

ACCOUNTING FOR ACTIVISM AMONG MEMBERS OF YOUTH PARTY ORGANISATIONS

FRANCISCO JAVIER ALARCÓN GONZÁLEZ
Universidad de Granada
fjalarcon@ugr.es
ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7900-5626>

JOSÉ REAL-DATO
Universidad de Almería
jreal@ual.es
ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9734-0850>

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the activism of members of youth party organisations (YPO). The purpose is to explore the explanatory power of three different models of party activism: civic voluntarism model, general incentives model and socio-psychological model. The original dataset used is members of youth sections in Spain (n=2144) including demographic items, social background and some measures of attitudes, motivations and party activism. The findings reveal: (i) some similarity among members of youth sections in relation to activism levels and in a great number of the independent variables used; (ii) a positive impact on party membership and party activism of associationism and expressive attachment to the youth section; (iii) passive and active modalities of activism are related to the possession of money (having a job); and (iv) a good fit of the socio-psychological model with regard to civic voluntarism and general incentive models in active modalities of activism.

KEYWORDS

Civic voluntarism model; General incentives model; Party activism; Socio-psychological model; Spain; Youth sections of political parties.

EXPLICANDO EL ACTIVISMO ENTRE LOS MIEMBROS DE LAS JUVENTUDES DE LOS PARTIDOS POLÍTICOS

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RESUMEN

Este trabajo se centra en el activismo de los miembros de las organizaciones juveniles de los partidos políticos. El propósito es examinar tres diferentes modelos de activismo partidista: voluntarismo cívico, incentivos generales y socio-psicológico. Se utiliza una encuesta original realizada a los miembros de las organizaciones juveniles de los partidos políticos españoles (n=2144) con información sociodemográfica, antecedentes sociales y medidas sobre actitudes, motivaciones y activismo partidista. Los hallazgos revelan: (i) cierta similitud entre los miembros de las organizaciones juveniles en relación a los niveles de activismo y en el mayor número de variables independientes contempladas; (ii) un impacto positivo en la afiliación y activismo del asociacionismo y de la identificación con la organización política juvenil; (iii) las modalidades de activismo, pasivo y activo, están relacionadas con la posesión de recursos como dinero (vía empleo), y (iv) un buen desempeño del modelo socio-psicológico en comparación con el modelo de voluntarismo cívico y el de incentivos generales en la explicación en las modalidades de activismo activo.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Modelo de voluntarismo cívico; Modelo de incentivos generales; Activismo partidista; Modelo socio-psicológico; España; Organizaciones juveniles partidistas.

1. INTRODUCTION

The decline in party membership (Van Biezen et al. 2012) and apathy towards political parties is evident from the lack of trust in the political system in general and in the political class in particular. This trend of detachment from formal or institutional politics is more pronounced among young people. Scholars studying this phenomenon suggest that young people do actually engage in politics but in alternative or non-traditional forms of political participation (O'Toole et al. 2003; Blais et al. 2004; Sloam 2012, 2013; García-Albacete and Lorente 2019), and through other means such as the Internet (Ward et al. 2002). As a result, young people have been identified as the key players in the growing popularity of non-conventional forms of political participation. A consequence of mostly paying attention to new forms of political participation among young people is the neglect of other more traditional forms of political participation (beyond electoral participation). In this article we focus on one of these traditional forms, young people's participation in political parties, and more specifically, in youth party sections.

Youth party sections or organisations (YPO) are common among political parties around the world (Heidar 2006; Poguntke 2006). With varying formal status and structures (they are more or less autonomous within parties; sometimes membership is automatic for party members below a certain age while in other cases it is voluntary) (Hooghe and Stolle 2005; Mycock and Tonge 2012), YPOs are expected to play an important role in articulating the political involvement of young people, particularly with political parties, as well as a major talent pool for these organisations (Hooghe et al. 2004; Russell 2005; Bruter and Harrison 2009; Bennie and Russell 2012; Rainsford 2018). Compared to the exhaustive literature on political parties or the abundant research on political participation among young people, there are not many studies focusing on these party organisational branches. Apart from the abovementioned works, we can find just a handful of studies throughout the last decades, such as those of Recchi (1998), Barberà et al. (2002), Bargel and Petitfils (2009), Dechezelles (2009), Espinoza and Madrid (2010), Ninyoles (2015), Pickard (2015), Alarcón (2017, 2021), Rainsford (2017), de Roon (2019) and Weber (2020). This article adds to this literature by focusing on a specific aspect of YPOs – namely, explaining activism among members of these organisations. Activism is defined here as the degree of involvement of YPO members in different types of activities of the organisation. Understanding such involvement is important not only to better grasp what moves young people (in this case, this set of particularly engaged individuals) to participate in politics, but also to have a more precise picture of

the motivations of many of those who in the future will become part of the political elite (Recchi 1998; Hooghe et al. 2004).

