

HOW TO MEASURE PERCEIVED POLITICAL EFFICACY? A THREE-COMPONENT SCALE

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to develop and examine a scale that measures three components of perceived political efficacy: personal, collective and external. Twelve statements were formulated based on four abilities: 1) ability to influence the enactment of new laws and political decisions, 2) ability to facilitate the election of a political leader, 3) ability to demand that existing laws and political decisions be observed and 4) ability to express any political opinions freely and publicly. Data was collected online via social media from Russian, Kazakh and Ukrainian samples (N = 2,184) between 2015 and 2017. The scale's structural validity was tested using confirmatory factor analysis. Results showed that with some modification the short version of the proposed model exhibits good fit indexes across all samples. Configural, metric and scalar invariance of the short version of the Perceived Political Efficacy Scale was also successfully tested. Additionally, differences in political efficacy between certain age groups were discovered, as well as between countries. Namely, people in the 30+ age bracket exhibited higher political efficacy than those in the 18–19 age bracket. Ukrainian respondents showed significantly higher personal and collective efficacy when compared to Russian and Kazakh respondents. Kazakh respondents exhibited the highest level of external efficacy.

Keywords: internal political efficacy, external political efficacy, personal political efficacy, collective political efficacy, political self-efficacy, scale.

Political behavior is among the most topical subjects in modern political psychology. In recent years the question of what exactly drives groups and individuals to engage forms of political activity has become increasingly important as the world has witnessed several waves of revolutions, as well as unexpected shifts in voting behavior. The rise and spread of new forms and channels of political engagement through social media dictates the need for a better understanding of the underlying mechanisms of political behavior.

While many factors might contribute to a person's eventual political behavior, it is widely accepted that political efficacy plays one of the major roles in that process. In psychology, the general concept of self-efficacy was first described by A. Bandura (Bandura, 1977, 1997) as a person's evaluation of their ability to reach desired outcomes. Bandura suggested that self-efficacy is a major factor that predicts the

behavior of an individual who has previously encountered problems in the process of working towards a particular goal.

More importantly, Bandura distinguished between general and specific self-efficacy. While general self-efficacy describes a person's evaluation of their ability to achieve desired goals in general, specific self-efficacy refers to particular areas of one's life. Political efficacy is usually considered to be one of those specific types and is often defined as an individual's perceived ability to influence political processes (Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954).

Over time, researchers developed two major distinctions between aspects of political efficacy. Firstly, there is the distinction between internal and external political efficacy. Internal efficacy is a person's perception of their or their group's abilities. External efficacy represents an individual's evaluation of how responsive the political system is – how willing the government is to listen and react to the citizens' demands and opinions (Niemi, Craig, & Mattei, 1991; Madsen, 1987; Schulz, 2005).

Secondly, researchers began to distinguish between personal and collective (group) efficacy. While the former described a person's perceived ability to influence political processes by themselves, the latter focused on a person's evaluation of such ability of their group (Bandura, 1997; Klandermans, 1984; van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2010). Thus, the modern approach to political efficacy distinguishes between three components: internal personal efficacy, internal collective efficacy and external efficacy. However, few studies take all three components into account.

The level of political efficacy is influenced by both socio-demographic and psychological factors. Most studies usually focus on internal efficacy. They showed that male, middle-aged and voters with higher education all exhibit a higher level of political efficacy than female, young and older voters, as well as those with less education (Caprara & Vecchione, 2017). Additionally, internal personal political efficacy has been shown to correlate positively with three of the Big Five – energy/extraversion, conscientiousness and openness (Ibid.).

At the same time collective efficacy is positively predicted by ingroup identification in the case of tight-knit groups of political activists and the outcomes of collective actions (van Zomeren, Leach, & Spears, 2010; van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). It should be noted that these principles may not apply to other cases of collective efficacy, depending on the scope and definition of the in-group. External efficacy is also predicted by the experience of attempting to communicate with political authorities through established institutions (Heiss & Matthes, 2016; Lee, 2006).

