

### Electoral Integrity and Quality of Democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Case of Mozambique

**Jochua Abrão Baloi**

University of Saint Thomas of Mozambique, Maputo, Mozambique

Email: jbaloi@yahoo.com.br

#### **Abstract:**

*This article comes about with the objective of analyzing the electoral integrity and the quality of democracy in sub-Saharan Africa, considering the case of Mozambique. The main argument that guides this article is that, in the case of Mozambique, electoral cycles are characterized by problems of electoral integrity, more due to the political centralism adopted by the ruling party, Frelimo. To support this argument, can be advanced a premise according to which the political centralism adopted by Frelimo was inherited from the colony, from the militarism of the struggles for independence and perfected in the socialist period. From a qualitative and multidisciplinary approach centered on African history and political science, this article concludes that, although Mozambique is formally a democratic country, its political practices denote that it is a country with problems of electoral integrity.*

#### **Keywords:**

*Electoral Integrity, Democracy, Elections.*

### **I. Introduction**

This article aims to analyze electoral integrity and the quality of democracy in sub-Saharan Africa, considering the case of Mozambique. It argues that in the case of Mozambique, electoral cycles are characterized by problems of electoral integrity, more due to the political centralism adopted by the ruling party, Frelimo.

The explanatory hypothesis for this problem is that, for the Mozambican case, the political centralism adopted by Frelimo was inherited from the colony, from the militarism of the struggles for independence and, above all, it was perfected during the socialist period.

Thus, in all democratic countries, the process of electoral integrity guarantees free, fair and transparent elections, however, electoral cycles are not always accompanied by electoral integrity. In the case of Mozambique, electoral cycles are tainted in part by vicious voter registration, by adulteration of electoral results and by post-electoral conflicts. These problems are a consequence of the very construction of the State, which denotes political centralism in the management of public affairs.

The methodological construction that guides this article involves a symbiosis of several methods (Qualitative, Monographic, Historical, Bibliographic and Process Tracing), combining them with reflective hermeneutics for the effective reach of the theoretical and historical reference on electoral integrity linked to democracy and electoral cycles in Mozambique. Furthermore, based on surveys provided by P-DEIAM, and carried out with 2047 citizens and collected in 2020, on electoral integrity in the 2019 legislative and presidential elections in Mozambique, and using the SPSS 21.0 software package for its analysis, these data show that in these elections there were indeed problems with electoral integrity.

This article is divided into three parts, in addition to this introduction and conclusion. In the first, a review of the literature on electoral integrity, democracy and electoral cycles is presented. Then, a debate about elections in centralized contexts is raised, considering the case of Mozambique, and finally, the research data is analyzed and discussed.

## II. Research Methods

### 2.1 Electoral Integrity, Democracy and Electoral Cycles

In political science, the discussion about electoral integrity and electoral cycles is much broader than the issue of democracy *per se*. Studies exist on electoral integrity and democracy, as is the case of Van Ham (2015), Norris (2014), McAllister & White (2015), Fortin-Rittberger et al (2017), among others.

According to Norris (2014), electoral integrity refers to the quality that can be assessed in an election. Therefore, it seeks to reflect on the principles, values and universal standards applicable to democratic elections, which must be found in all phases of the electoral cycle (Norris, 2012).

Indeed, electoral integrity in democratic countries should ensure that elections are fair and free. Corroborating this idea, Freire et al (2018, p. 35) state that to define the agenda for the Electoral Integrity process, it is necessary to analyze the quality of the country's elections and democracy, then the public perception of electoral integrity and electoral malpractices, the political legitimacy of the process, participation through voting, if there were demonstrations and whether they were peaceful or violent and finally the regime of concessions, repression or replacement.

These elements are very important if one intends to analyze electoral integrity in democratic countries as such. Failure to observe these elements and phases in this process contributes to the failure to achieve the expected electoral integrity.

It was from the third wave of democratization, therefore, in 1990, that a movement of democratization emerged in Africa (Huntington, 1994), which in part brought and opened another page in African political science after many countries had gone through dictatorships and repressions of political-civil liberties. From this period on, it was possible to speak, in part, of processes and electoral cycles that, in their momentum, present their electoral trajectory in a free and fair way or fraudulently (Freire et al, 2018).