Very few previous works have focused on explaining activism (beyond membership) among YPO members (Cross and Young 2008b; Bruter and Harrison 2009; Alarcón 2021). As we show in the following section, these have provided partial accounts of the factors affecting different types and intensities of activism. Our contribution in this article consists in offering a more encompassing explanation, which considers the plurality of factors that may affect the intensity and preferences for different types of activism. In doing so, we compare the explanatory power of different theoretical models of political participation – more specifically, the civic voluntarism model (CVM) (Verba et al. 1995), the general incentives model (GIM) (Seyd and Whiteley 1992) and the socio-psychological model of participation (SPM) (Whiteley and Seyd, 1996, 2002). We perform such comparison using data from a unique survey of 2,144 members of the main YPOs in Spain carried out in 2016.

This article challenges the classic view of traditional party membership and party activism by presenting evidence on the existence of passive and active participation within Spanish youth party organisations. It also shows that models developed in American and British contexts can travel to other established democracies and European countries to explain partisan behaviour. Our results show a great fit of the socio-psychological model of political participation in party activism, compared to the civic voluntarism and general incentives models. Previous membership in other associations and affective factor to YPOs increase the likelihood of involvement in economic activities and in activities that require the investment of more time.

The article is structured as follows. After this introduction, we discuss the different factors that could account for YPO members' activism. These factors are grouped as per the three models mentioned above, then we introduce the main characteristics and theoretical expectations. In the third section we detail the data and methods we used in the analysis, the results of which are presented in the fourth section. The article ends with a discussion of the results and a series of concluding remarks.

2. ACCOUNTING FOR PARTY ACTIVISM AMONG YPO MEMBERS

The category of activism applied to party members implies understanding it mainly as having a behavioural nature. Being counted as a party activist requires individuals to engage in some type of activity,

ranging from paying party fees (usually a formal requirement for membership, but not necessarily, as in the case of American parties or some new parties in Europe) (Ware 2006; Rodríguez-Teruel et al. 2016) to participating in the party's governing bodies, with a great variety of activities in between (Heidar 2006; Scarrow 2007). These multiple manifestations not only vary in their form, but also in the intensity of resources they require from party members. They include time, money, but also other more specific resources, such as specialised knowledge (for instance, when contributing to party policy debates), social capital (when recruiting new members), or even physical strength (when participating in crowd control in party events). These diverse forms of party activism run in parallel to the variety of explanations available in the literature (Scarrow 2015). Roughly, they derive from general explanations of political participation, and they include accounts based on the resources an individual possesses (education, time, particular skills and social capital) (Verba and Nie 1972; Brady et al. 1995), individuals' attitudes (spousal social norms, sentiments of personal efficacy, attitudes towards different types of activity) (Seyd and Whiteley 1992; Whiteley and Seyd 1996), the incentives associated to each activity (either economic, purposive, solidary, or expressive) (Clark and Wilson 1961; Olson 1965; Clarke et al. 1978; Wilson 1995), sociodemographic factors, such as age or gender (Burns et al. 2001), and other even structural factors, such as the context of opportunity (Morales 2001) or the influence of organisational cultures (Heidar 1994).

These models have been partially adapted by previous studies aiming to explain young party and YPO members' activism. Cross and Young (2008b) used a sample of young members of the Liberal Party in Canada to test the effect of different groups of variables (representing sociodemographic characteristics, political socialisation patterns, motivations to membership and attitudes towards political parties and other variables, such as attitudes towards interest groups or belonging to YPO) on the involvement in different types of party activities and its intensity. Their analysis finds that motivations for membership have an important influence on the intensity of participation – those with a political career motivation or aiming at influencing party policy tended to dedicate more hours to the party – though they were less important in explaining specific types of participation; for instance, campaign activism was significantly higher among those who joined because they believed in the party's policies, while participation in intra-party processes was more frequent among those who enjoyed socialising (2008b: 267). Attitudes towards political parties played a positive role in participating in campaigns and intra-party democracy, while political socialisation had a much more limited influence.

The importance of incentives for membership is also acknowledged in Bruter and Harrison's (2009) comparative study on young party members (not necessarily YPO members) in 15 European countries. These authors find that what they call 'social-minded' YPO members (that is, those joining these organisations for the sake of the opportunities they provide to interact with like-minded people) are least dedicated to the YPO or their party than 'moral-minded' (those who join to advance their ideological preferences) or 'professional-minded' members (those pursuing a career in politics).

Finally, Alarcón's (2021) study is the only one exclusively focusing on YPO members. In his study, he tested how well the rational choice explanation (Olson 1965; Clark et al. 1978) and the GIM (Seyd and Whiteley 1992) accounted for activism among YPO members in Spain. The results showed that the GIM offered a more satisfactory explanation than the rational choice. Thus, though, in principle, the tradeoff between costs and benefits seems to explain YPO members' activism, the importance of these factors disappears when social norms and affective factors or sentiments of group efficacy enter the equation. More specifically, perceptions of personal efficacy (whether individuals believed that their actions would have any political influence) and affective factors (identification with the organisation) positively affect the intensity of participation in YPO activities.

In this article we continue with this line of work but focusing on how alternative theoretical models account for YPO members' activism. Here we contrast the general incentives model with two additional ones: the civic voluntarism model and the socio-psychological model. Next, we develop the main characteristics and theoretical expectations implied by these models.

