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Political Participation: Scale Development and Validation

Gopal, K.¹ and Verma, R.²

¹Mittal School of Business, Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India. Email: rajesh.verma@lpu.co.in

²Corresponding author, Mittal School of Business, Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India. Email: krishan.gopal@lpu.co.in

ABSTRACT

The topic of political participation has been a substantial interest area for political scientists and sociologists, primarily because it is related with influencing the selection and functioning of government in a democracy. Sizeable research has been done on conceptualization of the concept of political participation with almost all the studies either case studies or conceptual in nature. This paper aims to clarify the construct of political participation by developing valid and reliable scale to measure political participation. In this study highly reliable and valid scale development procedure by Churchill (1979) and Hinkin (1995) has been used to ensure reliability and validity of the scale. The findings revealed that political participation can be divided into two four main factors called conventional/traditional political participation, unconventional/non institutional political participation, knowledge seeking political participation and influential political participation.

Keywords: Political participation, Traditional political participation, Non institutional political participation, scale development, scale validation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Political Participation

Political participation in its simple sense means taking part in politics (Easton, 1965). Political participation referred to “those legal activities by citizens which are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take” (Nie and Verba 1978). It includes the activities like campaigning, demonstrating, voting, rioting and other similar activities. The type of political participation differs widely between different cultures, political systems and different time frames. The evident doubt is how to arrive at a meaningful conclusion about the points of parity and difference in different types of participation across different nations and different cultures.

Many Faces of Participation

The concept of participation has got significant attention in political science. Contradiction between advocates of system oriented and development arguments have influenced the normative aspect, whereas a lot of taxonomies, dimensions, conceptualizations can be traced in empirical approaches. Researchers in this paper is neither concerned with the established theory nor with the categorization of different methods of participation. The important is differentiation between political participation and other human behaviour to construct the scale for political participation. Two common differences will be considered: The difference between conventional and unconventional way of participation and between governmental and non governmental oriented behaviour.

Let us start by considering simple meaning of political participation. In simple words political participation means get involved in politics. Therefore, politics can be described as system of production and distribution of values (Easton, 1965). In other words political participation comprises all those kinds of behaviour which makes possible for the citizens to participate in values production and distribution process for the society. Couple of observations can be made on this point. First the behaviour is intentional to influence the process- but not necessary always. For example working for a political party or candidate can be with the intention to get some advantages from the political party or candidate, without the objective to impact the procedure of creating and allocating of values to the society. Secondly “voluntary” participation can also be abandoned as specific trait of political participation. For example, protest against setting up of an industry in your residential area can be considered under this. In this case, behaviour is politically important even if it is Voluntary or not.

In majority of the countries values production and distribution are not done by government organizations only, so participation can be seen in other domains as well. Political Participation is a crucial channel between interests and requirements of the citizens and process of production and distribution of values. No more points are needed to justify the concept of participation in a wider context. In fact, justifications are required to limit the definition of political participation. A liberal concept of participation has many benefits both from comparative and analytical perspective. On the other hand, limiting the focus on government sector has many issues because the capacity of these sectors varies with time/place (Helmets, 1975).

Moreover, it is also indecisive that people are capable to make a distinction between their requirements and interests as per governmental/non governmental criteria. Even in nontotalitarian or democracy systems, it is difficult to make people understand what pertains to state and what belongs to private sector and creation of values. In developed countries governments have increased the scope of their activities, offering fulfillment of citizen’s basic needs and regulate many of their activities. Consecutively, citizens require the fulfillment of more demands and expect attention from government machinery. Especially, in a liberal democracy, excessive expectations and demands are generated, which makes demarcation between typical government activities and non governmental tasks very difficult. On the grass root level, a citizen is faced with the issue of government interfering deeply in his/her affairs, for example, an employee loosing job, a customer watching television on surfing the internet or a citizen in need of driving license or a subsidy on certain commodities. So the question of restricting political participation to government sector should be left to the decision of potential participants (Hirschman, 1982).

Another viewpoint dominates the difference between Traditional (Conventional) and Non Traditional (unconventional) ways of participation. Many researchers pin point the types of behaviour that should be considered unconventional mode of political participation. In addition to 'protest' and political action there exists many other terms like untraditional, non electoral, not legitimate, unorthodox and as previously mentioned unconventional. Majority of these terms have negative surplus meaning and are status quo oriented.