Despite this, studies by Baloi (2022) denote, for the case of Mozambique, that the situation of electoral integrity is not as much as one might imagine, since there is a dictator who works in the name of democracy, which is called “democratized dictatorship”. This placement was thus conceived, since the democratic regime implemented in Mozambique does not have the same characteristics as the democracy proposed by the great theorists of modern democracy, such as Schumpeter, Dahl and Downs.

The meanings of democracy implanted in Mozambique, if looked at from the point of view of electoral integrity, are far from the democracy referred to by these theorists. Looking at how the electoral process is managed *per se*, when it is intended that the opposition does not win the elections in honor of the heroic's founders of the homeland's liberators (Baloi, 2021).

The modern approach to democracy is marked by an antipathy in several countries regarding the functioning of representative democracy, although this model has not been overcome in political practices. Thus, Schumpeter, Dahl and Downs are among the various authors who have contributed greatly to the approach to democracy from an empirical point of view (Baloi, 2019).

The ideal models of representative democracy today are realized through a diversity of institutions that seek to create important public policies that must be formulated by all members elected by the people. These institutions have certain characteristics, such as free, fair and periodic elections, freedom of expression and association, which are the great ideals of any democracy.

These elements, if observed in full, guarantee that there is electoral integrity expected mainly in democratic countries. Alongside this placement, democracy would be a method that is used to achieve party interests. Therefore, democracy is a political and institutional method used for making political decisions, which are effective through the competitive struggle for power in the choice of leadership through free and periodic elections, and, therefore, it legitimizes competition for leadership (Schumpeter, 1961).

On the other hand, democracy leads the government to be responsive to its citizens, in the sense of guaranteeing certain opportunities to citizens in order to legitimize competition and citizens' rights. Therefore, the democratic ideal is linked to competition and participation, which Dahl (2005) calls polyarchy. Therefore, in it, citizens have rationality and preferences protected by democratic institutions in view of the consideration of their rights and interests for the formation of public policies (Baloi, 2019).

In the same vein, democracy makes the government act in accordance with its interests with a view to achieving power, and in this sense, elections have the role of selecting the government. Thus, for Downs (1999), although individuals have an instrumental rationality, and use democracy based on the economic model, the government is composed of people who have economic resources in order to formulate good action strategies in order to increase benefits and guarantee the right to vote of its citizens.

With regard to electoral cycles, Brender & Drazen (2005), attest that these occur in countries with democratizing tendencies, since in these countries, voters are not familiar with the management of the electoral process *per se*, and are unaware of the elements that can change and make an electoral process unfeasible, in relation to countries with consolidated democracies.

Recent studies on electoral cycles reveal that, in order to assess electoral integrity, it is necessary to consider a set of dimensions: electoral laws, electoral procedures, delimitation of electoral districts, electoral census, registration of parties and candidacies, journalistic coverage, financing of electoral campaigns, voting process, vote counting, results and electoral administration (Luís, 2020). These indicators denote the importance that electoral cycles have for electoral integrity in order to create a consolidated democracy.

In general, the electoral cycle is composed of three phases, the pre-election, electoral and post-election periods. Strictly speaking, the pre-election period comprises major areas such as the legal framework, planning and implementation, training and education, registration and electoral campaign. The election period

covers the broad areas of operations and voting, counting and results, appeals and complaints. The post-election period, in turn, includes the phases of evaluation, institutional reinforcement and eventual adjustments and reforms. All these areas form a natural continuum, with the integrity of each one of them likely to affect the others, with a natural impact on the integrity of the election as a whole (Luís, 2020, pp. 14-15).

These phases, and the nuances that occur in them, show how complex this process is, which in a way affects electoral integrity, especially in countries with a democracy under construction.

After analyzing the theoretical debate on electoral integrity and its relationship both with democracy and with electoral cycles, the problem of elections in centralized contexts is discussed, considering the case of Mozambique.

