

Construction and Validation of the Community and Socio-Political Participation Scale (SCAP)

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Abstract. This article describes the development and validation of a new instrument, the scale (SCAP) which measures community participation (CP) and socio-political participation (SPP). The sample consists of 756 participants in Málaga, residents whose average age is 38.78 years old ($SD = 13.96$) and of whom 58.5% are women. The results endorse the psychometric qualities of the instrument. We present descriptive analysis of the items, the dimensionality of the scale and its internal consistency. The external evidence of validity shows positive and statistically significant correlations with sense of community and empowerment, variables theoretically related to participation. A confirmatory factor analysis confirms the two-dimensional structure (CP and SPP). Further analysis show a higher CP in women. This instrument extends the quantitative research on citizen participation.

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Participation has rarely been the subject of study in itself but rather it has been considered as a resultant process of other processes.

Some work in Spain has studied socio-political participation within the context of social integration, the latter being understood as involvement in society. For Gracia, Herrero, and Musitu (2002) the degree of participation of a person in the social life of its community is important, especially because social integration is an essential pre-requisite to forming a social network and for social support. A person is integrated in, participates in and creates social networks in its community; therefore, a person extracts social support from said community. For example, young people with a high level of community participation show higher scores in social self-esteem and life satisfaction, and lower scores in loneliness (Martínez, Amador, Moreno, & Musitu, 2011). According to the authors these results are consistent with those obtained in other studies in the research areas of adolescence and the adult population. In other words, for both sectors of the population the greater their implication and participation in the community, the greater their psychosocial adjustment.

Participation is one of the most important subjects of social studies (Santacreu, 2008). Sánchez (1991, pg. 271) defines it as “taking part in an activity or process” of the social system and community life. This author specifies that “top down” participation possesses a more organized structure and seeks social change,

and therefore each society creates ways of institutionalizing participation at cultural, social, political and economic levels and through different channels (family, business, political parties and trade unions, intermediary groups, the State, etc.). This in turn allows society to manage and satisfy common needs (García, 2001). This mechanism is realized through social organizations (political parties, committees, councils, boards, etc.), and not individually; channels have been established to accomplish this, and there are concrete objectives that provide structure and organization. To the contrary “bottom up” participation is characterized by its spontaneous and ludic nature; it does not come from regulatory bodies, but rather through neighborhood associations, sectors such as self-help groups, social movements, etc. So, it is a kind of participation which occurs at a more informal level (in everyday life). Any kind of participation is considered to be an essential element in involvement with the community (Sánchez, 1999) which should be a mechanism of mediation and social dynamics (Denche & Alguacil, 1993). Participation becomes a means of involving communities, to achieve certain actions. Its effects contribute to the processes of empowerment and the sense of community (McMillan, Florin, Stevenson, Kerman, & Mitchell, 1995; Sánchez, 1991, 2001; Wandersman & Florin, 2000; Zamora, 2008; Zimmerman, 2000). Thus, those people with an elevated sense of connection to their community are more likely to provide social support to others (Haines, Hubert, & Beggs, 1996). This sense of community is based on the connection felt by subjects who share a common space, with the same lifestyle, which can produce a greater awareness

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of participation as a means to resolve problems (Musitu, 1991). In other words, the sharing of a common reference system leads to a perception of a link between participatory behavior and the resolution of community conflict. This in turn amplifies feelings of efficiency and control whilst feelings of alienation lessen (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990). So, empowerment is one of the fundamental strategies in the transformation of communities (Maya-Jariego, 2004), being defined as the process whereby people, organizations and communities acquire or improve their capacity to take control of their lives (Rapaport, 1981).

