Polish Journal of Applied Psychology
2014, vol. 12 (2), 27–40

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Psychometric Properties of the Sociopolitical Control Scale: A Preliminary Study on a Polish Sample

Abstract:

The Sociopolitical Control Scale (SPCS) measures psychological empowerment at the intrapersonal level. It comprises two subscales – leadership competence (LC) and policy control (PC). Adapting SPCS to Polish cultural conditions required measuring the translation, checking comprehension of items and establishing reliability and validity. Reliability and convergent validity are sufficient enough for this measure to be used in psychological research. Confirmatory Factor Analysis lets us assume that SPCS is an appropriate measure, and the Polish scale factorial structure resembles the factorial structure of the original version. Since Poland is a socio-demographically homogeneous country, our research is significant for cross-cultural comparisons, despite a non-representative sample (n = 469). The Polish version of SPCS was developed to be used in research on the social involvement of a political, religious and humanitarian nature.

Keywords:

Sociopolitical control, Psychological empowerment, Psychometric evaluation, Cross-cultural assessment

Streszczenie:

Skala Kontroli Socjopolitycznej (SKSP) jest narzędziem służącym do pomiaru psychologicznego empowermentu na poziomie intrapersonalnym. Adaptacja SPCS do polskich warunków kulturowych wymagała przetłumaczenia narzędzia, badania spójności wersji polskiej i amerykańskiej oraz ustalenia trafności i rzetelności. Rzetelność oraz trafność zbieżna są wystarczające do stosowania SKSP w badaniach psychologicznych. Wyniki analizy czynnikowej pozwalają przyjąć, że skala jest narzędziem trafnym, a struktura czynnikowa polskiej wersji jest zbliżona do struktury czynnikowej wersji oryginalnej. Polska jest krajem socjodemograficznie homogenicznym, dlatego prezentowane badania mają znaczenie dla porównań międzykulturowych pomimo niereprezentatywnej próby (n = 469). Polską wersję SPCS stworzono w celu użycia jej w badaniach nad zaangażowaniem społecznym o charakterze politycznym, religijnym i humanitarnym.

Słowa kluczowe:

Poczucie kontroli socjopolitycznej, empowerment psychologiczny, ewaluacja psychometryczna, porównanie międzykulturowe

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Introduction

Sociopolitical control indicates the intrapersonal component of psychological empowerment (Holden, Evans, Hinnant & Messeri, 2005; Zimmerman, 1990, 1995). The key components of empowerment are considered to include participation, control and critical awareness found at the following levels: individual (psychological empowerment), organizational, and community (Zimmerman & Warschausky, 1998). Sociopolitical control refers to an individual's conviction about his capabilities and how effectivehis influence is over the social and political system (Paulhus, 1983; Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991). Sense of sociopolitical control comprises two factors: leadership competence (LC) and policy control (PC). Leadership competence describes the tendencies and abilities related to human management (Smith & Propst, 2001). The measure of policy control refers to the perceived capability to have influence over what those in power do (Itzhaky & York, 2003).

Sociopolitical control is an important variable in those fields of psychology where the centre of interest includes various sorts of individual and group involvement. The notion of sociopolitical control is, in a natural manner, connected with community psychology, since it was developed in this trend (Zimmerman, 1989, 1990; Rappaport, 1981, 1987). Another application of sociopolitical control is work and organizational psychology (Boyd & Angelique, 2002; Boyd & Angelique, 2007). The Sociopolitical Control Scale can also be used for research conducted in line with political psychology. Especially since some items of the Policy control subscale have been used since the 1950s by the *Michigan Survey Research Center* in studies devoted to political participation (Milbrath & Goel, 1977).

The SPCS may be applied to devise prevention and intervention models in different community-based settings. Applications of this approach may be useful for providing models in different community-based promotion and interventions designed as psychologically empowering. For instance, the sociopolitical control construct could be helpful in developing abuse prevention programs (Holden, Messeri, Evans, Crankshaw & Ben-Davies, 2004; Peterson, Lowe, Aquilino & Schneider, 2005). Other examples of this concept's application may be in regard to local community participation measurement (Itzhaky & York, 2000, 2003). Additionally, sociopolitical control could be useful for measuring psychological empowerment in organizational settings, for example among employees (Boyd & Angelique, 2002, 2007), members of a church or political leaders and followers (Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991; Kanafa-Chmielewska, 2009).

