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# What drives parents to co-create value in public schools: examining the role of ideological orientation

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## ABSTRACT


This study extends self-determination theory and research on value co-creation (VCC) in public services by providing fresh insights into the motives influencing parental VCC in public schools. Moving beyond prior work focused on institutional and resource-based enablers, we introduce ideological orientation as a novel moderator shaping how intrinsic and extrinsic motives translate into VCC. Drawing on survey data from 301 parents and employing SEM, we show that relationship and empowerment motives positively influence VCC, while status motives exhibit a comparatively weaker relationship. Parents' left-wing orientation strengthens the impact of relationship and empowerment motives and weakens the role of status motives.

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**KEYWORDS** Value Co-creation; self-determination theory; ideological orientation; public education

## Introduction

Parental engagement is widely recognized as a critical component of high-performing public education systems. Studies consistently show that when parents collaborate with teachers, by sharing information, supporting learning, or contributing to school life, students benefit academically, socially, and motivationally (Cosso, von Suchodoletz, and Yoshikawa 2022; Honingh, Bondarouk, and Brandsen 2018). Yet many school systems often struggle to translate these benefits into sustained involvement (Cranston, Labman, and Crook 2021; Spear et al. 2023). Recent PISA data illustrate this paradox: between 2018 and 2022, proactive parent – teacher discussions declined across OECD countries, including substantial drops in Lithuania (OECD 2023). This disconnect between known benefits and actual participation suggests that crucial pieces are missing in

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understanding what truly drives parents to become active partners in their children's education. Indeed, as recent public management scholarship shows, co-creation initiatives across different public services often fail or struggle to sustain citizen engagement over time despite supportive, well-designed structures (Hoppen, Huber, and Aaslund 2025; McMullin 2024) and exponential growth in research on the concept (Ege, Kaiser, and Steiner 2025).

Public management research has approached this challenge primarily by examining institutional and resource-based enablers of value co-creation (VCC), such as organizational openness (Andrews and Brewer 2013; Bovaird and Loeffler 2012; Meijer 2012), participatory infrastructure (de Jong, Neulen, and Jansma 2019; Jarke 2019; Neumann and Schott 2023), managerial attitudes (Davis and Ruddle 2012; Gebauer, Johnson, and Enquist 2010; Leone et al. 2012), and citizen capabilities (e.g. Andrews and Brewer 2013; Bovaird and Loeffler 2012; Jarke 2019). While this work has advanced understanding of when and under what conditions citizens participate, it provides limited insight into why individuals choose to engage in the first place. Research on VCC in public services has only partially addressed the internal motivational mechanisms that shape citizens' willingness to co-create (W. H. Voorberg, Bekkers, and Tummers 2015), with most studies focusing on generic constructs such as civic duty (Wise, Paton, and Gegenhuber 2012), self-efficacy (Alonso et al. 2019; Bovaird et al. 2016; Schüler, Fee Maier, and Liljedal 2020) or political self-interest (Hutter, Füller, and Koch 2011). The motivational heterogeneity explaining parental engagement, specifically the role of psychological needs and value-based orientations, remains underdeveloped.

Despite these important insights, prior research has largely overlooked the role of psychological motivational mechanisms that drive parents' willingness to engage in VCC. With only a few exceptions focusing on motives such as normative commitment and social identity (Bovaird and Loeffler 2012; Jakobsen and Calmar Andersen 2013), civic duty (Wise, Paton, and Gegenhuber 2012), most studies have outlined the conditions under which VCC occurs rather than explaining why some parents choose to participate while others do not. Second, although political psychology shows that ideological orientation influences how individuals perceive civic responsibilities and the role of the state (Goren 2001; Jost and van der Toorn 2012), public management research has scarcely examined how such orientations condition citizens' engagement in public services. Prior studies have not integrated motivational and ideological perspectives, even though Jost and van der Toorn (2012) suggest that ideological orientation can act as a value filter that amplifies or suppresses the translation of psychological motives into action. This leaves unanswered why similar motives lead some parents to participate actively in VCC, while others remain less engaged.

To address this gap, we aim to answer the following research question: how do psychological motivational mechanisms drive parent-teacher VCC in public schools and how does ideological orientation moderate these effects? Drawing on self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci 2000), we conceptualize three parental motives, namely, relationship, empowerment, and status, and argue that their behavioural expression depends on whether they align with individuals' political – ideological values. Simultaneously, drawing on insights from political psychology (Jost and van der Toorn 2012), ideological orientation is therefore theorized not as a direct antecedent of engagement but as a value filter that strengthens, weakens, or redirects the translation of motives into behaviour.

We explore this question by surveying 301 parents of primary and secondary school children in Lithuania. According to the OECD (2023), the country demonstrates high levels of parental involvement in schools, comparable to other EU member states, allowing for meaningful benchmarking. It has also implemented national policies supporting parent-school collaboration, including legal protections for parental participation and structured platforms for engagement. With income levels, educational attainment, and institutional development near the EU average (Eurostat 2024), Lithuania offers a representative setting for investigating VCC in European public education. At the same time, its experience with post-1990 education reforms provide an additional layer of insight into how institutional and normative shifts may shape parental engagement.

This study extends SDT (Ryan and Deci 2000) and contributes to the literature on VCC in public services (e.g. Osborne 2018; Steen and Brandsen 2020; W. H. Voorberg, Bekkers, and Tummers 2015) in several ways. Specifically, we deepen the understanding of internal motivational antecedents of VCC by providing fresh insights into the motives influencing VCC among parents of school-aged children. While existing research has largely focused on institutional enablers of citizen participation in co-creation, our study introduces ideological orientation as a novel moderator that conditions how intrinsic and extrinsic motives translate into VCC. By integrating psychological and political perspectives, we demonstrate that co-creation is not only a function of motivational strength but also of ideological congruence, that is, whether the motive aligns with an individual's broader political worldview. Together, these contributions offer a more nuanced account of why some parents co-create value with teachers while others remain at the margins, despite similar institutional opportunities. They also advance broader debates in public management around the behavioural foundations of co-creation and the importance of contextual and value-based moderators in public service engagement.

