

Socioeconomic Status and Political Participation in College and University Students

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to synthesize and evaluate the current knowledge on socioeconomic status (SES) and civic engagement, or political participation. Previous research reveals extensive knowledge on a similar, yet vastly broader topic: that there is a close relationship between democracy and socioeconomic growth. Although there is a dispute within the political science community as to the direction of causality between these two variables, there is a wide consensus that the existence of one improves the sustainability of the other. This paper will dive deeper into this topic by analyzing a correlational study on two important subparts of democracy and socioeconomics: political participation and socioeconomic status. The results are expected to show a significant positive correlation between political participation and socioeconomic status among college students.

Introduction

- Countries with higher levels of political participation, or civic engagement generally ranked higher on democracy strength indexes (Phiri, 2017).
- Political participation has been deemed one of the strongest indicators of democracy.
- Lindquist concludes that “local capitalism and civic engagement variables are associated with positive socioeconomic outcomes” Lindquist (1964).
- Historical analyses on political participation and social class reveal that although members of the low to middle class were heavily involved in the political process in the 19th century, they have largely been ostracized from it in the 20th (Phiri, 2017).

Hypothesis

The hypothesis for this study is the following: There will be a positive correlation between political participation and socioeconomic status. Null hypothesis: There will be no positive relationship observed.



Expected Results and Discussion

Data collection is not yet complete (22 current responses have been registered)

Results expected to reject null hypothesis and support alternative hypothesis.

Preliminary data reveals an average political participation score of 3.23 on the five-point Likert scale. When broken down, this result is expected to reveal positive relationship with socioeconomic status.

Based on previous research, it might be expected that this relationship exists, but the political landscape in youth is shifting worldwide (Johnson, 2019).

Regardless of the final outcome of the study, the results will offer insight into a crucial indicator of successful democracies: political participation. Without it, democracy cannot excel.

The results will allow for comparison across different demographics, including country of residence. Further, significant policy decisions rely on such studies to make set legislative agendas.

References

Lindquist, J. H. (1964). Socioeconomic Status and Political Participation. *The Western Political Quarterly*, 17(4), 608. doi:10.2307/444871

Phiri, M. Z. (2017). Comparative Perspectives on South Africa's and Brazil's Institutional Inequalities under Progressive Social Policies. *Journal of South African Studies*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03057070.2017.1343009>

Rojas, H. (2008). Political Conversation Orientation and Political Engagement Measure. *PsycTESTS*. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.southern.edu/10.1037/t27224-000>

Methodology

- Participants include at least 15 female and 15 male college and university students from both Southern Adventist University and various universities in Europe.
- Participants responded to a questionnaire consisting of three broad sections:
 1. Demographic questionnaire
 2. Socioeconomic Questionnaire
 3. Political Participation Questionnaire, including two sub-sections:
 - a. Civic Participation
 - b. Political Efficacy
- Participants were answered most questions on a five-point Likert scale, with others being nominally measured