

Understanding and Political Participation in Constitutional Monarchy of Dusit District Residents

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Abstract—The purposes of this research were to study in three areas: 1) to study political understanding and participating of the constitutional monarchy, 2) to study the level of participation. This paper drew upon data collected from 395 Dusit residents by using questionnaire. In addition, a simple random sampling was utilized to collect data.

The findings revealed that 94 percent of respondents had a very good understanding of constitution monarchy with a mean of 4.8. However, the respondents overall had a very low level of participation with the mean score of 1.69 and standard deviation of .719.

Keywords—Constitution Monarchy, Political Understanding, Political Participating.

I. INTRODUCTION

NOWADAYS the importance of active political participation of the constitutional monarchy of Thailand 2007 is on the rise. The active political participation is vital to the development of understanding and of democracy that both representatives and voters can benefit from the interaction with each others. Moreover, active political participation allows common people to express their opinions about many important issues. This would assist the government to be able to respond to the real needs of the people. In other words, the active political participation would enhance government in terms of transparency, responsiveness, and accountability [1].

Likit Teeravakin (2009) stated that Thai education often emphasizes on the teaching of both knowledge and ethical standards [2]. However, the teaching of basic political and political skills will be taught only in the political science department. Therefore, most Thai students often receive a superficial knowledge of political science.

The development of understanding and increasing the level of active participation in the system of constitution monarchy is important to the country in terms of social, economic, and political development. The current government has offered three policies: 1) promote the understanding and the correct way to participate in the constitution monarchy system, 2) dissolve conflict situations which may lead to violence and support peaceful ways to express opinions, and 3) set up a political free committee to be the mediator and be able to monitor the problems without bias.

Since it is vital to promote the understanding of the active political participation, the researcher has a quest of studying

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the current situation of residents in the Dusit District, Bangkok and has aimed to study what are the levels of understanding and participation of the people within the constitutional monarchy.

II. METHODOLOGY

The population of this quantitative study was 31,837 people who lived in the Dusit District, Bangkok, Thailand. The random sample technique for this study was chosen to gain demographic variety. The sample size was determined by using Taro Yamane table with a 0.05 level of significance [3]. The data collation was done via a Thai questionnaire to elicit respondents' expectation and to obtain their level of understanding and participating in the activities of the constitutional democracy. The validity of each question in the questionnaire was tested using Item-Objective Congruency or IOC index. In addition, 30 respondents were used as a pilot study in order to find ways to improve each question and to get an acceptable Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of more than 0.7 and any question with Cronbach Alpha Coefficient less than 0.7 would be redesigned and retested. Statistic tools included mean, standard deviation, and t-test.

The objectives of this research

- 1) To study the political understanding of the constitutional monarchy system,
- 2) To study the level of participation in the constitutional monarchy system.

The conceptual framework of this research paper was based on the theory proposed by Almond and Powell, (1976) [4]; the understanding and participating can be measured both formally and informally.

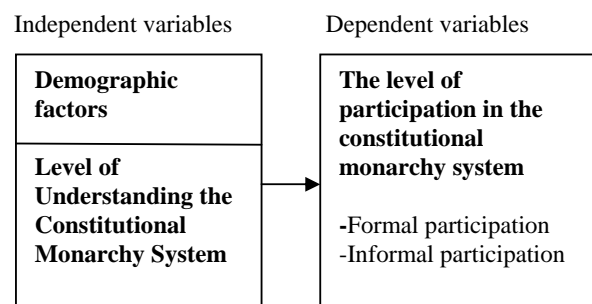


Fig. 1 The conceptual framework

III. FINDINGS

The findings of this research revealed that gender had no difference in the terms of level of participation. However,

differences in age, income, education, family, residency period, and source of information had a difference in the level of understanding and participation with a 0.05 level of significance.

