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FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO DEMOCRATIC CULTURE ALERTNESS: A CASE STUDY OF SUAN SUNANDHA RAJABHAT UNIVERSITY (BACHELOR DEGREE STUDENTS)

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Abstract

The objectives of the research are: 1) to study the level of attentiveness in democratic culture; 2) to compare the level of attentiveness in democratic culture based upon personal factors and political socialization; and 3) to study factors contributing to the attentiveness in democratic culture. The samples are 181 bachelor students studying Political Science at the College of Innovation and Management.

The research used surveys for data collection. Statistical analysis was done using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, t-test, One-way ANOVA and Multiple Regression Analysis.

The research found; 1) the students' level of attentiveness to democratic culture is at the highest ($\bar{x} = 4.27, S.D = .427$); 2) hypothesis testing found student's major is a factor contributed to difference in democratic culture attentiveness while gender, age, religion and college year do not

contributed to difference in democratic culture attentiveness; and 3) Multiple Regression Analysis shown political socialization, family institution, educational institution, and peer factors have effect on employee engagement at 35.3 percent.

Keywords

Attentiveness, Culture, Democracy, Political Science, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University

1. Introduction

The late Kingdom of Siam had undergone a democratic revolution on June 24th, 1932. From being governed under absolute monarchy, Thai people have since obtained the country's highest authority. The people possess equal rights and freedom. They live under the majority rule and are governed by the same law (Thanaporn Ngowcharoen, 2017). The transformation provides major contradiction to what was deeply rooted in the Thai community. In order for it to be successful, democratic culture, through political socialization process, must thoroughly be embedded in citizen's subconsciousness. In the other words, it must generate vigilance and attentiveness which can subsequently build active participation in the society. (Samuel Huntington)

Democratic alertness had always been observable throughout the Thai's history, and the university students' heroic political demonstrations were among a few circumstances which the new generation remember them by. Some university students are taught to have certain views and beliefs towards democratic culture, therefore those who felt strongly often had the urge to pursue what was right for the society and the country.

Nowadays, members of the society became more vigilance towards democratic culture. For instance, they preserve the basic rights and took part in electoral voting both at local and national level. They have a tendency to express their opinions in the public sphere regardless of their viewpoints. There are many social and environmental factors contributing to the alterations of such perceptions. Political socialisation is formed by the society in which an individual resides in. Today, 'society' not only extended to a physical place but also space and time provided by online platform. Amongst the most basic institutions, 'family institution' is the first institution which shapes a person's habits, beliefs and ideas. The family institution is comprised of individual members like a father, a mother, or relatives in general.

The knowledge and perceptions are often passed down from these family members to the next generation, and once young children are ready for school, 'educational institution' teaches them other perspectives that are important to the society. It is inarguable that a person with higher education often has higher attentiveness towards certain matters. Friends that belong to the same crowd also have a tendency to develop similar viewpoints. Moreover, 'media and communication

institution' is one of the most crucial factors in today's society which has an ability to shape and reshape public's opinions and attentiveness towards political matter. (Almond and Verbra : Sompong Raksatham, 2009) Media today manifest a power to manipulate the crowd in whichever way they want. It is a double-edged sword which can stipulate either positive or undesirable standpoint.

The College of Innovation and Management of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University offers many well-known courses, one of which is Political Science. The students from this major are selected because of their apparent interest in political science. The College also shows strong interest in the subject of democracy as the course syllabus concentrates on topics such as political socialization and democracy. With this reason, one is keen to find out which factors contribute to an awareness and attentiveness in democratic culture in those students.

2. Research Objectives

1. To study the level of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University students' attentiveness in democratic culture.
2. To compare the level of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University students' attentiveness in democratic culture based upon personal factors and political socialization.
3. To study factors contributing to the Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University students' attentiveness in democratic culture.

3. Research Framework

The framework is stipulated from literature review of many documents and theories on the study of democratic alertness and political alertness as well as democratic culture.

