



Political Participation in Emerging Adults: Examining Gender and Economic Differences

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ABSTRACT: This study explored the levels of different forms of political participation among emerging adults in Delhi-NCR and compared them across gender and economic status. Data was collected from 159 participants (60 males, 99 females; median age = 20 years) using convenience sampling. Political participation was measured using the Political Participation Scale by Gopal and Verma (2017). Descriptive findings showed that conventional political participation had the highest mean, followed by knowledge-seeking participation, while unconventional and influential participation were comparatively lower, indicating that emerging adults are more engaged in traditional and information-oriented forms of political activity than in direct influence-based modes. No significant gender differences were observed across any dimension, suggesting a possible narrowing of the gender gap in political participation. MANOVA results revealed a significant effect of economic status on conventional political participation and unconventional participation while knowledge-seeking and influential participation were not significantly affected. Post hoc comparisons indicated that the below ₹5 lakh group reported higher conventional and unconventional participation than both the ₹5-24 lakh and above ₹24 lakh groups. These findings find empirical support from grievance and relative deprivation perspectives that associate economic disadvantage with greater involvement in both, institutional and non-institutional or protest-oriented activities. The findings further challenge the preconceived notions regarding the levels of conventional political participation among Indian youth and paint a broader picture for discerning the complex nature of political participation

KEYWORDS: Political participation, gender, economic status, emerging adults

I. INTRODUCTION

Political participation, which is defined as “the activity that has the intent or effect of

influencing government action” is recognized as a cornerstone of democratic engagement and governance. (Verba et al., 1995). While early scholars emphasized on conventional forms of participation such as voting, campaigning, party membership etc. (Verba & Nie, 1972), the understanding of the phrase has expanded to reflect the changing political realities and citizen practices. Recent literature describes the extension of political participation from simple voting activities such as activism, appeals, petitions, demonstrations etc. which are now perceived as an accepted or appropriate mechanism to voice one’s politics (Teorell et al., 2007). A cause driven political engagement has gained popularity among youths (Dalton, 2008; Norris, 2002). This raises the importance of understanding political participation from a comprehensive viewpoint.

Formal or conventional political participation refers to institutionalized, structured and legally sanctioned activities through which citizens engage in the political system. These include voting in elections, campaigning, membership in political parties and attending political rallies (Henn & Foard, 2012). Contrastingly, unconventional political participation refers to non-institutionalized forms of political action that operate outside formal political structures, such as protests, demonstrations, sit-ins and community blockades (Bourne, 2010). Knowledge-seeking political participation involves individuals actively acquiring information about politics, governance and public affairs in order to inform their political attitudes and actions and lastly, influential political participation refers to actions undertaken with the explicit aim of shaping political decisions, policy outcomes, or leadership selection amongst family and friends. Political participation is influenced by a combination of structural, social and personal factors. (Levinson, 1958; Milbrath, 1965). Verba et. al (1995) argue that income shapes political participation through unequal access to resources, civic skills and political efficacy, a claim



reinforced by later work on political inequality (Schlozman et al., 2012). Similarly, Burns et. al (2001) argue that gender gaps in political participation arise from differential socialization, unequal resources and lower political efficacy among women, despite formal equality in political rights.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

In India, conventional political participation continues to be the most visible form of engagement as evidenced by high electoral turnouts, reflecting the citizens' continued faith in formal democratic mechanisms (Yadav, 1999), while the social identity of an individual such as caste and community significantly shape the patterns of institutional participation (Chhibber & Verma, 2018). At the same time, protest traditions such as dharnas, bandhs and mass demonstrations have long been utilized to articulate grievances when institutional avenues have failed to provide contentment (Palshikar, 2011). Digital media and civic education having expanded in their accessibility has further increased opportunities for political learning among young people and first-time voters since higher political knowledge shows strong correlation with more informed voting and broader engagement in both formal and informal activities (Jayal & Mehta, 2010). Lastly, civil society organizations are often the ones to carry out influential forms of political participation, along with student movements and grassroots campaigns that combine both the conventional forms as well as non-conventional forms in order to enact change (Chandhoke, 2003).

