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Knowledge assessment on the functions of government authorities. Assemblymen, council, prefect, and mayor

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Introduction: Elections allow citizens to participate in the political process and to choose those candidates they consider suitable to govern their nation.

Methods: In this context, this research aims to investigate the level of knowledge of Ecuadorians about the authorities, for which a survey was applied to 1,376 inhabitants from different provinces and ages. The survey evaluated knowledge about executive function, mayor and prefect, legislative office positions, assembly members and councils.

Results: The information showed that people know more about the functions of the mayor, followed by the assemblyman, prefect and finally council, admitting that age is a correlated factor. It was also seen that Ecuadorians show they know more about the functions of the prefect than of the mayor, also reinforcing the premise: the older the person, the more knowledge he/she has about executive functions of popular representations. However, in legislative functions, there is more knowledge about the work of councils than the members, unlike what was evidenced before. Regarding age, a significant variation is observed, demonstrating that the group between 27 and 64 years is the one with more correct options.

Conclusions: The results reveal the urgent need of governments, academia and society in general to work on electoral processes literacy.

KEYWORDS

elections, Ecuador, legislative functions, executive functions, knowledge assessment

Introduction

Sectional elections were held on February 2023 in Ecuador, where prefects, vice-prefects, mayors, councils, rural councils and parochial council members were elected. The results showed several trends, one of which was observed in previous elections—2014 and 2019—with ~20% of no vote ([Consejo Nacional Electoral, 2023](#)), particularly this year, in the rage of electoral campaigns with emerging populism along the use of social networks, candidates have been tempted to dissuade with promises on issues outside their competences and obligations ([Franco, 2020](#)).

In Ecuador, the obligation of voters to inform themselves about candidates is not established in any specific law. However, the [Ley Orgánica Electoral y de Organizaciones Políticas \(2020\)](#) requires political parties and candidates to provide clear and sufficient information on their proposals and government plans, as well as to participate in public debates and other media that allow voters to know their proposals and action plans. It also establishes the obligation of the mass media to provide fair and objective information

on candidates and electoral proposals to ensure transparency and free expression of the electorate. In short, although there is no law that establishes the obligation of voters to inform themselves, the duty of citizens is to know the proposals and inform themselves about the work of their authorities.

Hence, this research aims to investigate the knowledge of voters about the basic functions of popular election authorities, considering that there is time for the electorate during the electoral year to inform themselves about the political proposals of candidates and political parties.

Theoretical framework

General characteristics of voters in democracy

The electorate consists of a diverse group of individuals who have the right to elect their leaders or representatives based on their political views or preferences. This group is chosen in accordance with laws, culture, historical moment, and other contextual factors, such as democracy. For its part, democracy is a mutant term that can be defined in a prescriptive and descriptive way (Sartori, 2012), but for the purposes of this study it will be considered as the most valid or “most suitable” form of government at present (Van Barneveld, 2001). The word democracy is derived from the Greek *demos*, which means people, and *kratos*, which means government, although many countries that declare themselves democratic are far from its praxis, because for it to happen it is necessary to take into account the opinions of all who integrate the democratic society (Cárdenas-Ruperti et al., 2020).

In this sense, one of the key issues when presenting a political campaign in a democratic environment is to know the electorate, taking into account the historical moment. Thus, political communication strategists use various techniques that aim to unveil how to approach and reach the right segment in the electoral process with their proposals or messages: get the vote or position themselves. “The vote is an act full of cultural meanings, which reflects customs, habits, preferences, filiations and political phobias” (Valdez and Huerta, 2011, p. 3).

In this regard, several authors have researched the way in which voters could act. Alaminos (2021) collects five voter models. These models allow us to understand the different motivations of voters when exercising their right to vote, reflecting that sometimes the electorate’s interest is not only in the proposals, but responds to other factors.

As shown in Table 1, there are several motivations and only in the rational choice model does the voter seek information on the proposals of the party or the politician. Hence, there is a strong tendency for other factors to play a prominent role in voters in deciding their vote, including their sense of belonging to a particular social group or ideology. Likewise, Lipset (1960) states that the political behavior of citizens is closely related to a wide range of psychological and sociological factors. In this sense, McDermott (1997) comments that voters, on many occasions, even without fully understanding a political measure, respond to their own preferences. Although there may be a scarcity information in the electoral campaign, the ideology of the party will always be known.

