



# Measuring the Impact of Education (a Medium for Political Information), Which Leads to the Fostering of a Democratic Government in the Arab Region

**Eiman Medhat Negm, Azza El Sharabassy**

Arab Academy for Science, Technology, and Maritime Transport, College for Management and Technology, Alexandria, Egypt

## Email address:

Eiman\_medhat@yahoo.com (E. M. Negm), Sharabassy@hotmail.com (A. El. Sharabassy)

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**Abstract:** Education creates empowered citizens, promoting democracy. Prior studies stated that there is a correlation between education and democracy. However, little work has sought to establish a connecting link between these two variables, especially in the Arab Region or the newly developed democratic societies. The aim of this study is to measure the impact of education, which leads to fostering a democratic government in Egypt. The paper explores the correlation through quantitative approaches, which will provide valuable insight into this relationship. This study analysed 300 questionnaires using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) in order to test the research hypotheses. The selected sample were Egyptians of different socio-demographic backgrounds (age, gender, marital status, and education) in order to ensure a large enough variety in the studied population. In this study, education contains three components: Information, Thinking ability, and learning ability. The analysis shows that all the components of education contained a strong, positive, and significant relationship with fostering democratic government. This study contributed academically by providing insights concerning a newly emerging democratic society. With this knowledge practitioners can apply educational activities that empower citizens to exercise and defend their democratic rights and responsibilities in society.

**Keywords:** Arab Culture, Democracy, Education, Learning Ability, Politics, Thinking Ability

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## 1. Introduction

Fostering a democratic government entails: “supreme power to be vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system” [1]. Democracy requires empowering citizens with information, access to services, and prospects for engagement [2]. According to president Abraham Lincoln, it is: “the government of the people, by the people and for the people” [3]. Thus, it is essential for citizens in a democratic society to have sufficient knowledge of Constitutional values as well as the structure, function, and processes of government [1].

Education is a universal human right, an empowering social and economic tool [4]. Knowledge is strength [5] and it helps in the promotion and protection of democracy [6]. Equipping and moulding citizens with knowledge, skills, and understanding, provides empowerment [3]. Prior academic

political studies confirmed that educated citizens have greater acceptance of democratic principles, issue understanding, voting, and engagement in community affairs [7]. Accordingly, they become dominant in exercising and defending their democratic rights and responsibilities in society [2]. They also become inspired to develop an active part in democratic life [5].

Egypt's 2011 revolution was the start of the critical period of transition to democratization [8]. However, is Egypt ready for democracy despite the fact that more than 30% of the public suffers from illiteracy? According to the Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics (CAPMAS) for the year 2013, 25.9% of Egypt's population above 10 years of age is illiterate. The report found that levels of illiteracy among individuals above the age of 60 (64.9%) exceed that of youth aged 5 to 24 (8.6%). The illiteracy rate between urban residents reached 19.1%, while the rate of the countryside residents reached 31.2%.

Prior political studies provided a good deal of empirical support that education leads to more democratic behaviours [9], [10], [11]. Nevertheless, the theoretical reasons for this relationship remain unexplored [2], especially in the Middle East context. In this paper, the researchers investigate empirically the knowledge and education of people in Egypt, which leads to the Fostering of a democratic government.

The association between education and civic activity is clearly stated in prior political research [12]. However, the reasons for this correlation are less obvious. In one view, education integrates teaching, training, and instruction about the virtues of civic and political participation [13]. The more educated the citizens are, the more effective they become in various doings related to both work and civic activities [14]. This study assumes that promotion of democracy is through education. Citizens should be knowledgeable to help democracy triumph [6]. Therefore, this study addresses the following questions: Does education influence the acquisition of political knowledge?

## 2. Theoretical Framework

The success of a democracy depends on having a large number of supporters fighting for the benefits of a community as a whole [5]. Education creates such supporters and stabilizes democracy [13]. Prior political researches illustrate a significant connection between education and democracy [15]. Studies indicated that education is an essential determinant of civic culture and participation in democratic societies. *“The uneducated man or the man with limited education is a different political actor from the man who has achieved a higher level of education [16].”*

Education plays a significant role in preparing citizens to become participants in a democratic society and gain political knowledge [15]. According to prior political research, education provides people with wide-ranging knowledge base, enhancing intellectual and practical skills; teaching the importance of social and personal responsibility; and grasping the complexity of a dynamic world [6]. Accordingly, it develops pro-democratic and active citizens [17]. With education, individuals become better-informed citizens that add valued insights on issues facing the community [6]. Furthermore, it aids citizens to think for themselves rather than depending solely on authority figures [13].