## Theory and hypothesis development

### *Co-creation of value in public services*

Co-creation in public services refers to processes in which citizens or community members actively collaborate with professional service providers to create value, typically with the aim of improving service outcomes (Maijala, Rantamäki, and Kurkela 2025; Osborne, Radnor, and Strokosch 2016). While the concepts of co-creation and co-production are often used interchangeably, scholars increasingly stress their distinction. Co-production generally denotes citizen participation in the implementation or delivery of services (Pestoff 2006), whereas VCC reflects how value is created and generated by users and providers through their interactions. As Osborne (2018) argues, VCC requires an interactive and dynamic relationship where value emerges at the nexus of interaction. Central to this perspective is the notion of 'value-in-use', which emphasizes that value is created when services satisfy users' needs in ways that are meaningful to them (Scutella, Plewa, and Reaiche 2024). These needs are inherently highly individual (Engen et al. 2021) and shaped by expectations and the quality of specific service encounters (Osborne, Nasi, and Powell 2021; Trischler et al. 2023). In other words, co-production is generally used to describe citizens' participation in the design, management, delivery, and evaluation of services, that is, their direct, often task-related contributions to service processes (Osborne, Radnor, and Strokosch 2016). VCC, by contrast, is a broader concept that captures how these contributions, when combined with the efforts of providers and institutional arrangements, generate value-in-use for citizens and public value for communities (W. H. Voorberg, Bekkers, and Tummers 2015). In this perspective, co-production can be seen as one mechanism through which co-creation occurs, but co-creation also includes relational, experiential, and outcome-level dimensions that extend beyond the act of producing services.

For example, a public school's value (e.g. student achievement and performance, socialization, parental satisfaction, etc.) emerges from the interplay of teacher effort and parental involvement, among other factors. In this sense, VCC is seen as a way to increase public value by making services more efficient, legitimate, and tailored to community needs (Osborne, Radnor, and Strokosch 2016). Scholars argue that co-creation can strengthen social cohesion and rebuild trust in government by empowering citizens as partners in service delivery (Brandsen and Honingh 2018).

### *Parents as co-creators of educational services*

Parental involvement is increasingly recognized as a form of co-creation between families and schools. Rather than viewing education as solely delivered by professional educators, this perspective recognizes that parents actively help produce better educational outcomes for their children by

working together with teachers (Honingh, Bondarouk, and Brandsen 2018). This collaboration spans multiple educational levels, from early childhood education in preschools (Pestoff 2012) and kindergartens (Lindenmeier et al. 2021) to primary and secondary schools (Cicatiello et al. 2023; Honingh, Bondarouk, and Brandsen 2018). Similar complexities have been observed in other public service contexts, where co-creation initiatives often face challenges related to role ambiguity, coordination, and sustained commitment (Hoppen, Huber, and Aaslund 2025). Schools are no exception as teachers and parents often have to negotiate overlapping responsibilities and expectations. Indeed, education involves multiple actors from the service user perspective: not only are the pupils actively engaged, but parents also play a crucial role as co-creators responsible for their children's well-being, development, and progress at school (Cicatiello et al. 2023). As a result, parental involvement extends beyond passive support to become an integral part of the co-creation process, directly influencing the quality and outcomes of the educational service.

VCC takes two distinct forms through parental involvement: participation behaviour and citizenship behaviour (Survilaite et al. 2024). Drawing on service-dominant logic (SDL) and public service logic (PSL), participation behaviour refers to parents' in-role, necessary contributions to the educational service (e.g. helping with homework, ensuring attendance, or communicating with teachers), which are essential for co-creating the child's learning experience. In contrast, citizenship behaviour refers to extra-role, voluntary actions by parents that go beyond required duties to support the school community, such as volunteering at school events, providing feedback to teachers, or advocating for school improvements. According to VCC theory, both forms enhance public value in different ways (Yi and Gong 2013). Parental participation directly co-creates value-in-use for their own child's education by integrating home resources with school efforts (aligning with SDL's idea that value is realized in use through active stakeholder involvement), thereby improving the student's outcomes. Parental citizenship behaviours contribute to broader public value by strengthening the overall service ecosystem and social capital of the school, for instance, a parent's volunteer work or advocacy benefits other students and improves the school environment as a whole.

Parental involvement, when effective, leads to significant benefits for both student outcomes and schools as a whole. Decades of research have linked parental involvement to improved student achievement, attendance, and motivation (e.g. Cosso, von Suchodoletz, and Yoshikawa 2022; Crosnoe et al. 2016; Jakobsen and Calmar Andersen 2013; Jeynes 2012; Won-Tack 2021). In addition to individual student-related outcomes, parental involvement positively affects organizational aspects of schools, such as enhancing perceived school reputation and improving teacher competence (Survilaite

et al. 2024). Studies during COVID-19 also demonstrate a strong positive correlation between parents' co-production in online education and service satisfaction (Cicatiello et al. 2023). This has led experts to advocate for sustaining parental engagement in educational co-creation beyond crisis contexts, emphasizing collaboration and co-creation as a successful model (Cicatiello et al. 2023; Steen and Brandsen 2020).

Despite its benefits, co-creating education presents challenges that highlight the need to better understand parental motivation. To start with, the partnership between parents and teachers merges the formal realm of the school with the informal realm of the family, creating what Honingh, Bondarouk, and Brandsen (2018) describe as difficult and ambiguous relationships. Role ambiguity emerges as teachers, who are trained professionals, must balance their expertise with parents' intimate knowledge of their children. This complexity might be further compounded by structural barriers: time constraints, resource limitations, and cultural factors can create participation inequities. While some initiatives, such as the Danish parental training programme, successfully engaged disadvantaged families and improved literacy outcomes (Andersen et al. 2021), there remains a risk that co-creation might inadvertently favour already-advantaged parents who have greater capacity to participate. Nonetheless, by providing the enabling conditions, even highly vulnerable groups may become successfully involved (Hoppen, Brandsen, and Honingh 2025).

### ***Motivational mechanisms driving citizen co-creation***

Understanding why citizens engage in co-creation has been a longstanding focus in public management research. Sharp's early categorization (Sharp 1978, cited in; Alford 2002) distinguished material incentives, solidarity, and expressive incentives. Alford (2002, 2009) refined this, arguing that while extrinsic rewards motivate simple, transactional tasks, intrinsic motivations such as solidarity and expressive rewards are crucial for more complex forms of engagement. Subsequent studies confirmed that intrinsic drivers, including normative commitment and social identity, often outweigh material incentives (Bovaird and Loeffler 2012; Jakobsen and Calmar Andersen 2013). Parrado et al. (2013) further emphasized the role of self-efficacy and perceived competence in sustaining citizen involvement, echoing Bandura's (1994) broader findings on self-efficacy and motivation.