Coffé and Bolzendahl used cross-national survey data (2010) and found that women participate less in conventional political activities such as voting, campaigning and party work. However, they still are active and expressive among community-oriented forms of engagement. These differences in the choice of engagement are shaped by an imbalance in resources, disparities in political attitudes and socially defined gender roles rather than a lack of interest. Wolak's (2020) findings further add to these justifications for the incongruences as they found that women often report lower levels of political self-confidence compared to men. This incongruence in self-confidence could explain their choice of political engagements as it manifests itself through lower levels of certain forms of political engagement, including political interest and political attention. Research on this matter across India is fairly consistent as demonstrated in studies like Panda

(2019), who utilizes data from the India Human Development Survey (IHDS) and saw that the electoral participation significantly influences education, income and other socioeconomic characteristics. Moreover, he saw that individuals who acquired higher education and possess higher economic resources were participating more actively which could be due to greater political awareness as well as political-confidence.

Similar to Panda, research conducted about the political participation among Muslim women in Assam's Char regions by Irfanul Islam (2024) saw patriarchal institutions which inhibit the access of women to education and economic status end up impacting their ability to engage politically as well. Studies by E. Benrithung Patton (2020) and Shiv Narayan Mali (2021) further demonstrate that political participation occurs within a broader social and economic context, where individuals from higher socioeconomic backgrounds tend to exhibit greater political involvement, while those from lower socioeconomic groups face barriers such as limited financial resources, inadequate political information and weaker political networks, ultimately leading to unequal political influence and representation in decision-making processes.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The literature reviewed consistently shows a clear mismatch between the voting behaviour of individuals across different socioeconomic realities. However, these studies fail to consider the various unconventional forms of participation that help shape the politics of a country. Hence, this study aims to identify and explore the various other forms of participation in politics that are exercised by citizens of India across socioeconomic (gender and income) brackets. Adults (18-25) have been chosen for the study because emerging adulthood is a distinct period demographically, subjectively and in terms of identity explorations (Arnett, 2000) as well as because a recently conducted survey suggests that while the interest in politics might be rising among the youth, the electoral participation has remained below 50% among the same population (Lokniti-CSDS, 2024). The findings from this study will contribute to improve and enrich the theoretical understanding of political participation which will help guide inclusive democratic strategies. The study will also shape civic education, NGO outreach and political communication toward building self-belief alongside political engagement.



OBJECTIVES:

O1: To measure the levels of political participation (Conventional, Unconventional, Knowledge Seeking, Influential and overall Political Participation) among emerging adults

O2: To examine gender differences on political participation measures (Conventional, Unconventional, Knowledge Seeking, Influential and overall Political Participation) among emerging adults.

O3: To determine economic status differences on political participation measures (Conventional, Unconventional, Knowledge Seeking, Influential and overall Political Participation) among emerging adults.

HYPOTHESES:

H1: There will be no significant difference between Gender groups on Political Participation measures (Conventional, Unconventional, Knowledge Seeking, Influential and overall Political Participation) among emerging adults.

H2: There will be no significant difference between Economic Status groups on Political Participation measures (Conventional, Unconventional, Knowledge Seeking, Influential and overall Political Participation) among emerging adults.

III. METHODS:

Sample: The study included a total sample of 159 participants selected through convenience sampling. Among them, 60 were males and 99 were females. The participants had a median age of 20 years, with ages ranging from 18 to 24 years. In terms of educational status, 124 participants were undergraduate students and 35 were postgraduate students. Regarding institutional affiliation, 111 participants were enrolled in public universities while 48 were from private universities. All participants in the sample were unmarried. In terms of economic status, 49 participants reported an annual family income of up to 5 lakhs, 66 participants belonged to families with an annual income between 5-24 lakhs, and 44 participants reported a family income above 24 lakhs per annum.

Tools: The Political Participation Scale (PPS) was developed by Krishan Gopal and Rajesh Verma (2017) to measure different forms of political participation among individuals. The scale consists of 18 items rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with response options ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The items are distributed across four subscales: Conventional Political Participation (7 items), which includes activities

such as voting and participation in electoral processes; Unconventional Political Participation (6 items), which includes protest-related activities such as demonstrations and strikes; Political Knowledge Seeking (3 items), which reflects the extent to which individuals seek political information and stay informed about political affairs; and Influential Political Participation (2 items), which involves attempts to influence political decisions through actions such as contacting leaders or engaging in advocacy by discussing the news with your friends and family. Scores are calculated by summing responses across the items. Higher scores indicate greater levels of political participation and engagement in political processes, whereas lower scores indicate lower involvement in political activities.

