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Informational Determinants of Access to MEPs for HR NGOs:

A Case Study of HR NGOs Covering Human Rights Situation in Iran

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Abstract

The access of different interest groups to the EU institutions and international organisations is defined by the type of information they provide and the tactics they employ to send information. Based on the findings of scholars working in the informational determinants of access to policymakers, interest groups supply information needed by policymakers and, in return, convey what they need, which is access to the policymaking process. However, almost all researchers working on the informational determinants of access to policymakers focus on issues related to the legislative process. Also, these researchers primarily work on interest groups' access to the policymaking process on issues related to business sectors. Consequently, examining the existing literature indicates no research on the informational determinants of access to policymakers, in my case MEPs, regarding the human rights issues in other countries, which is a more political issue. Therefore, this research examines the informational determinants of access to MEPs for HR NGOs regarding the human rights issues in Iran.

Furthermore, this research examines the information types and tactics that provide HR NGOs access to the EP's decision-making process on human rights issues in third countries. Therefore, a mixed-methods approach is applied to examine the research hypotheses. Findings of the empirical analysis show that there are differences with other researchers' findings on other issues. However, other studies indicate that based on the limitation of NGOs compared to different types of interest groups, they are more likely to provide political-based information to access MEPs. Nevertheless, the findings of this research indicate that expert knowledge provides more access to MEPs on human rights issues. On the other hand, however, the results of this research indicate that outside tactics led HR NGOs to more access to MEPs than inside tactics on human rights issues. The qualitative part provides more insight into the reason for access of HR NGOs to MEPs on human rights issues.

The theoretical understanding of informational determinants of access to MEPs on the human rights issues in Iran for HR NGOs will contribute to the study of HR NGOs and NGOs' interaction with MEPs. Furthermore, empirical analyses combined with interviews

with representatives of HR NGOs will become an essential asset to scientists who work in this field. The research also has a great potential to be expanded by including the access of HR NGOs to MEPs based on the human rights situation in different countries or exceptional cases like women's rights or religious issues.

Chapter 1: Research Introduction

The Research in Brief

In the current era, HR NGOs are considered a key component of participation in the human rights decision-making process that realises human rights promotion worldwide. They represent the diversity of citizens' characteristics, interests, and aspirations that make them visible at the community level. In addition, they identify complementary solutions to address human rights issues at the national, regional, and international levels. Knowledge and experience and the trust of community members persuaded policymakers to take advantage of the competence and experience of HR NGOs in the human rights policy-making process. Given that most of these organisations also have the task of raising public awareness of human rights and influencing public policy, the presence of these organisations in the process of the human rights policy-making process can formulate and implement effective human rights law and guarantee the development of human rights practices in the international community. It should be noted that the tendency of human rights policymakers to take responsibility stems from related laws and regulations and legal duties, while HR NGOs in all areas of human rights strive to develop human rights. The reason is that they inherently feel responsible in this regard.

However, access to MEPs regarding human rights issues is rarely as straightforward as replying to a call for a consultation. It is no easy task to impact the EP policy-making process in the human rights issues in a specific area or even to succeed access to this process. What is the most dependable approach for HR NGOs to access the EP? Chalmers (2011, 2013) developed a theoretical framework based on the exchange theory that Pieter Bouwen introduced to describe the access of different organisational forms of business interest representation to the EU entities. Pieter Bowen believes that information as essential access goods can provide interest groups with access to EU institutions (Bouwen, 2002, 2004a, 2004b). Based on the theory that Bouwen introduced, each EU institution

needs certain information based on its function. Therefore, business interests have to implement the access goods required by an institution to increase their chance to access it. Chalmers believes that access, in this regard, is assumed to be the function of the informational needs of policymakers. The substantive role of interest groups to meet these demands is primarily disregarded. Chalmers added two other supply-side factors to the theory that Bouwen introduced and developed his theoretical framework (Chalmers, 2011, 2013). The theoretical framework that Chalmers introduces could explain the access of HR NGOs to the EP regarding human rights issues.

This research project will address the issues arising with HR NGOs seeking access to MEPs regarding human rights issues. Protecting human rights has long been accepted as a fundamental challenge in any system of governance and has proved problematic in the EP as well. Indeed, although EU institutions consider human rights to be the cornerstone of the EU, there are arguments that the EP has prioritised its commercial interests to the point where there is little room for HR NGOs to access MEPs. Comments like this fuel a desire to examine the access of HR NGOs to MEPs. Therefore, the researcher will empirically develop and examine a theory of informational determinants of access for HR NGOs for this PhD thesis.

In general, the issue of access of interest groups to policymakers in the EU and explaining the role of non-governmental actors in this field is one of the topics that many researchers have addressed (Bouwen, 2004b; Hall and Deardorff, 2006; Broscheid and Coen, 2007; Chalmers, 2013; De Bruycker, 2016; Hanegraaff, Beyers and De Bruycker, 2016). Klüver (2013, 25) points out that non-governmental actors such as businesses entities, NGOs, and think tanks, on the one hand, the media and the influential institutions of the EU, on the other hand, are rational and purposeful actors who, through interaction with each other, are always trying to increase their desirability and achieve their interests. This interaction is formed so that non-governmental actors supply ‘certain goods’ to policymakers to access the decision-making process. For example, Adam Chalmers (2011) considers certain goods as ‘information’ that the EU's key institutions urgently

need to have, and hence he considered lobbying in the EU ‘informational lobbying.’ On the other hand, Pieter Bouwen (2002) refers to certain goods more accurately as ‘access goods’, stating that in exchange for access to EU institutions, non-governmental actors must offer certain goods and that information is the basis of all goods. Information is often considered the currency in exchanges between interest groups and policymakers in the legislative process (Chalmers, 2013; De Bruycker, 2016).

In contrast, its impact on the access of HR NGOs to MEPs regarding the human rights issues, especially in the third countries, has so far not been studied. Studying the access of HR NGOs to MEPs on human rights issues in third countries is essential because discussing human rights issues in the EP is a political issue, and its process is contrary to the legislative process. This research adopts the theoretical expectations developed by Adam Chalmers (2011, 2013) to study the access of HR NGOs to MEPs and empirically examines whether informational exchanges between MEPS and HR NGOs provide the latter group access to MEPs or not. Converting this model to a model that can analyse the access of HR NGOs to MEPs in the human rights issues in the third countries can help the literature. First, in chapter three, the researcher shows the existing theory based on the exchange theory. Then develops a dynamic theory based on that we can study the access of HR NGOs to MEPs by considering the type and tactics HR NGOs use to access MEPs on human rights issues in third countries, which is more political action for MEPs. Depending on the different information types, HR NGOs supply to MEPs at different levels, MEPs provide access to the HR NGOs that supply the information on human rights issues in the third countries. The research discusses access of HR NGOs to MEPs based on the information types offered to MEPs. This research also attempts to discuss tactics used by HR NGOs to access the decision-making process. These theoretical arguments concentrate on informational determinants of access to MEPs for HR NGOs. Since it is time-consuming to study the information types and tactics that provide HR NGOs access to MEPs on different issues thus, the researcher examines human rights violations in Iran as a case study.

This PhD thesis presents a mixed-methods empirical study based on a theoretical model which deepens earlier models by examining the different constructs of the model. Furthermore, the theoretical model considers the relationship between different information types and access to MEPs regarding the human rights situation in Iran. These information types are expert information and political-based information. In this research, the relationship between two types of information with the access of HRGOs to MEPs will be examined. Furthermore, based on previous studies, this research examines the access of HR NGOs based on the tactics they used to send information to MEPs. Two different categories of tactics are introduced based on the previous studies to examine the relationships between tactics and access to MEPs. These tactics are divided into inside and outside tactics. In addition, to assure the robustness of the results, two moderator variables were included in this research. The purpose of assessing these moderator variables is to ensure that they may affect the access of HR NGOs based on the tactics they used to send certain types of information. Cooperation amongst HR NGOs regarding the human rights situation in Iran is also added in the model as a control variable.

The Contribution of the Study

In contemporary academic areas, the consideration regarding lobbying issues and access of different interest groups, especially NGOs, to different policymakers have expanded dramatically (Bernhagen and Bräuninger, 2005; Coen and Katsaitis, 2013; Greenwood, 2017), as it can be perceived by different conferences, review articles and specific journal topics. Different case studies (Dür and Mateo, 2012), and surveys (Dellmuth and Tallberg, 2017), address the access of different interest groups to different institutions. These studies show that the access of different interest groups to the policy-making process depends on different information types (Bouwen, 2002; Chalmers, 2013; Tallberg *et al.*, 2018; Lucas, Hanegraaff and De Bruycker, 2019) and informational tactics (Binderkrantz, 2008a; Dür and Mateo, 2012; Weiler and Brändli, 2015; Chalmers and Shotton, 2016; Hanegraaff, Beyers and De Bruycker, 2016). The growing literature based on the theory of access addresses the role of inside tactics, outside tactics, political-based

information, and expert information on accessing different interest groups to the EU institutions.

Scholars point out the significant role of informational determinants of access. Researchers believe that information types and informational tactics for access to policymakers are prominent and substantial factors, where inside and outside tactics and political-based and expert information lead different interest groups to access the policy-making process. Researchers cite several factors based on which the information types provide interest groups with access to policymakers. These factors are a group's endowment with material resources and the issue context (Beyers, 2008; Klüver, 2012). Given the type of groups, these researchers point out that groups with more financial and supportive capabilities supply more expert information that provides these groups access to policymakers.

On the other hand, citizen groups focus more on political-based information due to their ability to access policymakers. Researchers also believe that a tactic to reach policymakers depends on the type of interest groups. For example, business associations that are resource-rich and engaged in distributive policy areas should concentrate on inside tactics, whereas citizen groups should consistently rely on outside tactics. However, according to Chalmers, the empirical research has highlighted that the recognition and utilisation of different information types and informational tactics can positively affect the access of different interest groups to policymakers (Chalmers, 2013); the literature includes many theoretical gaps. For example, all research regarding the access of interest groups to policymakers is about business issues, and scholars have not yet studied political issues. Moreover, issues related to human rights and HR NGOs have not been considered in the main discussion of informational determinants of access.

Even though most researchers have argued the access of NGOs to policymakers based on informational determinants of access, many previous studies have focused primarily

on business-related legislation issues. However, the activities of HR NGOs are different from those of other interest groups because of their goals and capabilities. However, HR NGOs have different limitations, such as lack of human resources and budgetary constraints compared to other organisations. On the other hand, HR NGOs are generally associated with the people and victims of human rights. These potentials enable such organisations to have the information and ability to mobilise people on various issues. However, few previous studies have examined the importance and impact of these organisations' information types on policymakers and the tactics used to access them. Hence, there has been a slight lack of empirical support and insufficient knowledge about the information types and tactics that HR NGOs use to access policymakers.

Furthermore, there is a need to empirically test the hypotheses of informational determinants of access for HR NGOs based on the quantitative and qualitative methods to empirically test and investigate the effects of different information types and informational tactics for access to MEPs. However, there has been a lack of empirical quantitative and qualitative studies in measuring different effects of different types of information types and informational tactics and insufficient knowledge about the role of types of information to apply certain types of tactics to send them to policymakers. Moreover, examining the literature shows no research regarding the impact of cooperation among citizen groups on their access to policymakers. Thus, these issues are important and exciting to be studied in this PhD thesis and should be understood as the theoretical gap of informational determinants of access.

The information types and informational tactics have not been examined in the access of HR NGOs to MEPs yet. Additionally, the central research problem that has to be studied in this research is whether, compared to legislative issues, these different information types and informational tactics impact the access of HR NGOs to MEPs regarding human rights issues differently. In addition, how different information types affect the access of HR NGOs based on the tactics, they apply. In addition, whether or not cooperation amongst HR NGOs increases their chance to access MEPs regarding human

rights issues. The logic behind this theory is to assume that the cooperation could affect the access of HR NGOs to MEPs. This is considered the central literature gap in the informational determinant of access theories and organisational literature.

The Research Aims and Scopes

In this study, the researcher explicitly attempts to focus on the informational determinants of access to MEPs as policymakers for HR NGOs regarding the human rights situation in Iran. This research aims to empirically test the causal relationship among different components of the informational determinant of access: Inside tactics, outside tactics, expert information, and political-based information on the access of HR NGOs to MEPs regarding the human rights situation in Iran. Furthermore, in this research, the researcher attempted to examine the impact of information types on the choice of tactics to access MEPs regarding the human rights situation in Iran. The purpose of this study is to empirically examine the causal relationship between access to MEPs as the independent variable, information types, and informational tactics as dependent variables of a theoretical research model to predict and measure the effect of informational determinants of access of HR NGOs to MEPs rather than recognition of structural correlations between variables. Thus, the research aims to know and test: (1) The causal relationship between informational tactics and access of HR NGOs to MEPs regarding the human rights situation in Iran. (2) The causal relationship between information types and access of HR NGOs to MEPs regarding the human rights situation in Iran. (3) The causal relationship between HR NGOs' cooperation and access of HR NGOs to MEPs regarding the human rights situation in Iran? The intent of this study is not only based on a predictive approach but also to develop and extend the currently existing theory of access. In addition, as the analysis method is based on partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM), it intends to predict endogenous constructs, namely: inside tactics, outside tactics, expert information, and political-based information. Therefore, this research contributes to developing the theory of access by analysing the utilisation of different information types and informational tactics and measuring their impacts on the access of HR NGOs to MEPs. Furthermore, the research contributes to the theory development of variance, which

predicts endogenous variables. Therefore, predictive research aims to emphasise developing existing theory in informational determinants of access.

Structure of the Thesis

The first chapter is intended to lead the reader through the rest of the study and explain the researcher's structure to present his research findings. As shown, this first chapter is managed to introduce the research problem and present aims and scopes. Section 1.1 presents a brief of the project, and section 1.2 introduces the theoretical relevant aspects of the study. Section 1.3 also briefly present the scopes of the research. Chapter two shows the literature review of the issues surrounding the research topic. The literature review presents the study with the required background and describes its relevance. In this section, an attempt was made to review past research on the theory of access. Therefore, first, the fields of origin of this theory were examined, and then the researcher examined the development of this theory. Chapter three of the research is dedicated to explaining that the theoretical framework of this study. This chapter first elaborates on a theory of access developed by Adam Chalmers. Then, the researcher shows how he converted the theory of access developed by Adam Chalmers on business issues to human rights issues. The fourth chapter of the study accounts for how the research is designed and the methods used to conduct it. Since a mixed-methods approach is applied to analyse this research's hypothesis, this chapter is divided into three sections. The first part of this chapter explained how he conducted a qualitative study to create a questionnaire and the data collection and analysis methods. The second part explained how he conducted the quantitative part and how he analysed the findings of this part. In the last part of chapter three, the researcher explained the qualitative part that supports the findings of the quantitative part. Consideration of ethical issues and validity and credibility issues is also discussed in chapter four. Finally, chapters five and six present the empirical analysis and summary of the findings for this study. In chapter five, the findings of the study are provided in three different parts. Consequently, chapter six discusses the findings from chapter five, followed by a conclusion to this thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Globalisation has provided an opportunity for non-governmental actors to play a central role in the process of strengthening the protection of human rights (Marcinkutė, 2012, p. 52). The emergence of new actors in human rights issues raises many questions regarding human rights and how they can influence the process of decision-making in different international organisations or entities. This process is slightly more complicated about these actors' role in the EU decision-making process in different areas. There is not much information about how these actors lobby in the EU decision-making process. Still, these actors' ability to influence the EU decision-making bodies has attracted many researchers (Oudelaar, 2015, p. 7). Examining the literature shows that measuring influence is somewhat problematic in political studies. Based on that, Pieter Bouwen (2002) introduces an alternative approach that studies interest groups' access to the EU institutions instead of focusing on influence. However, access does not fundamentally mean influence. Some Groups of lobbying or political actors might gain access to decision-making bodies of the EU without translating this position into actual policy outcomes. However, gaining access to the EU decision-making bodies is a pre-condition to exert influence on different EU decision-making processes. Hence, access is expected to be a good indicator of influence (Bouwen, 2004a, pp. 337–338).

This chapter argues that, based on access exchange logic, non-governmental actors like NGOs' access to the decision-making process on human rights issues is related to the access goods they provide to the decision-makers in EU decision-making bodies. Information is the basis of all access goods decision-makers need (Bouwen, 2002). Chalmers (2013, p. 39) calls information the 'currency of lobbying in the EU'. The theory is that decision-makers are uncertain of their policy's potential consequences and need information about the likely consequences of alternative proposals and the likely reactions from constituency interests. Some HR NGOs are attractive to decision-makers because

they often provide this information. They tend to be experts on the policy issues that most affect their interests and frequently collect politically salient information on constituencies' views (Tallberg *et al.*, 2018, p. 215). Nevertheless, what these actors lack, and request is access to decision-makers – a necessity for influencing human rights issues. The question is how informational lobbying relates to the access of NGOs to the EU decision-making bodies? In this chapter, the researcher attempts to show, based on the existing literature, an NGO's ability to provide information to decision-makers starts with considering the broad range of strategic choices NGOs make regarding information provision. Significantly, two supply-side factors are the type of information NGOs send to decision-makers and the tactics used to do so (Chalmers, 2013, p. 40).

Definition of HR NGOs in the Literature

In 1945 based on the need for the UN to distinguish in its Charter between participation rights for specific intergovernmental agencies and those for international private organisations, the UN developed the term of *NGO*. As a result, virtually all types of private groups can be identified as NGOs at the UN (Simmons, 1998). They just have to be independent of governments' control, not attempting to challenge governments (Willets, 2006). Vakil (1997, p. 2060) describes NGOs as —"*self-governing, private, not-for-profit organisations that are geared to improving the quality of life for disadvantaged people.*" Albert Kuruvila (2015, p. 28) defined NGOs as "*formal, self-governing, voluntary organisations involved in helping individuals and communities to achieve their social, economic and cultural goals. They are institutionally separate from government and commercial organisations and do not distribute profits but are accountable to their stakeholders.*" Finally, the World Bank's definition (1992) of NGOs is as follows: "*many groups and institutions that are entirely or largely independent of government and that have primarily humanitarian or cooperative rather than commercial objectives* (Anbazhagan and A., 2016)."

The existing literature shows that researchers try to identify different types of NGOs. The types of NGOs are distinguished by the level of organisation, geographical location, and primary purpose. For example, Willetts (2002) classifies NGOs as local, provincial, national, regional, and global NGOs based on their fields. On the other hand, Maslyukivska (1999) points out that people regard NGOs otherwise based on their geographical location. Some researchers also identify NGOs based on their primary purpose (Lewis, 2004).

Laurie Wiseberg (1991, 529) considers an HR NGO "a private association that devotes significant resources to promoting and protecting human rights, independent of governmental and political groups seeking direct political power and which does not itself seek such power." Generally, the definition presented by Wiseberg is considered to cover the description of HR NGOs; however, this description of NGOs finds relevance mainly to international NGOs, and the few organisations serve in the human rights situation regarding the situation of human rights in different countries. However, the current phase of NGO growth in the international arena can apply to NGOs working in developed states.

HR NGOs are recognised for their role in collecting information regarding the violations of human rights and freedoms. HR NGOs collect different types of information from different sources. For instance, they work with other HR NGOs to collect information from human rights victims or gather information from witnesses (Marcinkutė, 2012, p. 55). By collecting and propagating information regarding human rights abuses worldwide, HR NGOs seek to draw the consideration of the public, policymakers, and international organisations to the issue that exists in the human rights issues and support the concerns of unheard voices. Therefore, the documentation and distribution of information by HR NGOs play an essential function in bringing human rights issues to the public and policymakers.

Furthermore, the crucial function of HR NGOs in collecting the information is verified by researchers. Indeed, HR NGOs work as a fundamental source of information to policymakers and international organisations (Baehr, 2003). Besides, HR NGOs supply substantial information types that sometimes differ from the information supplied by governments and therefore demonstrates that some governments may mislead HR NGOs about the actual human rights situations in their country or even other countries. Given the above definitions of NGOs, identifying different NGOs led to separate descriptions for each organisation based on their function. Therefore, paragraph 17 of Resolution 1296 of the Economic and Social Council - ECOSOC (23 May 1968) qualifies HR NGOs by designating that:

"...should have a general international concern with this matter, not restricted to the interests of a particular group of persons, a single nationality of the situation in a single State or restricted group States. Special consideration shall be given to the applications of organisations in this field whose aims place stress on combating colonialism, apartheid, racial intolerance and other gross violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms.¹"

Nevertheless, the definition of HR NGOs by the UN does not mean that these organisations were created by the UN. On the contrary, a review of the existing literature shows that the emergence of human rights organisations dates back to even before the founding of the UN. The main difference between HR NGOs with other NGOs is that NGOs working on different issues, but not human rights issues attempt to defend the rights of their own constituents; however, an HR NGOs attempts to ensure rights for all members of society (Wiseberg, 1991). Moreover, other interest groups seek to improve their own particular interests; an HR NGOs is open to all legitimate societal forces (Brett, 1995).

¹ Accessible at: <https://archive.globalpolicy.org/ngos/ngo-un/info/res-1296.htm>

Theory of access in the Literature

To understand the lobbying activities of HR NGOs in the European institutions, especially the EP, the key is to analyse the NGOs and decision-makers relationship as an exchange relation of two interdependent groups. Like the lobbying on political or business issues in the EP, it is a mistake to consider human rights lobbying as a unidirectional activity of HR NGOs vis-à-vis the EP (Bouwen, 2004b, p. 476). The MEPs are also keen to collaborate because they need close contact with the HR NGOs to fulfil their institutional functions on human rights issues in the EU and other countries worldwide. On the other hand, MEPs are uncertain of the consequences of their decision and the likely reactions from constituency interests (Klüver, 2012, p. 491; Tallberg *et al.*, 2018, p. 215).

Based on "*administrative science, organisation theory and organisation sociology*," Bouwen (2002) founded a new theory of access that can be used to study the relationship between HR NGOs and MEPs. Exchange theory and resource dependence are the core of the framework he introduced. The exchange model and resource dependency are closely related; however, both theories focus on organisations' role in exchanging resources; resource dependence takes a closer look at the ensuing interdependence between the interacting organisations (Leblebici, 1999). Based on the resource dependence perspective, organisations that fulfil their duties need multiple resources that cannot be sufficiently generated.

The theory is based on a social exchange model for studying inter-organisational relationships, which offers an excellent framework for studying the interaction between different interest groups and MEPs on different issues in the EP decision-making process. Some researchers already use exchange theories to analyse relationships between interest groups active in business activities and EU institutions (Eising, 2007b; Chalmers, 2011; Klüver, 2012). According to these theories, NGOs and the EU institutions' interaction can be conceptualised as a series of inter-organisational exchanges (Bouwen, 2002). Based on a cost and benefit analysis, the organisations involved in the exchange process decide with whom to interact. The exchange relation will continue until the exchange is reciprocal,

and both sides of the interaction receive benefits (Tallberg *et al.*, 2018). However, groups involved in the exchange process do not benefit equally from the process (Bouwen, 2004a).

Consequently, based on the lack of organisational self-sufficiency, organisations interact with actors that control the resources they need. They demand resources from the environment and therefore interact with those organisations that provide the resources they need. A necessary consequence is that organisations become interdependent with those they interact with (Bouwen, 2002). Bouwen (2002) believes "organisations can become subject to pressures from those organisations that control the resources they need." For example, in the EU decision-making process on human rights issues, NGOs and the EP can become interdependent because they need resources from each other. The crucial resource required by different interest groups is access to the EP decision-making process on different issues. On the other hand, MEPs require the resources necessary to function in the different issues' decision-making process.

To understand the process of resource exchange between different interest groups and the EP, we should study the goods that involved two groups in the process exchange. To provide different interest groups' access to the EP decision-making process in different issues, MEPs demand 'certain goods' from the different interest groups, which Bouwen calls it 'access goods' and the basis of all of the access goods he introduces is information (Bouwen, 2002, 2004a, 2004b). Bouwen defines access goods as:

"Access goods are goods provided by private actors to the EU institutions in order to gain access. Each access good concerns a specific kind of information that is important in the EU decision-making process. The criticality of access good for an EU institution's functioning determines the degree of access that the institution will grant to the private interest representatives." (Bouwen, 2002, p. 370)

Based on the recent public choice approaches to study lobbying in the EU (Crombez, 2002) ,*information increasingly plays a central role in the analysis* (Bouwen and McCown, 2007). Considering that those different interest groups are better informed on issues based on their concern than decision-makers are, this literature argues that different interest groups play a crucial role in the decision-making process in different issues by transmitting information to the MEPs.

Access goods are vital for different interest groups to access the EP decision-making process in different issues. The degree of access granted to different interest groups is related to providing critical access goods by them. The criticality of a resource for an organisation is the extent to which it requires the resource for continued operation. The criticality of access good for MEPs determines the degree of access that the EP will provide for different interest groups that provide the critical good (Bouwen, 2002)

Like the model Pieter Bouwen introduces the resource exchange on the relationship between the EU institutions and interest groups, there is a possibility to model the resource exchange for the relationship between different interest groups and the EP as a supply-and-demand scheme access goods (Bouwen, 2004b; Bouwen and McCown, 2007). Whereas different interest groups are responsible for supplying access goods in this model, the Parliament determines the demand. Demanded access goods by MEPs have a direct relationship with the access of different interest groups to the decision-making process of EP on different issues. Different interest groups can access the EP only if MEPs also demand the access goods they provide.

Some researchers believe that MEPs are less in need of expert knowledge than 'political capital' to ensure re-election (Chalmers, 2013). The re-election concern makes MEPs keener to show consideration for the interests of broad parts of society. Communication with groups that protect interests, such as human rights or environmental

issues, allows MEPs to accomplish this intention (Tallberg *et al.*, 2018). Based on the EP's legislative role on different issues, the demand for expert knowledge on most issues is somewhat limited. Considering the EU's legislative decision-making process, the Commission first drafted a detailed proposal on an issue. Although some basic expert knowledge is essential, the amount of expertise needed to amend and decide in the EP in all issues is low. Based on their understanding of the proposals related to the different issues drafted by the EC, MEPs need the information to assess the proposals. The MEPs tasks are to evaluate the legislative proposals from a European perspective, as the EP is a directly elected supranational assembly. The EP requires information about European law on different issues for this assessment. This access good includes the institution's critical resource because it provides information about the EU's law's needs and interests. An additional reason that MEPs are interested in this access good is the supranational assembly's decision-making rules. Given the majoritarian decision-making rules in the EP, MEPs are encouraged to think supranational. To obtain a majority in Parliament, the positions of MEPs from different member states must be reconciled. As a rule, the agreement between different national positions is forged within the Parliament's transnational political groups. Because the access goods concern information from a European perspective, the goods is helpful for the MEPs (Bouwen, 2002, 2004b). Specifically, it facilitates transnational coalition-building within the supranational assembly.

To understand the Parliament's role in the legislative process, the MEPs' constituency orientation must also be considered. Scholars consider that the EU Member States have different national rules for the organisation of European elections. These electoral systems' differences impact the legislator–voter relationship (Farrell and Bowler, 1993, p. 52). All MEPs in the supranational assembly are nevertheless elected at the national level, and they, therefore, retain essential links with their electorate back home. MEPs need information about their national electorate opinion on different issues to increase their re-election chances. This is why MEPs ask for information about public opinion on some issues from different interest groups. This access good provides MEPs with information based on the needs and preferences of their voters.

Informational determinants of access in the Literature

Lobbying is inherently an interactive process between actors with distinct goals. An interactive relationship with decision-makers is a prerequisite for NGOs to influence decision-making. Therefore, what is essential is the "access" of NGOs to the right people in the right places and at the right time (Bouwen, 2004a). Existing literature on informational lobbying of interest groups explains access in an exchange between NGOs and decision-makers on varying issues. The larger NGOs literature models this exchange in terms of 'pressure and purchase' tactics (Chalmers, 2011). These studies point out that pressure groups' influence relies on supplies that lobbyists can admit or refuse; informational lobbying is based on the partisan provision of information and the strategic understanding of such information. Decision-makers reduce misinformation by thoroughly selecting the interest representatives whose information they consider and by rewarding or penalizing fallacious data. However, in the EU context, the literature explains lobbying in terms of information exchange based on the interests of two parties involved in the process. In fact, in the EU, the key to successful lobbying is directly related to NGOs' information rather than political support or campaign assistance (Broscheid and Coen, 2003, p. 170).

Information defines how different interest groups interact with MEPs on different issues. For example, NGOs are relative experts on issues related to their interests and have technical and politically salient information on human rights issues. On the other hand, MEPs pressed for time and lacked expert staff in different areas, drawing on this information to reduce uncertainties about their decision's outcomes (Lehmann, 2009). Therefore, interest groups find themselves in an excellent position to take advantage of this informational shortage. Thus, they tend to supply information to MEPs in exchange for access to the decision-making process on human rights issues to have their voices heard at the EU level and, ultimately, steer the EP's decision-making process in different issues (Beyers, 2004; Eising, 2007b).

Examining the literature on lobbying in the EU as an information exchange shows considerable support in the existing literature (Bouwen, 2002; Hall and Deardorff, 2006). Nevertheless, while some models predict when and at which stage of the decision-making process, NGOs manage to supply information to decision-makers on different issues or some models try to have insight into NGOs' vast informational repertoires, how informational lobbying relates to access for HR NGOs relatively is unclear. The little work that has addressed the issue almost exclusively concerns demand-side factors. In other words, access is recognized as a function of decision-makers' informational needs in different issues (Chalmers, 2013; Hanegraaff and De Bruycker, 2020). The original capacity of NGOs to involve these needs is mostly ignored. Instead, this capacity ultimately arrives through assuming policymakers' interests and organisational structure (Weiler and Brändli, 2015). The informational exchange becomes an entirely automatic process. For example, NGOs that urged to having detailed information on human rights issues will gain access to those decision-makers who most value that type of information. These demand-side definitions of access do not cover all part of the informational lobbying in the EU, especially lobbying with the MEPs (Chalmers, 2013). The existing literature on informational lobbying does not give us a clear picture of the other side of the lobbying process. Such a description is essential because it will give us a more accurate picture of HR NGOs access to MEPs on human rights issues. The literature argues that an NGO's capacity to supply information to decision-makers on different issues begins with considering the full range of strategic choices NGOs make concerning information provision (De Bruycker and Beyers, 2019). Specifically, two supply-side factors, which are the type of information NGOs typically send to decision-makers, and the tactics they use to do so will be examined in this literature (Chalmers, 2011). Information type ranges from technical information on different issues and expert knowledge to legal information to information about the public opinion a case decision-makers work on that. Information tactics can include outside tactics like public events or mobilizing citizen support for a human rights issue and inside tactics like sending emails or letters, face to face meetings or making the phone call (Chalmers, 2011). It is not easy to grasp the essence of the relationship between MEPs and HR NGOs. In addition to the type of information,

different interest groups' tactics to convey information to MEPs are another determining factor in their access to the EP's decision-making process. These factors substantially determine the access that MEPs provide to different interest groups in issues in different countries.

First, from the existing studies on NGOs' access to the EP, it seems critical to consider the type of information that MEPs need to understand their interaction with NGOs. As explained before, Bouwen (2002, 2004b, 2004a) strongly argues that a specific type of information affects the EP and NGOs' relationship. To gain access to the EP decision-making process on different issues, different interest groups have to provide the information demanded by MEPs. Drawing on theories of access, the relationship between NGOs and MEPs as an exchange of information and access shows that the more NGOs provide information about MEPs' needs, the more chance to MEPs provides them the access to the decision-making process. While decision-makers in the EP demand multiple forms of information on different issues that cannot be sufficiently generated within, interest groups which are specialized in collecting information relevant to their cause and can provide the information to MEPs. At the same time, different interest groups covet what MEPs control – access to the decision-making process. Different interest groups are attractive to MEPs because they often possess this kind of information. They tend to be experts on the issues that most affect their interests and frequently collect salient information on constituencies' views. Nevertheless, what different interest groups lack and desire is access to decision-makers – a prerequisite for influencing the decision-making process related to their interests (Tallberg *et al.*, 2018).

Tallberg et al. (2018) "believe, while co-operative rather than antagonistic, this relationship is not innocent." Both sides understand that different interest groups have a strategic incentive to present specific information in such a way to MEPs that it benefits their interests. Decision-makers are also knowledgeable that different interest groups seek their objects which do not necessarily correspond with their own (Weiler and Brändli, 2015, p. 747). Therefore, decision-makers will attempt to establish mechanisms they can

use to evaluate the reliability of different interest groups and their information. Nevertheless, such screening mechanisms may be imperfect for many reasons, like the costs of establishing full control and time-pressuring. MEPs are likely to accept the remaining risk of bias, given the benefits of outsourcing information collection to different interest groups. The result will be providing access to different interest groups from MEPs on the decision-making process on different issues (Tallberg *et al.*, 2018, p. 215).

