



DETERMINANTS OF SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS AND POLITICAL EFFICACY: A CORRELATIVE APPRAISAL OF PARTICIPATION

Dr. E. Benrithung Patton

Assistant Professor

Department of Political Science,

Fazl Ali College (Nagaland University), Mokokchung

798601: Nagaland, India.

Abstract

The political efficacy levels are regarded as one key indicator of the well-being of democratic polities. The higher the political efficacy of the citizenry, the higher is its general participation in political matters. Encompassing the above high involvement, the study undertakes an analytical view of political efficacy to elaborate and to test an argument about the influence of structural factors on this indicator of a democratic polity's health. The tool used for the data collection was Systematic Random Sampling (SRS) method. The sample comprised of 407 respondents drawn from different Assembly Constituency of Nagaland. The obtained data were analyzed by using a three-point Likert scale based on the standard political efficacy questions. The results revealed that the level of sense of political efficacy have a positive and significant effects on patterns of participation. On close examination it was found that the respondents' level of political efficacy produced differences among different socio-economic variables undertaken in this study.

Keywords: Political attitude, socio-economic status, participation, level of political efficacy.

Introduction

The concept of political efficacy has played a prominent role in studies on political participation. Political efficacy is the “feeling that political and social change is possible and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change” (A. Campbell et al. 1954). Various studies on political participation consider construction of political efficacy to be a crucial predictor for the outcome of participation. High levels of efficacy among citizens are usually viewed as desirable for the stability of democracy, because in the modern democratic society, citizens should feel that they have some power to influence the actions of their government (Wright, 1975). Citizens who are confident about having this power are more likely to support the democratic system.

Democracy encourages involved participation, which requires higher degree of sense of political efficacy (SPE). In turn, the greater degree of political participation requires a higher SPE as also that of political awareness. The concept of SPE is used to identify a citizen’s feelings about the effects of his action on political events and affairs. Historically, Campbell et. al. (1954) argued that voting behaviour was dependent upon one’s SPE. Conversely as Almond and Verba (1963) advocates that belief in one’s competence is a key political attitude. The self-confident citizen appears to be the democratic citizen. Not only does he think he can participate, he thinks others ought to participate as well. Furthermore, he does not merely think he can take part in politics; he is likely to be more active.”

Now that political efficacy is one of the most researched variables in political science. Its significance in existing literature relates to its theoretical and empirical association with political interest, political support and political participation. It is of relevance in democratic political systems which espouse citizen engagement and governance by popular control. Taking all the above components it is correct to suggest that sense of political efficacy as individual’s perceptions of his effectiveness in the domain of politics. It is a feeling that individual political action does have or can have an impact upon the political process. While political participation and political support are the analytic concerns in most empirical efficacy research, the more fundamental interest plainly underlying most of the work analysis individual attitudes and behavior but rather the health of a democratic

system. Placed at such a crucial intervening variable it becomes an important subject to study the link between the respondent's sense of political efficacy and towards their electoral participation.

The present paper examines one of the most fundamental aspects of representative democracies which are closely related to the theme of political participation. Besides the standard socio economic variables, there are a number of political attitudes such as political efficacy which immensely influences political participation of the citizens. They have considerable implications for political participation because they determine both the attitude as well as participation of the voters.

Material and Methods

This work is based on qualitative and is intensive in nature. Data is collected from both the primary as well as secondary sources. The primary information is collected from the field study conducted during the year 2016 which is specifically based on the last Nagaland Legislative Assembly Elections. For the study, a sample size of five Assembly Constituencies was selected to conduct the study. The selection is made using the Systematic Random Sampling (SRS) method. From each of the sampled assembly constituencies, three polling stations were selected. Out of which thirty voters (respondents) each were selected from the electoral roll of the selected polling station. This was supplemented by interview with people from various walks of life to enrich the data collected from the field. The secondary information is gathered from various published and unpublished academic books, journals, articles, official records, statistical documents and seminar papers, etc.

The respondent's level of sense of political efficacy was thoroughly examined about politics and government by the four standard questions pertaining to political efficacy statement. An efficacy scale of measurement placed the respondents in one of the three levels of political efficacy scale –high, medium and low political efficacy.

A three-point Likert Scale is used to measure the respondents' level of sense of political efficacy. The respondents were asked to rate agreement or disagreement with each statement on a scale of one to three, with the key as follows: 1=Don't know, 2=Disagree and 3=Agree. Based on the respondent's indication, each answer was scored from 3 points for agree, 2 points for disagree and 1 point for don't know. Accordingly, the respondents' sense of political efficacy has been categorized under three levels – High (for agree), Low (for disagree) and None (for don't know) respectively. A higher overall score indicates higher political efficacy.