Zimmerman and Zahniser's (1991) Sociopolitical Control Scale (SPCS) has been adapted to Polish cultural conditions despite the existence of its revised version from 2006 (Peterson, Lowe, et al., 2006).

Scale adaptation and its psychometric evaluation were performed for research concerning social involvement of a political, religious and humanitarian nature in Polish cultural conditions. Poland is a homogeneous country with regard to its ethnic socio-demographic criteria (1.23 per cent minorities), racial (100 per cent White), and religious character (96 per cent religious people, of which 88 per cent are Catholics) (GUS, 2010, 2009; CBOS, 2005).

The particularity of social participation in Poland makes measuring the sense of sociopolitical control important. It is commonly acknowledged that Poles are relatively inactive socially. Low propensity to associate in non-governmental organizations and low electoral turnout seem to reflect this pattern (Sułek, 2009). Such indices are substantially lower even if compared with other democracies in transition, not to mention well-established democratic systems (Millard, 2010; Chmielewski, 2008). A plausible explanation has not yet been found. Some researchers attempt to explain this phenomenon by referring to comparative frameworks, but with limited success (Cześnik, 2007). Searching the literature devoted to civic activism, we can find claims that some psychological factors are relevant in cases where decisions are made to participate in a political system. Among these we may highlight a sense of duty to participate and sense of self-efficacy, which are key factors at the individual level (Norris, 2002). Therefore, it is probable that a sense of sociopolitical control is a relevant variable in searching for a reason for low social activity in Poland.

The initial adaptation and verification of the SPCS psychometric parameters was conducted on a sample of 469 research participants. The validity and reliability of the measure will be verified in the future on larger samples.

The procedure of creating a Polish version of SPCS consisted in establishing the Polish language version and determining its fundamental psychometric properties within the methodological guidelines (Hambleton, Merenda, & Spielberger, 2005; AERA, APA, & NCME, 1999). Confirmatory factor analysis – CFA was performed using Statistica version 9.0. For the remaining calculations we used SPSS version 14.0. Our research was conducted in 2009.

Adaptation

The SPCS (Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991) was translated by a psychologist, a political scientist specializing in issues regarding participation, and a sworn translator. After a back-translation, a final Polish version of SPCS was established. Answers were provided on the 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree). Upon having determined the Polish language version, our next

step was to check the comprehension of items. The SPCS statements were intelligibly formulated for all research participants, regardless of their level of education and age.

The cohesion of SPCS was checked by bilingual graduate students of English philology who filled out the Polish and American SPCS version. The correlations between the results of the SPCS Polish and American version for particular statements in Leadership competence ranged from 0.70 to 0.94 ($p < 0.001$), whereas in Policy control from 0.58 to 0.85. For the overall SPCS result (items 1 to 17) the level of correlation amounted to 0.92 ($p < 0.001$); *Leadership competence* was slightly higher (items 1 to 8) $r = 0.93$ ($p < 0.001$) than for *Policy control* (items 9 to 17) $r = 0.90$ ($p < 0.001$).

Psychometric evaluation

Method

Sample one

The first group of participants consisted of adults studying at different educational levels in Wrocław ($n = 101$). Wrocław is a city in southwest Poland, population 632 thousand permanent inhabitants (GUS, 2010), which places it in fourth place among the largest cities of this country. It is an important and dynamically developing centre of economy, politics and culture. Among participants were students with bachelor's degrees, master's degrees and those doing postgraduate studies, as well as students of the University of the Third Age. The University of the Third Age is intended for students older than 60 years, regardless of their level of education, who, however, are no longer in full-time employment. The majority of the examined group were women ($n = 78$). The average age was 28 years, the youngest research participants were at age 20, whereas the oldest were 74. More than two thirds of the respondents had secondary education, almost 28 per cent completed master's degrees or other five-year study programs, whereas six per cent held a bachelor's degree. Nearly 70 per cent of the respondents were employed. Also 70 per cent of the research participants came from households which had at their disposal a household budget equal to or higher than the Polish average gross wages and salaries.

Sample two

Participants in the second sample ($n = 184$) were adult volunteers, working for their organisations without salary. They were involved in three different types of organisations: political ($n = 68$), religious ($n = 54$) and humanitarian aid ($n = 62$).