## **2.2 Elections in Centralized Contexts: The Case of Mozambique**

In countries with a consolidated democracy, elections are a political instrument to reward and punish their leaders in the exercise of their functions. To this end, this situation, in political science, is called the theory of economic voting, which serves as an instrument to hold leaders accountable, rewarding or punishing them politically for their performance in the good or bad conduct of government (Semedo et al, 2013; Downs, 1999).

Despite this, elections can create uncertainty and/or political instability regarding the doubt about the future results of the elections, which is characteristic of countries with democratizing tendencies, mainly African ones.

In African countries, especially those with strong political centralism, the experience of elections has denoted that there is always political instability and lack of electoral integrity, which can lead to electoral inconsistency accompanied by substantial electoral violence and/or (re)emergence of civil war.

In the midst of this problem, uncertainty regarding electoral results (Przeworski et al, 1996) and government involvement in electoral cycles (Heywood, 1997), specifically during the electoral period, has been the main and only cause of the destructive nature of electoral integrity, mainly in African countries.

Matsimbe's studies (2018, p. 122) denote that

Elections only gain relevance as mechanisms for strengthening democracy when viewed from the point of view of the rationality of the electorate in its electoral choices. In addition to elections being the cornerstone in modern liberal democracies, in emerging African democracies they are the main, if not the only, form of political participation by citizens.

This placement actually denotes what would be expected in emerging democracies, the case of Mozambique, in which elections should be democratic and that could lead citizens to actively participate in the political process. However, because of the political centralism assumed by the liberating party, Frelimo, since the national liberation struggles and consolidated after independence (1975), the political situation in Mozambique does not reflect a democratic country per se, but rather a country with a strong political centralism and therefore with serious problems of electoral integrity.

The situation of electoral uncertainty and the problems of electoral integrity experienced in Mozambique, which are partly caused by the inadequate involvement of key actors in the entire political-electoral process, as well as their ethnic and political identity, combined with the viciousness of all the electoral cycle. This contributes to Mozambique being on the list of formally democratic countries, but which in practice is experiencing a dictatorship in the name of democracy.

Despite this, the entire Mozambican electoral process is characterized by unsuccessful elections that include, among other factors: problems with the electoral law itself, electoral census bias, electoral fraud, political intimidation, electoral violence, official favoritism towards candidates from parties in the power, political intolerance (Igreja, 2013; Tollenaere, 2006), and above all, lack of a political-democratic culture.

The political situation of most countries in sub-Saharan Africa is immersed in democracies with a veil of dictatorship, which Baloi's studies (2022) call democratized dictatorship, since, most African countries, in general, do not have a history of decolonization or a period of independence that was accompanied by democratization per se. Therefore, the construction of post-independence states in most of these countries was only possible through the creation of a centralized power patent in a single party (Baloi, 2022, p. 76).

This citation denotes that Mozambique is no exception, as its political system shows the coexistence of several democratic models in the same territorial space: local democracies and even anti-democratic practices, which vary within different national scales (Baloi, 2021). Therefore, in other cases, there is a situation of peaceful coexistence of these models that Young (2004) considers virtual democracies or semi-democracies.

In the midst of this placement, in Mozambique there is a formal electoral democracy, despite falling short of the democratic assumptions evident in the democratic theory of Dahl and Downs. Therefore, its system of government still continues to be managed in molds of political centralism whose political tolerance is minimal, which is explained by the successive electoral offenses (Baloi, 2021), and therefore by the problems of electoral integrity in the legislative and presidential elections of 2019.

Still in this matter, there is a political intolerance of the majority and liberating party, Frelimo, which is verified "through the installation of a culture of fear, intimidation and silencing of opponents" (Matsimbe, 2017, p. 72), to maintain the political centralism inherited from the colony, from the militarism of struggles for independence and perfected in the socialist period.

Therefore, elections in centralized contexts are weakened, considering how the central government manages the process. Furthermore, this political centralism weakens the State's institutions regarding the management of public affairs and the supply of goods and services to citizens.

This political centralism is due to the construction of the Mozambican state which, intends to control everything from the central government, with the aim of monitoring and combating its opponents (Baloi, 2021).