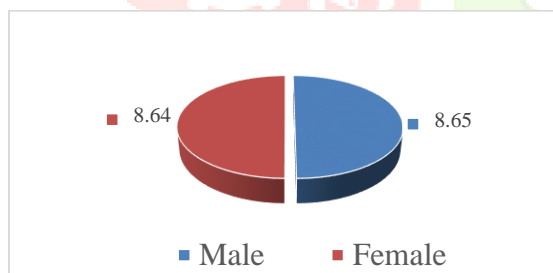
Result and Discussion

A number of factors influence the extent to which people participate in different modes of participation and the ways in which they do so. Though many factors contribute to differing levels of attitude among citizens, one of the most commonly used models is the measurement of socio-economic and demographic factors. For this study, six types of socio-economic and demographic indicators have been chosen seeking to explain patterns in the distribution of sense of political efficacy among the respondents. These are age, gender, education, marital status, occupation and place of residence.

Gender and Political Efficacy

It is generally assumed that being a male or female influences the nature of political behaviour. Women's involvement in politics, as well as their sense of political efficacy differs from those of men. First of all, compared to men, women are commonly regarded as less knowledgeable, less interested, less informed, and less efficacious in politics (Verba et al. 1997). Bone and Ranney (1971), in their study of American Voters, attributed the feelings of inefficacy and political inactivity of women mainly to their accepted family role, who leave the 'rough and dirty' world of politics to their husbands or men folk.

Figure 1: Gender and Level of Political Efficacy



Source: Field Study, 2016

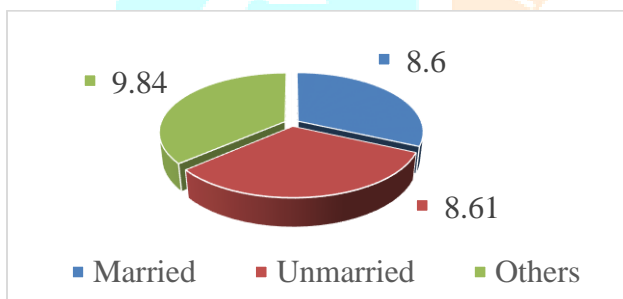
Figure 1 reveals that there is just a slight difference in the level of political efficacy between male and female respondents. The sense of political efficacy was slightly higher among men (8.65%) as compared with that of women (8.64 %). Political efficacy studies done in Indian setting also revealed a similar pattern. Rajnarain in his study of voting behaviour in Uttar Pradesh at the time of Fourth General Elections, found that in all the three constituencies (the urban, rural and reserved), the efficacy score was higher for the male than the female. He also found that female non-voters have lower efficacy than male non-voters (Rajnarain & Pathak, 1972). Thus, it has

been found over and over again that a person who feels efficacious participate at a higher level than those who lack such feeling. The evidence generally comes from numerous national samples taken at different times (Campbell et al. 1971).

Marital Status and Political Efficacy

The marital status variable has also been included to examine its relation with political efficacy. It is generally assumed that married person will usually have high level of efficacy. There are not many studies available which take note of marital status in determining one's political behaviour, except for political participation, where it has been shown that highest participation rates are for married persons (Kapoor, 2007). On such a given context it would be interesting to know the role of marital status in determining one's sense of political efficacy. Figure 2 presents data on marital status and the level of political efficacy.

Figure 2: Marital Status and Level of Political Efficacy



Source: Field Study, 2016

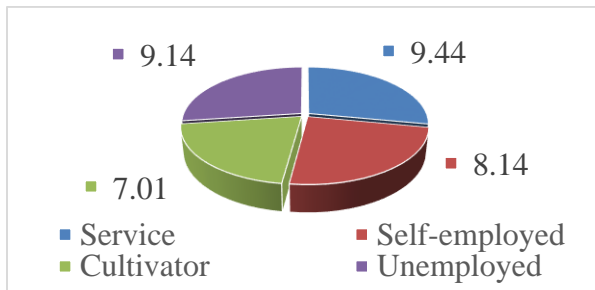
Looking at the result highlighted in Figure 2, it shows that it is different from the generalizations just stated above. Though the category designated as 'others' category have very few respondents, yet they have the highest level of efficacy (9.84%). They are followed by the unmarried respondents (8.61%) and the married respondents (8.60%).

Occupation and Political Efficacy

It is generally believed that a person's occupation also influences his political attitudes. Voting behaviour studies have generally found that people in higher status occupations tend to be more efficacious and active than those in the lower status occupations. Workplace authority might be expected to create a greater feeling of social entitlement, which often translates into political participation (Sobel, 1993). Membership of highly politicized

occupational groups leads to a higher sense of political efficacy and has important consequence on one's political behaviour.