Research was conducted at meetings of non-profit organisations. The majority of the second sample were women ($n = 99$). The average age was 29 years, the youngest were 18, whereas the oldest were 71. More than 41 per cent of the respondents had secondary education, almost 43 per cent completed master's degree studies or other five-year studies,

whereas 13 per cent held a bachelor's degree. Nearly 69 per cent came from households which had at their disposal a household budget equal to or higher than the Polish average gross household income.

Sample three

Sample three (n = 184) consisted of socially inactive people. They did not differ from those in sample two, who were active, with regard to gender, age, level of education, and total monthly gross household income. For confirmatory factor analysis, sample two and sample three will be combined.

Measures

Sociopolitical Control Scale

We used the 17-item SPCS developed by Zimmerman and Zahniser (1991) in this study.

Convergent Validity of SPCS

In order to determine convergent validity, we correlated the variable measured by SPCS with variables similar to the theoretical viewpoint. To determine the convergent validity of the Sociopolitical Control Scale, we used the following: the GSES (Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale), the Directiveness Scale version D-15 (15 items) and the subscale of behavioural efficiency from the Social Competence Questionnaire in situations demanding social exposure (SE).

The Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale is a Polish adaptation of the measure developed by Jerusalem and Schwarzer (Juczyński, 2001). This measure is based on the self-efficacy theory formulated by Bandura (1977). The Directiveness Scale is a Polish adaptation of Ray's Directiveness Scale (Ray, 1976). The Polish Directiveness Scale measures the tendency to impose one's will on other people, as well as one's determination and assertiveness. It is described as a measure useful in managerial recruitment (Brzozowski, 1997). By contrast, the Social Competence Questionnaire (SCQ) measures the complex abilities needed in coping with specific-type social situations (Matczak, 2001). An individual acquires these abilities through social training. The SCQ consists of three competence subscales which condition behavioural efficiency in intimate situations (I), in situations requiring assertiveness (A) and in situations of social exposure (SE). The SE subscale comprises 18 items.

Data analytic strategy

First, we performed confirmatory factor analysis based on data from all samples to examine the two-factor SPCS model. The next step was to test the scale's convergent validity, which was done for sample one. Then we established intergroup differences in sociopolitical control and in its two dimensions, using data from sample two and sample three.

Results

In order to determine a model to fit the data, we performed a maximum likelihood confirmatory factor analysis. As can be seen in Table 1, we tested the two-factor model in this study. In all cases the discrepancy X^2 was statistically significant; however, this fit statistic is often referred to as a too stringent standard. The other fit measures – the goodness fit index (*GFI*), normed fit index (*NFI*) and comparative fit index (*CFI*) – were all above 0.7 in sample two and in combined samples two and three. These indices are sufficient for the model to be considered fitted to the data. The root mean square error of approximation (*RMSEA* = 0.087) reached an acceptable low level in sample one and in sample two. Taking into consideration the 90 per cent confidence intervals (CIs), the two-factor model is better fitted to the data in sample one and in sample two than in sample three (cf. Table 1).

Table 1. The fit statistics of SPCS confirmatory factor analyses.

	Two-factor Model of SPCS for Leadership Competence and Policy Control		
measures of fit	**Sample 1** ***n*=101**	**Sample 2** ***n*=184**	**Sample 3** ***n*=184**
X^2	202.162	263.545	322.788
df	118	118	118
***p*-value**	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001
GFI	0.804	0.847	0.813
NFI	0.735	0.826	0.742
CFI	0.600	0.762	0.693
RMSEA	0.087	0.087	0.105
(90% CI)	(0.067, 0.106)	(0.074, 0.100)	(0.093, 0.118)

The SPCS factor loadings in CFA are shown in Table 2 for all considered samples. The leadership competence subscale is comprised of items from one to eight, while the second subscale consists of the last nine scale items. The lowest factor loading was observed in the eighth statement; it does not reach 0.3 level. Despite this, we did not eliminate the eighth statement owing to the current, preliminary stage of working with the Polish version of SPCS, which should be in accordance with the original version of SPCS.

Table 2. Factor Loadings in Confirmatory Factor Analysis (Two Factors).

