



The Social Factors Influencing Thai Students' Political Participation

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to test the explanatory and predictive power of certain social factors in relation to Thai students' political participation. Four forms of participation, namely tracking political information, conventional participation, political consumerism, and political demonstration, were treated as separate but related facets of participation. The data were collected from 13,950 students studying at 45 universities located in all regions of Thailand, including Bangkok. The analysis was performed by correlation coefficient and multiple regression. The findings show that the correlations among variables were positive and significant, and that social factors can significantly explain and predict political participation.

Keywords: *Political Participation, Students, Social Factors, Trust, Norms, Network.*

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ปัจจัยทางสังคมที่มีอิทธิพลต่อการมีส่วนร่วม ทางการเมืองของนักศึกษาไทย

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บทคัดย่อ

เป้าประสงค์ของงานวิจัยนี้ คือ การทดสอบอำนาจการอธิบายและทำนายของปัจจัยทางสังคมต่อการมีส่วนร่วมทางการเมืองของนักศึกษา การมีส่วนร่วมทางการเมืองที่ปรับเปลี่ยนประกอบด้วย การแสวงหาข้อมูลข่าวสารทางการเมือง การมีส่วนร่วมแบบดั้งเดิม การมีส่วนร่วมในฐานะผู้บริโภคทางการเมือง และการมีส่วนร่วมในการชุมนุมทางการเมือง การมีส่วนร่วมทั้งสี่รูปแบบนี้มีการวิเคราะห์แยกกันแต่มีความสัมพันธ์กัน ข้อมูลจำนวน 13,950 ตัวอย่างถูกรวบรวมจากนักศึกษาที่ศึกษาในมหาวิทยาลัยทุกภูมิภาครวมทั้งกรุงเทพมหานคร การวิเคราะห์ใช้สัมประสิทธิ์สหสัมพันธ์และการวิเคราะห์การถดถอยแบบพหุ ข้อค้นพบสำคัญคือ มีความสัมพันธ์เชิงบวกอย่างมีนัยสำคัญระหว่างปัจจัยทางสังคมและการมีส่วนร่วมทางการเมือง และปัจจัยทางสังคมสามารถอธิบายและทำนายการมีส่วนร่วมทางการเมืองอย่างมีนัยสำคัญเช่นเดียวกัน

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Introduction

Political participation is a concept that has been one of the most concepts in political science because political participation is at the heart of democracy. We cannot think of democracy without political participation because the essence of democratic values is the value of participation (Verba, Schozman, and Brady, 1995). In other words, those that are not involved in politics tend to have world views that are not consistent with democracy. Consequently, many scholars have tried to do research to find out the patterns and factors influencing political participation in order to deeply understand this phenomenon, including an explanation of the causal relationships and prediction of the phenomenon of political participation, more precisely. This will lead to a policy that promotes more effective participation.

There are two dominant approaches to political participation study. The first approach is a sociological one, which focuses on the structural variables of situation analysis factors determining political participation. These variables are the role of socio-economic status and social factors. The second approach is a psychological one, which focuses on the attitude of people or political participation, depending on the locus of control and political efficacy (Cohen, Vigoda, and Samorly, 2001). This research used the sociological approach, focusing on social factor variables to create a relationship model between social factors and political participation.

The target group of this research was university students. Thai students used to playing a crucial role in politics. They have generated enormous political changes in Thai society, particularly in October 1973. Although the political role of students in recent years may have decreased, the students' political participation is an issue of interest. The emergence of the Internet and modern media has led to a need to have more political participation because the students can use the new media as a channel to express their political thoughts and to create a variety of political activities. Moreover, the political situation in Thailand from 2006 to 2009 was an intense political conflict, which stimulated students to be more interested in politics.

The objective of this study was to test the explanatory and predictive power of social factors in relation to Thai students' political participation hoping that this would lead to knowledge expansion in the area of political participation.

Literature Review

Verba, Nie, and Kim (1971) defined that political participation as a way to communicate with the public through various activities about the interests, wishes and needs of the common citizens. The goal is to build influence on an election and the decision of the government. Verba et al. (1995: 9) then adjusted the meaning of political participation more precisely as “the activity that is intended to or has the consequence of affecting, either directly or indirectly, government action”.