Still in this context, one can ask why most of the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, even after achieving independence and consequently the assumption of democracy as a political regime, still remain centralized countries? The answer to this statement lies in the fact that the

democratic models adopted in Africa were imported from Western models, leaving aside the socioeconomic and political conditions of African peoples (Matsinhe, 2018).

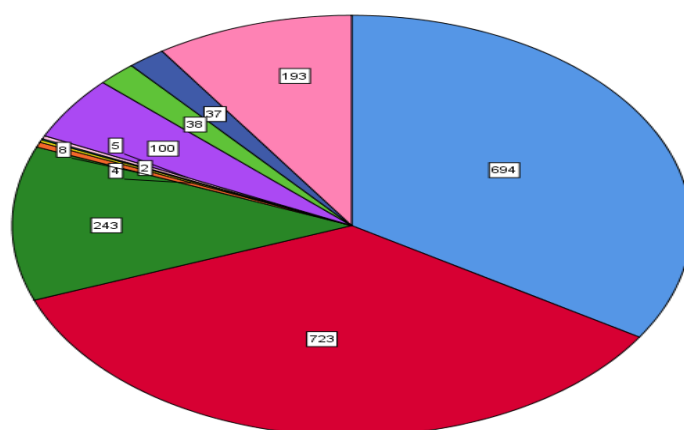
Furthermore, African countries do not have experiences of Western-style democracies, which contributes to the adoption of a model imposed and borrowed from consolidated democracies. In short, the assumption of Western democratic models is the element that contributes to the existence of democracies with a veil of dictatorship, since even looking at the typically African traditional governance, power is always centralized and in the hands of a leader. This aspect is important to understand, why in African countries we still have dictatorships, and consequently electoral offenses, therefore problems of electoral integrity.

After analyzing elections in centralized contexts, considering the case of Mozambique, the research data are then analyzed and discussed regarding the electoral integrity in the 2019 legislative and presidential elections in Mozambique.

### III. Results and Discussion

For a better systematization, this part will present the analysis of the survey data that were based on - surveys provided by P-DEIAM as previously mentioned- questions proposed to a total of 2047 respondents, regarding electoral processes and electoral integrity in the legislative and presidential elections of October 2019. The data were analyzed from the SPSS 21.0 software package.

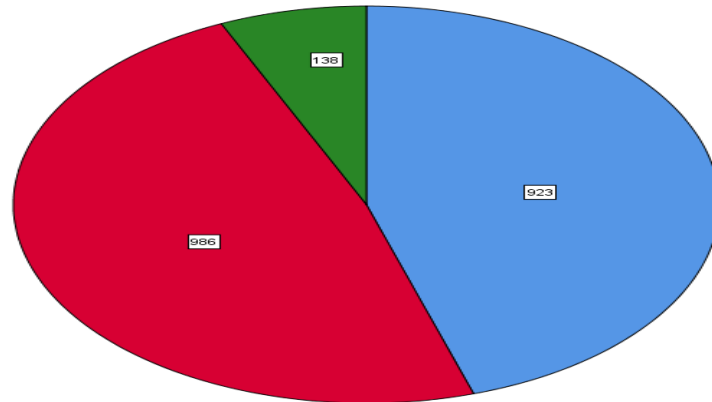
The respondents were asked the following question: What type of violence was there during the election campaign in your province? Regarding this issue, the data in figure 1 are more enlightening. Almost equally (Figure 1), the opinions of respondents are divided between no violence (694) and beatings/physical aggression (723), followed by threats (243), murders (100), all (38) and vandalism of campaign material (37).



**Figure 1.** What kind of violence was there during the election campaign in your province?

By analyzing this figure 1, it can be concluded that, in fact, during the electoral campaign there were problems of electoral integrity, from beatings/physical aggression, threats, murders, and vandalism of campaign material.