The current body of work on political behavior leaves little room for doubt that political efficacy is a major factor that predicts people's willingness to engage in various forms of behavior, from voting to street action (Acock, Clarke, & Stewart, 1985; Harder & Krosnick, 2008; Blackwood & Louis, 2012; Cakal, Hewstone, Schwär, & Heath, 2011; Cohen-Chen, Halperin, Porat, & Bar-Tal, 2014; Mannarini, Roccato, Fedi, & Rovere, 2009; Mummendey, Kessler, Klink, & Mielke, 1999; Rees & Bamberg, 2014; Tausch & Becker, 2013; van Zomeren, Leach, &

Spears, 2010; van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008; van Zomeren, Saguy, & Schellhaas, 2012; Zimmerman, 1989; Klandermans, 2008).

The link between efficacy and voting behavior is both apparent and more nuanced than initially suspected. For example, a person's initial willingness to vote has been shown to depend on their external political efficacy, i.e. their faith in the election institution. At the same time, the act of voting increases a person's personal internal efficacy, and in subsequent elections internal efficacy also becomes a factor influencing the odds of voting (Harder & Krosnick, 2008).

Political efficacy is also increasingly linked to collective action. Klandermans lists political efficacy among his five key factors that contribute to impactful protest movements, alongside ethnic and national identification, grievances, negative emotions and participation in various institutions of civil society (Klandermans, 2008). Notably, this approach uses a very particular understanding of collective efficacy in the context of political interest groups and may not be applicable when collective efficacy is measured in the context of bigger groups, such as ethnic groups or nations.

Measuring political efficacy. Over the years there have emerged several approaches to measuring political efficacy. Most methods use a number of statements and ask respondents to evaluate their agreement or disagreement with them on a Likert scale. Even still, there are a number of notable differences between the most well-known surveys.

First and foremost, various surveys differ in which political efficacy components they measure. Some surveys only measure personal efficacy (Caprara, Vecchione, Capanna, & Mebane, 2009; Morrell, 2005; Schulz, 2005), while others examine collective efficacy (Klandermans, 1984). Similarly, some methods only measure internal efficacy (Caprara et al., 2009; Morrell, 2005), while others include external efficacy.

Secondly, the methods differ based on their authors' understanding of internal efficacy. For example, several surveys measure internal political efficacy through items that are more suited to measuring a person's political awareness and understanding of politics. A good example of such an approach would be the scale developed by Morrell (2005) and Schulz (2005).

For instance, the Schulz scale uses items such as "I am able to understand most political issues easily" and "I know more about politics than most people of my age" to measure internal efficacy, which doesn't completely correspond with the understanding of personal efficacy as a person's perceived ability to influence political processes. Additionally, the Schulz scale also omits items measuring collective internal efficacy. Despite that fact, Schulz's survey is often used in many modern studies that aim to measure political efficacy (Arens & Watermann, 2017).

Other scales, however, employ an understanding of political efficacy as one's perceived ability to commit certain political acts, which better corresponds with the classic definitions of the term. The Caprara scale (Caprara et al., 2009), for example, includes ten items which cover a broad spectrum of political actions that have to do with elections: the ability to express one's political opinions, conduct campaigns in support of one's preferred candidate, facilitating the election of one's

preferred candidate, raising funds to support one's candidate or party, participating in election monitoring, keeping elected officials accountable, etc.

Thirdly, surveys vary by the degree of specialization. An example of a highly specialized scale would be the survey developed by K. Kenski and N. Stroud that specifically addressed efficacy in the context of a presidential election (Kenski & Stroud, 2006). This and similar surveys are limited to a very small number of statements, which, in our opinion, provides for a limited understanding of actual political efficacy.

On the other hand, both the Caprara and the Schulz scales described above are good examples of more generalized studies that shows a complex approach to measuring efficacy.

In summary, an analysis of the existing methods demonstrates a clear lack of a comprehensive scale that would include all three components of political efficacy.

The goal of this study is to develop a scale that simultaneously measures internal political efficacy, both personal and collective, as well as external efficacy, and examine its structural validity. Whereas we aim to attempt to create a scale that can be applied universally, the study was conducted in several different countries.

Study

Participants

Respondents from three countries (Russia, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine) took part in the current research from 2015 to 2017. The data was collected online. The survey was created and hosted via Google Forms and distributed through social media, namely, Facebook and VKontakte. The survey fully guaranteed respondents' anonymity, the participants took part in the study on a voluntary basis.

