underscores that corruption information disclosure is not a one-size-fits-all solution but requires tailoring to specific environments and circumstances.

### 4. Conclusion

A comprehensive analysis of the above studies has led to several key conclusions. Strengthening the electoral accountability system can help reduce corruption. Research results from different countries and regions support this viewpoint. The disclosure of corrupt information and voters' previous beliefs can affect their voting and party support, which helps improve the honesty and integrity of politicians and reduce corruption. Therefore, decision-makers should attach importance to strengthening the electoral accountability system to enhance the effectiveness of the political system and ensure that politicians better represent the public interest. This is crucial for developing countries political system reform and sustain-

able development. These studies are aimed at developing countries, including Brazil and Mexico. This indicates that developing countries face various problems in political elections, official corruption, and voter literacy. Suppose these corrupt behaviors and phenomena cannot be identified, discovered, studied, analyzed, and resolved promptly and accurately. In that case, developing countries' political system reform and sustainable development cannot be fundamentally guaranteed.

The core content of these studies involves providing theoretical support for combating corruption, guiding election behavior, and improving political systems by improving anti-corruption systems, procedures, and links. Corruption information disclosure is crucial in strengthening voter support and enhancing the electoral accountability system. At the same time, the government should also improve political transparency, enhance political supervision capabilities, comprehensively carry out anti-corruption education, and encourage voters to participate in politics. Governments should also mobilize their media and other media to disseminate information about corruption. However, its impact is complex and depends on various factors. This highlights the importance of disclosing corrupt information and requires decision-makers to consider different backgrounds and potential mechanisms when implementing such policies. Future research can further investigate the impact of corrupt information disclosure in different countries and regions and conduct a more comprehensive review of the reactions of voters and politicians. This will help to develop more targeted policies to strengthen the electoral accountability system, combat corruption, and uphold democratic principles.

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