In the context of unconventional political participation the work of Alan Marsh is most significant and interesting. He developed instrument to measure 'unconventional' political participation. Participants were exposed to a set of 10 stimuli i.e. refusing to pay rent and taxes demonstrations, damaging property, occupations, violence, painting slogans, strikes, boycott, blockades and petitions. The cognitive, conative and affective elements of the attitude towards the above mentioned modes of participation asked from the respondents. Deterministic model of Guttman was applied to develop a 'protest potential scale' (Marsh, 1974; 1977; 1979; Marsh and Kaase, 1979).

The above discussion clearly demonstrates that one of the main reasons of difference of opinions among researchers about political participation is due to the absence of valid and reliable scale to measure political participation. This research article is an attempt to bridge this void by developing and validating a new scale to measure political participation. Researchers have used highly reliable and valid procedure of scale development by Churchill (1979) and Hinkin (1995).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

As liberal democratic culture and values grow in majority of the societies, it became unquestionable that broad participation in decision making process is a precondition for true democracy (Dahl 1971, 1998; Pateman 1970). Political scientists claimed that everybody must have equal chance to influence decision making (Verba, et. al., 1978). While Voting and electoral turnout which is backbone of democratic process has been declining over the last few decades in almost all developed countries (O'Tolle, et. al., 2003), academic researchers and technocrats have been investigating substitute forms of political participation that could shape and influence decision making process. As a result political participation have taken diverse forms such as member of a political party or community based organization, contacting a politician/government officials to solve local issues, signing a petition, damaging public property or shooting at security forces during demonstrations and riots (Bourne, 2010).

Giving a final definition of political participation is not so easy, especially if one considers both teleological (concentrated on goal oriented political behaviour) and praxialist view (concentrated on relevant procedures involved). For example, India has recently witnessed the riots in Jatt agitation in Haryana in 2016, would one classify these riots as a form of political participation or simply these kinds of acts can be considered "pure criminality". A working definition of political participation is required before moving on to the next step.

Despite the fact, there is hardly any universally accepted definition of political marketing (Uhlener 2001), political participation is generally cited as public participation in decision making. Riley et. al., (2010) explained political engagement as a set of duties and rights that includes formal political activities, for examples, voting or joining a political party. Diemer (2012) also explained political participation as

involvement in traditional political mechanisms such as voting and joining political organizations. Munroe (2002) defined political participation as extent to which people are using their right to involve in political activities such as to speak freely, to vote, or to influence others. Such conceptualization focuses on lawful nature of political participation. In other words these definitions clearly set up a frame of reference with the existing repository of political praxis as per conventional political norms, although these norms may differ across time or across countries.

On the other hand some researchers focus on telos instead of praxis, primarily by defining political participation as a set of activities with aim of influencing political authority. Huntington and Nelson (1976), explained political participation as an activity by citizens primarily with the motive of influencing government decision making. Verba et. al., (1995) defined political participation as an activity with the basic intention of influencing government decisions-either directly by influencing the developing or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of the people who make and finalize those policies. The Praxis does not considered important in these definitions as considered in teleological definitions.

Such definitions means that the telos is achieved through some types of pre determined praxis which is acceptable and lawful. According to such a definition the government was correct while stating that recent riots in Haryana were criminal acts because the methods used by rioters were against the law and went clearly beyond the acceptable boundaries of political organizations and its institutional norms. But on the other hand riots can be seen as events charged with a political engagement and rioters tried to influence the public policy even though they were acting against the law. In other words their political praxis was against the law.

Arguably, ability to raise a group's demands in the public sphere is one of the indicators of sustainable democratic system and is desirable form of political participation. Over the last decade, much has been written about the rights of individuals and groups to enter in public domain to legitimately raise their demands. For example, Jasiewicz (2011) found how the ethnic minorities in Poland participate in political arenas by expressing their view through mass media using their native language although this incite negative reactions from political parties. As per Jasiewicz, the opportunity given to ethnic groups to freely communicate their views synchronized with Poland's democratic consolidation process, after the incidents of 1989 when minority groups captured on conventional form of participation including letters, public statements and interviews and gave up confrontational form of action. In this scenario democratization process co-exists with clear commitment to disallow confrontational methods and to pursue conventional political methods.

