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FACTORS INFLUENCING POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN LEBANON: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF PERCEIVED CONGRUENCE

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FACTORS INFLUENCING POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN LEBANON: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF PERCEIVED CONGRUENCE

Abstract

Abstract

This study analyzes the factors that influence political participation. These factors include: political information efficacy, political interest, community engagement, political party affiliation and perceived congruence. Moreover, this study addresses the mediating role of perceived congruence on the relationship between political interest, community engagement and political participation. A quantitative survey method was used and structured questionnaire was administered to a convenience sample of 412 respondents. The findings of this study revealed that political interest, community engagement, and political party affiliation have a positive effect on political participation. In addition, the results indicated that perceived congruence has no direct or mediate effect on political participation. The current study enhances marketing literature to understand political behaviors under unusual political situations. In contrast, this research supports both political parties and governments for better understanding the factors that influence political participation which guide them to fulfill their political marketing objectives and gain citizens' support.

Keywords

Political information efficacy, political interest, community engagement, perceived congruence, political participation

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past years, the authority power had changed from few dictatorial individuals or groups to citizens. Human rights have become more important for the country's image and citizens' rights to select their representative became a priority. Particularly, the new international system forces governmental authorities' through-out the world to protect the freedom of citizens' opinion expression and for democracy application. The existence of individual's political participation in society is a fundamental key for the wellbeing and future of all countries' democracies (Shapland, 2015).

Currently, marketing researchers and practitioners are enticed to analyze the aspects that elucidate why citizens are anticipated to partake in political activities. These dynamics encompass individual information resource (Opdycke et al., 2013); political efficacy (Almond & Verba, 1989; Verba et al., 1995; Armigeon, 2007), community engagement (Vitak et al., 2011); attributes of genetics and personality (Hatemi & Verhulst, 2015), political interest (Oni et al., 2017), perceived congruence (Dolny et al., 2015), political marketing campaign (Anim et al., 2019).

Nowadays, getting people to partake in political movement and increasing their political participation is one of the most crucial problematic issues faced by political parties and governments (Abdollah, 2009). In Lebanon, the problem of individual's political participation has become a major issue due to the decline in the level of political participation (Thomas, 2018). This decline will critically affect the health of democracies (Shapland, 2015). According to Maddah (2021), citizens in Lebanon are frustrated by the existing political parties, because they failed to manage the critical service problems, such as the permanent power outage and the current fuel crises in addition to the existing economic situation. These challenges have made the political participation in Lebanon a significant valuable matter. For Hajjar (2018), citizens in Lebanon have less enthusiasm, interest and emotion toward the current political process. They also have insufficient faith in their elected officials. This knot has motivated myriad researchers to analyze the factors that influence political participation in Lebanon (Saud et al., 2020).

Political participation is the activities that impacting governmental policy, whether by impelling the selection of governmental authorities or by influencing their decisions (Irwin, 2003). Political participation in western democracies includes a variety of actions, such as holding or running for political office, casting their votes, joining political symposium, writing to lawmakers, signing petitions, participating in protests, and becoming a member of political group (Conover, 1995; Putnam, 2000).

After reviewing the literature, the current study closes the gaps and enhances marketing literature by developing a conceptual framework that helps in explaining the concept of political participation. Furthermore, this study is considered one of the few empirical studies in Lebanon, which contributes to better understanding of the concept of political participation through analyzing the role of political information efficacy, political interest, community engagement and political party affiliation. Moreover, this study contributes to a better grasp of political participation factors by examining the mediating role played by the perceived congruence on the relationship between political interest, community engagement and political participation. Besides, the present study adopts the civic voluntarism model, cognitive engagement theory and social cognitive theory to develop a research model. In this context, this study provides empirical support to validate these mentioned theories.

Existing literature on political participation sheds lights on individual's motivation to participate in different political activities such as political crowd-funding (Kusumarani et al., 2019; Baber et al., 2020), voting intention (Alelaimat, 2019), and protest (Lee, 2014). In contrast, few studies have highlighted the political participation as a whole entity which encompasses all diverse activities such as casting votes, protest and demonstration, political campaign, and attending political parties. Furthermore, prior studies were focused on the role of political marketing on political behavior (Anim et al., 2019). Yet, limited research investigates the factors that influence citizens to participate in political movement. Moreover, most of the studies that address people's motivation to participate in political activities online and offline was conducted in western countries (McAtee et al., 2011; Vissers et al., 2014). Still, little research has addressed the influential factors of political participation in developing country such as Lebanon. In addition, most of the previous studies concerning individual resource were focused on perceive information

resource (Kusumarani et al., 2019, Baber, 2020); technological skills (Oni et al., 2017) and financial resource (Oni et al., 2017; Baber 2020). Instead, the individual's political information efficacy was not well understood. Therefore, this study extends the Kusumarani et al., (2019) study by adding political information efficacy, and political party affiliation as predictor variables for explaining political participation in Lebanon.