The General Incentives Model

The GIM (Seyd and Whiteley 1992; Whiteley and Seyd 1996, 2002) states that activism is a result of both the incentives that participation in YPO activities offer to individuals, as well as the effect of other socio-psychological factors. Regarding incentives, previous research has suggested that they might play an important role (Brutter and Harrison 2009). The GIM includes those incentives considered by rational choice models, namely collective benefits derived from political participation, personal costs of participating and selective incentives (that is, benefits that the individual enjoys independently of achieving the collective goals). Here, Seyd and Whiteley (1992) distinguish between outcome incentives (selective material incentives associated with benefits individuals obtain from participating, such as offices or career opportunities), process incentives (benefits obtained

from participation itself, such as meeting like-minded people or just having fun) and ideological incentives, this being a particular kind of process incentive, where individuals feel rewarded by the mere pursuit of their personal ideas. In the case of YPOs, and following the logic of the collective action derived from rational choice assumptions, selective incentives would be crucial in explaining members' activism.

In addition to this rational choice baseline, the GIM model also includes a number of socio-psychological factors influencing individual activism. First, there is the sentiment of personal efficacy, that is, believing that one's participation can make a difference in the organisation. This is a long-recognised factor explaining participation in collective action (Pateman 1970; Moe 1980). Second, we also add a feeling of group efficacy (Whiteley and Seyd 2002; Smith et al. 2021), that is, believing that collective action through the YPO will produce positive outcomes. Finally, in some studies non-rational motivations have been added to these factors, such as expressing sentiments of attachment or adhering to a social norm (Seyd and Whiteley 1992; Gallagher et al. 2002; Alarcón 2021), although in other works both these factors remain within the SPM model (Whiteley and Seyd, 1996 2002). In this study, they have been included within the SPM model, under a pragmatic approach.

The Civic Voluntarism Model

This is probably the best known and utilised among the different theoretical approaches to political participation (Verba and Nie 1972; Milbrath and Goel 1977; Verba et al. 1978, 1995). Starting from the observation that political behaviour is not evenly distributed across social groups, the model has emphasised the importance of resources associated with an individual's social position to explain their political participation.

Social status, educational level, income and time are the four basic resources considered in the CVM. Jointly or separately, they are positively correlated with electoral participation (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Blais et al. 2004) as well as with other forms of political engagement (Verba et al. 1995; Nie et al. 1996; Pedersen et al. 2004; Whiteley et al. 2011). They act through psychological mechanisms, fostering individuals' material and cognitive interests (civic skills) in the functioning of the political community, as well as a normative commitment (particularly in the case of education).

In line with this literature, we expect educational level and social status to influence positively activism within YPOs (Verba et al. 1993). Regarding income, we think it is not as important as the other two factors when considering YPO members. Since many of them are

at the beginning of their professional careers or have not started them yet, and their income still significantly depends on the support of parents or relatives, income is probably greatly determined by social status.

With respect to the fourth resource, time, we expect that its impact on YPO members' activism relates to a certain life cycle effect. Though some forms of political participation increase with age (Quintelier 2007), for activities implying a high participative intensity it is likely that the adult-life obligations (professional or family-related) may constitute a limitation. So, as free time may imply a higher level of activism among YPO members, we must also consider the impact of life cycle dynamics.

Verba et al. (1978) also distinguish between individual and group resources. The absence of individual resources can be compensated for by the development of group resources that originate in their membership or contact with social and associative networks such as political parties, unions, associations or informal groups. These networks may also trigger psychological, cognitive and normative mechanisms inducing party activism. For instance, having relatives in political parties increases formal and informal knowledge about the structure of political parties and can stimulate party activism (Recchi 1998; Cross and Young 2008a). In YPOs these external supporting networks are formed by friends and relatives, as well as fellow participants in other associations.

Finally, as we have mentioned above, in the CVM these structural factors influence individual behaviour through psychological mechanisms promoting political participation, particularly the development of civic interests and skills. The CVM includes variables such as the sense of political efficacy or psychological commitment to politics (Verba et al. 1995). Regarding YPO members' activism, we expect that these mediating variables have also a relevant explanatory role in this model.

The Socio-psychological Model

The social-psychological approach model is grounded on Fishbein and Ajzen's work on the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980) and the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen 1991), which helps explain behaviour by focusing on attitudes towards specific types of behaviour.

The SPM describes the relationship between beliefs and attitudes by assuming that attitudes have a direct influence on behaviour (in this case, party activism). Therefore, the individual assessments about a certain object predisposes people to carry out certain actions with regard to this object. Two main factors affect political behaviour according to the SPM (Whiteley

and Seyd 1996, 2002): expected benefits and social norms. Expected benefits are understood as the benefits reported by the course of actions. Individuals are considered as utilitarian people who calculate the benefit of each type of participation. Thus, YPO members will participate if they consider that the different activities YPOs promote will bring some benefit (either individual or social).