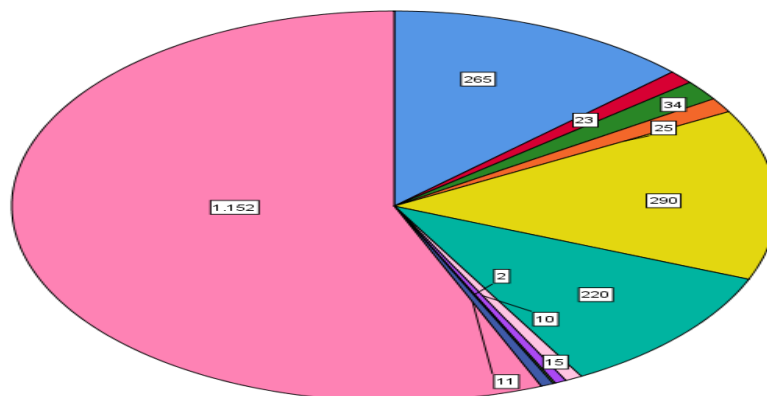
Regarding the question about, *if the results in your province are to be trusted, are they honest?* In this case (Figure 2), there is a very great similarity between No (986) and Yes (923), along with a small number of non-respondents (138).



**Figure 2.** Can the results in your province be trusted? Are they honest?

Analyzing these data, it can be concluded that due to the problems of electoral integrity, the results of the 2019 elections are unreliable, as shown by the results in figure 2.

Concerning the question about *Why don't you trust the results in your province?* The highlights, in this case, are the electoral process (290), did not have support from the population (265), electoral fraud (220), support from local leaders (34), campaign (25), and did not have the best program/proposal (23) were denoted. Again, the majority (1152) did not respond (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Why don't you trust the results in your province?

The conclusion that can be drawn from the data in Figure 3 above is that the absolute majority of 1152 preferred not to respond. With this abstention, it can be said that people prefer to remain in silent because they know that there will always be electoral fraud.

About the question *If you do not trust your province's results, who are to blame for the false results?* The respondents, at the level of culprits for the falsity of the results (Table 1), highlighted the National Electoral Commission - NEC (742), followed by the party in power (551).

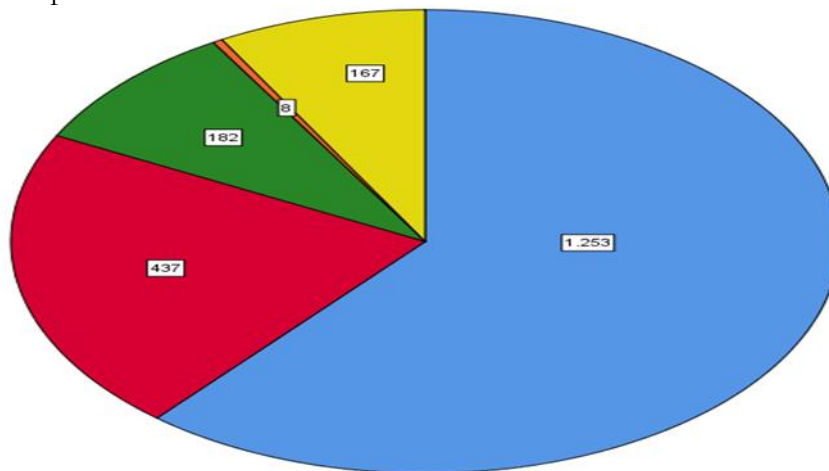
**Table 1.** Culprits for the falsity of the results

Distrust in the results		Frequency
If you do not trust your province's results, who are the culprits for the falsity of the results? NEC	Yes	742
	No	12
	NA	1293
If you do not trust your province's results, who are the culprits for the falsity of the results? Frelimo	Yes	551
	No	17

		NA	1479
If you do not trust your province's results, who are the culprits for the falsity of the results?	Local Leaders	Yes	98
		No	46
		NA	1903
If you do not trust your province's results, who are the culprits for the falsity of the results?	Courts	Yes	154
		No	44
		NA	1849
If you do not trust your province's results, who are the culprits for the falsity of the results?	Police	Yes	137
		No	46
		NA	1864
If you do not trust your province's results, who are the culprits for the falsity of the results?	Other	Yes	16
		No	47
		NA	1984

The data in Table 1 above brings the conclusion that the blame for the problems of electoral integrity lies directly with the election management bodies that enter into collusion with the party in power.