SPCS Items	Sample 1 *n*=101		Sample 2 *n*=184		Sample 3 *n*=184	
	factors		factors		factors	
	LC	PC	LC	PC	LC	PC
SPCS 1	0.67		0.83		0.74	
SPCS 2	0.70		0.68		0.68	
SPCS 3	0.65		0.63		0.77	
SPCS 4	0.38		0.57		0.64	
SPCS 5	0.51		0.51		0.59	
SPCS 6	0.61		0.60		0.47	
SPCS 7	0.47		0.48		0.51	
SPCS 8	0.27		0.29		0.28	
SPCS 9		0.50		0.72		0.62
SPCS 10		0.61		0.50		0.37
SPCS 11		0.53		0.78		0.55
SPCS 12		0.55		0.84		0.57
SPCS 13		0.53		0.47		0.64
SPCS 14		0.60		0.55		0.61
SPCS 15		0.58		0.45		0.45
SPCS 16		0.36		0.49		0.49
SPCS 17		0.49		0.53		0.64

The overall reliability of SPCS and its two subscales (leadership competence and policy control) reached consecutive results: sample one (Cronbach's *alpha* = 0.8; 0.75; 0.77), sample two (Cronbach's *alpha* = 0.85; 0.79; 0.83), sample three (Cronbach's *alpha* = 0.84; 0.79; 0.79). These results are sufficient enough for this measure to be used in psychological research.

Leadership competence, compared with the overall result of the SPCS and with policy control, was characterized by the highest correlations with the GSES (0.46; $p < 0.01$), D-15 (0.64; $p < 0.01$) and the SE subscale (0.61; $p < 0.01$). This result allowed us to consider the Sociopolitical Control Scale to be valid. As leadership competence refers to the ability to manage other people and to be dominant, the D-15 scale, the SE subscale, and the GSES were used to measure similar variables. In turn, policy control is not only dependent on an individual, but to a large extent on situational and systemic factors. Therefore, what is not surprising are the relatively low correlations between policy control and the variables, the definitions of which strongly emphasise the personal capabilities in social and task-oriented functions (cf. Table 3).

Table 3. Convergent Validity (GSES, D-15, SE).

	GSES	D-15	SE
Leadership competence	0.46**	0.64**	0.61**
Policy control	0.22*	0.28**	0.20*
SPCS (17 items)	0.41**	0.55**	0.47**

*$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$; (Pearson's r; $n = 101$).

Both SPCS subscales are mutually correlated at the level of 0.29 (sample 1; $p < 0.01$), 0.40 (sample 2; $p < 0.001$), 0.43 (sample 3; $p < 0.001$). This result allowed us to believe that there was no interference between these two dimensions and that they measured other aspects of sociopolitical control. In all three samples both measures highly correlated with the overall result of the SPCS, namely leadership competence at the level of 0.75 (sample 1, $p < 0.001$), 0.78 (sample 2, $p < 0.001$), 0.81 (sample 3, $p < 0.001$) and policy control at the level of 0.86 (sample 1, $p < 0.001$), 0.88 (sample 2, $p < 0.001$), 0.88 (sample 3, $p < 0.001$). These results also provide convergent evidence for the SPCS.

Assessing the results distribution was needed for us to conclude the analysis of intergroup differences in sociopolitical control and in its two dimensions. By means of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, we established that both the Sociopolitical Control Scale results and its two subscales do not diverge from the normal distribution in sample two (SPCS $z = 1.23$, LC $z = 1.03$, PC $z = 0.53$; $p > 0.05$) and in sample three (SPCS $z = 1.34$, LC $z = 0.87$, PC $z = 1.20$; $p > 0.05$).

The involved participants (sample 2) are different from those uninvolved (sample 3) in policy control (t (366) = 3.29; $p < 0.01$). The effect size is small (Cohen's $d = 0.34$). The difference in sociopolitical control is at the statistical tendency level (t (366) = 1.85; $p = 0.065$). Policy control and sociopolitical control are higher among those involved in social activities (cf. Table 4).

Table 4. Means and Standard Deviations for Research Samples.