The objective of the work presented here is to provide a new instrument to measure participation. In the process, the recommendations offered by Funes and Adell (2009) have been taken into account, with respect to the methods and techniques used in the study of participation and as a result, the instrument is based on three research questions. The first is "*What it means to participate*". The aim of the scale is to evaluate behaviors in *direct participation* i.e. any activity, intervention or relationship which a citizen maintains with agencies or institutions, reporting no immediate reciprocity, or by some sort of commercial exchange. Three criteria are considered (Ioé Collective, 2007): a) the continuum "*formal participation*" and "*informal participation*". Formal participation is considered as the involvement with those social networks and associations with a specific objective in mind (cultural, political, religious, and professional) where taking part adopts a formal character for example joining an NGO or trade union. Groups considered to be more informal are those which meet to share cultural interests or for entertainment, like volunteering to help others individually; b) it can be occasional participation or one which lasts over time, which influences the *degree of commitment* the participant is willing to make (Ioé Collective, 2007; Quintanilla, 1988; Spector, 2002; Tett & Meyer, 1993); c) participation is understood to be *a means* of social transformation or as an end in itself. Based on a combination of these criteria, in the study presented here, two types of participation are distinguished: 1) *community participation*, which includes any conduct at an informal level in daily life and at a semi informal level but the direct aim of which is not to achieve social change (e.g. attending talks or debates on social issues and current affairs) and which include cultural and entertainment activities organized by neighborhood associations, parent groups, social clubs etc. (like taking part in activities organized in one's neighborhood); 2) socio-political participation, includes participatory behavior of a more or less formal nature which works towards social change. It is far removed from citizen participation exclusively as a political question which follows common causes such as suffrage and other forums

(Méndez, 2005). Socio-political participation can be found in all areas of life, although its political character is central with the end result being to achieve change (Zamora, 2008). Also considered within this concept are social movements or public demonstrations or collecting signatures with the aim of some sort of social change. This type of participation implies a certain level of social commitment (Huntington & Nelson, 1976; Verba & Nie, 1972).

The second and third research questions posed by Funes and Adell (2003) lead to the search for "*Why?*" and "*For Whom?*" Both of which could be useful for a questionnaire on participation. According to the literature, a greater integration in a community and a greater level of participation in activities and community organizations together have a positive influence on feelings of efficiency and control, both of which are important components of psychological well-being (Moos, 2005; Ortiz Torres, 1999; Zimmerman, 2000, among others). Taken from the model of social support and stress (Lazarus, 1996) participation in distinct associations of their neighborhood, allows the subject access to a greater number of sources of social support, which in turn increases their general well-being and quality of life (Gil, Pons, Grande, & Marín, 1996). For this reason being able to confirm existing levels of community and socio-political participation is an absolute necessity of psychosocial intervention which aims to help citizens take control over their lives and work together to solve their problems.

From a first bibliographic analysis of this subject it is possible to come to the conclusion that the data used for the study of participation is principally drawn from the use of surveys such as Euro barometers, Worldwide Surveys on Values, Social Barometer of Spain, etc. This leads to certain methodological problems because it is impossible to carry out comparisons between countries and moreover participation is only measured as belonging to certain social and political groups, which complicates even further, understanding in more psychosocial terms, a variable of interest in the psychology of participation (Morales, 2001). In the development of our scale we attempt to, firstly, add to the development of instruments with suitable psychometric properties for the investigation of aspects of social and community life and secondly, we consider the aforementioned two types of participation. It is considered necessary to have reliable and valid instruments for an evaluation centered on participation, which help in the investigation of this field, the final goal being to reveal the growth in citizen participation in the widest sense of the concept. Specifically, the objective of the present study is the construction of a scale which evaluates socio-political and community participation.

Method

Participants

The study was conducted with a sample comprising 756 inhabitants of the city of Málaga, of which 58.5% are women. The average age is 38.78 years ($DS = 13.96$). 74.5% are in a stable relationship, 56.5 have children, and 56.2% are currently employed. Regarding the level of education, 20.2 % have a primary education, 30.2% secondary education, and 46.5% a university education (graduated or still studying). 71.8% consider themselves to be middle class, 13.1% lower middle class, 12.8% upper middle class, 1.6% working class and only .7% as upper class.