Bertoldi (2009) mentions that voters are tired of traditional campaigns, so current policymakers rather than communicating seek to captivate the audience over. Nevertheless, the author proposes a holistic campaign in which emotions are only one more element of political campaigns, but a question arises: Are voters prepared to distinguish between emotional information?

The insights of Bertoldi (2009) on the holistic approach in political campaigns is aligned with the perspective of Hernandez et al. (2021) expressing these campaigns can increase polarization by reinforcing identities and, in some cases, fostering attitudes and negative actions toward those who support opposing parties. However, it is precisely the partisan differences—which can occur in a democratic State—that in some cases motivate the electorate’s vote, since when the population does not see differences between party lines, abstention or null voting is more frequent (Hobolt and Hoerner, 2020).

Research, models and theories have been conducted to try to discover the behavior of the electorate. As for voter models, there are conductivist, rational and cultural theories (Valdez and Huerta, 2011) that have been studied to determine voter motivation. The first refers to voters not making political decisions based on their own evaluation of the proposals or candidates, but rather are influenced by external stimuli that act as promoters of a particular political behavior (Fernández de Mantilla and Flórez Pinilla, 2008). Rational theory, on the other hand, refers to the human being’s capacity of reasoning, in which the informed subject votes motivated by those who give him/her the most benefit because of his/her interests (Montecinos, 2007). Regarding cultural theory, the people vote not only according to their interests or stimuli, but their beliefs, values and cultural norms.

Although there are multiple approaches and theories that address electoral behavior, there is a consensus that it is significantly influenced by the social context and moment. therefore it is decisive to understand elections as a perceptual agreement, in which voter participation is encouraged and they are made to feel like an active subject in the process (Dahlberg, 2013). However, Ashworth and Bueno de Mesquita (2014) point out a mistake to speak of electoral behavior in isolation, since it depends on other factors that have their genesis in the relationship of mutual dependence between politician and voter. In addition, the authors emphasize that the democratic performance of a state goes beyond the powers and/or knowledge that the electorate has about politicians. In addition, a study carried out by Gainsborough (2005) found that the geographic location where potential voters reside, especially in suburban and urban areas, is an important factor in understanding the electoral behavior and partisan identification of individuals. The study indicates that factors such as ethnicity and income have a significant impact on citizens’ political participation.

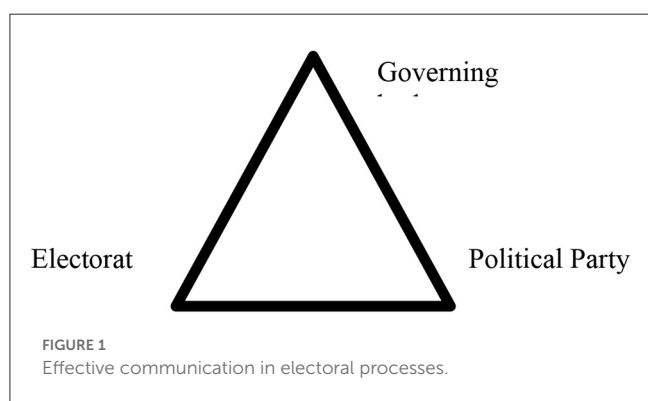
Knowledge of the electorate on the functions of elected authorities

In a democratic ecosystem, in which voters can freely choose their rulers and main authorities—it is assumed—there is prior knowledge of the roles of these authorities. Likewise, candidates or political parties aspiring to power must know the main demands

TABLE 1 Models of voters.

Model	Key element	Dimension of the research
Columbia	Voting is motivated by a sense of belonging toward a particular social group.	Sociological
Michigan	Voting is motivated by party identification (ideology). Sometimes the voter's identification with the party can lead to a distortion of reality.	Psychological
Rational voting	Enhanced rational and cognitive ability. The vote is motivated by the personal gain factors of the proposals raised by politicians.	Psychological
Biological	Genetic inheritance. There is a relationship between brain areas and ideological orientations.	Biological

Own elaboration based on Alaminos (2021).



of citizens and must respond to them through coherent proposals that comply with the provisions of the Law. In addition, there is the participation of a governing body, which will mediate between citizens and rulers through a normative/legal framework, i.e., there must be an effective communication between this triad (Figure 1), to which obviously the media disseminate the information raised by any of the aforementioned elements.

