



Predictors of public consciousness among Thai undergraduate students

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Abstract

Public consciousness is crucial for societies at both the local and national levels. This cross-sectional descriptive study examines public consciousness and determines factors to predict public consciousness among undergraduate students enrolled at Mahidol University, Thailand during the second semester of the 2020 academic year. The research instruments include a self-reported questionnaire, a public consciousness questionnaire, the Parenting Style Questionnaire, the Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale, and the self-efficacy and the modified multi-dimensional measure of perceived social support. The Cronbach's alpha reliabilities comprised 0.96, 0.66, 0.72 and 0.92, respectively. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and stepwise multiple regression. The research findings revealed that the mean score of public consciousness was 91.97 ($SD = 23.75$), indicating a high level of public consciousness. Self-efficacy was the most significant predictor ($\beta = 0.281$), the second most significant predictor was social support ($\beta = 0.239$), and the third was an authoritative parenting style ($\beta = 0.197$). The three aforementioned predictors accounted for 19.8 percent ($F_{3, 435} = 37.837, p < .001$) of undergraduate students' public consciousness. From the findings, university workers are recommended to plan activities or interventions to promote public consciousness for undergraduate students. Such interventions and exposure to public awareness by parents and teachers will help students gain confidence to continue helping others and society.

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Introduction

Public consciousness refers to the self-awareness of others and behaviour that benefits others in society as a

whole. The three components of public consciousness include helping others, social sacrifice, and commitment to social development (Charnnarong, 2019; Traprasit, & Sugmak, 2020). Public consciousness makes citizens aware of their rights and responsibilities through the exchange of ideas and participation in problem solving or development (Charnnarong, 2019). However, a lack of

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public consciousness may cause problems for individuals, society, and nation. Studies of the public consciousness of the current generation found a lack of people's good awareness about their own society, and that they value their own individual benefits over the benefits of society, which affect the daily lives of the Thai people (Boonchan, 2020; Charnnarong, 2019; Sukthumrong et al., 2019). In addition, public consciousness is a paramount national concern nowadays as public consciousness is critical in anticipating social problems (Sukthumrong et al., 2019). The development of public consciousness should focus on young people, and it can be transmitted through socialization of both families and society. Consequently, public consciousness as a desired citizen characteristic, particularly with youth, is required to develop society and the country (Charnnarong, 2019; Thai Ministry of Education, 2008).

Public consciousness is grounded in Bandura's social cognitive theory through human behaviours that are altered by the environment and determine aspects of the environment to which the individual is exposed. Human behaviour is identified as mental activity in the aspects of triadic reciprocal causation. From this perspective, three factors interact with each other, namely, personal, environment, and behaviour (Bandura, 1986). Personal factors, such as perception or an individual's beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge, are influenced by the environment. The environment refers to a social environment, including family, friends, and colleagues. The environmental situation can change an individual's perception and behaviour. An individual's conduct is impacted by personal and environmental factors. At the same time, it impacts such factors. According to Bandura (1986), public consciousness can be viewed as an illustration of reciprocal interaction factors that influence public consciousness outcomes. In addition, the reviewed literature also illustrates several significant factors, including self-esteem, self-efficacy, parenting styles, and social support, which are relevant to public consciousness.

Self-esteem refers to belief directed towards oneself in both positive and negative capacities (Charnnarong, 2019; Chonsawat, et al, 2020). Studies have reported that adolescent self-esteem was associated with public consciousness (Fu et al., 2017; Preston & Rew 2021). Self-efficacy is an individual's view of their talents. Bandura (1986) argued that individuals' behavior reflects their self-esteem and perceived self-efficacy, which affect how they are conscious of the public. Previous research indicates that self-efficacy is an important factor and is