Instruments

In this study the following instruments have been used, as detailed below:

Scale of Participation (SCAP)

A scale developed within this study which allows the evaluation of the degree of community and socio-political participation of the participants. Comprising 10 items with answers ranging from 1 (Never) to 9 (Very often). This is the final version of the scale in turn based on other scales developed by the authors and used in previous studies, resulting from distinct modifications derived from other investigations (Moreno-Jiménez, Vallejo, Hidalgo, & Ríos, 2009; Hidalgo, Moreno-Jiménez, & Quiñorero, 2011). Even though the internal consistency of said scales was acceptable (alphas ranging from 0.76 to 0.80) they were based on a general concept of participation and therefore did not distinguish between the two types of participation examined here. The completed quantitative analyses led to the definitive version which we have used in the present study (Table 1). Two dimensions of participation have been considered, in such a way that the first five items (1 – 5) belong to community participation and the last five (6 –10) to the socio-political.

Scale of Empowerment

The empowerment subscale published by Pick et al. (2007) was used. It comprises a total of 7 items the answers of which range from 1 (Never) to 10 (Very often). The validity analysis is around Cronbach's $\alpha = .879$.

Scale of Sense of Community

In order to measure this variable the scale proposed by Sánchez (2009) is used. This instrument comprises 18 items the answers of which range from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 10 (Strongly agree). The Cronbach's α is .933.

Procedure

The questionnaires were conducted by a group of students studying a PHD course specifically concerning the subjects of participation and volunteerism. Random questionnaires were administered in homes situated in distinct areas of Málaga, so that each student had to focus on a specific neighborhood. In the instructions given it was made clear that participation was voluntary, that the questionnaire had to be completed individually, that it would be kept anonymous and confidentiality of data would be ensured.

Data Analysis

To evaluate the psychometric properties of the scale of participation (SCAP) the following analyses were carried out:

- Descriptive of all the items (mean, Standard deviation, minimums, maximums), correlations between items and between each item and the total in its dimension or Index of homogeneity (adjusted).
- Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), principal components analysis (PCA), to analyze the dimensionality of SCAP.
- Internal consistency according to the alpha model for each factor.
- External validity of the questionnaire via correlations with the Sense of Community and Empowerment.
- A Confirmatory factor analysis through the structural equation modeling Equations.

Finally the results are analyzed on the proposed scale where possible differences between genders are looked for. The statistical treatment of the data is completed using the computer program SPSS 15.0 (SPSS, 2006); for the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) the program LISREL, version 8.30 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1999) is used.

Results

Descriptive statistics for all items, correlations between items and correlations item-test (Index of homogeneity adjusted for each item)

The descriptive analysis was carried out for the component items of the scale. The mean values obtained range between 2.13 and 4.94 (Table 2).

With the aim of analyzing the significance shared by the items comprising the matrix, a correlation analysis between items has been done, observing the positive correlations between all of them. Likewise the correlations between each item and the total adjusted score of its dimension (Table 3). It can be seen that the Index of homogeneity adjusted (IHa) is right because the item-total correlations were greater

Table 1. Items of the SCAP version used

1. I belong to/collaborate with an NGO, association or social collective (e.g. neighborhood association, cultural society, PTA, volunteer group, sports club, etc.)
1. Formo parte/colaboro de una ONG, asociación o colectivo social (ej: asociación de vecinos, cultural, AMPA, voluntariado, club deportivo, etc.).
2. I attend meetings/activities organized by an NGO, or other association (e.g. neighborhood association, cultural society, PTA, volunteer group, sports club, etc.)
2. Asisto a reuniones/actividades organizadas por una ONG u otra asociación (ej: asociación de vecinos, cultural, AMPA, voluntariado, club deportivo, etc.)
3. I actively defend my point of view in conversations on social issues and current affairs (neighborhood, employment, ecology, etc.)
3. Mantengo conversaciones en las que defiendo activamente mis ideas sobre temas sociales y de actualidad (barrio, empleo, ecología, etc.)
4. I attend talks or debates on social issues and current affairs (neighborhood, employment, ecology, etc.)
4. Acudo a charlas o debates sobre temas sociales y de actualidad (barrio, empleo, ecología, etc.)
5. I take part in activities organized in my neighborhood, community and/or city (bike trails, recreational community activities, street parties, etc.)
5. Participo en las actividades que se realizan en mi barrio, comunidad y/o ciudad (marchas en bici, actividades lúdicas-comunitarias, fiestas del barrio, etc.)
6. I sign petitions, asking for social change (protest, to help other collectives, change in laws, etc.)
6. Firmo peticiones para pedir un cambio social (protesta, ayudas a otros colectivos, cambio de leyes...)
7. I am a member of/collaborate in meetings/activities organized by trade unions or political parties.
7. Formo parte/colaboro en reuniones/actividades de un sindicato o de un partido político
8. I actively participate in the various electoral processes (vote, attend rallies, know the election manifestos of the parties, etc.)
8. Participo activamente de los diferentes procesos electorales (votar, escuchar mítines, conocer programas electorales, etc.)
9. I take part in activities/actions that promote social change (demonstrations, protest action, etc.)
9. Participo en actividades/acciones que promuevan un cambio social (manifestaciones, acciones reivindicativas, etc.).
10. I participate in organizing activities/actions that promote social change (send out leaflets, give informative talks, etc.)
10. Participo en la organización de actividades/acciones para promover un cambio social (enviar escritos, dar charlas informativas, etc.)