It is essential to understand that the citizen must be immersed in the political participation of his/her country to know the functions of the authorities and must know its social and political environment and reflect on it, so that he/she can fulfill the duties and demand his/her rights. The subject who possesses these skills and abilities will then be a competent citizen (Hernández-Gil and Núñez-López, 2020).

Citizen participation is a political right, and it is the way through which civil society is part of the decisions of their nation (Ibarra, 2006). Although this study mentions voting as part of political participation, it is much more extensive and complex, for example: activism, participation in political parties, oversight, participation in the media, and others.

The truth is that citizen participation is vital in democracy. Del Águila (1996, p. 35) argues that “wherever decisions are to be made that affect the community, citizen participation is the best (or most legitimate) method of doing so”. The same author points out that citizens’ lack of interest in the public matter is a response that derives from some possible problem of the system. In other words, there is no effective communication or functioning between the people, the political parties and the governing body.

Rivera (2019) says that democracies worldwide have suffered a significant decline around political participation of citizens and

TABLE 2 Role of political campaigns.

Role	Description of the roles
Educative	Explain the voters the proposals of each of the parties and candidates who participate on the election.
Communication	The main role of the campaign is to transmit messages.
Competition	Between the political parties.
Legitimacy	Legitimacy of the democratic system.

Source: Herrero and Römer (2014).

the effect of zero confidence of voters toward political institutions. On the other hand, authors such as Bianchi et al. (2016) agree that what is happening in Latin America is not a crisis of confidence in political parties, but a natural result of a paradigm shift, which arises due to the active participation of non-traditional political actors, who “defend principles, organize themselves politically, and exercise practices that are opposed to representative politics based on political parties” (Bianchi et al., 2016, p. 47).

Indeed, it is essential that citizens and voters know the functions of the authorities that will represent them in different aspects of political life, so education is fundamental to a conscious vote. Lipset (1960) argues that civic education is the cornerstone of a democratic system.

Civic education is a shared responsibility among governments, schools and society. In most democratic countries, however, it is the governments that must direct efforts toward its implementation, while the implementation of civic education curricula depends on the schools, which in turn need the support and policies of the governments. In the case of society in general, citizens are responsible for seeking information for training and acquiring the appropriate skills.

However, during the election year, political parties are responsible for informing their proposals through the so-called political campaigns. In Ecuador, the regulations governing the proper conduct of elections are the Electoral Law: Code of Democracy, which allocates an amount of time for this purpose. In this regard Herrero and Römer (2014) establishes some functions of political campaigns (Table 2).

Political campaigns are then a valid tool for the voter to receive messages, know the proposals of the different political parties, compare them and exercise their right to choose. For Kuschick (2003), campaigns are intended to convince and are created based on arguments, but also by trying to appeal to emotions and feelings

after having studied the demands and problems of the voters. However, the voter must know the functions of the authority to elect, otherwise it is difficult to identify unfeasible proposals according to the country's reality.

For the citizen to be a participative subject in the political development of his/her country, there must be a relevant ecosystem which meets some characteristics that respond to the historical moment. Fuentes et al. (2020), guided by Montessori, propose to take advantage of the temporality of the human being to educate them, in other words to use technology as a crucial tool. Encarnación Ordoñez et al. (2021) also present of electronic government as a possibility to promote public sector transparency as well as citizen participation.

Indeed, Technologies can be a complementary tool for political candidates in the dissemination of their campaigns. Through the internet, candidates can establish wide communication with voters and obtain feedback on their proposals, which would allow them to gain credibility and trust. The goal of any politician during a campaign is to gain the trust and support of the population, Consequently, the use of technology could be an effective strategy to achieve this goal (Tomlin et al., 2020). In this context, Internet allow candidates to create new support communities or strengthen existing ones. However, it is important to note that digital communication can also be a tool for manipulation, as noted by Balakhonskaya et al. (2020), since it allows for the customization of messages to reach an increasingly specific audience.

For this reason, it is necessary to recognize that the web not only serves as an information channel for voters but is also used for manipulation, as evidenced by the clear struggle to capture the attention of potential voters. As a result, it is crucial to have a critical approach when evaluating political information and online messages.

