การตื่นตัวทางการเมืองของเยาวชนไทยผ่านแฟลชม็อบ จังหวัดพิษณุโลก ประเทศไทย*

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บทคัดย่อ

     บทความนี้วิเคราะห์ความคิดทางการเมือง ประสบการณ์และการรับรู้ของผู้ประท้วงเยาวชนคนรุ่นใหม่ที่เข้าร่วมแฟลชม็อบในจังหวัดพิษณุโลก ประเทศไทย ในช่วงปี 2563 เพื่อสะท้อนแรงจูงใจ อารมณ์ความรู้สึก และความปรารถนาทางการเมือง ปัจจัยที่นำไปสู่การมีส่วนร่วมในการประท้วงแฟลชม็อบ โดยใช้ทฤษฎีโครงสร้างทางการเมืองและการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกกับเยาวชนที่มีบทบาทในแฟลชม็อบของจังหวัดพิษณุโลก จำนวน 10 คน จากการศึกษาพบว่า แฟลชม็อบในจังหวัดพิษณุโลกเกิดจากปัจจัยกระตุ้นหลายอย่าง ไม่ว่าจะเป็นความถดถอยทางเศรษฐกิจจากการบริหารที่ไม่มีประสิทธิภาพของรัฐบาลซึ่งกระตุ้นให้เยาวชนที่มีความตื่นตัวร่วมในแฟลชม็อบ รวมทั้งการยุบพรรคอนาคตใหม่ที่มีส่วนสำคัญในการกระตุ้นในฐานะสัญลักษณ์ของความอยุติธรรมในสังคมไทย นอกจากนี้ยังพบว่าโครงสร้างทางการเมืองที่ไม่เป็นประชาธิปไตย เช่น การควบคุมของรัฐ การกดทับทางการเมือง และการขาดความปลอดภัยและความยุติธรรมในการแสดงออกทางการเมืองเป็นส่วนหลักสำคัญต่อโครงสร้างที่บีบคั้นและนำไปสู่การเคลื่อนไหวแบบแฟลชม็อบ ดังนั้น เยาวชนที่มีบทบาทในแฟลชม็อบจึงต้องการประชาธิปไตยที่แท้จริง การรื้อระบอบอำนาจนิยม ความปลอดภัยทางการเมือง รัฐสวัสดิการและความยุติธรรม โดยมองว่าการเปลี่ยนแปลงของวัฒนธรรมและระบบทางการเมืองเป็นสิ่งสำคัญต่อการสร้างสังคมที่เท่าเทียมกันมากขึ้น และต่างเชื่อว่าการส่งเสริมความคิดเชิงประชาธิปไตยจากระดับของรากหญ้าเป็นส่วนสำคัญต่อการบรรลุเป้าหมาย ดังนั้น จากประสบการณ์และมุมมองจึงสะท้อนถึงความต้องการทางเศรษฐกิจที่ท้าทาย การส่งเสริมคุณค่าทางประชาธิปไตย และความเป็นธรรมทางการเมืองและความปลอดภัยเพื่อการอยู่ร่วมกันและสังคมที่เป็นธรรมในประเทศไทย

คำสำคัญ: แฟลชม็อบ, โครงสร้างที่ไม่เป็นประชาธิปไตย, การเคลื่อนไหวของเยาวชน, การตื่นตัวทางการเมือง

Political Awakening of Thai Youth in Flash Mobs, Phitsanulok Province, Thailand[*]

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the political ideas, experiences, and perceptions of youth protestors who participated in a flash mob in Phitsanulok Province, Thailand in 2020. It aims to study the motivations, emotions, and political aspirations of these participants and explore the factors that drove their involvement in the demonstration. The study utilized the political structure theory and conducted in-depth interviews with ten active youth participants from the flash mob in Phitsanulok province. The findings reveal that the flash mobs in Phitsanulok were spurred by various precipitating and exogenous factors. Economic deterioration resulting from the government's inadequate administration played a significant role in motivating the active youth to join the flash mob. The dissolution of the Future Forward Party, seen as a symbol of injustice in Thai society, also played a crucial role. Additionally, the study identified undemocratic structures, such as state controls, political repression, and the lack of safety and fairness in political expressions, as key sources of structural strain that prompted the flash mob mobilization. Consequently, the participants demanded true democracy, the dismantling of authoritarian regimes, political safety, state welfare, and justice. They viewed a transformation of Thai political culture and system as essential for creating a more equitable society. They believed that fostering democratic thinking from the grassroots level was pivotal in achieving this goal. By examining their experiences and perspectives, the study emphasizes the need to address economic challenges, promote democratic values, and ensure political safety and fairness for a more inclusive and just society in Thailand.