In turn, social norms are determined by the context of the individual, largely influenced by culture and societal beliefs. We consider two kinds of norms: internal and external. The former refer to internalised values, so that a person will participate in a YPO if they believe that the political action is normatively justified. Regarding external norms, societal beliefs are determined by attitudes of other people whose opinions have influence on the individual's values. Therefore, if relatives, friends or other people an individual has a close relationship with value positively political participation, individuals will be more motivated to be active in YPOs. The underlying idea is that people will participate in politics because they want to be accepted or integrated.

The SPM was completed with the introduction of two additional elements – personal political efficacy and an affective factor related to normative support for the organisation. The affective factor calibrates the emotional union of the subject with the YPO, and it should have an important influence on party membership. Therefore, higher levels of activism may depend on the extent to which an individual identifies with the YPO.

DATA AND METHODS

The YPO members survey

We test these models using data from a survey on members of the youth sections of Spanish political

parties. Fieldwork was carried out between April and November 2016, using an online questionnaire in a self-administered format. The link to the questionnaire was sent by email with the assistance and collaboration of the staff of the youth sections. The total used sample size was 2144 people, belonging to the youth sections of Spanish political parties represented in Parliament. The online supplementary information provides additional details on the survey and the sample.¹

Dependent variables

The activism of YPO members was measured through their participation in different types of activities in the organisation in the last twelve months: payment of fees²; donating money to the political organisation; participation in activities of the youth section (events, collecting signatures, parties, demonstrations, etc.); voluntary party work (unpaid); and recruiting members. In addition, the questionnaire asked if they had held any executive position in the structure of the youth organisation. This repertoire of activities follows previous works about activities of party members (Seyd and Whiteley 1992; Whiteley and Seyd, 1996, 2002; Cross and Young 2008a, 2008b; Van Haute and Gauja 2015; Scarrow 2015). The different modalities can be divided into two groups, depending on the energy and resources individuals must invest in them. Membership fees and donating money are passive modalities of activism, as they do not require interaction with other members nor any significant time investment. The other four modalities imply a substantive energy investment on the part of the YPO member. For instance, voluntary work implies renouncing leisure time, and in some cases, attendance to events involves an economic cost (Webb et al. 2020). Internal party office is deemed to be a 'high-intensive' activism form (Whiteley and Seyd 2002:62). An executive committee is necessary in order to ensure the youth section survives and

Table 1.
Political activities undertaken by members (% yes)

	JSE/JSC	NNGG	Young of IU	JERC	EGI	GN	JNC	Total
Membership fees	90*	36,1*	67,6*	94,3*	88,4*	87,4*	94,5*	73,4
Donate money	10,1*	6,8*	26,1*	11,4	7,2	34,5*	6,4*	13,2
Participation in activities	83,2*	81,6*	89,3	98,6*	92,8	100*	96,3*	86,1
Voluntary work	70,1*	70,5	79*	90*	75,4	88,5*	78	73,9
Recruit members	77,4*	80,4	84,1	95,7*	84,1	87,4	76,1	80,6
Youth Party Office	57,6*	47,1*	49,3	81,4*	30,4*	50,6	56,9	53,1
N	900	499	410	70	69	87	109	2144

Note: *adjusted standardised residuals > 2 or < - 2. See the online supplementary information for the meaning of the different acronyms. Source: own elaboration

functions effectively. Members occupying or having held a party office position in the youth section have more responsibilities in the youth section and are also expected, at least in theory, to spend a great deal of time on and be active in the youth section. In sum, passive modalities of activism are related to the definition of party membership while the other four activities are related to party activism.³ Both kinds of activism – economic activism and active party activities – have been considered as dependent variables used to test alternative models of political participation.

Table 1 shows different rates of participation in the seven samples of YPO in the six party activities examined. The variability in the responses ranges between 18 in participation in activities and 58 points of difference in party fees, with some differences being significant. The number of those who reported involvement in at least one of the three active modalities (participation in activities, voluntary work and recruitment of young people) represented over the half of the members of each youth sections. On the other hand, both passive modalities of activism show more pronounced differences between members of YPO. This is due, on the one hand, to the different individual profiles of members that we can find within youth sections, and on the other hand, that young people under 18 years of age are exempt from paying membership fees. An additional reason could be that political parties, in view of retaining members, were not very strict in controlling membership fees. In the case of the PSOE, Méndez (2000: 228) points out that at the end of the 90s, only 67% of the affiliates were up to date with the payment of the fees and only between 30 and 35% of the affiliates declared carrying out other types of internal activities. The data show that members of both Catalan non-state-wide parties – JERC and JNC – provide a high level of economic support to their parent political party or the corresponding youth section, either by paying fees or through donating money. In contrast, lower levels of economic support are to be found among members of NNCG.

In the analysis, we will model these two types of activism separately. Economic activism is operationalised through a dichotomic variable, where 1 means paying fees and/or donating money to the YPO (range 0-1, mean = 0,75; Standard deviation = 0,431); and active modalities of activism an additive intensity scale (range 0-4; mean = 2,93; Standard deviation = 1,155).

Independent Variables

To test the different theoretical models, we have three blocks of independent variables, one for each

model, plus a number of control variables related to the sociodemographic characteristics. We briefly introduce here the variables associated with each model, while the details about their operationalisations and the main descriptive statistics can be found in the online supplementary material to this article.