Total sample size was 2,184 respondents, which included four subsamples:¹

- the Russian sample consisted of 1,370 respondents (51.2% men and 48.8% women), aged 18 to 90 years old ($M = 31.07$; $SD = 12.65$);
- the Kazakh sample consisted of 219 respondents (32.4% men and 67.6% women), aged 18 to 65 years old ($M = 28.37$; $SD = 10.69$);
- the first Ukrainian sample consisted of 331 respondents (53.2% men and 46.8% women), aged 18 to 68 years old ($M = 38.12$; $SD = 11.54$);
- the second Ukrainian sample consisted of 264 respondents version (37.1% men and 62.9% women), aged 18 to 64 years old ($M = 30.71$; $SD = 10.78$).

For the Russian, Kazakh and first Ukrainian samples the survey was conducted in Russian. The Russian language is the official state language in Russia and the second official language in Kazakhstan. In Ukraine, at least 83% of citizens have previously preferred Russian in a study conducted by Gallup (Gradirovski & Esipova, 2008). However, due to the rising tension between Russia and Ukraine in the context of the Crimean situation and the Donbass conflict, we chose to provide

¹ The data was collected during a study conducted in collaboration with A. Samekin and I. Yagiyayev.

a Ukrainian-language option of the questionnaire to cover respondents who might decline to fill out a Russian survey for political reasons.

Method

Based on the analysis of previous studies on perceived political efficacy we decided to develop a new political efficacy scale that combines all three typical components of political efficacy: personal, collective and external. To form each type of political efficacy we use four abilities of political interaction: 1) ability to influence the enactment of new laws and political decisions, 2) ability to facilitate the election of a political leader, 3) ability to demand that existing laws and political decisions be observed and 4) ability to express any political opinions freely and publicly. Thus, we formulated 12 items for evaluation (see Table 1). Participants were asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with the statements using a 5-point response scale (1 = completely disagree, 5 = completely agree).

Table 1

Structure of Perceived Political Efficacy Scale

Abilities for efficient evaluation	Internal political efficacy		External political efficacy
	Personal	Collective (group)	
To influence the enactment of new laws and political decisions	I can influence the enactment of new laws and political decisions	Together citizens of my country can influence the enactment of new laws and political decisions	The people in charge of government are willing to provide information on how political decisions are made
To facilitate the election of a political leader	I can facilitate the election of a political leader whose views I share	Together citizens of my country can facilitate the election of a political leader whose views they share	The people in charge of government are interested in ensuring equal rights for all political parties and groups
To demand that existing laws and political decisions be observed	I can successfully demand that existing laws and political decisions be observed	Together citizens of my country can successfully demand that existing laws and political decisions be observed	The people in charge of government are interested in carrying out the lawful demands of the citizens
To express political opinions freely and publicly	I can freely and publicly express my political opinions	Together citizens of my country can express their political opinions freely and publicly	The people in charge of government are interested in ensuring that citizens speak freely on any topic

Results

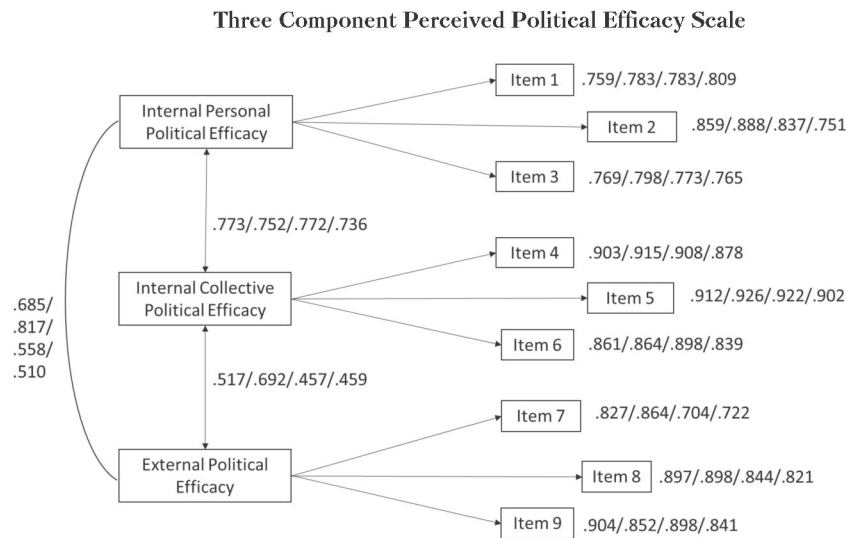
To examine the proposed structure of our political efficacy scale confirmatory factor analysis via Mplus (Muthen & Muthen, 1998–2012) was used. In the tested model separate items formed three interconnected factors: internal personal, internal collective and external political efficacy.