The definition of political participation in this manner makes the various political activities integrated as part of political participation, including trying to persuade others how to vote, attending campaign rallies or political meetings, working for political parties or candidates, and protesting government policy and communicating political ideas. This definition of traditional political participation focuses on “political action” or “political behavior,” which aims to create an impact on the decision making regarding government policies and practices, including choosing the personnel to create and manage those policies.

In addition, the definition of political participation has been extended by political psychologists. The dimension of psychological involvement is added as another form of participation. Cohen et al. (2001) stated that political participation is the level at which citizens are interested in and aware of politics and public activities, as measured by knowledge and tracking political information or participation in political debate. Tracking political information has been defined by some scholars as an independent variable that is related to political participation; however, Cohen et al. (2001) consider this variable to a dependent one or a type of political participation. Cohen’s idea is interesting and should be taken into consideration because if we associate the concept of political participation with the concept of participation in the development or management of the environmentt, we can see that there are many scholars that place the perception of information as one dimension of participation, such as Arnstein (1969) and the United Nations Development Programme, UNDP) (1997).

It is asserted here that integration of traditional political participation and involvement of political psychology will broaden our understanding of political participation. As a result, the present author agrees with Cohen et al. (2001) in terms of integrating perceived political information as a dimension of political participation, and in this study political participation has been defined as the level of political interest and awareness of the citizens which is expressed by tracking political information, political activities or acts intended to make an impact and that have an influence on policy formulation and implementation, electing personnel to perform political duties, and removing personnel from political positions (Cohen et al., 2000).

Types of Political Participation

Scholars have classified political participation in several ways. Each academic uses different criteria to build his/her typology. Almond and Powell, Jr. (1966) categorized participation by using political convention as a criterion, which categorized political participation into two types: 1) participation in conventional forms, which include elections, discussion of politics, campaign activities related to elections, involvement in political and social groups, and personal contact with politicians; and 2) participation in unconventional forms such as petitioning the government, campaigning for recall, protests or demonstrations, confrontation with political contenders, civil disobedience, use of violence to destroy property and lives, and guerrilla warfare and revolution.

Later Milbrath (1971) identified a form of political participation using political activities and people roles in politics as the basis of classification. He has classified the form of participatory politics into 6 types: 1) voting, 2) party and campaign workers, 3) community activists such as organized groups to solve social problems, working with social groups, membership in public organizations; 4) contacting officials on matters related to the interests of the party itself; 5) protestors joining marches in the streets or causing riots to pressure the government to act or refrain from policy action and administration in all matters; and 6) communicators participating in gathering political information, engaging in political meetings, and providing information and knowledge about politics.

Milbrath's classification, however, was mixed between activities and roles as the basis of classification. Activities were employed to create the first and fourth types of political participation, whereas roles were used to build the second, third, fifth, and sixth, resulting in ambiguity and leading to confusion.

In addition to forms of political participation, Milbrath (1965) proposed the concept of "the hierarchy of political involvement," which shows the behavior of people that become involved in conventional politics. The political involvement of people in politics can be categorized into three levels. The beginning level is political activities, including voting, talking about political issues, convincing others to vote for a particular candidate, showing symbols of support, and contacting politicians or political leaders. The medium level consists of activities such as donations to political parties, joining meetings or political gatherings, participation in political campaigns, and being a member of a political party. The high level is events including fund raising activities, competition for candidacy, and political positions.

Milbrath's framework of a hierarchy of political involvement was made up of patterns from western society, where the political system is stable. In developing countries, however, the political system is unstable, which generates more confusing and complicated forms of political participation and does not comply with Milbrath's framework. In Thai society, for instance, some people are hired to be candidates without knowledge of politics. However, the concept of the hierarchy of involvement in politics has proposed an interesting way of participation. Cohen and colleagues (2001) applied the concepts of Milbrath (1971) and Verba (1995) in their study and identified political participation in terms of two forms: psychological involvement and active political participation. They defined psychological involvement as "one's level of personal involvement in social and political issues and knowledge of these issues, as distinguished from active change-oriented behavior aimed to influence political officials" and active political participation as "activities directly aimed at influencing political officials and political decision-making processes" (Cohen, Vigoda, and Samorly, 2001: 737-738).