The scale demonstrates satisfactory reliability, with the developers reporting a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of approximately 0.79. Adequacy of the political participation scale in this study was determined through reliability analyses across the total sample, gender groups and economic status groups. After omission of two items with negative and very low item-total correlations, the reduced 16-items showed acceptable values of Cronbach's Alpha ranging from $\alpha = .69$ to $\alpha = .86$ for the total sample; from $\alpha = .71$ to $\alpha = .87$ for male groups and from $\alpha = .67$ to $\alpha = .86$ for female groups; from $\alpha = .64$ to $\alpha = .86$ for low economic status groups, from $\alpha = .65$ to $\alpha = .88$ for average economic status groups and from $\alpha = .61$ to $\alpha = .85$ for the high economic status groups.

Research Design: The present study employed a quantitative comparative research design. The comparison groups are gender (male, female) and economic status (Low, Average & High).

Procedure: Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection and they were informed about the purpose of the study, their voluntary participation and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by not collecting personally identifying information and by using the data only for academic purposes. A Google Form was created which carried the questionnaire which was then provided to the participants to fill. The study focused on emerging adults because political attitudes that last the rest of their lives begin forming at this stage (Verba et al., 1995; Dalton, 2008). Following this, the participants from the emerging adult population were then further selected from the age range of 18 to 24 years. To



maintain consistency of experiences and control potential extraneous variables, ensuring relatively similar life circumstances, educational exposure and social environments among participants becomes extremely crucial. This was achieved by only including unmarried college and university students. Economic status was categorized into low (annual family income up to ₹5 lakhs), middle (₹5-24 lakhs), and high (above ₹24 lakhs) groups. This classification is broadly consistent with income stratifications used in Indian socioeconomic research and policy discussions that distinguish lower, middle and higher income groups based on annual household income levels (Kumar, 2017; Pew Research Center, 2021). Such grouping allows for the assessment of how the differences in socioeconomic resources may influence political participation and related attitudes. Lastly, due to a lack of comparable data from transgender and non-binary individuals as opposed to their cisgender counterparts, this study has excluded their analysis due to the incapacity to make any meaningful group comparisons.

III. RESULT AND INTERPRETATION:

In order to examine the objectives chosen for this study, a statistical analyses of Descriptive Statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation) and Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was used which was computed with the help of *SPSS v.24*—a statistical package for the social sciences (IBM Corp, 2016). To execute the MANOVA tests, Gender and Economic Status were entered as the independent variables (factors) and political participation measures (Conventional, Unconventional, Knowledge Seeking, Influential and overall Political Participation) were entered as the dependent variables in the *SPSS*. The data was first screened for outliers and checked for missing values. Important assumptions for MANOVA was satisfied as the normality of the data was within the acceptance range set for Skewness and Kurtosis (George & Mallery, 2019) and homogeneity of variances showed equal error variances of score on dependent variables across comparison groups.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICAL REPORT:

Descriptive statistics of the total sample indicated that conventional political participation had the mean score ($M = 15.06$, $SD = 4.39$) of 15 out of the maximum 25 indicating a slightly above moderate conventional political participation. Unconventional participation had the score of ($M = 11.01$, $SD = 5.25$) 11 out of the maximum 30 indicating lower than moderate unconventional

political participation. Following this, knowledge-seeking participation had the score of ($M = 11.21$, $SD = 2.92$) 11 out of maximum 15 indicating a slightly above moderate level of knowledge-seeking political participation and lastly the score of influential participation was ($M = 6.43$, $SD = 2.55$) 6 out of a maximum of 10 indicating moderate level of influential political participation. The overall political participation mean was 43.72 ($SD = 11.76$) out of 80. Skewness and kurtosis values for all variables fell within ± 2 , indicating approximate normality and supporting the use of parametric tests. The pattern suggests that respondents showed fairly consistently moderate levels of political participation across various forms, except unconventional political participation.