This analysis showed that the full version of the scale has a good fit for the Russian and Kazakh samples, but an unsatisfactory fit for both languages for Ukrainian sample (see Table 2) (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The analysis of factor loadings for separate items showed that items about ability to express political opinions freely and publicly worsen fit indexes for each model. Due to these considerations we modified our models by excluding these items.

Results for the short version of the scale exhibited good fit indexes for all Russian language versions of the tested scale in different countries, with the best fit exhibited by the Ukrainian sample. At the same time, the Ukrainian language version of the scale showed slightly less satisfactory indexes. In general, we consider these results to confirm the structure of the modified model of our perceived political efficacy scale: all items have high level ($> .700$) loadings on respective type of political efficacy (See Figure 1).

To check the validity of the short version of the scale multigroup confirmatory factor analysis was conducted for different countries, genders and age groups. We distinguished three age groups: the 31+ group ($N = 939$, political socialization largely occurred during the latter soviet years); the 20–30 group ($N = 920$, political socialization occurred during the transition period of the 1990s); the 18–19 age group ($N = 325$, political socialization occurred in the 21st century).

Figure 1



Note: $p < 0.01$. Estimates order: Russian sample/Kazakh/Ukrainian/Ukrainian (Ukrainian language)

Table 2

CFA for tested 3 component models of the Perceived Political Efficacy Scale

Models	χ^2	df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR	AIC	BIC
Full version of the Perceived Political Efficacy Scale (12 items)								
Russia	472.786***	51	.953	.939	.078	.045	42,356.270	42,559.950
Kazakhstan	115.816***	51	.946	.930	.076	.041	6,581.078	6,713.252
Ukraine (Russian language)	241.773***	51	.903	.875	.106	.057	9,287.621	9,435.904
Ukraine (Ukrainian language)	181.773***	51	.892	.861	.099	.063	7,683.942	7,823.404
Short version of the Perceived Political Efficacy Scale (9 items)								
Russia	180.982*	24	.977	.965	.069	.026	31,810.084	31,966.761
Kazakhstan	41.517*	24	.983	.975	.058	.025	4,980.223	5,081.895
Ukraine (Russian language)	45.190*	24	.986	.979	.052	.025	6,965.548	7,079.612
Ukraine (Ukrainian language)	75.309*	24	.948	.922	.090	.040	5,756.431	5,863.709

* – $p < .05$, *** – $p < .001$.

All samples were compared for three levels of measurement invariance: configural, metric and scalar. Configural variance model shows if the same items measure our construct through all samples. Metric adds information about equivalence of factor loadings of items. And scalar describes equivalence of items intercepts. Proposed model for perceived political efficacy showed good fit on every sample (Byrne, 2012) (See Table 3).

The descriptive statistics and correlations can be seen in Table 4. To determine the socio-demographic differences in political efficacy additional analysis was conducted. First, the difference between men and women was analyzed. ANOVA showed that there are no significant differences in any type of perceived political efficacy between men and women ($p > .05$).

Then, the differences between the three age groups were analyzed. ANOVA showed significant differences in the levels of personal ($F = 3.153, p < .05$) and collective political efficacy ($F = 3.380, p < .05$). The 31+ age group showed significantly higher personal and collective efficacy than the 18–19 age group.

Finally, the differences between the three countries were analyzed. Four subsamples were analyzed: the Russian sample, the Kazakh sample, the Ukrainian sample that used the Russian-language survey and the Ukrainian sample that used the Ukrainian-language survey. ANOVA showed significant differences for all three types of political efficacy: personal ($F = 117.598, p < .05$), collective ($F = 87.363, p < .05$) and external ($F = 23.784, p < .05$). Ukrainian respondents demonstrated a higher level of personal and collective political efficacy when compared to the Russian and Kazakh samples. However, the Kazakh sample showed the highest level of external efficacy compared to Russians and Ukrainians. Notably, there are no significant differences between the Ukrainian in different language samples.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to develop and test a three-component scale of perceived political efficacy that takes into account personal, collective and external efficacy. The original scale was based on four abilities – 1) ability to influence the enactment of new laws and political decisions, 2) ability to facilitate the election of a political leader, 3) ability to demand that existing laws and political decisions be observed and 4) ability to express any political opinions freely and publicly. However, analysis showed that items based on the ability to express any political opinions freely and publicly are less closely tied to perceived political efficacy and worsen model fit. One possible explanation for this is that ability to express political opinion, i.e. freedom of speech, is seen by the respondents not to influence political processes, but perhaps as a more abstract measure of freedom. Thus, only items based on the other three abilities were left in the short modified version of the scale.