In a democracy, the people choose the political leaders during regular elections [17]. People have a choice between different candidates and parties who want the power to govern [12]. The elected representative must listen to the people and be responsive to their needs [15]. Thus, democracy requires independent thinking by the public [16]. Studies indicated that the opportunity for progressive social and political change rests in citizens' hands [17]. With education, people improve their critical thinking skills, analyzing issues in a logical and reasoned manner [13]. It supports citizens to make wise, sensible, and civilized decisions when confronted with a community problem [15];

or encourages citizens to question and challenge authority [5].

Education is a means to create competent citizens [12]. *“Education promotes the opportunity to learn about politics by transmitting specific information and influencing career paths and social networks; it increases the motivation by socializing students to the political world and stimulating their interest in it; and it develops the cognitive ability necessary for effective learning [18].”* Therefore, education provides individuals' prosperities for the gathering of political knowledge (awareness of political facts) [17]; having the ability to think logically and analytically [19]; possessing moral attributes, such as good judgment and courage [20]; and developing tolerance, moral obligations, and a sense of justice [21].

Prior studies show that there is a direct link between education and democratic behaviour [6]. The influence of education contains a direct effect on political knowledge, as well as an indirect effect through political engagement and structural factors, such as occupation and income [18]. Education teaches citizens to interact and cooperate with others and raises the benefits of civic participation, including voting, protesting, campaigning, etc. [17]. Education also raises the support for more democratic regimes, increasing the likelihood of democratic uprisings against dictatorships and other anti-democratic coups. Literacy enables people to stay informed; as a result, informed citizens are in a better position to improve their democracy in their society [12].

This study is built upon the assumptions of [10]. He argues that: *“education presumably broadens men's outlooks, enables them to understand the need for norms of tolerance, restrains them from adhering to extremist and monistic doctrines, and increases their capacity to make rational electoral choices”* (p.79) and he concludes that: *“if we cannot say that a high level of education is a sufficient condition for democracy, the available evidence does suggest that it comes close to being a necessary condition”* (p.80). Other studies explained that democratic societies that embrace educated citizens are more stable than the less educated ones (higher education predicts the likelihood of democratic uprisings against dictatorships and other anti-democratic coups) [4]. Education leads to higher participation in a whole range of social, governmental, political, civil, electoral, and constitutional activities [17]. Thus, the proposed conceptual framework is as follows:



Figure 1. The proposed Conceptual Framework.

Citizens should be experienced, informed, and familiar with constitutional, governmental, and parliamentary issues to facilitate triumph of democracy [6]. An educated person entails certain three components to evaluate a person's education competence, which are *Information* (possess the

general knowledge needed for making informed rational decisions and inferences on familiar and novel situations); *thinking ability* (possess mastery of the general thinking abilities required for making informed intelligent decisions, estimates, assessments, and inferences); and *learning ability* (possess the capability of independent learning that cope with and adapt to the changing environment.) [22]. Hence, the hypotheses in this study are:

- Hypothesis (A) Information as a component of education impacts people's ability in Egypt to Foster a democratic government
- Hypothesis (B) Thinking ability as a component of education impacts people's ability in Egypt to Foster a democratic government
- Hypothesis (C) Learning ability as a component of education impacts people's ability in Egypt to Foster a democratic government

### 3. Research Method

This study followed the *positivism research philosophy*. In positivism studies, the role of the researcher is limited to data collection and interpretation through objective approach. The research findings are usually quantifiable observations that lead themselves to statistical analysis.

In order to maintain minimal interaction with the participants, a quantitative method, *administrated questionnaires*, was used by the researcher. This approach was constructive to measure the known associations and significances among the studied variables (educated citizens and the surfacing of a democratic society). The investigation was *descriptive in nature*. The researcher aimed to identify particular characteristics within this theoretical subject - to determine and portray societies that embrace educated citizens (higher education predicts the likelihood of democratic uprisings against dictatorships and other anti-democratic coups).