Building on these insights, Alford and Yates (2016) proposed that self-efficacy and willingness to contribute are key indicators of citizens' underlying motivations. More recent research has also highlighted identity affirmation and the desire for social recognition as emerging motivational drivers (Brandsen and Honingh 2016; Osborne, Radnor, and Strokosch 2016). Extending these frameworks, this study highlights three psychological

mechanisms particularly salient in explaining parental engagement in educational co-creation: relationship motives, empowerment motives, and status motives, each potentially moderated by the citizen's ideological orientation.

### ***Parental motives and VCC***

In this section we provide the conceptualization of motives influencing parental VCC and explain their grounding in self-determination theory (SDT).

*Relationship motives* capture a parent's desire to strengthen social bonds and foster personal connections through engagement in school-related activities. These motives may include connecting more closely with one's child, fostering good relationships with teachers, and participating in the school's family community. In public management research, such drivers closely correspond to solidary incentives, namely, the satisfaction derived from belonging, affiliation, and social interaction (Alford 2002). Building up on SDT, relationship motives are directly tied to the need for relatedness, which is the universal desire to feel connected to and cared for by others (Ryan and Deci 2000). Parents motivated by relationship motives might volunteer for class events or parent committees primarily to cultivate a sense of community and relatedness rather than for material rewards. This conceptualization is supported by developmental psychology, which also indicates that forming attachments and maintaining relationships are fundamental aspects of human behaviour (Baumeister and Leary 1995). In the same vein, VCC literature also emphasizes the relational nature of service ecosystems, where value emerges through interactions, resource integration, and mutual engagement between actors (Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2016; Vargo, Maglio, and Archpru Akaka 2008). From this perspective, co-creation is not merely task-oriented but deeply embedded in social and relational processes.

*Empowerment motives* refer to a parent's desire to exert agency, influence decision making, and actively contribute to service improvements within the school environment. Parents driven by empowerment motives seek opportunities to have a voice in school governance, advocate for changes, or support their child's learning in ways that reflect direct personal involvement. In public management scholarship, these motives correspond to the intrinsic satisfaction derived from experiencing competence and self-determination through co-production (Alford 2002). Within SDT, empowerment motives map onto the needs for autonomy (the desire to act with volition and choice) and competence (the need to feel effective in one's actions). Applied to the educational context, when parents perceive their contributions as impactful and aligned with their values, their motivation becomes more autonomous and self-sustaining.

*Status motives* may encompass a range of externally oriented drivers shaped by the prevailing values and normative structures of a society, community, or organization. Individuals may, for instance, pursue moral status by contributing to their group through cooperation and the provision of public goods, or symbolic status through the accumulation and display of symbolic capital, such as education, aesthetic preferences, linguistic competence, or lifestyle practices (Bourdieu 1984). Conversely, social status can also be attained through dominance, expressed as coercion and intimidation, or through prestige, derived from skills and respect (Henrich, Chudek, and Boyd 2015; Roberts, Palermo, and Visser 2019). Research evidence indicates that among the late-Soviet and early-independence generations, who represent the largest group of parents of school-age children, there is a pronounced emphasis on self-enhancement values such as achievement and power (Mockaitis et al. 2025). Given that Lithuania and some other Central and Eastern European societies did not experience a post-World-War-II period of the Welfare State, as many Western European countries did, but instead transitioned directly into a neoliberal order, this orientation may reflect broader socio-cultural patterns that emphasize competition, individual success, and social recognition. In this context, social status is largely secured through mechanisms of dominance and prestige, or maintained by the accumulation of various forms of social capital (Bourdieu 1986; Cheng, Tracy, and Henrich 2010; Henrich and Gil-White 2001; Neel et al. 2016). In the context of public education, these motives may lead parents to engage not out of intrinsic interest in the activity itself, but to maintain or elevate their social standing or fulfil normative expectations of responsible or 'good' parenting. For example, parents may participate in school boards to gain visibility, demonstrate civic engagement, or avoid negative social judgement. These behaviours are often shaped by implicit or explicit pressures to conform to middle-class parenting norms, particularly in contexts where parental involvement is publicly valorized (Horvat, Weininger, and Lareau 2003). In public management research, these motives correspond to what Alford (2002) terms immaterial rewards, involving non-financial incentives such as symbolic status, recognition, or public praise.

## Hypothesis development

We propose that relationship motives positively influence VCC by shaping how parents choose to engage with the school. This includes both formal participation (e.g. helping in the classroom or attending school meetings) and discretionary, prosocial actions that benefit the school community more broadly (e.g. volunteering for events or offering support to other parents). Previous research lends support to the idea that relationship motives are positively associated with participation in co-creation across a variety of

contexts, including public healthcare services (van Eijk and Steen 2014) and for-profit services such as software development (T. Fernandes and Remelhe 2016) and manufacturing (Waseem, Biggemann, and Garry 2021) suggesting their relevance across service domains. We propose the following conceptual proposition: relationship motives have a positive impact on parental VCC. To empirically examine it, we distinguish two behavioural manifestations of VCC: participation behaviour, which reflects task-oriented involvement in school-related activities, and citizenship behaviour, which encompasses voluntary, extra-role contributions that go beyond formal requirements (Yi and Gong 2013). We operationalize these as distinct but complementary dimensions of VCC and specify the following structural hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 1 (a, b).** Relationship motives have a positive impact on parental VCC, [a) participation behaviour and b) citizenship behaviour].

Empowerment motives in public management research have been identified as citizens' sense of self-determination and competence as critical to their willingness to co-produce services (Alford 2002). More recent empirical studies confirm that perceptions of agency and empowerment are positively linked to participation in public service innovation, including participatory budgeting, urban planning, and education (S. D. Evans and Fernandez-Burgos 2023). We propose that empowerment motives serve as a key driver of parental VCC in schools, as they foster a sense of ownership and reinforce parents' belief in their capacity to effect meaningful change.

**Hypothesis 2 (a, b).** Empowerment motives have a positive impact on parental VCC, [a) participation behaviour and b) citizenship behaviour].

While status motives can stimulate participation, particularly when involvement provides public visibility or social recognition, they are generally less enduring than intrinsic or autonomous drivers. Studies show that behaviour motivated by social approval or image concerns often declines once reputational rewards are absent (Alford 2002; van Eijk and Steen 2014). In low-visibility contexts such as day-to-day school cooperation, these motives may thus generate only short-term or instrumental engagement. At the same time, status can also take moral forms: parents may seek recognition as 'good citizens' by contributing to communal welfare or by demonstrating responsible parenting (Bourdieu 1984; Henrich, Chudek, and Boyd 2015). Hence, status motives are not inherently detrimental but are less likely to produce consistent, self-sustaining co-creation unless they align with intrinsic or prosocial values:

**Hypothesis 3 (a, b).** Status motives are expected to show a weaker or potentially negative association with parental VCC, [a) participation behaviour and b) citizenship behaviour].