Data analysis is conducted after data collection is performed and inspected for final compilation. Statistical analysis was executed as follow; personal factors analysis used descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and t-test to compare the level of democratic culture alertness as per gender, age, religion, university year, and major.

Then, political socialization factors were analysed using mean and standard deviation, subsequently, Multiple Regression technique is used for finding the relationship between these multiple variables.

4. Methodology

The research defines ‘democratic alertness’ or ‘attentiveness to democratic culture’ as the people’s faith in democracy, faith in human’s honour and equality, and to be abided by the rules of democracy. Moreover, the definition includes citizens partaking in political activities and raising rational criticisms on political events. The people who believes in the power of democracy feels strongly against despotism, totalitarianism, or other forms of dictatorship.

Population sample of the research are 181 bachelor degree students of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. They are Political Science students are from the College of Innovation and Management. Out of the total 974 students, such participant number of population is determined using Krejcie and Morgan’s theory.

This research studies factors contributing to the democratic culture alertness of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University’s bachelor degree students. The research involves documentation study of relevant research, in particularly ones on factors contributing to democratic alertness. The research adopted Prittisan Chumpon’s theory on political socialization. According to the author, political socialization is stipulated by the influence of 5 institutions naming; family institution, education institution, peer institution, media institution and political institution. Additionally, the research uses Thinphan Nakata’s theory on democratic culture alertness in which the author believes factors contributing to such vigilance include; faith in democracy, adherence to democracy, rules abided, political participation, citizen’s duty, optimism, creative and rational criticisms, and opposition against political dictatorship.

In terms of variables, independent variables are gender, age, religion, university year and degree major. And democratic culture alertness factors are;

- 1) Family institution
- 2) Peer institution
- 3) Educational institution
- 4) Media institution
- 5) Political institution

On the other hand, the dependent variables are

- 1) Faith towards democracy
- 2) Faith in human’s dignity
- 3) Adherence to democratic rules
- 4) political participation
- 5) conscience to faithful citizenship
- 6) optimism

- 7) creative and rational criticism
- 8) disapproval of political dictatorship

The scope of study is in the area of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. The study took place from August to September.