The distinction between paraxial and teleological forms of political participation can be intriguing and important although very less literature available on such distinction. For example, does damaging and occupying public properties during a demonstration (i.e. telos to influence decision making by aggressive demonstration or confrontation) represents a acceptable method of political participation? Some researchers hitch on to a classification of political participation by outlining a clear distinction between legal and illegal political participation, and proposing that judging the nature of praxis regulate its qualitative place on the participation map. The distinction between legal and illegal political actions has an academic excavation of a long time. Thus the traditional approach of political participation "(conventional and unconventional methods of political actions in democratic society) and aggressive participation (political violence and civil disobedience) are analytically different types of political behaviour" (Muller 1982). Similarly political scientists

used an analogous approach to exploit on difference between aggressive and conventional participation (Opp et. al., 1981). Some recent studies also put emphasis on difference between legal and illegal political participation (Lavric et. al., 2010).

So the confusion remains: should democracies go ahead to entertain the political telos of an action ignoring the potentially violent nature of praxis? In other words, are the telos important enough to justify the violent nature of praxis? Let's try to put light on the issue by referring back to the origin of democracy.

The ancient Athenians- the inventor of democracy- did not consistently differentiate between telos and praxis of political actions. In fact, they believed the value of the telos behind political participation over the praxis. It appears that even man slaughter could be the acceptable form of political participation in classical Athens. For example Athenian citizens take it their duty to kill those who are planning to take control of their land without caring law and democratic institutions. Gagarin and Fantham (2010) explained that after the revolution of 411 BC, all Athenians passed a ruling that the assassinator of any opponent of the democracy might not be accountable for any penalty. The ruling was publically displayed and all the tribes taken an oath to kill any opponent of the democracy. Due to this oath many oligarchs left the city. In fact the wards of any person killed in the process of prosecuting probable dictators got rewards such as exemption from taxes, free public meals preferential treatment in the events organized by the government. The constitution of Athens describes the story of Harmodius and Aristogeiton, who were killed while stabbing to death the tyrant Hipparchus. With their act to kill the tyrant, Harmodius and Aristogeiton were woven into the roots of Athenian ideology and created the very core of Athen's democratic polity (Gagarin and Fantham, 2010). After the establishment of democratic system Cleisthenes hired the sculptor Antenor to create a statue of the two heroes who were considered the founder spirits of Athenian democracy.

Certainly, the violent activities (praxial activism) cannot be taken as legal form of political participation. Certainly some activities have been mentioned in the literature as extreme form of political participation. In case of Athens, one should acknowledge that the fundamental concern of Athens was the survival of democracy, and the entire system was designed in such a manner to minimize the risk of new dictatorial power to exploit the people. For instance, many officials were elected by the people so that rich and influential would be restricted from taking control of most important branches of government. The basic logic of Athenian democracy was that all citizens should have taken as active part in decision making and simultaneously being eligible to public office. The underlying telos was safeguarding democracy and end any praxis, even man killing could be permissible and even legitimate.

Since 1970's, research on political participation differentiated conventional and unconventional political actions depending on the characteristics of praxis. As discussed above, a particular praxis can be taken as an act of political participation if it fulfills the objective of "telos" in the decision making process. Conventional form of political participation is very structured and generally legal, For Example, voting, campaigning, lobbying, being member of a political party, attending political rallies etc. In this situation, one refers to the type of political participation which is embedded in the accepted limits of institutional politics. Such activities can be called "formal (Henn and Foard, 2012). On the other hand, non institutional forms of political participation such as signing a petition, boycotting, refusing to pay rent and taxes or participating in a protest march have also received lot of attention in the past few decades. Bourne (2010) proposed the following activities as being unconventional political participation: barricading a community, protests, firing at the security personnel, demonstrations. Marsh (1979) explained such activities as "elite

challenging” although unconventional activities do not certainly have to be unlawful. Muller (1982) and Opp et. al., (1981) explained some of these activities as “aggressive” whereas other researchers called actions such as damaging public property as illegal (Lavric et. al., 2010).

Based on some characteristics of the praxis and their consequences, some forms of unconventional participation were examined on a scale of less or more extremism and as a result less acceptable both legally and socially. Bourne (2010) argued that firing at security personnel as “unorthodox” form of political participation because it is one step ahead than simply being “unconventional”. Sometimes, a distinction is outlined between unorthodox and unconventional political participation methods with the former being more violent in nature. Even though the anachronism, one might consider that praxis of Aristogeiton to murder the dictator Hipparchus would be classified as unorthodox or a type of extreme and thus unlawful political participation. Such extreme actions such as murder of human beings have not found their place in modern world institutional politics. It is not clear that how modern democracies would respond if they had to encounter the dilemma between an imaginative democratic decline because autocrats get to power and assassinating aggressive tyrants to power. As far as Athenian Democrats are concerned, they had no doubt that for the sake of democracy not only the dictators but anyone related to them must face the death penalty. No intense distinction was made between conventional and unorthodox/illegal political activities as long as the demos (assembly of citizens) believed that it was for the survival and betterment of democratic system.