The analyses testing the GIM include variables measuring both *individual* and *group political efficacy*. Here, we must point out the generalised high perceptions among YPO members in these two variables. The GIM also includes variables measuring the respondents' perceptions about the *collective benefits* and the *costs* associated with participation in YPOs. Regarding collective benefits, instead of benefits linked to the policies each party promotes, we focus on collective benefits for the entire community produced by political parties, such as a better working of democratic institutions (Pattie et al. 2004). The variable measuring the *outcome incentives* is a scale measuring the extent to which individuals are predisposed to following a political vocation (Alarcón and Trujillo 2020). Finally, the GIM also includes two measures for *process* and *ideological incentives*.

In turn, the CVM includes variables measuring respondents' resources. We consider *educational level* and *social status*, together with *free time*. The latter is necessary for participating in active modalities of political activism (though not in the case of paying fees or donating money). This theoretical model also includes two variables measuring civic interests and skills. The first one is the *self-perception of political efficacy* (also included in the GIM). The second variable measuring civic interests refers to the respondents' perception of political participation as a *civic duty*. Finally, the CVM also considers the importance of individuals' networks as a factor influencing political participation (Verba et al. 1995). Here, we consider different indicators of respondents' involvement networks that could favour their participation in the YPO: membership in other *associations*, having *party members in the family* and being *recruited* by a friend, a relative or a classmate.

The variables included in the SPM refer to the *expected benefits* individuals associate with different courses of action, as well as to external *social norms* (the normative perceptions of participation in political parties). It also includes the indicator of *individual political efficacy* and a measure of *expressive attachment* or identification to the YPO.

Finally, we include in our models a number of control variables related to sociodemographic features in the respondents. The literature on political participation has demonstrated their influence in party activism (Rainsford 2017; Alarcón 2021). For instance,

studies suggest different patterns of political participation between young and old people and indicate that certain forms of political participation increases with age, especially when young people are fully incorporated into adult life (Quintelier 2007). Although in the case of party activism, the opposite phenomenon may be observed, due to adult life obligations. Entering into adult life implies certain obligations that may constitute limitations to party activism. Apart from age, in the models we also control for other life cycle variables that reflect those adult life obligations, such as living together with one's *partner*, or having *children*. Finally, we also consider the possible differential effect of *gender*.

Party Membership and Party Activism Among Members of the YPO

This section presents the results of the statistical analysis. The tables in this section show the results of the tests of the models for each theoretical framework: GIM (1), CVM (2) and, SPM (3) and, a full model with all the variables (4). Table 2 presents the logistic regression models for the first dependent variable (economic activism). In turn, for the active modalities of activism, we have resorted to OLS regression (Table 3). All these models also include a block of dummy variables for each YPOs (NNGG as reference category), aimed at controlling the fixed effects inherent to each political organisation.

In Table 2 we observe that the explanatory power of each model on economic activism is quite similar (i.e. the Nagelkerke's R² statistic ranges from 36,5% to 37,2%). The amount of explained variance in the full model (4) is still low (Nagelkerke's R² = 0.41) given the considerable number of variables entered. In terms of parsimony, the socio-psychological model, only comprising four variables, has the best fit.

In passive modalities of activism, several variables in the GIM present statistically significant coefficients. Members of YPOs with a higher sense of political group efficacy are more likely to support the youth section or political party through the payment of membership fees and the donation of money. Also, economic activism is more likely the higher the perception of participation costs and with lower levels of process incentives - that is when respondents do not find political participation as something fun or an environment to socialise in. In contrast, economic activism is more likely to be found among more extremist members. Finally, individual political efficacy does not have any significant impact on economic activism.

The second model evaluates the civic voluntarism model for economic activism. First, the expectation that those with a higher educational level have passive activism is not verified. It should be noted

that the educational level variable includes the last completed educational qualification, so the higher levels correspond to a higher biological age. This result is not in line with the literature on political participation and party membership, where it is pointed out that the oldest people present higher levels of activism. In contrast, free time has a significant effect on economic activism. The negative, significant coefficient in this variable corroborates the theoretical expectation that those who economically support their party do not need free time. On the contrary, members of the YPO with allegedly less free time (because they are in the labour market) seem to show higher probability of staying up-to-date on membership fees and donate money. Moreover, we find significant effects of associationism on party activism, both economic and active activities (Tables 2 and 3). The data validate the expectation about the implications that participation in civil society organisations boost party activism. Both analyses indicate that those young people who participate in a greater number of associations before joining the YPO are also more active in youth sections. Such importance emerges in the analysis of the CVM model and the full model (4) in Table 2. Regarding the way individuals are recruited, it does not have a significant effect on economic party activities. There is no significant difference between those who join the organisation at their own initiative and those recruited through other types of networks (friends, relatives or classmates).

In the model evaluating the SPM in Table 2, members who felt that they were very strong supporters were more likely to pay membership fees and donate money. The emotional attachment to the youth section seems to be a strong predictor of economic activism. Expected benefits have also a positive and significant impact on economic activism. If members of youth sections in political parties perceive the fact that a particular method of participation is effective or influential for their party goals, they are more likely pay party fees. Finally, and in contrast to expectation, social norms do not have an impact on economic activism.