In the late 20th century, there was a new phenomenon of political participation called political consumerism. Stolle and colleagues (2003) argued

that political consumerism has become a crucial part of the political repertoire of young and critical citizens. The activities of political consumerism are buying or boycotting products and services based on political or ethical values. When people involve in boycotting certain goods they use the market as an arena for politics and engage in political consumerism. It can be defined as a costomer's choice of services and products based on ethical and political thought (Stolle, Hooghe, and Micheletti, 2003: 2-3). Political consumers make their choices on the basis of attitudes and values associated with issues of justice, fairness, or non-economic issues (Stolle, Hooghe, and Micheletti, 2003). The phenomenon of political consumption in Thai society occurred in 2006 when people boycotted against nearly 100 companies and products seen to be linked to Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

From the concepts of political participation discussed above, it can be seen that political participation can be classified into four forms.

1. Viewing political news or psychological involvement. Citizens are interested in seeking information related to policy issues, political decision, and political events.
2. Participation in conventional politics. This form of participation includes voting, engaging in political speech, contacting national or local politicians, campaigning to support political parties or candidates, signing petitions for the enactment of a law, signing petitions for recall, writing articles or letters to support political ideas or policy, being a member or worker of a political party, and giving money to a party or candidate.
3. Participation in political consumerism. This form of participation consists of many activities: boycotting products or services on the basis of political or ethical reasons, engaging in cultural activities associated with politics, and campaigning through social media or the Internet.
4. Participation in demonstrations. This form of participation aims at building pressure in order to alter the decisions of the government. Peaceful or violent protests are an example of this form of political participation.

Social Factors and Political Participation

In searching for the social factors employed in this research, the concept of social capital was used as a guideline. Social capital consists of three components; namely, trust and the norms and networks that can improve the effectiveness of society by assisting coordinated action. Trust is comprised of moral resources whose supply increases through use and it becomes exhausted if not employed. Cooperation is “lubricated” by trust (Putnam, 1993: 169-172). The greater the level of trust that exists within a community, the greater is the likelihood of cooperation. Social trust can arise from two related sources, norms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement. Norms arise when an action has similar externalities for a set of others. Socialization and social sanction create and maintain norms. The norm of generalized reciprocity is a crucial component of social capital. Various social problems can be effectively resolved by using this norm (Putnam, 1993: 169-172).

Putnam (1993) pointed out that the social network has two forms, horizontal and vertical. Horizontal networks combine people of equal social status and power, whereas vertical networks conjoin nonequivalent individuals in an asymmetric relation of hierarchy and dependence (Putnam, 1993). Networks of civic participation such as the neighborhood associations, choral societies, cooperatives, sports clubs, mass-based parties, and unions, are important forms of social capital because they create horizontal interaction (Putnam, 1993). People living in a community with strong horizontal networks are able to coordinate for mutual benefit (Putnam, 1993: 173).

For the purpose of this study, the concept of social capital mentioned above can be constructed into three social variables: 1) trust in social and political institutions, 2) the norm of the democratic promotion of the university, and 3) social networks of students.

Trust in Social and Political Institutions

Trust in social and political institutions is a generalized belief in social and political institutions which results from a long term perception of people about the roles and practices of these institutions. They can then conclude that the social and

political institutions should be trusted or distrusted. People trusting in social and political institutions is critical to the strength of democracy (Misher and Rose, 1997: 418). Trust is important because it creates collective power, helping government to make decisions and obtain resources through peaceful measures. When trust is high, governments can create innovative policies and, if successful, support will increase (Gamson, 1968: 45-6). When trust is low, the government cannot govern effectively, trust is further undermined, and a vicious cycle is created (Muller and Jukam, 1977). Many researchers have found that there are correlations between the political trust in political institutions and the levels of political participation (Fennema and Tillie, 1999: 703).

The social and political institutions in this study are specified in the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand 2007, which contains four groups. The first one associated with the monarchy is the Privy Council. The second group concerns judicial power, including the Constitutional Court, the Court of Justice, Administrative Courts, and a prosecution organization. The third group is the executive and legislature, including the Council of Ministers, the Senate, the House of Representatives and a political party. The last group is made up of the independent organizations under the Constitution including, the Election Commission, the Ombudsman, the National Counter Corruption Commission, the State Audit Commission, the National Human Rights Commission, and the National Economic and Social Advisory Council.

From a theoretical perspective, trust in political institutions positively correlates with the levels of political participation. The stronger the trust in social and political institutions is, the more likely the citizens will participate in politics.

