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Evaluation of Sociopolitical Control Scales for Tourism

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Abstract

Over the past few decades, shifts in sociopolitical and technological landscapes have elevated citizen participation and empowerment as fundamental elements of democratic decision-making in diverse settings. This trend holds true for the field of tourism as well. Consequently, studies in tourism have underscored the importance of citizen participation and empowerment within the host communities of tourism destinations.

Introduction

Empowerment is a process through which individuals enhance their control over their sociopolitical lives by strengthening their abilities, competencies, and self-efficacy in decision-making (Chiang & Jang, 2007; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Speer & Peterson, 2000). It occurs when individuals gain increased command over their lives and actively participate in their primary and purposeful groups (Speer, Jackson, & Peterson, 2001; Tremblay & Gutberlet, 2010). This concept includes both individual and organizational empowerment. According to Zimmerman (1990), the former emphasizes individuals' self-efficacy and control in sociopolitical contexts, while the latter highlights their cooperation within an organization. Empowerment is broadly related to one's acts of empowering others, while psychological empowerment (PE) represents an individual's internal state of being empowered (Menon, 2001).

Psychological empowerment is not merely an individual component because it includes active engagement in an individual's community and a direct realization of one's sociopolitical circumstances (Zimmerman, 2000). Therefore, PE is an appropriate measure of self-perception of competence in one's sociopolitical environment. Zimmerman theorized that the three different components of PE, the interactional, behavioral, and intrapersonal, are interrelated. The interactional component of PE represents awareness and understanding of the political situation; the behavioral piece refers to purposive actions to affect outcomes; and the intrapersonal component includes individuals' competence, efficacy, and mastery (Ohmer, 2007; Peterson, Lowe, et al., 2006). Among the three components of PE, the intrapersonal element is strongly indicative of individuals' perceived capacity for controlling their sociopolitical contexts, more so than the other two dimensions (Leung, 2009).

During the last few decades, community psychologists have widely used the sociopolitical control scale (SPCS) to measure the intrapersonal component of PE. The SPCS measures how strongly an individual believes in his or her ability and efficacy in sociopolitical contexts (Itzhaky & York, 2003; Peterson, Lowe, Aquilino, & Schneider, 2005; Peterson, Speer, & Peterson, 2011; Smith & Propst, 2001; Zimmerman & Rapport, 1988; Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991). The SPCS quantifies two primary dimensions of the intrapersonal component of psychological empowerment: leadership competence (LC) and policy control (PC). Policy control refers to the belief that can one can influence political circumstances while leadership competence addresses one's sense of leadership efficacy (Peterson, Lowe, et al., 2006; Peterson, Speer, & Hughey, 2006; Zimmerman, 1990).

The SPCS has been employed as a measure to assess public policies in such diverse areas as natural resource decision-making (Smith & Propst, 2001), public health programs (Zimmerman,

et al., 1999), ecological resilience (Ungar, 2004), youth programs (Diemer & Blustein, 2006), and social welfare (Markward, et al., 2006). Due to its robustness in diverse fields, scholars have found it worthwhile to improve the internal consistency of the SPCS. For example, Peterson and his colleagues (2006) demonstrated the scale's hypothesized two-factor structure attained higher reliability compared to the previous model by rephrasing two negatively worded items so all statements were positively worded.

Tourism scholars have been interested in PE and the SPCS; however, they have mainly focused on the PE of employees in the tourism industry (Chiang & Jang, 2007; Hechanova, Alampay, & Franco, 2006). Also, tourism researchers in these studies utilized only a part of the SPCS. In other words, while tourism researchers have been interested in PE at the professional workplace level, psychologists have addressed PE at the level of community policies and programs.

Communities and local residents of tourist destinations play critical roles in sustainable and positive outcomes in tourism development. Many studies, therefore, have examined residents' attitudes toward tourism development (Anderreck & Vogt, 2000; Ko & Stewart, 2002; Wang & Pfister, 2008; Woosnam, 2012). These studies emphasize residents' perceptions and satisfaction with tourism development.

Scale Construction and Results

Generation of Scale Items

 Measurement error associated with scales is often derived from poor questionnaire wording and construction (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009). Therefore, survey questions should use words that are consistent and valid measures of something the study wants to examine (Fowler, 1995). To minimize measurement error, scale items should be based on a literature review,

consultation with experts, and the results of pre- or pilot tests. The scale items used in this study reflect intrapersonal components of PE in the context of tourism development. The sociopolitical control scale for tourism (SPCS-T) was generated from a comprehensive review of the literature related to the SPCS. A pool of items was then created from two focus groups of residents living in the research area. The process followed Churchill's (1979) recommendation that individual and group interviews are applicable procedures in generating scale items (Hung, Sirakaya-Turk, & Ingram, 2011; Lankford & Howard, 1994; Mason & Cheyne, 2000; Woosnam & Norman, 2012). Additionally, a jury of five tourism experts in South Korea reviewed the set of 17 items to judge content validity and clarity of the rephrased items of the SPCS-T. The purpose of the expert panel was to determine whether the SPCS-T correctly reflected sociopolitical circumstances relevant to local tourism development of the study area, in order to avoid coverage error.

Table 2. Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis for the Initial Measurement Model

Construct	Item	Description	Factor Loading	Variance (%)	α
Leadership Competence				36.163	
	LC1	I am often a leader in groups,	0.816		0.937
	LC2	I would prefer to be a leader rather than a follower.	0.809		0.937
	LC3	I would rather have a leadership role when I am involved in a group project.	0.852		0.937
	LC4	I can usually organize people to get things done.	0.873		0.936
	LC5	Other people usually follow my idea.	0.844		0.936
	LC6	I find it very easy to talk in front of a group.	0.840		0.937

LC7	I like to work on solving a problem myself rather than wait and see if someone else will deal with it.	0.808			0.937
LC8	I like trying new things that are challenging to me	0.801			0.937

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			35.621	
TPC1	I enjoy political participation because I want to have as much say as possible in influencing the tourism department of my city.	0.788		0.938
TPC2	A person like me can really understand what is going on with the tourism department of my city.	0.852		0.937
TPC3	I feel like I have a pretty good understanding of the important tourism development decision making processes in my city.	0.828		0.937
TPC4	People like me are generally well qualified to participation in the tourism development decision making process in my city.	0.786		0.936
TPC5	It makes a difference who I support for local tourism development because my support will represent my interest.	0.823		0.936
TPC6	There are plenty of ways for people like me to have a say in what the local tourism development agency does.	0.820		0.937
TPC7	It is important to me that I actively participate in local tourism development issues.	0.785		0.936
TPC8	Most local tourism development agent officials in the city would listen to me.	0.789		0.940
TPC9	Local tourism development is important to support.	0.598		0.939

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