

Validating an Empowerment Scale with Community Participants in Azerbaijan

Alexander Cheryomukhin, PhD Candidate, Rutgers SSW

The empowerment construct has been central in theories and practice interventions across many social science disciplines, including community psychology, public health, political science, education and social work. Empowerment of vulnerable and disadvantaged populations is a primary mission of the field of social welfare (National Association of Social Workers, 2008). The importance of empowerment is emphasized in major international documents including the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN, 2007). Support for citizen empowerment and participation is a central pillar of U.S. foreign policy, and citizen empowerment is an extensively used indicator for assessment of sustainable development and civil society in transition countries. Yet, empowerment-related outcomes are rarely evaluated as social scientists debate how empowerment can be measured in those cultures and whether participation in community based initiatives in those cultures is associated with people's empowerment.

My study proposes to translate and assess the validity of a widely used empowerment instrument, Sociopolitical Control Scale (SPCS-R), (Peterson et al., 2006), in the context of community mobilization programs in the Muslim country of Azerbaijan, and to test the association between psychological empowerment and theoretically related constructs such as community participation, sense of community, alienation and depression. The newly developed Azeri Empowerment Scale will contribute to the theory of empowerment by examining its international applicability in a different culture. The instrument can be used in future social science research and program evaluation. Because of the similarity of cultures and languages in the region of Caucasus and Central Asia, the instrument can be further tested and used in neighboring countries.

This research is a part of my doctoral dissertation project at the School of Social Work, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. I am looking for funding that could support this research project and/or partner institutions that could provide instrumental assistance.

Sincerely,

Alexander Cheryomukhin, MA, PhD Candidate,

Azerbaijan Psychological Association / Rutgers School of Social Work

Email: acheryomukhin@ssw.rutgers.edu