Norm of the Democratic Promotion of the University

Norms are the informal understanding that governs society's behavior. Norms can arise formally, where institutions explicitly outline and implement behavioral expectations. Social norms, however, tend to evolve informally, resulting from the reproduction of social practices in controlling behavior (Chong, 2000). They function as a form of socialization. The university is a major source of the political socialization of youth. It is also a source of knowledge and social

experience for students. If the university promotes democratic norms it will create rules and regulations to support students' social activities. If the students are in the atmosphere of a university that promotes democracy, they will learn about and understand the process of democracy and have positive attitudes toward democracy. As a result, political participation will increase.

There are many activities held by the university that promote democracy, such as discussing social and political problems, doing social work, encouraging students to organize a group or club or association, and teaching about democratic processes. If a university has a norm of promoting democracy, it will organize the activities mentioned above. In sum, the norm to promote democracy of the university is likely to be positively correlated with the political participation of students.

Social Networks of Students

Social networks of students mean that students join the groups or clubs of their university or engage in social groups as a member. Being a member of a group generates interaction and the exchange of ideas on social, political, and environmental issues. A social network serves as a virtual network in the flow of information (Teorell, 2006: 799). Students within the same social networks may perform social activities together or may participate in the same political activities. There are various clubs in the university; each has different goals and activities. Some focus on political activities and others may concentrate on music, sports, academics, and environment. These associations have a socialization function through which members learn civic skills and generalized democratic values and attitudes and they get recruited for political participative acts (Verba, Scholman, and Brady, 1995). In sum, the more the students engage in social networks, the more they participate in politics.

Research Methods

Questionnaires that measured forms of political participation and social factors were distributed to students of the social sciences, the natural sciences, and the humanities in forty-five universities in Thailand: Chulalongkorn University, Thammasat University, Mahidol University, Khonkaen University, Chiang Mai University, and Prince of Songkhla University, for example. The questionnaire contained 35

items of political participation and 35 items of social factors. Assistant researchers were sent to each university, distributing the questionnaires to students as planned and took them back when the respondents completed them. A total of 13,950 students completed the questionnaires. Pearson's r and multiple regression were employed to analyze the data. The respondents' average age was 20.37; 34.6% of the respondents were males and 65.4% were females.

Dependent Variables

Viewing political news is the level of personal involvement in seeking information related to social and political issues. The measure contained 6 items (examples: "Do you watch the political news on TV?," "Do you read newspapers which deal with political and social issues?").

Participation in conventional politics is the level of personal involvement in political activities such as voting, campaigning to support political parties or candidates, and signing petition on legal issues. The measure contained 14 items (examples: "Have you ever voted in elections for the parliament?," "Have you signed petition on legal issues?," "Have you participated in a political rally?").

Participation in political consumerism can be considered as the level of personal involvement in activities based on political and ethical ideologies, such as participating in social activities associated with politics. The measure contained 7 items (examples: "Have you bought products based on political or ethical reasons?," "Have you participated in campaign activities to boycott particular products based on political issues?").

Participation in demonstrations concerns the level of personal engagement in protests aimed at influencing political officials and the political decision-making processes. The measure contained 8 items (examples: "Have you participated in peaceful protest?," "Have you engaged in violent protests?," "Have you participated in a protest in which the demonstrators barricaded the road?").

Independent Variables

Trust in social and political institutions was considered to be the level of individual trust in social and political institutions provided in the Constitution of

the Kingdom of Thailand 2007. The measure contained 16 items (examples: “Do you trust the Privy Council?,” “Do you trust the Constitutional Court?,” “Do you trust the House of Representatives?,” “Do you trust political parties?”).

The norm of democratic promotion of the university was considered to be the level of the perception of students regarding university performance in relation to promotion of activities concerning political and social issues. The measure contained 10 items (examples: “Has the university organized seminars in social and political issues?,” “Has the university supported the students to do social work?,” “Has the university supported the students to organize groups or clubs to study social and political problems?”).

Social network is the extent to which the students engaged in the clubs or associations as a member. The measure contained 9 items (examples: “Are you a member of any political group in your university?,” “Are you a member of an environmental club?,” “How many friends do you have that can share their views on social and political issues?”).