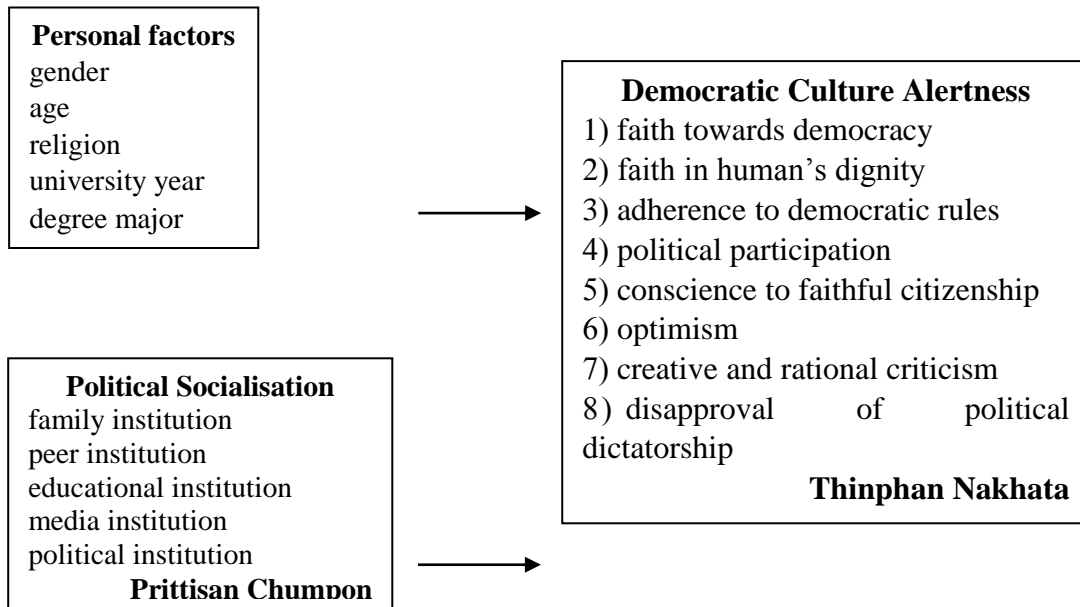


Figure 1: Thinking Framework

5. Research Findings

1. From this research, Factors Contributing to Democratic Culture Alertness: a Case Study of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University's Bachelor Degree Students, the result found democratic culture alertness is at the highest level ($\bar{x} = 4.27, S.D = .427$). When considered individually by aspect, 'conscience to faithful citizenship' and 'faith in human's dignity' have higher means in comparison to the other aspects ($\bar{x} = 4.48, S.D = .533$), follow by 'adherence to democratic rules' ($\bar{x} = 4.47, S.D = .611$), and 'disapproval of political dictatorship' ($\bar{x} = 3.94, S.D = .738$) consecutively. The results are shown on Table 1 as follow;

Table 1: Democratic Culture Alertness

Democratic Culture Alertness	Level Comment			
	\bar{x}	S.D.	Meaning	Level
faith towards democracy	4.36	.673	Highest	3
faith in human's dignity	4.18	.677	High	6
adherence to democratic rules	4.47	.611	Highest	2
political participation	4.34	.578	Highest	4
conscience to faithful citizenship	4.48	.533	Highest	1
optimism	4.10	.601	High	7

creative and rational criticism	4.27	.568	Highest	5
disapproval of political dictatorship	3.94	.738	High	8
Total	4.27	.427	Highest	

2. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1: different personal factors comprising of gender, age, religion, university year, and degree major results in different democratic culture alertness.

Hypothesis 1.1: bachelor degree students of different gender has different democratic culture alertness; hypothesis testing found different gender does not result in different democratic culture alertness at statistical difference of 0.05 (P=.531). Therefore, it rejects the hypothesis and can be explained as follow; as shown on table 2

Table 2: Provides a Comparison of Levels of Democratic Culture Alertness in Bachelor Degree Students of Suan Sunundha Rajabhat University by Gender

(n=181)

Gender	Amount(person)	\bar{x}	S.D.	T	P. Value
Man	59	4.30	.397	.628	.531
Woman	122	4.25	.442		

*Statistical Significance at .05

Hypothesis 1.2: bachelor degree students with different age have different democratic culture alertness. The result shown difference in age does not result in different level of democratic culture alertness at statistical significance of 0.05 (P=.055), therefore it also rejects the hypothesis as shown on Table 3.

Table 3: Provides a Comparison of Democratic Culture Alertness in Bachelor Degree Students of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University based on Different Age Group

(n=181)

Source of variance	SS	DF	MS	F	P. Value
Between-Group Variance	1.380	3	.460	2.579	.055
Within-Group Variance	31.559	177	.178		
Total	32.938	180			

* Statistical Significance at .05

Hypothesis 1.3: bachelor degree students of different religions have different level of democratic culture alertness. Relatively, the result found students with different religions do not have different level of democratic culture alertness at significance level of 0.05 (P=.528) and therefore, rejects the hypothesis. It can be illustrated on Table 4 as follow;

Table 4: Provides a Comparison between Democratic Culture Alertness in Different Bachelor Degree Students identified by Religion

(n=181)

Source of variance	SS	DF	MS	F	P. Value
Between-Group Variance	.235	2	.118	.640	.528

Within-Group Variance	32.703	178	.184		
Total	32.938	180			

* Statistical Significance at .05

Hypothesis 1.4: bachelor degree students studying in a different university year have different level of democratic culture alertness. The result found, at statistical significance level of 0.05, students studying in a different university year do not have different level of democratic culture alertness (P=.068), therefore, it rejects the hypothesis as displayed on Table 5 as follow;

Table 5: Provides a Comparison of Democratic Culture Alertness in Different University Year (n=181)

Source of variance	SS	DF	MS	F	P. Value
Between-Group Variance	1.736	2	.868	2.734	.068
Within-Group Variance	56.525	178	.318		
Total	58.262	180			

* Statistical Significance at .05

Hypothesis 1.5: students with different majors have different level of democratic culture alertness. The result confirms the hypothesis and shown students with different major have different level of democratic culture alertness at significance level of .05 (P=.018).