Along with information types that different interest groups provide for MEPs, their tactics to convince MEPs need to be considered. Depending on the time pressure, types of information, and other factors, the tactics based on which MEPs provide different interest groups access are different. Using different tactics by different interest groups can increase the salience of a message, send a signal about the importance or message of a particular human rights case, and show different interest groups' commitment to the message. Some researchers divided these tactics into inside tactics and outside tactics (Chalmers, 2011, 2013). While inside tactics that different interest groups use encompasses the world of advisory bodies, committees, and Parliamentary committees and is not visible to the broader audience, different interest groups' outside tactics potentially expose to the public and subject by media scrutiny (Repository, 2013). Dellmuth and Tallberg (2017) separated inside and outside tactics, where inside tactics were introduced as influence tactics that involve direct interaction and outside tactics as tactics targeted at influencing decision-makers indirectly through public-opinion mobilization. Based on outside tactics Dellmuth and Tallberg introduced, we can say different interest groups, on the one hand, target the MEPs who need this information and, on the other hand, focus those who want to convey information to the legislators effectively (Dellmuth and Tallberg, 2017). However, through a public event or media campaign, it is hard to transmit technical details and complex information (Beyers, 2004, p. 215). Examining information that different interest groups provide based on MEPs need in terms of types and tactics allows researchers to address a series of questions in the existing literature on information lobbying. These questions are: Based on which types of information MEPs grant access for different interest groups on the decision-making process on human rights issues? Which tactics grant the most access to the MEPs for HR NGOs based on human rights

issues? Are inside tactics inferior to outside tactics when it comes to access for HR NGOs? Based on which informational determinants MEPs provide more access for HR NGOs on human rights issues' decision-making process?

The information types and tactics will be discussed separately in the next two parts of this chapter.

Access and Information types

Extensive research has been done on the role of information types on the access of different interest groups to policymakers. As a result, the information-exchange perspective on the access of interest groups to policymakers has become an essential model in interest group and policymaker's scholarship. This perspective implies that information types are critical for accessing different interest groups to policymakers. Moreover, interest groups supply different information types to policymakers to access or influence in return (Bouwen, 2002; Klüver, 2012). Scholars, therefore, accept that policymakers need interest groups for policy input (Bouwen, 2002; Dur, 2008). On the other hand, However, scholarship on information exchange has predominantly addressed the interest group's side of this exchange process (Crombez, 2002; Baumgartner *et al.*, 2009); other scholars have studied the informational demands of policymakers in their interactions with interest groups (Bouwen, 2004a; Hanegraaff and De Bruycker, 2020).

The main question of the scholars that studied the demand-side of the informational exchange of interest groups and policymakers was: What are the informational demands of policymakers in their exchanges with interest groups? Examining the informational needs of policymakers is essential, as it can lead to significant insights into the conditions of reciprocity in information exchanges. For example, interest groups may provide different information types to policymakers; however, they may never access policymakers who do not value the supplied information types (Hanegraaff and De Bruycker, 2020). The information demands of policymakers are thus crucial for which interest groups control

political policymaking. Consequently, there would be potential biases favouring interest groups to comply with these demands.

Some scholars explain policymakers' informational demands based on policymakers' function, while others study the domestic context of policymakers' countries of origin. For instance, Pieter Bouwen (Bouwen, 2002, 2004b, 2004a) published a series of papers on the subject based on the exchange model of interest groups access regarding the type of information each EU decision-making body needs. According to Bouwen, the information that EU decision-makers need for legislation on different issues determines the access patterns. The EC has the legal right to initiate legislation and is responsible for drafting legislative proposals. The drafting of proposals occurs in the first stage of the policymaking process and presumably requires a considerable amount of technical and expert information. Expert Knowledge is, consequently, a significant resource for the EC's legislative work (Bouwen, 2002, p. 379). As the most effective executive body of the Union, the EC, with only a handful of experts, lacks the necessary human resources to make policies. Therefore, based on the issue they are working on, the EC communicates with different interest groups, such as HR NGOs, which have specialized work areas. Therefore, interest groups with recourse to the type of technical information required by the Commission have more access to the EC.

The role of the Council as a wholly intergovernmental institution in the EU legislative process is entirely different from the Commission (Chalmers, 2013, p. 42). As one of the main pillars of legislation and representing national governments' interests, the Council is the forum for reconciling the member states' specific purposes and powers. The importance of national interests controls the Council, and therefore members of the Council need to identify their national or domestic interests on different issues. Therefore, council members need information that can facilitate bargaining power for their countries. This means that member states have a specific demand for information about their national interests (Bouwen, 2002, p. 381). Therefore, groups that provide information about the 'national encompassing interest' to the Council have more access to the Council. We should consider

that as a collective entity, members of the Council are usually reluctant to establish relations with these groups. The indirect way is usually the only way an interest group can reach out to the Council of Ministers. The government or EU member states that support the issue act on their behalf in the EU institutions (Panke, 2012, p. 145).

In the literature on EU interest politics, However, the EC has been identified as the first target of lobbying groups; the additional powers acquired by the EP over the last decade have led to the supranational assembly's elevation's importance as a lobbying target on different issues. Since the Treaty of Maastricht, the EP gained real veto power in the EU's decision-making process. The Parliament's additional power coincides with a relative decline of the Council's influence (Bouwen and McCown, 2007, p. 424). As the only elected assembly of the EU, the EP needs information to assess the EC's proposals from a European perspective. The lack of expertise of MEPs in all issues and the lack of access to information required to review the EC's proposals make the MEPs' decision dependent on access to information from external sources such as NGOs. Therefore, NGOs have information about the encompassing European interest and have more chances to access the Parliament.

The second group of scholars focused on the supply-side of the informational exchange model. Eising (2007a), drawing on a survey, sought to explain why interest groups like NGOs lobby the EU institutions and what groups gain access to the EU institutions. Based on organisational theory, four main dimensions influence NGOs' access patterns: "institutional context, resource dependencies, interest group organisation and strategic choices." Eising believes no comprehensible picture has yet emerged as to what determines NGOs' access to the EU institutions. He focused on the Bouwen exchange model, which stresses NGOs' organisational features, particularly their policy information control. Eising seeks to integrate these studies in a consistent explanation of NGOs' access to the EU institutions, thus aiming at the consolidation and modification of our established understanding. Drawing on the organisational theory of resource dependencies, he suggests that the EU institutional context, resource dependencies between actors involved in the

exchange process, and the NGOs' structures and strategies shape EU policymakers' access. The finding of his survey shows evidence that providing information to the EU policymakers improves the chance to access the policymaking process related to their interests (Eising, 2007b, p. 352). Eising focuses on a narrow range of information types: political, legal, and technical, limiting the model he introduced. His work did not provide information about which information grants NGOs the most access to policymakers. However, Eising study indicates that information provides access for NGOs to the EU institutions.

Dür and de Bièvre (2007) believe, based on NGOs' limitations on providing expert information and technical data about different cases, to capture the attention of policymakers are forced to provide "*general principles like equity, social justice, and environmental protection,*" making their informational contribution of 'little value' to the *EU decision-makers in different EU institutions*" (Dür and de Bièvre, 2007, p. 82; Chalmers, 2013). In fact, this group of researchers emphasizes the limitations of interest groups. According to the findings of some of these researchers, groups that have more human and financial resources have a greater ability to provide expert information than groups that do not have this capacity to provide these types of information.

Access and Strategies

Considerable research has been done to study the determinants of interest group tactics to access policymakers (Binderkrantz, 2005; Chalmers, 2013; Chalmers and Shotton, 2016; Hanegraaff, Beyers and De Bruycker, 2016; De Bruycker and Beyers, 2019). Based on the available literature, Andreas Dür and Gemma Mateo (2012) have provided a list of different labels that researchers use to classify interest groups' informational tactics. The first label they introduce is inside and outside tactics that various scholars used in their studies (Gais, 1991; Walker, 1991; Kollman, 1998; Gerber, 1999; Kriesi, Tresch and Jochun, 2007). For example, Adam Chalmers (Chalmers, 2011) later used this label in his research for informational determinants of access to the EU. The other label is information

politics and protest politics based on the Beyers research (Beyers, 2004). Information politics is the presentation of different types of information to the public at specific decision points, while protest politics usually also contains the presentation of information to the public (Beyers, 2004, p. 214). Also, Andreas Dür and Gemma Mateo (2012), based on the research conducted by Binderkrantz, find three other labels related to their study: 'administrative', 'media' and 'mobilisation' strategies (Binderkrantz, 2008b). Finally, the last label recognised from the existing literature is grassroots strategies (Nownes and Freeman, 1998).

These studies' primary consideration was what determines the tactics different interest groups employ to influence policymakers? These studies show that institutional context, group context, and issue characteristics determine interest groups choice of tactics regarding their access or influence policymakers or the policymaking process (Beyers, 2004; Dür and de Bièvre, 2007; Mahoney, 2008; Dür and Mateo, 2012). Findings of some studies have presented that group type is relevant to applying tactics to influence policymakers (Klüver, 2012; Dür and Mateo, 2013; Weiler and Brändli, 2015). The anticipation based on these studies is for NGOs to employ more outside tactics and interest groups working on business issues to concentrate more on inside tactics (Bouwen, 2004a; Della Porta, 2006; Dür and Mateo, 2012; Weiler and Brändli, 2015). Researchers discuss two reasons to support their findings: NGOs employ more outside tactics while interest groups in business areas rely more on inside tactics. First, the rationale presented by the researchers is that NGOs need the political and financial support of their supporters (Dür and Mateo, 2013). Therefore, their efforts should be tangible to their audience, even though they know that inside tactics lead to more influence on policymakers. For this reason, they prefer to use inside tactics. In contrast, other interest groups working on business areas choose their tactics based on their cost and benefit considerations. In addition, because some politicians may not find outside tactics friendly, they are less inclined to employ outside tactics.

The choice of tactics also depends on information that different interest groups possess to policymakers (Beyers, 2004). Since interest groups with concern on business issues tend

to be well endowed with expert information, which is valuable for policymakers, they have more chance access to policymakers. Researchers' rationale is that expert information is better to send to policymakers since it contains details (Chalmers, 2013). NGOs, in contrast, employ outside tactics since they cannot supply expert information like other interest groups based on their limitations (Grant, 1999; Mahoney, 2008). These distinctions in the type of information NGOs and other interest groups supply make an inside tactic rather suitable for interest groups in the business field and outside tactics somewhat suitable for NGOs.

The existing literature regarding interest groups' tactics also examines the role of groups' resources in choosing tactics to access policymakers (Dür and Mateo, 2013; Weiler and Brändli, 2015). For example, some scholars regard employing outside tactics as a strategy of interest groups with limited resources. Based on that, Grant (1999) believes that access to policymakers is related to the interest groups' resources. Bergan (2009) argues that the expansion of the Internet provides a cheap tool for interest groups to reach their supporters and access policymakers. Interest groups can use social media for their advocacy field, demanding little staff time to support and having low entry costs (Van Laer, 2010). Along with mobilization strategy and media strategy, scholars classified social media as an outside tactic, supplying NGOs with a form of indirect access to policymakers (Edwards and Hoefler, 2010). On the other hand, however, Kollman (1998) stresses that outside tactics for access are costly. The rationale of these scholars is that while some outside tactics demand considerable resources, press releases or internet campaigns are relatively cheap compared to most inside tactics. Therefore, scholars argue that resourceful interest groups to be more likely to employ inside tactics than NGOs.

Conclusion

The literature review shows that the theory of access, which is introduced by Pieter Bouwen, can be converted to a theory of access for HR NGOs. So, an effort should be made to generate several specific and testable hypotheses about the access of HR NGOs to the EP. This framework of new theory should have the ability to explain the differential

access of HR NGOs to the EU multi-level system based on the supply and demand for access goods. Thus, the framework has to have the ability to discuss the unbalanced access facilities of HR NGOs to MEPs. Also, the study tries to shed some light on the informational determinants of the HR NGOs access to MEPs by focusing on the supply-side of informational access between HR NGOs and MEPs. The study's fundamental approach is informational access in terms of both information types and information tactics. This study's primary concern is not just about the information provided to MEPs but also about how this information determines access. Furthermore, systematically detailing and examining a wide range of different information types and tactics will provide critical insights into the EP's access determinants. The literature on the interest groups' access to the EU decision-making bodies focuses on a broad range of business lobbying issues. Based on that, it is a challenge to develop theoretical ideas in European interest politics on human rights issues, which is known for its diversity and complexity. The literature is rich in the access factors for business interests to the EU's central decision-making bodies. Yet, the informational determinants of access for HR NGOs had no concern among scholars.

Chapter 3: Theory and Models

Introduction

This chapter presents the conceptual and theoretical model of the research. The model introduced in this chapter attempts to develop our knowledge of how HR NGOs can access MEPs regarding the human rights issues in third countries. Since studying influence is a somewhat questionable move in political issues, the alternative approach that Pieter Bouwen (2002) introduced is taken for this study. Bouwen believes focusing on influence will not lead us to reliable conclusions; therefore, he studies the access of business interests to different EU institutions. In Bouwen definition, access and influence do not have the same description as some interest groups might access EU institutions without influencing the subject under their considerations. However, access to EU institutions is a precondition for interest groups to influence the EU legislative process. Therefore, Bouwen introduces studying access of interest groups to EU institutions as a good indicator of influence (Bouwen, 2004b). Consequently, this study, instead of focusing on the influence of HR NGOs on the EP in different cases, will study the access of HR NGOs to MEPs.

To study the access of HR NGOs to MEPs conceptual model of this research is based on the model that Chalmers (2011) introduced to analyse the access of interest groups to the policy-making process of different EU institutions. Converting this model to a model that can analyse the access of HR NGOs to MEPs in the human rights issues in the third countries can help the literature. First, the researcher shows the existing theory based on the exchange theory and then develop a dynamic theory based on that. We can study access of HR NGOs by considering the information types and tactics HR NGOs use to access MEPs on human rights issues in third countries, which is more political action for MEPs. Depending on the different information types HR NGOs supply to MEPs at different levels, MEPs provide access to the HR NGOs that supply the information on

human rights issues in the third countries. The study discusses access of HR NGOs to MEPs based on the information types offered to MEPs. This research also attempts to discuss, based on which tactics HR NGOs access to MEPs on human rights issues. These tactics are divided into inside and outside tactics. HR NGOs emerge as lobbying groups or information providers to access MEPs' decision-making process on human rights issues in the inside tactics.

In contrast, HR NGOs indirectly try to provide themselves access to the decision-making process on human rights issues in the EP by using outside tactics. These theoretical arguments concentrate on HR NGOs' informational determinants of access to MEPs. Since it was time-consuming to study the types of information and tactics to send information that MEPs based on that provide HR NGOs access to the decision-making process; thus, the researcher examines the access of HR NGOs to MEPs on the human rights situation in Iran as a case study. In addition to theoretical understanding, these theories are conceptualised by graphical models. This chapter also outlines the general hypotheses of the research.

The informational determinants of access

Chalmers introduces a model based on the exchange theory (Chalmers, 2011, 2013). Based on the exchange theory, the activities of interest groups in the European institutions should be considered an exchange between two groups of interdependent organisations. It means the relationship between the EU institutions and interest groups is not a unidirectional activity of interest groups to the EUs' different institutions (Bouwen, 2004a). On the contrary, there is a tendency from the EU institutions to interact with interest groups as they need to work with them to accomplish their institutional role. Based on this theory, the communication of interest groups and the EU institutions can be considered as a set of inter-organisational exchanges (Bouwen, 2002). The active groups of these exchanges try to find with whom they should interact based on their desire. The relationship between these two groups works if both groups find it beneficial to their

functions. Also, this theory shows that both sides of the interaction are not self-sufficient, and they need resources from outside (Tallberg *et al.*, 2018). Hence, they have to communicate with those groups with the resources they lack. Therefore, an unavoidable outcome is that both sides become interdependent. The resource that interest groups are looking for in this relationship is access to EU institutions, and on the other hand, EU institutions are looking for information to fulfil their functions (Bouwen, 2002; Chalmers, 2013).

Exchanging information as determinants of access for interest groups to EU decision-makers at different levels and issues has long found much support in the literature (Bouwen, 2002; Hall and Deardorff, 2006; Austen-smith, 2015). Based on the existing models on the study of informational determinants of access, some studies worked on the general overview of EU lobbying without indicating of interest group influence (Mazey and Richardson, 1993; Coen and Richardson, 2009). On the other hand, some scholars have discussed when interest groups use the access and voice strategies (Coen, 1998; Beyers, 2002; Eising, 2004) or the prediction of time that interest groups are expected to supply information (Crombez, 2002). In addition, scholars also examined conditions based on that interest groups access to the EU institutions (Bouwen, 2002; Marshall, 2010). Finally, researchers also discussed the level of access to EU policymakers as a representative for influence (Bouwen, 2004b; Eising, 2007b). However, the main interests of these studies are on the demand side of the issue. Based on the findings of these studies, access is considered the function of the informational needs of decision-makers at different EU decision-making institutions.

As explained in the literature review, Bouwen (Bouwen, 2004b) strongly argues that a specific type of information affects the relationship between the EP and different types of interest groups. To gain access to the EP decision-making process, different interest groups have to provide the information demanded by MEPs. Drawing on theories of access, the relationship between interest groups and MEPs as an exchange of information and access shows that the more interest groups provide information regarding MEPs'

needs, the more chance MEPs provide them access to the decision-making process. However, focusing on the demand-side of the issue caused these studies to ignore the ability of different types of interest groups to meet these needs. The consequence of this ignorance is that informational exchange is considered a mechanical process (Chalmers, 2013). This mechanical process works like groups frequently urged to have a particular type of information that can access those decision-makers who most value the information they supply.

Chalmers believes that focusing on the demand-side descriptions of access causes the supply-side of the informational determinants of access to be unclear (Chalmers, 2011). However, the supply-side of the information exchange process is critical as it provides us with a more detailed description of the HRNGO's access to the MEPs and enables us to analyse the informational determinants of access. Consequently, to study the determinants of access to the EU institutions, Chalmers introduces a framework to explore the supply side of the issue (Chalmers, 2013). Based on this framework, different information types and tactics used to send information should be considered together.

Based on the framework that Chalmers introduced, we can say information plays a crucial role in accessing HR NGOs to MEPs. Provision of information like other interest groups shapes an HRNGO's activities, and even how it can influence the access of MRNGOs to MEPs or encourage MEPs to take action on human rights issues based on the HR NGOs desires. Information controls the relationship between HR NGOs and MEPs. HR NGOs are relative specialists on the human rights issues they are concerned about and have considerable technical, expert and politically notable information on those issues (Wouters and Rossi, 2018). On the other hand, based on their limitations on time and staff, MEPs consider it necessary to draw on this information to decide with no or at least fewer uncertainties about the consequences of their decision on human rights issues (Rasmussen, 2012). In these circumstances, HR NGOs have the opportunity to take advantage of this informational asymmetry. They thus tend to supply information to MEPs in exchange for access to the decision-making process on the human rights issues that they

work on them or convince MEPs to take any action on ongoing human rights issues based on the HR NGOs' concerns.

In this study, the researcher discusses that HRNGO's capability to supply information to MEPs necessitates examining the full range of strategic choices HR NGOs make regarding information provision. Notably, this study examines two supply-side factors that Chalmers introduced to study informational determinants of access for interest groups to the EU: the information types and their tactics to send information (Chalmers, 2013). Based on this method, the researcher can examine the information types HR NGOs supply to MEPs in exchange for access and the tactics to send information to MEPs. Tactics applied to send information to MEPs have a significant relationship with how informational content is regarded (Chalmers, 2013). Applying diverse tactics can increase the salience of a message, transmit multiple signals concerning the seriousness or necessity of a message and show an HRNGO's devotion to the message. Analysing information provision regarding types and tactics enables us to find answers for questions raised based on the limitation of the existing literature.

Information types

Information is a key factor in the access of HR NGOs to MEPs regarding human rights issues. A literature review on informational determinants of access shows that it is not easy to make a comprehensive list of the information types that decision-makers need at different levels in the EU and information types that different interest groups can provide and supply to decision-makers (Hanegraaff and De Bruycker, 2020). Any attempt to introduce a list of information that decision-makers in the EU need on different issues is not easy and will require some arbitrariness due to the wide range of issues (Mahoney, 2008, p. 82) For example, information that MEPs need to decide on economic issues will differ from the information they need on human rights issues. On the other hand, some decisions of MEPs do not regard as legislation processes; instead, they are more political actions like statements and resolutions on the human rights issues in different parts of the

world. However, there is no comprehensive list of information regarding information types; we can make a definite distinction between ‘*Expert information*’ and ‘*political-based information.*’ We can identify expert information as ‘*highly technical*’, ‘*scientific aspects*’, ‘*data-driven information*’, and ‘*the effectiveness of a specific policy*’. On the other hand, political-based information refers to the level of political and social impact or support regarding an issue under the consideration of decision-makers (Braun, 2012; Hanegraaff and De Bruycker, 2020). MEPs need the information on human rights issues to provide them with ‘*technical*’ and ‘*data-driven,*’ ‘*concrete,*’ and ‘*confidential arguments*’, as well as information using ‘*legal language*’ (Chalmers, 2013). In some issues, MEPs, due to their lack of expertise in human rights issues and time pressures, need information that can translate a situation into clear or technical details and make it understandable and comparable (Chalmers, 2013).

One of the examples of expert information based on which HR NGOs might access the EP could be on what happened at Camp Ashraf in Iraq. By providing technical information, HR NGOs tried to draw the attention of the international community, especially the EP, to the issue. Human Rights Watch (HRW) called for an impartial investigation into the use of excessive force against an unarmed group and expressed concern about camp residents' safety. Amnesty International issued a statement expressing concern that some Camp Ashraf residents were reportedly beaten and tortured by Iraqi forces during the occupation. The organisation also expressed concern about the high risk of forced return of the People's Mujahedin Organisation of Iran (PMOI) members to Iran, which was associated with a higher probability of further torture or execution (Wills, 2010). Apart from the political statements of HR NGOs, Amnesty International tried to provide legal and professional reasons to demonstrate that PMOI members remained 'protected persons' under international humanitarian law. Following the expert information that human rights organisations have published on Camp Ashraf's issue, the EP has issued a resolution on Camp Ashraf based on the "*Geneva Conventions and*

*notably, Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.*²"

Besides expert information, MEPs often also seek political-based information from HR NGOs. Political-based information refers to political support for a human rights issue or the importance of an issue in society. It is less concerned with the essence of human rights issues and more with how society considers and supports the issue (Dür and de Bièvre, 2007; Braun, 2012). By supplying political-based information, HR NGOs signal the level of support that MEPs enjoy, for instance, from the broader public or a specific constituency, such as the supporters of their parties. Political-based information coming from different HR NGOs may put political pressure on MEPs and persuade them to take the necessary action regarding that issue, such that the action corresponds with the prevailing human rights views among the represented constituents. MEPs value these types of information related to human rights issues to predict political opposition that may occur in the loss of constituency support (Kollman, 1998; Lucas, Hanegraaff and De Bruycker, 2019).

Political-based information can also serve as a valuable subsidy for MEPs in that they are supported by national constituents on whose behalf they are representing in the EP. While MEPs can rely on opinion polls, surveys indicating political support in the EP regarding human rights issues, HR NGOs are well placed to supply political-based information about their support base, especially regarding critical human rights issues. HR NGOs are more prone to supply political-based information when they have extensive supporters and issues related to their concerns are salient in the media. Furthermore, financial issues do not seem to significantly impact political-based information provision than expert information provision (De Bruycker, 2016; Flöthe, 2019).

² European Parliament resolution of 24 April 2009 on the humanitarian situation of Camp Ashraf residents, P6_TA(2009)0311, Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52009IP0311>

Access of interest groups to decision-makers based on the information types is related to different variables. Kluver (2012, 494) argues that interest groups need material resources to supply information to policymakers. Based on the complexity of the institutional environment of the EU, interest groups need money and staff to supply different types of information to access policymakers effectively. Dür and de Bièvre (2007) argue that based on the limitations of NGOs regarding the material resources, they are not able to supply expert information; therefore, they are more likely to supply political-based information that has less value for the EU decision-makers. On the other hand, some researchers argue that besides the organisational structure of interest groups, the institutional environment at the European level is a crucial factor since, based on the legislative role each institution has in the EU; therefore, they need different types of information (Bouwen, 2004a). For example, based on the function of the EP and as the only elected institution of the EP, MEPs need information that helps them "to evaluate the European Commission's proposals from the European perspective." (Bouwen, 2002, p. 380) Therefore, the more interest groups supply information regarding the informational need of decision-makers, the more they access the decision-making process. However, Chalmers' research finds no support that political-based information like public opinion provides more access to the EP for interest groups. On the other hand, information regarding the social and political impact regarding an issue which "serve technical details with a specific public or social dimension" has a meaningful relationship with the access of interest groups to the EP (Chalmers, 2013, p. 49).

Informational tactics

However, there is no consensus on the information types through which EU institutions provide HR NGOs access to the decision-making process; much research is done on NGOs' tactics to access the decision-making process. Choosing access tactics is best understood in the existing literature by dividing it into two distinct components. First, some researchers divided the tactics used by NGOs for having access to the decision-making process into outside and inside tactics (Caldeira, Hojnacki and Wright, 2000; Beyers, 2004; Hanegraaff, Beyers and De Bruycker, 2016; Dellmuth and Tallberg, 2017;

De Bruycker and Beyers, 2019). Outside tactics indirectly address decision-makers in different institutions. Instead of seeking direct access, NGOs mobilise and increase public awareness by communicating their message through various public media outlets. While inside tactics privatise the conflict and limit its scope, outside tactics engage the community in conflict by engaging a broad audience (Hanegraaff, Beyers and De Bruycker, 2016, p. 2).

However, much research in the existing literature considered inside tactics are more effective regarding the access of interest groups to policymakers (Beyers, 2004; Eising, 2007b); there is no clear agreement regarding the superiority of inside tactics to outside tactics (Hanegraaff, Beyers and De Bruycker, 2016). Some researchers explained that the effectiveness of any tactic depends on different factors. Therefore, some researchers explained that the success of outside tactics is related to the issue salience and the support interest groups enjoy in different situations. Also, other scholars argue that resource-rich interest groups are more successful when they apply outside tactics to reach policymakers (Kollman, 1998; Lovejoy and Saxton, 2012).

On the other hand, researchers discuss that the effectiveness of inside tactics is related to the type of information delivered to policymakers. Beyers explains that inside tactics are sufficient for sending expert information to policymakers (Beyers, 2004). However, most studies presume that inside tactics are more effective regarding the access of interest groups to policymakers; the findings of Chalmers research indicated that inside and outside tactics are equally effective regarding the access that interest groups enjoy in the EU (Chalmers, 2013). Also Dellmuth and Tallberg (2017) argue that NGOs employ both tactics instead of relying exclusively on inside or outside tactics.

HR NGOs use different channels to convey their message to MEPs. When developing access tactics, HR NGOs select which channels they will use to access MEPs. Different channels provide many opportunities for HR NGOs to make their message heard by

MEPs. Some channels are more open, involving the public, while others are private, not subject to public scrutiny. HR NGOs can transmit the information directly to MEPs through specific channels planned in the EU or publicly by targeting the media and the broader public. HR NGOs' direct communication efforts with MEPs are known as inside tactics that use more direct approaches to MEPs. HR NGOs use inside tactics to have direct exchanges with MEPs through private communication channels (De Bruycker and Beyers, 2019, pp. 1–2). This access tactic allows HR NGOs to decide whether to keep discretion where the contact between MEPs and HR NGOs remains private. Instead, by employing outside tactics, HR NGOs are making their messages out in the open and engaging the broader public and the media in discussing human rights issues. Whether HR NGOs use outside or inside tactics, the channel they use may affect the content of the messages. When a message is conveyed directly to MEPs through a channel that does not allow for public scrutiny, HR NGOs can give technical and complex information related to the issue they want to convince MEPs to take any action. Because of the technical information that HR NGOs convey to MEPs during inside tactics, this tactic tends to be more influential during the decision-making process.

However, the procedure is different for outside tactics used to access MEPs. For example, when addressing an issue publicly and through the media, messages should attract public attention and surrender to journalistic procedures and standards for news value. Using media makes long and detailed statements about the technical requirements of this policy difficult. Public statements should be less complicated but more provocative and emphasise political aspects and norms rather than technical and expert information. Therefore, detailed information is more accessible to transmit through channels in inside tactics than through outside tactics. In the EU, interest groups mostly prefer direct interaction with decision-makers to convey information based on the EU's technocratic and complex decision-making process (Eising, 2007a). Indirect actions are sometimes considered the weapon of the weak (De Bruycker and Beyers, 2019, p. 2) or the last option of HR NGOs when they want to have access to MEPs. In outside tactics, the focus is on individuals outside the decision-making process (Hanegraaff, Beyers and De Bruycker, 2016). In this way, HR NGOs try to pressure those outside the decision-making process

by using individuals outside the decision-making process and media, launching public campaigns, and organising public events to achieve their goals (Wolton, 2013). HR NGOs' motivation to use outside tactics is rooted in the information needs that form the structure of decision-making institutions. When interest groups decide to influence the decision-making process on a particular issue, they use these tactics to remind decision-makers in institutions such as the EP about the outcome of their decisions. They show that they can influence their future choices by demonstrating the power of mobilising public opinion. As it sends the message to the individuals that the HR NGOs influence a legislator, this tactic does not seem friendly to the MEPs (Chalmers, 2013). Therefore, due to the efficiency of information processing concerning access to MEPs, many actors are encouraged to prioritise inside tactics and ignore outside tactics. However, the empirical literature makes it clear that not all actors ignore outside tactics (Chalmers, 2013; Dellmuth and Tallberg, 2017). The added value of outside tactics is related to incurring direct political costs for MEPs. Compared to outside tactics, inside tactics do not incur direct costs for decision-makers in the EP on human rights issues. Besides, protest policy, especially if it requires the expansion of the political conflict, has a higher potential to incur costs. Second, achieving a position or reaching a specific position means that actors can relate information at a relatively low cost. Such actors are likely to take precedence over lobbying and avoid costly public solutions, which may damage their reputation as trusted interlocutors.

Greenpeace commonly uses outside tactics to achieve its goals. It comprises tactics that indirectly influence decision-makers at different levels by mobilising and increasing the awareness of a broader audience. Outside tactics the organisation uses include using public communication channels instead of direct exchanges with decision-makers in various institutions. On the other hand, FORATOM mostly uses inside tactics to have access to decision-makers in different institutions. Strategies that FORATOM uses for access include a direct exchange with decision-makers through private communication channels. These access strategies take place mainly behind the scenes and away from the public (De Bruycker and Beyers, 2019).

Based on the area of issues that HR NGOs work on, they vary in their tactics to influence the EP's decision-making process. While some HR NGOs primarily engage in direct tactics of access to MEPs, providing information and arguments, other groups of HR NGOs try to indirectly access MEPs by applying outside tactics to influence the actions of the MEPs. The choice of access tactics chosen by HR NGOs over the MEPs' decisions has not been systematically considered by researchers, just as lobbying strategies have received less attention from other international organisations (Hanegraaff, Beyers and De Bruycker, 2016; Dellmuth and Tallberg, 2017). As a result, HR NGOs use different approaches to influence legislators and decision-makers in decision-making bodies to influence their decisions.

A Real-world example of informational determinants

It is common to observe HR NGOs functioning as lobbying groups, information providers, and agenda setters to influence MEPs decisions on human rights issues. Amnesty International, one of the most famous HR NGOs, has maintained a strong relationship with the EU institutions. A British lawyer who tried to protect two students held in Portuguese jails founded Amnesty International in 1961 (Meriläinen and Vos, 2011, p. 297). Since then, Amnesty International has been one of the most influential and well-known HR NGOs globally based on its works on human rights. People worldwide trust their human rights reports and believe that human rights standards need to be set up in more countries (Kim, 2011, p. 44). Amnesty International reports human rights violations in some countries, especially Iran, which sometimes change states' foreign policies and even diplomatic relationships. When Amnesty International strongly criticizes human rights issues in Iran or other countries, EU institutions cannot just ignore its impact on public opinion, especially the EP, which its members to be re-elected need people's vote in their constituency.

After gathering information from their networks, Amnesty international regularly provide strong recommendation and consultation to the MEPs about human rights issues. Amnesty international lobbies MEPs to ensure that the EU puts human rights protection at the heart of its policies. Their works include letters to representatives, meeting MEPs, taking part in committees or round-table discussions. They also provide information on human rights abuses in different countries and recommend how the EP should act. In addition, Amnesty International usually has meetings with MEPs on human rights issues, providing detailed information and suggestions about human rights in different countries and cases. It has also helped the EP decide on the violation of human rights in many particular cases.

Moreover, when a human rights violation occurs in a country, Amnesty International provides first-hand information and works with the EP to stop the abuse. Through yearly publications and reports on particular cases, Amnesty International raises essential agendas in the world. It also uses public media to spread its messages about its activities and projects. Amnesty International can affect public opinion toward critical issues more efficiently by sending more messages through the media. For example, when the absolute right of journalists in Iran violates the government, Amnesty International attempts to raise public awareness of the situation. When Nasrin Sotoudeh, a lawyer and prominent human rights activist in Iran, faced a thirty-three-year prison sentence, Amnesty International condemned Iran for violating the freedom of expression. Amnesty International tried to raise awareness about the case by publishing reports and using social media. Through Amnesty International's activities, the public understood the situation more clearly and was motivated to support Nasrin Sotoudeh. Following the arrest of Nasrin Sotoudeh, Amnesty International began collecting signatures by issuing a global petition urging Iranian authorities to release her immediately and unconditionally. As a result, more than one million people in more than 200 countries have gathered to condemn prison sentences for a prominent human rights lawyer in Iran after two completely unfair trials. Amnesty International said the signature calling for her release was handed over to

Iranian embassies worldwide³. As a result, the EP passed a resolution on 13 December 2018 on the release of Nasrin Sotoudeh and Calls on the Government of Iran to immediately and unconditionally release Nasrin Sotoudeh⁴. Although it cannot be said with certainty that the decision was due to pressure from Amnesty International, based on the cooperation between the EP and Amnesty International, the role that Amnesty International played in raising the issue in the concern of MEPs cannot be ignored.