Reliability

Cronbach's Alpha was used for testing the internal reliability of the questionnaires. The alpha of each variable was as follows: viewing political news was .6769; participation in conventional politics was .9070; participation in political consumerism was .8849; participation in demonstrations was .9536; trust in social and political institutions was .9471; norm of the democratic promotion of the university is .8894; and social networks of students was .6510.

Results

Correlations

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics, and intercorrelations among the research variables. The results show that all correlations among the variables were significant at $p < 0.01$, with the exception of the correlations between “trust in social and political institutions” and “participation in demonstration.” Trust in social and political institutions, however, was positively and significantly correlated with other

types of political participation; namely, viewing political news (.142), participation in conventional politics (.064), and participation in political consumerism (.025).

The results also show that the “norm of the democratic promotion of the university” was positively and significantly correlated with all forms of political participation, including viewing political news (.278), participation in conventional politics (.159), participation in political consumerism (.126), and participation in demonstration (.083). Similarly, “social network” was positively and significantly correlated with viewing political news (.238), participation in conventional politics (.251), participation in political consumerism (.239), and participation in demonstrations (.206).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations among Variables

	Means	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Trust in social and political institutions	17.61	8.21							
2. Norm of the democratic promotion of the university	8.72	2.34	.190						
3. Social network	2.73	1.95	.116	.211					
4. Viewing political news	4.44	1.57	.142	.278	.238				
5. Participation in conventional politics	5.25	4.09	.064	.159	.251	.252			
6. Participation in political consumerism	1.86	2.37	.025	.126	.239	.217	.862		
7. Participation in demonstrations	1.50	2.70	.001	.083	.206	.184	.805	.854	

** All correlations were significant at $p < 0.01$, with the exception of the correlations between “trust in social and political institutions” and “participation in demonstrations”.

Explanation and Prediction of Social Factors in Relation to Political Participation

Social Factors and Viewing Political News

Based on the coefficient of the multiple correlation coefficients ($R = 0.340$)

and the regression ($R^2 = 0.116$), 11.6% of the variance in “viewing political news” could be explained by social factors.

Based on the standardized multiple regression coefficient (β), the results showed that all variables were statistically significant predictors of “the viewing of political news.” Regarding the values of β , the “norm of democratic promotion of the university” was the most powerful predictor of viewing political news ($\beta = .231$) (Table 2).

Table 2: Coefficients of Social Factors and Viewing Political News

<i>Independent</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	β	<i>T</i>	Sig. <i>t</i>
Trust in social and political institutions	0.015	0.002	0.077	8.586	0.000
Norm of the democratic promotion of the university	0.154	0.006	0.231	25.317	0.000
Social network	0.142	0.007	0.173	19.172	0.000
Constant	2.462	0.057		43.019	0.000
R = 0.340, $R^2 = 0.116$, F = 499.789, Sig. F = 0.000					

Dependent variable: viewing political news

Social Factors and Participation in Conventional Politics

Based on the coefficient of the multiple correlation coefficients ($R = 0.270$) and the regression ($R^2 = 0.073$), 7.3% of the variance of “the participation in conventional politics” could be explained by social factors.

Based on the standardized multiple regression coefficient (β), two variables—the norm of democratic promotion of the university ($\beta = .117$) and the social network ($\beta = .215$) were statistically significant predictors of the participation in conventional politics (Table 3).

Table 3: Coefficients of Social Factors and Participation in Conventional Politics

<i>Independent</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	β	<i>t</i>	Sig. <i>t</i>
Trust in social and political institutions	0.009	0.002	0.018	1.944	0.052
Norm of the democratic promotion of the university	0.202	0.006	0.117	12.456	0.000
Social Network	0.455	0.007	0.215	23.104	0.000
Constant	2.064	0.152		13.541	0.000
R = 0.270, $R^2 = 0.073$, F = 294.280, Sig. F = 0.000					

Dependent variable: participation in conventional politics

Social Factors and Participation in Political Consumerism

Based on the coefficient of the multiple correlation coefficients ($R = 0.244$) and the regression ($R^2 = 0.059$), 5.9% of the variance in “participation in political consumerism” could be explained by social factors.

Based on the standardized multiple regression coefficients (β), two variables—the social network and the norm of the democratic promotion of the university were statistically significant predictors of “participation in political consumerism”. The finding indicates that the social network was the most powerful predictor of participation in political consumerism ($\beta = .210$) (Table 4).