Likewise, the findings of this study support governments and political parties. *First*, the outcome of this study will provide Lebanese government with a better understanding of the factors that influence political participation which is essential to maintain the health of democracy. *Second*, the findings of this study will help political parties to gain citizens' support by understanding the factors that influence citizens to participate in political activities. Furthermore, the findings of this study could be taken into consideration by politicians during election campaigns through realizing the importance of the factors that motivate citizens to participate in the political process.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Political Participation

Political participation is defined as the citizens' contribution in the political process (Falade, 2014). Political participation is the activity performed by citizens in the political life through which they determine the beneficial public goals of their society and the best methods to achieve these goals (Adelekan, 2010). Akamare (2003) as cited in Falade (2014) described political participation as a political behavior aspect and the role individuals play in political life. It is a direct or indirect voluntary participation by which citizens are engaged in the political process through various activities such as policies formulation, public behavior and political leader election. According to Awolowo et al., (2010), the core of the participation in political movement in any society is to influence authorities' decision making, pursue control and procurement of power.

2.2 Theories in the Context of Political Participation

The conceptual framework of this study is based on three theories: the civic voluntarism model (Verba et al. 1995), cognitive engagement theory (Conroy et al., 2012) and social cognitive learning theory (Bandura, 1986). *First*, the civic voluntarism model (CVM) consists of three factors: resources, motivation, and network of recruitment. This model recognizes that individuals' resources are the most powerful factor that explains why citizens participate in political or civic movement. Resources include several types such as: time, financial, information and skills. Each type of resource has a diverse impact on different forms of political participation. Motivation in this theory is acknowledged as psychological engagement. In addition, it's related to individuals' political interest and attitude towards political process, which forces them to perform a political behavior. Network of recruitment refers to the extent where people join political activities in a social group. The civic voluntarism model is crucial in explaining political participation. Yet, it's not necessary that all these factors are essential for explaining political participation (Kim et al., 2014). This study adopts this theory to explain the relationship between political information efficacy (resource), political interest (motives), community engagement (network of recruitment) and political participation.

Second, the theory of cognitive engagement indicates that the participation in political movement is mainly contingent on the level of individual's education and knowledge. This theory claims that individuals with greater political knowledge would participate more than others in political activities. Besides, this theory states that as individuals' education increases in the society, their political knowledge level increases too (Halpern et al., 2017) cited in Khan et al., (2019). This study employs this theory to explain the relationship between the individual's level of political information efficacy and political participation.

Third, cognitive social learning theory offers a framework to describe how personal, environmental and behavioral factors affect each other (Bandura, 1986). In political context, individuals' political interest and personality, in addition to the political environment will influence individuals' political behavior. Moreover, this theory states that an individual's

behavior is acquired through observing and imitating others through social interactions. This study utilizes this theory to explain the relationship between political interest and individuals' community engagement on political participation.

2.3. The Relationship between Political Information Efficacy and Political Participation

Political information efficacy is defined as the individuals' confidence and faith towards their government which affects their civic participation based on their trust level of understanding political affairs and their influence on political process (Opdycke et al., 2013). Researchers stated two types of political information efficacy: external and internal efficacy. Pinkleton et al., (2001) argued that individuals' political efficacy will be enhanced when the media establishes knowledge and information addressing the public and civic issues faced. Likewise, citizen's efficacy is influenced by the extent of political knowledge they have regarding the political activities (Kaid et al., 2007). These scholars argued that if voters feel less confident about their political information, they are less likely to elect or participate in political life. Therefore, the current study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1. *There is positive relationship between political information efficacy and political participation in Lebanon.*

