Can Social Networks Promote Political Trust?

A Case Study of Sukhothai Province Tells the Story

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to study the relationship between the concept of a network of civil engagement and political trust in Sukhothai Province. The study was based on a quantitative study by collecting data from a sample of 400 people. The data was analyzed using the SPSS for Windows program. The statistics used for data analysis were percentage, mean, and multiple regression analysis. It was found that, in general, there was a positive relationship between the network of civil engagement and political trust in this Province. The variables can account for 70.5 percent of the variation in political trust ($R^2 = 0.705$). However, the study also found that there were only teachers – parents associations, occupation groups, elderly groups, group formed by the state, volunteer and political groups that shown the positive relationship with political trust. Arguably, only organizations that characterized as formal and/or semi-formal networks, be hierarchical organizations, be professional organizations and have connection with governmental agencies that had a correlation with political trust. To develop a level of political trust, government agencies should encourage people to participate in such networks since it can strengthen the development of democracy.

Keywords: Network of Civil Engagement, Political Trust, Sukhothai Province

Introduction

A 2019 Human Achievement Index survey conducted by the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council in the lower northern region of Thailand showed that Sukhothai had the highest Participation index score when compared to other provinces in the same sub-region. Sukhothai had a mean participation index score of 0.6497 (the national average score was 0.5208). The participation index was determined from four components: 1) voting turnout, 2) community groups, 3) households participating in local groups, and 4) households participating in social services activities. The fact that people in Sukhothai have an average score of more than 0.5 which is higher than the national average score is a very interesting issue. This is because studies have suggested that Thai people value and participate in political and/or social activities at a moderate to relatively low level (Suebvises, 2018; Mutebi, 2005; Mongkolnchaiarunya, 2005).

An interesting question is that if the people in Sukhothai have a high index score of participation, can participation in such social networking activities be able to promote a higher level of political trust in the people of Sukhothai? A number of scholars have described the relationship between social networks of civil engagement (SNCE) and political trust, describing how SNCE can build and/or develop public trust (see the literature review section for details). Consequently, this study focuses on the relationship between these two concepts. In order to understand the concept of SNCE and political trust concept, the following sections will briefly describe both concepts. Details of these two concepts will be presented in the literature review section.

The SNCE concept explains that SNCE refers to the relationship or interaction between two or more individuals or a relationship at an organizational level (Cooper, 2005; Pelling & High, 2005). This relationship gradually increases with interactions in various forms, such as family, kinship, co-workers or social media (Marin &

Wellman, 2010). This can happen at the family, workplace, neighborhood, and community level. Aside from that, SNCE can be found both in formal and informal settings. Members of SNCE can be of a diverse nature such as individuals, groups, or organizations/institutions. It can be said that SNCE create infinite ties which are able to connect people in society to interact both face-to-face and remotely (Milroy & Milroy, 1992).

In explaining the concept of trust, the literature review has found that many scholars who have explained the concept. Francis Fukuyama is an example. He described trust as the expectation a community in that members behave with honesty and follow standards of cooperation with each other (Fukuyama, 1995). In order for a person to gain the trust of another person, that person must maintain respect and behave as a virtuous member of society. Christopher Thompson states that trust is essential to the existence of society, and it is something that cannot happen by itself. Trust requires interactions with other people (Thompson, 2017) and it is something that, when it happens, can be gained or lost depending on the situation (Thompson, 2017).

Notably, trust can be divided into two types: political trust and social trust. Political trust refers to the belief that political institutions and political officials will effectively perform their duties and responsibilities and the outcomes of policy and administration will be in the best interests of the members of society (Li, 2004). Social trust refers to the belief that individuals in a community or society will provide assistance and cooperation, and will not take advantage of and hurt others (Newton, 2001). Remarkably, both types of trusts may or may not be related to each other (Newton, Stolle, & Zmerli, 2018).