Models and general hypotheses

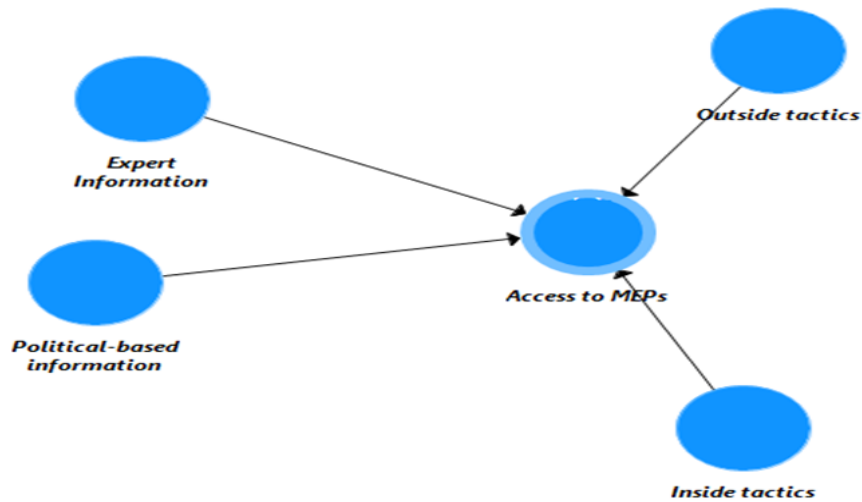
Conceptual Models

As previously explained, the service HR NGOs offer is primarily informational for having access to MEPs. Well-informed HR NGOs provide understaffed MEPs with relevant information regarding human rights issues for authorized access to the decision-making process. On the other hand, HR NGOs try to access MEPs by employing different tactics to send information. Based on Chalmers's theory, the researcher converted his theory to a theory of access to explain the relationship between the type of information that HR NGOs provide and tactics they employ to send information to access MEPs. Through these models, the researcher hopes to understand which informational determinants MEPs provide access to the decision-making process for HR NGOs and which types of information and tactics grant the most access to the MEPs on human rights issues in Iran. Figure 1 shows how informational determinants lead to access for the HR NGOs in the decision-making process.

³ For more information see: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/06/more-than-1-million-people-join-global-campaign-to-demand-iranian-government-release-nasrin-sotoudeh/>

⁴ European Parliament resolution of 13 December 2018 on Iran, notably the case of Nasrin Sotoudeh (2018/2967(RSP), P8_TA(2018)0525, Available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2018-0525_EN.pdf

FIGURE 1- THEORETICAL MODEL



These models generally explain the informational factors that determine HR NGOs' access to MEPs regarding human rights issues. Figure 1 shows the information types that lead HR NGOs access to the MEPs. The access of HR NGOs to the MEPs depends on the expert or political-based information that they provide to MEPs on human rights issues in particular cases. For example, when MEPs want to decide on a violator of human rights resolution, they need different information types and data on the case they work. As they are not experts on human rights issues and are understaffed, they seek information outside the Parliament.

On the other hand, some HR NGOs want to encourage MEPs to take a strong step to force the human rights violators to stop the violation. To influence the decision-making process, they provide information that MEPs need. The more they provide information on the human rights situation on the case MEPs are working on, and the more MEPs provide them access to the decision-making process.

The other informational factor determining the access that MEPs provide to the HR NGOs on human rights issues is the tactics that HR NGOs use to access MEPs. Figure 1

shows the determinants of access to MEPs, based on tactics HR NGOs use to access them. These tactics are inside tactics based on which HR NGOs directly try to transfer their information to the MEPs in exchange for access to the decision-making process and outside tactics which, based on that HR NGOs, indirectly try to access MEPs. HR NGOs may attempt to influence public opinion to change the decision-making process on human rights issues since they understand that public opinion can influence MEPs. Through public media or public events, HR NGOs try to force MEPs to change their behaviours toward the case they are working on based on HR NGOs' information, lobbying.

Control variable

Cooperation among different HR NGOs can determine their impact on the decision-making process on an issue or provide them access to MEPs. HR NGOs' cooperation exists when some HR NGOs collaborate on specific issues. Cooperation is a set of collaborations within a given area of human rights issues where an NGO participates at a specific time. HR NGOs have different reasons to form cooperation on the human rights issue based on their concerns. For example, an HRNGO might cooperate with other organisations to lobby on a crucial decision-making process on human rights issues or help their voices be heard by society. Cooperation of HR NGOs signals decision-makers that HR NGOs collaborate on a particular stance on human rights issues. The signal from HR NGOs cooperation minimises the transaction costs of decision-makers; in this research's case, MEPs dealing with HR NGOs in these coalitions.

When we consider the access of HR NGOs to MEPs, we need to pay significant attention to the cooperation of HR NGOs on the different human rights issues. Cooperation among HR NGOs on a human rights issue can be observed by reviewing the joint letters of these organisations to the EP and their other activities regarding different human rights issues. For instance, HR NGOs, by sending a joint letter to the EP Delegation for Relation with Iran, asked MEPs to raise their concerns for the situation of dual citizens

that were captive in Iran ⁵. Also, since HR NGOs need information regarding human rights issues from the context of the issue, they cooperate with those organisations that work closely with the victims of those issues. Therefore, besides testing the informational determinants of access, the cooperation of HR NGOs is added as a control variable.

Cooperation among HR NGOs to access MEPs or convince them to take any action regarding human rights issues is essential based on different reasons. For instance, HR NGOs cooperate in the particular human rights issue since collaboration benefits them to achieve their purposes. Furthermore, cooperation among HR NGOs can be easily observed in human rights issues. For example, there are many HRNGO forums in the EU. By participating in these forums, HR NGOs discuss their projects and, in some cases, their projects' results and exchange information regarding human rights issues in different cases. One example of these forums is the World Summit on the Information Society Forum (WSIS). In 2018 ARTICLE 19 participated at the 2018 WSIS Forum to discuss the human rights situation in Iran. The main concern of this HRNGO was that Iran's National Committee is participating in fora that demand the protection of freedom of expression while unabashedly sponsoring the same tools that work to control this in the name of defending "morals in cyberspace."⁶

HR NGOs tend to cooperate in human rights issues because this networking among HR NGOs can efficiently achieve their goals. The more HR NGOs cooperate, the more they can influence the MEPs to provide HR NGOs access to the decision-making process on human rights issues more efficiently. Cooperation among HR NGOs in the EU can occur because more HR NGOs can have more power in pressuring MEPs regarding access to the decision-making process. The number of HR NGOs in human rights issues is also

⁵ For more information, see: <https://redress.org/publication/joint-ngo-letter-to-the-european-parliament-delegation-for-iran-regarding-dual-nationals/>

⁶ For more information, see: <https://www.article19.org/resources/ws-is-forum-take-iran-task-human-rights-failures-online/>

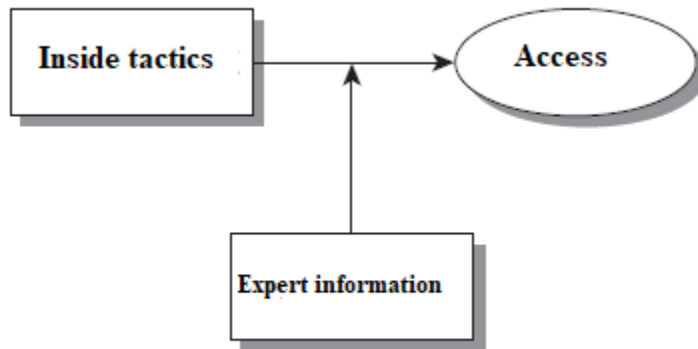
significant when dealing with the different types of information. The more HR NGOs work on a particular case, the easier it is for HR NGOs to access MEPs. HR NGOs can make the public realise the human rights issues a particular country faces during many activities in a particular case.

Mediator variable

When considering the informational determinants of access of HR NGOs to MEPs based on the information types and tactics, we need to pay significant attention to the type of information that different tactics can best deliver. Different information types can moderate the access of HR NGOs to MEPs based on the tactics they employ to access MEPs. It means that these two information types are essential to determine the type of tactics employed to access MEPs on human rights issues.

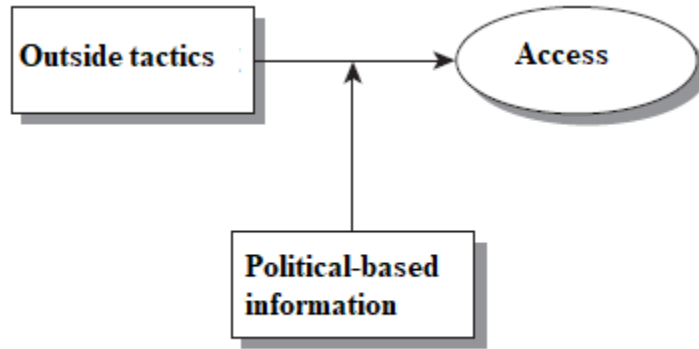
Reviewing the literature based on tactics that different interest groups employ to send information to decision-makers to access the decision-making process shows that different information types moderate interest groups' access to decision-makers based on different tactics. For instance, some researchers believe that expert information sent by inside tactics provides more access for interest groups. On the other hand, Beyers (2004) believes that information transmitted from outside tactics can be sent through inside tactics, but not all information sent through inside tactics is transmittable through outside tactics. A press conference or issuing press releases, for instance, is less efficient for transmitting expert information that contains the analysis of raw information. Therefore, expert information sent by inside tactics plays a significant role in accessing interest groups to decision-makers. Furthermore, as shown in figures 2 and 3, the moderator variable can directly affect the access of HR NGOs to MEPs.

FIGURE 2- THE MODERATION MODEL OF EXPERT INFORMATION TO INSIDE TACTICS



On the other hand, Outside tactics occur in a public arena and differ from inside tactics because information transmission from HR NGOs to MEPs transpires indirectly. Beyers believes that public arenas are less well filled for the detailed scrutiny of expert information. Nevertheless, sending expert information by employing outside tactics to MEPS is not irrelevant to human rights issues. The critical issue of sending information by employing outside tactics is that information tends to enter the public arena slightly randomly and incongruously. For example, issuing press releases should be no longer than one page, and holding press conferences would take a minimum time. Also, during any demonstrations, demonstrators can shout only a few slogans. Therefore, employing outside tactics almost inevitably force HR NGOs to select and frame information that fits with the tactics they employ. Nevertheless, considering the importance of the public arena for MEPs, political-based information can moderate the access of HR NGOs to MEPs. Figure 3, shown below, shows how the mediator variable can directly affect the access of HR NGOs to MEPs based on outside tactics.

FIGURE 3- THE MODERATION MODEL OF POLITICAL-BASED INFORMATION TO OUTSIDE TACTICS



Based on the theoretical framework and models developed in this chapter, the seven general hypotheses of this study are as follows:

Working hypothesis 1: The more HR NGOs provide Expert information on human rights issues to MEPs, the more likely to have access to the MEPs.

Working hypothesis 2: The more HR NGOs provide political-based information on human rights issues to MEPs, the more likely to have access to the MEPs.

Working hypothesis 3: The use of outside tactics increases the access of HR NGOs to MEPs on human rights issues.

Working hypothesis 4: The use of inside tactics increases the access of HR NGOs to MEPs on human rights issues.

Working hypothesis 5: The cooperation of HR NGOs has significant relationship with the access of HR NGOs to MEPs.

Working hypothesis 6: Expert information moderate the access of HR NGOs to MEPs based on inside tactics.

Working Hypothesis 7: Political-based information moderate the access of HR NGOs to MEPs based on outside tactics.

Case selection

To examine the informational determinants of access to MEPs on human rights issues from a demand-side view, namely, how do different types of information and tactics related to human rights situations buy access for HR NGOs to the MEPs? it might be ideal for conducting empirical research on the EP's decisions on the human rights situation in different countries. However, studying the informational determinants of access to MEPs on the human rights situation in different countries for HR NGOs might be vary based on various factors. Researching the human rights decisions of the EP towards different countries might be too time-consuming. It is also true that collecting data about the access of HR NGOs to MEPs on different countries' human rights situations may constrain projects' range and scope. Therefore, the decision is to study the access of HR NGOs to MEPs in Iran's human rights situation. There are several reasons why Iran is a good case study for this research.

First, human rights are among the issues that play an essential role in Iran and the EP relations. According to the EU Charter, human rights are the cornerstone of the EU's common foreign policy (Altafin, Haász and Podstawa, 2017, p. 123). In this regard, EU members have always criticised Iran's human rights situation in international organisations (Smith, 2006, p. 126), and political talks with Iranian officials call for improvement. They cite issues such as executions, floggings, stoning, inequality of women's share of inheritance with men, non-performance of certain occupations by women, violations of freedom of expression and press rights, and other issues the basis of their human rights concerns.

The EP is one of the most active institutions in the field of human rights criticism against Iran. The EP has always played an essential role in guiding public opinion in the international arena by issuing resolutions and compiling reports, and indirectly influencing the UN resolutions (Smith, 2006). Based on the EP's concern about Iran's human rights situation, the EP has issued several resolutions on human rights violations in Iran. Although these resolutions are not binding, they reflect the MEPs' views and have

a high impact on the world's public opinion. An examination of the EP resolutions towards Iran shows that many cases of human rights violations in Iran have come to the attention of this body. For instance, on 4 September 2008, a European Parliament resolution entitled "Death Penalty" was adopted Towards Iran. The resolution contains 12 clauses and focuses on issues related to legal conviction and the death penalty in Iran. The resolution underscored the 2008 statement and statements issued by the EU Presidency and expressed grave concern over the number of executions in Iran in 2008 (191). It also prohibits the death penalty for children under international law, Article 6 (Clause 5) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the Child's Rights.

Furthermore, the resolution claimed that at least 130 death sentences were reported in 2008 in breach of the international obligations of the Iranian government⁷. A European Parliament Resolution Towards Iran was also issued on 14 June 2012 entitled "Situation of Ethnic Minorities." The resolution contains ten articles and condemns human rights violations such as the prohibition of freedom of speech, belief and assembly, and social, political and cultural rights among Baha'i and Sufi minorities. In addition, the previous resolution strongly condemns the use of the death penalty in Iran ⁸.

Besides, the EP adopted a resolution entitled "The EU's Strategy Towards Iran" on 3 April 2014 and, after final approval, announced it to EU institutions, Parliaments, and European governments. The resolution is about the nuclear issue, the prospect of Iran's relations with the EU, regional issues and the human rights outlined in 23 articles. The EU's resolution addresses human rights violations in Iran such as prohibitions on freedom of speech and belief, prohibition on freedom of information, prohibition on freedom of assembly, prohibition on the freedom of civil movement, violations of women's rights,

⁷ European Parliament resolution of 4 September 2008 on executions in Iran, P6_TA(2008)0412, Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52008IP0412>

⁸ European Parliament resolution of 14 June 2012 on the situation of ethnic minorities in Iran (2012/2682(RSP)), P7_TA(2012)0265, Available at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+TA+P7-TA-2012-0265+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN>

the death penalty, unfair trials and criminal laws, gender discrimination and sexual orientation, and expresses its deep concern and calls on the Iranian authorities to release all human rights defenders, political prisoners, trade union activists and detainees arrested in the 2009 presidential election in Iran; it also warns the high number of executions (especially Baha'is) in 2013 and 2014. Besides, the EU believes that the 2013 presidential elections in Iran were not held following democratic standards and mentions the Declaration on Criteria for Free and Fair Elections dated 26 March 1994 in the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The Iranian government is also a member. In its resolution, the European Parliament emphasizes that in all its relations with Iran, it will prioritize human rights and calls on the EU to launch a dialogue on human rights with Iran on judicial and security issues. The resolution's positive points include welcoming Dr. Rouhani's proposal for a Charter of Citizenship and welcoming the Iranian government's willingness to establish more transparent and constructive relations with the West. It notes, however, that citizenship rights must be fully in line with Iran's international obligations, including non-discrimination and the right to life, promoting prohibition of torture, guaranteeing the total freedom of religion and guaranteeing freedom of speech, and believes that these rights are currently limited by the vague definition of crimes related to national security⁹.

On 25 October 2016, a resolution was adopted with 52 paragraphs in 5 sections, entitled "the EU Strategy Towards Iran After the Nuclear Agreement" by the European Parliament. The first section of this resolution deals with the importance of bilateral dialogues between Iran and the EU on different issues like human rights and insists on developing the Parliamentary dimension of EU-Iranian relations as part of re-establishing mutual trust. After discussing Iran's economic potential in the fifth section, we can see the EU's concern about the high rate of executions, asking Iran to respect freedom of expression, minority and religious rights, and calling Iran to respect fair trial¹⁰.

⁹ European Parliament resolution of 3 April 2014 on the EU strategy towards Iran (2014/2625(RSP)), P7_TA(2014)0339, Available at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+TA+P7-TA-2014-0339+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN>

¹⁰ European Parliament resolution of 25 October 2016 on the EU strategy towards Iran after the nuclear agreement (2015/2274(INI)), P8_TA(2016)0402, Available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2016-0402_EN.pdf

In another resolution on 31, May 2018 the EP adopted a resolution on “Situation of imprisoned EU-Iranian dual nationals in Iran”. In this resolution the European Parliament condemned the imprisonment of EU-Iranian dual nationals and asked for their immediate release¹¹. Also, on 13 December of 2018, the European Parliament explicitly called on Iran to immediately and unconditionally release Nasrin Sotoudeh and urges the judiciary system to respect due process and fair trial and expresses its deep concern over the detention of dual nationals on their return to Iran¹². If we pay attention to the number of resolutions and the breadth of issues, it shows that human rights in Iran are of interest to MEPs.

Second, over the past few decades, HR NGOs have become an influential element in various international processes such as the environment, human rights, health, trade, politics, education, and the quantity and quality of their activities. Meanwhile, HR NGOs active in human rights, using their specialized tools in the three areas of drafting the law, law enforcement and monitoring the implementation of laws, have played an essential role along with official and international institutions involved in human rights issues. In particular, they should define themselves in terms of oversight and, by informing the governments about the progress and regression in the field of human rights, they should sensitize the communities inside and outside the country to the alleged cases of human rights violations. Each HRNGO has its way of protecting human rights in different countries. For example, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, through their track record and the international nature of their activities, have several practical tools for influencing global human rights processes, especially in Iran. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have repeatedly stated in their annual and case-by-case reports on Iran: Violations of women’s rights, labour rights, ethnic and especially religious minority

¹¹ European Parliament resolution of 27 October 2016 on nuclear security and non-proliferation (2016/2936(RSP)), P8_TA(2016)0424, Available at:

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2016-0424_EN.pdf

¹² European Parliament resolution of 31 May 2018 on the situation of imprisoned EU-Iranian dual nationals in Iran (2018/2717(RSP)), P8_TA(2018)0231, Available at:

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2018-0231_EN.pdf

rights, pressure on journalists, a sharp increase in executions, protests against juvenile executions, violations of rights, Formation of peaceful rallies, suppression of the opposition. Also, they try to work with the EP to increase the human rights situation in Iran. There are many HR NGOs that the situation of human rights in Iran is a big concern.

The theoretical understanding of this research can significantly contribute to the study of informational determinants of access to the MEPs on human rights issues, particularly in the case of Iran. This study tries to understand what determines the access of HR NGOs to MEPs on human rights issues in Iran. We have to consider that information plays a crucial role in the access that MEPs provide for HR NGOs on human rights issues. The type of information that HR NGOs send to MEPs and their tactics to send information seems crucial in determining the access that MEPs provide for human rights issues. Even though it is hard to measure the impact of HR NGOs on MEPs on human rights issues, the informational determinants of access can be studied.

Conclusion

To understand what determines the access of HR NGOs to MEPs, the researcher developed general theories by reviewing the existing literature. Information seems to be the main factor in the MEPs and HR NGOs relationship. HR NGOs try to influence The EP's decisions on the human rights issues functioning as information providers and lobbying groups. HR NGOs provide information for MEPs and provide themselves with a great chance to access MEPs in human rights issues. HR NGOs also pressure MEPs' decisions to function as lobbying groups or interest groups with data from the field. The types of information are also crucial for MEPs to let HR NGOs access the decision-making process. Reviewing the literature shows that based on the MEPs concern to be re-elected, political-based information tends to provide more access for HR NGOs than other types of information. However, that does not mean MEPs do not need expert information regarding human rights issues in third countries. Therefore, the more HR NGOs supply information based on MEPs' needs, the more MEPs provide them access to the decision-making process on human rights issues. MEPs' access for HR NGOs is about the type of information HR NGOs provide them and the tactics that HR NGOs use to convey this

information. HR NGOs' tactics to access the decision-making process in this research are divided into inside and outside tactics. Outside tactics target people outside the decision-making process. As HR NGOs have gained significant trust among the public, by mobilizing people outside the decision-making process, they can have access to MEP's or put pressure on them on the human rights situation in different countries.

On the other hand, MEPs can receive more technical data; therefore, these tactics tend to provide more access for HR NGOs. To test the informational determinants of access of HR NGOs to MEPs, the types of information and the tactics to transfer data that HR NGOs use are essential factors. As more HR NGOs provide information related to MEPs' needs, they can have more access to them. Besides, as HR NGOs use different tactics to convey their technical and political information, they have more access to the MEPs. Therefore, hypotheses that test the access that MEPs provide for HR NGOs in the decision-making process on the human rights issues in Iran are developed. This chapter developed general hypotheses, which will be empirically tested in the following chapters. The general theories developed in this chapter can be applied to studying the access of HR NGOs to MEPs on human rights situations in other countries. However, conducting empirical studies with many cases requires more time, resources, and data. With limited data availability, the focus of this study is on the case of Iran. The next chapter will explain how the researcher collected data and conducted empirical studies.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

Mixed methods

Since this was the first time a researcher had studied the access of HR NGOs to MEPs, it was decided to use mixed-methods approach to conduct this research. Mixed methods research has been defined in various ways by experts in the field of mixed methods research, all of which have in common the use of both quantitative and qualitative research methods in a single study. Thus, an accurate mixed methods study is characterised by the integration of quantitative and qualitative findings during the stages of the research process, which can be in the stages of data collection, analysis or interpretation of research results. For instance, Abbas Tashakkori, in his joint article with John W. Creswell entitled "*The New Era of Mixed Methods*," explained research based on mixed methods as which the researcher use both qualitative and quantitative approaches in a study with a single research design in collecting and analysing data, combining findings and conclusion on a particular topic (Tashakkori and Creswell, 2007). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) also consider mixed methods as research methods in which the researcher combines quantitative and qualitative techniques, methods, approaches, and concepts. Based on some researchers' point of view, the mixed methods do not mean rejecting the importance of qualitative and quantitative approaches, but on the contrary, both approaches are considered essential and valuable based on this approach. In other words, each of these approaches (quantitative and qualitative) has advantages and disadvantages. The mixed methods approach aims to use the advantages of both approaches and minimise their disadvantages by combining these two approaches (Cresswell *et al.*, 2003). According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, if we draw an axis in which quantitative approaches are at one end and qualitative methods are opposite, the mixed methods are located in the middle of the axis and between these two approaches. They also mention other features of the mixed-methods approach. The mixed-methods approach legitimises multiple approaches and methods to answer questions instead of restricting or forcing the researcher to use a

limited-approach method. Mixed methods approaches are comprehensive, pluralistic and complementary and allow the researcher to choose the appropriate method according to his/her research (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, pp. 4–6). Therefore, in general, the mixed-methods approach can be considered a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches in different stages of research, from conceptualisation and data collection to the stage of data analysis to use the advantages and strengths. These approaches and minimising and avoiding their weaknesses can be a more complete and accurate study of a single phenomenon and reveal its various aspects.

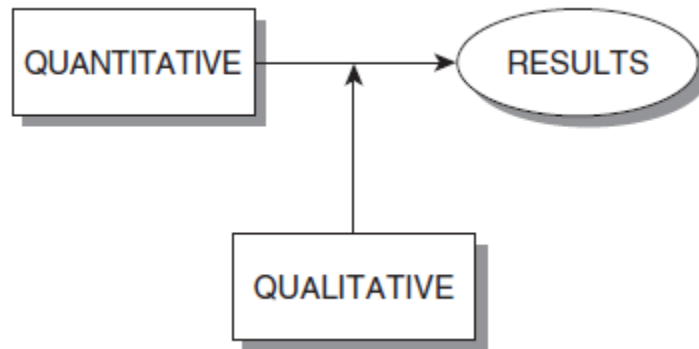
There are many advantages to mixed methods research, but the two main advantages of this approach over its one-method approach are that it answers research questions in a way that other methods cannot answer. For example, if the theory test can be performed with a quantitative method alone and theorising with a purely qualitative method will be possible, then both the design process and the theory test can be performed simultaneously with the mixed methods. On the other hand, the mixed-methods approach will provide a more substantial interpretation because quantitative and qualitative methods reinforce each other's strengths and cover each other's weaknesses. Furthermore, combining quantitative and qualitative findings can obtain an overview of the findings, which is impossible with any quantitative or qualitative approaches alone. In addition, the mixed-methods approach is beneficial in clarifying the similarities and differences between specific aspects of a phenomenon. Using both types of data allow researchers to simultaneously generalise the sample results to the community and understand the phenomenon of interest. Also, based on the participants' feedback, the theory test can be performed to correct it with this approach. Finally, the rate of citation to articles done by the mixed methods approach is higher than traditional articles, which can be a reason for the importance and acceptance of this research approach.

Although, as mentioned, the mixed-methods approach is a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, this combination is done in different forms and methods. That is why the proponents of this approach speak of mixed-methods and not of the mixed-method (Greene, 2006). Furthermore, a distinctive feature of mixed methods is their

paradigmatic pluralism. In other words, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches in different ways has led to different patterns and models of mixed methods. Although, at the same time, they present a typology of different mixed methods approaches, Teddlie and Tashakkori (2011) state that these patterns and models are so diverse that no typology can fully address them. Therefore, to conduct the mixed methods approach, at least three steps must be taken in addition to what is available in traditional research methods (determining the purpose of the study, the research question, and the type of data to be collected). These three steps are Step 1: Decide on using a theoretical lens, Step 2: Decide on how to collect data and prioritise it, and Step 3: Decide on data analysis and where the data is to be combined. Data analysis and integration may be performed through separate data analysis processes in a mixed-methods approach. When deciding on a mixed-methods approach, the first question is, what is the right design? To choose the right design, we should consider three issues: first, whether the quantitative and qualitative steps are done together or sequentially? The second priority is with which research approach? The priority of qualitative or quantitative method is a crucial decision, and thirdly, at what stage of the research will the combination of quantitative and qualitative data be done? Creswell et al. (2003) divide the mixed methods approach into two simultaneous and sequential groups. The sequential group includes Sequential Explanatory Strategy, Sequential Exploratory Strategy, and Sequential Transformative Strategy, and the simultaneous group includes Concurrent Triangulation Strategy, Concurrent Nested Strategy, and Concurrent Transformative Strategy.

In this research, a Sequential Exploratory Strategy has been used. In this strategy, first qualitative data were collected to create a questionnaire and then quantitative data was collected based on the questionnaire and finally, qualitative data were collected to support quantitative findings. The visual presentation of the third step of the study based on Steckler (1992) and others is as shown in figure 4.

FIGURE 4- THE VISUAL PRESENTATION OF THE THIRD STEP OF THE STUDY



Priority in this research is given to quantitative findings, and qualitative findings support quantitative findings. Data analysis is usually related, and the combination of data is done in the discussion chapter. This scheme is suitable for explaining relationships or examining findings, especially when findings are beyond the researcher's expectations.

This research is intended to empirically examine the hypotheses and measure the applicability of informational determinants of access of HR NGOs to MEPs regarding the human rights issues in Iran from the supply-side of the relationship between HR NGOs and MEPs. In this research, the information types and informational tactics used by HR NGOs to access MEPs regarding the human rights situation in Iran will be studied simultaneously. The existing literature in the informational determinants of access to the EU for interest groups generally studied the issues related to the legislative process in the EU. Therefore, there is no tool to test our hypotheses on the informational determinants of access to MEPs for HR NGOs on human rights issues, which are more political issues. The researcher decided to choose a mixed-methods approach as the research methodology based on this limitation. Therefore, the researcher employed a mixed methods research design to collect, analyse, and combine quantitative and qualitative research in this study. A sequential quantitative and qualitative data collection was chosen as the most appropriate means to create a questionnaire for the quantitative part of the study and the final qualitative part to support the findings of the quantitative part.

In this study, the first step was to use the in-depth interview to extend the knowledge of the concepts of independent variables in this research. In-depth interviews were started with members of HR NGOs to deeply identify their viewpoints on informational determinants of access to MEPs regarding human rights issues. Also, the goal was to develop a richer theoretical understanding of informational determinants of access to better define items of informational determinants of access as independent variables. The in-depth interviews, which included open questions, were conducted with some key managers of HR NGOs, which helped to understand better their viewpoints regarding tactics and information types they use to access MEPs for designing the questions of informational determinants of access in the questionnaire for measuring the effects of these constructs on the access of HR NGOs to MEPs.

Nonetheless, survey strategy of variables such as inside and outside tactics and political-based and expert information is incorporated according to existing scales of Chalmers's work. The in-depth interview was done because even though different sources of informational determinants of access as independent variables were identified based on the study of Chalmers, the constructs of different sources of informational determinants of access were unpacked from Chalmers' study. Consequently, there were no measurement scales to assess the impacts of each of these sources of informational determinants of access to the EU on the access of HR NGOs to MEPs on the human rights situation in the third countries.

Therefore, interviewing members of the HR NGOs who have worked in this field for a long time was a crucial step required for this study. Furthermore, it was essential to develop the concept of informational determinants of access from their views, create and design the questions of four independent variables through their answers to the open questions of an in-depth interview. As a result, based on the research design concept, this research method, according to theory development, can be regarded as deductive. If we start research with a theory, generally generated from scholar's reading of the academic literature, and the researcher tries to design a research project approach to examine the

theory, the researcher is applying a deductive method. The current research also began with considering some of the theories about informational determinants of access, lobbying strategies, and tactics used by interest groups to access policymakers for reviewing the related literature to design the research approach and to examine the hypotheses related to the access of NGOs to the EP based on the types of information and the tactics to send the information to MEPs.

Steps of Conducting Research

As mentioned, this research has been done in three separate stages. Therefore, each of these stages involves different methods for collecting data and analysing processes. This section briefly describes each of these three stages. First, the steps taken to prepare the questionnaire are explained, and then the quantitative part. Finally, in the third stage, the qualitative part that was done to support the results of the quantitative part will be discussed.

Stage 1:

Qualitative Part to Create a Questionnaire

This research is designed to empirically test and analyse the hypotheses and measure the applicability and effects of information types and tactics to access MEPs for HR NGOs on human rights issues in third countries. The first step was to use the in-depth interview to deepen the understanding of the concepts of the independent variables in this research as the central part of the theoretical model. Therefore, in-depth interviews started with representatives of HR NGOs to deeply classify and understand their views and insights toward different information types and tactics they employ to access MEPs. Also, to generate a richer theoretical understanding of informational determinants of access to MEPs to better define and formulate inside and outside tactics and expert information and political-based information as independent variables and better unpacking and decomposing elements of these types of variables in the research model. Therefore, the

in-depth interview, which included open questions, was carried out with representatives of HR NGOs, which helped to understand their opinions regarding informational determinants of access for designing the questions of different information types and tactics to send information to MEPs in the questionnaire for measuring the effects of these constructs on the access of HR NGOs to MEPs. Although Chalmers (2013) introduces survey variables such as inside and outside tactics and political-based information and expert information in a model as informational determinants of access for interest groups to the EU, the structures of each of these variables address legal issues. Therefore, a new measurement scale was needed to assess or measure the impact of each of these four variables on HRNGO access to MEPs regarding human rights issues.

Theoretical sampling

In the sampling section of the qualitative part of this research, the theoretical sampling method was used to create the questionnaire. In theoretical sampling, the samples were selected to obtain a comprehensive and rich set of data (Chun Tie, Birks and Francis, 2019). Theoretical sampling was not based on simple random selection or a sample representing a particular community, but rather a type of sampling whose primary purpose was to assist the researcher in developing a model (Taherdoost, 2016). In this sampling method, samples were selected to help the researcher clarify and define the boundaries and appropriateness of the categories. So, the researcher tried to be open-minded and flexible in sampling. In the early stages of data analysis, the researcher tried open and relatively unfocused sampling.