2.4. The Relationship between Political Interest and Political Participation

Political interest is described as one of the substantial motivational factors which are related to performing political behavior (Reichert, 2018). Political interest has an important impact on elections and political involvement (Kusumurani et al., 2019). According to Verba et al., (1995), political interest is described as the level of political discussion which decides whether individuals will participate in political movement or not. Previous studies confirm that the extent of individuals' political interest determines their online and offline political participation (Abdu et al., 2016; Oni et al., 2017; Kusumurani et al., 2019; Baber, 2020). Oni et al. (2017) found that the individuals' intentions to use e-democracy are influenced by their level of political interest. Besides, Abdu et al. (2016) argued that youth's online political participation through Facebook application is influenced by political interest. Thus, based on the above review, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H2. *There is positive relationship between political interest and political participation in Lebanon.*

2.5. The Relationship between Political Interest and Perceived Congruence

Perceived congruence is defined as the fact about how well-matched entities are (Maille et al., 2011). In essence, congruence in marketing research is referred to as identical, fit, matching up, similarity and consistency between two or more objects. Burke et al., (2007) defined perceived congruence as the degree of matching values between relationships. Dolný et al., (2015) investigated the congruence level within the fifteen European countries between politicians and voters. They revealed that congruence with politicians was high in individuals with extreme political interest. The notion is that people who are interested in political process are better able to grasp their own preferences as well as the preferences of candidates (Kusumurani et al., 2019). Furthermore, Kusumurani et al., (2019) revealed that political interest influence perceived congruence. Therefore, according to the mentioned review, the current study posits the following hypothesis:

H3. *There is positive relationship between political interest and perceived congruence in Lebanon.*

2.6. The Relationship between Community Engagement and Perceived Congruence

Online community engagement is the passion that individuals have towards their community because they believe it is a challenging, important, and successful action (Ray et al., 2014). People that are actively involved in the community are engaging in a form of selective exposure, which is the propensity for a person to only take in information that is advantageous to their inclination. The fact that they have the same interests as other members is one of the reasons people join online communities (Ridings et al., 2004).

Besides, homogeneous citizens in political context are usually surrounded by group of individuals that share political views and attitudes. According to Eveland et al. (2009), the more diversified the political conversation, the fewer individuals would want to participate in political movement. Kusumurani et al., (2019) found that community engagement affect individuals perceived congruence. Thus, this study proposed the following hypothesis:

H4. *There is positive relationship between community engagement and perceived congruence in Lebanon.*

2.7. The Relationship between Community Engagement and Political Participation

Community engagement is defined as the interactions between individuals' that have common interests and attitudes (Shen et al., 2010). It helps individuals to accept, refuse, produce, use and publicize political information (Weeks et al., 2013). Gimpel et al., (2006) consider that community engagement is one of the powerful aspects that drive individuals to partake in political life. Kim et al (2016) stated that contact with common and similar minded perceptions ominously impact the online participation activities of active blog users. According to McAtee et al., (2011) social network sites could play a critical role in political participation processes. Extant studies revealed that community engagement has a positive effect on individuals' intentions to participate in political crowd-funding as a form of political participation (Kusumurani et al., 2019; Baber 2020). According to the mentioned review, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H5. *There is positive relationship between community engagement and political participation in Lebanon.*

2.8. The Relationship between Political Party Affiliation and Political Participation

Political party affiliation is defined as individual's association with a political party in which one's ideas and beliefs coincide and are aligned (Brown, 2019). Political party affiliation is more than just an ideology; it's also an emotional response that's based on a primal feeling of partisan identity, which is attained very early in life and sustained throughout the whole life cycle (Iyengar et al., 2012). Political party affiliation is a powerful predictor of a variety of political actions and political involvement, including political engagement, leader selection, interest, and ideology (Milner, 2019). Therefore, this study posits the following hypothesis:

H6. *There is positive relationship between political affiliation and political participation in Lebanon.*

2.9. The Relationship between Perceived Congruence and Political Participation

Congruence in political context refers to how closely voters' choices match those of their representatives or governmental policies (Dolný et al., 2015). Earlier studies explained different categories of congruence. One of these categories refers to relationship congruence that was described by Real-Dato, (2017), as a form of one to many relationships and many to many relationships. The congruence relationship between supporters and their representatives is categorized as many to one relationship which is one of the substantial areas in political context (Real-Dato, 2017). Kusumurani et al., (2019) discovered that individuals' perceived congruence has a positive impact on the intentions to participate in political crowd-funding. Thus, this study proposed the following hypothesis:

H7. *There is positive relationship between perceived congruence and political participation in Lebanon.*

2.10. The Mediate Effect of Perceived Congruence

Various studies revealed that perceived congruence might influence individuals' political behaviors such as voting turnout (Reher, 2014), support of political campaigns (Ensley, 2009), improved democracy satisfaction (Reher, 2015), political candidates support (Badas et al., 2018), and political crowd funding (Aaker et al., 2009). Kusumurani et al. (2019) indicated that people with stronger congruence with political candidates are more inclined to vote.