Technology can facilitate access to information about political parties and their proposals, but it does not guarantee that all voters will fully understand the information presented to them. Other factors may influence a voter's decision, such as their ideological identification, personal affinity with candidates, or their opinion of the government in power (Rosema, 2007). It is important for political parties to make an effort to present their information and political proposals in a clear and accessible manner for all citizens.

Data and methods

The aim of this research is to evaluate the level of knowledge of Ecuadorians about the functions of popular election authorities, deriving the following null hypothesis, H_0 : There is no significant relationship between age and knowledge of Ecuadorians about the functions of popular election authorities. Deriving from it the following alternative hypotheses:

H1. The level of knowledge of Ecuadorians about the functions of the elected authorities varies according to their age.

This hypothesis seeks to verify the level of knowledge on government responsibilities based on four age groups ($N = 1,376$), 16–17 years ($N_1 = 67$), 18–26 years ($N_2 = 887$), 27–64 years ($N_3 = 388$) and over 65 years ($N_4 = 34$). It is worth mentioning that the vote is optional in the two extremes: 16–17 and over 65, this means

that there is no obligation on voting; however, for people between 18–26 and 27–64, *Ley Orgánica Electoral y de Organizaciones Políticas* (2020), specifically in article 301, states that voting is mandatory for people over 18. This hypothesis was similarly tested by Benbenaste and Delfino (2004).

H2. Ecuadorians have more knowledge about the functions performed by the mayor than the prefect.

In Ecuador, both the mayor and the prefect are elected political positions, both have common elements such as: executive functions in local government, being responsible for implementing policies and programs for the welfare of the population, being in charge of the administration of resources, contain a strategic planning for the economic, social and cultural development of their jurisdictions, however, there are differences regarding government powers. The mayor is responsible for municipal affairs, such as local budget, urban planning, transportation, garbage collection, maintenance; on the other hand, the prefect is the maximum representative of the provincial government, of the maintenance of roads and bridges, the protection of the environment, the promotion of tourism, among others (León Trujillo, 2004).

H3. Ecuadorians have more knowledge about the functions performed by the assemblymen than the councils.

In Ecuador, members of assembly and councils have a legislative function related to the review and approval of laws, and also control and supervise the work of the executive members. For Pachano (2010), although both represent a geographical constituency, the councils respond to a city or municipality, while the assembly members are oriented to regulations at the state or provincial level.

These three hypotheses are included in a descriptive design, defined as the analysis of the properties and characteristics of social phenomena (Hernández-Sampieri et al., 2014). Hence, a survey composed of 16 questions was conducted to evaluate the knowledge of Ecuadorians about the functions of elected authorities. It was organized into four questions about assembly members, four about prefects, four about mayors, four about councils. The first question in each section seeks to know whether the respondent knows the work of the elected official with a dichotomous answer option, while the following three questions seek to validate the knowledge of those respondents who claimed to know the tasks they perform through specific questions of true/false.

A content validation was applied to the survey, in which five experts with more than 10 years of experience in political science from the International University of Ecuador (one expert), University of Las Americas (two experts), and University of Santiago de Compostela (two experts) participated, modifying the number of questions, which changed from 6 to 4 for each popular representative. Also, the wording was improved to a less technical and more understandable language, and the resulting preliminary version was piloted with 52 people, allowing to calculate its reliability through Cronbach's Alpha, obtaining a value of 0.81, which means that the set of items of the data collection instrument is reliable. After this review, the final version was validated and applied to a non-probability random sample of 1,376 inhabitants from the following Ecuadorian provinces: Loja, Guayaquil, Azuay, Pichincha, Tungurahua, Zamora and Cañar. However, the correlation on geographic location in Ecuadorian territory in this research is not significant for this study,

maintaining only the value of age groups as an independent variable. Knowing these characteristics, the survey was applied from December 10, 2022 to January 15, 2023, ordering the findings with the IBM® SPSS® Statistics v. 29.

Results

Firstly, it is observed that the functions that are unknown are those of the councils with 50.8%—699 people, then the prefect with 39.8%—548 people, followed by the assemblymen with 37.1%—511 people, and finally the mayor with 15.2%—209 people (Figure 2). This difference is presented in Table 3.

According to the alternative hypothesis [H1]: The level of knowledge among Ecuadorians regarding the functions of elected authorities varies according to their age, which assessing the association between age and the level of knowledge about popular election functions, it can be evidenced that according to chi-square tests performed in all cases, there is a bilateral asymptotic significance <0.001 with a count <5. Thus, there is indeed a relationship between the two variables (Table 3).