As mentioned above, there are interesting arguments to suggest that people's participation in SNCE can develop stronger political trust. Therefore, to expand the academic knowledge in studying the relationship between SNCE political trust, this study focuses on studying this in a different context from previous studies. This is done by choosing to study in Thailand and specifically the area of Sukhothai for to study whether and how SNCE can relate to political trust. The literature review revealed that the relationship between the two concepts has not been studied in this area. Thus, this research may be a starting point for further analysis and academic endeavors to explore the relationship of the two concepts in different contexts.

Research Objectives

To study the relationship between SNCE and political trust in Sukhothai Province.

Literature Review

The concept of SNCE and political trust will be described in detail respectively as follows;

The Concept of SNCE

This section presents the concept of SNCE. It describes the classification, importance, and shows the relationship between SNCE and political trust. The details are in order as follows:

To start, SNCE can be classified using different criteria. Two classification criteria are presented here: 1) the structure related to the network model, and 2) the interaction related to the network relationship (Milroy & Milroy, 1992). If classified according to structure, SNCE can be categorized as 1) formal social structural networks such as family members, relatives, neighbors, groups of people with the same interests, and 2) informal social networks such as associations, political groups, professional groups and institutions or agencies (Stone, 2001). In contrast, if SNCE are classified based on members' interactions with others, SNCE can be classified as 1) primary social

networks, which are social groups in which members share close ties. Members have concern for each other, share activities and cultures and spend time together for long periods. The relationships that occur in these type of groups are often lasting and purposeful in themselves. Members tend to provide psychological comfort to those involved and provide support and encouragement to group members. Group members also tend to be influential in developing personal identity from other members. An example of this type of group is the family group, cultural group or religious group, 2) Secondary social networks: the members of this type of network tend to have a non-personal relationship, but rather one in which everyone is focused on the group's goals. Members are assigned to perform their duties; therefore, the roles of the members can be rotated and are interchangeable. Examples of this type of group are employer-employee social networks, a general assembly, cooperatives, companies, and the armed forces (Stone, 2001).

On the issue of the importance of SNCE, Verba, Schlozman, & Brady (1995) describe its importance as "the heart of democracy" (Verba et al., 1995). This definition has been supported by many academics. Most suggest that anyone participating in a SNCE is highly likely to exhibit democratic attitudes and behaviors, such as 1) having higher social trust (Fennema & Tillie, 2001), 2) having higher levels of social skills, a public minded and positive attitude towards others (Gaby, 2017), 3) having higher political involvement (Wicks, Wicks, Morimoto, Maxwell, & Schulte, 2014), and 4) political attitude, confidence and trust will be developed to a higher level (Putnam, 2000).

According to the literature review, there are many interesting scholarly proposals describing the relationship between SNCE and political trust. Details are now presented as follow:

Robert Putnum is one of the scholars who has placed great emphasis on the study of SNCE. Putnam explains that social networks are an important factor in building trust (Suebvises, 2018; Putnam, Leonardi, & Nonetti, 1993). Interestingly, Putnam's ideas have been studied extensively in many academic contexts and areas of study, for example, the studies of Mendert Fennema and Jean Tillie. Two studies focus on the relationship of two ideas in Amsterdam, Netherlands. Firstly, their study in 1999 concluded that there was a correlation between the level of community participation in various racial groups and political participation and political trust. A second study in 2001 concluded that people's participation in politics and participation in community activities can build people's social and political trust (Fennema & Tillie, 2001). Thus, it can be concluded that the civic engagement network through political participation and participation in community activities has a great influence on the development of political trust. Both studies are consistent with a study in the UK by Yaojun Li and colleagues. Their study argues that people's activity and participation in communities or organizations, both formal and informal, can motivate people to have higher levels of political and social trust (Li, Pickles, & Savage, 2005). In addition, a study by Hyungjun Suh and colleagues, which examined the relationship between patterns of trust and political participation in five countries – South Korea, Germany, Italy, Greece and Turkey – confirms the relationship of these two concepts. The study found that politically motivated citizens were more likely to be politically active and more involved in SNCE than others. The study also added that participation in informal political participation organizations will help foster the development of each individual's both social and political trust (Suh, Yee, & Chang, 2013).