The explanation behind this conclusion is that individuals who view that the political candidate does not embody their ideals are more likely to regard the political process and election outcome as dull and insignificant. Based to my knowledge, this is the first study investigating the mediate effect of perceived congruence between the relationship of political interest, community engagement and political participation. Thus, the current study contributes to the literature by addressing the mediating impact of perceived congruence. Therefore, the current study posits the following hypothesis:

H8 a. *Perceived congruence mediates the relationship between political interest and political participation in Lebanon.*

H8 b. *Perceived congruence mediates the relationship between community engagement and political participation in Lebanon.*

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study focuses on political participation; the conceptual framework was developed based on a previous study conducted by Kusumurani et al., (2019). Moreover, the researcher proposed this framework by adding further factors, as shown in Fig. 1.

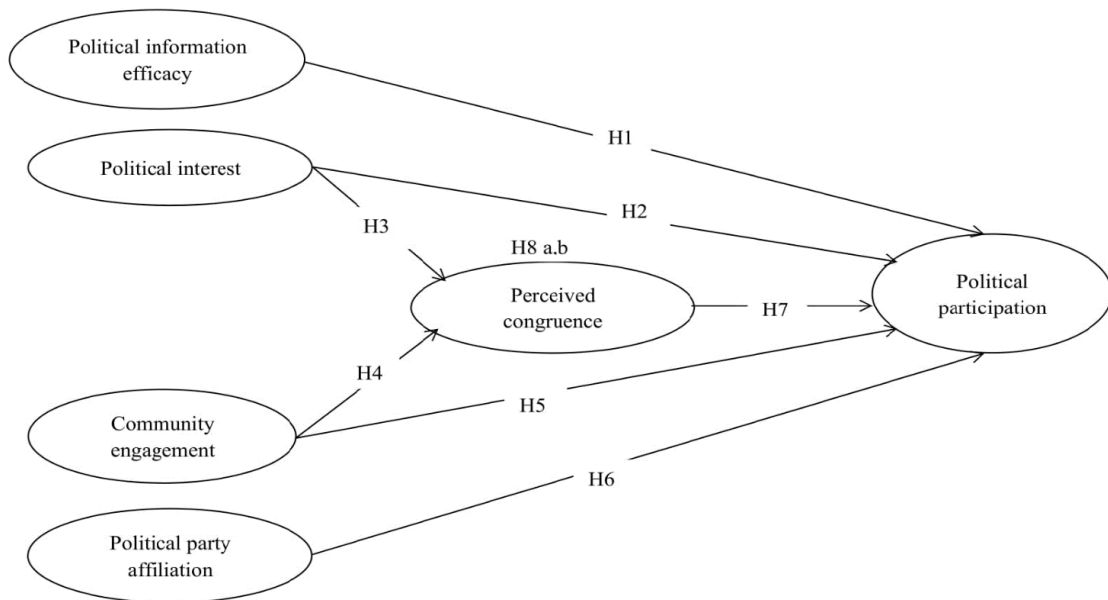


Fig.1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Kusumurani et al., (2019) and adjusted by the researchers

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design and Sampling

This study investigates the factors that affect political participation in Lebanese context, these factors include: “political information efficacy, political interest, community engagement, political party affiliation and perceived congruence”. To achieve the current research objectives, and empirically analyzes the issue of the participation in political movements, data were collected from Lebanese respondents, during the time between 26-4-2022 and 10-6-2022 which included the time of the parliamentary election in Lebanon, which triggered the participation interest in political context. Based on online and offline data collection method, structured questionnaires were distributed with a convenience sample of 800 respondents. The online data collection method facilitates obtaining a big number of respondents. Using social media platforms including Email, WhatsApp, and Messenger, the link of survey was administered to the potential respondents.