However, when reviewing the association degree between the variables, which was measured through the Phi value, there is a differentiation in the results presented among the different positions of popular election, showing a stronger correlation in prefect and council than in assemblyman and mayor (Table 3) since the values are closer to 1.

Deepening on the responses of the 4 age groups, the functions of mayors are best known, while in the opposite case, the functions of councils are the least known (Table 4). The results show a progressive proportional increase in knowledge of the functions of the offices linked to age except the mayor, where 89.2% of people in the group from 27 to 64 years said they know, while the group over 65 years only got 88.2% (Table 5).

For the following alternative hypotheses, it should be noted those respondents who did not know the functions of the authorities were excluded from the validation of their knowledge. The validation included three specific questions about the tasks of each position, the following new sampling presented: assembly members (N = 865), mayor (N = 828), prefect (N = 1,167), and councilor (N = 677).

For the following alternative hypothesis [H2]: Ecuadorians have a greater understanding of the functions performed by mayors than prefects. In general terms, the average correct response rate for mayors is 78.6%, whereas for prefects, it is 81.9%. Considering the questions regarding mayors: “Is one of the functions of mayors to present ordinances projects to the Municipal Council within the scope of the Municipal Autonomous Government (GAD)?” “Is the mayor responsible for planning, constructing, and maintaining the road system within the provincial scope?” and “Can the mayor grant permits for games, amusements, and public shows in the urban parishes within their jurisdiction?” The most accurate response has been for the presentation of ordinances projects with a 92.5% accuracy rate for the option “True,” whereas the least accurate response has been for the planning, construction, and maintenance of the road system with a 65.1% accuracy rate for the option “False”.

Regarding the prefect, the questions posed were: “Is it among the functions of the prefect to convene and preside over Provincial Council sessions with voice and vote?” “Does the prefect have the authority to approve or reform plans, programs, and projects from the Mayor’s Office?” and “Is one of the competencies of the prefect to build and maintain the provincial road system?” Among these questions, the correct response with the highest accuracy for the option “True” has been related to the road system with a 93.7% accuracy rate, whereas the approval of plans and programs issued from the Mayor’s Office with the option “False” has obtained the lowest accuracy rate with 66.4%.

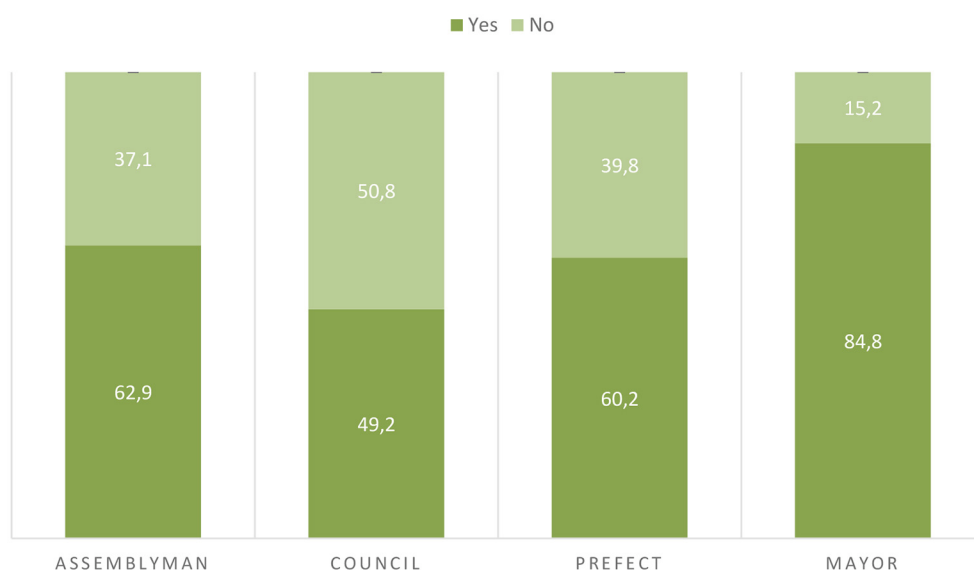


FIGURE 2 Knowledge about the functions of elected authorities.

TABLE 3 Chi-square age-knowledge test about functions in elected positions.