At this stage, resources were selected that provided the researcher with more relevant information. As the data were analysed, the findings were used to select the following sources. In the present study, 11 HR NGOs were considered the interviewee's sample size. Among those recruited were three organisations registered with the EU Parliamentary Lobbying System, and eight others were international NGOs and NGOs working specifically on the human rights situation in Iran. Interviews in this section were conducted from 06/10/2019 to 03/02/2020. The duration of the interviews was about 45

minutes to an hour, according to the agreement with the interviewees. The interviews were semi-structured. In individual interviews with the interviewees, four main questions in the interview were used for preliminary review. In theoretical sampling, an attempt was made to guide the analysis of the research process. The researcher considered that after seven interviews, the main and sub-factors were repeated in the previous interviews, and the researcher reached theoretical saturation. Corbin and Strauss (1990) argue that theoretical saturation is often thought of as occurring when a new category of data is no longer being extracted, but in fact, theoretical saturation refers to something beyond that. In the sense that the fundamental goal is not simply to achieve a set of categories; instead, theoretical saturation refers to the formulation of categories based on their characteristics and dimensions, which includes various forms of their possible relationships with other concepts.

The researcher conducted online interviews via Skype with Amnesty International's Iran researcher, a member of Human Rights Watch (HRW) that works on the human rights situation in Iran, a member of Committee to Protect Journalist (CPJ), interview via WhatsApp with the representative of Bahaei International Organisation in Brussels. Since these HR NGOs are the most prominent NGOs on human rights issues globally and are registered on the lobbying system of the EU, they would be the best source to conduct the qualitative study. Also, the researcher conducted interviews via Skype with Campaign to Free Political Prisoners in Iran (CFPPI), the Baloch Activists Campaign (BAC), Hengaw Organisation for Human Rights, Kurdistan Human Rights Networks and three other anonymous HR NGOs.

HRW is one of the most famous HR NGOs, and its headquarters is in New York City. HRW conducts research and advocacy on the human rights situation in different parts of the world. The NGO is registered in the Lobbying system of the EU with three lobbyists. HRW released many reports and statements regarding the human rights issues in Iran and asked the EU members and other countries to take the needed actions based on the human rights situation in Iran. Also, Amnesty International is one of the largest and most famous

HR NGOs globally, and human rights in Iran has always been its primary concern. Amnesty International is registered in the lobbying System of the EU with thirteen lobbyists. Since Iran has one of the highest numbers of journalists in prisons, the CPJ to be their voice is essential. The CPJ is a non-profit organization that supports press freedom worldwide. CPJ also is registered in the EU Lobbying System with three lobbyists. The Other NGO that works on religious rights and has a great concern on the human rights abuses in Iran regarding religious issues is Bahaei International. Bahaei International has an office in Brussels and is registered in the Lobbying System of the EU. Hengaw Human Rights Organisation and Kurdistan Human Rights Network are two HR NGOs that work on the rights of one of the most famous ethnicities in Iran. They also work on other human rights issues in Iran. BAC is another HR NGO covering human rights issues related to ethnic groups in Iran, especially Baloch people, headquartered in Sweden. The other organisation that works on human rights situations and has a TV Channel is CFPPI, headquartered in England. CFPPI works on the issues related to the political prisoners in Iran. Table 1 shows the list of HR NGOs with which the researcher conducted interviews.

TABLE 1- LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

List of HR NGOs	Interview Method
Human Rights Watch	Online Via Skype
Amnesty International	Via WhatsApp
CPJ	Online Via Skype
Bahai International	Via WhatsApp
CFPPI	Online Via Skype
Baloch Activist Campaign	Online Via Skype
Hengaw Human Rights Organisation	Email
Kurdistan Human Rights Network	Email

Anonymous	WhatsApp
Anonymous	Online Via Skype
Anonymous	Online Via Skype

After exchanging several Emails with Tara Sepehri, Far from HRW, the researcher conducted an in-depth interview with her online via Skype for about an hour. She is currently working as a researcher on the human rights issues in Iran at the HRW. The interviews with the representative of Amnesty International were via WhatsApp. Based on the schedule of Raha Bahreini during the data collecting process, we divided the interview into three different parts. Each part lasts about 15 minutes. Raha Bahreini is in charge of researching human rights at Amnesty International. The other interview that the researcher conducted online via Skype was with Sherif Mansour, the CPJ. After exchanging emails, the researcher interviewed him for about an hour based on the time difference between the EU and the USA. The interview with Shiva Mahbobi was also conducted via Skype. Shiva Mahbobi is the spokesperson of CFPPI, and the interview with her was about 45 minutes. The researcher also received detailed answers to questions by Email from Rebin Rahmani, the Kurdistan Human Rights Network board member, and Kamran Teymouri, the Hengaw Human Rights Organisation representative. Also, the researcher had three other interviews that their interviews wanted to be anonymous. These interviews were conducted online via Skype.

Systematic data collection and analysis

In the method the researcher applied to create the questionnaire for the study, data analysis is performed simultaneously with their collection, and these two processes are not separate from each other. In the present study, during the data collecting process, their analysis was started simultaneously, and through simultaneous analysis of the collected data, awareness was created to collect more data. Therefore, as Charmaz pointed out, the distinction between data collection and analysis stages in traditional research methods was

deliberately ignored (Charmaz, 2006). There is no specific method for collecting data specific to the creating a model or questionnaire, but based on the nature of the research, different data collection methods such as interviews, observation, and analysing documents or a combination of them can be used. For example, the researcher used interviews as a data collection method, but document analysis also helped the researcher formulate the questionnaire.

The researcher studies the participants' experiences in the research and expresses his / her potential analytical perceptions and ideas about them (Charmaz, 2006). Strauss and Corbin (1998) argue that the analysis process bridges the researcher and the data. Data analysis involves systematic yet flexible procedures for constructing a questionnaire inductively. This process of data analysis is accomplished through the coding process. Coding means that different parts of the data are labelled to indicate what each piece of data is about (Charmaz, 2006). However, there are different procedures to the data encoding process, each of which is suitable for a particular study (Glaser, 1992; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Creswell, 2002; Charmaz, 2006), the common aspect of all these procedures is that the primary data are converted into specific and meaningful units so that concepts can be extracted from their combination. If the study aims to create a theory, these concepts are categorised and described in abstract categories.

The data analysis process requires the application of a continuous adaptation strategy. Continuous adaptation means that the researcher identifies concepts and continuously compares them with the emerging category to formulate and saturate them (Creswell, 2002). Continuous adaptation requires deep and continuous immersion and comprehensive and sufficient knowledge of the data or the ability of theoretical sensitivity. In this study, relying on the coding procedure of Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Glaser (1992) and mainly Allan (2003), a flexible and straightforward model for data coding was used but with a difference. The model that these researchers introduce is such that after identifying the key points, the data will be extracted, then the assigned code with common axes will become a set of concepts, and by grouping the concepts, the categories will be extracted. The

difference in this study is that the model categories were already known and are based on Chalmers' study. However, it was not clear what concepts created these categories. Therefore, the researcher did not seek to identify new categories and only sought to identify concepts to reach these categories. Therefore, the researcher tried to follow the coding method of these researchers to reach the mentioned categories. With these explanations, the data analysis steps will be discussed in detail. It should be noted that these steps were not linear but overlapped with each other and followed a reciprocal process.

Coding Process

Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe this data analysis stage as "open coding." Open coding is the process of shredding, examining, comparing, conceptualising, and classifying data (Williams and Moser, 2019). In this form of coding, initial hypotheses were made about possible ways of relating the code to specific dimensions, resulting in similar data grouped and labelled (Flick, 2018). Then, open coding was done through an in-depth examination of interviews in detail. The goal was to produce concepts consistent with the questionnaire and reduce the neglect of the major categories. At this stage, Strauss and Corbin recommend micro-analysis coding. According to them, micro-analysis means data should be analysed word by word, and coding means the meaning inferred in words or word sets (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Allan, 2003).

Nevertheless, as Allan (2003) points out, the coding procedure through micro-analysis coding has two significant disadvantages. First of all, this method is very time-consuming. Second, because every data source contains much information, it does not seem easy to encode all words and phrases. Thus, adopting such an approach to data analysis sometimes leads to confusion. In addition, sometimes, the division of data into words causes the level of analysis to be reduced to the analysis of the details contained in them. Glaser (1992) also argues that this data analysis process leads to over conceptualisation. He argues that such overemphasis on the mechanisation of research reduces the degree of theoretical saturation and the construction of labelling. So, Glaser believes that the unit of analysis is different depending on the type of data and its volume. It means the unit of analysis can be a line, a

sentence, a paragraph or the whole document (Glaser, 1992). To solve this problem, he recommends key points coding. In this way, we identify key points and encode them, leading to the emergence of concepts (Allan, 2003). Therefore, the researcher followed Glaser's recommendation and encoded key points to identify the concepts to avoid confusion.

After identifying the key points in the data, codes were assigned or labelled in this way. Corbin and Strauss(1990) recommend three sources for naming codes: a set of concepts in the field and phrases used by experts in the field or phrases uttered by research participants. Charmaz (2006) and Given (2008) also believe that it is better to label the codes in two ways. One of the methods is in vivo coding. In this way, in vivo words are used. In vivo words mean the actual expressions expressed in the documents or, more simply, in vivo coding means coding key points according to the concepts and terms used by the participants in the research (Given, 2008). This coding method has been used more in studies that use the interview method as a data collection method. Another way of labelling data is called sociological constructs. In this labelling method, theoretical terms are consistent with common terms in the background or interpretations of the researcher (Given, 2008). In this labelling method, the researcher assigns labels to the common data in the relevant field of expertise or used by experts in the relevant field.

Both methods described above were used to label the codes. By applying both methods in cases where the researcher was not able to come up with a proper label for the key points expressed in the interviews, relying on existing concepts or concepts used by experts, the researcher used the method of labelling according to sociological structures, and in cases where it was not possible to do so. After encoding and labelling the key points, the sensitive and essential conceptualisation stage began. One of the researcher's main strengths to create a model is its ability to transform data from descriptive to conceptual. However, extracting concepts was a complex and challenging activity and required creative confrontation with the initial code and an abstract representation of events and interactions between the coding data.

In short, to convert the data from the descriptive level to the conceptual level, after identifying and recording the key points and assigning the code to them, the resulting codes were analysed. Furthermore, finally, those codes related to each other were grouped and described in terms of a specific concept. In other words, the inferred concepts are the product of grouping codes with common elements and features. Therefore, each source was examined separately, and the key points were identified separately by source and assigned to that code. The related codes were then combined and grouped and labelled as concepts.

In situations where the primary purpose of the researcher's study was to develop a schema for designing a questionnaire, by using the set of rules described in the steps described above, the purpose of the study is met, and the data analysis process is completed. However, researchers whose study aims to present or formulate a theory or a theoretical framework should continue the process of data analysis until the theory derived from the data is developed (Williams and Moser, 2019). These researchers should apply rules and criteria that are not further explained in this study.

Criteria for evaluating the validity and validation of the findings of questionnaire based on interviews

As mentioned in the data analysis section, the data are collected and analysed using the continuous matching method. In addition to being a way to analyse data, it is also a method of credibility and dependability on findings. Therefore, applying this method should convince the readers that the study results arise from accurate and systematic data collection and analysis procedures (Lub, 2015). Furthermore, in this method, explanations for potential concepts are formed by carefully reading and retrieving data throughout the data analysis process. Finally, the continuous matching of activities guides the researcher to achieve a questionnaire based on the interview.

Nevertheless, it is possible to evaluate the study's findings to satisfy and show the credibility and dependability of the results based on the evaluation criteria of qualitative research set by experts such as Guba (1989), Mertens (2014) and Goulding (2002). Like quantitative research, in which researchers have criteria for evaluating their findings, qualitative research researchers operate based on standards equivalent to evaluation criteria in quantitative analysis. Thus, for example, Guba and Lincoln equate credibility with internal validity, transferability with external validity, dependability with reliability, and confirmability with objectivity for qualitative research (Guba and Lincoln, 1989).

In qualitative research, the credibility criterion is equivalent to the internal validity criterion in quantitative research (Korstjens and Moser, 2018). In quantitative research, internal validity means to what extent the researcher has provided conditions that show that the observed changes in the dependent variable are due to the effects of the independent variable, not other factors? In qualitative research, based on the validity criterion, the test is done to see if there is a correspondence between the accurate perception of structures by the participants in the research and the report presented by the researcher? The researcher can meet the research validity criteria using a set of guidance strategies. For example, continuous, long-term engagement means one of these criteria as long as the researcher is sure that the themes and examples are repeated instead of expanding. Other criteria mentioned are consistency and monitoring of developed structures, documenting the change process from beginning to end, and using multiple information sources.

Nevertheless, perhaps one of the most practical criteria for evaluating the structure formed for the questionnaire is the Kappa test (McHugh, 2012). Kappa index has been used to measure the reliability of the findings. The method works as another person, without knowing how to integrate the codes and concepts created by the researcher, tried to categorize the codes into concepts. The concepts presented by the researcher are then compared with the concepts presented by this person. Finally, the kappa index is calculated according to the number of similar and different concepts created (De Mast, 2007).

To understand the concept of kappa, we need to ask two questions. First, to what extent is the agreement between the various observers' readings greater than expected only by chance? This can be calculated by subtracting the percentage of consensus observed from the consensus expected only by chance.

$$\textit{unanimity expected by chance} = \frac{A + B}{N} \times \frac{A + C}{N} \times \frac{C + D}{N} \times \frac{B + D}{N}$$

The second question is, what is the maximum amount that two observers can increase their consensus relative to the consensus expected only by chance? Their full agreement is 100% (complete consensus - two observers have a full agreement). So, the maximum amount they can expect to increase their consensus is:

$$\textit{Unanimity observed} = \frac{A + D}{N}$$

Kappa states how much more consensus is observed than is expected only by chance (i.e., the percentage of consensus observed minus the percentage of consensus expected only by chance, or deduction); For the maximum amount that observers can expect to increase their consensus (100% minus the consensus expected only by chance; the denominator of the deduction). Therefore, in numerical value, Kappa shows how much greater the consensus among observers is than the consensus expected only by chance, and it is in the form of the maximum increase ratio that may Unanimously occur only by coincidence states (De Mast, 2007). The following equation can define Kappa's statistical index:

$$K = \frac{(\textit{Unanimity expected only by chance}) - (\textit{Unanimity observed})}{1 - \textit{unanimity expected by chance}}$$

The Researchers' Role in First Part of the Research

In qualitative research, the researcher is the collector of information, in the sense that it is the researcher who decides what kind of questions and in what order to ask the data sources; What to observe and what to write down (Mertens, 2014). As a result, many argue that because all data is refined from the collector's perspective, the findings are often subjective, intuitive, and value oriented. Nevertheless, through self-discipline, the researcher tried to avoid falling into the trap of subjectivizing the findings. On the other hand, most qualitative research experts agree that qualitative researchers should take precise and regular measures at every stage of the research process to show their lack of bias in reflecting the findings (Goulding, 2002; Cresswell et al., 2003; Charmaz, 2006). Therefore, since the preparation of a standard questionnaire by the selected method also follows a qualitative research style, as a researcher, in addition to being the designer and analyst of the study, the researcher also was an essential factor in collecting information; Therefore, level of researcher's skill, accuracy and experience in dealing with the research problem was efficient on the research result. Therefore, the researcher tried to be sensitive to the issue under study. Theoretical sensitivity makes the questions and the framework for the questionnaire conceptually rich and coherent.

Designing the Questionnaire

After identifying the questionnaire questions, it was time to design the Questionnaire. In this part of the research, the researcher decided to design a questionnaire with closed questions according to the advantages of closed questionnaires. The second step was to decide on the scale to measure. Based on the available literature, it was decided to use the Likert scale to design the Questionnaire. One of the most common forms of measuring attitudes and beliefs in the humanities is the Likert scale. Most researchers who use the Likert scale use scales of 1 to 5 degrees or 1 to 7 degrees more in their scales. Many researchers believe that the higher the number of grades, the more accurate the measurement, while some experts believe that using more grades does not enhance the measurement. The issue is that many respondents cannot sufficiently distinguish the distances used on the Likert scale. Finally, most experts state that the ratings can vary according to the respondent's characteristics, the measured subject, and the research

hypotheses (Beglar and Nemoto, 2014; Joshi *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, a five-point Likert scale has been used in this research, considering the subject of the study and the study sample.

In order to collect data on all information types, the Questionnaire requires respondents to classify how frequently (on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being 'never' and 5 being 'very often') their organisation provides these types of information to MEPs. Also, for the tactics that HR NGOs use to send information to MEPs, to collect data on all tactics, the Questionnaire requires respondents to classify how frequently (on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being 'never' and 5 being 'very often') their organisation uses these tactics to send information to MEPs. Chalmers (2011) believes that measuring information types and tactics based on frequency is based on the rationale that sending information more frequently will provide more access for interest groups. To measure the Access of HR NGOs to MEPs, the Questionnaire asks respondents how frequently, on the same 1 to 5 scale, the organisation they work for is in contact with the MEPs directly in their official office in Brussels or MEPs' advisors, or other places. Also, to examine the role of cooperation among HR NGOs and its impact on their access to MEPs, the Questionnaire asks participants the number of organisations they are cooperating with regarding the human rights situation in Iran.

Why Online Questionnaire?

An online questionnaire was designed based on the findings of the qualitative section to collect data related to the quantitative part of the study. Many reasons persuaded the researcher to use this type of Questionnaire. One of the most important factors was the geographical dispersion of HR NGOs. The geographical issue made it impossible to reach all of them in a situation where travel was difficult due to the pandemics of Corona. On the other hand, since most members of HR NGOs worked remotely during the pandemic, access to them by phone was difficult. These issues no longer exist when we design online questionnaires. Using the online Questionnaire, the researcher could, after designing the Questionnaire, send the link of his online Questionnaire to the target sample anywhere in the world at no cost so that the researcher does not get caught in a geographical trap for

having complete research. For this purpose, it was possible to send the online questionnaire link through social networks, send short messages, or send emails to the targeted sample.

Another advantage of the online Questionnaire is that there are no errors. Because the online questionnaire data is entered into the database simultaneously as the participant answers the questions and the whole system is done automatically. The percentage of such errors in this method is practically zero. Another advantage of the online Questionnaire is time savings. When researchers use an online questionnaire, they do not need to spend much time at all but share the link of their Questionnaire through communication channels with their targeted sample. The other advantage of the online Questionnaire is that there is no need for the presence of the questioner. The physical presence of the researcher may put the respondent in an unfavourable situation due to the researchers' psychological burden, and the response may refuse to give correct answers to some of the questions in the Questionnaire. Therefore, the answers given to the Questionnaire may not be frank. However, the online Questionnaire, because it is done through cyberspace and on the Internet, the respondent will answer the questions whenever they want. Moreover, no psychological burden is imposed on the respondent due to the absence of the researcher.

Validity of the Questionnaire

Finally, the last test before sending the Questionnaire to the targeted sample was content validity. The purpose of this type of evaluation is to answer the question of whether the content of the tool can measure the defined purpose or not? For example, does the content of the test, which is defined as measuring the access of HR NGOs based on the type of information they provide to MEPs, really measure access? For this reason, to evaluate the content validity, experts' opinions in the field were used. For example, to assess the access of HR NGOs to MEPs, after listing all the tools that provide access to them, from the relevant experts, the relevance, simplicity and clarity of each item, and their necessity in questionnaire format was asked. To evaluate the content validity from the experts' point of view, the content coordination of the measurement tool and the purpose of the research was used.

For this purpose, a quantitative method was considered for this research. In the qualitative review of the content, experts were asked to provide the necessary feedback after reviewing the tool, based on which the items were modified. Two relative Content Validity Ratio (CVR) and Content Validity Indexes (CVI) were used to evaluate content validity quantitatively (Ghazali *et al.*, 2018). First, experts were asked to examine each item based on a three-part range of "necessary," "useful but not necessary," and "not necessary" to determine the CVR. Then the answers were calculated according to the following formula:

FIGURE 5- CVR FORMULA

$$CVR = \frac{n_E - \frac{N}{2}}{\frac{N}{2}}$$

(Ghazali *et al.*, 2018)

Stage 2:

Quantitative part

The second part of the study began with identifying HR NGOs working on the human rights situation in Iran. A list of HR NGOs that only work on Iran's human rights was prepared to generate a sample related to the research. After checking the organisation's website and registration, only the organisations registered in the EU or have an office in the EU to follow their affairs included in the sample. Therefore, the organisations that are not active in the EU were removed from this list. A list of international HR NGOs was then prepared to identify if they have any activity in the EP regarding Iran's human rights situation. By checking the websites and activities of these international HR NGOs, it was found that some of them because their priorities are issuing whose implementation depends

on a direct presence in that country, and due to the impossibility of the presence of these organisations in Iran, they have no activities on human rights issues in Iran. A list of 157 HR NGOs was generated by putting these two lists.

To start collecting data in Jun 2020, the researcher first sent emails to the organisations in the sample, explained his project, invited them to fill the questionnaire, and then asked them to participate in an interview related to his project. Based on the phone numbers that the researcher collected on the NGOs' website while generating his sample, the researcher also called these organisations to ask them for the possibility of participation in an interview and convince them to fill the questionnaire. Based on the situation related to the Corona virus's pandemic, many of them were working remotely, and the researcher left a message for them and explained the project and asked them for an interview and filling the questionnaire. After the questionnaires were first sent to HR NGOs by email, the questionnaires were sent to organisations three more times, each time at two-week intervals. In all three emails sent to the HR NGOs, the researcher shortly explained the project and asked them if they are not yet filled the questionnaire to participate in his survey to help him collect the relevant data. However, three weeks after the last reminder to the HR NGOs, the researcher stopped collecting data regarding the quantitative part of the study.

At the end of the data collection process, the researcher downloaded the data gathered from the survey at Google Forms to an Excel spreadsheet file. At this point, the data was controlled and organized to correlate to the research questions. Next, the researcher examined the dataset for missing values. After downloading the dataset, the first step of the data analysis started by checking the data's normality and then following the procedure.

Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM)

To examine the conceptual model of research and test the hypotheses, the SEM method with partial least squares (PLS) approach was used using Smart PLS software. Researchers

in recent years have increasingly used partial least square structural equation modelling. In this context, the use of hierarchical latent variable models provides the opportunity for researchers to develop PLS-SEM applications to more advanced and complex models (Becker, Klein and Wetzels, 2012; Hair *et al.*, 2012). Researchers have cited several reasons for using this software, the most important of which are: suitability for small samples, usability for non-normal data, and the possibility of using measurement models with an index (Chin, Peterson and Brown, 2008; Wetzels, Odekerken-Schröder and Oppen, 2009). SEM analysis with PLS approach has three main stages of measurement model fit (relationships between questions and hidden variable), structural model fit (relationships between hidden variables) and general model fit (sum of measurement and structural models) (Akter, Fosso Wamba and Dewan, 2017). Since researchers should continuously adapt the requirements to verify and legalize theories in the social science disciplines empirically, data and multivariate analysis methods as the most crucial research system can help them achieve their goals (Erick and Marko, 2011; Hair *et al.*, 2011). Moreover, SEM is recognized as a second-generation multivariate analysis procedure, combining characteristics of the first-generation procedures, such as principal and elements of linear regression analysis (Fornell, 1982). Consequently, SEM is peculiarly valuable for the method of developing and examining theories, and some scholars believe that SEM can be a standard in the analysis process (Ringle, Sarstedt and Straub, 2012).

Also, many scholars in different filed of studies utilize SEM as a unique research method (Rigdon, 1998). SEM can test complete sets of interrelated dependent correlations between groups of constructs expressed by multiple variables while considering for measurement error has presented and assisted SEM's broad range of applications. From the analytical stage, SEM explains an upper-level and advanced version of general standard linear modelling procedures like multiple regression analysis and is generally applied to estimate whether the model designed for the study is compatible with the data gathered to reflect the theory (Astrachan, Patel and Wanzenried, 2014).

SEM is a multivariate analytical procedure adopted to examine, measure simultaneously, and predict hidden causal correlations among complex variables, yet in circumstances where the relations are hypothetical or not straight visible (Williams, Vandenberg and Edwards, 2009). Linking factor analysis and linear regression designs together, SEM allows the researcher to statistically examine the relations between theory-based latent variables and their indicator variables by including straight observable indicator variables (Hair *et al.*, 2011). Whereas SEM is similar to multiple regression in that both methods examine relations between variables, SEM is regarded as a potential method to measure multi-level dependence relations together.

If the purpose of the study is to generate different hypotheses in unexplored model fields, which have lack practical foundations, experimental analysis methods are regarded as the first chosen approach. Richter and others (2016) explain prediction as utilizing a statistical model to data to determine an output value for new remarks provided their input values. Hence, the goal of predictive research is centred on forecasting and generating new and increasing current models. PLS-SEM is a causal modelling method intended to maximize the defined variance of the dependent latent constructs.

Features of PLS-SEM are that this approach works competently with small sample sizes and complex models and makes no presumptions regarding data distributions (Cassel, Hackl and Westlund, 1999). Besides, PLS-SEM can run and operate reflective and formative measurement models and single-item constructs (Crocetta *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, researchers can utilize PLS-SEM in different research areas. Consequently, as this study's purpose is prediction-oriented, it has used the PLS-SEM approach to measure and predict the coefficients to maximize the R^2 value of the target-dependent variable (Access to MEPs) in the theoretical model. Therefore, to examine the research hypotheses, the PLS-SEM approach is applied to examine each hypothesis for measuring, predicting, and defining key target constructs.

Furthermore, the PLS-SEM approach has examined the impact of the independent variables such as political-based information, expert information, inside tactics, and outside tactics on the study's dependent variable, which is access to MEPs. Besides, the theoretical model of the research consists of a complex model, where there are different indicators. For example, the research consists of one control variable: the cooperation of HR NGOs in the human rights situation in Iran. Also, this research measures moderation of expert information and political-based information on inside and outside tactics, respectively. Therefore, the theoretical model of this study contains many variables with different indicators.

This study is based on the prediction method because it tries to develop the informational determinants of access to the EP. This research intends to examine hypotheses that have not been examined based on the theory of access. Measuring the impact of information types and different tactics to access MEPs based on the human rights issues in third countries has not been studied yet. However, researchers have started to discuss the informational determinants of access in the EU on business issues; there is still much needed to advance more methodical evidence on informational determinants of access to the EU institutions on different issues. Therefore, PLS-SEM as a predictive research method is applied in this research based on the above explanations.

Stage 3:

Quantitative Part

The quantitative study results convinced the researcher that more comprehensive studies are needed to demonstrate the relationship between different tactics and information types and the access of HR NGOs to MEPs. For example, with the results of quantitative studies, we may argue that one type of information provides more access than another or that outside tactics, in turn, provide more access to HR NGOs. However, considering the existing literature on other issues and comparing it with the results of this study, the researcher decided to address this issue based on quantitative analysis so that quantitative

findings are accompanied by qualitative support. The researcher decided to conduct qualitative studies through interviews to address this issue. This qualitative study can help the researcher explain why outside tactics, cooperation between HR NGOs, and expert information have a more significant relationship with the access of HR NGOs to MEPs than other factors.

According to the quantitative and qualitative studies conducted on different issues, it can be said that each of these two methods has its advantages and disadvantages (Steckler *et al.*, 1992). For example, some researchers believe that conducting a qualitative case study can help the researcher conduct an in-depth study and make more detailed findings on different issues (Lijphart, 1975). However, considering that this study is about the access of HR NGOs to the human rights issues in Iran, there may be a fundamental problem in causal inference. On the other hand, some other researchers believe that a quantitative analysis may be well suited to test alternative hypotheses by controlling other potential explanations (Jackman 1985). However, the quantitative research approach requires a structured questionnaire with close-ended questions. As a result, it leads to limited outcomes described in the research proposal. So, the results cannot always express the tangible transpiring in a generalised framework.

Moreover, the respondents have restricted options of answers based on the choice made by the researcher. The other issue related to the quantitative studies is the lack of available data, which leads the researcher to a time-consuming collection process (Collier 1993). Along with the quantitative findings, qualitative findings can help the researcher to explain the relationship between HR NGOs and MEPs much more in detail. The most critical issue in the previous chapter is the lack of explanation regarding the relationship between information types and HR NGOs' tactics to send information. However, an attempt has been made to theoretically consider information types as a moderating variable that moderates HR NGOs' access based on the tactics they employ.

The method of in-depth interviews is primarily used to study the informational determinants of access of HR NGOs to MEPs. In order to study issues to support the quantitative part of the study, the researcher divided HR NGOs into two main groups of interviewees: International HR NGOs and organisations work only on the human rights situation in Iran. To invite the international HR NGOs, the researcher contacted organisations registered in the EU lobbying system, which provides them with an excellent opportunity to access MEPs on the human rights situation in Iran and other countries. The researcher had different choices for HR NGOs that only cover the human rights situation in Iran; after checking the web page of different HR NGOs included in this group, the researcher decided to make two other sub-groups. The first sub-group is about HR NGOs generally covering human rights in Iran, and the second sub-group is about HR NGOs working on particular issues like religious rights or the right of ethnic groups in Iran. Interviews with these two subgroups give a good insight into the type of information they supply, and tactics used to send information to decision-makers in the EU, in this study's case, MEPs.

Based on the situation caused by the pandemic of Coronavirus, the choice of the method of interviews was challenging. Based on the pandemic situation, three interview methods were applied to conduct interviews with the targeted interviewees: Online via skype, phone call via WhatsApp, and email interview. For an online interview, the researcher had to develop a trustful interview situation. The researcher was able to conduct online interviews with the representatives of HR NGOs with the help of one of his acquaintances who work as a reporter in an International TV. The researcher's other method to conduct interviews was through email and phone calls via WhatsApp. While asking the target group for the interview, some claimed that they are busy based on the situation caused by the pandemic, and they prefer to participate in the interviews only if the researcher sends them the questions and they write the researcher back when they are free. After exchanging emails with some of the HR NGOs' representatives, the researcher had the chance to interview several interviewees. Fortunately, technology development helped the researcher conduct his interviews as it was impossible during the pandemic. Also, conducting face-to-face interviews takes time and resources to meet the representatives of NGOs since HR NGOs

are located in different countries. However, emailing the question sheets was a good method based on the ongoing situation; the researcher could not ask more detailed questions regarding the response to the questions.

Through interviews with these different targeted groups, the researcher tried to test the issues that could not test during the Quantitative part and find support for the findings of the quantitative part. Two sets of interview questionnaires were prepared for two interview groups. For the first group, which are international and famous HR NGOs in human rights, interviews include questions regarding their relationship with MEPs on the human rights situation in Iran. During preparing questions for the interviews, the researcher tried to consider that questions can cover these issues:

- 1- The relationship between the information types and tactics that HR NGOs apply.
- 2- HR NGOs interaction with media,
- 3- Whether MEPs ask them to provide them information regarding the human rights situation in Iran,
- 4- Their interaction with other NGOs.

For the second group, also the researcher asked the same questions he asked from the first group to see the different perspectives of HR NGOs that only work on the human rights situation in Iran. In addition, however, there are other questions to determine if they are just an information provider to other big NGOs or supply their information directly to influence MEPs.

Interview Questions

Given that in this part of the research, the researcher was looking to explain the results of the quantitative part, the researcher used open-ended questions during the interviews to get broader and richer answers. Open-ended interview questions were applied in the interviews considering interviewees mostly prefer to provide verbal responses and give extensive and more prosperous answers (Van den Beemt and Diepstraten, 2016; Gray,

2021). The open-ended questions were asked to give us more insight into the tactics, information types, and cooperation between HR NGOs that give them access to MEPs. The questions were designed to specifically search for "participants' opinions" (Creswell and Creswell, 2017, p. 190). The Creswell seven protocol was used to design the questions. The components of the Creswell Protocol are as follows: 1- "A heading (date, place, interviewer, interviewee)", 2- "Instructions for the interviewer to follow, so that standard procedures are used from one interview to another", 3- The questions (typically an ice-breaker question at the beginning followed by four to five questions that are often the sub-questions in a qualitative research plan, followed by some concluding statement or a question)", 4- "Probes for the four to five questions, questions", 5- "spaces between the questions to record responses", 6- final statement to thank participants, and document report, 7- "A log kept by the researchers." (Creswell, 2014, p. 193)

The researcher conducted the interviews one after the other at intervals of two or three weeks and, after conducting the interviews, began to reflect on the practice. At the end of the interviews, the researcher tried to briefly reflect on his attitudes and reactions, as Doucet & Mauthner suggested (2008). These reflections outline the researcher's possible preferences or assumptions that may have influenced the interpretation of the respondent's words or how he or she wrote about interviewees.

The researcher used interview question probes when feasible throughout the interviews with different representatives of HR NGOs. Interview question probes utilize participants' responses to extend responses, expose interest, or define questions (Creswell, 2014). There are verbal and non-verbal probes which both are used in this research. We usually categorize verbal probes into three categories: awareness probes, conversational control probes, and credibility probes, as Rubin & Rubin suggested (2011). Awareness probes help the researcher to push interviewees to develop and address at length. However, conducting online interviews pose difficulties for the researcher to indicate attention or for interviewees to understand the researcher taking notes. To address this challenge, apparent attention helps, such as "I want to write this down signalled interest and attention. Non-

verbal attention inquiries include taking notes while the interviewee explains something and looking back to the interviewee after taking notes (Rubin and Rubin, 2011).