4.2 Measurement Instrument

The research measurement instrument scale was adapted from previous studies (Table 1) based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree to strongly agree”. First of all, this instrument was distributed to several experts to take their opinion about its validity, then the research instrument scales was modified based on their recommendations. The political information efficacy measure was based on three items and adapted from Kaid et al., (2007). The four measurement items for the political interest were adapted from Oni et al. (2017). Community engagement measure was based on five measures and adapted from Kim et al. (2012). Political party affiliation measure was based on five items from Haste et al., (2006). In addition, perceived congruence measure was based on five items from Weinstein et al. (2011). Lastly, the five measurement items for the political participation measure were adapted from Van Deth (2015).

Table 1: Constructs and items

Constructs	Items	Source
Political information efficacy	I consider myself well-qualified to participate in politics	(Kaid et al.,2007)
	I think that I am better informed about politics and government than most	
	I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country.	
Political interest	I love to discuss political issues with friends/people around me.	Oni et al. (2017)
	I like to give opinions on political issues.	
	I like to participate in the discussion of political issues.	
	I am generally interested in political issues.	
Community engagement	Participating in an online community is important to me.	Kim et al. (2012)
	Participating in the online community means a lot to me.	
	I am interested in participating in the online community.	
	I spend a lot of time and effort in participating in an online community	
	Participating in the online community can help me to express who I am since others can understand what I am interested in.	
Political party affiliations	I know the process of municipal and parliamentary elections	Haste et al., (2006)
	I like to join a certain political party in the future	
	I work actively/passively for a political party	
	I vote for only one political party always	
	I am interested in the activities of one political party	
Perceived congruence	I can identify myself with one of the political candidates.	Weinstein et al. (2011)
	I share the same value with one of the political parties.	
	I have the same live mission with one of the political parties.	
	I really share a common interest with any of the parties.	
	One of the political parties and I have things in common.	
Political participation	I have participated in a political demonstration organized by some political parties in Lebanon	Van Deth (2015)
	I have posted or shared a photo/video/link about some political parties in Lebanon on social media at least once	
	I have contributed to a political discussion about some political parties in Lebanon at least once	
	I have replied a tweet or a post about some political parties in Lebanon on social media at least once	
	I have joined or left a political group for some political parties in Lebanon	

5. DATA ANALYSIS

The demographic information of the respondents including their age, gender, marital status, income and educational level was captured for additional analysis. The descriptive statistics of respondent's demographic information were conducted by using the frequency analysis in SPSS. In addition, multiple linear regression analysis was chosen to examine the gathered data as well as testing the research hypotheses. The data was analyzed using the IBM SPSS version 26 program.

Table 2: Demographic profile of respondents (N=412)

Attribute	Value	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	176	42.7
	Female	236	57.3
Age	18- 25 years	114	27.7
	26-35 years	144	35.0
	36-45 years	120	29.1
	46-65 years	30	7.3
	> 65 years	4	1.0
Education Level	Primary school	8	1.9
	Secondary school	92	22.3
	Bachelor degree	198	48.1
	Diploma	50	12.1
	Master degree	28	6.8
	PhD or DBA	36	8.7
Marital status	Single	160	38.8
	Married	230	55.8
	Divorced	22	5.3
	Widow	0	0
Income	Less than 100\$	132	32.0
	Between 100\$-300\$	110	26.7
	Between 300\$-500\$	96	23.3
	Between 500\$-1000\$	16	3.9
	Between 1000\$-5000\$	48	11.7
	Above 5000\$	10	2.4

A total of 412 consumers out of 800 successfully completed the questionnaire, accounting for 51.5 percent of the overall population. Table 2 illustrates the results of descriptive statistics of consumer demographic information, including 57.3 % of female respondents and 42.7 % of male respondents in this survey. Single respondents made up 52.9 percent of the total, with married respondents accounting for 38.8 percent of the total. The majority of respondents were between the ages of 36 and 45 (35%), followed by those between the ages of 18 and 25 (29.1%), and those between the ages of 18 and 25 (27.7 %), then the ages between 46 and 65 (7.3 %), and those above the age 65 (1%). Respondents with a bachelor's degree accounted for 48.1% which took the majority of respondents in the study, followed by those with secondary school (22.3 %) and those with certificate/diploma (12.1%). The majority of respondent's income levels were between \$100 and \$300 and less than \$100, accounting for 58.7%.

5.1 Measurement model evaluation

This study used Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin, Cronbach's alpha, factor loading, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted for all constructs to evaluate the measuring model's outcomes.