### **The moderating role of left-wing ideological orientation**

Individuals across the ideological spectrum engage in value co-creation activities, however their motivations for participation may differ. Research shows that left-leaning citizens tend to be guided by collective and justice-oriented motives, emphasizing solidarity, equality, and social cooperation, while right-leaning citizens tend to value individual responsibility, efficiency, and the maintenance of social order (Van Eijk and Steen, 2016; Bovaird et al. 2016). Both orientations can thus contribute to co-creation, however through different moral and motivational logics: left-oriented individuals may view participation as a means to advance collective welfare, whereas right-oriented individuals may see it as a way to strengthen community self-reliance or ensure effective outcomes.

In public education, these orientations and logics can manifest in complementary ways, i.e. some parents may contribute to support equal opportunities and a cooperative climate, while others may be motivated by stewardship, discipline, or a desire to secure the best possible environment for their children. Political psychology and value-orientation research provide a similar distinction: individuals on the political left tend to prioritize prosocial and egalitarian values, whereas those on the right emphasize self-enhancement, achievement, and order (Pieurko, Schwartz, and Davidov 2011; Schwartz 2012). Consequently, left-oriented parents may prioritize cooperation and shared responsibility within the school community, while right-oriented parents may see their involvement as an expression of commitment, stewardship, or the desire to provide the best opportunities for their children. Both approaches contribute to educational co-creation but are driven by different moral foundations – care and fairness on one side, and loyalty, authority, and sanctity on the other. Empirical evidence reinforces this distinction, showing that egalitarian and prosocial orientations predict greater cooperation and volunteering (Bekkers 2005; Van Lange et al. 2012), while values related to order and responsibility also foster civic involvement (Putnam 2000).

A left-wing ideological orientation may buffer or weaken the negative association between status motives and value co-creation (VCC). Left-leaning values emphasize egalitarianism, solidarity, and moral equality (Jost, Federico, and Napier 2009), making overt status-seeking appear normatively inconsistent. When left-oriented parents experience status-related desires, they are likely to reinterpret or

redirect these motives towards socially valued forms of participation, such as demonstrating civic virtue or supporting inclusive initiatives, thereby preserving coherence with their egalitarian self-concept. This process of moral reframing can transform status pursuit into moral or relational expression (Bourdieu 1984; Henrich, Chudek, and Boyd 2015).

While conservatives tend to ascribe more importance to hierarchy and visible achievement, left-leaning individuals often derive recognition from moral contribution or group service (D. Fernandes and Mandel 2014; Kim, Park, and Dubois 2018). Consequently, status motives may still operate among left-leaning parents, but through symbolic rather than competitive channels, seeking esteem for being cooperative, responsible, or socially conscious rather than for gaining visibility or rank.

Thus, ideological orientation does not eliminate status motives but alters their expression and behavioural consequences. When infused with egalitarian values, status-driven motivations become less compatible with direct involvement in school activities, intensifying their negative association with VCC. Therefore, we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 4 (a, b).** Left-wing ideological orientation increases the positive relationship between parents' relationship motives and VCC [a) participation behaviour, and b) citizenship behaviour].

**Hypothesis 5 (a, b).** Left-wing ideological orientation increases the positive relationship between parents' empowerment motives and VCC [a) participation behaviour, and b) citizenship behaviour].

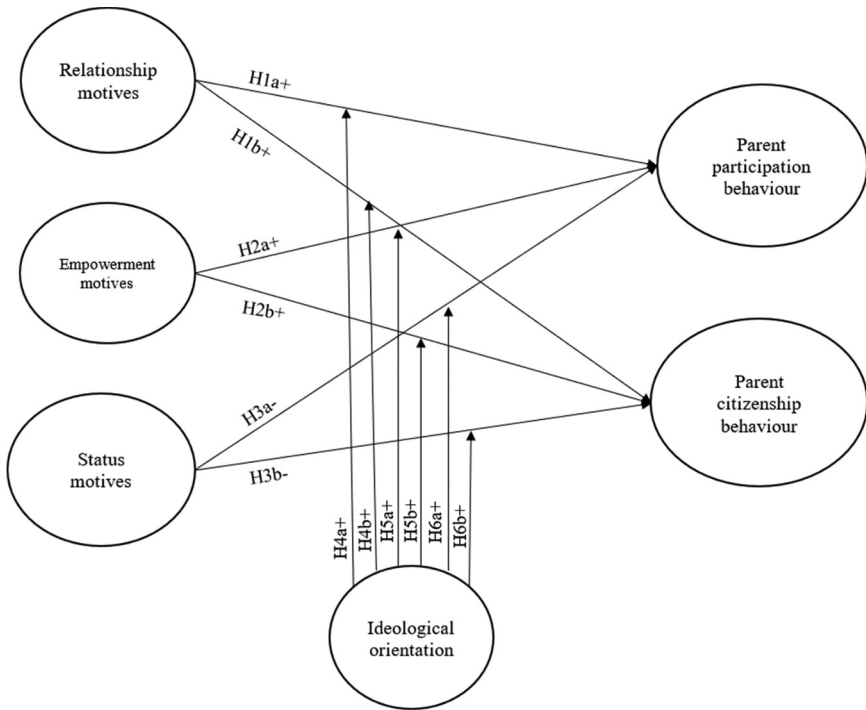
**Hypothesis 6 (a, b).** Left-wing ideological orientation increases the negative relationship between parents' status motives and VCC [a) participation behaviour, and b) citizenship behaviour].

The conceptual framework of our study is illustrated in [Figure 1](#).

## **Methodology**

### ***Context and participants***

The study focuses on parents of primary and secondary school children enrolled in Lithuanian public schools. Parents were eligible to participate if they were currently raising at least one school-aged child, ensuring that respondents had ongoing opportunities to engage in value co-creation (VCC) activities with teachers and schools. For parents with multiple children, the questionnaire



**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework with hypotheses.

instructed them to refer to the school of their eldest child to maximize the likelihood of past involvement in school activities.