In spite of everything the distinction between conventional and unconventional participation often debated on realistic grounds. As Linssen et. al., (2011) argues, the distinctions between unconventional and conventional activities remains a controversial issue because of the act that some unconventional acts such as demonstrations and petitions are getting more acceptable and differently perceived in the public domain as time passes. So it would be wrong to classify the acts of participating in demonstrations or signing petitions as unconventional political participation as such type of participation has increasingly become acceptable. As per published estimates, about 10 lakhs people participated in marches and demonstrations against the war in Iraq in London in February, 2003 (BBC, 2003). Not only in London millions of people demonstrated in other large cities across Europe against the War. In many democracies variety of examples of mass participation in protests especially by young people takes place in the recent past (Gonzales, 2008). Therefore looking into the new trends and forms of political engagement the distinction between unconventional and conventional participation- to the extent it exist in contemporary research- is probably outdated.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Literature review on political participation exhibited that researchers have given many components explaining political participation in their studies with very little linkages between them. The components explained by researchers in many studies are overlapping with almost no empirical support. So capturing the substance of political participation while framing questionnaire is a challenging task for any researcher. This study has used Lamprianou (2013) framework for describing political participation. The main reason behind using this framework is that it has been developed after a very comprehensive literature review of political participation. Lamprianou (2013) has divided political participation in 3 main components i.e conventional activities, Unofficial (non institutional) activates and Extreme/unorthodox activities.

4. SCALE DEVELOPMENT

To Ensure high reliability and validity researchers have used highly reliable and valid procedure of scale development by Churchill (1979) which is also in agreement with Benter and Bonnet(1980), Anderson and Gerbing (1982), Begozzi et. al., (1991), Nunnally & Bernstein (1994) & Hinkin (1995). Following figure presents a comprehensive view of scale development process followed in this study.

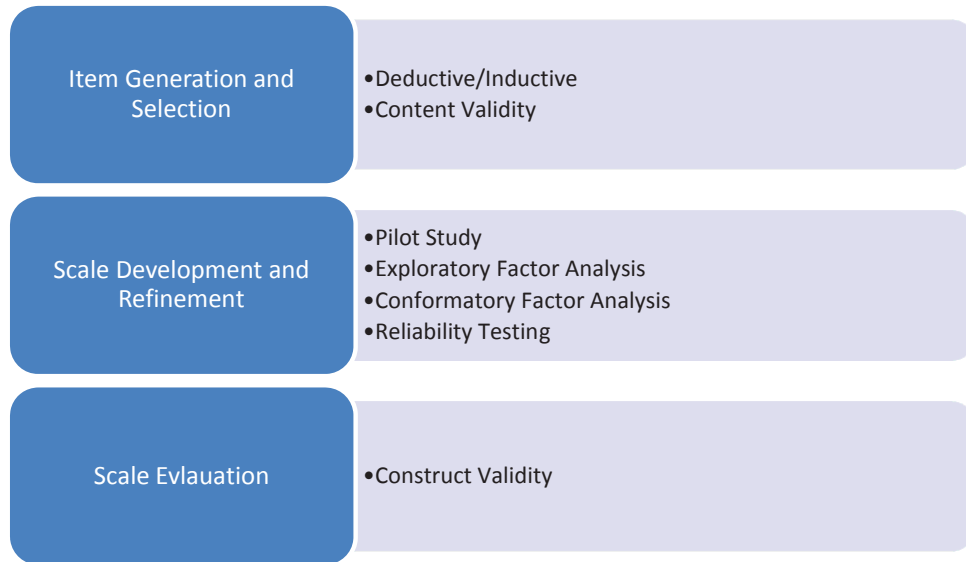


Figure 1: Scale Development Process

Item Generation and Selection

Deductive scale development method was used to generate items for the study. To understand the concept to be investigated a comprehensive literature review was constructed to develop the definition of construct. This definition was used to generate the items (Schwab, 1980). After literature review the authors identified 32 items measuring political participation. Researchers used a 5 point Likert Scale to get response with 5 points as “Always” and 1 as “Never”.

Content Validity

Content validity was used to examine the internal consistency of the items identified. The experts rated the items as ‘Retained’, ‘Modified’, or ‘Deleted’. The help of ten academicians having in depth knowledge of the subject area was taken for content validity. After evaluating the feedback of experts 6 items were deleted due to the possibility of duplication, lack of transparency and misinterpretation. Revised scale was again sent back to experts. This time experts suggested using more familiar words but no suggestion was there for deletion of an item.