Table 3: Result of measurement model.

Latent Variable	Latent items	Factor loading	N	Cronbach Alpha	AVE	CR
Political information efficacy	PIE-1	0.765	3	0.896	0.571094	0.799572
	PIE-2	0.783				
	PIE-3	0.718				
Political interest	PI-1	0.821	4	0.962	0.669238	0.889996
	PI-2	0.815				
	PI-3	0.839				
	PI-4	0.797				
Community engagement	CE-1	0.660	5	0.953	0.488525	0.826581
	CE-2	0.715				
	CE-3	0.749				
	CE-4	0.683				
	CE-5	0.684				
Political party affiliation	PPA-1	0.637	5	0.873	0.491666	0.828279
	PPA-2	0.699				
	PPA-3	0.742				
	PPA-4	0.699				
	PPA-5	0.725				
Perceive congruence	PG-1	0.668	5	0.939	0.522804	0.845348
	PG-2	0.744				
	PG-3	0.715				
	PG-4	0.768				
	PG-5	0.716				
Political participation	PP-1	0.772	5	0.937	0.594026	0.879638
	PP-2	0.722				
	PP-3	0.79				
	PP-4	0.776				
	PP-5	0.791				
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin	0.919					

In order to determine the sampling adequacy of data, The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) was measured. The value of (KMO) was 0.919 which is marvellous as stated by (Kaiser, 1974). In order to determine the internal consistency of the variables, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values (Table 3) was indicated. The Cronbach's alpha and composite reliable values of all the variables were larger than 0.799 and 0.962, respectively, which are higher than Hair et al (2017) recommended threshold value of 0.7. Furthermore, this study tested the average variance extracted values (AVE) for all of the constructs and the results show that AVE ranged from 0.488 to 0.66 where the convergent validity of all construct is

still adequate because the composite reliability is higher than 0.6 as proposed by (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Therefore, the findings guarantee the study's constructs' consistency, reliability, and convergent validity.

5.2 Hypotheses testing, and results

This study investigates the relationship between political information efficacy, political interest, community engagement, political party affiliation, perceived congruence and political participation in Lebanon. Moreover, this study explored the mediate impact of perceived congruence among the explored variables: political interest, community engagement and political participation. To assess the relationship between the variables and to test the proposed hypotheses, this study employs the regression analysis to measure how the mentioned variables are responsible for explaining political participation in Lebanon. The direct and indirect relationships among the variables also provided in Table 4. The multiple linear regression estimates that community engagement, political interest, and political party affiliation influences political participation. Likewise, the results indicate that perceived congruence has no mediate effect on the relation of political interest, community engagement and political participation.

Table 4: Structural relationships and hypotheses testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Std Beta	S.E.	t-values	P	Results
H1	PIE→PP	.062	.063	1.179	.239	Not supported
H2	PI→PP	.133	.049	2.525	.012	supported
H3	PI→PC	.575	.039	12.359	.000	supported
H4	CE→PC	.099	.049	2.118	.035	Not supported
H5	CE→PP	.284	.046	7.310	.000	supported
H6	PPA→PP	.533	.059	10.815	.000	supported
H7	PC →PP	-.070	.052	-1.486	.138	Not supported

P-value \leq 0.05

PIE: political information efficacy

PP: Political participation

PI: political interest

CE: community engagement

PPA: political party affiliation

The results indicate that political information efficacy (β 0.062, p 0.239) has no direct relationship with political participation; therefore, H1 is not supported. H2 is supported as political interest has a positive effect on political participation (β 0.133, p 0.012). H3 is also supported as perceived interest has a positive effect on perceived congruence (β 0.575, p 0.000). In contrast, community engagement has no direct relationship with perceived congruence (β 0.099, p 0.035); therefore, H4 is not supported. Community engagement has a positive relationship with political participation (β 0.284, p 0.000); thus H5 is supported. The political party affiliation has also a positive relationship with political participation (β 0.533, p 0.000); therefore H6 is supported. Finally, the results indicate that perceived congruence (β -0.070, p 0.138) has a no direct effect on political participation. Thus, H7 is not supported.