The data for this study were collected by a professional research agency using an online panel. The agency invited a pool of parents based on region, gender, and age distributions in Lithuania. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were not pre-selected for high levels of parental involvement, allowing to capture a heterogeneous sample of parents with varying degrees of engagement in VCC. A total of 962 parents were contacted, producing 465 initial responses (response rate: 48.3%). Of these responses, 71 responses did not satisfy the sampling criteria – did not have school-aged children. In addition, after controlling for incomplete questionnaires ( $n = 93$ ), the final sample consisted of 301 respondents. The sample includes 57% female respondents; the average age was 42.82 years ( $SD = 7.16$ ). 63.2% of respondents came from major cities, 28.2% from other urban areas, and 8.6% from rural areas. For more details about demographic characteristics, see [Table 1](#). Ethical approval for the study was provided by the university research ethics committee, and informed consent was collected prior to survey completion.

**Table 1.** Distribution of parent demographic characteristics.

Demographic Variable	N	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	129	42.9
Female	172	57.1
Total	301	100.0
<b>Age</b>		
25–34	31	10.3
35–44	161	53.5
45–54	93	30.9
55–64	12	4.0
64+	4	1.3
Total	301	100.0
<b>Education</b>		
Primary education	3	1.0
Secondary education	10	3.3
Vocational training	42	14.0
Higher education (bachelor's degree)	134	44.5
Higher education (master's degree)	103	34.2
PhD	7	2.3
Other	2	0.7
Total	301	100.0
<b>Income</b>		
Less than 500 Eur	26	8.6
500–700 Eur	42	14.0
701–900 Eur	45	15.0
901–1000 Eur	31	10.3
1001–1500 Eur	44	14.6
1501–2000 Eur	17	5.6
More than 2000 Eur	17	5.6
Do not want to disclose	79	26.2
Total	301	100.0
<b>Working hours</b>		
Not working	26	8.6
Less than 20 working hours per week	6	2.0
Part-time job	7	2.3
Full-time job	215	71.4
Full-time job, often need to work overtime	47	15.6
Total	301	100.0
<b>Location</b>		
Vilnius	101	33.6
Kaunas	62	20.6
Klaipėda	27	9.0
Other city	85	28.2
Rural area	26	8.6
Total	301	100.0
<b>Number of children</b>		
One	177	58.8
Two	109	36.2
Three and more	15	5.0
Total	301	100.0

Note. Composed by the author, based on the results of the SPSS software platform.

## **Survey administration and flow**

The survey was administered online using the research agency's secure platform. After screening questions ensured eligibility, participants were shown the motive items, followed by the parent-teacher VCC scales, and finally the ideological orientation scale. Sociodemographic questions were asked at the very end. To reduce consistency bias, scale batteries were separated by short filler questions. Attention checks were included to ensure data quality. On average, the questionnaire took around 10 minutes to complete.

## **Measures**

*Relationship motives* was measured using a four-item scale developed by Neel et al. (2016) measured on a seven-point Likert scale from 'completely disagree' (1) to 'completely agree' (7). An example item is 'Getting along with the people around me is a high priority'. ( $\alpha = 0.88$ )

*Empowerment motives* was measured using a three-item scale developed by Neghina et al. (2017) and Yi and Gong (2008) on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 'completely disagree' (1) to 'completely agree' (7). An example item is 'I want to exercise control over the co-creation project' ( $\alpha = 0.77$ )

*Status motives* was measured using a five-item scale developed by Neel et al. (2016). All items were scored on a seven-point Likert scale. An example item is 'I do not like being at the bottom of a hierarchy' ( $\alpha = 0.89$ ).

*Ideological orientation* was measured using G. Evans, Heath, and Lalljee (1996) instrument consisting of 4 items measured on a seven-point Likert scale from 'completely disagree' (1) to 'completely agree' (7). An example item is 'Government should redistribute income from the better off to those who are less well off' ( $\alpha = 0.87$ ). This instrument is widely used in political psychology (e.g. Bol et al. 2021; Yeung and Quek 2025) to capture individuals' left – right orientations rooted in attitudes towards redistribution, equality, and the role of the state, dimensions that are theoretically consistent with our focus on egalitarian versus hierarchical value frameworks. As such, the scale aligns well with the conceptualization of ideological worldviews as value filters that shape how psychological motives are interpreted and expressed in VCC contexts.

## **Parent-teacher VCC: scale development, validation, purification and convergent validity**

An item pool for measuring *parent-teacher VCC scale* was generated, consistent with recommendations in the scale development literature (DeVellis 2017). First, we screened relevant literature on VCC from public management, education, marketing and consumer behaviour (e.g. Prahalad and

Ramaswamy 2004; Ranjan and Read 2016; Yi and Gong 2013) and identified other related measures that assess VCC and similar constructs (e.g. value-in-use, co-production). Based on this review, we developed directions for the conceptual domain of parent-teacher VCC and preliminary scale dimensions and their item list. Second, adhering to DeVellis's (2017) guidelines for item generation, to obtain a richer set of items, we conducted five in-depth expert interviews (three marketing professors, one public management professor and two general management professors) and 11 interviews with secondary school principals. Third, eight focus groups were conducted, comprising 56 teachers from public and private schools. Based on data obtained from qualitative research, the items identified in the literature review were further complemented with vocabulary used by experts and teachers. After the elimination of duplicating items, an initial scale with 44 items was derived. We conceptualized *parent-teacher VCC scale* as a reflective, multi-dimensional scale.

To ensure content validity, we followed recommended item judging procedures (DeVellis 2017; Netemeyer, Bearden, and Sharma 2003); the relevance and representativeness of measurement items were pretested with five education researchers. Judges were given the opportunity to recommend additional items that were missing from the item pool. The *parent-teacher VCC scale* was originally developed in English and translated into Lithuanian following a simultaneous translation and back-translation process by two professional interpreters (Brislin 1986). On the basis of received feedback, several minor modifications in item wording were made. This process resulted in a refined item pool consisting of 39 statements.

We purified the *parent-teacher VCC scale* following scale development guidelines (e.g. DeVellis 2017; Netemeyer, Bearden, and Sharma 2003). First, we examined individual item properties, such as means, and standard deviations, and observed the item ranges' correspondence to the theoretical ranges, item variances, and all inter-item correlations. Second, we purified the *parent-teacher VCC scale* using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and a stepwise procedure with LISREL 9.1. The purified measurement model comprised of 25 items, 8 dimensions and showed acceptable fit ( $\chi^2 = 32.35$ ,  $df = 14$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.068$ ,  $CFI = 0.994$ ,  $SRMR = 0.016$ ). Appendix A presents *parent-teacher VCC scale* items. Next, we assessed the properties of the scale by including it into a larger structural model together with psychological motives and ideological orientation as independent variables.