		Sample 1 n=101	**Sample 2** n=184	**Sample 3** n=184
Leadership Competence	*M*	26	27	27
	SD	4.31	4.58	4.32
Policy Control	*M*	27	32	30
	SD	5.55	6.03	5.30
SPCS	*M*	53	58	57
	SD	7.95	8.91	8.15

People who comprise sample two, in other words who are involved politically, religiously, or in humanitarian aid, differ with regard to both subscales (LC: F (2, 181) = 7.407;

$p < 0.01$; PC: F (2, 181) = 33.966; $p < 0.001$) and the SPCS general value (F (2, 181) = 29.222; $p < 0.001$). Those politically involved were characterized by a higher value than those involved religiously or in humanitarian aid. The size of the effect in relation to LC between the politically involved and the religiously involved is moderate (Cohen's $d = 0.65$), while in relation to PC and the SPCS it is substantial (Cohen's $d = 1.47$ and Cohen's $d = 1.35$ respectively) (cf. Cohen, 1992). As to the size of effect between the politically involved and those involved in humanitarian aid, it is moderate with regard to LC (Cohen's $d = 0.50$) and substantial for both PC (Cohen's $d = 1.14$) and the SPCS (Cohen's d =1.03) (cf. Cohen, 1992). Means and standard deviations for the involved (sample 2) are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Means and Standard Deviations for Involved Groups.

		P *n*=68	**R** *n*=54	**H** *n*=62
Leadership Competence	*M*	28	25	26
	SD	4.34	4.79	4.19
Policy Control	*M*	36	29	30
	SD	4.46	5.01	5.97
SPCS	*M*	64	54	56
	SD	7.02	7.69	8.63

P - politically involved; R – religiously involved; H – involved in humanitarian aid.

We observed differences between the involved and their groups of comparison, which included people similar to the involved with regard to gender, age, level of education and income. Those who were politically involved were characterized by higher PC (t (134) = 6.68; $p < 0.001$) and the SPCS (t (134) = 5.05; $p < 0.001$). The size of the effect was substantial in both instances, namely for PC: Cohen's $d = 1.15$ and for SPCS: Cohen's $d = 0.87$. Means and standard deviations for the uninvolved comparison group are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Means and Standard Deviations for Uninvolved Comparison Groups.

		CP *n*=68	**CR** *n*=54	**CH** *n*=62
Leadership Competence	*M*	27	28	27
	SD	4.51	4.00	4.39
Policy Control	*M*	30	30	28
	SD	4.71	5.70	5.42
SPCS	*M*	58	58	55
	SD	7.70	8.75	7.94

CP – P comparison group; CR – R comparison group; CH – H comparison group

Discussion

Our study aimed to evaluate the quality of the measure developed by the Polish adaptated SPCS. Since people in Poland are said to be relatively inactive socio-politically, every reliable measure of sources of civil activity and inactivity is valuable.

Adaptation of the Polish SPCS can be regarded as successful due to the fact that its statements do not contain any content specific for the American culture. The indices are high enough for the two-factor model to be considered fitted to the data in the preliminary study on a Polish sample. The values of the psychometric parameters allow us to claim that the SPCS is reliable and valid. The psychometric properties of the subscales – leadership competence and policy control as well as the whole Sociopolitical Control Scale – replicate across all three samples.

The whole group of involved participants (sample 2; n=184) differed from the whole group of uninvolved participants (sample 3; n=184) in policy control, but the effect size was small. The difference in sociopolitical control was at statistical tendency level. Policy control and sociopolitical control were higher among participants involved sociopolitically.

Taking into consideration people involved in various ways – politically, religiously and in humanitarian aid – those politically involved obtained the highest results. The differences were especially large in policy and general sociopolitical control. There were no statistically significant differences between those involved religiously and in humanitarian aid.

Our research has three major limitations. Firstly, the sample is not representative. However, this sample proved to be sufficient enough for the preliminary validation of the SPCS since Poland is an ethnically and religiously homogenous country. Further research is required to verify the psychometric parameters of the SPCS Polish version for bigger and representative samples. Additionally, for comparison purposes, using the revised SPCS (SPCS-R) would be valuable. Secondly, the results do not inform about validity based on participants' behaviour. They refer only to self-reporting tools: GSES, D-15 and ES. We would like to point out that wider presentation of Polish SPCS validity issues is planned in further articles. Thirdly, although all data were self-reported – acceptable in psychological research – it enabled us to understand the volunteers', activists', and isolates' psychological experiences.

Acknowledgements

This research was founded by grant N N106 043034 from the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education. We wish to thank the author of the original measure, Prof. Marc A. Zimmerman, for granting us permission to adapt the Sociopolitical Control Scale to Polish.

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