Examples of conversational control probes carried comments such as " That is what I wanted to ask you late." Another instance of conversational control probe practised in the research was, "I think I missed something, and please go back to something I missed if it is possible." Finally, credibility probes were practised to control understanding while interviewees pointed to dates or different situations. Although question probes are deemed to function tentatively, they completed a goal in the resulting interview protocol of the research. In the research, the use of question probes combined a personalized segment to the discussion. The researcher considered personalization and conversational affordances essential, mainly since interviews were conducted online through Skype and What's App.

Managing and Recording Data

Based on the protocols designed in the research, basic measures were taken to maintain the security of the interviewees' personal information and the reliability of the research. In the first step, according to Creswell's recommendations for the possibility of unexpected and technological problems, the recorded interviews were transcript as a backup program (Creswell, 2014). As previously mentioned, due to the sensitivities of the interviewees, it was decided that all of them remain anonymous. Therefore, each interviewee was assigned a code that only the researcher could know them. The interviews recorded by Skype were recorded in a separate file immediately after and immediately transcribed into text. This method was needed since the recorded interviews on Skype were automatically deleted after one month, and the other issue was that it was an additional review to ensure that the recordings were not affected by transfer problems or researcher errors. The interview files were stored on an external hard drive. The researcher's notes were also stored on the same hard disk as a file. The same procedure was followed for interviews conducted by contacting WhatsApp. The only difference was that WhatsApp interviews were recorded separately by another device.

Data reliability was completed in different steps. First, by communicating with the interviewees, they were given an additional opportunity to confirm their statements or, if they were not satisfied with parts of the interview, to delete that part or provide additional explanations. The first interview (# 10 # 11) was transcribed immediately after and emailed to the interviewee before the following interviews. The first participant of the interview (# 10 # 11) received the transcription and applied the desired changes after reading the transcription. As a researcher, the interview transcription was checked for editing accuracy and typographical errors by the interviewer that might be found in the text. Based on the researcher's review of the text and the changes made, the researcher found out what he or she did in subsequent interviews. In one of the questions, based on a review of transcript # 10 # 11, other sub-questions were considered for the following interviews.

The next step was to interview representatives of HR NGOs who had declared their willingness to participate in the interview. After conducting the interviews, the researcher reviewed the recorded interviews immediately after and added items to his notes during the interview. The immediate review of records caused the points that came to the researcher's mind during the interview not to be forgotten. Transcripts of interviews were usually transcribed on the same day as the interview. During the transcript, the researcher took notes on his perceptions, double-edged questions, and issues similar to the existing literature on informational determinants of access to policymakers. After transcribing the interviews, the researcher saved all transcripts in a file with code only the researcher had access to on an external hard drive. By studying the interview transcription, first, the commonalities, then the topics that helped the researcher analyse the results, were examined.

Research Assumptions

The researcher kept a few assumptions in mind from beginning to end to do this research. The first assumption was that the researcher would base the principle on the fact that the participants participated with their consent, then the researcher would take their statements honestly. Of course, the researcher also considered this right for himself that if

the participant answered the questions that had a confirmatory aspect for the previous questions differently for any reason, the researcher would not use that interview in the analysis due to the circumstances. Given that qualitative data were collected through interviews in two stages of the research, the researcher assumed that the data narrated the activities of HR NGOs. Also, considering that most human rights organisations do not have many employees due to limitations, the researcher assumed that the most knowledgeable person in that organisation filled out the questionnaires when the researcher submitted the questionnaires. Another essential and basic assumption was that although the interviewees may not be theoretically familiar with their activities, in practice, their experiences give them a wealth of information about the type of information and tactics that give them access to policymakers.

In addition to the above, as a person who has not had any explicit human rights activities due to the situation in Iran, the researcher had in mind the assumption that his access to human rights organisations would be difficult. However, the situation was much more complex than the researcher thought in practice. At the same time, the researcher expected that in the first encounter with human rights organisations, he might be asked many questions to get acquainted with the nature of his research. Therefore, based on this assumption, the researcher tried to prepare all the cases in advance to answer their basic questions, observing all the ethical rules in research.

Ethical Considerations

Regarding the significance of ethical issues in conducting research and the challenges of conducting research, most universities make great efforts to protect the dignity and safety of participants in this regard. However, since the University of Padova does not have an Institutional Review Board for approving research projects on human subjects, PhD students in Human Rights, Society, and Multilevel-Governance do not need permission to conduct their human rights studies. Therefore, although regarding the researcher's experience in a research institute, the researcher was familiar with the ways to protect the safety of participants, the researcher asked his colleagues for more information to protect

the participant's safety in the researcher's research project. Furthermore, since this research consisted of three separate parts, it was necessary to pay close attention to the ethical issue in this research. Therefore, at each research stage, the researcher had to assure the participants that he would do their best to protect their personal information. Therefore, this issue was fundamental in the second and third stages of the research. The significance of protecting the personal information of the participants in the second and third stages of the research was because of some security issues. These years, some human rights activists were at risk of abduction outside of Iran. Unfortunately, some of them faced many difficulties and unfortunately, one of them was executed by the Iranian government. Therefore, the trust-building process had to be done carefully and with great sensitivity.

Several ethical concerns were respected to guarantee that the study was appropriately conducted. For the first part of the study, an Informed Consent form was recruited, and all participants were demanded to read it carefully and sign it before the interviews. In the Consent form, first, the scope of the study was described to the participants. Then, the participants were informed that they could withdraw during or even after the interview in the next step. None of the participants had any objection to recording the interview. Participants also were informed that their information could be confidential if they wanted and that the particular content of the individual interviews was discussed only with the supervisor.

For the second part of the study considering the advantages of using an online questionnaire, in this study, an online questionnaire was used to collect data. The link to the questionnaires was sent by email to each organisation. In these emails, the researcher briefly outlined the research objectives for the study participants and explained that their participation in the study is entirely voluntary. Also, the researcher explained that when the data collecting process is finished, the researcher will download the data in excel form and delete the questionnaire form. To respect the confidentiality of participants in the survey, the researcher did not ask any personal questions in the survey questions. By ensuring the participants that after extracting the data from the questionnaire form, the questionnaire

link would be deleted, the researcher tried to signal them that there would not be any challenge to protect their personal information.

The third part of the study was challenging because it was possible to ask challenging questions regarding the HR NGOs interactions with MEPs regarding their activities on human rights in Iran. Therefore, the researcher decided the interviewees in this part to be anonymous. In the first part of the interviews for designing the questionnaire, the researcher realized that the interview participants, who wished to remain anonymous, avoided signing the form, which made them hesitant to conduct the interview. Therefore, a different approach was used to conduct interviews that supported the results of the quantitative section. In addition, to observe ethical considerations in conducting the study, all participants provided oral consent for interview and participation to maintain ethical concerns in conducting the study. Therefore, the participants participated in the study after the researcher willingly contacted them and explained the purpose and process of the research. While requesting written consent is common, Silverman (2011) says that very formal ways to obtain consent should be avoided in favour of strengthening relationships that maintain a consistent ethical focus on participants. Therefore, in this study, verbal satisfaction was considered appropriate. In support of this type of content, Lisa T. Eyler and Dilip V. Jeste (2006) clarified that the power of qualitative research often prevails in the informality of communication and the interactive nature of the research process. In the first contact with interviewees, the research purpose was explained to the participants, and they were assured that they had the right to withdraw from the research process without any explanation. In the next step, participants were explained that their information would remain completely confidential and that the specific content of the individual interviews was discussed only with the supervisor. Of course, with the well-thought-out arrangements, the observer and the participants were unknown to each other. In the final report, the participants are referred to the results with codes that are only identifiable to the researcher. As a result of the personal nature of the content of the research interview, the researcher considered it appropriate to indicate the confidentiality of the information and build trust in the early stages of interviewing participants.

Research Limitations

Although the necessary predictions were made before the study began for most potential problems during fieldwork and data analysis, it was challenging to find solutions to some limitations. The first problem appeared when the researcher went to the representatives of the organisations for interviews. In the first encounter with the interviewees, the researcher realized that they would have a hard time trusting him, and the researcher, as a beginner researcher in this field, had difficulty gaining their trust. So, to solve this problem, the researcher looked for a solution outside the academic environment. Considering the acquaintance with three victims of human rights in Iran and their cooperation with human rights organisations and one in journalism, the researcher succeeded in carrying out the first stage of trust-building to start the research process. After the trust-building measures, the researcher interviewed eleven representatives of HR NGOs, which helped him a lot in designing the questionnaire. In the next stage, which included sending questionnaires to all organisations involved in the research topic, and also in the final stage, which was related to the qualitative part of the research, the researcher faced the trust-building issue. Nevertheless, with the tactics, the researcher used in the first part to build trust and the methods recommended by the supervisor and other professors, the researcher was able to gain the relative trust of the representatives of human rights organisations.

Apart from the limitations of building trust, in the following stages, how to conduct the interviews and the meeting place for conducting the interviews for the first and third stages of the research were other problems of the research process. Since the second stage included sending the questionnaire online and the questionnaires were designed so that the personal information of the participants was not questioned, there was no problem about the place of meeting with the representatives of the organisations. However, other stages of the research, the place to meet representatives of HR NGOs and how to conduct the interviews, became one of the main problems in conducting the research. It was challenging to arrange meetings with interviewees, as they lived in different countries in Europe, and

some of them were outside Europe for work reasons. Furthermore, meeting representatives of HR NGOs became challenging when some of them requested an informal meeting for the trust-building process before conducting the interviews. The consequence of their request brought many limitations for the researcher. Since most of them asked to meet them outside their organisation, the meeting place was sometimes based on their desire; meeting them was uncomfortable for the researcher. The result of those meetings was an agreement to conduct interviews online via WhatsApp and Skype, and in some cases, by email. Of course, the main problem was that when the researcher emailed the questions to the interviewees in the first phase of the study, the researcher could not have asked more questions that arise in semi-structured interviews. These problems also existed in the third stage, which, due to the ethical issues, the researcher will avoid further explanations in this regard in this section.

However, a significant problem emerged with the COVID-19 epidemic. The researcher had to go through the second and third stages of research during this period. Due to health emergencies and strict lockdown worldwide, access to representatives of HR NGOs was challenging. So, the researcher had to follow these steps online. In these stages, especially in the second stage, almost all organisations closed their offices and followed their work remotely. Therefore, the remote works of representatives of HR NGOs made it very difficult for the researcher to access them. So, for about five hours a day, the researcher was sending emails to communicate with representatives of organisations to convince them to participate in the research process in the second phase. In the third stage, these problems were reduced due to vaccination and restrictions, but communication with organisations still required much time.

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the methodology to study the informational determinants of access to MEPs on human rights issues in Iran. Of precise focus are the information types and informational tactics that provide HR NGOs with access to MEPs. A mixed-methods

approach of a quantitative survey supported by a qualitative interview was introduced in this study. The study employed a mixed-methods approach of three steps qualitative and quantitative interview. To complete this approach, the researcher examined different information types that HR NGOs supply to MEPs and the different tactics to send information to MEPs. The study moreover offered a research design in three steps. Step one introduced a qualitative part to create a questionnaire. In this part, the researcher tried to explain how he designed the questionnaire. Step two collected survey replies from an online questionnaire, advancing education course facilitators. Finally, step three discussed the interviews completed in in-depth Skype and WhatsApp interviews with members of HR NGOs. Factual quantitative, statistical, and interview content analyses were employed to show the informational determinants of access to HR NGOs regarding the human rights situations in Iran. The study findings add the best methods to limited research in informational determinants of access to policymakers on different issues.

Chapter 5: Research Finding

Results Related to creating the Questionnaire

As explained in the previous chapter, due to the lack of a standard questionnaire regarding the access of HR NGOs to MEPs on human rights issues, there was an attempt to build an interview-based questionnaire. The results obtained for the preparation of the questionnaire are presented below.

Coding Results

As the first interview was transcript, the researcher began to face the challenge of using the unique framework for data analysis. Although its particulars mainly were evident in the researcher's mind, one of the first roadblocks that directly occurred was upscaling the collected data from the primary descriptive stage of describing the data to a higher level of conceptualisation. Conceptualisation was challenging since the researcher goal was not to create a theory. At this stage, as Glaser (1998) stated, the researcher must focus on conceptualisation to successfully analyse emerging data, which appeared challenging to the researcher. The first interview yielded over six pages of notes. The researcher initially felt a little impatient as the researcher sought to identify concepts related to the pre-designed model as quickly as possible.

At this stage, the researcher felt that it became necessary to re-evaluate his understanding of how the framework that he applied handles data units to avoid approaching the data in a biased way, based explicitly on the impatience of the researcher. Therefore, the researcher took a step back and carefully re-evaluated what was demanded to adequately analyse the emergent raw data. The researcher found out how conceptualisation cannot be rushed at this stage. What is indeed demanded is a preference of how conceptualisation can only come about due to a long and consistent process of

collecting and coding data. To illustrate this process, the raw data from the first interview was divided into four excerpts to be managed easier. The researcher also did the same process for other interviews. The data was organised in the order it was collected and divided into separate chapters based on the four main questions of the interview, which made it easier to understand the flow of information it contained.

During this process, the only analysis conducted for the first interview was the development of memos, reflecting the researcher's ideas and understanding of individual excerpts. At this stage, the researcher began open coding each excerpt individually, then again collectively as a whole and followed this procedure for other interviewees. This process is applied, breaking down the gathered data to give the labels to its parts. Key points were extracted by conducting word-by-word and line-by-line analysis of the data. The Appendix 4 shows the sum of open codes extracted from 102 lines.

As the data analysis advanced and the concepts were broadened, a series of open codes and categories emerged, as shown in Table two. Finally, the researcher decided on eleven emergent sub-categories: political and social impact, public opinion, face to face meetings, sending emails, phone calls, social media, media strategy, mobilisation strategy, legal information, technical information, and access MEPs. After this stage, the emergent categories were categorised in the final categories based on the model created for this research based on the existing literature. In this way, I could create a questionnaire for the determinants of access to MEPs for HR NGOs based on the human rights issues in Iran. At the end of this process, the researcher first checked the reliability of the coding process and then created the questionnaire. The result of the reliability of the coding process and the content validity process for the questionnaire will be presented in the following.

TABLE 2- OPEN CODES

Categories	Sub-categories	Item
Political-based information	Political and social impact	Political and social impact
	Public opinion	Public opinion in the EU
		Public opinion on the country the issue has happened
Inside Tactics	Face to face meeting	Face to face meeting in the official offices
		Face to face meeting in local offices
		Face to face meeting in seminars or other places
	Sending Emails	Sending emails to assistance
		Sending emails to official emails
		Sending emails to personal address of MEPs
	Phone Calls	Phone call to assistance
		Phone call to official office

		Direct Phone call to MEPs
Outside Tactics	Social Media	Using Facebook
		Using Twitter
		Using Instagram
	Media Strategy	Publishing analysis and research
		Issuing press releases and holding press conferences
		Contacting reporters
	Mobilization Strategy	Conducting petition
		Legal public demonstration
		Holding discussions and conferences
Expert Information	Legal information	The violation of the EU law
		The violation of international law
		The violation of treaties that the country is member of
	Technical information	Information regarding special cases
		Information in the form of yearly, quarterly or monthly reports

		Analysis and research reports
Access to MEPs		Direct access to MEPs in seminars or outside the office
		Access to Assistance
		Regular direct access to MEPs

Kappa Test for the Validity of Codes

Kappa index has been used to measure the reliability of the designed questionnaire. Based on this method, another expert student in the encoding process has categorized the codes into concepts without knowing how to integrate the codes and concepts created by the researcher. The concepts presented by the researcher are then compared with the concepts presented by this person. Finally, the kappa index is calculated according to the number of similar concepts created and different concepts created.

As shown in table 4 below, the researcher has created ten categories and the other eleven categories, of which eight are common concepts.

TABLE 3- KAPPA INDEX RESULTS

		The researcher		
		Yes	No	Total
Assistance	Yes	A=8	B=1	9
	No	C=2	D=0	2
	Total	10	1	11

$$\text{Unanimity observed} = \frac{A + D}{N} = \frac{8}{11} = 0.727$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{unanimity expected by chance} &= \frac{A + B}{N} \times \frac{A + C}{N} \times \frac{C + D}{N} \times \frac{B + D}{N} \\ &= \frac{9}{11} \times \frac{10}{11} \times \frac{2}{11} \times \frac{1}{11} = 0.121 \end{aligned}$$

$$K = \frac{(\text{Unanimity expected only by chance}) - (\text{Unanimity observed})}{1 - \text{unanimity expected by chance}} = \frac{0.606 - 0.121}{1 - 0.121} = 0.739$$

Cohen recommended the Kappa result be explained as follows: values ≤ 0 as designating no agreement and 0.01–0.20 as none to slight, 0.21–0.40 as fair, 0.41–0.60 as moderate, 0.61–0.80 as substantial, and 0.81–1.00 is an approximately absolute agreement (Sited in: McHugh 2012). As can be seen in the above equation, the value of the kappa index was calculated to be 0.739, which is at the agreement level according to Cohen's agreement.

The Content Validity of the Questionnaire

Before the questionnaires were sent to the HR NGOs, the content value of the questionnaire had to be assessed. Even though the first idea of studying informational determinants of access to the EU decision-makers was inspired by Bouwen (2002) and then developed by Chalmers (2013), there have not been any forerunner scales to measure the effects of informational determinants of access to MEPs on the human rights issues directly. Therefore, the questions of informational determinants of access to MEPs on the human rights issues were created from in-depth interviews with members of HR NGOs to explain more competent their insights about their access to MEPs to create the questions of information types and tactics constructs such as mobilizations strategies, media strategies, technical information, and legal information. Consequently, it was essential to

evaluate the content validity of the questionnaire by experts and workers of NGOs dealing with the questionnaire and collecting data.

Content validity relates to the process to determine how well the components of a concept can be favourably described (Sekaran and Bougie, 2019). Another purpose of content validity is to validate every item in the instrument describing each measured construct (Miller and Lovler, 2018). Construct present validity information to verify that the items in the scale are associated, and they measure the construct that is meant to be measured (Ghazali *et al.*, 2018). Based on the content validity test, specialists have to accept that the construct has been appropriately operationalized, obtaining all characters of the constructs (Brinkman, 2009). The Content Validity Index (CVI) was the first step measured based on Waltz and Bausell's Content Validity Index for content validity goals (Clemson, Fitzgerald and Heard, 1999). To measure the CVI, the questionnaire was sent to nine scholars and experts working for HR NGOs for a long time, and they were asked to signify their viewpoints to each question. Next, the CVI for every item was scored based on three criteria of relevancy, clarity, and simplicity. Then, all experts were requested to reply to these three dimensions based on a four-part Likert scale such as follows: Irrelevant, somewhat relevant, relevant, completely relevant. The formula based on which we can measure CVI is as follow:

FIGURE 6- CVI FORMULA

$$\text{CVI} = \frac{\text{The number of experts who chose 3 and 4}}{\text{Total number of respondents}}$$

(Ã and El-masri, 2005)

The least approval rate of CVI must be higher than 0.78. After examining the results, the CVI rate for 29 questions out of 32 was satisfactory. However, based on this assessment, three questions did not match the criteria rate and had to be revised or deleted

due to the absence of the slightest content validity based on nine experts working for HR NGOs. The results are shown in the following tables.

TABLE 4- THE CVI RESULT

Questions	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	Expert 4	Expert 5	Expert 6	Expert 7	Expert 8	Expert 9	Experts in Agreement	Accept rate = 78%	
1	.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	
2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	1.00	
3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	8	0.88	
4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	1.00	
5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	8	0.88	
6	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	
7	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	
8	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	1.00	
9	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	8	0.88	
10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	1.00	
11	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	
12	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓	6	0.66	Deleted
13	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	
14	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		8	0.88	
15	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	1.00	
16	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	8	0.88	
17	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	8	0.88	
18	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	
19		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	
20	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	1.00	
21	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	8	0.88	
22	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	
23	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	1.00	
24	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		8	0.88	
25	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	1.00	
26	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	
27	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓	6	0.66	Deleted
28		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	7	0.77	Deleted
29	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	1.00	
30	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	
31	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	1.00	
32	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	

TABLE 5- THE CVI SIMPLICITY DIMENSION

Questions	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	Expert 4	Expert 5	Expert 6	Expert 7	Expert 8	Expert 9	Experts in Agreement	Accept rate = 78%	
1	.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	
2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	1.00	
3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	8	0.88	
4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	1.00	
5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	8	0.88	
6	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	
7	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	
8	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	1.00	
9	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	8	0.88	
10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	1.00	
11	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	
12	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		6	0.66	Deleted
13	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	
14	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		8	0.88	
15	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	1.00	
16	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	8	0.88	
17	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	8	0.88	
18	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	
19		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	
20	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	1.00	
21	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	8	0.88	
22	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	
23	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	1.00	
24	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		8	0.88	
25	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	
26	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	
27	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	7	0.77	Deleted
28		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	7	0.77	Deleted
29	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	1.00	
30	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	
31	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	1.00	
32	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	

TABLE 6- THE CVI CLARITY DIMENSION

Questions	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	Expert 4	Expert 5	Expert 6	Expert 7	Expert 8	Expert 9	Experts in Agreement	Accept rate = 78%	
1		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	
2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	1.00	
3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	8	0.88	
4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	1.00	
5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	8	0.88	
6	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	
7	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	
8	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	1.00	
9	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	8	0.88	
10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	1.00	
11	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	
12	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	6	0.66	Deleted
13	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	
14	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		8	0.88	
15	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	1.00	
16	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	8	0.88	
17	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	8	0.88	
18	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	1.00	
19		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	
20	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	1.00	
21	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	8	0.88	
22	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	
23	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	1.00	
24	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		8	0.88	
25	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	1.00	
26	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	
27	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			6	0.66	Deleted
28		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	7	0.77	Deleted
29	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	1.00	
30	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	
31	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9	1.00	
32	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8	0.88	

After deleting three questions, which nine specialists in CVI form assessed, the CVR form was utilized. The model that Lawshe introduced was employed to evaluate the content validity ratio (CVR) quantitatively (Ghazali *et al.*, 2018). First, CVR was applied in order to guarantee that questions of data collection tools are adequately expressed. Then, the CVR form was sent to six experts and academicians and asked them to indicate whether each item is 'essential,' 'useful but not necessary,' or 'not necessary.' Finally, CVR was examined based on the following formula:

$$\text{CVR} = (\eta_e - N/2) / (N/2)$$

η_e = number of experts indicating essential,

N = total number of experts

CVR is positive if more than half of the experts designate the question as essential. It is 0 if only half of the experts designate the question as essential and negative if less than half of the experts designate the questions essential. The CVR supports the researchers in developing on the scale and determining which questions to maintain and which questions to exclude. Since the experts who assessed the CVR differed from the CVI evaluation, a rate higher than 0.56 was accepted (Lewis, Templeton and Byrd, 2005; Ghazali *et al.*, 2018).

TABLE 7- THE CVR FORM OF ACCEPTED QUESTIONS

Questions	Expert 1			Expert 2			Expert 3			Expert 4			Expert 5			Expert 6			Expert in Agreement	CVR	Accepted rate is 56%
	Essential	Useful but not Essential	Not necessary	Essential	Useful but not Essential	Not necessary	Essential	Useful but not Essential	Not necessary	Essential	Useful but not Essential	Not necessary	Essential	Useful but not Essential	Not necessary	Essential	Useful but not Essential	Not necessary			
1	✓			✓				✓		✓			✓			✓			5	0.66	✓
2	✓			✓				✓		✓			✓			✓			6	1.00	✓
3	✓			✓				✓		✓			✓			✓			6	1.00	✓
4	✓			✓				✓		✓			✓			✓			6	1.00	✓
5		✓		✓				✓		✓			✓			✓			5	0.66	✓
6	✓			✓				✓		✓			✓				✓		5	0.66	✓
7	✓			✓				✓		✓			✓			✓			6	1.00	✓
8	✓			✓				✓		✓			✓			✓			6	1.00	✓
9	✓			✓				✓		✓			✓			✓			6	1.00	✓
10	✓				✓			✓		✓			✓			✓			5	0.66	✓
11	✓			✓				✓		✓			✓			✓			6	1.00	✓
13	✓			✓				✓		✓				✓		✓			5	0.66	✓
14	✓			✓				✓		✓			✓			✓			6	1.00	✓
15	✓			✓				✓		✓			✓			✓			6	1.00	✓
16		✓		✓				✓		✓			✓			✓			5	0.66	✓
17	✓			✓				✓		✓			✓			✓			6	1.00	✓
18	✓			✓				✓		✓			✓			✓			6	1.00	✓
19	✓			✓				✓		✓			✓			✓			6	1.00	✓

20	✓			✓			✓			✓				✓		✓			5	0.66	✓
21	✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			6	1.00	✓
22	✓			✓				✓		✓			✓			✓			5	0.66	✓
23	✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			6	1.00	✓
24	✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			6	1.00	✓
25	✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			6	1.00	✓
26	✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			6	1.00	✓
29	✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			6	1.00	✓
30	✓				✓		✓			✓			✓			✓			5	0.66	✓
31	✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			6	1.00	✓
32	✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			6	1.00	✓

Generally, at this stage, after managing CVI, deleting some questions, then developing, distributing CVR form, and then examining these forms after receiving from specialists, leads to this idea that both of these forms have reached the standard criterion and adequate support from specialists as the respondents designated to the questions. Consequently, it illustrates that the questionnaire as a data collecting tool has content validity, and it is proper to distribute the questionnaire amongst HR NGOs as the target population.

Findings of the Quantitative Part of the Research

Normality of Data

PLS-SEM is regarded as a nonparametric statistical approach. It is not the same as covariance principles structural equation modelling. In PLS-SEM, the normal distribution of data is not required. Nevertheless, it is essential to check that the data are not regarded as strictly non-normal data. The strict non-normal data can create an obstacle in the evaluation of the parameters' significance. Furthermore, highly non-normal data raise standard errors accomplished from bootstrapping employment in PLS. Consequently, it reduces the probability of some relationships that should be estimated as significant (Henseler, Ringle and Sinkovics, 2009). Therefore, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is applied to examine the data distribution to show that the choice of PLS will lead us to more reliable results. This test examines the data's normality in light of the following hypotheses.

H0: The data have a normal distribution.

H1: The data do not have a normal distribution.

According to the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test table, the data distribution is normal if the significance level for all independent and dependent variables is greater than the test level (0.05). Table 9 displays the results of this test.

TABLE 8- NORMALITY OF DATA

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Technical Information	0.138	83	0.001
Legal Information	0.108	83	0.017
Media strategy	0.153	83	0.000
Political and social impact	0.201	83	0.000
Public opinion	0.128	83	0.002
NGOs Cooperation	0.174	83	0.000
Access to MEPs	0.169	83	0.000
Mobilization strategy	0.116	83	0.007
Face to face	0.151	83	0.000
Social media	0.101	83	0.037
Email	0.149	83	0.000
Phone call	0.116	83	0.008

The significance level for all variables was less than 0.05 indicating that generally the null hypothesis is rejected and confirming that the data distribution is not normal. As a result, Smart-PLS can be used. It is rational to utilise non-normal data in PLS. PLS-SEM is regarded as a nonparametric statistical approach. In PLS, the data do not have to be normally distributed. However, it is a significant point to discover that the data are not regarded as extreme non-normal data. It can generate an issue in the estimation of the parameters' significances. In particular, highly non-normal data rise standard errors gained from bootstrapping. Hence, there is a possibility of reducing the likelihood of some relationships that must be considered significant (Sarstedt, Ringle and Hair, 2017).

The main Descriptive statistics

The first section of this part uses tables and graphs to present descriptive statistics related to the demographic information of the respondents (sample size) as well as the status of research variables.

The Longevity of HR NGOs

A total of 83 responses were collected, putting the response rate at about 53 per cent. All the data used in this chapter, further explained below, are derived from this survey dataset. As we can see in table 10, twelve out of eighty-three organisations completed the questionnaires, or 14.5 per cent, were founded between ten to fifteen years ago. Also, the percentage of participants that are found between twenty-one to twenty-five is 14.5 per cent. On the other hand, the highest percentage of respondents are organisations founded between sixteen to twenty-one years or more, by 26.5 per cent and 25.5 per cent, respectively. Also, 19 per cent of respondents found twenty-six to thirty years ago.

TABLE 9- RESPONDENTS' ORGANISATION LONGEVITY

Longevity	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percent
10 to 15 Years	12	14.5%	14.5%
16 to 20 Years	22	26.5%	41%
21 to 25 Years	12	14.5%	55.4%
26 to 30 Years	16	19.3%	74.7%
More than 31 Years	21	25.3%	100%
Total	83	100%	

Number of Organisation Each HRNGO Cooperate with

Twenty-two respondents to the survey said they cooperate with 13 to 17 organisations on human rights issues in Iran, putting the response rate at about 26.5 per cent. This percentage is the same for those organisations that works with 8 to 12 organisations on the issue. The percentage of organisations that work with 3 to seven and 18 to 22 organisations is 17.7 per cent and 20.5%, respectively. Based on the Table 11, nine organisations work with 23 to more organisations, putting the response rate at about 10.8 per cent. At the end of this chapter, the impact of HR NGOs cooperation on access to MEPs will be discussed.

TABLE 10- NUMBER OF ORGANISATION EACH ORGANISATION COOPERATE WITH REGARDING HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN IRAN

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Precent
3 to 7 organisations	13	15.7%	15.7%
8 to 12 organisations	22	26.5%	42.2%
13 to 17 organisations	22	26.5%	68.7%
18 to 22 organisations	17	20.5%	89.2%
23 to more organisations	9	10.8%	100%
Total	83	100%	

The Descriptive Statistics of the Research Variables

Descriptive methods were used to describe the research data by presenting a table and using descriptive statistical tools such as measures of central tendency and statistical dispersion. Descriptive statistics for all variables used in the study are provided in Table 12. In addition, measures of central tendency and statistical dispersion of research variables are presented in this section. Mean and median were used as measures of central tendency,

and standard deviation and variance were used as measures of statistical dispersion. SPSS23 was used to compute the figures in this table.

Measures of central tendency depict the average value of score distributions. Measures of statistical dispersion show how the values of the distribution. Standard deviation indicates the distribution of the respondents around the mean values. The greater the standard deviation, the greater the dispersion of scores than the mean, indicating that the study group is more heterogeneous in terms of the studied feature and vice versa. The scores shown in the table indicate that the Standard Deviation of inside tactics is less than other variables. The highest dispersion of scores belongs to the dependent variable of the research, access to MEPs. The standard deviation of outside tactics is slightly greater than that of inside tactics. In contrast, the scatter of scores of political-based information compared to expert information shows a significant difference.

TABLE 11- DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

	Technical Information	Legal Information	Expert information	Face to face	Email	Phone call	Inside tactics	Social media	NGOs cooperation	Political-based information	Political and social impact	Public opinion	Access to MEPPs	Outside Tactics	Mobilization strategy	Media strategy
Mean	3.216	3.702	2.960	3.452	3.650	3.586	3.562	3.289	2.843	2.989	3.190	2.789	3.030	3.164	3.072	3.133
Std. Error	0.110	0.096	0.096	0.093	0.077	0.083	0.076	0.105	0.136	0.110	0.127	0.128	0.117	0.103	0.120	0.114
Std. Deviation	1.004	0.876	0.876	0.843	0.704	0.759	0.690	0.957	1.234	1.005	1.156	1.163	1.065	0.941	1.091	1.038
Variance	1.008	0.768	0.767	0.711	0.495	0.576	0.475	0.915	1.524	1.010	1.336	1.353	1.135	0.886	1.190	1.078
Range	4.000	3.333	3.500	3.333	3.667	3.667	2.889	4.000	4.000	4.000	4.000	4.000	4.000	4.000	4.000	4.000
Minimum	1.000	1.667	1.500	1.667	1.333	1.333	2.111	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Maximum	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000	5.000
N	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83	83

Regarding the mean of the variables, table 12 shows there is no stark difference between expert information (2.960) and political-based information (2.989). Thus, it appears that to access MEPs, HR NGOs provide the same amount of information. However, if we pay more attention to the items that make up the category of outside tactics, there are differences between technical information (3.216) and legal information (2.702), which will be discussed in the qualitative section. The mean related to the usage of inside tactics (3.562) shows HR NGOs use more these tactics compare to outside tactics (3.164). The differences between the items of each category the differences of each item are not meaningful. In the qualitative part, the usage of different items will be discussed. The mean related to the access that HR NGOs have to MEPs based on the information types and tactics is (3.072).

Reflective Measurement Model in PLS

Henseler and others (2009) described how reflective measurement models should be evaluated in association with their validity and reliability; therefore, before presenting data analysis, the researcher will first present the reliability and validity of the research measurement scales. First, the researcher presents the outer model loading and the tested internal consistency by measuring Cronbach's alpha and CR scores. Second, the researcher assessed the convergent validity by comparing AVE and CR scores. Finally, the researcher presents the discriminant validity by analysing loadings and cross-loadings from the confirmatory factor analysis and comparing the square root of AVE with the correlations among the latent variables.