Descriptive statistics of the male sample indicated that conventional political participation had the mean score ($M = 15$, $SD = 4.63$) of 15 out of the maximum 25 indicating a slightly above moderate conventional political participation. Unconventional participation had the score of ($M = 10.45$, $SD = 5.25$) 10 out of the maximum 30 indicating lower than moderate unconventional political participation. Following this, knowledge-seeking participation had the score of ($M = 10.75$, $SD = 3.13$) 11 out of maximum 15 indicating a slightly above moderate level of knowledge-seeking political participation and lastly the score of influential participation was ($M = 6.28$, $SD = 2.64$) 6 out of a maximum of 10 indicating moderate level of influential political participation. The overall political participation mean was 42.28 ($SD = 12$) out of 80. Skewness and kurtosis values for all variables fell within ± 2 , indicating approximate normality and supporting the use of parametric tests. The pattern suggests that respondents showed fairly consistently moderate levels of political participation across various forms, except unconventional political participation.

Descriptive statistics of the female sample indicated that conventional political participation had the mean score ($M = 15.10$, $SD = 4.26$) of 15 out of the maximum 25 indicating a slightly above moderate conventional political participation. Unconventional participation had the score of ($M = 11.35$, $SD = 5.42$) 11 out of the maximum 30 indicating lower than moderate unconventional political participation. Following this, knowledge-seeking participation had the score of ($M = 11.48$, $SD = 2.76$) 11 out of maximum 15 indicating a slightly above moderate level of knowledge-seeking political participation and lastly the score of influential participation was ($M = 6.52$, $SD = 2.51$) 6 out of a maximum of 10 indicating moderate level



of influential political participation. The overall political participation mean was 44.46 ($SD = 11.61$) out of 80. Skewness and kurtosis values for all variables fell within ± 2 , indicating approximate normality and supporting the use of parametric tests. The pattern suggests that respondents showed fairly consistently moderate levels of political participation across various forms, except unconventional political participation.

Descriptive statistics of the lower income sample indicated that conventional political participation had the mean score ($M = 16.70$, $SD = 5.10$) of 16 out of the maximum 25 indicating slightly above moderate conventional political participation. Unconventional participation had the score of ($M = 12.91$, $SD = 5.75$) 13 out of the maximum 30 indicating lower than moderate unconventional political participation. Following this, knowledge-seeking participation had the score of ($M = 10.98$, $SD = 2.85$) 11 out of maximum 15 indicating a slightly above moderate level of knowledge-seeking political participation and lastly the score of influential participation was ($M = 6.41$, $SD = 2.40$) 6 out of a maximum of 10 indicating moderate level of influential political participation. The overall political participation mean was 47 ($SD = 12.11$) out of 80. Skewness and kurtosis values for all variables fell within ± 1 , indicating approximate normality and supporting the use of parametric tests. The pattern suggests that respondents showed fairly consistently moderate levels of political participation across various forms, except conventional and unconventional political participation, which were higher.

Descriptive statistics of the middle income sample indicated that conventional political participation had the mean score ($M = 14.05$, $SD = 3.58$) of 14 out of the maximum 25 indicating moderate conventional political participation. Unconventional participation had the score of ($M = 10.13$, $SD = 4.96$) 10 out of the maximum 30 indicating lower than moderate unconventional political participation. Following this, knowledge-seeking participation had the score of ($M = 11.50$, $SD = 2.98$) 11 out of maximum 15 indicating a slightly above moderate level of knowledge-seeking political participation and lastly the score of influential participation was ($M = 6.33$, $SD = 2.79$) 6 out of a maximum of 10 indicating moderate level of influential political participation. The overall political participation mean was 42.02 ($SD = 12.11$) out of 80. Skewness and kurtosis values for all variables fell within ± 2 , indicating approximate normality and supporting the use of parametric tests. The pattern suggests that respondents showed fairly

consistently moderate levels of political participation across various forms.

Descriptive statistics of the high income sample indicated that conventional political participation had the mean score ($M = 14.77$, $SD = 4.21$) of 15 out of the maximum 25 indicating slightly above moderate conventional political participation. Unconventional participation had the score of ($M = 10.20$, $SD = 4.58$) 10 out of the maximum 30 indicating lower than moderate unconventional political participation. Following this, knowledge-seeking participation had the score of ($M = 11.02$, $SD = 2.95$) 11 out of maximum 15 indicating a slightly above moderate level of knowledge-seeking political participation and lastly the score of influential participation was ($M = 6.61$, $SD = 2.40$) 7 out of a maximum of 10 indicating moderate level of influential political participation. The overall political participation mean was 42.61 ($SD = 12.11$) out of 80. Skewness and kurtosis values for all variables fell within ± 1 , indicating approximate normality and supporting the use of parametric tests. The pattern suggests that respondents showed fairly consistently moderate levels of political participation across various forms.