Figure 3: Occupation and Level of Political Efficacy



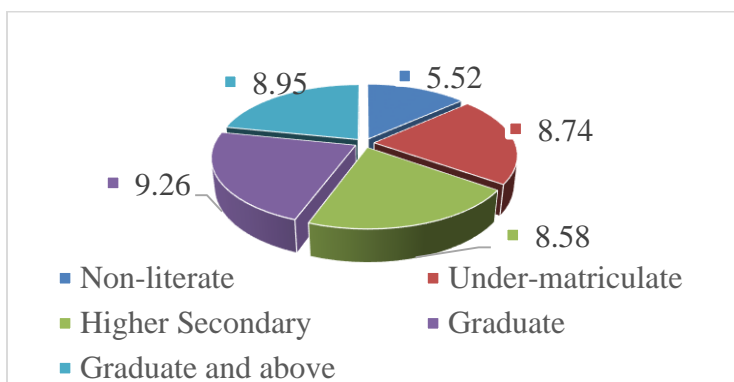
Source: Field Study, 2016

Figure 3 presents data on respondent's occupational status and their level of political efficacy. Among the four occupational categories, service respondents reported to possess the highest (9.44%) level of political efficacy. They are followed by respondents belonging to unemployed category (9.14%), self-employed (8.14%) and cultivators (7.01%) respectively.

Education and Political Efficacy

Education tends to promote higher sense of political efficacy which contributes to feelings of political effectiveness. It is considered as the single most important factor contributing to higher sense of political efficacy. Perhaps, it is generally assumed that education fulfills one of its primary functions in providing tools with which the individual can cope more effectively with the environment. Finkel (1987) observed that people of a higher class and people with a higher education are more likely to vote and feel efficacious though the effect is insignificant.

Figure 4: Education and Level of Political Efficacy



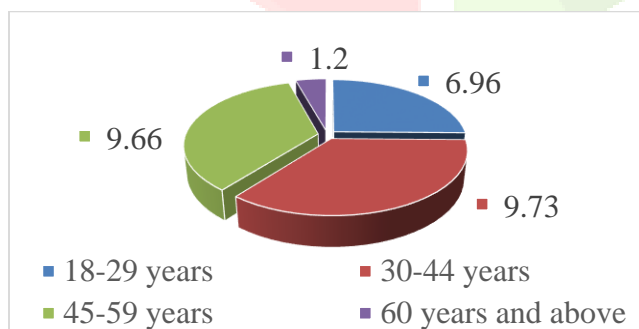
Source: Field Study, 2016

A look into the data presented in Figure 4 shows that respondents' level of education seems to be highly significantly associated with their level of political efficacy. Among the respondents belonging to the five educational categories, the graduate respondents secured the highest level of political efficacy (9.26%). They are followed by respondents belonging to graduate and above (8.95%), under matriculate (8.74%), higher secondary (8.58%) and non-literate (5.52%) respectively. Such a result may be due to the fact that persons with higher levels of education may understand the political world better and recognize ways to influence government authorities.

Age and Political Efficacy

There is a general assumption that like sex, different age groups also exhibit a differential sense of political efficacy, political involvement and political activity. It is expected that age of the respondents will have a positive impact on political efficacy. As people age they become increasingly aware of impact of governmental politics on their welfare and subsequently their personal stakes in politics increase and become more evident. And for which it is granted that the efficacy level of the respondents grows with age (Finkel, 1987). Likewise, it is quite reasonable to expect persons to feel less politically efficacious as they reach old. This becomes evident in post-retirement they become isolated from the social and institutional ties which may provide indirect influence on government authorities (Campbell et al. 1971). When they grow older, people are less likely to believe that they can affect the political process.

Figure 5: Age and Political Efficacy



Source: Field Study, 2016

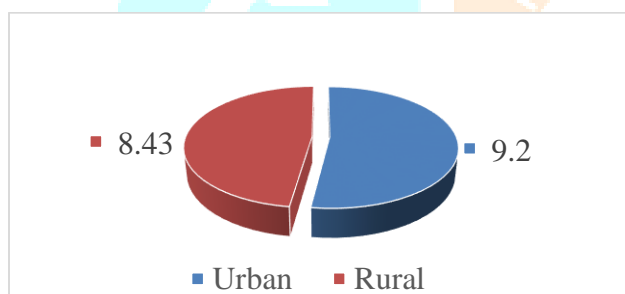
The sample reading of data as presented in Figure 5 above indicate that the highest level of political efficacy is reported from age group of 30-44 years (9.73%). After which there was a slight drop of degree (0.7%) in the age group of 45 – 59 years who scored 9.66 per cent. And they are followed by the respondents belonging to the age

group of 18 – 29 years (6.96%) and 60 years and above (6.64%) respectively. Therefore, the study reveals that the middle age group of respondents has the highest level of political efficacy.