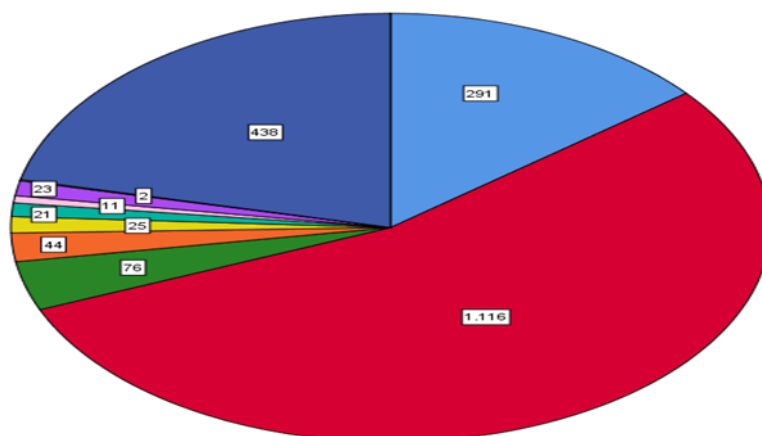
Respondents, when were asked *if the campaign ran freely in their municipality*. The data shows that also by majority (Figure 4), respondents answered Yes (1253), followed by No, with intimidation of the opposition (437), No, without justification (167), No, with police action (8) and 167 did not respond.



**Figure 4.** Do you think the campaign ran freely in your municipality?

The data in figure 4 shows that campaigns often take place with intimidation, despite the majority having responded that they were free, but in practice and because of the abstention in this response, it is clear that these elections were not even free, neither fair nor transparent.

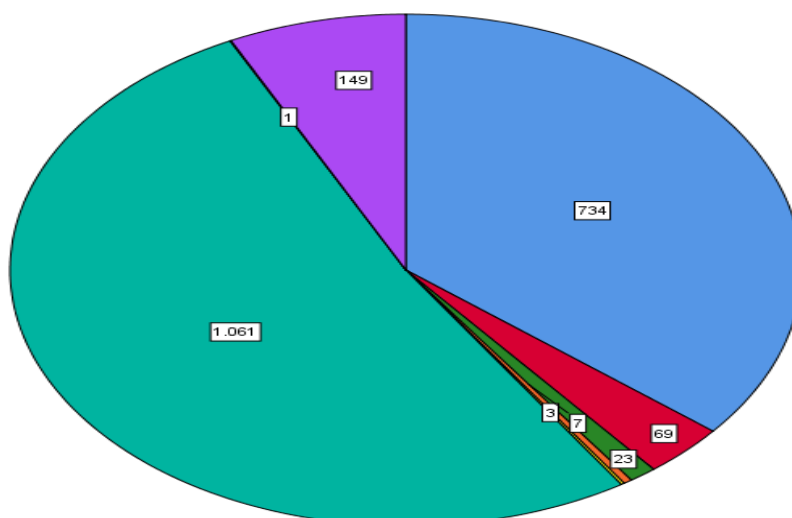
The other question posed to respondents was *whether the police did unacceptable/illegal things during the campaign in their municipality?* The data denote that although most answers (Figure 5) were No (1116), there are worrying answers: Yes, persecution of opposition members (291), Yes, protection of Frelimo's elements (76), Yes, detection by opposition elements (44), Yes, beatings (25), Yes, preventing marches by opposition elements (23).



**Figure 5.** Did the police do unacceptable/illegal things during the campaign in your municipality?

Figure 5 above leads to the conclusion that many times the action of the police has been to intimidate the population, chasing and detaining members of the opposition, beating them and preventing them from marching. These elements actually stain the electoral integrity.

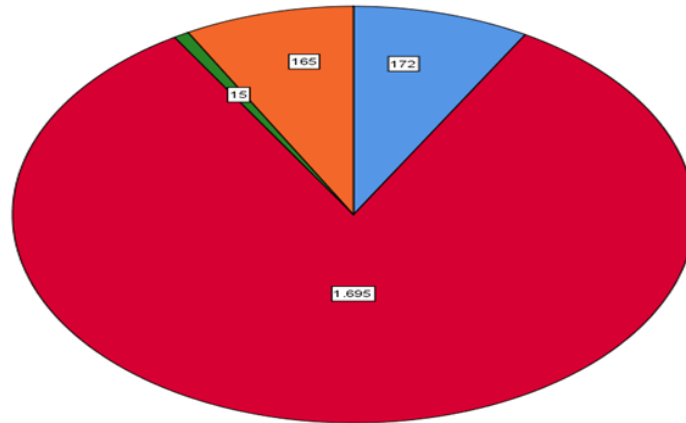
Regarding the question about *what problems were there at your polling station?* Although most respondents (Figure 6) answered I had no problems (1061), 734 identified delays as the main problem, followed by not being registered (69) and feeling intimidated (23). There were 149 non-respondents.



