

Example of essay on governmental influence on citizens political behavior

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



In the history of political thought and democracy building, there is an inconsistency between citizen's voting for a candidate or party and his/hers final satisfaction with a progress of the chosen candidate or party. In practice, this inconsistency corresponds to a continuous criticism of ruling government and desire to change it for the former one or an entirely different. In political theory, this phenomenon gained its implementation in a concept of political efficacy. The essence of the term " political efficacy" refers to citizens' perception of their influence on government and how much trust in authorities and policies they have. In the context of political theory, efficacy can be divided into internal and external. Internal efficacy refers to individual's perception of his/her skills and their possible implementation in process of governmental improvement. On the other hand, external one deals with individual's perception of how governmental policies correspond to individual's needs and life improvement (Kahne & Westheimer, 292). In the present essay, governmental influence on citizens and subsequent level of their political efficacy are discussed. In this context, the central thesis is that government influences its population by affecting individual's self-perception as citizens and their ability to change social reality. In this respect, citizens' approaches to the participation in social development and electoral behavior change. This statement is supported by three arguments. First of all, by providing citizens with various opportunities to influence its activity, government shows people that they are empowered to rule their society in the direction they want to. Secondly, in case of satisfactory governmental policy, citizens have higher trust in government and respect to their status of citizens and members of society. Finally, when a

governmental policy is not satisfactory and political efficacy is low, people are likely to have little belief in their ability to change something. In further detailed explanations, the impact of government on citizens' self-perception is shown through the behavioral patterns each change causes.

The first argument refers to the fact that by giving people an opportunity to influence government, it secures the existence of the whole social structure and motivates people to participate in country's political life. Through the provision of various tools of influence, like voting, writing letters and running for office, people are given an opportunity to express them both politically and publically (Berinsky, 76). In the context of political efficacy, such opportunity creates trust between policy-makers and voters; subsequently, people have more trust in the system (Campbell, 52). The availability and relative easiness of those resources application make people more aware of politics and their possible changes. For instance, if voting was the only way to influence government, citizens' behavior between elections would be quite apolitical and ignorant to socio-political events (Nabatchi, 23). On the other hand, the lack of actual means to influence government would result in development of distrust and even some radical activity (Berinsky, 79).

Subsequently, availability of those three means of influence already contributes to affirmation and positive perception of citizenship by voters. In case of satisfactory governmental policy, the first argument of self-awareness as citizens and corresponding rights evolves to the entirely new stage - pride of being part of this system and obligation of its further improvement are developed. In this context is meant that successful governmental policy increases political efficacy and people's desire to

contribute to the overall process of well-being and democracy building (Berinsky, 69). In this case, citizens' contribution might take two forms. First, since political dimension might be considered quite successful and satisfactory, people would become more involved in other spheres of life – their professional activity, public or humanitarian participation (Campbell, 63). In this context, the best example is Switzerland, where political efficacy is one of the highest in the world. In this country, people have a respect to their government and efforts of other people, who improve their lives. Subsequently, they get involved in voluntary, humanitarian and socially useful activities, in order to express their gratitude to the government and contribute to further development of their society (Alonso, Keane & Merkel, 81). On the other hand, a complete satisfaction with governmental policy might result in another pattern of behavior – people might become less politically and publically active, and their citizens' self-perception and participation in political life might add up to voting on elections (Nabatchi, 25). In any case, political efficacy and positive political or social involvement of people under conditions of satisfactory governmental policy contribute to an integral approach of multi-dimensional society building.

The final argument refers to the situation when government fails to satisfy citizens' expectations of policy application and decision-making conduct. When population is not satisfied with an existing policy or governmental ruling, its trust in government is falling. In this case, governmental failure might result in two kinds of citizens' behavior – ignorance or alternatives ways of influence on government (Campbell, 71). The first pattern of behavior would be a lack of motivation for citizen's participation in political

life. Since the current elected government failed to do what electorate was hoping to achieve, the next elections would be characterized by lower voters' attendance and low political activity in general (Nabatchi, 16). The most vivid is an example of Canada. The last national elections had shown voters presence to be less than 50 % (Alonso, Keane & Merkel, 85). The main reason for this was that, under conditions of Canadian electoral system, citizens do not see proportional representation of candidates they had voted for, since candidates get elected only when their party wins (Nabatchi, 29). The second possible implication of the case discussed is that population might choose radical methods of influencing on governmental decisions. Among those methods might be peaceful demonstrations, civil disobedience, or calling for national referendum. The example of such case might be the current situation in Greece, where people, unsatisfied with governmental policy and its implications on country's economy, demanded resignation of the President and calling for a national referendum concerning governmental decision of accepting additional foreign credits or not. In this context, people are empowered by government and democratic regime to decide how they want to proceed in their development. Thus, dissatisfaction of governmental policy does not always mean a lack of population's participation in political and social life. After all, it is hard to ignore the environment one lives in. Overall, it can be concluded that the main influence government has on citizens refers to their self-perception as citizens and members of society. Depending on satisfaction or dissatisfaction with governmental policy and the level of political efficacy, pattern of citizen's behavior changes from a positive non-interference, but regular attendance of elections, to an active

involvement in political life through running for the office, peaceful demonstrations and calling for a national referendum. Subsequently, governmental influence on an individual is immense; it forms individual's overview on right and wrong, political obligations and rights of both government and citizen. Governmental behavior triggers public behavior and subsequent implications of both on the development of local communities and society in general. From my personal perspective, the government influences my perception of good citizenship and patriotism. Successful policies make me want to pay government with my citizen's awareness and active involvement in social and political life, while disastrous and harmful governmental decisions trigger a desire to be more active politically than socially, since in order to achieve a harmonious development of the country, essential changes should be made in fundamental politics and then in society.

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