associated with public consciousness among adolescents (Boonchan, 2020; Chonsawat et al, 2020; Traprasit & Sugmak, 2020). Diversified parenting styles and approaches used by parents to manage their children's behaviors are found in the Parenting Styles Theory of Baumrind (1971). This theory characterizes three parental styles: authoritarian, authoritative, and allowing. An additional parenting style, the uninvolved parenting style, was afterward included (Maccoby, & Martin, 1983). There are two essential fundamentals of parenting: parental receptivity and parental constraint (Teacher & Pradesh, 2018). Consisting with the definition of self-awareness of others and behaviors that benefit others in society as a whole, numerous categories of research illustrate that certain parenting styles are related to public consciousness among students (Boonchan, 2020; Kleebsuwan, 2017; Traprasit & Sugmak, 2020; Wisetchai, 2017). Social support refers to the perception of support from others including family, friends, and teachers. According to the social cognitive theory, the environment has a significant influence on public consciousness (Boonchan, 2020; Kleebsuwan, 2017; Wisetchai, 2017).

Educational institutions are vital environmental factors in promoting the development of students to become good citizens. Mahidol University is an educational institution that focuses on developing student identities that benefit others and student awareness, according to the university's ideals. Mahidol University also aligns with the goal of generating graduates who are "good, wise, and happy."

Empirical evidence indicates that public consciousness among university students is necessary and important to develop students to the desirable characteristics for a quality citizen in society. Meanwhile, public consciousness can develop from a young age. An integrative approach to determine predicting factors of public consciousness among Thai students is required. The findings of such an approach would contribute to the development of knowledge for a program to develop public consciousness among undergraduate students. Hence, this work investigates the level of public consciousness and predictors of public consciousness among university students.

Conceptual Framework of the study

The conceptual framework of this study was based on the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986; 1989) and a

review of related literature in order to explain the causal relationship among factors including, self-esteem, self-efficacy, parenting styles, and social support contributing to public consciousness among Thai undergraduate students.

Bandura's social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986; 1989) grounded and explained public consciousness as behavior factor of triadic reciprocal causation factors, namely, cognitive, environment, and behavior. Based on this theory, it is believed that individuals develop public consciousness because of the reciprocal interaction between cognitive and environment factors. Cognitive factors are such as self-esteem and self-efficacy. The environment factors involve parenting styles, and social support. Moreover, literature reviews of public consciousness among students have shown that factors influencing public consciousness included self-esteem (Fu et al., 2017; Preston & Rew, 2021), self-efficacy (Boonchan, 2020; Chonsawat et al., 2020; Traprasit & Sugmak, 2020), parenting styles (Boonchan, 2020; Kleebsuwan, 2017; Traprasit & Sugmak, 2020; Wisetchai, 2017), and social support (Boonchan, 2020; Kleebsuwan, 2017; Wisetchai, 2017). These relationships are illustrated in [Figure 1](#).

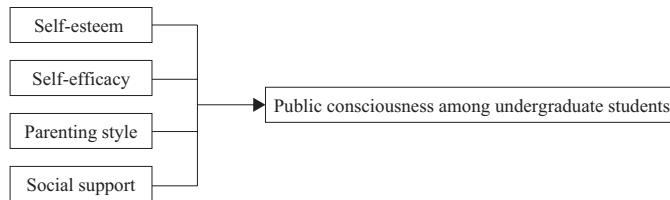


Figure 1 Conceptual framework of this study

Methodology

This predictive correlational study was undertaken to determine the predictors of public consciousness among undergraduate students, including self-esteem, perceived self-efficacy, parenting style, and social support.

Participants and Sampling

A simple random sampling technique was used to recruit 265 undergraduate students of a single autonomous university in the second semester of the 2020 academic

year. Participants included undergraduate students aged between 18–23 years who could read and write Thai.

The sample size for this study was calculated using G*Power software. A power of 0.95, an alpha value of 0.05, and a small effect size of 0.15 were considered for this study. G*Power software suggested a sample size of 139. However, a sample size of 209 was considered to compensate for missing data and ensure data quality for Multiple Regression.

Instruments

Data were obtained using six self-reporting questionnaires as follows:

1. A personal information record form was used to assess demographic characteristics including age, gender, religion, parents' marital status, and living arrangements.