Scale Development and Refinement

According to Churchill (1979) & Hinkin (1995) the scale development and refinement stage includes pilot testing of the instrument, testing the construct through exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis.

Pilot Testing

For pilot study the questionnaire was distributed among 50 respondents. The Cronbach's alpha was calculated. The Cronbach's alpha was .872 (Table 1) which was above the minimum acceptable limit of 0.7 as per Nunnally (1994). Therefore the measure indicates that the consistency between statements is adequate and researchers can begin with final data collection.

Table 1
Reliability Statistics

<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	<i>Number of Items</i>
.725	20

Exploratory Factor Analysis

The next stage in scale development and refinement is conducting the exploratory factor analysis. The questionnaire was distributed among 400 voters by contacting them personally. Respondents were divided on the basis of rural/urban areas, Gender ratio, Occupation, Age group and Caste to get the true representation of population. The respondents were selected from the top 5 districts of Punjab in terms of voter's population.

Many repeated rounds of factor analysis were applied to analyse the data. After each round the total variance explained and number of factor extracted were inspected. Items having low communalities were deleted to improve the factor structure and to obtain a structure with much clear loadings. Principal component matrix was used and for rotation Varimax method was applied. The minimum acceptable KMO value should be .60 (Tabachnick and Fidell, 1996). The KMO found to be .895 (Table 2). The significance level shown by Bartlett's Test of Sphericity found to be .000. So both these measures indicate that sample is adequate for applying factor analysis.

Table 2
KMO and Bartlett's Test

<i>KMO and Bartlett's Test</i>		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.895
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	6375.39
	Df	153
	Sig.	.000

Factor Structure

To classify the items the rotated components matrix was applied. The factors below .5 were suppressed to obtain a clearer matrix. A total of 4 factors were extracted with a cumulative variance of 79.50% (Table 3).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis is a special case of SEM (Joreskog and Sorbom, 2004). The confirmatory factor analysis was applied using SPSS Amos 23.0 to the 4 factors extracted in factor analysis. Careful Scrutiny

Table 3
Factor Structure

<i>Variables</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
I work for a political party or candidates during elections	.929			
I attend political meetings	.926			
I am/was a member of a political party	.923			
I always vote in elections	.918			
I attend political rallies	.916			
I discuss about Politics with my friends, relatives and Colleagues	.856			
I participate actively to solve the community problems	.832			
I take part in strikes to influence government		.851		
I file petitions against the government		.827		
I refuse to pay government rent and taxes to influence government decisions		.821		
I take part in blockades to influence government		.816		
I take part in demonstrations to influence government		.796		
I take part in boycotts to influence government		.751		
I use electronic media (TV/Radio) to know about politics			.937	
I search on internet about politics			.930	
I read about politics in Print Media (Newspapers/Magazines etc.)			.927	
I try to influence my friends, relatives and colleagues on formation of political opinion				.880
I try to convince my friends, relatives and colleagues to vote				.879

Table 4
Extracted Factors

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Factor Name</i>
I work for a political party or candidates during elections	Conventional/Traditional Political Participation
I attend political meetings	
I am/was a member of a political party	
I always vote in elections	
I attend political rallies	
I discuss about Politics with my friends, relatives and Colleagues	
I participate actively to solve the community problems	Unconventional (Non Institutional Political Participation)
I take part in strikes to influence government.	
I file petitions against the government.	
I refuse to pay government rent and taxes to influence government decisions.	
I take part in blockades to influence government	
I take part in demonstration to influence government.	
I take part in boycotts to influence government.	Knowledge Seeking Political Participation
I use electronic media (TV/Radio) to know about politics.	
I search on internet about politics.	
I read about politics in Print Media (Newspapers/Magazines etc.)	
I try to influence my friends, relatives and colleagues on formation of political opinion	Influential Political Participation
I try to convince my friends, relatives and colleagues to vote.	

of the results showed that some indicators are below the threshold level. After the inspection of modification indices, covariance, standardized residue two items were covaried. The final indices were Chi square = 226.6.

CMIN/DF = 1.770, GFI = .942, RMR = .039, CFI = .984, RMSEA = .044 and PCLOSE = .854. **Figure 3** gives a comprehensive view of confirmatory factor analysis.

The final items were again checked for internal consistency and Cronbach's alpha was calculated using SPSS. The value of Cronbach's alpha was .781 (Table 5) which indicates high degree of internal consistency.