### **Measurement reliability, validity, and robustness checks**

Table 2 displays the reliability and validity statistics. All constructs demonstrated good or excellent reliability ( $\alpha > .77$ ). The AVEs exceeded 0.50 for all

**Table 2.** Means, standard deviations and correlations.

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	Cronbach's alpha
1. Status motives	4.40	1.20	1						0.898
2. Relationship motives	5.13	1.27	0.04	1					0.860
3. Empowerment motives	5.24	1.21	-0.02	0.03	1				0.773
4. Ideological orientation	5.20	1.40	-0.02	0.03	0.04	1			0.818
5. Parent participation behaviour	4.94	0.95	0.03	0.39**	0.35**	0.15**	0.05	1	0.904
6. Parent citizenship behaviour	5.47	1.41	0.17**	0.53**	0.21**	0.07**	0.11	0.47**	0.806

Note. Composed by the author, based on the results of the SPSS software platform.

constructs (Fornell and Larcker 1981). The convergent and discriminant validity values for each construct are provided in [Appendix A](#).

We assessed common method bias using Harman's single factor test, which indicated no problems related to common-method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, and Podsakoff 2012). The first component result captured 26.48% of the total explained variance, which is well below the classic threshold of 50% (Harman 1960). As an additional robustness check, we examined the models with socio-demographic control variables. Following Chepurina and Rialp Criado (2021), age, education and gender were initially included since they may have a significant impact when studying VCC. However, since they had no model effect, they were removed from the final analysis to retain some degree of parsimony in a complex model.

## Results

### *Confirmatory factor analysis*

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is a pivotal step in statistical analysis when dealing with latent variables and a precursor to examining the causal processes in structural equation modelling (Thompson 2004). Thus, the CFA analysis was designed to determine if every item in the survey accurately reflected the content of the assigned construct. As the constructed model is complex and includes second-order factors, the CFA was done separately for independent and dependent constructs. In general, the fits of the CFA are good (CFA model fit for independent constructs: RMSEA = 0.0735, NNFI = 0.928; CFI = 0.944, IFI = 0.944; CFA model fit for dependent variable participation behaviour: RMSEA = 0.0635, NNFI = 0.983; CFI = 0.993, IFI = 0.993; CFA model fit for dependent variable citizenship behaviour: RMSEA = 0.0791, NNFI = 0.924; CFI = 0.942, IFI = 0.943). Overall, the RMSEA of all CFA analyses is below the conventional threshold value of 0.08, and the NNFI and CFI are both well above the traditional 0.90 cut-off. These robust fit indices

confirm the suitability of our measurement model in accurately capturing the underlying constructs and provide a solid foundation for the subsequent structural equation modelling analysis.

### Structural equation model (SEM) results

SEM was developed to examine the relationships between parental motives, ideological orientation, parent participation and citizenship behaviours (Figure 2). In the final estimated model, the structural model fits the data well (RMSEA = 0.079, CFI = 0.840, IFI = 0.841). The full SEM is presented in Appendix B.

Concerning the direct effects of specific motives, the results show that the predicted relationships between the independent variables and dependent variables are statistically significant.

The results reveal a positive and statistically significant relationship between relationship motives and the behaviours of parent participation ( $\beta = 0.74, p < 0.01$ ) as well as parent citizenship ( $\beta = 0.59, p < 0.01$ ), thus providing support for Hypotheses 1a and 1b. This suggests that parents who prioritize close, cooperative relationships with teachers and the school

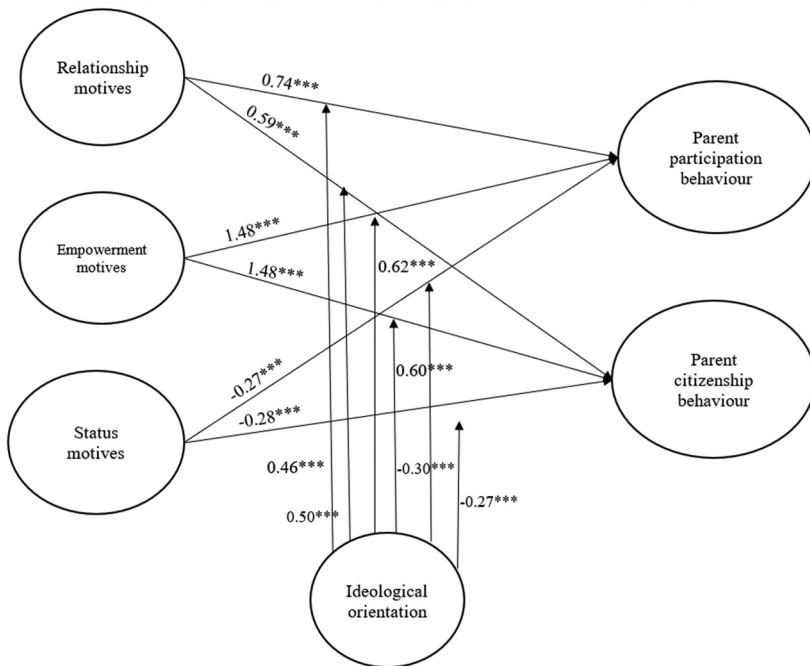


Figure 2. Results of hypothesis testing,  $***p < 0.001$  (full SEM model see in Appendix B).

community tend to be more actively engaged in both routine and voluntary school-related activities.

The results also confirm a positive and statistically significant relationship between empowerment motives and parent participation ( $\beta = 1.48, p < 0.01$ ) as well as parent citizenship ( $\beta = 1.48, p < 0.01$ ) behaviours, supporting Hypotheses 2a and 2b. Notably, empowerment motives showed the strongest associations with VCC among the three examined motives, indicating their particularly important role in predicting parental involvement in VCC. This result indicates that parents who particularly value the possibility to influence school processes or educational outcomes are especially active co-creators.

Status motives, on the other hand, had a statistically significant and negative association with parent participation ( $\beta = -0.27, p < 0.01$ ) and parent citizenship ( $\beta = -0.28, p < 0.01$ ) behaviour. This gives evidence for Hypotheses 3a and 3b. Although these effects are smaller, they suggest that when parents are primarily driven by hierarchical or image-related concerns, their involvement tends to be weaker or more conditional.