**Figure 6.** What problems were there at your polling station?

The conclusion that can be drawn from Figure 6 is that in the 2019 elections there were several problems at the polling center, from the delay in opening polling stations, lack of voter registration, to intimidation if the population voted for the opposition.

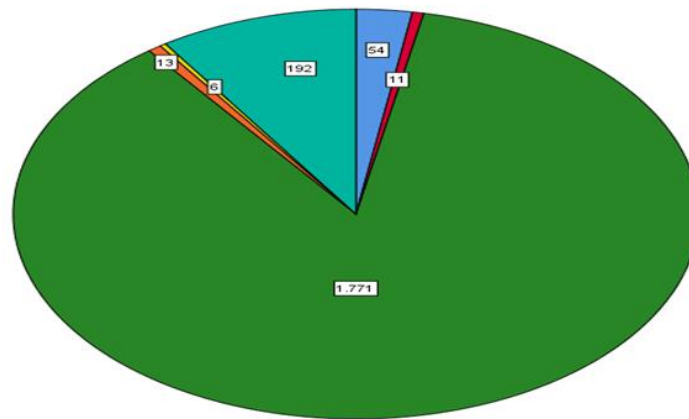
With regard to the question about *the effects of the police present at polling places*, most respondents (1695) stated that the presence of the police provided security (Figure 7), 172 responded that it was frightening, only 15 reported that there were no police and 165 did not respond.



**Figure 7.** Effects of police present at polling places

These data bring to the conclusion that although the police are a protective body, often, during election periods, they do not provide security, therefore intimidating citizens, as shown in figure 7 above.

When asked *if there was intimidation or violence at polling places?* Again, the majority said there were no problems (1771), 54 said yes, caused by Renamo, 13 answered yes, caused by Frelimo, and 6 said yes, caused by everyone (Figure 8), with 192 not responding.



**Figure 8.** Was there intimidation or violence near polling places?

The data in figure 8 above shows that during election periods, mainly in Mozambique, there are always small outbreaks of intimidation and violence near the polling places, which creates problems of electoral integrity.

#### IV. Conclusion

This article showed that in the Mozambican case, electoral cycles are tainted by vicious voter registration, by adulteration of electoral results and by post-electoral conflicts. These problems are a substitute for the political centralism adopted by Frelimo in the management of public affairs.

Furthermore, this article revealed that electoral integrity must consider the values and guiding principles that apply at the international level to democratic elections and the phases of the electoral cycle. However, because of the political centralism of most African countries, electoral integrity ends up being threatened, especially throughout the electoral cycle.

At the heart of this problem, there is a relationship between democracy and electoral integrity, since where there is democracy, voters have more confidence in the bodies managing elections, and therefore, there is no fraud or electoral violence. Therefore, understanding democracy *per se* is an essential element for citizens to understand the importance of electoral integrity, even when election management bodies prove to be unreliable.

The empirical evidence has denoted that in Mozambique there are serious problems related to electoral integrity, since in the 2019 legislative and presidential elections, there were several adversities throughout the electoral cycle, from electoral uncertainty to the problems of democracy that is mixed with dictatorship.

Furthermore, the survey data revealed that for a total of 2047 respondents, in the 2019 legislative and presidential elections there were problems of electoral integrity more due to the inability of the electoral management bodies themselves to avoid violence during election periods, the lack of reliability in the election results themselves and by intimidation and violence at polling stations.

The study suggests that for elections to be fairer, freer and more transparent, and therefore, for there to be electoral integrity, it is necessary for the Mozambican government to introduce electronic vote, for there to be independence of the bodies that manage elections from the central government; the civil society must be stronger and more reliable and the fore avoiding electoral fraud.