Table 5
Reliability Analysis

<i>Cronbach Alpha</i>	<i>No. of Items</i>
.781	18

To check the construct validity the composite reliability of all the factors calculated which was in the satisfactory range of .871 to .967 (Hair et. al., 1998). Also the average variance of the four factors extracted ranges from .657 to .867 which is also in the acceptable limits. So these values indicate the construct validity of scale. Factorial loading and reliability measures also support the construct validity of the scale.

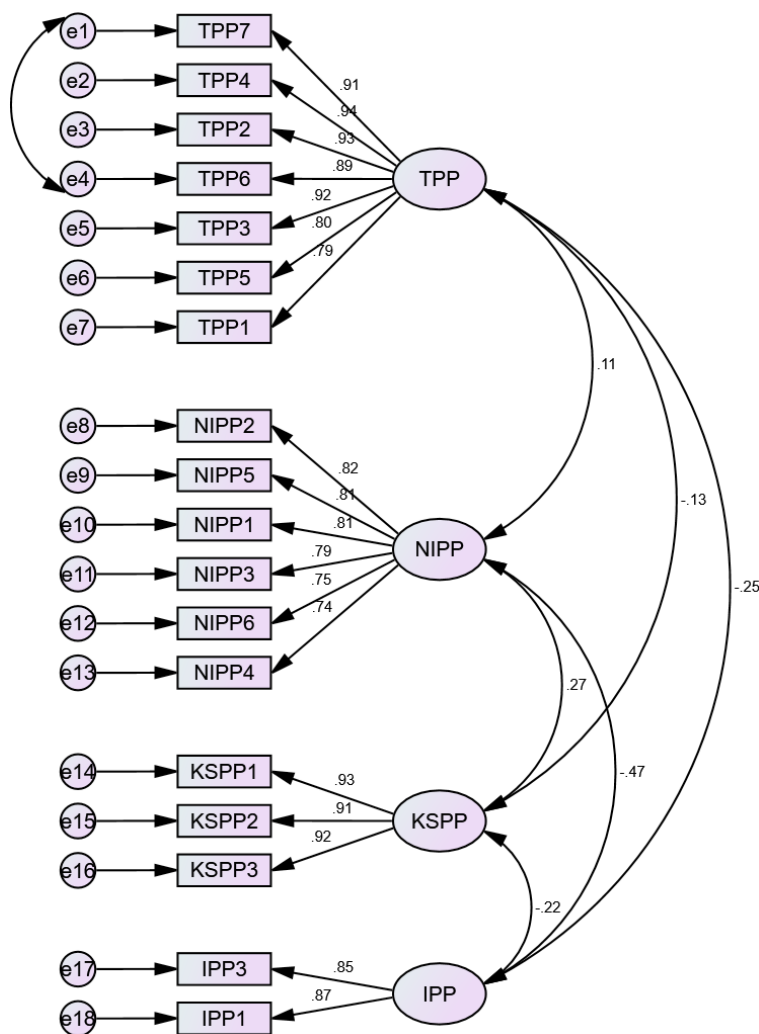


Figure 2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

5. CONCLUSION

The study has theorized a broad literature review of existing definitions of political participation. A rigorous methodological procedure was carried out to develop a validated measurement scale for political participation. At the very starting, the total items were 26 which were later reduced to 18 in order to improve the factor structure and the final model. The final model was comprised of the 4 factors such as conventional/traditional political participation, unconventional (Non Institutional Political Participation), knowledge Seeking Political Participation and influential political participation. The scale has passed all the reliability tests which prove that the internal consistency among the variables is very high and will benefit the various political parties and academicians in their study on political participation.

6. LIMITATIONS

In this study researchers have used highly valid and reliable scale development procedure by Churchill (1979) & Henkin (1995) but still the study have some limitations. The major limitation is that both the techniques of scale refinement i.e exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis are based on sample size. Although Researchers in this study have every rationale and proper literature support to use these techniques but much better results can be obtained by using a larger sample size. The study captures 4 general dimensions of political participation which can vary from time to time and from one place to another place.

7. SCOPE OF FUTURE RESEARCH

The scale for measuring political participation will be proved very useful in enriching the research on political participation. This scale can be used only for measuring political participation but cannot answer the influence of different activities by political parties on political participation. So further study can be conducted based on this scale to measure the affect of activates done by the political parties on political participation. Secondly a further research can be conducted to determine the relationship between the political participation and government performance.

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