	Value	gl	Bilateral significance
Assemblymen			
Pearson's chi-square	18.047 ^a	3	<0.001
Likelihood ratio	18.173	3	<0.001
Linear by linear association	17.591	1	<0.001
No of valid cases	1,376		
Prefect			
Pearson's chi-square	82.291 ^a	3	<0.001
Likelihood ratio	85.467	3	<0.001
Linear by linear association	78.103	1	<0.001
No of valid cases	1,376		
Mayor			
Pearson's chi-square	14.061 ^a	3	0.003
Likelihood ratio	13.519	3	0.004
Linear by linear association	11.830	1	<0.001
No of valid cases	1,376		
Council			
Pearson's chi-square	79.701 ^a	3	<0.001
Likelihood ratio	81.057	3	<0.001
Linear by linear association	74.397	1	<0.001
No of valid cases	1,376		

^aIndicates that the value is used to assess the statistical significance of the relationship between the variables.

Exploring the details of the validation of knowledge regarding the functions of mayors and prefects, taking into consideration the age groups, it is evident that regarding questions about the functions of mayors, the extremes are identified by the 16–17 age group with the lowest average percentage of correct responses (67.3%), while the group of individuals over 65 years old has the highest average percentage of correct responses (91.1%). Regarding the intermediate groups, the 18–26 age group has an average percentage of 76.2%, and the group between 27 and 64 years old contains 84.3% of accurate responses. In other words, concerning the mayoral scope, it can be argued that the older the individuals, the more knowledge they possess about the functions.

Regarding the age ranges and the functions of the prefect, the results lead to determining that the trend is similar to what has been shown with mayors, although the average data assumes a greater knowledge about the prefecture. Among the 16–17 age group, a score of 76.8% was achieved, 18–26 years old with 77.1%, 27–64 years old with 89.5%, and finally, over 65 years old achieved 93.8%. It should be mentioned that the knowledge difference between the intermediate groups is 0.3%, meaning that the variation is minimal in the functions of prefects compared to the knowledge about the functions of mayors (Figure 3).

Regarding the last alternative hypothesis [H3]: Ecuadorians possess a greater knowledge about the functions performed by

TABLE 4 Phi test to measure the correlation level between the variables.

	Value	Approximate significance	
Assemblymen			
Nominal by nominal	Phi	0.115	<0.001
	Cramer's V	0.115	<0.001
No of valid cases		1,376	
Prefect			
Nominal by nominal	Phi	0.245	<0.001
	Cramer's V	0.245	<0.001
No of valid cases		1,376	
Mayor			
Nominal by nominal	Phi	0.101	0.003
	Cramer's V	0.101	0.003
No of valid cases			
Council			
Nominal by nominal	Phi	0.241	<0.001
	Cramer's V	0.241	<0.001
No of valid cases		1,376	

assembly members than councilors. In estimating the data on legislative bodies, the average number of correct answers for members of assembly is 67.3% and for the councilor is 75.2%. The questions asked about the members of the assembly are: Is it the function of the members of the assembly to monitor the actions of the municipalities at the national level? is it the function of the assembly member to issue, codify, reform, and repeal the laws? The question that received more correct answers is “True” with 88% and is oriented to the function of the assembly member for the issuance, codification, reform and repeal of laws. However, the question with more “false” option (51.1%) has been related to the control of the behavior of municipalities at the national level (Figure 4).

As for the functions of the councils which in general contain a higher rate of correct answers, the formal questions were: Does a council have the power to carry out works in the different neighborhoods? Is it the power of the council to plan, build and maintain a road system at the provincial level? and, Is it the power of the council to monitor the actions of the Mayor? The consultation with the highest number of correct answers is directed to the control of the actions of the mayor (88.3%) marked with the option “True”; on the contrary, the answer with the lowest number of correct answers refers to the power to carry out works in the neighborhoods (61.3%), marked with the option “False”.

Regarding the age range and correctness on the questions addressed to the members of the assembly, the percentages are: 16 and 17 years old with 51%, 18–26 years with 60.1%, 27–64 years with 82.6% and over 65 years with 76.9%. Unlike the previous hypothesis, although it is maintained that the age group between 16 and 17 years have the fewest correct answers, the group that has the most knowledge about the members of the assembly is between 27 and 64 years. In the previous hypothesis, it was the group older than 65 years who knew more the work of these authorities.