In short, despite Mozambique being formally a democratic country and/or being a country with a democratizing tendency, its political practices of political centralism denotes that it is a country with problems of electoral integrity.

## References

- Baloi, J.A. (2022). The Democratized Dictatorship: The Historical Matrices of Centralism Politician in Angolan and Mozambican State Building. In: Neto, J. A. (Org.). History: Repertoire of Cultural and Historical References, Paraná: Athena.
- Baloi, J.A. (2019). The Role and Limits of Representative Democracy: An Analysis from Joseph Schumpeter, Robert Dahl, and Anthony Downs. *Journal of Political Science and International Relations*. Vol. 2, No. 4, pp. 79-85. doi: 10.11648/j.jpsir.20190204.11.
- Baloi, J.A. (2021). Political-administrative decentralization in the context of a unitary state: an analysis from Mozambique (1998 - 2018). 2021. 280 f. Thesis (Doctorate in Political Science) - Institute of Social and Political Studies, State University of Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro.
- Brender, A. & Drazen, A. (2005). Political Budget cycles in new versus established democracies. *Journal of Monetary Economics*, Elsevier, v.52, n.7, p. 1271-1295.
- Dahl, R.A. (2005). *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. Edusp: Sao Paulo.
- Downs, A. (1999). *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. Edusp. São Paulo.
- Eywood, A. (1997). *Politics*. London: Palgrave.
- Fortin-Rittberger, J. & Harfst, P. & Dingler, SC. (2017). "The Costs of Electoral Fraud: Establishing the Link Between Electoral Integrity, Winning an Election, and Satisfaction with Democracy." *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 27 (3): 350-368.
- Freire, D. & Cotias, M.L. & Menezes, P.V.D. (2018). Electoral Integrity and Quality of Democracy in Latin America, *Journal of Electoral Studies*. Recife, V.2, Number 3, p.1-103.

- Huntington, S.P. (1994). *The Third Wave: Democratization at the End of the 20th Century*. Sao Paulo: Attica.
- Igreja, V. (2013). The Implications of Accumulated Resentments and Memories of Political Violence for Administrative Decentralization in Mozambique: *Journal of Political Studies*, v. 6, no. 1, p. 162–180.
- Luís, C. (2020). Elections, electoral integrity, and populism: an analysis of the sticking points. *International relations*. 67:1, pp. 13–25.
- Matsimbe, Z. (2018). Electoral Studies in Africa: Theoretical, Methodological and Conceptual Challenges. In: Forquilha, S. (Org.) *Challenges for Mozambique*, Maputo: IESE.
- Matsimbe, Z. (2017). Liberating Parties in Southern Africa: Reflection on the Challenges for Mozambique. In: Brito, L de & Castel-Branco, C. N. & Chichava, S. & Forquilha, S. & Francisco, A. (Org.) *Challenges for Mozambique*, Maputo: IESE.
- Mcallister, I. & White, S. (2015). “Electoral Integrity and Support for Democracy in Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine.” *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 25 (1): 78–96.
- Norris, P. (2012). *Making Democratic Governance Work. How Regimes Shape Prosperity, Welfare, and Peace*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Norris, P. (2014). *Why Electoral Integrity Matters*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Przeworski, A. et al. (1996). *What Makes Democracies Endure?* - *Journal of Democracy* 7:1, 39–55, Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Schumpeter, J.A. (1961). *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*. Culture Fund: Rio de Janeiro.
- Semedo et al. (2013). *Market Studies, Opinion Survey and Economic Consultancy*, Afrosondagem lda.
- Tollenare, M. (2006). *Decentralization Support to Post-Conflict Mozambique: Intent and Outcomes*, Working Paper No. 37, Netherland Institute of International Relations.
- Van Ham, C. (2015). “Getting Elections Right? Measuring Electoral Integrity.” *Democratization* 22(4): 714–737.
- Young, C. (2004). The End of the Postcolonial State in Africa? Reflections on Changing African Political Dynamics. *African Affairs*, 103 (410), 23–49.