Concerning the control variables included in the models in Table 2, age of membership and being under 18 years old have significant, negative coefficients in all models. People who became a YPO member younger were more likely to pay fees than members who be engaged in a more advanced age. A possible explanation for this patter is that those who arrived younger and are still on the YPO have had to renew their membership or support for the youth section every year. However, when the individual is a minor (under Spanish legal age to membership – 18 years old), their involvement is

Table 2.
Determinants of economic activism: logistic regression analysis

	GIM (1)	CVM (2)	SPM (3)	FULL (4)
Personal efficacy	0,006 (1,006)	0,019 (1,019)	0,009 (1,009)	0,005 (1,005)
Group efficacy	0,125*** (1,134)			0,094* (1,099)
Collective benefits	0,059+ (1,061)			0,024 (1,025)
Cost	0,065* (1,067)			0,073* (1,076)
Outcome incentives	0,010 (1,010)			0,009 (1,009)
Process incentives	-0,070+ (0,933)			-0,101* (0,904)
Ideological incentives	0,319* (1,376)			0,290+ (1,336)
Education level		0,113 (1,120)		0,089 (1,093)
Social status		0,084 (1,088)		0,068 (1,070)
Free time		-0,534*** (0,586)		-0,526** (0,591)
Civic duty		-0,147 (0,864)		-0,067 (0,953)
Associations		0,193** (1,213)		0,176* (1,192)
Recruited		0,029 (1,030)		0,110 (1,116)
Family party member		0,148 (1,160)		0,262 (1,300)
Expected benefits (a)			0,260*** (1,297)	0,287*** (1,333)
Social norms			-0,035 (0,965)	-0,033 (0,967)
Expressive attachment			0,350*** (1,419)	0,329** (1,389)
Gender	-0,230 (0,795)	-0,220 (0,803)	-0,357** (0,700)	-0,422** (0,656)
Age	-0,088*** (0,915)	-0,100*** (0,905)	-0,085*** (0,919)	-0,102*** (0,903)
Partner	0,321 (1,379)	0,392+ (1,480)	0,556* (1,743)	0,196 (1,217)
Children	-0,054 (0,947)	-0,073 (0,929)	-0,117 (0,890)	-0,133 (0,876)
Under 18	-1,507*** (0,221)	-1,175*** (0,309)	-1,538*** (0,215)	-1,376*** (0,253)
JSE	3,041*** (20,919)	2,938*** (18,873)	2,698*** (14,844)	2,787*** (16,236)
Young of IU	2,095*** (8,125)	1,771*** (5,878)	1,174*** (3,235)	1,424*** (4,155)
JERC	3,585*** (36,055)	3,432*** (30,924)	2,955*** (19,204)	3,130*** (22,883)
EGI	2,633*** (13,922)	2,276*** (9,734)	2,412*** (11,161)	2,033*** (7,639)
GN	4,038*** (56,686)	3,103*** (22,256)	2,514*** (12,352)	3,162*** (23,609)
JNC	4,044*** (57,081)	3,858*** (47,365)	3,622*** (37,402)	3,528*** (34,056)
Constant	-0,991 (0,371)	0,480 (1,617)	-0,634 (0,531)	-2,044+ (0,129)
R2 Cox-Snell	0,246	0,247	0,242	0,268
R2 Nagelkerke	0,372	0,369	0,365	0,410
N	1505	1647	1633	1438

Beta coefficients with exponential of Beta in parentheses

[*** p≤0,001; ** p≤0,01; * p≤0,05;+ p≤0,10]

Source: own elaboration

not full due to that fact that they may not be able to afford the necessary economic resources.

As we expected, gender has an effect on economic activism, but is only significant in the SPM and the full models. Among men, it is more likely to find members who support economically the YPOs, and – as we can see in Table 3 – participate more in party life than women do. Finally, in contrast to previous expectations, members of YPOs who are in couple are more likely to be economically active; the impact of this variable is positive in the CVM the SPM models.

As in economic activism, when accounting for participation in other party activities (Table 3), the SPM is the most parsimonious model and its explanatory power is substantially higher the civic voluntarism and the general incentive models. Also, the explanatory gain of the full model (4) in terms of the R2 statistic is low. Thus, the expected benefits of partisan activities and the affective factor of partisanship have an impact on conducting activities within the youth section. Members with high levels of party identification with the YPO or the parent party are more likely show higher levels of participation in party activities. Also, greater expected benefits of active participation makes participation more likely.

As in economic activism, in the general incentives model group political efficacy and a more intense perception of collective benefits have a positive impact on participation in party activities. Selective outcome incentives have also a significant effect on party activities, suggesting that party members are motivated by vocational engagement: members that think of politics as a part of their calling are clearly far more active – in the line of expectation for ‘professional-minded’ members (Bruter and Harrison 2009; Weber 2020). Moreover, the positive, significant coefficient in ideological incentives shows that current extremist members are more motivated to participate in party activities. Finally, process incentives do not make a contribution to the explanation of activities, which is contrary to the sociability function of youth sections (Cross and Young 2008b; Bruter and Harrison 2009; Dechezelles 2009).