Place of Residence and Political Efficacy

Place of Residence is also likely to play an important role in determining one's sense of political efficacy. It is a fact that person who resides in urban community, the greater is the likelihood of him/her being politically efficacious and participation in politics (Dowse & Hughes, 1975). This may be largely due to easy access to different political resources, such as political institutions, frequent interaction/meeting with the political leaders and easy access to education and mass Medias. Such opportunities are easily available to urban dwellers as compared to the rural dwellers and hence the former are expected to be more political efficacious than the rural inhabitants.

Figure 6: Place of Residence and Level of Political Efficacy



Source: Field Study, 2016

It is evident from the data presented in Figure 6 that urban respondents have a higher level of political efficacy (9.20%) than the rural respondents (8.43%).

In summary, there is evident variation in respondent's responses under all the items analyzed under political efficacy statement. The study shows that patterns of participation have positive and significant effects on the dimensions of efficacy. Fostering positive efficacious attitudes seems to be connected with the building of a stronger pattern of participation in which citizens are involved; becoming more intricately involved and absorbed in the context helps to promote a greater sense of political efficacy. Finding ways to foster patterns of participation is found out to ultimately yield positive feelings of efficacy. This is important given the direct effects we know to exist between efficacy and other types of political behaviors and attitudes (Anderson, 2010).

Interestingly, the study found out that respondents belonging to the category of service, graduate, middle aged persons and urban areas were the highest scorers in the level of political efficacy. From the above results suggest that sense of participation may indirectly affect many of the factors known to be influenced by efficacy. Above all, the existing knowledge on efficacy based on the theory of participatory democracy reveals the link that level of political participation per se enhances political efficacy.

Conclusion

The foregoing analysis provides significant mixed patterns in the degree of political attitude of respondents. Though respondents have participated at a high rate in voting (86.48%), no doubt there are still many issues that require considerable improvement in terms of democratic development in the state. Moreover, the quantity and quality of political participation may be ineffectual if it continues to produce uneven distribution in the sense of political efficacy. In this sense, democracy is better if the voices and interests of the people are well taken into considerable reality. This consideration is projected to manifest while maintaining correct frame of political attitude since it provides some of the most basic building blocks for democratic foundations. As a whole the study indicates that there is a positive link between the level of sense of political efficacy and of political participation of the respondents. And there is also an apparent and substantial correlation with socio-economic factors of the respondents. On a finer note the study suggest that a perceived lack of political efficacy tend to diminish political participation.

Acknowledgments

NA

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The author declare that there is no conflict of interest.

References

- Campbell, Angus, Gurin, Gerald and Miller, Warren, E. (1954). *The Voter Decides*. Evanston: Peterson and Company.
- Wright, J. D. (1975). Does Acquiescence Bias the Index of Political Efficacy? *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 39 (2), 219-226.
- Almond, Gabriel and Verba, Sydney. (1963). *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Verba, Sydney, Burns, Nancy and Schlozman K. L. (1997). Knowing and Caring About Politics: Gender and Political Engagement. *Journal of Politics*, 59, 1051-1072.
- Bone, H. A. and Ranney, A. (1971). *Politics and Voters*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.
- Rajnarain and Pathak, D. N. (1972). Voting Behaviour in Uttar Pradesh- Political Behaviour in Gujarat with reference to the Fourth General Elections. In Dastur et. al. (Eds.). *Studies in the Fourth General Elections*. New Delhi: Allied Publishers. Available from <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/17878/6/chp-5.pdf>.
- Campbell, Angus, Gurin, Gerald and Miller, Warren E. (1971). *The Voter Decides*, Survey Research Centre. University of Michigan: Greenwood Press.
- Kapoor, Priyanka. (2007). *Empowering Scheduled Tribe Women (A Sociological Study of Political Efficacy among Gaddi Women)*. Department of Sociology, R. G. College, Meerut: A Thesis Submitted to Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut.
- Sobel, R. (1993). From occupational involvement to political participation: An exploratory analysis. *Political Behavior*, 1(4), 339-353.
- Finkel, Steven. (1987). The Effects of Participation on Political Efficacy and Political Support: Evidence from a West German Panel. *Journal of Politics*, 49(2), 441-64.
- Dowse, R. E. and Hughes, J. A. (1975). *Political Sociology*. London: John Wiley and Sons.
- Anderson, Mary R. (2010). Community Psychology, Political Efficacy, and Trust. *Political Psychology*, 31(1), 59-84.