* In the version finally proposed will remove items 2 and 3.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for each item

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Average	SD
Item 1	754	1	9	3.27	2.623
Item 2	757	1	9	2.85	2.418
Item 3	754	1	9	4.94	2.568
Item 4	754	1	9	2.75	2.145
Item 5	758	1	9	3.16	2.269
Item 6	758	1	9	3.90	2.556
Item 7	753	1	9	2.13	2.032
Item 8	754	1	9	4.09	2.666
Item 9	753	1	9	3.08	2.287
Item 10	757	1	9	2.38	2.044

than .450; the least being between item 3 and Community Participation (.452).

Dimensionality of SCAP

The data matrix is factorisable, as the measure of fitness of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) is of .869 above the .70 desired. Bartlett's test is also statistically significant, Chi squared approximately (45) = 3271.659, $p < .001$. The factor analysis, with a direct oblimin rotation

(the correlation between the factors analyzed is assumed) demonstrates the existence of two factors. Table 4 shows the saturation of each item in each factor, all of them high and positive, greater than .650 except for the third item which has similar weights in the two factors, which demonstrates that it should be removed from the scale.

The first factor which explains 48.123% of the total variance is made up of 5 items related to social and political participation. This has been denominated *Socio-Political Participation* (SPP). The second factor explains 11.861% of the total variance; it is also made up of 5 items which are related to community participation. It is denominated *Community Participation* (CP). The two factors explain 59.984% of the total variance.

Internal Consistency- Reliability

For both factors on the SCAP scale the coefficient of Cronbach's alpha has been calculated: (CP) Cronbach's alpha = .815; (SPP) Cronbach's alpha = .819. The results show a good reliability of the questionnaire, although the data shows that eliminating item 3 produces an increase in the internal consistency of the scale of CP, being Cronbach's alpha = .827.

Table 3. Correlations between items. Correlation item-total adjusted for each dimension

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Item 2	.760									
Item 3	.359	.368								
Item 4	.454	.565	.455							
Item 5	.429	.494	.297	.545						
Item 6	.327	.303	.442	.389	.377					
Item 7	.287	.338	.244	.430	.326	.334				
Item 8	.319	.262	.304	.347	.348	.394	.453			
Item 9	.337	.361	.367	.498	.432	.542	.518	.484		
Item 10	.371	.396	.362	.565	.437	.501	.526	.414	.693	
PCommunity	.802/.653	.841/.730	.661/.452	.783/.662	.718/.559					
IH/IHc										
PSocio-political						.743/.562	.717/.573	.737/.542	.841/.733	.799/.687
IH/IHa										

IH/IHa = Index of Homegenity / Index of Homogeneity adjusted.

External Reliability of the questionnaire

Given that conceptually Empowerment and Common Sense are related to Participation, what has been analyzed is how the scores obtained in SCAP relate to those obtained in the scales of Empowerment and Common Sense.