2. The public consciousness questionnaire (Prewnim, 2015) was employed to measure public consciousness. The questionnaire consisted of 55 items that measured the level of public consciousness. Respondents indicated (on a scale of 0 = "not at all" to 3 = "every day") how often they experienced public consciousness. The total scores were between 0 and 150. A greater score demonstrated a greater degree of public consciousness. A total score between 0 and 50 indicated low public consciousness. Meanwhile, a total score between 51–100 indicated moderate public consciousness, and 101–150 indicated high public consciousness. In this study, Cronbach's alpha reliability was .96.

3. Rosenberg's self-esteem scale (RSE- Thai version) translated by Tinakon & Nahathai (2011) was utilized to determine self-esteem and the orientation towards an individual's self-esteem. This scale comprised 10 statements having 5-positive and 5-negative determinants. A five-point Likert scale (1–5) was provided with each statement. The total score was calculated by the simple addition of the scores on individual readings. The scores ranged from 0 to 40. A greater score indicated greater self-esteem and vice versa. Cronbach's alpha reliability was .66.

4. Parenting Style Questionnaire (PSQ- Thai version) developed by Wongpituk (2013) was used to measure parenting style. In addition, it provided the level of participants' perceived parental caring style. There were 22 items scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1–5) to identify the parental styles including authoritative, authoritarian,

allowing, and neglectful parenting styles. Cronbach's alpha reliability of each style was 0.80.

5. General perceived self-efficacy scale (GPSES-Thai version) translated by Sukmak et al. (2002) was employed to determine perceived self-efficacy. It had 10 items that tested how confident one was in their ability to plan and carry out the course of action in reaction to a potential crisis. A four-point Likert scale (1–4) was provided for each statement. The total score was calculated by the simple addition of the scores on individual readings. The scores were between 10–40, a greater score indicated a greater self-efficacy and vice versa. Cronbach's alpha reliability was .91.

6. Modified multi-dimensional scale of perceived social support (the revised MSPSS-Thai version) constructed by Wongpakaran & Wongpakaran (2012) was utilized to calculate social support. It comprised 12 components that were each given a score on a five-point Likert scale (1–5) determining a person's view of how much outside social support they obtained. Three subscales were employed: significant others (So) (components (1), (2), (5), and (10); family (Fa) (components (3), (4), (8), and (11); and friends (Fr) (components (6), (7), (9), and (12). The total scores ranged from 1–60, higher scores represented higher social support and vice versa. Cronbach's alpha reliability was .96

Ethical Considerations

The Mahidol University Central Institutional Review Board (MU-CIRB) (No. MU-CIRB 2020/084.1507) approved this research before administering the questionnaires to participants. Participants were invited to attend this study and they were provided with a complete description of all aspects of the research. According to the sensitive nature of some questions and potential fatigue from finishing the online forms, the risks and advantages associated with uneasy feelings were revealed. Participants acknowledged that the involvement was completely voluntary, and they could withdraw at any time without suffering any repercussions.

Data Collection

After IRB approval by the MU-CIRB, all participants were required to scan a QR code to complete the survey and were asked to read an information sheet before completing the survey. Participants were provided with help-seeking information at the end of the survey to assist

them if they felt distressed. The questionnaire took the participants between 45 minutes to 1 hour to complete.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics including frequency, percent, mean, standard deviation, and range were employed to explain the demographic attributes and to study the variables. Stepwise multiple regression was used to determine the association and prediction of self-esteem, self-efficacy, parenting styles, and social support to public consciousness.

Results

Participants attending this study totaled 265. About 78.1 percent of them were female. Participants were between 18 and 26 years old, having a mean of 19.17 ($SD = 0.94$). More than 95 percent of participants were Buddhist. More than three-quarters of them (81.5%) lived with their families, and 73.6 percent of their parents were still married.