Table 6: Shows a Comparison between Democratic Culture Alertness in Suan Suanandha Rajabhat University's Bachelor Degree Students of Different Major (n=181)

Degree major	Amount(person)	\bar{x}	S.D.	T	P. Value
political science	119	4.32	.419	.2379	.018
Politics and government	62	4.17	.428		

* Statistical Significance at .05

Hypothesis 2: political socialisation factor results in different democratic culture alertness. There is association between the independent and dependent variables. From the analysis, the result shown the factor has effect on different levels of democratic culture alertness at statistical significance level 0.05 and can be illustrated on Table 7 as follow;

Table 7: Displays Multiple Regression Analysis of Factors Contributing to Democratic Culture Alertness

Political Socialization	B	t	P. Value
family institution	.265	3.775	.000
peer institution	.170	2.655	.009
educational institution	.232	2.942	.004
media institution	.143	1.768	.079
political institution	.021	.332	.741
Constant	2.058	9.075	.000
R = .609^a, R² = .371, R²_{Adjusted} = .353 Sig = .344			

* Statistical Significance at .05

From the table, the model predicts democratic culture alertness at 35.3 percent. Factors associated to democratic culture alertness, at statistical significance level of 0.05, the most is family institution follow by educational and peer institution. On the other hand, media institution and political institution have no association with the dependent variable at statistical significance level of 0.05.

The correlation coefficient value is used for the calculation of variables prediction and the equation is as follow:

$$y = 2.058. + (0.265x_1) + (0.170x_2) + (0.232x_3) + (0.143x_4) + (0.021x_5) \quad (1)$$

Relatively, positive correlations between the two set of variables, (x)'s association that are found on (y) or the democratic culture alertness are discovered from 'family institution'(x₁) 'educational institution'(x₃) and 'peer institution'(x₂) with coefficient value of .265, .232 and .170 consecutively. This means family institution(x₁), educational institution(x₃) and peer institution(x₂) are factors contributing to democratic culture alertness.

6. Result Conclusion

1. The level of democratic culture alertness of bachelor students on the overall in at the highest level. When considered by aspect, the highest to lowest are conscience to faithful citizenship, adherence to democratic rule and disapproval of political dictatorship.

2. Hypothesis testing found gender, age, religion, and university year do not induce differences in culture alertness while degree majors induce differences towards democratic culture alertness.

3. Multiple regression analysis found political socialization factors can predict democratic culture alertness of bachelor degree students of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. The factor which has the most effect, in consecutive order, are family institution, educational institution, and peer institution.

7. Result and Discussion

From the result, Factors Contributing to Democratic Culture Alertness: a Case Study of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University's Bachelor Degree Students found;

7.1 The level of democratic culture alertness is at the highest level ($\bar{x} = 4.27, S. D = .427$). This revealed a growing interest in politics in bachelor students. Documentary research shown students valued political righteousness and are especially active in the time of change such as at the time of military coup, changes in government, political conflicts and government transparency. The

following incidents may have had effect on student's interest in politics and consequently produce higher participations, in which major factors contributed to the behavior are shaped by family institution, peer institution, and social as well as environmental factors. (Sompong Raksatham, 2009) Political socialization could occur directly and indirectly through knowledge, beliefs, values shaped by family institution which is the first institution that has influence on individual. Primarily, parents hold the utmost power in shaping and reshaping the child's beliefs and political attitudes since the early years, therefore, it is considered as the first factor which enables democratic culture alertness. Subsequently, educational institution also has a strong influence on developing one's democratic culture alertness. It is believed that the higher educated the person, the better perspectives they have of the world. The values could come from teacher's perceptions and institutions core values which place strong attentiveness in democracy. Furthermore, higher access to social media allows democratic culture alertness to take place at a higher intensity. The finding coincided with Nitithorn Klamkoom (2018)'s study on the Democratic Political Culture of Bachelor Students of Mahidol University (Salaya Campus) which found that the participants possess high political participation and high political culture.