The Outer loading Test

Examining the indicator loadings is the first step of the reflective measurement model constructs assessment in the PLS-SEM (Hair *et al.*, 2014). The theoretical model of this research includes 16 constructs, namely: Two constructs for expert information such as legal information and technical information, two constructs for political-based information such as public opinion and political and social impact of an issue, three constructs for inside tactics such as face to face meetings, sending email, and phone call, three constructs for

outside tactics such as social media, media strategies, and mobilization strategies. Moreover, the rest of the constructs of the theoretical model are one control variable and the dependent variable, the cooperation of HR NGOs and access to MEPs, respectively. After running the reflective measurement model of the research by Smart PLS software, outer loadings of each construct's indicators that are below 0.7 must be removed.

Notwithstanding, first, the researcher examined the influence of indicator deletion on AVE and CR; it indicates that it was considered that if outer loadings are > 0.4 but < 0.7 , the deletion can enhance measures higher than the threshold, which for AVE is > 0.5 and for CR is > 0.7 . If the deletion could have increased the measures higher than the threshold of AVE and CR, then the reflective indicator of that construct was deleted. However, if the deletion did not raise the measures higher than the threshold of AVE and CR, then the reflective indicators were maintained (Hair Jr *et al.*, 2021).

Based on the above explanation, in this research, the researcher kept all indicators above 0.7. In other words, the indicators were deleted if construct indicators could have raised the measures above the threshold of AVE and CR. In the process of examining the relationship between items or the questionnaire questions with structures, it should be noted that if the items do not measure the hidden variables correctly, the relationships cannot be tested. Therefore, a model will be homogeneous in which the absolute value of the factor loads of each of its corresponding observable variables is at least 0.7. Table 13 shows the results of the relationships of the items and their hidden variables. Based on the results shown in the table below, the factor load observed in all cases has a value greater than 0.7, indicating a good correlation between the hidden and the observable variables. Also, according to the obtained results, the value of t-statistic in all cases must be greater than the value of 1.96, which shows that the correlation between observable and hidden variables is significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that their items have correctly measured each category, and by considering the findings of this scale, hypotheses can be tested.

TABLE 12- OUTER LOADING

	public opinion	Political and social impact	Legal information	Technical information	Face to face	Email	Phone call	Social media	Media strategy	Mobilization strategy	Access to MEPPs	Cooperation
q01	0,937											
q02	0,882											
q03		1000										
q04			0,843									
q05			0,860									
q06			0,814									
q07				0,806								
q08				0,727								
q09				0,842								
q10					0,913							
q11					0,867							
q13						0,788						
q14						0,820						
q15						0,763						
q16							0,794					
q17							0,778					
q18							0,798					
q19								0,843				
q20								0,865				
q21								0,854				
q22									0,848			

q23	0,930			
q24	0,908			
q25		0,933		
q26		0,934		
q29			0,891	
q30			0,895	
Cooperation				1000

The Internal consistency

The second in the measurement of the model constructs in the PLS is the construct's internal consistency reliability. Reliability deals with the extent to which measuring tools produce the same results under the same conditions; In other words, the correlation between a set of scores and another set of scores in an equivalent test obtained independently on a group of subjects. Reliability tests include Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR).

Cronbach's alpha coefficient is usually used to determine the reliability that indicates internal consistency and measurement accuracy. Cronbach's alpha estimates the reliability according to the intercorrelations of the observed indicator variables. Cronbach (1951) declared a value above 0.7 as an acceptable reliability indicator. Table 14 shows that the entire construct's Cronbach's alpha is higher than the standard value that normally must be higher than 0.7. On the other hand, some researchers believe that CR in structural equation modelling is a better measurement tool compared to the Cronbach's alpha. Because in calculating the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each component, all indicators are entered with equal importance in the calculations; While for calculating the CR, indicators with higher factor load are more important. This makes the reliability values of the components more realistic and accurate than their Cronbach's alpha. From Nunnally's point of view, if the CR value for each component is above 0.7, it indicates the appropriate internal stability for the measurement models. Consequently, in this research, based on table 14, CR as the second principles of measuring internal consistency reliability of the constructs almost all are between 0.834 and 0.931, which show very strong and high reliability of construct's indicators. In addition, values of CR higher than 0.95 are not acceptable based on highly inter-correlation between indicators. Values higher than 0.95 mean that all the indicator variables measure the same aspect and are unlikely to be a valid measure of the construct. It is worth noting that there are exceptions in this regard. For example, as shown in Table 14, the value of "Social and political impacts of an issue" equals 1 because this variable is single item constructs measured by one indicator. That is the reason that its Cronbach's

Alphas and CRs are becoming 1. The results of Cronbach's alpha coefficient and CR are presented in Table 14.

TABLE 13- CRONBACH' S ALPHA AND COMPOSITE RELIABILITY SCORES

	Cronbach's Alpha	CR
Email	0,703	0,834
Face to face	0,740	0,884
Access	0,745	0,887
Cooperation	1,000	1,000
Legal information	0,791	0,877
Media strategy	0,876	0,924
Mobilization strategy	0,852	0,931
Phone call	0,706	0,833
Political and social impact	1,000	1,000
Social media	0,815	0,890
Technical information	0,709	0,835
public opinion	0,797	0,906

The Convergent Validity

The other step in the reflective measurement model constructs evaluation in PLS measures convergent validity. Hair and others (2011) say that "Convergent validity is the extent to which a measure correlates positively with alternative measures of the same construct." Therefore, the items considered indicators of a particular construct should concentrate, partake and provide a high and significant variance balance. A high degree of outer loadings of a construct reveals that the proposed indicators maintain much in common that the construct necessitates and captures. This kind of character is also regularly called indicator reliability. The general rule is that the standardized outer loadings should be 0.70

or more formidable. The logic behind this rule can be realized in the requirement of the square of a standardized indicator's outer loading, called the communality of an item. Based on Hair and others' explanation (2021), "The square of a standardized indicator's outer loading demonstrates how much of the variation in an item is explained by the construct and is described as the variance extracted from the item." A general rule is that a latent variable should demonstrate a leading and essential part of each indicator's variance, commonly at least should be 50%. Consequently, the AVE should be more significant than 0.50 (Hair *et al.*, 2011). In this regard, the commonality of latent variables in this research can reveal a fundamental segment of each indicator's variance, which is higher than 50% and has indicated the general rule of defining a large part of the indicator's variance.

This standard is specified as the high mean value of the squared loadings of the indicators correlated and related to the construct. Consequently, the AVE is comparable to the commonality of a construct, which indicates that both of them should be higher than 0.5. Based on the same logic, which is practiced with the specific indicators, and an AVE value of 0.50 or higher confirms that, by mean and on average, the construct illustrates and represents more than half of the variance of its indicators. Therefore, the outer loadings of indicators and the AVE should also be regarded to confirm convergent validity. Besides, AVE is a standard measure to verify convergent validity on the construct level (Hair Jr *et al.*, 2021). The general rules for convergent validity are:

CR higher than 0/7

CR higher than AVE

AVE higher than 0/5

As presented in Table 15, all AVE of variables is higher than 0.50, meaning that all variables have reached the general rule for AVE. Furthermore, all loadings are significant and are higher than 0.50, AVEs are greater than 0.50, and all CR values are higher than AVE values. Consequently, the indicators of all variables met the convergent validity,

which indicates that the measure of one indicator correlates absolutely with alternative measures of the same construct.

TABLE 14- CONVERGENT VALIDITY

	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE
Email	0,703	0,626
Face to face	0,740	0,792
Access	0,745	0,797
Cooperation	1,000	1,000
Legal information	0,791	0,704
Media strategy	0,876	0,802
Mobilization strategy	0,852	0,871
Phone call	0,706	0,624
Political and social impact	1,000	1,000
Social media	0,815	0,729
Technical information	0,709	0,629
public opinion	0,797	0,828

The Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity is the extent to which a construct should be positively different and characteristic from other constructs by observational standards (Westen and Rosenthal, 2003). Consequently, building and discovering discriminant validity designates that a construct is unique, different, and produces and catches phenomena and cases not defined by other constructs in the theoretical model. Cross loadings and the Fornell-Larcker test are applied to examine the discriminant validity of constructs. The general rule in cross-loadings is that an indicator's loadings should be higher than all of its cross-loadings.

Besides, an indicator's outer loading on the correlated construct should be higher than all its loadings on other constructs (Hair *et al.*, 2014).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis revealed that all of the items have high loadings on their corresponding constructs. Ullma and others (2001) suggested keeping reflective items with 0.4 or higher loading values. Although Henseler and others (2009) said that researchers commonly recognize 0.7 as the accepted value for all loadings, indicating that the loadings should be higher than 0.7. AS an example, the indicator's loading of q01, as one of the indicators of public opinion construct is 0.937, which by matching it to all of its loadings on other constructs, it can be concluded that this value is higher than all of the other construct's loadings in the raw. This rule also implies to all of the construct's indicators. In this research, the cross-loading table designates that all constructs are distinguishing, different, and capture cases not described by other constructs in the theoretical model. Accordingly, these marks and indicates the occurrence of discriminant validity of all constructs and their indicators.

TABLE 15- CROSS-LOADING

	public opinion	Political and social impact	Legal information	Technical information	Face to face	Email	Phone call	Social media	Media strategy	Mobilization strategy	Access to MEPs	Cooperation
q01	0,937	0,570	0,769	0,705	0,598	0,459	0,505	0,586	0,656	0,694	0,706	0,485
q02	0,882	0,347	0,559	0,449	0,395	0,291	0,279	0,476	0,521	0,466	0,524	0,308
q03	0,520	1,000	0,620	0,686	0,545	0,457	0,539	0,509	0,444	0,588	0,566	0,270
q04	0,592	0,452	0,843	0,585	0,614	0,338	0,432	0,450	0,559	0,626	0,681	0,425
q05	0,668	0,516	0,860	0,632	0,583	0,387	0,362	0,540	0,506	0,560	0,601	0,439
q06	0,617	0,614	0,814	0,626	0,497	0,445	0,449	0,528	0,458	0,485	0,541	0,324
q07	0,555	0,780	0,682	0,806	0,590	0,493	0,518	0,568	0,462	0,599	0,571	0,290
q08	0,307	0,367	0,490	0,727	0,575	0,414	0,465	0,342	0,418	0,476	0,433	0,392
q09	0,632	0,468	0,560	0,842	0,746	0,404	0,458	0,630	0,555	0,594	0,658	0,407
q10	0,557	0,535	0,663	0,757	0,913	0,598	0,580	0,644	0,590	0,712	0,693	0,436
q11	0,429	0,427	0,533	0,680	0,867	0,441	0,572	0,598	0,493	0,582	0,568	0,319
q13	0,420	0,474	0,396	0,480	0,396	0,788	0,530	0,583	0,418	0,521	0,435	0,300
q14	0,395	0,225	0,441	0,427	0,556	0,820	0,438	0,622	0,546	0,572	0,532	0,324

q15	0,172	0,423	0,231	0,394	0,433	0,763	0,746	0,450	0,472	0,485	0,412	0,194
q16	0,239	0,490	0,352	0,452	0,470	0,737	0,794	0,489	0,497	0,553	0,462	0,287
q17	0,305	0,280	0,266	0,345	0,382	0,505	0,778	0,335	0,560	0,497	0,403	0,343
q18	0,478	0,478	0,504	0,583	0,632	0,452	0,798	0,614	0,599	0,605	0,585	0,349
q19	0,450	0,449	0,474	0,514	0,593	0,607	0,582	0,843	0,573	0,581	0,615	0,372
q20	0,535	0,396	0,496	0,587	0,597	0,512	0,448	0,865	0,517	0,537	0,607	0,301
q21	0,527	0,456	0,562	0,608	0,600	0,680	0,576	0,854	0,615	0,664	0,643	0,451
q22	0,584	0,348	0,470	0,545	0,544	0,575	0,619	0,635	0,848	0,685	0,690	0,557
q23	0,587	0,404	0,545	0,518	0,530	0,563	0,625	0,592	0,930	0,763	0,740	0,541
q24	0,591	0,438	0,615	0,575	0,571	0,504	0,644	0,569	0,908	0,819	0,765	0,581
q25	0,599	0,496	0,568	0,610	0,659	0,619	0,687	0,642	0,815	0,933	0,783	0,520
q26	0,621	0,601	0,682	0,708	0,709	0,629	0,631	0,660	0,764	0,934	0,788	0,546
q29	0,575	0,432	0,555	0,560	0,602	0,590	0,574	0,680	0,762	0,783	0,891	0,559
q30	0,652	0,577	0,746	0,711	0,672	0,460	0,544	0,621	0,699	0,720	0,895	0,575
Cooperation	0,448	0,270	0,476	0,454	0,430	0,350	0,414	0,440	0,625	0,571	0,635	1,000

The other principle regarded as a more effective procedure for estimating discriminant validity is the Fornell-Larcker test. This tool examines the square root of the AVE values with the latent variable correlations. Precisely, the square root of each construct's AVE requirement is higher than its highest correlation with any other construct (Hair *et al.*, 2014). So, by matching all square roots of each construct's AVE with the latent variable correlation of other constructs, based on Table 17, it is concluded that all of the square roots of each construct's AVE are higher than the latent variable correlation of other constructs. Thus, the test of discriminant validity designates that all constructs have discriminant validity. Furthermore, it indicates that by applying the Fornell-Larcker test, each construct is entirely different and distinguishing from other constructs. Besides, the Fornell-Larcker test designates that all constructs distinguish and achieve phenomena and cases, which are not expressed by other constructs in the theoretical model.

TABLE 16- FORNELL-LURCKER (DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY)

	Email	Face to face	Access to MEPs	Cooperation	Legal information	Media strategy	Mobilization strategy	Phone call	Political and social impact	Social media	Technical information	public opinion
Email	0,791											
Face to face	0,591	0,890										
Access to MEPs	0,587	0,714	0,893									
Cooperation	0,350	0,430	0,635	1,000								
Legal information	0,459	0,678	0,730	0,476	0,839							
Media strategy	0,609	0,612	0,818	0,625	0,609	0,896						
Mobilization strategy	0,668	0,733	0,841	0,571	0,670	0,846	0,933					
Phone call	0,705	0,646	0,626	0,414	0,493	0,703	0,706	0,790				
Political and social impact	0,457	0,545	0,566	0,270	0,620	0,444	0,588	0,539	1,000			
Social media	0,704	0,699	0,728	0,440	0,599	0,667	0,697	0,628	0,509	0,854		
Technical information	0,547	0,793	0,712	0,454	0,730	0,609	0,706	0,601	0,686	0,667	0,810	
public opinion	0,424	0,560	0,688	0,448	0,743	0,655	0,653	0,447	0,520	0,590	0,652	0,910

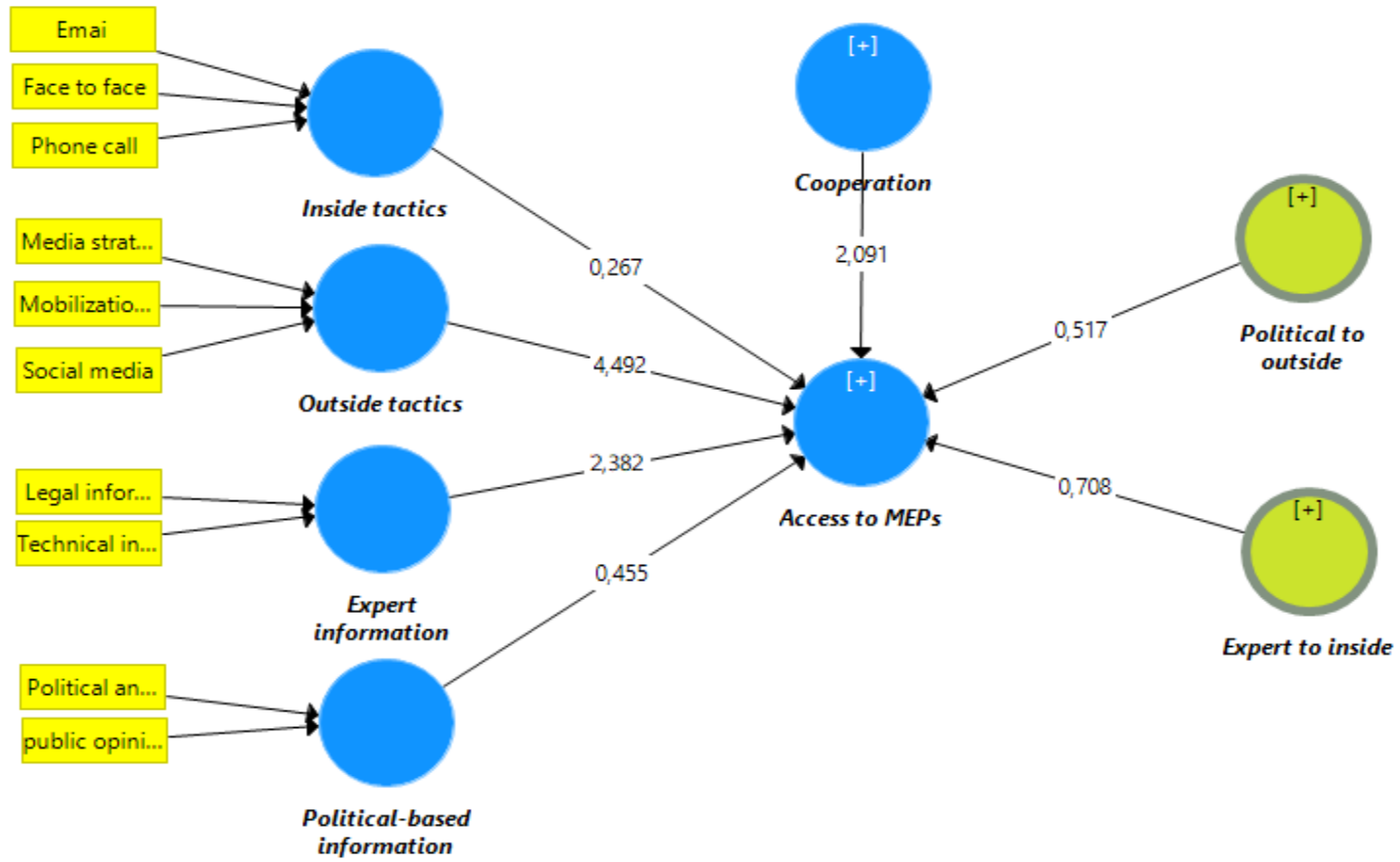
Validating Higher Model in PLS-SEM

The Bootstrapping Procedure in PLS-SEM

PLS-SEM does not imply that the data are typically distributed. Instead, it implies the assumption that parametric significance tests, which are used in regression analyses, are not relevant to be applied to test whether coefficients such as outer loadings and path coefficients are significant. Alternatively, PLS-SEM relies on a non-parametric bootstrap procedure to examine coefficients for their significance (Davison and Hinkley, 1997). Thus, many subsamples (bootstrap samples) are exercised and extracted from the original sample with replacement in the bootstrapping stage. Replacement indicates that each time an observation is extracted randomly from the sampling population, it is returned to the sampling population before the following observation is exercised. Furthermore, the population from which the observation is extracted frequently includes all the same elements and factors. Therefore, the number of bootstrap samples should be high and at least equal to the number of valid observations in the data set.

It should be considered that whether a coefficient is significant finally and lastly depends on its standard error obtained and achieved utilizing bootstrapping. The bootstrap standard error provides estimating the practical t value. Commonly, a two-tailed test's general critical and theoretical t value is 1.96 at a significant level of 5%. In my research, to test conclusively the significance of coefficients, the standard error, which estimates the empirical t values, was acquired by bootstrapping procedure and employed by PLS-SEM software. Figure 7 shows the results.

FIGURE 7- STRUCTURAL MODEL PATH COEFFICIENTS WITH STATISTICAL T VALUES



- 1- According to the figure the significance between the expert information and the access of HR NGOs to MEPs is 2,382, which is greater than 1.96, indicating that the effect of expert information on the level of access is significant at the 95 percent level of reliability. Therefore, the first hypothesis of the research is positively meaningful, significant and statistically supported.
- 2- The significance between the political-based information and the access of HR NGOs to MEPs is 0,455, which is not greater than 1.96, indicating that the effect of political-based information on access is not significant at a 95 per cent level of reliability. Therefore, the second hypothesis of the research is not meaningful and statistically not supported.
- 3- The significance between the outside tactics that HR NGOs employ to access MEPs is 4,492, more significant than 1.96, indicating that the effect of inside tactics on the level of access to MEPs is significant at a 95 percent level of reliability. Therefore, the third hypothesis of the research is positively meaningful, significant and statistically supported.
- 4- The significance between the inside tactics that HR NGOs employ to access MEPs is 0,267, which is not greater than 1.96, indicating that the effect of outside tactics on access is not significant at a 95 percent level of reliability. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis of the research is not meaningful and statistically not supported.
- 5- The significance between HR NGOs cooperation and the access to MEPs is 2,091, which is greater than 1.96, indicating that the effect of HR NGOs cooperation on access to the MEPs is significant at a 95 percent level of reliability. Therefore, the fifth hypothesis of the research is meaningful and statistically supported.
- 6- The Moderation of expert information to inside tactics is the sixth hypothesis with t value 0,760, and its effect on the access of HR NGOs to MEPs is not above the threshold of two tailed tests 1.96 at a significant level of 5 percent. Therefore, this hypothesis is not meaningful and statistically is not supported.
- 7- The Moderation of political-based information to outside tactics is the last hypothesis with t value 0,517, and its effect on the access of HR NGOs to MEPs is not above the threshold of two tailed tests 1.96 at a significant level of 5 percent. Therefore, this hypothesis is not meaningful and statistically is not supported.

TABLE 17- INNER MODEL T STATISTICS (SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS ARE SHOWN WITH**)

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Cooperation -> Access to MEPs	0,151	0,142	0,072	2,091*	0,037
Expert information -> Access to MEPs	0,193	0,192	0,101	2.382*	0,018
Expert to inside -> Access to MEPs	0,060	0,040	0,084	0,708	0,479
Inside tactics -> Access to MEPs	-0,032	-0,009	0,119	0,267	0,790
Outside tactics -> Access to MEPs	0,598	0,582	0,133	4,492**	0,000
Political to outside -> Access to MEPs	0,035	0,038	0,068	0,517	0,605
Political-based information -> Access to MEPs	0,037	0,053	0,082	0,455	0,650

Assessment of Indicator's Collinearity

Some researchers suggested the full collinearity test as a complete approach for the coincidental assessment of vertical and lateral collinearity (Kock and Lynn, 2012; Kock, 2015). Via this process entirely automated by the software Smart PLS, Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs) are developed for all latent variables in a model. The occurrence of a VIF more significant than 5 is suggested as a sign of pathological collinearity and also as a signal that the model may be degraded by common method bias. Consequently, if all VIFs resulting from a complete collinearity examination are equal to or lower than 5 (Hair Jr *et al.*, 2021), the model is deemed free of common method bias (Tehseen *et al.*, 2020). Thus, the researcher examined the latent variables, including legal information, technical information, political and social impact, public opinion, media strategy, mobilisation strategy, social media, sending email, phone call, and face to face, for collinearity as

predictors of entrepreneurial competencies. Table 19 indicates that the values of VIF for all the predictor latent variables are less than 5. Therefore, collinearity is not an issue in this model.

TABLE 18- VIF VALUES

	VIF
Email	2,122
Face to face	1,833
Legal information	2,139
Media strategy	3,672
Mobilization strategy	3,968
Cooperation	1,000
Phone call	2,366
Political and social impact	1,372
Social media	2,027
Technical information	2,139
public opinion	1,372
Access to MEPs	1,546

Construct Cross Validated Redundancy

Besides estimating the R² values, Stone-Geisser's Q² value must be applied as a measurement criterion of predictive accuracy (Geisser, 1974; Stone, 1974). This criterion is a sign of the model's predictive relevance. Q² values higher than zero for a particular reflective endogenous latent variable in the structural model prove the path model's predictive significance for a special construct. The blindfolding procedure completes the Q² value. The blindfolding procedure only applies to endogenous constructs, which have reflective measurement model characteristics to endogenous eligible item constructs.

Q² values are more leading than 0 presentations that the model has predictive significance for endogenous construct. Conversely, values of 0 and under express an insufficiency of predictive significance. It is worth noting that the Q² value could be assessed by employing two distinct procedures. The cross-validated redundancy method is developed on the path model estimations of the structural model and the measurement model of data prediction. Another alternative procedure is the cross-validated communality exploits only the construct scores assessed for the endogenous target construct to predict the excluded data points. Hair and others approved cross-validated redundancy as a measure of Q² to be utilized since it encompasses the critical character of the path model, the structural model, to predict excluded data points (Hair *et al.*, 2014). Consequently, the cross-validated redundancy table after running the blindfolding is as follows:

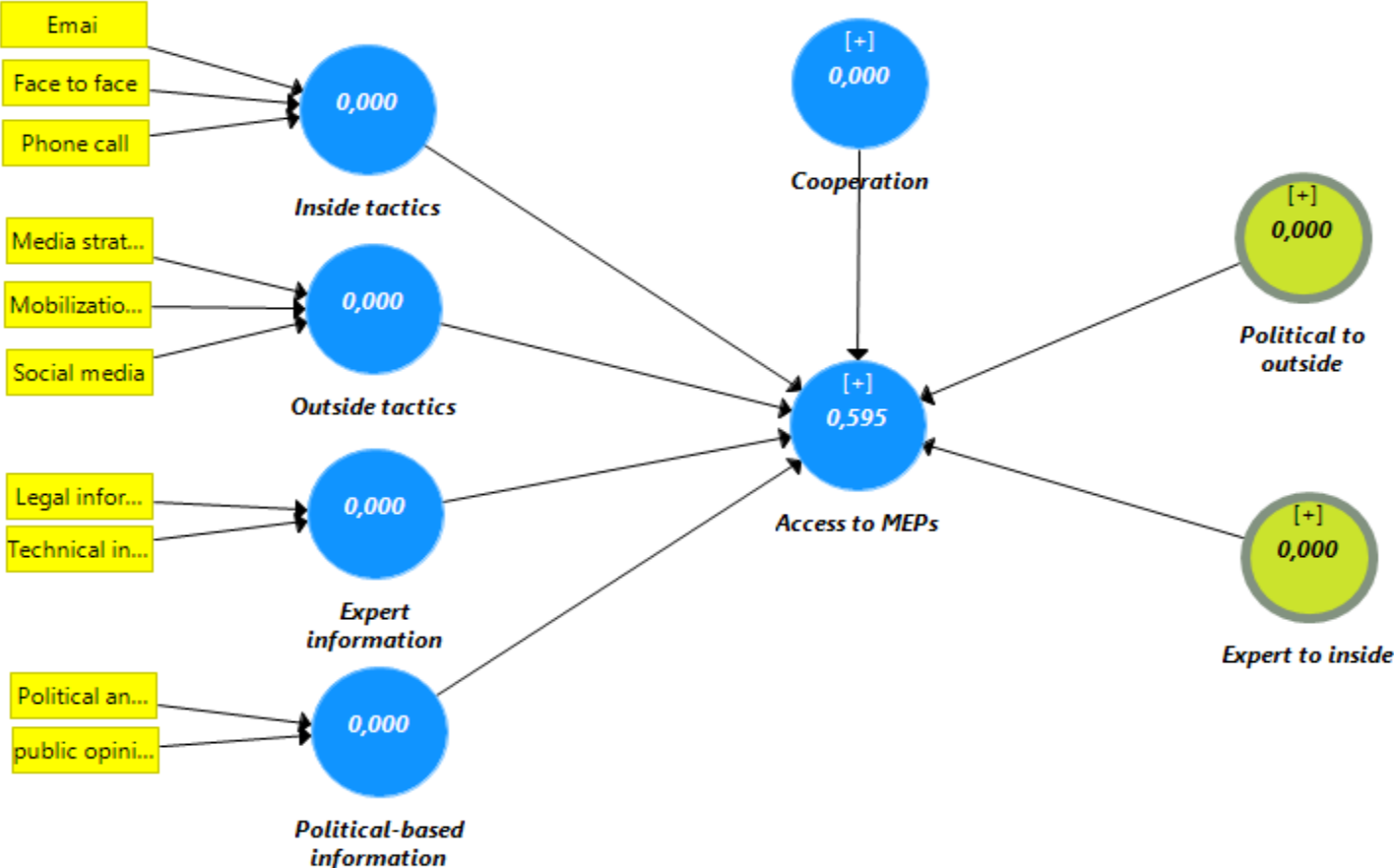
TABLE 19- CV-RED

	SSO	SSE	Q ² (=1-SSE/SSO)
Access to MEPs	166.000	67.187	0.595
Expert information	166.000	166.000	
Expert to inside	83.000	83.000	
Inside tactics	249.000	249.000	
NGOs cooperation	83.000	83.000	
Outside tactics	249.000	249.000	
Political to outside	83.000	83.000	
Political-based information	166.000	166.000	

The description of table 20 as CV Red table is that all Q^2 values of the table are above zero, designating that the exogenous constructs have predictive significance for the endogenous constructs of this research. These metrics determine the model's predictive power for an endogenous structure. This index measures how well the independent variables of a hypothetical dependent variable predict it. If $Q^2 = 0.02$, the predictive power is considered weak; if $Q^2 = 0.15$, the predictive power is considered moderate, and if $Q^2 = 0.35$, the predictive power is considered strong. In this regard, as Q^2 values are being used for reflective endogenous variables, it indicates the path model's predictive significance for the endogenous construct of access to MEPs.

Consequently, the Q^2 value is more potent than zero, which implies that the model has predictive significance Access to MEPs. Furthermore, it is shown that Q^2 values of exogenous variables are more significant than 0.35, which reveals the solid predictive significance of exogenous constructs for access to MEPs as an endogenous construct. Besides, based on the results, it can be assumed that the structural model of the research has a significant predictive character in the definition of research hypotheses results

FIGURE 8- CONSTRUCT CROSS VALIDATED REDUNDANCY



Construct Cross validated Commuality

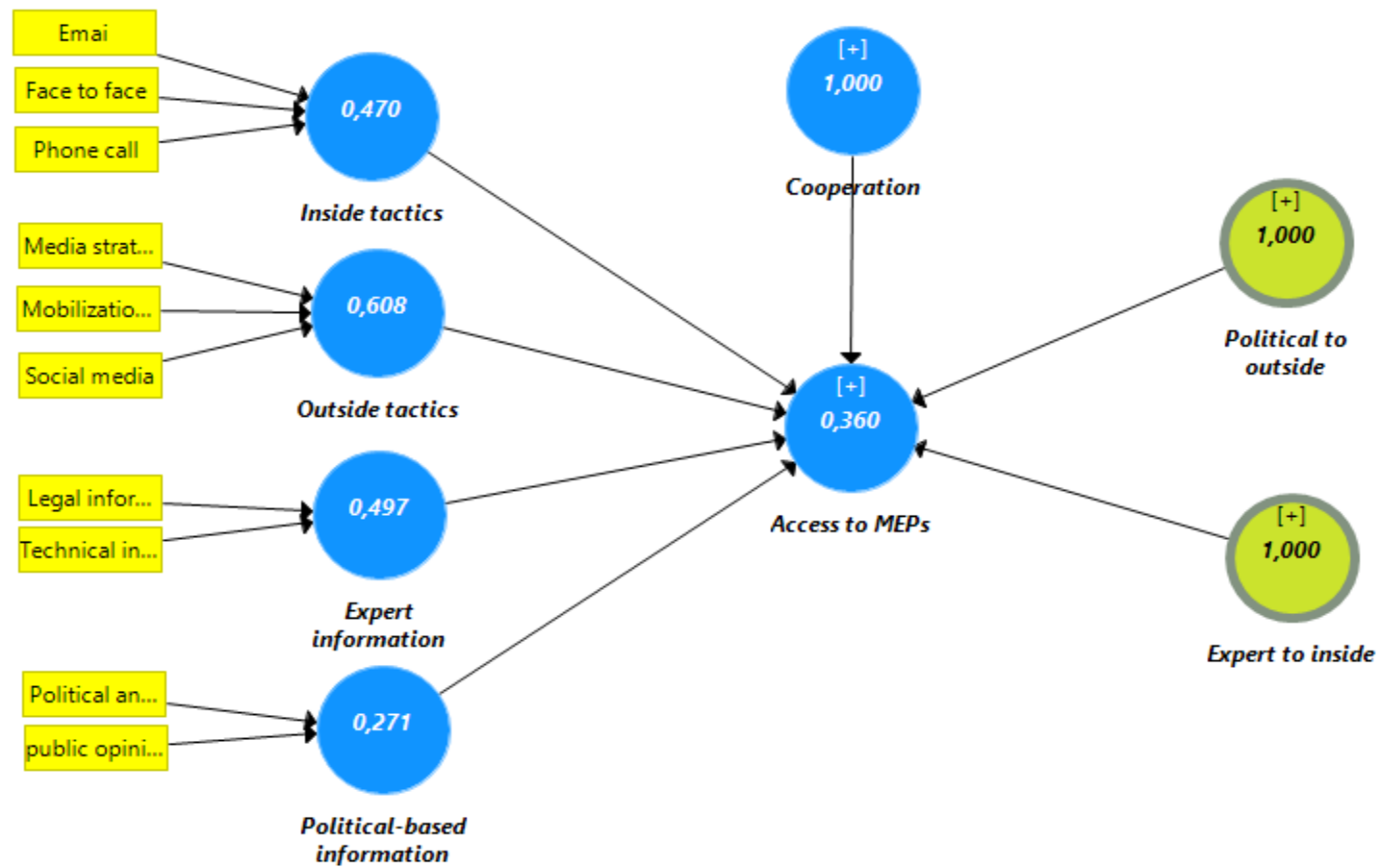
This test determines whether the research questions measure the variables correctly and with a high share in the form of a measurement model, indicating that the measurement quality of the variables in the model is high. The coefficient of variation of the common index is compared with three values: 0.02 (weak), 0.15 (medium), and 0.35 (strong). The coefficient of variation of the common index is shown in Table 21.