The total score of public consciousness behaviors ranged from 0 to 135 ($M = 91.97$, $SD = 23.75$). The mean score of 91.97 implied a high level of public consciousness among the samples. There were four parenting styles with a rating scale from 1 to 5. A mean total score of 11.77 ($SD = 2.11$) implied a low authoritarian parenting style, authoritative parenting style was high ($M = 22.79$, $SD = 3.66$), while neglectful parenting style was low ($M = 11.76$, $SD = 2.13$), and indulgent parenting style was medium ($M = 13.65$, $SD = 3.74$). The total actual score for self-esteem was between 10 and 20, having a mean of 14.61 ($SD = 1.50$), implying high self-esteem. Meanwhile, the total actual score for self-efficacy was between 10 and 40, having a mean of 27.83 ($SD = 5.08$), which implied moderate self-efficacy. The mean total score for social support was 57.70 ($SD = 14.71$), and ranged from 12 to 84, implying high social support (Table 1).

The general assumptions of multivariate analysis were to test for missing, outlier, normality, linearity, and multicollinearity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007) before data analyses to decrease the potential distortion and bias in the results. Next, a correlation matrix of Pearson's correlation coefficients of variables predicting public consciousness to examine these associations in a multivariate context is presented in Table 2.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of the study variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Level	(n = 265)
Public consciousness	91.97	23.75	High	
Authoritarian parenting style	11.77	2.11	Low	
Authoritative parenting style	22.79	3.66	High	
Neglectful parenting style	11.76	2.13	Low	
Indulgent parenting style	13.65	3.74	Medium	
Self-esteem	14.61	1.50	High	
Self-efficacy	27.83	5.08	Medium	
Social support	57.70	14.71	High	

Table 2 Correlation matrix of variables predicting depression.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	(n = 265)
Public consciousness	1								
Authoritarian	-.015	1							
Authoritative	.225****	-.424**	1						
Neglectful	-.015	.508**	-.430**	1					
Indulgent	-.087	-.233**	.443**	-.111	1				
Self-esteem	.290**	.134	-.233**	-.233**	-.010	1			
Self-efficacy	.302**	-.099	-.064	-.130	.092	-.088	1		
Social support	.040	-.260**	.194	-.258**	.203**	-.145	-.015	1	

Note: * $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$.

The significance as well as the best predictor of public consciousness among undergraduate students were analyzed using stepwise multiple regression. The results demonstrated that perceived self-efficacy was significant and was the best predictor, accounting for 9.1 percent of the explained variance ($\beta = 0.281$, $t = 5.034$, $p < .001$). The second most significant predictor was social support, which accounted for 7 percent in the prediction

($\beta = -0.239$, $t = 4.209$, $p < .001$). The third and least significant predictor was authoritative parenting style which accounted for 3.7 percent ($\beta = 0.197$, $t = 3.470$, $p < .001$). These three predictors accounted for 19.8 percent ($F_{3, 435} = 37.837$, $p < .001$) in the prediction of public consciousness among undergraduate students (Table 3).

Table 3 Stepwise multiple regression statistics of variables predicting public consciousness.

Variables	ΔR^2	b	SE-b	β	t	(n = 265)
Constant		-37.782	17.045			-2.217*
Self-efficacy	.091	1.118	.266	.239		4.209**
Social-support	.070	2.541	.505	.281		5.034**
Authoritative parenting style	.037	6.882	1.983	.197		3.470**
$F_{3, 261} = 12.044^{**}$						
$R^2 = 0.198$						
Adjust $R^2 = 0.189$						

Note: * $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$.

Discussion

Studying public consciousness among students is important because it can produce graduates and people with desirable characteristics. The results demonstrated a high level of public consciousness among the samples of undergraduate students (mean = 91.97, $SD = 23.75$). This indicated that parents and educational institutes should instruct students to develop their emotions and capabilities to survive as good people. Consistently, several previous studies have shown high overall scores of public consciousness among students in Thailand (Sukthumrong et al., 2019; Sirisunyaluck, 2017; Wuttiprom et al., 2019). Although the results of the present study indicated high public consciousness scores, the predictors of public consciousness should be recognized as a key to develop public consciousness in the broader social context.