Additionally, another two studies that can be used to confirm the strong relationship between SNCE and political trust are the studies of Anne Maria Warren and colleagues and of Pamela Paxton. Anne Maria Warren and colleagues studied the relationship between these two concepts in the social context of Malaysia and discovered

that participation in a SNCE has a positive influence on building people's trust in political institutions such as governments, policies and the domestic justice system (Warren, Sulaiman, & Jaafar, 2014). The study of Pamela Paxton, in addition, focused on the relationship between social networking membership and trust in 31 countries and found that at the individual level, an important factor that makes an individual have a higher level of trust is to be a member of a group or association that has a clear system of relationships in the organization or being a member of a diverse group (multiple memberships). Additionally, when considering the national level, Paxton found that the more people participate in the social network the higher level of trust that will be developed (Paxton, 2007).

The results of the studies above have fostered an academic debate on the importance and influence of the concept of SNCE in promoting political trust in different contexts. In order to expand the body of academic knowledge more widely, a number of scholars agree that the focus on studying in a multinational context will deepen scholars' awareness of the factors that can generate political trust. Therefore, the focus of this study is on the influence of SNCE on trust. It is hoped that the results of the study will deepen the academic debate about these two concepts and will be beneficial to the academic society in the future.

The Concept of Political Trust

In the following sections, 1) the definition of trust, 2) the definition, importance, and types of political trust, and 3) the differences between the origins of political trust and social trust will be discussed.

Trust is another concept that has attracted the attention of many academics. In general, it's explained that trust is not something that comes naturally. Conversely, the factor that determines and develops trust arises from social relationships. Theoretically, trusts can be classified using a variety of criteria. But for the most part, scholars categorize trust into two categories: political trust and social trust. These two types of trusts may be related but are not interchangeable. Individuals may have high levels of trust in their neighbors and/or communities, but may not trust their political institutions and officials (Newton et al., 2018; Putnam, 2000).

Political trust refers to the belief that political institutions and political officials will effectively perform their duties and responsibilities, and the outcomes of policies and administration will be in the best interests of the members of society (Li, 2004; Mishler & Rose, 2001; Anderson & LoTempio, 2002). As it appears in the current literature, political trust can be divided into two categories: trust in political institutions such as parliament (Newton, 2001) and government (Anderson & LoTempio, 2002) and trust in political incumbents such as presidents (Hetherington, 1998), political bureaucrats (Nilson & Nilson, 1980) and other political actors (Shi, 2001). Numerous scholars have suggested that political trust is extremely important and can be of great political benefit. Examples of its significance are 1) showing the level of support and trust in political representatives and the government (Hadenius, 2004), 2) reflecting the people's satisfaction with the performance of the administration of political institutions (Rudolph & Evans, 2005), 3) helping the general public have more courage to contact or interact with government officials (Mishler & Rose, 2001; Hetherington, 1998) which can build more cooperation between people and the government, 4) promote both social and political participation (Damico, Conway, & Damico, 2000), and 5) promote the legitimacy and efficiency of political entities (Shi, 2001; Damico et al., 2000). It can be concluded that without political trust, all levels of the government may encounter difficulties and obstacles in administering and providing services to citizens.