TABLE 5 Age relationship with functions of mayors and council.

			3. Do you know the functions of a mayor?		
			No	Yes	Total
Age	16–17	Count	18	49	67
		% within age	26.9%	73.1%	100.0%
	18–26	Count	145	742	887
		% within age	16.3%	83.7%	100.0%
	27–64	Count	42	346	388
		% within age	10.8%	89.2%	100.0%
	65	Count	4	30	34
		% within age	11.8%	88.2%	100.0%
Total	Count	209	1,167	1,376	
	% within age	15.2%	84.8%	100.0%	
			1. Do you know the functions of a council?		
			No	Yes	Total
Age	16–17	Count	47	20	67
		% within age	70.1%	29.9%	100.0%
	18–26	Count	512	375	887
		% within age	57.7%	42.3%	100.0%
	27–64	Count	130	258	388
		% within age	33.5%	66.5%	100.0%
	65	Count	10	24	34
		% within age	29.4%	70.6%	100.0%
Total	Count		677	1,376	
	% within age		49.2%	100.0%	

Assessing the age range and the correct answers on the functions of the councils, the following finding is presented: 16–17 years had a percentage of 58.3%, 18–26 years of 67.5%, 27–64 years of 87% and over 65 years of 81.9%. As it happens with the members of the council, it is shown that the group represented by young people between 16 and 17 years have the least knowledge about these functions, while the group located between 27 and 64 years have the most correct options, surpassing in 5.1% those over 65 years.

Conclusion

Given the findings, there is discordance between what Ecuadorians say about their knowledge of the functions and their specific knowledge about these functions. Specifically, Ecuadorians admit to having more knowledge about the mayor, then assembly member, prefect and finally councilor; however, when evaluating their knowledge, it is shown that they have more knowledge about the functions of the prefect, followed by the mayor, councilor and finally assembly member. In other words, without entering

into philosophical premises about what the potential electorate knows and intends to express what is known, there is an obvious differentiation on knowledge related to labor, where indeed it must be stated that executive functions are in fact more known than legislative functions.

The null hypothesis H_0 : *There is no significant relationship between age and the knowledge of Ecuadorians about the functions of the authorities of popular election*, is rejected, thus favoring the acceptance of the first alternative hypothesis (H_1): *Level of knowledge of Ecuadorians about the functions of the authorities of popular election varies according to their age*, in which it is shown through statistical processing that there is indeed a correlation between both variables, summarizing that for mayor, prefect and assemblymen the age range >65 years have more knowledge, followed by the group between 27 and 64 years, later those between 18 and 26 years and finally the group between 16 and 17 years, except for councils where the group between 27 and 64 years have more knowledge over 65 years of age.

The following alternative hypothesis H_2 : *Ecuadorians have more knowledge about the functions performed by the mayor than the prefect*, is also rejected. Ecuadorians surveyed know more about the functions of the prefect than the mayor. Specifically for the mayor, respondents acknowledge that among their activities was submitting draft ordinances to the City Council, but most people believed that the mayor is responsible for planning, building and maintaining the road system. Instead, the potential voters are aware of the competences of the prefect on road construction and maintenance of the province, but most considered the power to approve or reform plans, programs and projects from the mayor’s office, which is totally false.

On the other hand, the third and final alternative hypothesis (H_3): *Ecuadorians have more knowledge about the functions performed by the assemblymen than the councils*, is rejected. There is more knowledge about the functions of the council than the assemblyman. Respondents admit to knowing that the assemblyman codifies, reforms and repeals laws, but also believe that his/her work is also monitoring the behavior of municipalities at the national level. As for the duties of the council, supervising the actions of the mayor is among its direct powers; however, the power to carry out works in the different neighborhoods is not in its functions, on the contrary, this responsibility is assumed directly by the municipality.

This research presented some limitations such as the time invested for designing the questions and the application of the survey, however, the results are significant and impact the academy specialized in political studies. Likewise, future researchers are encouraged to investigate the causality of the knowledge of the electorate on the functions of popular election authorities, inferring between the variables of media coverage, familiarity and understanding.