MANOVA REPORT:

A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was conducted to examine the effect of gender on overall political participation and its sub-dimensions among emerging adults. The results shown in Table 1 indicated that gender did not have a statistically significant effect on any dimension of political participation. Specifically, the effect of gender on Conventional Political Participation was not significant ($F = 0.020$, $p = .889$, $\eta^2 = .000$), suggesting that male and female participants reported similar levels of engagement in formal political activities such as voting or campaign involvement. Similarly, Unconventional Political Participation showed no significant gender difference ($F = 1.109$, $p = .294$, $\eta^2 = .007$), indicating comparable involvement in protest-related or non-institutional activities across genders. The effect of gender on Knowledge Seeking Political Participation was also not statistically significant ($F = 2.381$, $p = .125$, $\eta^2 = .015$), suggesting that males and females do not significantly differ in their tendency to seek political information or remain informed about political affairs. Likewise, Influential Political Participation did not show a significant gender difference ($F = 0.334$, $p = .564$, $\eta^2 = .002$), indicating similar levels of attempts to influence political decisions or leaders. Furthermore, the analysis revealed no



significant gender difference in Overall Political Participation ($F = 1.060, p = .305, \eta^2 = .007$). The very small partial eta squared values across all variables indicate that gender explains only a negligible proportion of variance in political

participation within the sample. Overall, these findings suggest that male and female emerging adults in this study demonstrate comparable levels of engagement across different forms of political participation.

Table 1: Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) testing the Main Effect of Gender on Political Participation and its subscales (Conventional, Unconventional, Knowledge Seeking and Influential Political Participation) among emerging adults.

Source	Dependent Variables	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Gender	Conventional Political Participation	.381	1	.381	.020	.889	.000
	Unconventional Political Participation	30.499	1	30.499	1.109	.294	.007
	Knowledge Seeking Political Participation	20.174	1	20.174	2.381	.125	.015
	Influential Political Participation	2.186	1	2.186	.334	.564	.002
	Overall Political Participation	146.655	1	146.655	1.060	.305	.007

The MANOVA results (table 2) indicated that economic status had a significant effect on conventional political participation, $F(2,156) = 5.552, p = .005, \eta^2 = .066$, and unconventional participation, $F(2,156) = 4.908, p = .009, \eta^2 = .059$, indicating moderate effect sizes. However, no significant differences were observed for knowledge-seeking participation, $F(2,156) = 0.564, p = .570, \eta^2 = .007$, or influential participation, $F(2,156) = 0.161, p = .852, \eta^2 = .002$. The effect of economic status on overall political participation approached significance, $F(2,156) = 2.858, p = .060, \eta^2 = .035$. These findings suggest resource-based activities showing greater class differentiation, suggesting that economic status shapes the form of political engagement rather than overall political involvement.

Post hoc comparisons (table 3) revealed that individuals in the below 5 lakh income group reported significantly higher conventional political participation than those in the below 5 lakh group ($p = .004$), while no significant differences were observed between the middle- and high-income groups. Adding to this, the below 5 lakh group demonstrated significantly higher unconventional political participation than both the 5-24 lakh ($p = .013$) and above 24 lakh groups ($p = .031$). Moreover, no significant differences between any income groups were observed in knowledge-seeking political participation as well as influential political participation. Lastly, no significant differences were found in overall political participation between the income groups either.

Table 2: Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) testing the Main Effect of Economic Status on Political Participation and its subscales (Conventional, Unconventional, Knowledge Seeking and Influential Political Participation) among emerging adults.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects							
Source	Dependent Variables	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Economic Status	Conventional Political Participation	202.372	2	101.186	5.552	.005	.066
	Unconventional Political Participation	257.370	2	128.685	4.908	.009	.059
	Knowledge Seeking Political Participation	9.694	2	4.847	.564	.570	.007
	Influential Political Participation	2.121	2	1.061	.161	.852	.002
	Overall Political Participation						



Overall Political Participation	772.847	2	386.424	2.858	.060	.035
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Table 3: Tukey HSD Post-Hoc Tests for Multiple Comparisons across Economic Status Groups on Political Participation and its Subscales (Conventional, Unconventional, Knowledge Seeking and Influential Political Participation) among emerging adults.