As mentioned above, political trust is different from social trust, therefore the origins of both trusts are also different. The following sections will discuss the origins of politics through the perspectives of two theories:

institutional theory and cultural theory. Both theories explain sources of trust differently but, interestingly, do not reject each other's explanations. On one hand, institutional theory explains that political trust is the result of political institutions being able to perform their responsibilities to the satisfaction of the people. If political institutions operate efficiently and effectively, have a good operating structure, able to set policies correctly and free from corruption, this will be able to generate public trust in the political institutions (Hetherington, 1998; Damico et al., 2000). As William Mishler explains, well-functioning political institutions build trust. In case the political institutions act dishonestly, it will cause people to have doubts, distrust and not support those political institutions (Mishler & Rose, 2001). On the other hand, cultural theory explains that political trust cannot arise from a political context but rather through a process of socialization (Mishler & Rose, 2001; Shi, 2001). Cultural theorists believe that strong and solid political trust cannot be built in a short period of time, but it exists in a political context with political values, norms and beliefs accepted by the people (Putnam et al., 1993; Shi, 2001). Generating political trust will take decades and pass it on between generations.

The literature review presented above highlights this research's aims to explore and determine whether and how participation in SNCE is important in building political trust by choosing to study in the context of Sukhothai Province, Thailand.

Research Hypothesis

There is a positive correlation between SNCE and political trust in Sukhothai Province (SNCE can create political trust).

SNCE	→	Political Trust

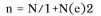**Figure 1** Research Conceptual Framework.

In this study, both independent and dependent variables were quantitative variables. The independent variable was a civic engagement network consisting of sub-variables: which are the number of groups people participated in 12 types of SNCE: 1) religious groups, 2) online communities, 3) Teacher-Parents' clubs, 4) Occupational groups, 5) Elderly groups, 6) Cultural groups, 7) State-organized groups, 8) Actor-singer support groups, 9) Family/ethnic groups, 10) Volunteer groups, 11) Sports/leisure groups, 12) Political groups. The dependent variable was political trust which is the sum of respondents' trust in political institutions and government officials.

Research Method

This study used a quantitative research methodology which can be described in detail as follows;

Population: the population used in this study was 601,778 people who were aged 18 years and whose house registration was in Sukhothai.

Sample: the sample was selected from all districts of Sukhothai Province. The number of samples was determined by using the formula if the number of the population is known. Therefore, this study chooses to use Taro Yamane's formula:

$$n = N/1+N(e)2$$

where e is the sample error. In this research, the error is 0.05.

     n is the sample size.

     N is the size of the electoral population.

Therefore, the sample size will be as follows.

$$N = 601,778 /1 + 601,778 (0.05)2 = 399.9 \text{ or } 400 \text{ people}$$

The sample is selected from the population by setting quotas according to the population of each district. All districts were assigned a sample number as equal to .07 percent of the total population. The details are as follows (see Table 1 attached).

Table 1 Number of Samples in Each District

District	Population	Sample	District	Population	Sample	District	Population	Sample
Muang	105,993	74	Srisamrong	71,946	50	Kongkailad	64,190	45
Baandanlanhoi	46,544	32	Sawankalok	86,472	40	Srisatchanalai	93,520	65
Kirimas	56,381	39	Srinakorn	26,718	20	Tungsaliam	50,014	35

Sampling

After obtaining samples from all 9 districts, the researcher conducted random sampling according to the specified number. By using Systematic Random Sampling, the list of all population units was arranged accordingly without bias. Subsequently, the researcher calculated the member selection interval and selected the first member (Random Start/R) using a simple random sampling method. Then a sample from the entire population was selected starting from the numbers obtained from the random sample until the specified amount was reached.

Research Results

From the data collection, the general information of the respondents is detailed in the following table.

Table 2 General Information of the Respondents

	Socioeconomic Factors	n	Percentage		Socioeconomic Factors	n	Percentage
Gender	Male	197	49.3		No Career/Retirement	14	3.5
	Female	203	50.8		Student	60	15.0
Age (Year)	≤ 20	52	13.0		Employee	41	10.3
	21–40	169	42.4		Business Owner	32	8.0
	41–60	154	38.6	Occupation	Farmer	79	19.8
	> 61	24	6.0		State Enterprise	47	11.8
The Highest Level of Education	Primary School	80	20.2		Government Officer	39	9.8
	Secondary Education	115	29.0		Labor	79	19.8
	Education Diploma	49	12.3		Others	9	2.3
	Bachelor's Degree	90	22.7	Length of Stay in Sukhothai (Year)	≤ 20	90	22.6
	Postgraduate	15	3.8		21–40	160	40.1
	Others	48	12.1		41–60	129	32.3
					> 61	20	5.0