The final two hypotheses of this study predicted that the perceived congruence might mediate the relationship between the political interest, community engagement and political participation. The mediation analysis was established based in Baron & Kenny (1986) steps for mediation analysis. These steps focus on assessing the effect of predictor's variables and mediate variable on criterion variable, and investigating the effect of predictor's variable on the mediate variable. Figure 2 illustrates that if there is positive relationship between the predictor variable (X) and the mediate variable (M) with a positive relationship between the mediate variable (M) and the criterion variable (Y) then the result indicate that the mediate variable (M) partially mediate the relationship between the predictor variable (X) and the

criterion variable (Y). Besides, if the result revealed that there is no effect of the predictor variable on the criterion variable without the influence of mediate variable then the mediate variable is fully mediate the relationship between the predictor variable and criterion variable. In contrast, if there is no relationship between the mediate variable and the criterion variable then the result show no mediation.

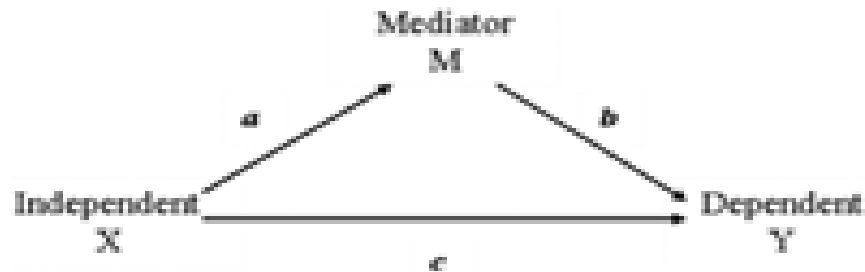


Fig.2: A Three-Variable Nonrecursive Causal Model
Source: Baron & Kenny (1986)

As indicated in Table 4, the direct effect of political interest on perceived congruence and political participation are supported. Similarly, community engagement has positive relationship with political participation while there no direct relationship between community engagement and perceived congruence. In essence, political interest influences both perceived congruence and political participation. Besides, as indicated in Table 6, the effect of perceived congruence on political participation was not significant ($\beta -0.070$, $p = 0.138$). This means that perceived congruence not mediate the relationship between neither political interest nor community engagement, and political participation. Thus, H8a and H8b are rejected.

6. DISCUSSION

This study is conducted to investigate the relationship among political information efficacy, political interest, community engagement, political party affiliation, perceived congruence and political participation. Further, this study addresses the mediating effect of perceived congruence between the relationship of political interest, community engagement, and political participation. The considerable direct and indirect relations among the investigated variables confirm previous researchers' arguments that political interest, community engagement and political party affiliation are critical precursors to political participation (Oni et al., 2017; Kusumurani et al., 2019, Baber ., 2020).

The findings of this study state that political information efficacy has no effect on political participation. This finding opposes previous studies that found a positive relationship between political information efficacy and political participation (Kaid et al., 2007; Opdycke et al., 2013). In this context, the researchers consider that political information efficacy is important for explaining political participation, but in case of Lebanon, citizens might have political information efficacy, yet they prefer not to participate in political movement due to the lack of trust in sectarian system that exists in Lebanon, which selects the authorities based on their religious. The findings also indicate that political interest influences political participation, the positive relationship between political interest and political participation supports previous studies which found that political interest influences political participation (Abdu et al., 2016; Brady et al., 1995; Kusumurani et al., 2019). The researchers consider that the positive relationship between political interest and political participation might be related to the powerful motive function of political interest in explaining political behavior. In addition, individuals who have interest in political movement are generally active.

Besides, the finding of this study stated that there is a positive relationship between political interest and perceived congruence; this finding is consistent with previous studies that found a positive relationship between political interest and perceived congruence (Dolný & Baboš 2015; Kusumurani et al., 2019). The researchers assume that when individuals have low political interest, they focus on the negative aspect of political candidates and they will not share the same mission and value with them. In contrast, the finding revealed a negative relationship between community engagement and perceived congruence; this finding opposes with previous studies that found a positive relationship between community engagement and perceived congruence (Huckfeldt et al., 2004; Kusumurani et al., 2019). The researchers consider that the negative relationship between community engagement and perceived congruence might be related to the effect of sharing a negative word of mouth towards the current political situation and the existing political candidates on social groups. Likewise, the finding of this study revealed a positive relationship between community engagement and political participation. This finding supports other studies by (Grant et al., 2002; Kim et al., 2016; Kusumurani et al., 2019) that found a positive relationship between community engagement and political participation. The researchers suggest that the positive relationship between community engagement and political participation might be related to the exposure of like-minded perspective and its effect on political activities. Similarly, enjoying working with others drives sharing same activities and behaviors.

