

Election Studies in Turkey

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Election studies with micro survey data have no long history in Turkey.

I'll talk first about

sampling and modalities of fieldwork,
then about issues and topics covered and questionnaire design
and finally about new wave of experimental designs.

Sampling

A few local fieldworks have been conducted in the 1960s but the first to my knowledge of a nation-wide representative sample was used for the 1977 general elections.

Hürriyet daily newspaper funded the fieldwork that was planned by Üstün Ergüder and Selçuk Özgediz both at the time at Boğaziçi University.

When I arrived at Boğaziçi U in 1994 the military regime years have already taken the willingness and energy out of political scientists. The data of the 1977 were nowhere to be found! The technology of fieldwork was somewhat better developed by then primarily due to the WVS again initiated by Professor Ergüder and two younger colleagues Yılmaz Esmer and Ersin Kalaycıoğlu. Hamit Fişek, a psychologist was also part of the team that developed a stratified multi-staged clustered sampling strategy.

However, the original probability sampling strategy depended on the poor statistical information that could be provided by the State Institute of Statistics.

When I started to conduct survey in 1994 I found out that no block information, no addresses (household and/or business) existed. The only thing that could be done was either to create one's own random blocks with random addresses that could be used to originate the sample of address blocks or one could use street names for the purpose at hand.

Creating one's own address blocks was too expensive so we all relied on the second best alternative which was not a probability sample.

The street names were exhaustively collected by the ministry of finance for realty estate taxes. Each street also had an average of estate square meter values which were used for stratification. However, nobody knew how many households were on each street.

ISSP membership forced us to design a probability sampling strategy and improved our fieldwork practices. We waited until 2006 to receive household block addresses from the SIS. Urban addresses slowly were transferred into the addressed based population registry system. We distributed the sample in accordance to geographic regions and then within each we randomly picked address blocks which then yielded addresses.

In accordance to ISSP standards we do not have substitution and visit addresses up to 3 times

The response rate is about 50%

Weighting is still problematic, we have nationwide cross tabs for gender, age and education levels.

To my knowledge ESS has a very similar sampling and fieldwork practice.

Turkish Election Studies (TES) started in 2002 in collaboration with Ersin Kalaycıoğlu. Ever since we always conducted a two-wave (pre-post) panel design.

In 2002 and 2011 we were able to have a post-election control sample together with the second wave of our panel.

CSES 2011 is the post-election control sample .

To our knowledge no other nationally representative pre or post random sample election study exist in the country. There are newspaper sponsored surveys usually post-election but their technical credentials are quite poor

Modalities of Fieldwork

The golden standard is still FtoF and this is out of necessity in Turkey

Landline phone penetration remains low and now is surpassed by multiple cellular phone ownership. Phone number availability for sampling is poor and to my knowledge legally not available. People do phone surveys with random digit dialing but since no reliable information exists on the population of users this is not nearly as useful as it is in the West.

Mail system is totally unreliable

Web based surveys are being used but they carry the usual sampling problems.

Problems with FtoF fieldwork

Main problem is to find trained personnel or keep the trained ones

Costs are rising; over the last 2 decades costs have nearly tripled in real Euro terms!

But of course we are more and more demanding of our fieldworkers.

Fieldworkers are young university students

perhaps better to reach the younger population

but they also are above the average education of the respondents

and may be intimidating to them

plus they are overly unreliable to stay on the job

Regularly there will be people who complain to authorities about our questions

In the past I had to personally get involved but nowadays fieldwork goes much more smoothly, no police intervention for nearly 7-8 years now. But...

Issues and Topics Covered

More emphasis on economic voting analyses

Less emphasis on spatial or sociological approaches

- 1-2 spatial voting articles

- 1-2 on PID

Few pieces on religiosity and ethnic bases of the vote

New emphasis on media effects and political knowledge

Recent interest on political mobilization

Nothing yet on issue priorities

MA/PhD students are now working on

- local vs general election preferences

- leadership effects

- ethnic voting

- partisan mobilization

- media effects

Questionnaire design issues?

No evaluation of questionnaire practices

No evaluation of demographic questions

We (w S. Banducci) do have evidence that at least for some sensitive questions gender of the interviewer makes an effect on our measurements; more in the past than recently.

We basically adopt ISSP or CSES modules and develop a few questions for the Turkish case

No analysis of wording effects and best wording practices
we have our own personal preferences

New wave of experimental designs

I should bare some weight of responsibility for this.

Having gone over quite a number of different topics of relevance in survey research me and a number of my students became more interested in experimental design issues. Besides a handful of likeminded people around our TES team and few others in Ankara we may be alone in this.

We adopted a list experiment in 2011 which recently got accepted in the EPSR and appears useful in shedding light for issues under the influence of conformist pressures.

More experiments using vignettes have been undertaken
religious vs ethnic identity of people creating an image of threat

More and more students are interested in this kind of causal analysis

More important question: How many people are we in total?

My hunch is that we are not that many.

We are now gathering a group of like-minded political scientists who can talk to one another in January 2015. We have about 25 people. About 7-8 of these have had their PhD degrees for longer than 15 years!

Among the rest there are about 10 of these like-minded colleagues are in the field of election studies and will have a few articles over the next couple of years on this topic in a decent peer reviewed journal.

There are a number of economists who mostly have an opportunistic perspective for publications but have little interest in developing the field. None are into data collection and all are in secondary data analysis

So, the real issue is to keep the younger generations interested and productive in election studies.