From Table 2, it was found that most of the respondents were female, aged between 21-40 years, followed by 41-60 years. Most of the respondents completed their highest education at the secondary level, followed by bachelor's degree and primary education. The main occupation is farmer followed by students/students and government officials/state enterprise employees. Most of them have lived in Sukhothai for 21-40 years and 41-60 years, respectively.

From the analysis of the results of the study on the issue of the respondents' trust in politics. The results are as detailed in the following table.

Table 3 Results on the Issue of the Respondents' Trust in Politics

	Political Trust: The Confidence that	Mean	S.D.
1	The government is doing a good job and spends tax wisely.	3.5435	1.15604
2	The SAO/Municipal provides good service to the people and make people's lives more comfortable.	3.2428	.99003
3	MPs operate with transparency. People can actually check their work.	3.4054	1.10281
4	Senators that value public participation and opinions.	3.1592	1.14210
5	The police operate on the principle of equality, no prejudice and no benefit for the sake of comrades.	3.0027	1.09820
6	Government officials perform their duties to the best of their ability and contribute to the benefit of the people.	3.2101	1.02814
7	Courts enforce the law equally on all citizens.	2.9800	.97569
8	The village headman can be relied upon for the general public.	3.5373	1.03135
9	If s/he is actively participating in political activities, s/he will be able to be a person who is very important to Thailand's politics.	3.5663	1.11098
10	S/he can understand the various political situations at both the national and local levels.	3.5950	1.12656

According to the results of the study, respondents had a moderate to high level of political trust. An interesting point was that the respondents had the most trust in the village headman, followed by the sub-district administrative organization/municipal council and civil servants.

When analyzing the results of the study on the issue of participation in SNCE, the details are as shown in the following table.

Table 4 Respondents' Participation in the SNCE

Group	Frequency of Attendance (Amount/Percentage)			Average of Participating Groups (N)	Analysis Symbol
	No Attendance	Once in a While	Attend Regularly		
Religious Group	36 / 9.0	294 / 73.5	61 / 15.3	1.4661	G1
Social Network	109 / 27.3	161 / 40.3	130 / 32.5	3.3681	G2
Teacher-Parents Club	210 / 53.3	131 / 33.2	53 / 13.5	1.0753	G3
Professional Group	260 / 65.3	96 / 24.1	42 / 10.6	1.4058	G4
Elderly Group	250 / 62.8	118 / 29.6	30 / 7.5	1.0405	G5
Cultural Group	308 / 77.0	79 / 19.8	13 / 3.3	1.0556	G6
A Group Formed by the State	260 / 65.0	109 / 27.3	31 / 7.8	1.3942	G7
Actor-Singer Support Group	320 / 80.0	70 / 17.5	10 / 2.5	1.1972	G8
Family / Ethnicity	286 / 71.5	101 / 25.3	13 / 3.3	1.0270	G9
Volunteer Group	196 / 49.5	159 / 40.2	41 / 10.4	1.1500	G10
Sports / Leisure Groups	298 / 74.5	82 / 20.5	20 / 5.0	1.3723	G11
Political Group	317 / 79.3	62 / 15.5	21 / 5.3	1.0645	G12

From the table, the top three SNCE in which the respondents participated the most regularly were 1) online social groups, 2) religious groups, and 3) teacher-parent groups/clubs. The top three groups or networks in which respondents participated in the most infrequently were 1) religious groups, 2) voluntary groups, and 3) social networks. The top three groups or networks in which respondents did not participate were 1) actor-singer support groups, 2) political groups, and 3) cultural groups. When analyzing the mean number of groups in which the respondents participated, the top three groups were 1) Social Networks, 2) Religious Groups, and 3) Occupational groups, with mean values of 3.3681, 1.4661 and 1.4058 respectively.