Keywords: Flash mob, Undemocratic structure, Youth movement, Political awakening

Introduction

The political movements of Thai youth gained momentum following the dissolution of the Future Forward Party on February 21, 2020. The initial reaction took the form of a "flash mob" protest in central Bangkok and has since spread to various locations, particularly within university campuses. Thai students, in particular, perceive the dissolution of the Future Forward Party as a stark manifestation of political injustice in Thailand. According to these students, the court system and legal framework have been manipulated as political tools by the ruling elites and the military government. They argue that these mechanisms have been employed to stifle ideas and suppress dissent, effectively depriving the country's youth of a voice in free and fair elections. The prevailing sentiment is that this suppression obstructs the democratic aspirations of Thai youth.

The uprising has found considerable traction on social media platforms, with Twitter serving as a prominent channel for mobilization and coordination. Notably, a large-scale demonstration took place in front of the Democracy Monument in Bangkok on July 18, 2020, showcasing the collective strength and determination of these youth activists. Unfortunately, as the movement has gained momentum, its participants have faced arrests and threats, further exacerbated social discontent and rallied more individuals against the military junta. The repressive measures employed by the authorities have only intensified the resolve of these activists and amplified their call for political change.

Overall, the political movements of Thai youth have emerged as a response to the dissolution of the Future Forward Party, highlighting concerns over political injustice, limitations on democratic participation, and the suppression of dissent. The movement's growth, facilitated by social media, has not only galvanized support but also provoked a harsh crackdown by the authorities, deepening the social divide and fueling the call for reform.

In addition to the dissolution of the Future Forward Party, the outcome of the general election in 2019 further exacerbated the sense of injustice among Thai youth. The election served as a political experience that highlighted their concerns. As a result, the movement advocating for political change found support in over 25 Thai universities. Social media played a significant role in this movement, with the use of hashtags (#) on various platforms to campaign for the removal of the Election Commission. The youth activists also created a website, www.change.org, as a means of organizing and coordinating their efforts in calling for the removal of the Election Commission. More than 40 student organizations

and activity groups issued statements in support of the removal of the Election Commission, further amplifying the movement's reach and impact. Additionally, groups like the Youth and Direct Democracy Thailand and the Network of New Generation for Social Changes lodged a complaint with the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC), urging an examination of the Election Commission. The primary grievances behind the protests against the 2019 election result included several factors. Firstly, there was dissatisfaction with the delay in receiving election votes from New Zealand, which subsequently hindered the timely counting of the total votes. Secondly, there was discontent with the decision to halt vote counting on March 24, 2019. Lastly, there were suspicions regarding the Election Commission's performance in other aspects, such as discrepancies between the number of voters and the number of votes cast (Youth and Direct Democracy Thailand, 2020). Consequently, starting from February 2020, a significant number of Thai youths participated in demonstrations demanding constitutional reforms, the resignation of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha, and substantial reforms within the monarchy. These calls for change reflect the growing frustration and aspirations of Thai youth seeking a more democratic and just political system (Lertchoosakul, K., 2021).

In Phitsanulok province, a network of university students formed, and more than 28 networks collectively issued a statement on April 1, 2019, demanding an audit of the Election Commission's actions. Additionally, on April 2, 2019, students from Pibulsongkram Rajabhat University and Naresuan University organized the "See Less" activity to gather names of individuals supporting the removal of the Election Commission. However, the student movement faced interference, control, and threats from the police, military, and university administrators. The intervention, control, and threats imposed by the police, military, and university administrators resulted in a hardening of attitudes among the students. These actions reinforced their opposition to the dictatorship, authoritarianism of the Thai government, and the prevailing issues of injustice in Thai society. The atmosphere of fear created by such interventions played a significant role in shaping the political experiences and perceptions of Thai students. Consequently, they became more critical of the social and political contexts surrounding them.

This article aims to delve into the political ideals, experiences, and perceptions of Thai youth who participated in flash mobs in Phitsanulok during 2020. Its objective is to comprehend the motivations and factors that prompted their involvement in political protests. The intention is to shed light on the

underlying reasons driving their active participation and to provide a deeper understanding of their aspirations for political change.

Research Objectives

1. This study aims to delve into the political ideals, experiences, and perceptions of Thai youth who actively participated in flash mobs in Phitsanulok province during 2020.