Consistent with our theorizing, ideological orientation shaped how psychological motives translated into behaviour. The results show that higher left-wing orientation positively moderates the relationship between relationship motives and parent participation ( $\beta = 0.46, p < 0.001$ ) as well as citizenship ( $\beta = 0.50, p < 0.001$ ) behaviours, supporting H4a and H4b. This pattern indicates that relational motivations become more behaviourally significant among parents who endorse egalitarian or community-oriented values. A left-wing orientation is also shown to significantly increase the association between empowerment motives and both parent participation ( $\beta = 0.62, p < 0.001$ ) and parent citizenship ( $\beta = 0.60, p < 0.001$ ) behaviours, supporting Hypotheses H5a and H5b. This implies that individuals with empowerment motives who are more prone to left-wing ideas are indeed more likely to engage in parent participation and citizenship behaviours compared to those who do hold weaker left-wing orientation beliefs.

Finally, ideological orientation moderated the effects of status motives in the expected direction, supporting Hypotheses 6a and 6b. The interaction terms were negative for both participation ( $\beta = -0.30, p < 0.001$ ) and citizenship ( $\beta = -0.27, p < 0.001$ ), indicating that the negative association between status motives and co-creation behaviours becomes stronger among parents with more left-leaning orientations. This result reflects the misalignment between hierarchical status concerns and egalitarian value frameworks, which may reduce the likelihood that status-driven motivations translate into active engagement.

## Discussion and conclusion

Our findings contribute to the growing body of literature on the antecedents of VCC in public services, particularly within the context of public education. Using self-determination, public service motivation, and expectancy-value theories, we investigated how three motivational drivers, namely, relationship, empowerment, and status motives, predict parental involvement and citizenship behaviours in schools. We also looked at how parents' ideological orientation affects these relationships.

Consistent with earlier studies (van Eijk and Steen 2014; Waseem, Biggemann, and Garry 2021), our results show that relationship motives, which refer to parents' wish to strengthen ties with children, teachers, and other families, are strong predictors of VCC. These findings highlight the social-relational aspect of VCC (Ballantyne and Varey 2006) and stress the psychological need for relatedness as a main motivator of involvement. Public school leaders should develop a feeling of community by means of inclusive communication, activities, and projects that promote interpersonal trust and belonging (Baxter and Toe 2023; Eden, Nneamaka Chisom, and Sulaimon Adeniyi 2024).

As reported in the results section, empowerment motives had the strongest associations with both participation and citizenship behaviours, highlighting the importance of agency and impact in forming a child's education. This finding supports the growing emphasis in public management on enabling citizens to significantly influence the design and delivery of services (Martin et al. 2024; Scupola and Mergel 2022; Torfing et al. 2021). Our study provides empirical evidence that such motives are also important on an individual level, indicating that parents co-create because they seek to have more control over education services and improve their quality, which supports findings by van Eijk and Steen (2014). To harness the positive influence of empowerment motives, schools should provide easily available tools for parent-led projects, decision-making, and cooperative planning processes to maximize this possibility. These findings highlight the importance of internal psychological drivers, often overlooked in co-creation research that focuses primarily on structural or resource-based antecedents (e.g. Starkey et al. 2021). Our study complements these perspectives by demonstrating that intrinsically motivated parents are active co-creators in educational settings, irrespective of socio-economic resources.

Our findings show that status motives are negatively associated with parental VCC, suggesting a tension between the pursuit of individual status and the collaborative nature of VCC. This type of adversarial relationship implies that when parents are highly motivated by a desire to improve their social standing, this may result in disengagement from collective educational endeavours, possibly due to a perceived misalignment with altruistic or

community-focused values. As a result, when developing their communication and VCC strategies, public school managers should seek to balance community and collective benefits with recognition of individual motivations.

A novel contribution of this work is the identification of left-wing ideological orientation as a moderator of motivation for co-creation in public services. Parents with more left-leaning views showed a stronger correlation between relationship motives and VCC behaviour, supporting the notion that egalitarian and community-oriented values increase the relevance of interpersonal connections. Left-wing orientation also notably strengthened the association between empowerment motives and VCC. These results are consistent with earlier studies connecting left-wing ideas to participatory government, civic duty, and backing of group action (Balliet et al. 2018; Jost, Federico, and Napier 2009). From this perspective, left-wing ideology seems to strengthen natural drives to co-create, especially those connected to agency and cooperation.

Conversely, a left-wing orientation strengthened the negative link between status motives – based on dominance, prestige, and social capital – and both citizenship and participation behaviours. This reinforces the idea that egalitarian values could be politically at odds with such status-seeking, and it would cause left-leaning parents to refrain from involvement if they believe it is self-serving. These findings also complement studies on system justification theory, indicating that left-wingers tend to oppose hierarchical differences and symbolic status displays (D. Fernandes and Mandel 2014; Kim, Park, and Dubois 2018).

The interpretation of study findings requires taking cultural and historical background into account as well. Public confidence and the perceived legitimacy of citizen involvement in public institutions may still be shaped by social-political legacies of Lithuania's history (Baimenov and Liebert 2019; Monobayeva and Howard 2015). Future comparative research should investigate whether similar moderation effects would be observed in contexts with various welfare state models and histories of participatory governance, such as Scandinavian countries, where left-wing ideas are indeed more closely linked to decentralization, localism, and citizen empowerment (Bergh 2004; Jukić et al. 2019).

The finding that left-wing orientation can either strengthen or moderate motivational effects challenges the conventional wisdom that political ideology simply predicts levels of engagement. Rather, ideology seems to influence the way motives convert into action either by increasing internalized drives or by causing conflict with external ones. Krispenz and Bertrams's (2024) latest studies also caution against

over-romanticizing the left as uniformly altruistic, stressing that even on the left activism could be motivated by self-enhancement goals. Further studies should look at the interaction between ideological orientation, motivation types, and co-creation behavioural expressions.

### ***Practical implications***

In terms of practical implications, the study suggests that school leaders should strategically balance their use of formal mechanisms with pro-social approaches to enhance parental motivation. At present, schools largely adhere to motivational agendas that are provided and imposed through regulatory requirements designed by public policy implementation bodies. While it is widely acknowledged that formal participation (e.g. classroom assistance or attendance at school meetings) may encourage parents to take a greater role in VCC, attention should also be directed towards motivating parents through the planning and support of pro-social initiatives to strengthen the relationship and empowerment motives of involvement. Public school leaders should develop a feeling of community by means of inclusive communication, activities, and projects that promote interpersonal trust and belonging (Baxter and Toe 2023; Eden, Nneamaka Chisom, and Sulaimon Adeniyi 2024). Indeed, similar to findings from other public service contexts (Hoppen, Huber, and Aaslund 2025), our results suggest that schools need to invest in building sustained relational infrastructure and shared commitment with parents, especially when working with diverse ideological orientations.

