Designing and validating the Social Media Political Participation Scale: An instrument to measure political participation on social media

# Details

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## Sample

In a first qualitative phase, 106 items were selected after a search on Web of Science, Communication Source and Google Scholar using different combinations of keywords such as [online] or [digital] or [internet] or [social media] with [political] or [civic] or [public] or [activist] and [expression] or [participation] or [engagement] and 32 items remained after an evaluation of different items of the Social Media Political Participation Scale in terms of wording, grammar, scaling and item allocation.
A second quantitative phase was a survey with 595 students from eight schools agreed to participate in the study (59.1% males and 40.9% females; mean age 17.15 years old) spread among five different provinces in the country

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Researchers

# Abstract

Social media have expanded citizens’ political repertoires with new modes of action. To measure these changing
political practices, a new instrument, called the Social Media Political Participation Scale was developed and
psychometrically tested. The instrument aims to capture both active, expressive forms of political action through
social media as well as cognitive political social media use (e.g., sharing posts versus information seeking and
acquiring). Based on a literature review and the recommendations of an expert panel, an item pool was
generated. The second phase consisted of a questionnaire completed by 595 teenagers. The construct validity was
assessed using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), as well as convergent
validity and internal consistency. The analyses revealed four theoretically grounded constructs measured with 21
items: latent engagement, follower engagement, expressive engagement and counter engagement. As a validated in\_x0002\_strument, the Social Media Political Participation Scale allows future research to gain a more profound insight
into who is politically engaged and why, as well as how digital technologies are embedded in diverse forms of
political action.

# Outcome

The aim of this study was to develop an instrument to capture political participation through social media and test it on a group of students. "Participation’ as both cognitive participation (i.e. information seeking and acquiring) and active, expressive forms of expression through social media. A newly developed instrument, called the Social Media Political Participation Scale, which consists of four theoretically grounded constructs. (1) the latent engagement subscale represent different ways for cognitive engagement through information seeking and consumption, through a social media platform so involvement in political or social issues, without actively creating or reproducing content; (2) the counter engagement subscale consists of items describing behaviour that is generally considered controversial, unusual or hurtful and therefore could be considered as a form of ‘anti-social behaviour’ or notions of ‘hacktivism’; (3) the expressive engagement and (4) the follower engagement subscales describe more commonly measured behaviours in the context of political engagement through social media such as commenting and posting. The expressive and follower engagement scales illustrate how different ‘levels’ of engagement might exist on social media platforms: whereas the expressive items describe forms of content creation initiated by the user, the follower items describe forms of engagement that require some form of action from the user, but the user is not the instigator of the action, nor have they created the original content. This scale could gain a more profound and nuanced insight in the different ways in which social media platforms might be employed for political purposes by citizens and can be helpful to identify those groups in society who are engaging in political and civic life, how they do so and why. Especially young citizens who are often studied in this context." (Waeterloos et al., 2021, p. 7)