

Petra A n ý ž o v á

Doctoral thesis:

Cross-Country Comparability of Social Capital and Political Disaffection Attitude Scales in the European Social Survey

Abstract

The doctoral thesis deals with the methodological perspectives of comparative cross-national research. Currently, in the globalization period, the importance of these perspectives has been increasing. Unfortunately, social scientists analyse attractive international data more and more often without realising the levels of data comparability. Therefore they are not fully aware the best approach to statistical analysis of these data and their convenient comparative interpretation. This thesis introduces the issue of data equivalence as one of the most important quality aspects of cross-national research and focuses especially on attitude scales owing to the fact that their comparability is endangered the most in comparative research. In particular, the subject of the analysis is the international comparability of two of the most frequent robust attitude scales: namely social capital and political disaffection scales as they are measured in the European Social Survey first data set. In sociology and political science, these two social science concepts are very significant and they have been studied both theoretically and empirically as social phenomena for very long time. Quite often, they have factual social and political impact as well when we realise that they can explain social cohesion character and low voter turnout causes in modern societies. However, only a few empirical studies and their comparative outcomes are complemented appropriately with statistically verified and proven comparability levels of these attitude scales which is far from being sufficient from the methodology point of view. On the basis of structural modelling, this thesis documents that even in the European countries which are considerably culturally, historically, and socially close, there is a possibility to carry out comparative juxtaposition of the relations between these attitude scales and other clarifying variables from the data set, however it is not possible to compare any other statistical indicators like arithmetic mean of scale or items etc. Consequently, the comparison of so robust attitude scales has its certain limits which are necessary to be taken into consideration both in the primary and secondary data analyses.

Key words:

cross-national survey, equivalence, comparison, attitude scale, measurement indicator, structural modelling, The European Social Survey, social capital, political disaffection