Dependent Variables	(I) Economic Status	(J) Economic Status	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Conventional Political Participation	Below 5 lacs	5-24 lacs	2.6484*	.80502	.004	.7435	4.5533
		Above 24 lacs	1.9212	.88663	.080	-.1769	4.0192
	5-24 lacs	Below 5 lacs	-2.6484*	.80502	.004	-4.5533	-.7435
		Above 24 lacs	-.7273	.83085	.657	-2.6933	1.2388
	Above 24 lacs	Below 5 lacs	-1.9212	.88663	.080	-4.0192	.1769
		5-24 lacs	.7273	.83085	.657	-1.2388	2.6933
Unconventional Political Participation	Below 5 lacs	5-24 lacs	2.7820*	.96563	.013	.4970	5.0670
		Above 24 lacs	2.7138*	1.0635	.031	.1972	5.2304
	5-24 lacs	Below 5 lacs	-2.7820*	.96563	.013	-5.0670	-.4970
		Above 24 lacs	-.0682	.99662	.997	-2.4265	2.2901
	Above 24 lacs	Below 5 lacs	-2.7138*	1.0635	.031	-5.2304	-.1972
		5-24 lacs	.0682	.99662	.997	-2.2901	2.4265
Knowledge Seeking Political Participation	Below 5 lacs	5-24 lacs	-.5204	.55277	.615	-1.8284	.7876
		Above 24 lacs	-.0431	.60881	.997	-1.4838	1.3975
	5-24 lacs	Below 5 lacs	.5204	.55277	.615	-.7876	1.8284
		Above 24 lacs	.4773	.57051	.681	-.8727	1.8273
	Above 24 lacs	Below 5 lacs	.0431	.60881	.997	-1.3975	1.4838
		5-24 lacs	-.4773	.57051	.681	-1.8273	.8727
Influential Political Participation	Below 5 lacs	5-24 lacs	.0748	.48430	.987	-1.0712	1.2208
		Above 24 lacs	-.2055	.53339	.922	-1.4676	1.0567
	5-24 lacs	Below 5 lacs	-.0748	.48430	.987	-1.2208	1.0712
		Above 24 lacs	-.2803	.49984	.841	-1.4631	.9025
	Above 24 lacs	Below 5 lacs	.2055	.53339	.922	-1.0567	1.4676
		5-24 lacs	.2803	.49984	.841	-.9025	1.4631
Overall Political Participation	Below 5 lacs	5-24 lacs	4.9848	2.1927	.063	-.2039	10.1736
		Above 24 lacs	4.3864	2.4150	.168	-1.3284	10.1011
	5-24 lacs	Below 5 lacs	-4.9848	2.1927	.063	-10.1736	.2039
		Above 24 lacs	-.5985	2.2631	.962	-5.9537	4.7568
	Above 24 lacs	Below 5 lacs	-4.3864	2.4150	.168	-10.1011	1.3284
		5-24 lacs	.5985	2.2631	.962	-4.7568	5.9537

Based on observed means.

The error term is Mean Square (Error) = 135.214.

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

IV. DISCUSSION:

Overall, the pattern of results suggest that respondents exhibit fairly consistent moderate levels of political participation across most forms with the exception of unconventional participation, which came out to be relatively lower. This indicates that emerging adults in the present sample may be more inclined towards institutional, informational and interpersonal forms of political engagement rather than disruptive or protest-oriented activities. Past studies show young people showing lower

participation in disruptive and unconventional forms of political participation, while still maintaining a fairly moderate hold of other forms of political engagement (Dalton, 2008; Henn, Weinstein, & Forrest, 2005). Arvanitakis & Marren, (2009) suggest that young people begin their political engagement with socially acceptable and conventional forms of engagement before moving onto the more challenging forms of activism. Therefore, a reflection of political socialization can



be inferred in emerging adults from their generally moderate and conventional forms of participation.