7.2 The comparison of democratic culture alertness in students with different personal factors at the significance level 0.05 in terms of different gender, age, religion, university year, and degree major, the result discovered;

Gender: different genders do not result in different level of democratic culture alertness (significance level .05), therefore, it rejects the hypothesis. Whether the participant's gender is male or female, they are attentive to democratic culture. They also have freedom and expression in the political process such as in electoral voting or taking part in the local and national politics, as observable in Thailand's former female Prime Minister. Both genders portray interest in the country's politics which coincides with John Locke's theory describing rights in self-protection, rights in selecting their leader, rights in respecting others under the standard of moral and equality. Phra Maha Sunthorn Chaturaphitsupap (2012) Relatively, the study corresponds to Thanaporn Ngowcharoen (2017)'s study on Democratic Culture of Srimahapoe Students in Prajeenburi which found both genders are accustomed to democratic culture from various sources and most students partook in political participation by inviting family to the past electoral voting events.

Age: on this aspect, it was found students with different age do not portray different level of democratic culture alertness at a significance level .05, therefore it rejects the hypothesis. The participants' age groups of this study are between 19-23 years old in which the age range is quite narrow therefore possibly produces indifferent perspectives on certain aspects. Nowadays, it is much easier for one to engage in political culture due to the tremendous growth in mass media

access. Hence, students age 19 could have similar electronic access to those age 23. Chaiyakrit Rattanagorn (2015)'s work on Factors influencing Political Alertness of Students from Chonrasadorn Aumrung and Chonkunyanukoon Schools which stated that 'age' is not a barrier to opinion expression because everyone is entitled to such rights. Such research also found students of different ages do not have different level of democratic culture alertness. Relatively, the finding corresponds with political socialization theory written by Almond and Verba (1980) saying that political socialization is not limited to age but is alter by direct or indirect experiences, attitudes, values and beliefs.

Religion: on this aspect, it was found students of different religion do not have different level of democratic culture alertness at a significance level .05, therefore, it rejects the null hypothesis. Differences in religions is not a barrier to political alertness as all religions, whether it is Buddhism, Christian or Islam, rest upon the concept of righteousness and fairness. Thus, individual of different religions is entitled to have freedom of expression and political participation. Watcharapong Amnuayraksakun(2018)'s work on democratic political culture that its characteristics are comprised of self-respect and respect towards others; meaning there should be no class division, acceptance in the differences, behaviors, ideas, and religions. Respectively, Wattana Sengphairogh (2012)'s study on Political Alertness of Youths in Educational Institutions in Bangkok and the Development of Democracy during 2006-2011 found students of different religions do not portray different level of political culture development.

University Year: on this aspect, it was discovered that students in different university year do not have different level of democratic culture alertness at a significance level .05, hence, it also rejects the null hypothesis. This is because students in different year all have equal access to political information and is submitted to similar knowledge provided by their educational institution. The students are subjected to similar political stimulants which are progressively attention-grabbing than ever. Many educational institutions placed strong emphasis on citizen duty in democratic society as seen in various subjects provided by Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University or Political Science degree itself. Today, politics became everyone's duty. It is the job of every citizen, regardless of university year, to partake in political process and political culture. Huntington's work on political participation (Mayuree Thanomsuk: 2011) found the more educated the people, the better understanding they have about government's impact on individuals. They often pay more attention on government's news, talk about, or partake in political activities. The theory coincides with Wattana Sengphairogh (2012)'s study on Political Alertness of Youths in Educational Institutions in Bangkok and the Development of Democracy during 2006-2011 which found students university year do not portray different level of political culture development.