Second, the study findings highlight the importance of internal psychological drivers, often overlooked in co-creation research that focuses primarily on structural or resource-based antecedents (e.g. Starkey et al. 2021). Therefore, we suggest schools to design and to implement programmes that engage parents and students in shared experiences, rather than focusing efforts on parental involvement to attendance at meetings. Initiatives such as family learning nights, collaborative projects, and cultural events not only strengthen relationships but, when institutionalized, enable school leaders to embed pro-social practices into the daily life of the school by cultivating a stronger sense of belonging to community. Second, when motivating parental engagement, school leaders should account for ideological diversity through the lens of social status, aligning appeals with both left- and right-wing value orientations (D. Fernandes and Mandel 2014; Kim, Park, and Dubois 2018). In practice, this means combining initiatives that resonate with egalitarian left-leaning values (equity, inclusion, solidarity) and traditional right-leaning values (heritage, responsibility, discipline) to establish a balanced framework for VCC motivation. For example, initiatives such as parents volunteering to mentor or to support families experiencing socio-

economic challenges will help to ensure that no child is excluded from educational opportunities due to financial or social barriers. Such practices may motivate left-leaning parents by affirming values of equity, collective action, and community empowerment. On the other hand, schools may motivate right-leaning parents to engage in VCC by offering activities that emphasize family values, tradition, and personal accountability. For example, mentorship programmes focused on responsibility and discipline, where parents collaborate with teachers to set consistent expectations for homework and punctuality, can be effective. Such initiatives appeal to right-leaning parents by affirming heritage, order, and personal responsibility.

### ***Limitations and directions for future research***

This study has several limitations that could be addressed in future research. First, the research was based on a sample of respondents from only one country (Lithuania). As discussed in the previous section, future studies could test the examined relationships in countries with a strong welfare system, where the traditions of citizen engagement and co-creation within public services may be more established. The findings also aid in identifying possible cultural variations in public VCC. Second, this study did not consider the influence of other individual-level characteristics that may influence parental motives and VCC behaviour. For instance, factors such as personal values, social capital or parenting philosophies might influence how parents engage with schools and could provide additional explanations for the observed relationships. Future research could incorporate these individual differences to capture the complexity of parental engagement in public VCC. Another limitation stems from the focus on educational services as the study context, which makes it uncertain how the findings would apply to other public services. Admittedly, while public services such as healthcare and social services have quite distinct characteristics, there is enormous opportunity for these organizations to work more closely with their end-users. Hence, future research could investigate whether and how the motivations for VCC change depending on the type of public service examined. Finally, regarding the assessment of ideological orientation, this study adopts personal wealth as the primary criterion for its definition; however, an individual's political beliefs are likely to encompass additional viewpoints, including social, cultural and ethical dimensions. It would be worthwhile to consider incorporating a different measurement, which would allow for the multifaceted nature of political beliefs to be taken into account and which could provide a more accurate representation of the respondents' ideological orientations.

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## Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A. Measures

Construct/Items	Factor loading (EFA)	Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
<b>Relationship motives</b> Neel et al. (2016)		0.860	0.695
Being part of a group is important to me.	0.886		
I enjoy working with a group to accomplish a goal.	0.905		
When I'm in a group, I do things to help the group stay together.	0.870		
<b>Empowerment motives</b> Neghina et al. (2017) & Yi and Gong (2008)		0.773	0.614
I want to exercise control over a co-creation project.	0.642		
I want to be able to determine how much I want to be involved.	0.897		
I want to have an influence over the final output.	0.755		
<b>Status motives</b> Neel et al. (2016)		0.898	0.692
It's important to me that other people look up to me.	0.819		
I want to be in a position of leadership.	0.809		
It's important to me that others respect my rank or position.	0.854		
I do things to ensure that I don't lose the status I have.	0.897		
<b>Ideological orientation</b> G. Evans, Heath, and Lalljee (1996)		0.818	0.689
The government should redistribute income from those who are very well off to those who are less well off.	0.885		
Ordinary working people do not get their fair share of the nation's wealth.	0.898		
There is one law for the rich and one for the poor.	0.848		
<b>Parent participation behaviour (2<sup>nd</sup> order factor)</b> Developed based on Yi and Gong (2013)		0.904	0.559
<b>Responsible behaviour</b>	0.750		0.651
I adequately completed all the expected behaviours.			0.634
I fulfilled responsibilities to the school.	0.758		0.696
I followed the class teacher's directives or orders.	0.796		
<b>Personal interaction</b>	0.834		
I was friendly to the teachers.	0.871		
I was kind to the teachers.	0.876		
I was polite to the teachers and school staff.	0.605		
<b>Information seeking</b>	0.832		
I often talk with my child about school matters.	0.788		
I have asked others for information on what educational services and programs the school offers.	0.812		
I have paid attention to how other parents engage with the school to support my child's education effectively.	0.843		
I have searched for information on the school's policies, procedures, and resources.	0.742		
<b>Information sharing</b>			
I gave the teacher proper information about my child's needs and circumstances.			
I provided necessary information so that the teacher could perform his or her duties effectively.			
I clearly explained my expectations regarding my child's education to the school staff.			

(Continued)

Construct/Items	Factor loading (EFA)	Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
<b>Parent citizenship behaviour (2<sup>nd</sup> order factor)</b> Adapted from Yi and Gong (2013)	0.840	0.806	0.628
<b>Helping</b>	0.916		0.770
I assist other parents if they need my help.	0.843		0.681
I help other parents if they seem to have problems.	0.652		0.546
I teach other parents to solve problems appropriately.	0.908		
<b>Advocacy</b>	0.853		
I recommend my child's school to others.	0.836		
I encourage friends and relatives to have their child attend this school.	0.874		
I say positive things about the school and its teachers.	0.873		
<b>Tolerance</b>	0.756		
If the school does not live up to my expectations, I would be willing to put up with it.	0.783		
If the teacher makes a mistake, I would be willing to be patient.	0.758		
If I have to wait longer than I normally expected to receive answers to my questions, I would be willing to adapt.			
<b>Feedback</b>			
When my child experiences a problem at school, I let the teachers and staff know.			
When school activities are successful, I comment on it.			
If I have a useful idea on how to improve school activities, I let the teachers know.			

Note: the items are measured using a seven-point Likert scale.

### Appendix B. SEM model (t-values)