The findings of the present study among the population of emerging adults showed that gender played a non-significant role in determining one's political participation, both overall as well as within each sub-dimension. This means that the male and female participants reported similar levels of engagement in conventional political participation, unconventional political participation, knowledge-seeking political participation and influential political participation. The very small partial eta squared values further suggest that gender accounted for only a negligible proportion of variance in political participation within the sample. These results imply that in the emerging adult population, males and females in the exhibit similar levels of political engagement across different forms of participation. Such findings are consistent with various other empirical studies suggesting that traditional gender gaps in political participation have gradually narrowed, particularly among younger generations where access to political information, education and civic opportunities has become more similar for men and women (Dalton, 2008; Inglehart & Norris, 2003). This suggests that gender may be becoming a less influential determinant of political participation among contemporary emerging adults.

Finally, the findings demonstrate that economic status significantly influenced certain forms of political participation, particularly conventional and unconventional participation, while no significant differences were observed for knowledge-seeking and influential political participation. Post hoc comparisons revealed that individuals in the lower-income group demonstrated higher levels of conventional as well as unconventional political participation compared to both middle and higher income groups. These results suggest that individuals with fewer resources may rely more on action based ways of participation rather than information based ways, a pattern empirically backed and widely discussed in resource-based models of political participation (Verba et al., 1995). This inspection of class inequalities posits the idea that resources only converge with the form of activities that are accessible to their respective conditions and realities. This allows the higher-income groups to rely on both passive and information based engagement equally as direct forms while the lower-income groups lean towards activities that cause direct impact through both institutional and non-institutional means (Cainzos & Voces, 2010).

Lastly, the results in knowledge-seeking and influential participation among different income groups being similar serves as an indicator of the existence of consistent awareness and dialogue amongst the youth.

Implications:

The findings of the present study help us discern some significant data about the political participation among emerging adults. Firstly, an overall moderate level of political participation observed among emerging adults hints at a basic level of political awareness and engagement. This is largely enacted through conventional, informational and interpersonal forms of participation. Studies consistently argue that early civic engagement plays a foundational role in shaping long-term patterns of political participation (Verba et al., 1995; Dalton, 2008) and these results only support those ideas. Hence, initiatives and programs to boost political engagement throughout different forms should take place.

Secondly, the differences in political participation among males and females were completely non-significant, showcasing the ideas from studies like Inglehart & Norris, (2003) which argue that due to the emergence of more equal access to education, political information and civic opportunities for women, the disparities in their political participation has also been reducing.

Finally, the results comparing the data across economic status clearly suggest that socioeconomic factors may significantly influence the form of political participation. This can be seen from the fact that individuals tend to engage in the forms of participation which is best suited to their immediate needs (OECD, 2006; World Bank, 2004). Engaging in collective action-based participation from the lower income group might arise from a shared sense of group identity (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Moreover, they're the group worst affected by government policies and hence are more likely to engage in active participation rather than passive information-based forms (Solt, 2008). These findings call attention to the importance of reducing socioeconomic barriers to promote more inclusive political engagement.

Limitations:

The sample was restricted to emerging adults from a specific geographical context (Delhi) and was gathered with the use of convenience sampling, reducing the generalizability of the findings. A larger sample size along with the use of random sampling methods would've helped increase



the generalizability of the data, enriching the study in the process. This study also used self-report measures of political participation, which may muddy the results due to inaccuracies in self-perception as well as social desirability.

Moreover, accessibility and resources that shape one's political participation in a metropolitan city like Delhi might surpass those present in various rural areas or Tier-2 cities. Lastly, income levels might not be the best representative of one's socio-economic status as other factors like family background and orientation might affect the lived experiences of different income groups.

V. CONCLUSION

The present study examined patterns of political participation among emerging adults and the influence of gender and economic status on different forms of participation. The findings revealed that participants generally demonstrated moderate levels of political participation, with relatively lower engagement in unconventional forms. This implies that emerging adults in the sample tend to engage more in institutional, informational and influential means of participation rather than protest-oriented activities. Furthermore, the results indicated that gender did not significantly influence overall political participation or any of its sub-dimensions, showing that male and female emerging adults generally match in their levels of engagement across various forms of political activity. Contrastingly, economic status showed a significant effect on certain types of participation, particularly on conventional and unconventional forms where individuals from the lower income groups exhibited greater levels of involvement in both conventional and unconventional forms of participation.

Overall the findings highlight that while political engagement among emerging adults is generally moderate, socioeconomic factors may shape the form of participation rather than the overall level of involvement. Concluding, it's important to consider structural resources when understanding patterns of political participation among the youth as it still shapes the forms in which political participation is undertaken.

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