Curiously, the scale didn't show significant differences in any type of political efficacy between genders. It has been previously suggested that links between gender and political efficacy are largely dependent on other social attributes linked to gender in a particular culture (Caprara & Vecchione, 2017), like income and social

Table 3

Configural, metric and scalar invariance of the short version of the Perceived Political Efficacy Scale

Model	χ^2	df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR	AIC	BIC	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf	ΔCFI
<i>Gender</i>											
Configural invariance	334.328*	48	.970	.956	.074	.024	50,249.447	50,590.782	–	–	–
Metric invariance	348.830*	54	.969	.959	.071	.025	50,242.898	50,550.099	14.502*	6	0.001
Scalar invariance	361.399*	60	.969	.963	.068	.026	50,237.363	50,510.431	12.569	6	0.000
<i>Age</i>											
Configural invariance	353.847*	72	.971	.957	.073	.027	50,102.083	50,614.085	–	–	–
Metric invariance	373.081*	84	.971	.962	.069	.029	50,087.542	50,531.277	19.234	12	0.000
Scalar invariance	435.291*	96	.966	.961	.070	.034	50,126.442	50,501.910	62.61***	12	0.005
<i>Countries</i>											
Configural invariance	394.746*	96	.969	.954	.075	.028	49,512.286	50,194.955	–	–	–
Metric invariance	452.491*	114	.965	.956	.074	.040	49,532.494	50,112.763	57.745***	18	0.004
Scalar invariance	513.273*	132	.961	.957	.073	.042	49,559.137	50,037.005	60.782***	18	0.004

* – $p < .05$, *** – $p < .001$.

Table 4

Descriptive statistics and correlations between components of perceived political efficacy

	M	SD	α	1	2
Russia (N = 1370)					
1. Internal Personal Political Efficacy	2.375	1.051	.834		
2. Internal Collective Political Efficacy	3.018	1.215	.921	.709*	
3. External Political Efficacy	1.987	1.084	.907	.636*	.495*
Kazakhstan (N = 219)					
1. Internal Personal Political Efficacy	2.562	1.081	.863		
2. Internal Collective Political Efficacy	3.063	1.385	.929	.724*	
3. External Political Efficacy	2.593	1.129	.903	.726*	.625*
Ukraine – Russian language (N = 331)					
1. Internal Personal Political Efficacy	2.218	0.868	.841		
2. Internal Collective Political Efficacy	3.407	0.978	.927	.696*	
3. External Political Efficacy	3.802	0.795	.854	.468*	.526*
Ukraine – Ukrainian language (N = 264)					
1. Internal Personal Political Efficacy	3.194	0.924	.814		
2. Internal Collective Political Efficacy	3.998	0.943	.905	.682*	
3. External Political Efficacy	2.116	0.794	.835	.475*	.402*

* $p < 0.05$.

standing. To further analyze whether gender inherently affect political efficacy, additional data is required to control for these factors.

Results also indicated that older people have higher political efficacy: those whose political socialization occurred in the final years of the Soviet Union had higher internal personal efficacy than those, whose socialization occurred in the 21st century. There are two possible explanations for this. On one hand, older people generally have higher social status and higher income and, therefore, may have higher general efficacy and, in turn, political efficacy. On the other hand, the older age group has experienced the transformations that post-Soviet countries went through. The experience of participating in major political changes, both personal and that of other people, is often considered a factor that leads to an increase in political efficacy.

Finally, results of the study show significant differences in political efficacy between Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, which roughly corresponds to these countries' recent political history, as well as current government policies and media coverage of political news. The generally higher personal and collective efficacy of Ukrainian respondents seems to be a logical result of two successful revolutions. The high external efficacy of Kazakh respondents might be attributed to a high

level of trust in the government and a belief in its benevolent nature due to a high level of propaganda.