It is important to note that this study has some limitations that should be taken into account when interpreting the results. Firstly, the sample size of 1,376 participants may not be representative of the entire population of Ecuador. Additionally, the survey was conducted in only three provinces, which may limit the

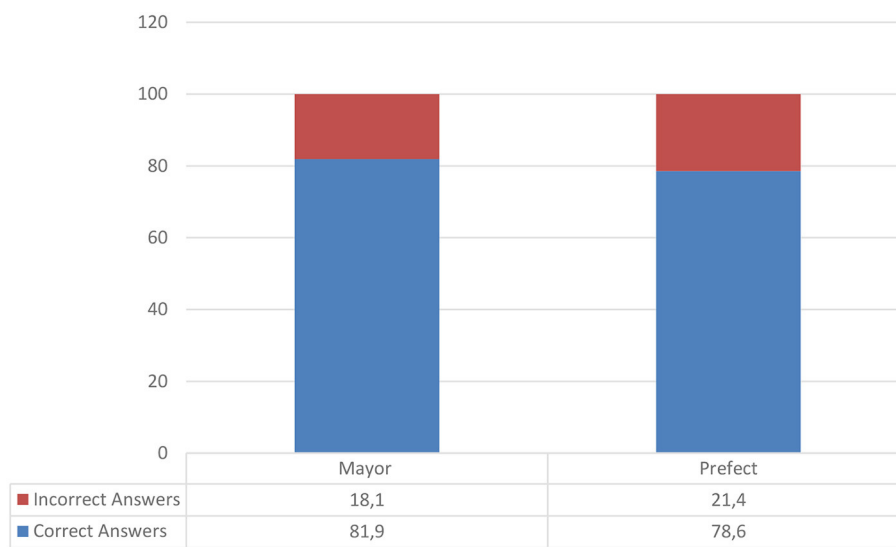


FIGURE 3
Correct/incorrect answers about functions of mayor and prefect.

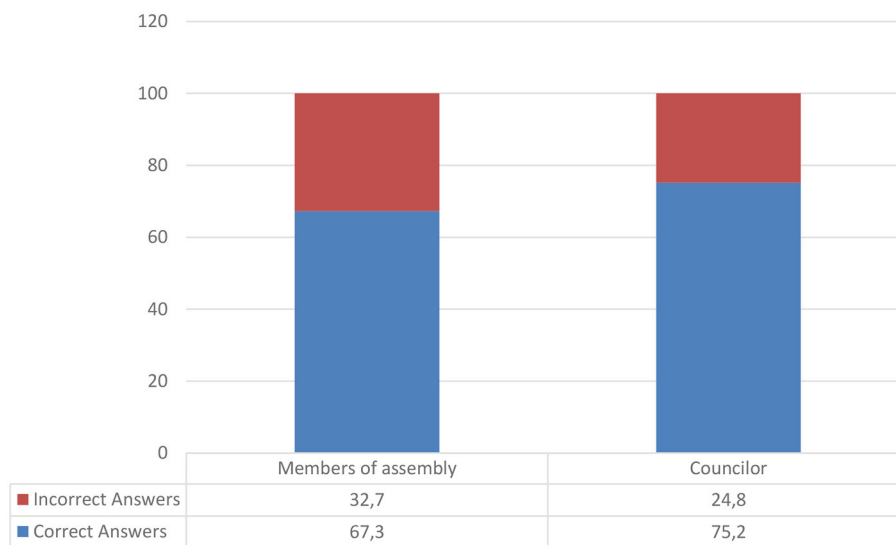


FIGURE 4
Correct/incorrect answers about functions of members of assembly and councilor.

generalizability of the findings to other regions of the country. Furthermore, the survey design may have introduced biases, such as social desirability bias or response bias, which could have influenced the participants' responses. Despite these limitations, this study provides valuable insights into the knowledge and perceptions of Ecuadorians regarding the functions of elected officials. Future research could expand the sample size and geographic scope of the study to increase the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, incorporating qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups, could provide a more in-depth understanding of the factors that influence citizens' knowledge and perceptions of elected officials. Overall, this study

lays the groundwork for further research on the topic and highlights the importance of educating citizens on the functions of elected officials to promote informed decision-making in the electoral process.

As a final reflection, this research is an initial step toward understanding the relationship between citizen knowledge and political participation in Ecuador. Moreover, there must be constant preparation on civic education, allowing Ecuadorians to go to the polls with prior knowledge about the functions of the authorities, as well as the consistency of the proposals of candidates and political parties regarding their roles.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by Universidad Politécnica Salesiana. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

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Conflict of interest

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