Testing Research Hypothesis

The correlation coefficient was analyzed between 12 independent variables, including the number of 12 types of SNCE, and political trust (The symbol used is Pol Trust). Both variables were quantitative variables that satisfy the preliminary agreement of regression analysis, the study then analyzed the data to test the hypothesis using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and tested the statistical significance of the correlation coefficient. The results of the study are now shown in the following table.

Table 5 Results of Testing the Correlation Coefficient

	Pol Trust	G1	G2	G3	G4	G5	G6	G7	G8	G9	G10	G11	G12
Pol Trust	1	.156	.083	.503**	.602**	.357**	.167	.557**	.071	.131	.567**	.166	.626**
G1		1	.384**	.194**	.330**	.122*	-.110*	.269**	-.121*	-.127*	.243**	.216**	.139**
G2			1	.258**	.302**	.069	.102*	.262**	.023	.040	.405**	.285**	.109*
G3				1	.348**	.102*	.146**	.341**	.018	.071	.249**	.132**	.104*
G4					1	.160**	.207**	.408**	.043	-.030	.270**	.255**	.186**
G5						1	.101*	.302**	-.026	.092	.045	.077	.147**
G6							1	.072	.202**	.168**	.151**	.253**	.176**
G7								1	-.052	.048	.285**	.100*	.104*
G8									1	.100*	.200**	.295**	.047
G9										1	.005	.050	.008
G10											1	.357**	.094
G11												1	.293**
G12													1

Note: **p < .001, *p < .05

From the table it was found that the correlation coefficient between 12 independent variables and political trust are between 0.071 and 0.626, which is no higher than .80. Therefore, regression analysis can be used. Additionally, six variables were statistically significantly positive at the .01 level with the Pol Trust: G3, G4, G5, G7, G10 and G12. Thus, these 6 variables were used for further multiple regression analysis using the Stepwise Method. The results are shown in the following table.

Table 6 Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis in Political Trust Forecasting

Variables	b	SE_b	β	t
G3	1.122	.030	.214	6.996**
G4	1.748	.029	.315	10.057**
G5	1.162	.025	.214	7.383**
G7	.925	.038	.167	5.153**
G10	2.047	.022	.391	13.213**
G12	.467	.015	.094	3.372**
(Constant)				
$R = 0.710$; $R^2 = 0.705$; $F = 155.326$; $SE_{est} = .907$; $a = .677$				

Note: ** $p < .001$

In studying factors that can together predict political trust, it was found that 6 independent variables were statistically significant in predicting political trust (p value < 0.001). The six variables accounted for 70.5 percent of the variation in political trust ($R2 = 0.705$), and were able to create a forecast equation. The researcher then calculated the multiple correlation coefficient, forecaster significance weight values in standard and raw scores as well as create multiple regression equations.

The details are as follows:

1. Forecasting equation

$$\hat{y} = b_0 + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + b_3x_3 + b_4x_4 + b_5x_5 + b_6x_6 + e$$

Political Trust = 1.348 + 1.122(G3) + 1.748(G4) + 1.162(G5) + 0.925(G7) + 2.047(G10) + 0.467(G12)

2. Forecast equation in standard score form

$$Z = \beta_1 Z_1 + \beta_2 Z_2 + \beta_3 Z_3 + \beta_4 Z_4 + \beta_5 Z_5 + \beta_6 Z_6 + \varepsilon$$

$$Z_{\text{Pol trust}} = .214_{(G3)} + .315_{(G4)} + .214_{(G5)} + .167_{(G7)} + .391_{1(G10)} + .094_{(G12)}$$

Summary of Testing Hypothesis

From the results of the study, the regression coefficient (β) was less than α, indicating that the independent variable had an effect on the dependent variable. Thus, it can be concluded that there is a relationship between SNCE and political trust in Sukhothai. The research hypothesis is accepted since there is a correlation between SNCE and political trust in Sukhothai Province.