Overall, the results described in this paper indicate that the Perceived Political Efficacy Scale can be used in future studies as a reliable and stable measurement instrument. It will enable the analysis of the role of different types of political efficacy in the emergence of various types of political behavior.

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Appendix A

Perceived Political Efficacy Scale (short version)

Instruction: Consider the current events in your country. Read each statement and indicate the degree to which you agree with it on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is “completely disagree” and 5 is “completely agree”.

1. I can influence the enactment of new laws and political decisions.
2. I can facilitate the election of a political leader whose views I share.
3. I can demand that existing laws and political decisions be observed.
4. Together citizens of my country can influence the enactment of new laws and political decisions.
5. Together citizens of my country can facilitate the election of a political leader whose views they share.

6. Together citizens of my country can demand that existing laws and political decisions be observed.
7. The people in charge of government are willing to provide information on how political decisions are made.
8. The people in charge of government are interested in ensuring equal rights for all political parties and groups.
9. The people in charge of government are interested in carrying out the lawful demands of the citizens.

Internal personal political efficacy: 1–3

Internal collective political efficacy: 4–6

External political efficacy: 7–9

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Как измерить воспринимаемую политическую эффективность? Трехкомпонентная шкала

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Резюме

Целью данного исследования была разработка и апробация шкалы, измеряющей три компонента политической самоэффективности: личную, коллективную и внешнюю самоэффективность. 12 утверждений были сформулированы на основе четырех способностей: 1) способности влиять на принятие новых законов и политических решений, 2) способности способствовать избранию политического лидера, 3) способности требовать исполнения существующих законов и политических решений и 4) способности свободно и публично выражать любые политические взгляды. Ответы респондентов российской, казахстанской и украинской выборок (N = 2184) были собраны онлайн через социальные сети в 2015–2017 гг. Структурная валидность шкалы была проанализирована с помощью конфирматорного факторного анализа. Его результаты показали, что с рядом модификаций укороченная версия предложенной модели демонстрирует хорошие показатели соответствия по всем трем выборкам. Также была успешно протестирована конфигурационная, метрическая и скалярная инвариативность укороченной версии Модели Воспринимаемой Политической Самоэффективности. Кроме того, были выявлены различия в показателях политической самоэффективности между возрастными группами и странами. В частности, люди в возрастной группе старше 30 лет демонстрировали более высокую политическую самоэффективность, чем

респонденты в группе 18–19 лет. Украинские респонденты демонстрировали значительно более высокую личную и коллективную самооффективность по сравнению с российскими и казахстанскими респондентами. Наконец, казахстанские респонденты продемонстрировали наивысший уровень внешней политической самооффективности.

Ключевые слова: внутренняя политическая эффективность, внешняя политическая эффективность, личная политическая эффективность, коллективная политическая эффективность, политическая самооффективность, шкала.

Приложение А1

Воспринимаемая политическая эффективность. Короткая версия

Инструкция: *Подумайте, пожалуйста, о текущей политической ситуации в вашей стране. Прочтите каждое утверждение и оцените, насколько вы согласны с каждым из них, по шкале от 1 до 5, где 1 — полностью не согласны, а 5 — полностью согласны.*

1. Я могу влиять на принятие новых законов и политических решений в моей стране.
2. Я могу способствовать избранию политического лидера, чьи взгляды я разделяю.
3. Я могу требовать исполнения существующих законов и политических решений.
4. Вместе граждане моей страны могут влиять на принятие новых законов и политических решений.
5. Вместе граждане моей страны могут способствовать избранию политического лидера, чьи взгляды они разделяют.
6. Вместе граждане моей страны могут требовать исполнения существующих законов.
7. Люди, стоящие во главе государства, готовы предоставить информацию о том, как принимаются политические решения.
8. Люди, стоящие во главе государства, заинтересованы в создании равных прав для всех политических сил.
9. Люди, стоящие во главе государства, заинтересованы в исполнении законных требований граждан.

Ключ:

Личная внутренняя политическая самооффективность: утверждения 1–3

Групповая внутренняя политическая самооффективность: утверждения 4–6

Внешняя политическая самооффективность: утверждения 7–9.

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Сфера научных интересов: политическое поведение, электоральное поведение, социальные движения, коллективное поведение, социальное взаимодействие, социальное влияние.

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