According to Table 21, the measurement model's quality for the variables is medium to strong (above 0.15). Finally, divergent validity is confirmed in this study, according to the two tests of divergent validity and related results, and the model has good divergent validity.

TABLE 20- CROSS VALIDATED COMMUNALITY

	SSO	SSE	Q ² (=1-SSE/SSO)
Access to MEPs	166,000	106,170	0,360
Cooperation	83,000		1,000
Expert information	166,000	83,487	0,497
Expert to inside	83,000		1,000
Inside tactics	249,000	131,922	0,470
Outside tactics	249,000	97,640	0,608
Political to outside	83,000		1,000
Political-based information	166,000	120,936	0,271

FIGURE 9- CONSTRUCT CROSS VALIDATED COMMONALITY



The Determination Test

The most crucial criterion adopted in PLS-SEM to evaluate the structural model is the R² coefficient. R Squares or R² coefficients were used to evaluate the fit of the structural model by the PLS method in this study. R² is a criterion utilized to connect structural equation modelling measurement and structural parts and show an independent variable's effect on a dependent variable. The higher the R² values for the endogenous structures of a model, the better the model's fit. The R² value varies from 0 to 1, with more significant levels designating higher levels of predictive accuracy. According to Hair and others (2014) Sarstedt and others (2017), and Henseler and others (2009), R² values of 0.75, 0.50, or 0.25 for endogenous latent variables can, as a general rule, be respectively represented as strong, moderate, or weak. The value of R² indicates the ability of the model to describe structures. As shown in Table 21, the R² value for access to MEPs as an endogenous construct is 0.872.

TABLE 21- R SQUARE OF THEORETICAL MODEL'S ENDOGENOUS VARIABLE

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Access to MEPs	0.823	0.806

Consequently, it describes that R² for access to MEPs is strong. Alternatively stated, it has strongly predicted the accuracy of the model. Thus, R² values of access to MEPs designate the degree of variance predictive accuracy modifications done by exogenous constructs of the model. Furthermore, four exogenous latent variables could predict 87% access to MEPs variance as an endogenous construct. The exogenous latent variable's mixed effects on R² of the endogenous constructs reveal that it could affect 0.875 as the degree of variance predictive accuracy modifications of endogenous constructs.

The Overall Fit

After examining the fit of the measurement part and the structural part of the model, the model's overall fit is examined through the GOF criterion, which is an indicator to check the model's fit to predict endogenous variables.

TABLE 22- CR AND R-SQUARE

	R Square	Composite Reliability
Access to MEPS	0.823	0.877
Media strategy		0.924
Mobilization strategy		0.931
Phone call		0.833
Political and social impacts		1.000
Public opinion		0.906
Email		0.834
Social media		0.890
Face to face		0.884
Legal information		0.877
Technical information		0.835

According to the table 23, the average communality of research variables is estimated to be 0.890 and was included in the model. In addition, the average R^2 of endogenous access variables was calculated to be 0.823. Therefore, the GOF value of the model is:

$$GOF = \sqrt{Communality \times R^2} = \sqrt{0.890 \times 0.823} = 0.855$$

Experts in PLS structural modelling consider the GOF index to be weak if it is less than 0.1, medium if it is between 0.1 and 0.25, and strong if greater than 0.36. Taking these criteria into account, the sample model's fit index is 0.855, which is strong. Based on these findings, it is possible to conclude that the tested model in the sample has a perfect fit.

Findings of Qualitative Part to Support Findings of Qualitative Part

Introduction

In the last part, a quantitative study was conducted. The quantitative part of this study indicates that expert information and outside tactics provide more access for HR NGOs to MEPs. Also, the cooperation among HR NGOs provides them more access to MEPs regarding the human rights situation in Iran. On the other hand, other hypothesizes of the research were rejected. The results show that the relationship between the political-based information and outside tactics with access to MEPs is insignificant. Reviewing the literature on the informational determinants of access to the MEPs on the legislative process shows that based on the nature of the EP, the relationships between interest groups access to MEPs on the legislative process based on political-based information and inside tactics is significant. The rejection of some hypothesizes of the research needs a more comprehensive analysis. In order to explain more about the results of the quantitative part of the research, the researcher decided to adopt a qualitative study with the method of in-depth interviews. Based on the qualitative findings of the research, we can discuss the reasons for the acceptance and rejection of the hypotheses.

HR NGOs-MEPs Interactions

The researcher asked general questions about HR NGOs interactions with MEPs regarding the human rights situation in Iran. Four anonymous representatives of HRNGO said that all of these organisations have regular interactions with MEPs. Interviewee #10#20 said that they often meet MEPs to provide them with different types of information and ask them to take action to the humanitarian situation in different issues, especially urgent actions regarding the human rights issues in Iran. The other interviewee (interviewee

#10#15) also said they try to interact with MEPs to present information gathered by its field workers. The interviewee mentioned that they have regular meetings with MEPs on human rights in different parts, especially in Iran. However, the interviewee also mentioned that they try to interact with MEPs when an urgent need arises. Interviewee #10#13 said that the EP is one of the important international institutions that we try to interact with regarding human rights issues related to journalists and freedom of the press. The interviewee explained that they need to interact with MEPs since the EP interacts with the Iranian authorities.

Furthermore, Interviewee #10#13 explained that they provide information to MEPs and expect MEPs to take the necessary actions regarding the rights of journalists who are at the risk of violations of their rights. Finally, the other HRNGO (interviewee#10#16) that has regular meetings with MEPs focuses on religious issues and the rights of minorities. Since religious minorities live in a challenging situation in Iran, the NGO tries to be their voice by providing information regarding the violence of their rights in Iran.

Two other representatives of HR NGOs (interviewee #10#21 and #10#11) explained that they are not registered in the EU lobbying system; however, based on the longevity of their activities, they have access to members of some parties in the EP. These organisations' access to different parties provides an excellent opportunity for these organisations to have access to MEPs from different countries. Although these organisations have limitations in meeting MEPs in the EP, they are in contact with MEPs in other places. Interviewee #10#21 said that they interact with MEPs and with advisories and assistance of MEPs. These interactions help these organisations present information related to the human rights situation in Iran to MEPs to help them take the needed actions regarding that issue.

While these HR NGOs seem to have extensive interaction with MEPs regarding the human rights issues in Iran, some HR NGOs have limited direct interactions with MEPs. Through an interview, a member of an anonymous HR NGOs (interviewee #10#14) said

that they do not have many interactions with MEPs since they are not registered in the EU lobbying system. Interviewee #10#14 explained that most of their access to MEPs is outside of the EP. The interviewee mentioned their limitations to access MEPs as follows.

"First, we have many limitations on access to MEPs. One of these limitations is that we are not registered in the lobbying system in the EU. Therefore, our access to MEPs is limited. The other limitation is to find an MEP whose priority is human rights issues. However, of course, given the priority of some MEPs on human rights issues, we have the opportunity to meet with them at seminars or elsewhere, present information we prepared on the human rights situation in Iran. The last limitation that I can say is "time." Since urgent action is needed in some human rights issues, we must meet MEPs in certain places that we do not have access to. So, time is the last barrier to meeting MEPs. But overall, I can say based on our organisation's capacity, we have interaction with some of the MEPs."

The other representative of an HR NGOs (interviewee #10#17) said that "since we are not registered in the lobbying system of the EU, we do not have many options to meet many MEPs to present our information, but we try to ask those MEPs that we have access the possibility of sharing our information with other MEPs." Nevertheless, that does not mean they do not have any access to MEPs in different places. Also, they have access to some advisors of some MEPs, which helps them indirectly access MEPs. Three other interviewees (#10#18, #10#19, #10#12) said that their organisations are newly founded and have access to a limited number of MEPs. Therefore, to improve their chance to have access to more MEPs, they also try to indirectly have access to MEPs by interactions with the advisors of MEPs. The representative of an organisation (interviewee #10#19) explained that since we do not have access to MEPs in the EP, we try to build our networks with MEPs advisors to provide the information we prepared regarding human rights situations in Iran.

Some of the interviewees (#10#11 and #10#15) mentioned that there had been times when MEPs had asked them for comprehensive information on some particular human rights issues. MEPs' requests for information provide a good opportunity for HR NGOs to access MEPs. In some cases, this access has led HR NGOs to discuss various issues with MEPs, which has paved the way for greater access to MEPs. This indicates that in some cases, organisations' access to MEPs is a two-way relationship that ultimately provides an opportunity for NGOs to have more access to MEPs.

Expert Information and Access to MEPs

Based on the findings of the quantitative part of the research, the relationship between expert information and access to MEPs on the human rights situation in Iran is significant. The result supports the research hypothesis that the more HR NGOs provide expert information to MEPs, the more access to MEPs. To support the acceptance of the first hypothesis of the research, the researcher asked different questions from HR NGOs representatives. Through interviews, the researcher can confirm that expert information provides more access to MEPs for HR NGOs.

HR NGOs activities include providing information based on international law and technical analysing and documenting human rights violence. HR NGOs use these types of information to access MEPs. For example, interviewee #10#20 said their organisation tries to influence MEPs by providing technical analyses based on the EU laws and facts regarding the human rights situation in Iran. The interviewee mentioned that:

"Through providing technical information, our organisation tries to access MEPs to convince them to consider the human rights situation in Iran as their priorities. For example, every year, we provide information related to the people executed in Iran by providing statistics and comparisons of different years. With our organisation efforts, in most EP resolutions, we can see the EP condemn Iran for the high number of executions in Iran."

One member of an HR NGOs (interviewee #10#11) explained that it is not a rationale to send information to an MEP that does not contain reliable and scientific analysis and is not supported by data. The justification for the interviewee's explanation was that MEPs that human rights issues are their priority try to follow the news, and they might have knowledge regarding some of human rights issues in different parts of the world. However, based on MEP's limited time to access reliable information not received from the media, they need information from other sources that helps them to make a profound and acceptable decision. Therefore, based on the interviewee's explanations, MEPs' time limits based on their duties, especially at issues related to human rights, causes them to look for expert information outside of the EP.

Another representative of an NGO (interviewee #10#16) explained, sending information to MEPs on the human rights issues in Iran has to be based on facts, figures, and MEPs must quickly assess the data. Therefore, the interviewee believes that going to MEPs and saying the human rights situation in Iran is unacceptable and based on international or EU laws, and you should take action based on that situation will not satisfy MEPs.

Interviewee #10#14 said that: "In order to access MEPs regarding the human rights situation in Iran, there is something more important than raw information, which is information based on technical and evidence-based data." In a nutshell, convincing MEPs based on their need for data-driven information to take any action based on the human rights situations in Iran requires evidence-based and expert information. Therefore, the interviewee's explanation indicates MEPs need expert information regarding human rights issues and based on that, they present MEPs expert information to have more chance to convince them to take the required action regarding human rights issues.

On the other hand, the relationship between HR NGOs and MEPs is not a one-way relationship based on the representative of an HR NGOs. For example, interviewee #10#13 said that:

"We often work on different issues to provide information and present it to MEPs or other policymakers; however, there are times that MEPs ask us to provide them information regarding human rights issues in Iran. For example, some MEPs closely follow the human rights situation in Iran, and they want to be updated with information based on facts and figures. Also, in some specific issues, they asked us to provide information to compare the situation at different times to find out if the situation was getting better."

Almost all interviewees mentioned that providing information based on facts and figures and comprehensive analysis and the desire of MEPs offer more chance for HR NGOs to communicate with them. Consequently, MEPs' need for expert information is another reason to offer more access for HR NGOs.

Political-based Information and Access to MEPs

Even though HR NGOs Provide Political-based information to MEPs regarding the human rights situation in Iran, representatives of HR NGOs stated that they are not sure if providing political-based information will lead them access to MEPs. However, the rationale behind the uncertainty of representatives of HR NGOs was different. For example, interviewee #10#21 believes the primary concern of MEPs is the public opinion of EU citizens on issues related to the economic situation in the EU. So, the interviewee believes providing information regarding the human rights situation in Iran might not influence MEPs. However, on the other hand, the priority of the EU citizens is not the human rights situation in Iran, and they have other concerns, according to interviewee #10#21.

The other issue that two of the interviewees (#10#19 and #10#14) mentioned was the limitation to providing information regarding the public opinion in the EU on the human rights situation in Iran. Interviewee #10#19 said that as an HR NGOs, they have limited staff and budget. Based on that, they focus on providing technical information more than political-based information. However, the interviewee said they also sometimes provide political-based information to support the technical information. On the other hand, interviewee #10#14 explained that providing information regarding the public opinion in the EU on the human rights situation in Iran needs a budget, time, and expert staff who can follow the procedure of a survey. According to interviewee #10#14, although the advancement of technology has increased access to the public, the allocation of time and staff who are experts in this field is still a key issue in providing information on public opinion on specific issues. However, interviewee #10#14 believes that the human rights situation in Iran is not the priority of the majority of the EU citizens and that consequently causes information related to public opinion in the EU regarding the human rights situation in Iran to have low value for MEPs.

Another issue raised by one of the interviewees is that the relationship between HR NGOs and MEPs is not one-sided. For example, when HR NGOs provide information to access MEPs regarding the human rights situation in Iran, the MEPs' demand for the type of information is also considered by NGOs. On the other hand, in different cases, MEPs might demand information related to the human rights situation in Iran. For example, according to interviewee #10#13, MEPs from different parties asked them for information on special human rights issues in Iran. However, according to the interviewee, MEPs always asked for detailed and technical information, and they never asked for information regarding public opinion. Regarding the reason, they provide information regarding the public opinion while they know that the desire of MEPs the interviewee said:

"We know what types of information MEPs need, and sometimes we think providing information related to the public backing on some issues will increase the salience of an issue and help us access MEPs. However, I have to

say we never publish information related to public opinion on our reports, especially our monthly or yearly reports, which are based on facts and figures, and there is legal consideration based on international laws. We always send information related to public opinion in a separate form to MEPs advisors."

The interviews show that NGOs, knowing that the MEPs want technical information, also provide political-based information to pressure MEPs. Nevertheless, the important thing is that the interviewees do not see the possibility of access to MEPs on human rights issues in Iran. By providing political-based information, HR NGOs are making their last attempt to access MEPs, according to interviewee #10#17.

Inside Tactics and Access to MEPs

One of the rejected hypotheses in this study is that applying inside tactics regarding the human rights situation in Iran provides more access to MEPs for HR NGOs. However, the interviewee's explanations on applying different tactics to access MEPs, considered inside tactics, indicate why inside tactics provide them less access than outside tactics. In this regard, the interviewees have mentioned various issues discussed in detail.

Regarding providing information to MEPs in face-to-face meetings on access to human rights issues in Iran, the interviewees pointed out issues that can justify the reason for rejecting the hypothesis of this study regarding the use of inside tactics to access MEPs. For example, the first issue that some interviewees mentioned is related to the place they meet MEPs. However, some interviewees (#10#13, #10#15, #10#16, #10#20) said that most of their meetings with MEPs were at MEPs' offices; other interviewees said they mostly meet MEPs in different places. Therefore, since they meet MEPs in different places like seminars, they have less time to talk to MEPs regarding their information based on the human rights situation in Iran. Furthermore, when they meet MEPs in different places, like at a conference, they must consider that they are not the only organisation to meet the MEP. So, time limitations cause HR NGOs representatives to focus on the main points of their

information during their meeting with MEPs. Interviewee #10#17 said that when they meet an MEP at a seminar, they cannot present technical or event political-based information to MEPs. The rationale of the interviewee for not providing political-based information to MEPs in public was not to put political pressure on the MEPs. In the interviewee's opinion, the presentation of political-based information in places such as conferences will not be considered friendly by MEPs, given the presence of the media and their political rivals. Therefore, the interviewee said their preference is to provide political-based information to MEPs in other ways. During meetings in places other than an official place, HR NGOs are forced to present some general information to MEPs and be hopeful that information catches the attention of MEPs for more details.

The other important issue that three of the interviewees (#10#18, #10#14, and #10#11) mentioned was when urgent action is needed. In this situation, HR NGOs representatives barely have access to MEPs; therefore, they meet advisors or staff of MEPs to provide them information regarding human rights issues in Iran. However, according to interviewee #10#18, when they provide information to advisors of an MEP, that does not mean they immediately send that information to MEPs. Interviewee #10#21 said that:

" There were times we went to advisors of MEPs and provided them detailed information about an issue that needed to be under the consideration of MEPs as a serious human rights violation. Although we provided information to the advisors and convinced them the issue was serious, the response was not what we expected. In many cases, advisors or assistances of MEPs told us that they would work on the issue, and then when they have a meeting with the MEP, they discuss the issue with the MEP. Unfortunately, this means it takes time for MEPs to receive our information."

The other way to send information to MEPs or their advisors is sending information by email. Almost all interviewees mentioned that their first choice is to send information to

MEPs by email. However, interviewees pointed out that this is not the best way to reach MEPs for various reasons. The first reason the interviewees mentioned was that based on the explanations they received from the staff of the MEPs' offices, they receive many messages during the day, and it takes time to address them all.

Accordingly, it may take some time for their messages to be responded to and reviewed by MEPs or their staff. For example, interviewee #10# 20 explained that:

" When we want to send our information to MEPs, we consider that there is a possibility that the message is read after a while, so we try to think about other options to send information to MEPs. For example, there was a time that we received a message from an MEP after a month. Consider it if we sent that information for urgent action? So, sending information by email is the first choice but not the best choice."

The other reason interviewees mentioned sending information by email to MEPs is not the best option is that they are not sure if MEPs receive the message or not? In addition, the interviewees pointed out that since the priorities of many MEPs might not be human rights issues in Iran, the staff responsible for checking emails might not inform the MEP regarding that issue. For example, interviewee #10#11 said that:

" Our research shows that MEPs themselves do not check emails in many cases. Rather, the person working in the office of the MEP checks the emails and responds to them according to the priorities of the MEP or conveys that information to the MEP. Therefore, even when we send information to MEP's other email addresses, I mean not the official one, we are not assured they will review our information. On the other hand, however, we rarely send information to the personal email of MEPs."

On the other hand, Interviewees have similar issues for not making sure that their phone calls lead to access to MEPs. Interviewees pointed out that they are not directly talking to MEPs when they call MEPs' offices. Therefore, they are not sure that MEPs will receive their messages. As mentioned in the case of sending information by email, the lack of priority given by some MEPs to the human rights situation in Iran is one of the reasons why they are not confident that MEPs will consider information. However, the interviewees mentioned the main issue regarding phone calls to send information to access MEPs is the limitations of sending different types of information in phone calls.

The rationale behind the uncertainty of interviewees regarding access to MEPs based on the information they send to MEPs via a phone call was that during their conversation via phone call, they can mention some key points, and they cannot provide more details. Usually, a phone call with an MEP or MEPs' advisors takes place for a short time. During this short time, the representative of HR NGOs has to provide as much information as possible. The problem is that they should consider the main point, and sometimes the information they provide during that short conversation is not clear for MEPs or their advisors, according to interviewee #10# 12. Interviewee #10#21 said that:

"Most of the time, during our phone call to access MEPs, we talk to MEPs' staff or advisors, and our call should not take much time, and we must provide certain types of information. One limitation is that we cannot provide much technical information during the phone call based on facts and figures. So, during our call, we tried to convince them that our information was rich and could help the MEP. Also, during our call, our goal is to inspire MEPs advisors or staff to check the email we sent and to check our website for more information."

In short, the priorities of MEPs on various issues, the timing of information transfers, political constraints, and the places where representatives of HR NGOs meet with MEPs

or their advisers lead to the use of inside tactics to not be very effective in accessing MEPs on human rights issues in Iran.

Outside tactics and access to MEPs

Through interviews with representatives of HR NGOs working on human rights issues in Iran, it seems natural that these organisations use the media to promote their activities to influence the people and MEPs and other policymakers. Interviews on NGOs' relationship with the media and the public show how HR NGOs act as agenda-setters and norm-generators and use the media to pressure MEPs. Representatives of some HR NGOs interviewed stressed that their organisations have separate communication teams. These communication teams publish their activities through the media based on the circumstances and announce their readiness to accept media interview requests. Interviewee #10#18 considers communication with the media and the public essential for HR NGOs. The interviewee added that they use the media for purposes such as awareness of the public and putting pressure on politicians. Using the media is a very effective tool to raise public awareness regarding human rights issues, according to interviewee #10#19. Based on interviewee #10#19, Public awareness is essential for their organisations in two ways. First, this awareness helps NGOs raise more money for their targeted projects, and then this awareness can indirectly put pressure on decision-makers.

Interviewee #10#15 took an example of the 2019-2020 Iranian protest in different cities of Iran and how their organisation interacts with the media and the public to pressure decision-makers at different levels. The interviewee believes HR NGOs alone could not effectively pressure MEPs or other politicians regarding that issue. HR NGOs need to work with the public to raise their awareness about the situation in Iran. Comprehensive media coverage about the 2019-2020 Iranian protest brought much attention to the public and decision-makers at different levels. As people showed their attention to the issue, HR NGOs could have more access to MEPs to discuss the situation. The media's extensive coverage makes people pay more attention to the 2019-2020 Iranian human rights crisis and pressure MEPs. Furthermore, as the media covers more about the freedom of speech

in Iran, MEPs brought the issue to their priority and issued a resolution condemning Iran for the crackdown of protesters in Iran.

The representative of other organisations explained that media help them follow their goal more effectively. Interviewee #10#17 explained that their organisation often uses the media to publicise its activities regarding minorities in Iran. The interviewee explained that since the Iranian government deals harshly with people who smuggle fuel to Pakistan for a living and the unfair treatment of Sunni Muslims, their organisation tries to provide information for the media to inform the world of the human rights situation in Iran. The media also provides essential information for NGO workers. Mid-size HR NGOs frequently use the media to expose their activities. The representative of a mid-size organisation (interviewee #10#11) said that their organisation publicises its activities to catch the public's attention and decision-makers at different levels, especially MEPs. The interviewee summarises their organisation's involvement with the media as follows:

"Our organisation often uses the media to expose its activities. These include interviews and the presence of me and another colleague in print publications and websites dedicated to human rights issues, especially human rights issues in Iran. In addition, our organisation produces reports and other publications that record the organisation's activities and publish these publications through various media. Typically, the organisation's website is also the main source of information and requests from the audience for support are from the organisation."

Interviewee #10#15 explained that a strong media team helps them advance their goals regarding human rights issues in Iran. The interviewees' rationale was that using media first provided them with a great tool to express their activities. They can have more financial and political support in different societies by expressing their activities. Second, media can signal MEPs and other policymakers the importance of human rights issues,

thereby creating a situation to access them. Interviewee #10#15 took an example to explain the importance of using media in their activities. The interviewee said that:

"During activities in this organisation, there were times that we sent information to policymakers, especially MEPs, but sometimes we did not receive any replies from them. However, when we participated in a conversation on a well-known TV or published an article in a newspaper, they asked us for more information, or even sometimes they provided a situation to talk to them or their advisors directly. So, a media team would lead us to access policymakers like MEPs and provide us more public support."

In interviews with representatives of HR NGOs, it was revealed that these organisations had focused part of their activities on social media as many people use social media. In addition, people's widespread use of social media has given HR NGOs an excellent opportunity to communicate directly with the public. Also, representatives of HR NGOs expressed different characteristics that convinced them to use social media as a great tool to access people and policymakers at different levels, especially MEPs. For example, these media are easily accessible, interactive, produce and exchange content quickly, have long-lasting and changeable content, and their users are accessible according to different interviewees.

According to one of the interviewees (interviewee #10#11), HR NGOs use social media more and more to access people and policymakers because it has a comparative advantage over other media (radio, television and newspapers). One of the advantages mentioned by interviewee #10#11 is the easy access of people to their pages and other pages in social media. According to interviewee number #10#11, considering that people can access news and information in any place and at any time, news transmission in social media is faster than other media types. The rationale of the interviewee was that following the news on

the radio and television requires time at certain times, so many may not be able to follow the news during the day. In addition, newspapers also cover the events of the past few days. According to interviewee #10#17, this advantage has caused even radio and television networks to launch their pages on social media to transmit news to the people. The speed of transmission of information in social media helps HR NGOs reach their goals regarding different issues, especially in situations where urgent action is needed or an issue under discussion by policymakers. For example, regarding access to MEPs on the human rights situation in Iran, interviewee #10#17 said:

“We have noticed that many MEPs follow news on social media. So in situations where there is a need for immediate action on a particular issue, our first choice is social media. However, on the other hand, comments that our followers leave on our posts are also considered by them. There were times we released news on an issue on our pages on Twitter or Facebook, and after a short time, that issue caught the attention of some MEPs.”

Interviewees expressed similar views on legal demonstrations. The interviewees emphasised that although holding legal demonstrations is associated with many problems due to their limitations, they consider it to impact public opinion and attract the attention of policymakers in various institutions. Interviewee #10#13 stated that in different cases when they plan legal demonstrations, they attract a lot of media attention, and this causes the message of these demonstrations to be noticed by many people, especially politicians in different institutions. Interviewer #10#13 points to the various demonstrations in some European cities supporting Nasrin Sotoudeh to show the impact of legal demonstrations on access to MEPs. The interviewee said in this regard:

“We have held demonstrations in different cities to support and ask the Iranian regime to release Nasrin Sotoudeh unconditionally. The demonstrations were covered by local media and, in some cases, by the international media. So, media coverage of

the demonstrations helped us influence MEPs to turn their attention to the issue, and some have contacted us for more information. Therefore, I can claim that these demonstrations were a great help for us to our voice be heard by MEPs, which eventually manifested itself in resolutions from the European Parliament."

Two other interviewees (#10#17 and #10#19) pointed out that although they cannot organise demonstrations due to their limitations, they have always asked their followers to accompany them in demonstrations organised by other organisations and groups regarding the human rights situation Iran. Interviewee #10#17 also pointed out that their support for demonstrations by other organisations could attract more attention and draw the attention of MEPs.

In general, the interviewees had a positive view of the impact of outside tactics on their access to MEPs. Respondents believed that the more their activities were seen in the EU, the more they had access to MEPs. During the interviews, representatives of HR NGOs mentioned some examples regarding their activities which cannot be mentioned in this part. Due to the anonymity of the interviewees, the researcher cannot mention those examples in this part. In short, although, according to the interviewees, they use all their tools to access MEPs, they have a particular account of outside tactics and find them more efficient.

HR NGOs Cooperation

Through the interviews, it turns out that HR NGOs cooperate in the field based on their need for more information and access to MEPs. The rationale behind this cooperation is that they can implement their goals regarding human rights issues in Iran more effectively through cooperation. Thus, even though HR NGOs have a distinct focus on different issues in the field of human rights, HR NGOs share common values and goals, which aim to help victims of human rights violations in Iran. However, different HR NGOs have their goals for this cooperation. One of these goals is access to information due to organisational

constraints, and the other goal is to use political signals that HR NGOs send to access policymakers when cooperating on a particular issue.

As mentioned above, one of the goals that cause HR NGOs to cooperate in human rights issues is accessing information. Interviewee #10#13 explained that based on their limitations, they do not have access to the first handed information in different parts of the world, especially in Iran. Therefore, they ask other NGOs for information or invite them to cooperate on that issue. In fact, he introduces information as the cornerstone of HR NGOs' cooperation. The interviewee also explained:

"If an organisation seeks to influence policymakers' decisions on human rights issues, it must provide information covering all aspects of an issue. Moreover, if this information is prepared in collaboration with other organisations, it will be more effective. This effectiveness is because the information provided in collaboration with some organisations will attract policymakers, qualitatively and politically, especially MEPs, seeking re-election to the European Parliament. So, the information provided by cooperation with other organisations will lead us to more access to MEPs."

The other interviewee also points out that information is an issue that leads them to work with other organisations. Interviewee #10#14 explained that since the organisation's longevity the interviewee works for is not much like other international NGOs, they cooperate with other NGOs by providing them information to have indirect access to decision-makers at a different level. This cooperation is not one-sided, and sometimes some famous international NGOs also ask smaller organisations for information and advice regarding the field of their focus. In this regard the interviewee #10#14 said that:

"As a human rights organisation, we are aware of the limitations of our colleagues in accessing human rights information in Iran. But, on the other

hand, they are aware of our limitations. So, there are times that they ask us to provide them with information regarding a particular issue. So, to take steps to improve the human rights situation in Iran, we share our information with other organisations in the hope that our information will reach MEPs and other policymakers in a larger group."

A member of an anonymous HR NGO (interviewee #10#13) said that as one of the prominent NGOs in human rights issues, sometimes they play a crucial role in cooperation with other HR NGOs. For example, the organisation the interviewee works for sometimes creates a situation for NGOs to cooperate on issues related to human rights situations in Iran. The interviewee explained a synergy impact as more HR NGOs cooperate if these HR NGOs share the same goals. The other important reason that HR NGOs tend to cooperate is avoiding duplicate efforts. Interviewee #10#19 mentioned that:

"We try to cooperate with other NGOs a lot in order to influence MEPs. For example, we often meet each other in the case of the human rights situation in Iran for cooperation. Our goal is to know what other colleagues do to avoid duplicate efforts. For instance, if we want to work on special issues like freedom of speech in Iran, first, we need to decide our desire to reach a common goal. Then, if other organisations previously worked on that issue already and did not reach their goal, we need to try other plans in order to reach our goal. Specially if the goal is to access decision-makers like MEPs."

The reactions of representatives of HR NGOs regarding the cooperation and the number of organisations in the field were different. Representatives of HR NGOs that only focus on human rights in Iran said that the large number of NGOs in the field promotes more chances for them to have access to MEPs regarding the human rights issues in Iran. They believe that the higher number of HR NGOs cooperating regarding an issue, the more they have access to MEPs based on the quality of information they present to MEPs

and how they send them information. On the other hand, one of the interviewees #10#16 had a different opinion and believed that many organisations working together on an issue could cause problems. According to the interviewee, one of these problems is the lack of coordination between organisations. This inconsistency between two or more organisations, according to the interviewee, may lead to chaos in the overall cooperation of the organisations.

HR NGOs also work together to send information to MEPs. One of the interviewees (#10#20) pointed out that the more organisations cooperate on sending information to MEPs, the more likely it is that MEPs will notice their information. Regarding the tactics they use to send information to decision-makers, the interviewee said that:

"When we send information to MEPs, it catches the attention of them when many organisations do it together, or we use media to raise awareness about an issue. For example, we publish a statement for urgent action regarding an issue in Iran, when more organisations, especially more internationally well-known NGOs, are included, we receive more calls from decision-makers."

In general, the goals of HR NGOs for inter-organisational cooperation can be divided into two categories based on the statements of two interviewees. The first category is organisations that seek information from other organisations. As interviewee #10#16 points out, the main reason for their cooperation is access to first-class information. According to the interviewee, cooperation with smaller organisations that have their communication channels in Iran will help them access their information. On the other hand, other HR NGOs, which mainly cover only human rights issues in Iran, try to reach out to the public, especially politicians, by providing information to larger organisations. Thus, collaborating with larger organisations is a tactic to gain indirect access to MEPs.

The role of information types on the choice of the tactics

Part of the interviews focused on the tactics used by HR NGOs to send expert or political-based information to MEPs. In this regard, the answers of the interviewees can be divided into two groups. The first group of interviewees pointed out that they use all available tactics when they decide to provide the MEPs with the different information types they have provided about the human rights situation in Iran. They believed that due to their limitations on direct access to MEPs, they would increase their chances of accessing MEPs by sending information in various ways. In this regard, interviewee number #10#18 said:

“We know our limitations, so we use different ways to send information to access MEPs. Of course, this does not mean that we rudely use tools that incur political costs for them. However, all the options for sending information to MEPs are on our table. Naturally, we take great care only when it comes to information that may cause problems for an individual or a group.”

On the other hand, the other group of interviewees with more access to MEPs pointed out that they decide what kind of information to send to MEPs, depending on the circumstances. Typically, this group of organisations tries to send them technical information in face-to-face meetings or emails by coordination with MEPs. However, in situations where direct access to MEPs may not be possible for some reason, they also use other tactics.

Generally, HR NGOs adapt their tactics not based on types of information but based on circumstances. These circumstances are different when there is a severe need to take a stand on the issue of human rights in Iran when they send information to MEPs on a monthly, quarterly or annual basis. Interviewee #10#121 pointed out that their first goal is to catch MEPs' attention to the issue. How this is done depends on things like the time limitation. Although some interviewees also mentioned that they have some limitations on

sending expert information by employing some tactics, the main issue is drawing the MEPs' attention. Therefore, it is possible to understand why technical information does not moderate NGOs' access through inside tactics. Also, we can understand why political-based information does not moderate the access of HR NGOs to MEPs based on outside tactics.