However, the study also found that only certain networks were associated with political trust. This includes being a member of the teacher-parent group, the occupation group, the elderly group, a group formed by the state, volunteer groups, and political groups.

Summary

The study found that there were 6 types of participation in SNCE, namely 1) teacher-parent group, 2) occupation group, 3) elderly group, 4) a group formed by the state, 5) volunteer groups, and 6) political groups have a positive relationship with political trust. Notably, most of these groups are formal and/or semi-formal, hierarchical, professional organizations and have a relationship with government agencies. The overall characteristics of the various groups are detailed as follows:

1. **Teacher-Parent Group**: Generally, members of the teacher-parent group usually perform official functions at school. All members act together to promote the effectiveness of school education. There are various missions and responsibilities, such as 1) formulating action plans and projects in accordance with national education, 2) promoting cooperation between schools, communities and parents, and 3) improving the learning disposition of all students. Therefore, members of this group have the opportunity to work with other members from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. To achieve group objectives, all members need to use the group's existing human resources to support the school's potential to provide better educational services to students. It cannot be denied that this group of teachers-parents inevitably needs to work with government agencies.

2. **Occupational Group**: In general, this is a group of people who have the same occupation, common goals, and benefits. This type of group usually has a consistent set of objectives. There are rules and regulations to promote cooperation and prevent conflicts of interest that may arise in the future. In addition, the group's work is officially checked and reported to all members who are involved in group activities. Examples of occupation groups that appear in Sukhothai include tourism groups, goldsmiths, farmers' groups, truth savings groups, cooperative groups, and homestay groups.

3. **Elderly Group**: As Thailand has stepped into an aging society, it is clear that the government has continuously and seriously formulated policies and measures to care for the elderly. The Thai government has aimed to promote and support every village and community in establishing an elderly club as an important mechanism for effective development of the elderly. This results in the elderly having better health both physically and mentally. Elderly groups often receive assistance and support from government agencies. Therefore, it is undeniable that members of the elderly group generally have relationships with government agencies and have work experience in contacting and coordinating with government officials regularly. Examples of elderly people appearing in Sukhothai include elderly clubs that have responsibilities in all types of local government organizations. Every group promotes a variety of activities for the elderly, such as health activities that involve meeting with medical personnel, sport competitions, folk sports, recreational activities with the community, religious activities, and public service activities

4. **A Group Formed by the State**: These groups are often formed by the government. It is often related to the implementation of government policies or as part of government operations. These organizations are based on the original conceptual framework that uses state mechanisms to drive concrete work. Government agencies usually encourage people to come together to in ways that benefits, support, maintain, and carry out legal and moral activities among people for the common good of all. This type of group is ongoing and has a formal and written management system. Examples of state-organized groups that appear in Sukhothai include: the Village Fund Management Committee, the Village Community Committee, the Village Public Health Volunteers and the Civil Defense Volunteers.

5. **Volunteer Group**: In Thailand, voluntary groups are those that can be formed by the government, private, or civil society organizations. This group has the main objective of creating benefits and happiness in society. Currently, there are various forms of volunteer work, such as those that use the self-reliance model in the community and helping people in various fields. At present, Thai government agencies attach great importance to volunteer activities. This can be seen from the establishment of volunteer groups at various levels such as in the sub-district, district, and provincial levels. At each level, it is essential that the cooperation of the people in each community is required. Therefore, the work of volunteer groups encourages members to work, meet, socialize,

contact, and coordinate with people from many sectors. Examples of volunteer groups in Sukhothai are: Groups under the supervision of the Sukhothai Provincial Local Administration Promotion Office, the Red Cross, the Volunteer Office, the Sukhothai Educational Development Volunteer Group, the Sukhothai Elephant Lovers Volunteer Group, the Royal Volunteer and the Sawankhalok Volunteer Group.