The model testing the CVM in Table 3, we personal efficacy has a positive impact on time devoted to party activities (Alarcón 2021). Besides, having free time is not related to a more in-depth engagement with the YPOs. Thus, party members who have full time jobs as well as studying simultaneously are more likely to be active members in the youth section. Also, a higher level of education increases involvement of young party members in party activities; while having relatives who are party members does not correspond to a higher level of party activism – quite

the opposite, in fact: those who joined the YPOs and without relatives being party members are more active (Eldersveld 1966). These results suggest that those joining the party because of family ties – family party membership – may be mostly motivated by the impulse of satisfying their relatives rather than because of genuine interest in party activism. At the same time, neither being recruited through personal networks nor a higher sense of civic duty show a significant relationship with active participation in youth sections. As we have pointed out in reference to family membership, in some sense these variables direct the affiliation of young members but not their involvement in party activities.

The feelings of personal political efficacy show influence in two of the three models in Table 3 – CVM and SPM. A high sense of individual political efficacy is linked to the intensity of party activism in both models. In contrast, individual political efficacy does not have a significant effect on participation in activities under the general incentives model and the full model (4).

As we expected, gender is related to participation in party activities; young female members display lower levels of activism. These results are in line with our expectations and previous research on young party members carried out in other contexts (Bargel 2008; Cross and Young 2008b; Espinosa and Madrid 2010) and Spain (Alarcón 2021). Party membership and party activism remain a traditionally male domain. In partisan activities, none of the two variables that help us to identify the life cycle present significant coefficients in the GIM, the SPM and the full models: members of the YPOs with family responsibilities are just as likely to engage in party activities as members without it. In contrast, in the CVM model, young people who live with their partner show lower intensity of participation in party activities. Living as a couple implies planning together, and less time for party activities and active engagement with youth sections. Finally, as in the case of economic activism, those who have joined the youth section younger are more likely to engage in party service. In contrast, underage party members present weak ties with YPOs. This means the pursuit of a multi-speed approach to party membership (Scarrow 2015) by parties and youth sections for some members – minors – in order to connect with new people and renew membership figures in order to survive.

CONCLUSIONS

The differences in the rates of political participation, and even in the different types of participation, have been explained by the presence or absence of certain individual characteristics. The relationship

Table 3.
Determinants of party activities: OLS regression analysis

	GIM (1)	CVM (2)	SPM (3)	FULL (4)
Personal efficacy	0,007 (0,008)	0,024*** (0,007)	0,018* (0,007)	0,008 (0,008)
Group efficacy	0,054*** (0,014)			0,017 (0,014)
Collective benefits	0,029* (0,013)			0,010 (0,013)
Cost	-0,005 (0,012)			0,020+ (0,012)
Outcome incentives	0,019*** (0,003)			0,012*** (0,003)
Process incentives	0,020 (0,014)			-0,005 (0,014)
Ideological incentives	0,103* (0,054)			0,039 (0,053)
Education level		0,063* (0,027)		0,114*** (0,026)
Social status		-0,039 (0,024)		-0,027 (0,023)
Free time		-0,127* (0,058)		-0,132* (0,055)
Civic duty		0,075 (0,056)		0,042 (0,053)
Associations		0,191*** (0,026)		0,099*** (0,025)
Recruited		-0,084 (0,062)		0,000 (0,060)
Family party member		-0,112+ (0,057)		-0,082 (0,055)
Expected benefits (b)			0,150*** (0,021)	0,113*** (0,022)
Social norms			-0,012 (0,012)	0,003 (0,013)
Expressive attachment			0,443*** (0,043)	0,363*** (0,046)
Gender	-0,101+ (0,057)	-0,031 (0,058)	-0,156** (0,054)	-0,116* (0,056)
Age	-0,032*** (0,009)	-0,041*** (0,010)	-0,038*** (0,009)	-0,041*** (0,009)
Partner	-0,009 (0,078)	-0,160* (0,081)	0,005 (0,075)	-0,076 (0,076)
Children	-0,262 (0,177)	-0,187 (0,186)	-0,111 (0,177)	-0,161 (0,172)
Under 18	-0,780*** (0,121)	-0,460*** (0,121)	-0,715*** (0,111)	-0,537*** (0,119)
JSE	0,190** (0,071)	0,138+ (0,071)	0,081 (0,066)	0,056 (0,070)
Young of IU	0,360*** (0,104)	0,150+ (0,087)	0,037 (0,081)	-0,029 (0,105)
JERC	0,815*** (0,172)	0,717*** (0,163)	0,429** (0,151)	0,486** (0,167)
EGI	0,024 (0,175)	0,006 (0,165)	-0,254 (0,155)	-0,363* (0,176)
GN	0,521** (0,166)	0,434** (0,147)	0,140 (0,139)	0,156 (0,161)
JNC	0,389** (0,136)	0,199 (0,128)	0,130 (0,120)	0,102 (0,130)
Constant	1,701*** (0,326)	2,842*** (0,284)	1,333*** (0,306)	0,704+ (0,362)
F-value	11,048	10,089	20,824	14,472
R	0,339	0,325	0,420	0,473
R squared (adj.)	0,104	0,095	0,168	0,208
N	1553	1645	1630	1434

Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression results: unstandardized coefficients with standard errors in parentheses

[*** p≤0,001; ** p≤0,01; * p≤0,05;+ p≤0,10]

Source: own elaboration

between demographic and socioeconomic variables with political participation has been empirically demonstrated (Verba and Nie, 1972; Nie and Verba 1975; Milbrath and Goel 1977). Theoretical developments allowed Verba et al. (1995) to formulate and test the civic voluntarism model of political behaviour that has been applied in this work to the activism of the members of Spanish youth sections. Theoretical and empirical research on British party members (Seyd and Whiteley 1992; Whiteley and Seyd 2002) incorporated two new models: the general incentives and the socio-psychological models. These are the three main approaches used to explain political participation and intensity of activism. In addition, other variables considered relevant in the literature have been introduced to complete the three models, such as gender, life cycle, age of membership, being underage and family party membership. Building on this, the article makes an original and significant contribution to the current literature on the involvement of members of political parties by providing a more nuanced understanding of party membership and party activism into the members of YPOs.

Of the results obtained in the analysis of economic activism and active participation in party activities on CVM, those referred to the effects of associationism and recruitment deserve particular consideration. In the first place, previous works on associationism and on social capital indicate that voluntary activity should stimulate participation. Membership in non-political and voluntary organisations – youth, student unions and cultural organisations – helps to acquire civic skills that can be used to support political participation, and should have an impact on party activism by increasing political involvement. In the case of Spanish youth sections, previous membership does have an impact on passive and active activities.

Second, with respect to recruitment, studies on the CVM suggest that political participation is partially explained by the fact that the subjects were incited to participate by other people. However, we have shown that recruitment networks, in general, do not have a significant effect party activism, even in economic activities that require less time or effort; recruitment through family ties, friends or classmates does not affect involvement of young party members. Being asked to participate may open political opportunities to young people inside a youth section, but it is not a sufficient condition in order to maintain a high level of involvement and intensity on party activism. These results have real implications for the functioning of political parties in terms of revitalising their membership. Parties often resort to recruitment campaigns to expand their numbers. These campaigns are usually successful,

and the number of members increases considerably (see Méndez 2000 for the case of the PSOE between 1975 and 1996). However, our findings suggest that new members will not necessarily be more active.

Explanations, predominantly from the UK, centre on the GIM; a range of incentives explain why some people engage intensively in party activism (Seyd and Whiteley 1992; Whiteley and Seyd 2002). In our models, ideological incentives explain economic activism and active participation in party activities; young party members with a more extreme ideological view within the YPO, are more engaged in youth party life. Selective outcome incentives also explain high-intensity involvement, as per previous findings about party activism in other countries (Bruter and Harrison 2009). Young party members with a high sense of political calling are more involved in party activities than members with low levels of calling. Further efforts in measuring this kind of selective outcome incentives might use this measure in surveys of party members rather than other political ambition indicators.

Finally, the SPM offers the best fit to the data of all the three theoretical models tested in the analysis. Expected benefits of activities and expressive attachment to YPOs significantly account for the observed variation in the levels of activism of party members also shows that participation in party activities is related to a sense of effectiveness of YPO members. Therefore, these variables deserve to be taken into consideration in future studies of party membership.

In conclusion, this article provides critical information for political parties as well as for YPOs and government agencies that promote political participation, party activism and, in general, democratic values. In a context of decline in the number of party members and the role of political parties in representative democracy, stimulating the participation of young people is key to reinforcing it.

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NOTAS

[1] <http://hdl.handle.net/10481/71064>

[2] For a review of membership fees of Spanish political parties see Baras et al. (2015:19)

[3] Exploratory factor analysis – principal component analysis with Varimax rotation – shows the presence of two underlying factors accounting for 52,1% of the variance. Factors correspond to the two types of modalities (passive and active). The first factor (accounting for 34,4% of the variance) includes participation in party activities, voluntary work, recruiting members, and holding an office in the YPO. The second factor is composed paying membership dues and donating money (17,7% of variance).

FRANCISCO JAVIER ALARCÓN GONZÁLEZ is Assistant Professor at the University of Granada (Spain). He holds a PhD in Social Science, with a dissertation about Spanish young party members. This thesis was Awarded by the Spanish Political Science and Public Administration Association Best PhD prize in 2018, and with a special mention at the Juan Linz Doctoral Prize by Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales. His work focuses on political elites and party members in Spain.

JOSÉ REAL-DATO is Associate Professor at the University of Almería (Spain). His research interests include the study of party responsiveness, the attitudes of national political elites, the institutionalisation and development of political science in national contexts, and the role of politico-administrative elites in the policy process. He is co-editor (with Nicolò Conti and Borbála Göncz) of the book *National Political Elites, European Integration and the Eurozone Crisis* (Routledge, 2018).