Student's Major: on this aspect, it was found students of different major have different level of democratic culture alertness at a significance level .05, therefore, it accepts the null hypothesis. Political Science students have higher democratic culture alertness than students in Politics and Government studies which are because the two disciplines place different emphasis on certain knowledge. Hence, student's majors in different disciplines are the main influence which creates differences in political values. Sometimes, even lecturer's perspective can be a key ingredient to different democratic culture alertness. The course content can be subjected to the newness of the discipline; Political Science discipline has been opened long before Politics and Government studies. In this light, Jirachoke Wirasai's (Mayuree Thanomsuk: 2011) work on *The Influence of Academic Content* found, students from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences have tendency to involve in political activities more than those studying in hands-on discipline. Similarly, Nitithorn Klamkum (2018)'s study on *Democratic Political Culture of Bachelor Students of Mahidol University (Salaya Campus)* found disciplines are major influence of democratic culture as they are subjected to knowledge provided by the institution.

7.3 Regression analysis found family institution has the most effect on political socialization and democratic culture alertness because family is the primary key to shaping and reshaping socialization process. For instance, if a family has tendency to pay particular interest in politics, the children would also pay interest in the topic. The assumption matches Almond and Verba's (Sompong Raksatham, 2009) concept stressing political socialisation occur directly and indirectly from information sharing in various institutions such as family institution and educational institution. Relatively, Prittisan Chumpon's study stated these institutions are political socialization factors in which family is the primary level institution. In the other words, children are subjected to learning from the day they were born in which anything that has been put in will affect their future. For instance, if they are taught to value electoral voting and political voicing, they are more likely to grow up believing in political participation.

Following family institution, educational institution has the second most effect on democratic culture alertness. This is because educational institution has the facility to provide knowledge, values, and beliefs through educational sessions shaped by course structure and content. Some classrooms may provide opportunities for students to exchange political opinions and became the first public sphere for them to develop opinion voicing confidence. Interestingly, work (Ruchirawat Lamtan : 2015.) on *Political Learning Process of Youths in Educational Institution* is primarily influenced by education institution as modern institutions tend to place significance interest in political process partly because 1. Course Content and Course Structure, 2. Class Activity, and 3. Teacher. These factors are the key to learning process.

Peer institution demonstrates significant impact on democratic culture alertness. Peers often belong to the same group and same age. They often have closely related bond and they are likely to behave and react similarly. In terms of political aspect, individuals who belong to a group that is not politically keen often attract similar kind of people and vice versa. This research found students who belong in the same groups have friends that pay particular interest in political system and they follow news as well as exchanging ideas on the topic. Similarly to (Ruchirawat Lamtan : 2015.) study which found peers have high influence on the group's interest, values, beliefs as well as political beliefs.

8. Academic Recommendation and Scope of Future Research

1. In the future, the researcher would like to develop qualitative study in combination to the quantitative one. Using in-depth interviews could help identify deeper participants' perspective towards democratic culture. Additionally, key informants can be extended to academicians, politician, political activists, and newer generations.
2. There should be further study on youth's political alertness in educational institutions in other area or regions in order to conduct comparative analysis between different sets of data.
3. The research should also focus on attitudes affecting the democratic culture alertness in order to stimulate stronger reaction in the future.

9. Research Limitations

This research uses only one sample group. Resulting in only one view of the research results, but in the future, the researcher will use this research In a comparative study with other samples to get modern research results.

10. Research Recommendation

Educational institution should incorporate democracy related content on a greater level. It should also develop and train institutional employees to have deeper and up to date understanding of the matter.

1. Friends and family should be able to have political participation and exchange opinions even with distinct viewpoints. They should participate in political public sphere to express their viewpoints which can be beneficial to many research developments.
2. Mass media institution should professionally introduce news that are not prejudiced or bias towards certain sides. They should inspect news origins and do not stimulate chaos in the society.

3. Political institution should have greater transparency allowing the people to examine their work and budgeting that came from citizen taxes. The government should provide the information through public relation activities that are easily accessible to all people such as through television channel reporting policy process and evaluation.

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