In addition, the finding of the present study revealed a positive relationship between political party affiliation and political participation. This finding is in line with previous study by Kusumurani et al., (2019) that found a positive relationship between political party affiliation and political participation. The researchers consider that the positive relationship between political party affiliation and political participation is not surprising especially when individuals are following the activities of some political parties; they will actively or passively participate in the political movements organized by these political parties. This finding opposes previous study by Baber (2020) that found a negative relationship between political party affiliation and intention to participate in political crowd-funding which is a form of political participation. Finally, the finding of this study stated that there's no relationship between perceived congruence and political participation. This finding opposes previous study by Kusumurani et al., (2019) and Reher (2014) that found a positive relationship between perceived congruence and political participation. The researchers deliberate that the participation in political movement in Lebanon was to change the current political situation. Thus, even if citizens had not shared the same common or values with any of the political parties, they could participate in political activities.

7- IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study have a number of ramifications. *First*, the empirical research of political behavior is still lacking. Therefore, this study enhances political marketing literature to understand consumers' behaviors in the political context. *In addition*, the current study is based on civic voluntarism model, cognitive engagement theory and cognitive social learning theory. In this context, the findings of this study support the two factors of civic voluntarism model Verba et al. (1995) and reject one. More, specifically, individual's political participation is a result of motivation (political interest) and network of recruitment (community engagement) but is not a result of individuals' resource (political information efficacy).

Moreover, the findings of this study oppose the cognitive engagement theory (Conroy et al., 2012) that pointed out that citizens with high political knowledge would participate in political life more than others. Further, the study's findings confirm Bandura (1986) cognitive social learning theory, which states that the concept of political participation depends mainly on imitation and observing others through community engagement and social interaction.

Finally, this study expanded previous literature that investigated various factors on political participation (Oni et al., 2017; Kusumurani et al., 2019). This study adds to this body of literature by identifying the political information efficacy and political party affiliation as predictors for explaining political participation in Lebanon.

7.2 Practical Implications

The findings of this study are beneficial for both political parties and governments. The findings revealed that political participation in Lebanon is related to the level of individuals' political interest, community engagement and political party affiliation. *First of all*, this research will aid governments to comprehend the factors that influence political participation in order to plan for the required actions to enhance political participation which is essential for the health of democracy. Further, the findings will help the political parties in Lebanon to understand the factors that affect individuals' participation in political movement in order to gain their support.

In addition, the findings stated that political party affiliation, political interest and community engagement played an influential role on political participation. In order for political parties to maximize individuals' affiliation, political interest and community engagement which influence their participation in political movement, political parties should make good communication strategies with citizens and understand their needs and involve them in the parties' decision making. Moreover, political parties are recommended to join citizens in a social group and provide political conservation around the existing political issues.

Finally, the current research suggests that political parties may face the problem of decline in political participation by giving constructive information for citizens to explain to them the importance of their participation in political movement and its crucial effect in supporting the democracy. Further, political parties and governments are suggested to provide social interaction with citizens through effective media to explain for them the process of political system, and the current issues faced in the country and listen to their grievance and problems in order to enhance citizens' political interest which affects political participation.

7.3 Limitations and Future Research

Like any research, this study is not free of limitations. *First*, the current study is conducted in Lebanon city which limits the scope of the research. The replication of the research framework in another country is important for the findings generalizability. *Second*, this study adopted convenience sampling technique that undermines its generalizability. Future research could employ another sampling technique to further analyze the relationship between the variables.

Third, data was gathered during unusual economic circumstances. Thus, individuals perception toward any state related to political situation could be changed. Future studies might focus on any additional mediating or moderating variables that can have a major impact on the link between these variables. *Fourth*, this study investigates the impact of political information efficacy, political interest, community engagement, political party affiliation on political participation. However, other variables may contribute in explaining political participation such as religion, political satisfaction, political trust, social norms, and personality traits. Thus, future research should study these factors that affect political participation.

Finally, this study was built based on three theories: civic voluntarism model, cognitive engagement theory and social cognitive learning theory. Future research is recommended to highlight other theories that might explain political participation such as social capital theory to explain the role of social media on political participation. These limitations should be taken into consideration for future research in order to cover any factor that could affect political participation.

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