TABLE I
LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING

	Total Number	Percentage
Level of Understanding		
1. Very good (Correct answers 16-20)	376	94.0
2. Good (Correct answers 14-15)	19	4.8
3. Medium (Correct answers 12-13)	3	0.8
4. Poor (Correct answers 10-11)	2	0.5
Total	400	100

From Table I, the total number of correct answers by the respondents was shown as follows. The majority of respondents or 376 could answer the questions correctly in the range of 16-20 questions.

TABLE II
LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING THE CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY SYSTEM

	N = 400	Percentage	Level
Level of Understanding			
1. A constitutional monarchy system	398	99.5	Very good
2. An open system	397	99.2	Very good
3. Constitution law as the highest law	4	1.0	Poor
4. Three separated power.	388	97.0	Very good
5. Legislative branch	182	45.5	Poor
6. Executive branch	369	92.2	Very good
7. Check and balance system	341	85.2	Very good
8. Thai Politics	319	79.8	Good
9. Political issues	315	78.8	Good
10. Term limit	388	97.0	Very good
11. Respect other's rights	399	99.8	Very good
12. Equal right	397	99.2	Very good
13. Free speech	391	97.8	Very good
14. People's right to vote	384	96.0	Very good
15. Property right	390	97.5	Very good
16. religion right	391	97.8	Very good
17. Equal right	396	99.0	Very good
18. Law and order	397	99.2	Very good
19. The majority right	393	98.2	Very good
20. Judicial branch	390	97.5	Very good
Total		88.47	Very good

From Table II, the first three topics that the majority of respondents could answer correctly included questions 1, 11, and 18 which included the topics of a constitutional monarchy system, respect other's right, and law and order. The question that the majority of respondents had not understood at all was topic 3 which was about the constitution law as the highest law of the nation.

TABLE III
LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION

	Mean	S.D.	Level
Level of Participation			
Informal Participation	1.79	.633	Low
Formal Participation	1.58	.849	Low
Total	1.69	.719	Low

From Table III, the overall mean and standard deviation for the level of participation was 1.69 and 0.719 respectively. This was quite low and it reflects the low levels of both informal and formal participation.

TABLE IV
FORMAL PARTICIPATION

	Mean	S.D.	Level
Formal Participation			
1. Election	2.79	.632	Medium
2. Free speech	1.59	.841	Low
3. Member of Political Party	1.47	.911	Lowest
4. Interest group	1.33	.632	Lowest
Total	1.79	.633	Lowest

From Table IV, the election process had the highest mean while other activities of participation showed a very low mean score.

TABLE V
INFORMAL PARTICIPATION

	Mean	S.D.	Level
Informal participation			
Protest on the street	1.88	1.249	Low
Violence on the street	1.27	.586	Lowest
Total	1.58	.849	Low

From Table V, informal participation, protest on the street had a higher mean score than violence on street.

IV. DISCUSSION

The findings of this research have revealed a fact that there was a high level of understanding but low level of participation of the respondents in the constitutional monarchy system. This reflected the quality of Thai voters. These findings concur with the idea of Almond and Verba which explained by Sombat Thamrongwong (1993) that the political behavior of voters was influenced by their knowledge and understanding of the political process [5]. The more knowledge and understanding voters have, the more they participate in the political process. Accordingly, the political development requires people to understand three factors which are affective, cognitive, and evaluative of the political system. The findings also agreed with the ideas of Geoffrey K. Robert, (1971) which stated both informal and formal participation was important for the improvement and the development of the democracy process [6].

From the finding, the overall level of participation was very low. However, the level of education did not make any difference in terms of their participation only for gender. The government should promote and encourage the level of participation more in terms of formal participation, especially during the election process. Moreover, gender does not make any difference in terms of the level of participation. The reason may come from the campaign to promote equal rights in Thailand which may result in the similar level of participation.

V. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES

The limitation of this paper came from sampling only a small group of people in one district which may not represent opinions of the mainstream ideas of the people in Bangkok, Thailand. Therefore, the findings may not be generalized to a bigger picture of the understanding and participating in the constitutional monarchy system. With the reason in mind, future research should use random sampling with a larger sample group. In addition, future studies should cover the reasons that people want to actively participate in political activities.

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