Table 4: Coefficients of Social Factors and Participation in Political Consumerism

<i>Independent</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig. t</i>
Trust in social and political institutions	-0.004	0.003	-0.014	-1.557	0.120
Norm of democratic promotion of the University	0.090	0.009	0.091	9.676	0.000
Social network	0.255	0.011	0.210	22.641	0.000
Constant	0.409	0.088		4.658	0.000
$R = 0.244$, $R^2 = 0.059$, $F = 241.971$, Sig. $F = 0.000$					

Dependent variable: participation in political consumerism

Social Factors and Participation in Demonstrations

Based on the coefficient of the multiple correlation coefficients ($R = 0.206$) and the regression ($R^2 = 0.042$), 4.2% of the variance in “participation in political demonstrations” could be explained by social factors.

Based on the standardized multiple regression coefficient (β), three variables—the norm of the democratic promotion of the university, the social network, and trust in social and political institution were statistically significant predictors of the participation in demonstrations. The finding also indicates that the social network was the most powerful predictor of participation in conventional politics. Trust in social and political institutions was the weakest predictor and it was a negative predictor of participation in political demonstrations. Consequently, if the students strongly trust social and political institutions, they will engage less in political demonstrations (Table 5).

Table 5: Coefficients of Social Factors and Participation in Political Demonstrations

<i>Independent</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig. t</i>
Trust in social and political institutions	-0.010	0.003	-0.030	-3.220	0.001
Norm of the democratic promotion of the university	0.066	0.011	0.058	6.125	0.000
Social network	0.259	0.013	0.188	20.039	0.000
Constant	0.346	0.101		3.433	0.000
R = 0.206, R² = 0.042, F = 168.155, Sig. F = 0.000					

Dependent variable: participation in political demonstrations

Discussion

The results of the research show that the social factors were significantly associated with political participation and could explain and predict most of the forms of political participation.

Overall, the low R² figures of the social factors explaining political participation in almost all regression analyses imply that there are other factors affecting political participation but that were not included in this study; social psychology factors, for example. The R² values had a pattern of decreasing in size from viewing political news (0.116), participation in conventional politics (0.073), and participation in political consumerism (0.059), to participation in political demonstrations (0.042). This implies that the more complicated is the form of political participation, the less likely it is explained by a single set of factors.

Trust in social and political institutions was significantly correlated with the three forms of political participation: viewing political news, participation in conventional politics, and participation in political consumerism. This could explain and predict participation in viewing political news and participation in demonstrations as well. However, there was a different direction in the prediction. Trust in social and political institutions predicts the positive way with viewing political news. This implies that students that trust in social and political institutions will participate more in viewing political news. This, however, turned to a negative direction when coping with participation in political demonstrations. This indicates that students that trust in social and political institutions will engage less in political demonstrations. In other words, if the students distrust social and political institutions,

they will participate more in political protests or demonstrations. Trust in social and political institutions, however, neither significantly explained nor predicted the participation in conventional politics or participation in political consumerism. In sum, if citizens trust social and political institutions, they will be interested in social and political news and will participate more in conventional politics, but if they distrust social and political institutions, they will participate more in political consumerism and demonstrations.

The norm of the democratic promotion of the university was significantly and positively correlated with all of the forms of political participation and could explain and predict all of the forms of political participation as well. In addition, it was the most powerful predictor of viewing political news and participation in conventional politics. It, however, was not a strong predictor of participation in political consumerism or demonstrations.

If the university regularly supports students in terms of engaging in social and political activities, and promotes democratic principles as a part of teaching subjects in each curriculum, it will create an atmosphere of learning about democratic practices. Consequently, democratic values will be inculcated by socialization. The students then may become psychologically involved in politics and feel that they are a part of the political system. Students' awareness of political inclusion stimulates the need to acquire more political information and to participate in conventional politics such as voting, attending rallies, and working as a volunteer of a political party or candidate.

The social networks of students were significantly and positively correlated with all of the forms of political participation, and they could explain and predict all of the forms of political participation. In addition, they were the most powerful predictors of participation in conventional politics, participation in political consumerism, and participation in political demonstrations. The social networks of students were principally "horizontal," bringing together students of equal status and power. These networks are the networks of civic engagement which are a crucial form of social capital. The findings of this research were corroborated by the work Putnam's work (1993) in modern Italy and reinforce the importance of horizontal social networks to political participation and democracy.

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