Perceived self-efficacy, social support, and authoritative parenting style were statistically associated with public consciousness ($p < .001$). These three predictors accounted for 19.8 percent ($F_3, 261 = 12.044$, $p < .001$) in the prediction of public consciousness among the students. Perceived self-efficacy was statistically associated with public consciousness ($p < .001$) and was the best predictor, accounting for 9.1 percent ($\beta = 0.281$, $t = 5.034$, $p < .001$). According to social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), self-efficacy is described as the cognitive component, indicating an individual's perceptions and evaluation of their own capacity to demonstrate public consciousness toward others and society. Self-efficacy can be managed to succeed by following the intents and goals stated. This explanation is supported by several previous studies (Boonchan, 2020; Chonsawat et al., 2020; Kleebsuwan, 2017; Traprasit & Sugmak, 2020). For instance, Boonchan (2020) conducted a cross-sectional study of 375 university students in Thailand and found that the public consciousness of students significantly influenced public consciousness. Besides, possessing self-efficacy will encourage students to participate in public activities. Likewise, Traprasit and Sugmak (2020) conducted a cross-sectional study among 160 students at a police nursing college. They found that self-efficacy was a significant predictive factor that affected the students' public consciousness.

Social support is also statistically associated with public consciousness ($p < .001$), in which it is apparent

that students with high social support tend to have public consciousness. Social cognitive theory again provides an explanation of this finding (Bandura, 1986). The theory defines social support as the environmental component, which includes perceived support from friends, family, and educational institutions. In this instance, the university should work to improve or aid public development in order to instill true public consciousness among its pupils. This argument is supported by several previous studies (Boonchan, 2020; Kleebsuwan, 2017; Wajee, 2016; Wuttiprom, et al., 2019). For instance, a cross-sectional study among 210 university students demonstrated that social support significantly affected public consciousness (Chonsawat, et al., 2020). Additionally, social support from family, friends, and university were the best predictors of public consciousness.

An authoritative parenting style is found to be statistically associated with public consciousness ($p < .001$). This appears to indicate that individuals positively perceive the consciousness of helping students. Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986) describes parenting styles as an environmental component. Parents who care about their children's well-being and provide intimacy with them exhibit desirable behaviors for young people. Students should participate in university activities and support and be considerate of others. Parental affection positively influences students into adulthood and results in them being better able to adapt to challenges in later developmental stages. Students raised in a supportive and loving environment are therefore more likely to develop public consciousness and positively contribute to society. Similarly, previous studies indicate that the use of an authoritative parenting style with adolescents was significantly correlated with measures of public consciousness throughout their development (Sukthumrong, et al., 2019; Traprasit, & Sugmak, 2020; Wajee, 2016). For example, Sirisunyaluck (2017) conducted a correlational study of 433 undergraduate students from Chiang Mai, Thailand. The study determined that parenting styles had a significant influence on public consciousness. Likewise, a cross-sectional study conducted by Traprasit and Sugmak (2020) and a sectional study conducted by Sukthumrong et al. (2019) showed a positive correlation between family nurture and public consciousness among students in Thailand.

Self-esteem was the predictor that had no association with public consciousness. A possible reason might be

that participants in this study had a total mean self-esteem score of 14.61, implying that this group of students had high self-esteem and slightly deviated from its mean ($SD = 1.50$). Therefore, further and deeper investigation into Thai university students' self-esteem is needed to confirm its association with public consciousness. Based on the social cognitive theory, self-esteem is displayed as a cognitive factor (Bandura, 1986). Thus, this finding remains inconclusive.

Recommendations

The findings of this study suggest a new direction for educational institutions. For example, school administrators and teachers should encourage self-efficacy and offer support to develop public consciousness among students. Family-based cultivation of public consciousness is also important. Moreover, a program or curriculum to promote public consciousness should be developed to induce undergraduate students' public consciousness by developing their self-perception and guiding them to improve their public consciousness. For future research, experimental studies should be conducted to investigate the creation of a program to improve public consciousness among undergraduate students. Additionally, a longitudinal and qualitative design should be utilized to further understand public consciousness among undergraduate students.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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