6. Political Groups: It can be said that a political group is a gathering of individuals whose objective is to formulate public policy or influence the appropriation of social values in the direction that their group wishes. That is to say, in the process of making public policy, there are various forms of negotiation between groups. There is negotiation from the people's level, community leaders, local administrators, and members of the local council. Therefore, it is undeniable that members of political groups often interact, communicate, and negotiate their interests directly with government officials.

Discussion

To discuss the results of the study, on the one hand, the results of this study are consistent with Putnam's proposal as it has suggested that civic engagement networks are an important factor in generating trust (Suebvises, 2018; Putnam et al., 1993). However, when considering the results of the study, it was found that a group that has a relationship with political trust is categorized as an official, related to government agencies and professional groups. This led to the conclusion that this study was inconsistent with the proposal of Putnam in all aspects. That is to say, Putnam said that participation in vertical groups, or what Putnam calls "vertical voluntary associations" (Putnam et al., 1993, pp. 175-176), such as sports, recreational, or singing groups are groups that can generate people's political trust. However, this study found that groups with such characteristics had no relationship with political trust in Sukhothai.

On the contrary, on the issue of the type of SNCE in relation to political trust, this study, in turn, was consistent with the findings of Ken'ichi Ikeda and Richey. They studied the influence of participation in SNCE on political participation and trust in Japanese society. SNCE was divided into three categories: 1) horizontal or vertical ties, 2) open or closed associations, and 3) political or non-political associations. Their results confirmed Putnam's proposed theory of a relationship between participation in SNCE and political participation and trust. On the other hand, the study found that, in fact, only "vertical" social networks, both formal and informal forms of networking, can promote political participation and political trust. Ken'ichi Ikeda found that vertical social networks had a positive effect on promoting political participation. An individual who participates in a network where the relationship between members is in accordance with written rules, statutes, ordinances, or regulations and have a close relationship with government officials, are more likely to participate in political activities than those who are not members of such groups (Ikeda & Richey, 2005). Such traits have the effect of fostering increased political trust. Consequently, such relationships have the effect of fostering members' political trust. Furthermore, Jung-sung You's study is another study that could explain the findings of this study. In a study of 170,000 people in 80 countries, Yoo found that people's experience of working at organizations with written work rules, that follow the principles of good governance and democracy, and that have a tangible benefit management, will have the ability to encourage people to have greater trust than those people who join an organization in which members are bound together at the level of kinship (You, 2012).

Finally, it can be concluded that this study found a correlation between SNCE and political trust in Sukhothai. However, the results of this study clearly indicate that only SNCE which can be characterized as formal and/or

semi-formal, hierarchical, professional organizations, and have relationship with government agencies, are related to political trust. One important reason is that the more an individual has experience working with government personnel, the more they learn to understand the logic, objectives, procedures and processes of government personnel and agencies. These experiences can foster an individual's increased trust in both officials and political institutions.

Suggestions

According to the research, political trust can be developed through participation in formal networks and relationships with government agencies and officials. Therefore, executives of local government agencies, committees working on various government projects, and leaders of the public sector network, need to focus on encouraging more people's participation in such networks in order to foster consistent and ongoing inter-sectoral ties and interactions at various levels. In addition, people should be encouraged to have work experience in a formal working environment with a clear scope of duties and responsibilities and have clear measures in resource allocation. It is hoped that this will lead to the development of people's democratic work skills and political trust. This will ultimately make democracy in the country stronger and more sustainable.

Recommendation for the Future Research

The research that has been undertaken for this study highlights a few topics on which further research would be beneficial. These include the further investigation in other types of government agencies and officials on enhancing political trust. What are those agencies, and how do the agencies generate political trust? In addition, the correlation between SNCE and political trust needs to be test in other areas. It is expected that knowledge and understanding about the relationship between these two concepts would be broaden.

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