Summary of Qualitative Part

The interviews with the representatives of HR NGOs covering the human rights situation in Iran provided the researcher with some insight into the access they have to MEPs based on the tactics and types of information they provide to MEPs. Notwithstanding their busy calendars and situation caused by the pandemic, HR NGOs' representatives were ready to help the researcher manage this research. The researcher honestly enjoys their help and attempt to do his best to keep them confidential. The general impression from the interviews was that HR NGOs working on the human rights situation in Iran face different difficulties to help victims of human rights violations in Iran. Different HR NGOs might provide certain types of information on a particular human rights issue, generally cover Iran's human rights situation, or even employ different tactics to send their information to MEPs, but all share common values and goals. These organisations, despite their limitations, are working hard to change and improve the situation of human rights in Iran. Their activities might cause unexpected threats such as being arrested or, unfortunately, being executed by the Iranian government. However, the true purpose of HRNGO activities is to change this situation by informing MEPs and other policymakers about the exact situation of human rights in Iran. When the researcher was concerned about the effectiveness of their activities, all representatives of HR NGOs believed that they were doing their best, but they needed more attention regarding this issue. While the interview does not include many HR NGOs that cover the human rights situation in Iran, it unveils how HR NGOs try to access MEPs. This part of the research can support the quantitative part by detailed explanations of interviewees. Interviews confirm that expert information and outside tactics provide more access for HR NGOs regarding the human rights situations in Iran. Also, this part provides reasons for rejecting some hypotheses of the study. Interviewees admit that HR NGOs cooperation provides more access to MEPs.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion

General Findings and Contribution

Our knowledge of HR NGOs is still inadequate, although their role has grown in the policymaking process in the EP and international organisations. The thesis is intended to shed light on the study of HR NGOs access and interactions with MEPs. Depending on the information types and tactics that HR NGOs employ to send their information to MEPs, the access of HR NGOs can be varied. With theoretical mechanisms of informational determinants of access, we can understand the relationship of information types and informational tactics with the access of HR NGOs to MEPs regarding human rights issues. HR NGOs access MEPs directly and indirectly by functioning as information providers, agenda setters, and norm generators. HR NGOs are private sector organisations providing information, report, and humanitarian help to victims of human rights violence, and policymakers use the information they provide during the policymaking process.

On the other hand, according to existing studies, HR NGOs need to have their voices heard to advance their goals. Therefore, information that HR NGOs supply and their tactics might be closely related to their access to policymakers. The designed mixed methods analyses determine the causal relationship between the access of HR NGOs to MEPs on human rights issues based on informational determinants of access. Furthermore, the findings from empirical studies reveal that HR NGOs some hypotheses of this study are not supported, and some findings are different from the existing studies on the access of different interest groups to MEPs on business issues.

Analysis of statistical data shows that not all different information types and informational tactics positively and significantly affect the access of HR NGOs to MEPs regarding the human rights situation in Iran. The results show that the relationship

between political-based information and HR NGOs' access to MEPs is insignificant, indicating that research findings do not support the first research hypothesis. The hypothesis was that the more HR NGOs provided political-based MEPs on human rights issues, the more likely they would access MEPs. In contrast, the results show a significant relationship between expert information and the access of HR NGOs to the MEPs, based on which the second hypothesis of the research is supported.

Comparison of the findings of this study with other studies shows fundamental differences—for example, the findings of Pieter Bowen's research (Bouwen, 2002, 2004b). As noted in the Research Literature section, Pieter Bowen believes that the access of different interest groups to EU institutions depends on the functions of policymakers in these institutions. Therefore, due to the different nature of the EP from other institutions, this institution does not need much expert information. His logic is that most of the technical discussions on legislative issues have taken place in the related commissions of the EC. Also, another study based on the ability of different interest groups to supply different information types to policymakers shows that citizen groups are less likely to turn to expert information due to financial and human resource constraints that require expertise (Dür and Mateo, 2012). Instead, they move toward political-based information that he sees as of little importance to policymakers. Expert information requirements are defined by the demand for highly technical expertise, which is more likely implemented by different, highly functional and resourceful, interest groups (Flöthe, 2019). Existing literature indicated that while business groups and civil society groups present expert information to a comparable extent, smaller or understaffed groups are less likely to comply with the demands of policymakers on expert information (De Bruycker, 2016; Hanegraaff and De Bruycker, 2020).

Furthermore, another study on access to policymakers identifies other factors that drive NGOs to use politically based information to reach policymakers. These factors are the political venues and communication channels that citizen groups apply to access policymakers (Hanegraaff and De Bruycker, 2020). For example, irrespective of the

group type, supplying political-based information is more likely to occur when NGOs approach MEPs and rely on public lobbying channels. Finally, another researcher based on the political systems that policymakers come from points out that although expert information is a necessary commodity, political-based information is more critical to these policymakers. Hanegraaff and Brruycker (2020) call political-based information a "luxury good" for policymakers. As noted, the findings of this study on the access of HR NGOs to MEPs on human rights issues differ from those of other studies. However, most of the factors mentioned by other researchers regarding access to policymakers on different issues has not been confirmed in this study. The results show that although HR NGOs face more limitations than business interest groups, expert information has a significant relationship with their access to MEPs. However, the relationship between political-based information and the access of HR NGOs is insignificant.

The qualitative part of this study indicates findings that help the researcher support the quantitative part's findings. Some interviewees pointed out that the relationship between the organisation they work for and MEPs is not one-way. Based on the explanations of these interviewees, there are times that MEPs or other policymakers ask for expert information based on facts and figures to help them take the needed actions regarding that issue. On the other hand, working on human rights issues is not related to political issues. Therefore, HR NGOs try to supply technical and legal information to help victims of human rights violence. However, interviewees explained that they sometimes provide political-based information; they provide this type of information to help them to convince MEPs to receive expert information.

Analysis of statistical data shows that not all different informational tactics positively and significantly affect the access of HR NGOs to MEPs. The results show that the relationship between inside tactics and HR NGOs' access to MEPs is insignificant, indicating that research findings do not support the third research hypothesis. The hypothesis was that use of inside tactics increases the access of HR NGOs to MEPs on human rights issues. In contrast, the results show a significant relationship between

outside tactics and the access of HR NGOs to the MEPs. Regarding the finding of this analysis fourth hypothesis of the research is supported. Comparing the findings of this study on the access of HR NGOs to MEPs based on the tactics they employ to access them differ from the findings of other studies on other issues. Although the results of the quantitative part are slightly different from the results of previous research, the reasons presented by the interviewees are very different from the logic presented by previous researchers which show the same results.

Chalmers' research shows that both inside and outside tactics relate to greater access to the EU institutions. Based on his research findings, although the frequency of using inside tactics is more than outside tactics, different interest groups can use both tactics to increase their chance to access EU policymakers. Furthermore, by comparison with other studies in lobbying strategies, Chalmers believes that outside tactics are not less efficient than inside tactics (Chalmers, 2013). As mentioned in the previous chapter, the extent to which HR NGOs use different tactics does not show a significant difference. However, the relationship between inside tactics and the access of HR NGOs to MEPs is not significant.

Although Chalmers argues that both inside and outside tactics influence different interest groups' access to MEPs, researchers point to some factors that play a role in influencing these tactics. The existing literature on interest group lobbying tactics considers the role of groups' ability with material support. Some scholars regard outside tactics as a policy of the weak (Dellmuth and Tallberg, 2017). In this regard, then, Grant (1999) believes that access should be indeed related to the possession of material support. Nevertheless, some scholars pointed out that outside tactics are more costly than inside tactics (Kollman, 1998). Due to outside tactics costs, a group of researchers believe that the success of this tactic depends on many resources that many NGOs cannot afford. Some researchers also point out that many groups can use outside tactics due to the Internet (Binderkrantz, 2012).

However, Mahoney (2007) found a negative relationship between outside tactics and the success of interest groups to influence the policymaking process. Many have also argued that the effectiveness of lobbying tactics is contextually dependent. For example, scholars such as Kollman (1998) argue that access provided by outside tactics depends on determinants such as issue salience and the support different interest groups have among the public. Unlike Mahoney and Chalmers' research, the quantitative part shows that outside tactics provide more meaningful access to MEPs for NGOs.

The qualitative part of the research also points to the quantitative part that outside tactics provide more access to MEPs for HR NGOs. Different factors presented by the interviewees indicate that HR NGOs prefer to use outside tactics to gain access to MEPs. One of the factors is the widespread use of the Internet and, accordingly, the use of social media. As MEPs are not always available to HR NGOs, using outside tactics can significantly help them access MEPs. In addition to using social media to create a wave to highlight a human rights issue, the interviewees noted that they had established extensive contacts with media and journalists to help them make waves over the years. Although previous research has shown that outside tactics are costly, interviewees believed otherwise. They believe that the use of the Internet and social media, although it has specialised human resources, helps them reduce their costs, and on the other hand, through these activities, raise much money.

On the other hand, Interviewees referred to a difference of issues that indicated their lack of competition for inside tactics. One of the reasons was that these organisations did not have direct access to an MEP in most cases. They also pointed out that a meeting with an MEP requires coordination with that Member's office, which in some cases may take a month. However, in some cases, immediate action is needed to influence the issue of human rights. Therefore, HR NGOs prefer to choose other tactics of informing and influencing MEPs. Nevertheless, in general, although the results show the alignment of the results of this section with previous research on other topics, the reasons that lead to the preference of outside tactics over inside tactics are different from previous research.

One of the reasons is the ability of HR NGOs to mobilise the public, which has been achieved over time and has accelerated with the spread of the Internet and social media.

The results of the quantitative section show that the relationship between the cooperation of HR NGOs and their access to MEPs is significant. This finding confirms the fifth hypothesis of this research. Unfortunately, no research has been done on the role of organisations' cooperation and their access to policymakers so that no comparison can be made in this area. However, the reasons for the impact of this issue can be discussed based on the qualitative part. Interviewees cited different reasons for their cooperation. Nevertheless, two reasons can explain the impact of HR NGOs' cooperation with their access to MEPs more than any other. One of these reasons is the validity of the information provided in cooperation with other organisations. Since each organisation may specialise in a particular area of human rights issues, cooperation between organisations will lead to a higher quality of their information and, consequently, more credible information. On the other hand, according to the interviewees, when smaller organisations provide information, and this information is verified due to the cooperation of larger organisations, this information will have higher validity.

On the other hand, cooperation between organisations regarding access tactics is very effective. According to the interviewees, the more HR NGOs in the public mobilisation on a human rights issue, the more it will be reflected. On the other hand, regarding the interviewees, cooperation among HR NGOs has led to the division of the burden of these organisations so that they can use various tools to access the MEPs. Furthermore, cooperation between HR NGOs allows these organisations to use different tactics simultaneously in a human rights project and provide different information, which will have a more significant impact on members of the European Parliament.

Based on existing research, two modifiers were added to the theoretical model of this research to examine the moderating role of information type on tactics. First, existing research suggests that inside tactics are more effective in sending expert information. In contrast, existing studies suggest that the transmission of political-based information through outside tactics is more appropriate. Based on the existing studies, business interest groups and citizen groups vary in their determination of tactics because of the exchange of information they supply. Business interest groups tend to be well organised with expert information valuable for policymakers, making it more straightforward to access EU institutions (Bouwen 2004; Dür & Mateo 2012). Citizen groups, on the other hand, tend to be funded with resources that are relevant for outside tactics. These differences in the type of resources different interest groups possess to policymakers make outside tactics relatively cheaper for citizen groups. However, the results of the quantitative part show that the types of information have no significant effect on the choice of tactics.

The results of the qualitative part show interesting findings because all the interviewees mentioned that they use a set of tactics and do not try to choose tactics based on the type of information. Interviewees explained that HR NGOs' choose a combination of tactics to increase the salience of human rights issues. They also noted that there is no prioritisation of tactics based on information due to the importance of some human rights issues. They identified the factor of time as more important than the type of information used to select tactics.

Limitation of study

Even before the research began, it was on the researcher's mind that he might encounter some specific limitations in how the research was conducted and the data obtained. Based on the research design and its specific limitations in examining the research community, these limitations may affect the research results. Another limitation that occupied the researcher's mind during the research was the limitation on the effectiveness of the research. Even if a researcher has chosen a robust research design and statistical analysis,

he or she still has limitations such as attention to a particular community or specific groups. This issue raises the question of the generalizability of research results that data specific to a limited and specific community cannot be generalised to other communities. Another limitation associated with the researcher from the beginning was the data collection process and data analysing statistical methods. Sometimes, as a researcher, we will not be able to collect the amount of data we want, and there may be times when it is challenging for researchers to find relevant people for their research or different materials involved in the research. Limitations in statistical methods can also be the source of many limitations in the course of research and cause the researcher's interpretations of existing findings to be limited. Given the issues mentioned above and the Corona pandemic's limitations, as a researcher, the researcher cannot deny that this study has limitations in theory, research design, and empirical studies. More importantly, as a researcher who has been involved in this research for more than three years, the researcher can improve or expand this study by knowing the limitations. Given the mindset that existed before the study began and the circumstances that the researcher encountered during the research, the limitations of this research are as follows:

First, this study focuses only on the access of HRNGO to MEPs regarding the human rights situation in a particular country, Iran. Among the many countries where HR NGOs are working to improve the human rights situation, the researcher decides Iran as the main focus of the study. There are several reasons why the researcher chose Iran, and it is discussed in detail in the third chapter. By focusing on Iran, the researcher can conduct his research on time and with available resources. However, if this research could cover more countries, this research might support the researcher's theoretical understanding much more deeply. It may be a logical argument by some people that this analysis may only apply to Iran if they focus only on research design.

Second, this research could have included more HR NGOs. The researcher focused on organisations registered in the EU or having an office in Europe to manage their affairs. As a researcher, I can say that no one can examine all HR NGOs in one study, even in the

context of a particular subject and country. This is because, in principle, organisations based in the United States or Asia have virtually limited access to MEPs. The researcher focused only on offices in Europe, as he knew that these HR NGOs would have access to MEPs. However, the researcher may also consider other HR NGOs that have acted on a case-by-case basis in Iran.

Third, the researcher only pays attention to the access of HR NGOs to MEPs regarding the human rights situation in Iran in general. Since each HRNGO working in human rights may focus specifically on a specific topic, the researcher decided to examine the overall access of HR NGOs to MEPs. If each topic were to be considered separately, many categories would have to be created. These categories may change the course of the research in general. Also, many HR NGOs try to cover a variety of cases, and the number of organisations working specifically on one issue was much smaller than other organisations.

Finally, it is essential to consider the temporal aspect of the interaction between personal and structural dimensions. Admittedly, the findings presented in this study reflect data collected during the COVID-19 pandemic, which was a point that was not considered in the data analysis. However, the study conducted before the pandemic would most likely generate different outcomes with the same participants.

Future Expansion

This thesis with a converted theoretical framework might have some boundaries, as explained earlier. Nevertheless, at the same time, it has excellent potential for development. Therefore, with these shortcomings in mind, the researcher hopes to develop this study in the future. First, it is possible to divide different kinds of HR NGOs. Environmental and human rights NGOs that work on the issues related the religious and migration issues will be the first objectives. Based on the experience of collecting data regarding the activities of HR NGOs to access MEPs, the researcher can collect data on how environmental NGOs

and HR NGOs that work on specific issues access different policymakers. HR NGOs that works on issues related to women's rights can also be another exciting field of analysis. Given that the EU has been involved in various human rights issues in recent years, studying the access of different human rights organisations to policymakers at the EU level will help us better understand the determinants of access to information. Second, with similar explanations and theoretical arguments, this study can be applied to other countries. In recent years, EU institutions had different activities regarding the human rights situation in different countries. In particular, we can mention the human rights situation in Afghanistan, China and Syria. Third, the researcher is interested in examining access of HR NGOs to EU organisations regarding the human rights situation in China. Because of China's financial support to some HR NGOs, it is possible to examine how HR NGOs activities are affected by this country. In addition, China has extensive economic ties with the EU that can influence policymakers' decisions, especially regarding human rights issues. If the researcher takes a qualitative study of China, he can examine the impact of Sino-EU trade relations on EU human rights decisions against China. Fourth, the researcher is interested in comparing the informational determinants of access to UN agencies and the EU. The same framework used in this thesis can be applied to examine the access of HR NGOs to UN-affiliated organisations. HR NGOs may not interact similarly with UN affiliates compared to EU organisations. The reason for this could be the structural differences between these organisations. Comparing informational determinants of access across different organisations can help researchers improve the theory of access. Fifth, the researcher hopes to study the relationship between the fund they receive from the EU and their tactics to access the EP. Using a similar structure, the researcher can analyse the impact of the EU's financial help to HR NGOs and the information types and tactics that HR NGOs employ to access MEPs or other EU policymakers.

Appendix 1

Interview Questions for the First Part of the Study

Introduction:

Thanks in advance for sharing your valuable time for this interview today, ____ (date) at (time). I will start the Skype call to you, and we will check our connection, and we will have some time to talk about other issues and get to know each other before the interview. Based on the agreement we had previously, your identity will remain confidential, and just the content of the interview will be discussed with my supervisor. A code that is only recognizable for me will be used for identification goals to prevent your identity information. My first goal is to listen to you and take notes while speaking. I will also use active listening pauses to provide you more time to develop your thoughts and points of view, so I do not interrupt you. To avoid any situation, you feel I am leading, I will talk more formally. Feel free to ask me for a break anytime you need that. If we lose our connection, I will try to call back as soon as possible through Skype. If, in any case, I was not successful in calling you back, I will inform you by email, and we will try to manage a time for the interview. So, I think in this way we can manage our time. Then, if you are ready, we can start the interview.

Interview Questions:

1. Thanks in advance for your participation in this interview. Can you tell me please about the Skype transmission? Is everything clear?
2. Do you know that we are doing an interview regarding a PhD and that you are being recorded?
3. First, please briefly introduce yourself and tell me how many years you are working in this organisation?
4. The next set of questions address the access of HR NGOs to MEPs: Do you access MEPs on human rights issues?
Do you have a regular meeting?

How about urgent issues?

Do MEPs ask you for a meeting?

6. What types of information do you mainly supply regarding human rights issues?

Is the information you provide for MEPs different from the information you provide for the public?

Is there any special division based on the information you provide?

What is the primary concern when you supply information?

What do you think about the following question?

The need for certain types of information for MEPs?

7. How do you send your information to MEPs?

Is there any particular way?

How much do you spend on the strategies to send information to MEPs?

8. Does your organisation try to put some pressure on these organisations? If so, how?

Does your organisation try to influence these institutions' decisions about the human rights situation in Iran?

9. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding this interview?

Appendix 2

Interview Questionnaire for Qualitative Part

Introduction:

First of all, I want to thank you for your participation in this interview. As I explained before, your answers from this interview will greatly help me to provide information regarding the activities of HR NGOs regarding their access to MEPs. Based on our agreement, all questions are voluntarily, confidential, and you can withdraw from the interviewee whenever you want during the interview. When you are ready, we can start the interview.

Interview Questions

- 1- Please briefly introduce yourself and your profession in the organisation you work for. How long have you worked? Job Title?
- 2- Can you describe your organisation's activities regarding access MEPs on the human rights situation in Iran? (Does your organisation have any interaction with the MEPs? Regular annual, monthly, or weekly meetings? Any reports?)
- 3- Do you contact other NGOs to cooperate regarding the human rights situation in Iran? Do you share information about your activities?
- 4- What types of information do you mainly provide MEPs regarding the human rights situation in Iran? Lega? Technical, political? (explain more about types of information if needed)
- 5- Do MEPs ask you for information? What types of information?
- 6- Do you think the tactics you use to send your information to MEPs impact your access to MEPs? If yes, how? Which tactics is your priority?
- 7- Does your organisation try to put pressure on MEPs? If so, how?
- 8- Does your organisation use the media to publicise your organisations' human rights activities in Iran? Try to mobilise the public? Media as a suitable method?
- 9- Is there any relationship between the information you provide and strategies you use to send information to MEPs?
- 10- Do you anything to add?

Appendix 3

Participant information sheet

Università degli Studi di Padova Human Rights Centre “ Antonio Papisca”

Researcher: Abdollah Baei Lashaki

Phone number: 00393274728660

Email Address: Abdollah.baeilashaki@studenti.unipd.it

Funding source: University of Padova

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. However, before you decide whether you would like to take part, it is essential that you understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you.

Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything unclear or if you would like more information.

Title of the study: *Informational Determinants of Access to MEPs for HR NGOs: A Case Study of HR NGOs Covering Human Rights Situation in Iran*

What is the purpose of the study?

The main goal of this research is to provide a comprehensive analysis of informational determinants of access to the members of the European Parliament.

Why have I been invited?

You have been invited to participate because either, your knowledge of NGOs activities, your direct experience in lobbying, are deemed very useful to achieve the purpose of this study.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in the project is voluntary, and you can choose not to participate in part or all of the project. You can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalized or disadvantaged in any way. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide

to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What will happen if I take part?

You will be interviewed once by the researcher only. The interview is structured; a limited number of questions will guide the conversation. In total, the interview process will take about 45+ minutes. If you are pressed for time, I can send questions in a Word file, and you can answer them. It is up to you to choose the method for the research.

When possible, the interview will be performed in person, either through telephone or through a VOIP system, such as Skype.

The interview will deal with your understanding of the lobbying process and your experience with the NGO you work for (or have worked for).

What do I have to do?

If you accept to participate, you are asked to inform the researcher about your availability to be interviewed, answer the questions openly, and agree with him on a date and place (or if the interview is not done in person, a means) to realize the interview.

What are the possible risks or benefits of taking part?

There are no reasonably foreseeable risks or harm to your participation in this research. However, you will contribute to a better, more comprehensive and more consistent knowledge and understanding of the determinate of access to the decision-making process on human rights issues on three international institutions.

What will happen when the research study stops?

The data collected will be stored in the researcher's computer and protected through a password. No one except the researcher will use data and finally erase it.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

As a default option, you are asked to provide your name and the role covered in the specific NGO you are working for. However, if you require it, your contribution can be anonymous and quoted only with a general reference to your programmer role.

Whatever be your decision, only the researcher will have access to your personal information. Data will be collected and stored in the researcher's personal computer and storage drive only and protected with a password.

As mentioned, the interviews will not ask about practical information; however, you can decide to remain anonymous and be referred to with your role only at any time of the research.

What will happen as a result of the research study?

The research study results will be presented and discussed in the researcher's PhD dissertation. The dissertation, or parts of it, maybe eventually published. You will be provided with a copy of the dissertation and informed via email about any publication where parts of your interview may be included.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

You are free to withdraw from the study without an explanation or penalty at any time. In that case, your data will be erased.

What if there is a problem?

If you would like to complain about any aspect of the study, you can call the Human Rights Center of the University of Padova.

You could call or write to the Secretary at:

Tel 049 827 1813 / 1817

Fax 049 827 1816

centro.dirittiumani@unipd.it

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Informed consent form

Title of Study: *“Informational Determinants of Access to MEPs for HR NGOs: A Case Study of HR NGOs Covering Human Rights Situation in Iran ”*

1 .	I agree to take part in the above project. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the participant information sheet, which I may keep for my records.	
2 .	<p>This information will be held and processed for the following purpose: write and discuss a Ph.D. Dissertation as well as in the prospective publication of the dissertation or of part of it.</p> <p>I understand that I will be given a transcript of data concerning me for my approval before it is included in the write-up of the research.</p> <p>I understand that I have given approval for my name and for the name of my workplace and for the role I play in it to be used in the final report of the project, and future publications.</p> <p>I understand that if I request it, my contribution will be anonymous and referred to only with the name of the workplace and with the role I play (or I have played) in it.</p>	
3 .	I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalized or disadvantaged in any way.	
4 .	<p>I agree to the University of Padova recording and processing this information about me.</p> <p>I understand that this information will be used only for the purpose(s) set out in this statement.</p>	
5 .	I agree to take part in the above study.	

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

When completed, 1 copy for participant: 1 copy for researcher file.

Appendix 4

TABLE 23- LINE BY LINE ANALYSIS FOR THE FIRST PART OF THE QUALITATIVE STUDY

Line by line analysis	Open Codes
<p>1- We remind politicians of the political and social consequences of their silence on human rights issues.</p> <p>2- They should know that their silence or actions have political and social impacts in different societies.</p> <p>3- We do not spend much time providing the political impact of an issue, but sometimes we remind them there are some social impacts if they remain silent.</p>	<p>Political and social impact</p>
<p>4- We verbally inform them of the public opinion about an issue facing human rights abuses in the country.</p> <p>5-I mean formally no, but in our meeting, we discuss what the public in particular countries expect from them.</p>	<p>Public opinion on the country the issue has happened</p>
<p>6- ... we conduct surveys about some human rights issues, and the result will be sent to policymakers.</p>	<p>Public opinion in the EU</p>

<p>7- ...so, I don't know if they want it or not, but we sometimes provide information regarding public backing about a human rights issue.</p>	
<p>8- We provide expert analysis of the reasons for the human rights crisis in certain countries to MEPs.</p> <p>9-, also we present to the MEPs our expert analysis on certain issues in some countries.</p> <p>10- Even if we sometimes need to inform MEPs for urgent action in special cases, we try to present our information based on facts and short analyses.</p>	<p>Information About special cases</p>
<p>11- If you check our website you can access all yearly reports based on facts and figures.</p> <p>12- It's really hard to supply monthly or quarterly information regarding human rights issues, but during our mission we did it every year...</p> <p>13- At the end of every year, we publish a yearly book regarding our activities and the human rights situation in different parts of the world</p>	<p>Information in the form of yearly, quarterly or monthly reports</p>
<p>14- Our goal is not to send raw information to MEPs. Instead, we prepare information with analysis and accepted documents.</p>	<p>Analysis and research report</p>

<p>15- Information that we send to decision-makers is data-oriented and with detailed expertise on the issues.</p> <p>16- We provide expert information to decision-makers.</p> <p>17- We never send raw information to MEPs; rather, we send it to MEPs based on expert work, and much time has been spent on it.</p> <p>18- Based on our experience, raw information does not help MEPs or us, so we try to provide expert information.</p>	
<p>19- Since human rights are considered the cornerstone of the EU, in almost all our reports to MEPs, we emphasize the relationship between EU laws and the issues that are our concern.</p> <p>20- Well, they are members of the European Parliament, then we provide them information regarding the EU law.</p> <p>21- In our meetings with MEPs or their consultants, our priority is working on the legal issues related to EU law regarding human rights violence.</p> <p>22- During our meeting with MEPs, legal issues regarding human rights take most of our time, either regarding EU laws, or....</p> <p>23- In our letters to MEPs, part of the issue is related to legal issues and their relationship with the violations of EU human rights priorities.</p>	<p>The violation of the EU law</p>
<p>24- or international law.</p>	<p>The violation of the international law</p>

<p>25-and our information is supported by international law.</p> <p>26- Well, we don't consider that EU and international law are different</p>	
<p>27- In our analysis, we refer to some countries' violations of international treaties.</p> <p>28- If a country is a party to a treaty and violates its agreements, it will be reported in detail.</p> <p>29- Actually, our information covers the violations of, and treaties.</p>	<p>The violation of treaty that country is member of</p>
<p>30- For us its easier to meet them in their local offices.</p> <p>31- It barely happened, but sometimes we met them in their local office.</p> <p>32- Honestly, its our only chance to meet them in their local offices.</p>	<p>Face to face meeting in the local office</p>
<p>33- Most of our meetings are in Brussels.</p> <p>34- I meet them mostly in their official office in Brussels</p> <p>35- They prefer to meet them in their official office in Brussels.</p>	<p>Face to face meeting in the official offices</p>
<p>36- Some of our face to face meeting take places in seminars or other places.</p> <p>37- I met them also in conferences and....</p> <p>38- It takes a few moments, but we can manage another meeting during our face to face meeting in other places.....</p>	<p>Face to face meeting in other places</p>

<p>39- To send our information, we manage everything via phone call to MEPs offices.</p> <p>40- For making an appointment with MEPs to talk about an issue, we call the official office.</p> <p>41- To have a formal meeting on a human rights issue, we call MEP's office in Brussels.</p> <p>42- However, the amount of information we can provide via phone call is limited, and sometimes we call the official office of MEPs to share our information.</p> <p>43- To send our information, we manage everything via phone call to MEPs offices</p>	<p>Phone call to the official office</p>
<p>44- We have MEPs' advisors' number and.....</p> <p>45- Why don't call their advisors when we have this chance?</p> <p>46- We are in contact via phone call with MEPs' assistance to share our information</p>	<p>Phone call to advisors or assistances</p>
<p>47- Direct phone call to MEPs? It depends on our relationship with MEPs.</p> <p>48- We have numbers of some of MEPs, but its our last choice.</p>	<p>Direct phone call to MEPs</p>
<p>49- We try to send a copy of our report to MEPs to the official email address of MEPs.</p>	<p>To the official email</p>

<p>50- Our first choice is to be in contact with MEPs with their official emails.</p> <p>51- It is better to send our information first to MEPs official email address.</p> <p>52- We send our information, report via MEPs official email.</p> <p>53- When our organisation wants to meet an MEP, we manage it via MEP's official email.</p>	
<p>54- To the Based on our relationships with some MEPs, we sometimes manage our meetings with his or her personal email.</p> <p>55- It barely happens, but we are also in contact with MEPs via their personal email.</p> <p>56- We sometimes are in contact with MEPs, not just with their official email but others.</p>	<p>To the personal email</p>
<p>57- Sending an email to the assistance or the consultant of MEPs is another option.</p> <p>58- Personally, I believe sending emails to assistance or consultants works more.</p> <p>59- We send emails to assistance of MEPs in order to share or information with them.</p>	<p>To the assistance or the staff of the MEPs</p>

<p>60- Since there is a possibility that someone else is in charge of checking MEPs' email, then we also send emails to consultants of MEPs.</p>	
<p>61- We share information regarding human rights issues via Facebook.</p> <p>62- We send information to MEPs via Facebook.</p> <p>63- Facebook helps us to share our information with MEPs.</p> <p>64- Some MEPs are active on Facebook, then sharing information via Facebook would help us to access MEPs.</p>	<p>Using Facebook</p>
<p>65- Twitter is another platform we can share our concerns with MEPs.</p> <p>66- By following MEP's Twitter account, we can be in contact with MEPs.</p> <p>67- We do not miss our chance to share information with MEPs via Twitter.</p>	<p>Using Twitter</p>
<p>68- Instagram also is used to share some of our information with MEPs.</p> <p>69- We use Instagram to remind MEPs regarding a human rights issue.</p>	<p>Using Instagram</p>
<p>70- We are publishing our analysis.</p> <p>71- Our research will be published on our websites, and other websites also share our research findings.</p>	<p>Publishing analysis and research</p>

<p>72- We publish the results in different places for our research findings to be read by the people and the authorities.</p> <p>73- People can have access to our reports on our websites and our pages on social media.</p> <p>74- How we expect can share our findings without publishing our findings and reports on well-known websites and journals?</p>	
<p>75- We work with media outlets to hold press conferences to keep the world informed of human rights developments.</p> <p>76- Collaborating with the media for press conferences is a great help in releasing our information.</p>	<p>Issuing press releases and holding press conferences</p>
<p>77- We cooperate with reports in many cases.</p> <p>78- Contacts with reporters is an absolute choice in some circumstances.</p> <p>79- Our relationship with reporters is not one way.</p>	<p>Contacting reporters</p>
<p>80- I am not sure of the effectiveness of petitions, but we conduct petitions to have more support.</p> <p>81- When we meet consultants of MEPs, we show them the petition signed by many people.</p> <p>82- By conducting a petition, at least we can find out how much support we receive.</p> <p>83- Conducting a petition is also an option.</p>	<p>Conducting petition</p>

<p>84- There are many problems with holding legal demonstrations, but sometimes we tried to attract the attention of politicians by holding demonstrations.</p> <p>85- We have held demonstrations, although not very large, with the cooperation of some other organisations.</p> <p>86- We have held several legal protests across the EU.</p> <p>87- We held protest rallies during the presence of Iranian politicians in European countries.</p>	<p>Legal public demonstration</p>
<p>88- In discussion sessions or seminars, we come up with good strategies for raising awareness.</p> <p>89- In the conferences we hold, we seek to provide information and influence the audience to put pressure on politicians.</p> <p>90- We have also held conferences in cooperation with other organisations.</p>	<p>Holding discussions and conferences</p>
<p>91- It is hard to meet them in the EP, and then we meet them in other places.</p> <p>92- ... so, meeting them in seminars is an option.</p> <p>93- never miss the chance to meet them in other places.</p> <p>94-and they know that in any public events we are there to meet them.</p>	<p>Direct access to MEPs in seminars or outside the office</p>

<p>95- We meet MEPs assistance or consultants to inform them what is going on in Iran.</p> <p>96- Having direct access to MEPs is impossible in some circumstances; consequently, we consider meeting their assistance.</p> <p>97- Access to the assistance of MEPs will lead us to access MEPs. We meet MEPs assistance or consultants to inform them what is going on in Iran.</p> <p>98- Having direct access to MEPs is impossible in some circumstances; consequently, we consider meeting their assistance.</p> <p>99- Access to the assistance of MEPs will lead us to access MEPs</p>	<p>Access to Assistance or advisors</p>
<p>100- We have direct access to MEPs.</p> <p>101- The door of some MEPs is always open for us in the EP.</p> <p>102- We have this chance to meet a MEP sometimes since his priority is human rights issues.</p>	<p>Regular direct access to MEPs</p>

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