The questionnaire contained words that are simple and straightforward. The survey was originally created in the English language. However, an Arabic version was also created due to the fact that the native language in Egypt is

Arabic. The researcher used the back-translation process in order to ensure that the language conversion was done accurately. A bilingual speaker whose native language was Arabic translated the questionnaire from the English language. Another bilingual whose native language was English then retranslated this translated version of the survey back into the original language. This procedure was vital because it helped to develop an equivalent questionnaire. Further, in order to ensure the validity of the study, a pre-test involving a sample of fifty people was conducted to refine and adjust the questions in the survey.

The quantitative approach was a *cross-sectional study* that took place during February and March 2015. The *consumers intercept data collection method* was used to reach the respondents and to ensure the collection of large amounts of data in a relatively short period of time in order to test the hypotheses. The researcher stopped random people on the streets, shopping malls, college campuses, sports clubs, and retail outlets and asked if they were willing to participate in a brief research study. Those who agreed were given a brief description of the survey process. The respondents were given the administrated questionnaire on the spot to fill out. The selected respondents were Egyptian citizens of different demographic backgrounds (age, gender, marital status, career, and income) in order to ensure a large enough variety in the studied population.

### 4. Analysis

The researcher distributed 350 questionnaires but only 300 questionnaires were completed and answered accurately, allowing for an 86% response rate. The data were analyzed using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), version 18, in order to answer the research questions and to support or invalidate the research hypotheses. The selected samples were Egyptians of different socio-demographic backgrounds (age, gender, marital status, and education) in order to ensure a large enough variety in the studied population. Table 1 illustrates this study's participants' socio-demographic traits.

**Table 1.** Interviewees' Socio demographic Traits.

		Gender	Age		Marital Status		Degree Attained	
Category and Percentage	Female	78%	Less than 20	16%	Single	33%	No Degree attained	33%
			20 less than 35	40%	Engaged	30%	High school Degree	22%
	Male	22%	35 less than 50	28%	Married	30%	College Degree	22%
			50 less than 65	17%	Other	7%	Post grad Degree	23%
Total		100%		100%		100%		100%

Before testing the hypotheses, the researchers conducted the reliability analysis. This analysis was used to indicate the firmness, consistency, and the level of errors of the items in each instrument that measured the variables. The variables in this study were measured in the questionnaires using 5-point likert scales. Each variable scale contained different numbers of statements. According to the results, all the scales in the questionnaire were reliable. Each variable's scale contained a

Cronbach Alpha above 0.7 coefficients. Table 2 illustrates the results. The reliability analysis was also conducted on the whole questionnaire. The overall questionnaire had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.948. This number indicated high internal consistency, signifying that the items in the set were positively correlated to one another.

The scale that measured "Information" contained four statements, which asks respondents about their level of

agreement with the statement. These statements are: I have a great deal of knowledge about the matter (governmental, constitutional & electoral aspect); I have a great deal of experience about the matter (governmental, constitutional & electoral aspect); I have a great deal of familiarity about the matter (governmental, constitutional & electoral aspect); I have invested a great deal of research about the matter (governmental, constitutional & electoral aspect). According to the reliability analysis, this scale contained 0.83 Cronbach Alpha.

The scale that measured “Thinking Ability” contained ten statements, which asks respondents about their level of agreement with the statement. These statements are: I like to have the responsibility of handling a situation that requires a lot of thinking; Thinking is fun; I would rather do something that is sure to challenge my thinking ability; I enjoy situations where I will have to think in depth about something; I find satisfaction in thinking hard and for long hours; I enjoy tasks that involves coming up with new solutions to problems; Learning new ways to think excites me very much; I feel satisfied after completing a task that required a lot of mental effort; I prefer complex to simple problems; I prefer a task that is intellectual, difficult, and important to one that is not (does not require much thought). According to the reliability analysis, this scale contained 0.76 Cronbach Alpha.

The scale that measured “Learning Ability” contained seven statements, which asks respondents about their level of agreement with the statement. These statements are: I put a great deal of effort sometimes in order to learn something new; Learning is of fundamental importance to me; I am always learning something new about political and social matters; There are a lot of things to learn about; The basic values of a person include learning as key to improvement; Learning is an investment not an expense; Learning is a key commodity necessary to guarantee survival. According to the reliability analysis, this scale contained 0.89 Cronbach Alpha.

The scale that measured “Fostering Democratic Government” contained three statements, which asks respondents about their level of agreement with the statement. These statements are: People in my community think highly of promoting a democratic society; It is admired in my community to be an active member of the democratic process; Democracy as a form of government does not have an outstanding reputation in my community. According to the reliability analysis, this scale contained 0.72 Cronbach Alpha.