It can be appreciated in Table 5 that the correlations are positive and statistically significant. The least relationship established is between Common Sense and Socio-political Participation which, it must be said, is conceptually consistent.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

With the idea of confirming the factorial structure found in the CFA, a confirmatory factor analysis was carried out. The method of estimation was of the maximum likelihood. The following indices have been used to evaluate the level of fit of the model: *Chi squared test of Satorra – Bentler* (Bentler, 2006); *the root mean square error approximation (RMSEA)*, *the goodness of fit*

index (GFI) and *the adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI)*, *non-normed fit index (NNFI)*, *Comparative Fit Index (CFI)* (Bentler, 2006). The model would be considered with good fit if $RMSEA \leq .06$ (Hu & Bentler, 1999), GFI , $AGFI$ and $CFI > .90$ and $\chi^2/df < 3$ (Kline, 2005).

On the basis of the theoretical revision and the analyses realized, three models will be compared:

Model 1. The one-dimensional model of participation: considering participation to be the only community, social and political factor.

Model 2. Two-dimensional: keeping in mind the two factors that have been considered conceptually (Community Participation and Socio-political Participation). These two dimensions are supported by the CFA.

Model 3. Two-dimensional excluding items 2 and 3: Based on the CFA of Model 2, item 2 is eliminated 2; furthermore, the previous statistical results had already indicated that item 3 should be eliminated. Therefore the resultant model is presented with 3 items for the CP factor and 5 items for the SPP (Table 6).

Table 4. Exploratory Factor Analysis

	Factor 1	Factor 2
Item 1	.391	.871
Item 2	.416	.913
Item 3	.522	.513
Item 4	.359	.712
Item 5	.357	.662
Item 6	.724	.393
Item 7	.717	.352
Item 8	.690	.326
Item 9	.852	.417
Item 10	.823	.372

Table 5. Correlations between scales

	Community P.	Socio-political P.	Sense of Community
Socio-political P	.630		
Sense of Community	.326	.207	
Empowerment	.452	.491	.461

All correlations are significant to level 0.01 (bilateral).

Table 6. Indices of adjusted values in the CFA of the distinct models of Participation

	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	CFI	NNFI	GFI	AGFI	RMSEA
1. Unifactorial	572.42	35	16.35	.76	.70	.77	.64	.142
2. Bifactorial (10 ítems)	302.42	34	8.89	.88	.84	.86	.77	.102
3. Bifactorial (8 ítems)	36.28	17	2.13	.98	.97	.98	.95	.039

For all $\chi^2 p < .001$.

The results of the analyses showed the good fit of the proposed model 3, displaying better indicatives of fit than models 1 and 2. Obtained are: RMSEA= .039; $\chi^2/df = 2.13$; CFI = .98; NNFI = .97; GFI = .98; AGFI = .95. The standard input coefficients of the model are presented in Figure 1.

Results in the SCAP scale

From this instrument of 8 items and two factors, community participation CP (3 items) and socio-political SPP (5 items), the following measures and deviations are obtained, typical of the sample studies: CP = 3, 06 (1.89); SPP = 3.12 (1.77); Total = 3.08 (1.64). By gender: In women, CP = 3.17 (1.61); SPP = 3.16 (1.72). In men, CP = 2.89 (1.81); SPP = 3.03 (1.81). Significant statistical differences can be appreciated in Community Participation, it being greater in women ($p < .05$).

Discussion

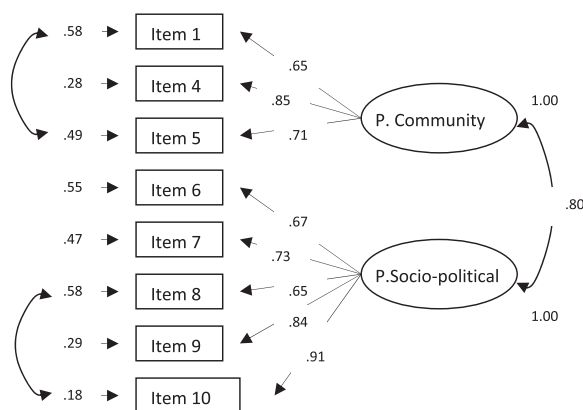
This paper proposes a scale to measure participation and in order to do this the dimensionality; internal consistency and reliability have been tested. Regarding dimensionality, the analysis carried out offers evidence of the structure of two factors: Community Participation and Socio-political Participation, in accordance with the initial theory. Therefore, the input analysis yields a high and positive saturation in each item for each proposed factor; with the exception of item 3, which