**Table 2.** Reliability Analysis.

Variable	Cronbach Alpha
Education: Information	0.83
Education: Thinking Ability	0.76
Education: Learning Ability	0.89
Fostering Democratic Government	0.72

When testing the hypotheses in this study, the researchers conducted the Pearson correlation analysis. Correlation coefficient analysis was used to measure the direction, strength, and significance of the relationships between the

independent variables, the components of education (Information, Learning Ability, and Thinking Ability) and the dependent variable, Fostering Democratic Government. According to the outcomes, all the components of education contained a strong, positive, and significant relationship with fostering democratic government (Correlation coefficient for Information is \*\*.568, \*\*.627 for learning ability, and \*\*.532 for Thinking Ability). Thus, all the hypotheses in this research is supported. Table 3 illustrates the correlation coefficient found in each hypothesis analysis.

**Table 3.** Pearson Correlation Analysis.

Variable	Correlation Analysis
H1: Information + Fostering Democratic Government	• **.568
H2: Thinking Ability + Fostering Democratic Government	• **.627
H3: Learning Ability + Fostering Democratic Government	• **.532

This study conducted the multiple regressions analysis to gain a more sophisticated exploration of the interrelationship among the set of variables. This analysis indicated that the model as a whole was significant, with a value of 0.000 in the ANOVA chart. This analysis also indicated that each independent variable contributed in diverse strength to impact in fostering democratic government (through the use of the Beta coefficients value). The variable with the largest Beta value had the strongest effect in fostering democracy. In this study, the variable (in corresponding order) with the strongest effects were: thinking ability (0.781), information (0.463), and learning ability (0.10.). Table 4 illustrates the results.

**Table 4.** Variables Impact Strength in Fostering Democratic Government.

Variable	Beta value
Thinking Ability (Strongest impact)	0.781
Information	0.463
Learning Ability (Weakest impact)	0.100

## 5. Conclusion

The aim of this research was to assess the impact of education, which leads to the fostering a democratic government in Egypt. Prior studies showed that in order for a person to be considered well educated they must embrace *Information* (possess the general knowledge needed for making informed rational decisions and inferences on familiar and novel situations); *thinking ability* (possess mastery of the general thinking abilities required for making informed intelligent decisions, estimates, assessments, and inferences); and *learning ability* (possess the capability of independent learning that copes with and adapts to the changing environment). Accordingly, the following research questions were sought: does Information, as a component of education, impact the ability to Foster a democratic government? Does thinking ability, as a component of education, impacts the ability to Foster a democratic government? Does learning ability, as a component of education, impacts the ability to Foster a democratic

government?

This quantitative research shows that the results are consistent with prior studies that believed education does impact and promotes democracy. Information, learning ability and thinking ability, as components of education, aid in fostering democracy. Education is an essential determinant of “civic culture” and participation in democratic politics. Education leads to higher participation in a whole range of social, governmental, political, civil, electoral, and constitutional activities. Democratic education helps citizens learn about themselves, engage with the world around them, and become positive and contributing members of society. Therefore, education increases the society-wide support for democracy because democracy relies on people with high participation benefits for its support. Educated nations are able to preserve democracy and to protect it from coups. The fundamental lack of political education distorts the broader view of democracy and doesn't teach people the value of human rights and equality. Thus, the issue of illiteracy is suggested as a reason for slow societal development and a barrier to democracy. If there is to be a successful transition to democracy, it is important to reform the existing education system.

This research recommends “education for democratic citizenship”. Training, information, and activities should be provided to equip citizens to (1) exercise and defend their democratic rights and responsibilities in society, (2) to value diversity, and (3) to play an active part in democratic life. Democratic education should be a goal to create educational ideals (method of instruction), conveying democratic value to education. It should also include self-determination within a community of equals, as well as values such as justice, respect, and trust.

When conducting this investigation, the researchers faced several limitations, preventing this study from being generalized among the population. The first limitation arises from the use of the consumer intercept data collection method in order to reach the respondents. Future research in this area would benefit from drawing a larger probability sample using, for instance, random sample selection techniques. The next limitation is that the data for this study were collected over a period of two months. The comparatively brief period of time allowed only a restricted number of respondents to participate. The sample size was very small when compared to the cities' populations. This research also focused only on large cities; therefore, the outcomes are not representative of the whole country of Egypt. For future research, a larger sample is needed and the data should be gathered proportionately from all regions in Egypt.

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