finally has been eliminated. Between them both factors explain almost 60% of the total variance (59.984%), with socio-political participation having the greater input weight. This means that informal and associative (community) participation is harder to define given the difficulty of capturing this form of participation with verbal items. Therefore, this scale is useful in quantitative studies which can be enriched with qualitative studies.

In themselves, the results of the confirmatory factor analysis demonstrate a good fit of the model in its two dimensional structure, finishing as a scale of two factors where CP is measured with three items and SPP is measured with five (items 2 and 3 from the original scale eliminated).

Until now, the different instruments proposed for measuring the variable participation have used items that refer to participation in some sort of community activity, associationism, or volunteerism (Sánchez, 1999). Moreover, there have been no distinctions made between forms of participation. These differ not only in the area of involvement but also in their formal or informal character, the degree of social commitment and the search for community involvement or social change. So it can be said that Community Participation is related to those community standards that develop stable social relationships built upon common interests, but in which there is no direct aim of social change. It is a more informal participation, less structured and with less continuity, so in general, the actors change smoothly. However, Socio-political Participation refers to involvement in those structures and processes that consciously seek change, working towards realizing these changes. It is therefore, participation that by its very nature is more structured, continuous and conscious.

The internal consistency is an indirect measure of reliability; in this case the good reliability of the questionnaire can be seen. The positive and statistically significant correlations of the scale with two other variables, conceptually related to participation, which are common sense and empowerment (Folgueras, 2003, 2008; Habermas, 2002; Pateman, 1970, 1985), prove the external validation of the instrument presented here.

**Figure 1.** Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

An analysis of the items leads us to conclude that the degree of participation is low. In the case of the factor Community Participation, the lowest measure is item 4: "I attend talks or debates on social issues and current affairs". In the case of Socio-political Participation, the lowest measure is found in item 7 "I am a member of/collaborate in meetings/activities organized by trade unions or political parties". The low scores in participation are in accordance with previous studies, where, in general, low indices of participation and political affiliation can be seen (Morales, 2001). However, despite the low indices of affiliation to political parties and the low opinion in which the political class is held (especially among the young) we are witnesses to a considerable movement. This movement, although it does fit into the classic partisan or trade union framework, nevertheless shows a high level of self-organization and can be seen as a response to highly sensitive social issues. Respond to this pattern: the autonomist movement, social centers, social forums or the recently appeared 15M. This can be seen as a one of the consequences of "cognitive mobilization" namely a group of better educated and well informed citizens who refuse to conform to a passive role limited to voting every four years and demand greater opportunities to make their voices heard (De Maya & Font, 2004).

In conclusion, the results obtained in this study allow us to evaluate the suitability of the metric properties of the items proposed, and the validity and reliability of the scale (SCAP). In future studies it would be interesting to inquire further into the different aspects of participation in relation to distinct socio-demographic variables or in specific sectors, for example, volunteerism. Social differences, such as gender, age, social class, level of education, ethnic group, etc. are transformed -depending on context- into social and economic resource discrepancies that complicate access to the public sphere.

So these factors can also affect the development, to a greater or lesser degree, of participation and the type of participation that is practiced. In any case, from psychosocial involvement to public authorities it is important to work towards reducing these discrepancies in order to develop a participative and socially responsible society. Participation is a potential driving force for social change whilst at the same time it implies a collective awareness and individual commitment of the people. Emerging in society is a *participation paradigm* (García, 2004) characterized by broader and more decentralized relationships which places non-instrumental value on relationships and connections and in turn places a higher value on community and exploring the necessities and possibilities contained within.

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