2. The research intends to gain an understanding of the motivations and factors that influenced the youth's decision to mobilize and participate in the flash mobs in Phitsanulok.

Literature Reviews

Political Opportunity Structure

According to Tarrow (1994), the concept of the political opportunity structure refers to a set of consistent but not necessarily formal or permanent factors that encourage or discourage social or political actors from utilizing their internal resources to form social movements and engage in contentious politics. Tarrow's main idea revolves around "contentious politics," which denotes the emergence of responses to changes in political opportunities, potentially shaping the incentives and constraints for individual participants. Essentially, it highlights how shifts in political opportunities or constraints create conditions that give rise to contentious politics. Participants in such movements may employ various forms of action, including riots, strikes, and barricades, among others, as part of their repertoire of strategies.

Indeed, the political opportunity structure is vital in shaping and influencing youth political movements in Thailand. The changing in political, social, and economic environments contribute to the framing of collective action and the emergence of contentious politics. Political situations and trigger factors can stimulate people's mobilization and legitimize their participation in political or social movements. Consequently, contentious politics can lead to collective challenges by social movements united around common purposes and social solidarities, targeting political opponents and authority figures.

The political opportunity structure encompasses several key dimensions. Firstly, it includes the degree of openness or closure of the institutionalized political system. The level of access and inclusiveness within the political system affects the opportunities available for youth movements to voice their concerns and demand change. Secondly, the stability or instability of the political system and state is crucial. Instability can create opportunities for youth movements to mobilize and push for reforms, while a stable system may pose challenges to their efforts. Thirdly, the presence or absence of allies and

support groups is significant. The availability of like-minded organizations, activists, and social groups that can offer support, resources, and networks strengthens the capacity of youth movements. Lastly, the division within the elite groups or their tolerance of protests shapes the political opportunity structure. If the elite groups are divided or tolerant of dissent, it creates an environment more conducive to youth mobilization and collective action (Giugni, M., 2009).

These dimensions of the political opportunity structure interact with social factors, trigger events, and grievances to shape the formation and trajectory of youth political movements. They can provide openings for collective actors to form or join social and political movements, as well as contribute to structural strain caused by severe situations like conflicts or political oppression. Overall, the political opportunity structure plays a significant role in the formation and dynamics of youth political movements in Thailand, as it influences the opportunities and constraints they face, and impacts their ability to challenge existing power structures and advocate for change.

Social and political movements can operate within both open and closed institutional settings. However, the extent of collective action and mobilization depends on the development of political motivation and the formation of meaningful action or ideology within these movements. Factors such as military coups and economic crises can act as precipitating factors, influencing the mobilization of social movements.

Moreover, the success or failure of mobilization efforts is contingent on various factors. These include the readiness of organizations, the level of insurgent consciousness, the prevailing political opportunity structure, the presence of alliances or support groups, the formulation of effective strategies and tactics, and the response of counter-movements. It is essential to understand the political opportunity structure in a dynamic manner, as it evolves over time, presenting shifting opportunities and challenges for mobilization. Furthermore, political actors within social movements tend to be more responsive to general factors in the political environment rather than issue-specific conditions. This suggests that broader political contexts and dynamics shape the actions and strategies of these actors (Meyer, D.S. & Minkoff, D.C., 2004). By considering these dynamics, we can gain a better understanding of the complexities and influences that impact social and political movements.

The political opportunity concept provides a broader and more dynamic framework for studying political and social movements. Scholars like Charles Tilly (1978) and Doug McAdam (1996) have

advanced the understanding of political opportunities and contentious politics, emphasizing the interplay between social movements, the political system, and processes of contention. This perspective highlights the interaction and intersection between state actions and insurgent challenges.

State actions toward social movements are crucial independent variables that can significantly impact the movement and its chances of success. The actions taken by the state can either enable or constrain the opportunities available for the movement to mobilize and achieve its goals. Additionally, external factors or exogenous factors play a critical role in shaping the political opportunity structure and influencing social movements. These factors, which are beyond the control of the movement itself, can create favorable or unfavorable conditions for mobilization and activism (Meyer, D.S. & Minkoff, D.C., 2004).

Given these considerations, applying the political opportunity structure theory to study the youth's flash mob in Phitsanulok province, Thailand, becomes essential. It allows for a deeper understanding of the motivations and factors that drove the youth to join and mobilize the flash mob. By examining the political opportunity structure, we can uncover the dynamics and contextual factors that influenced their participation and activism as follows:
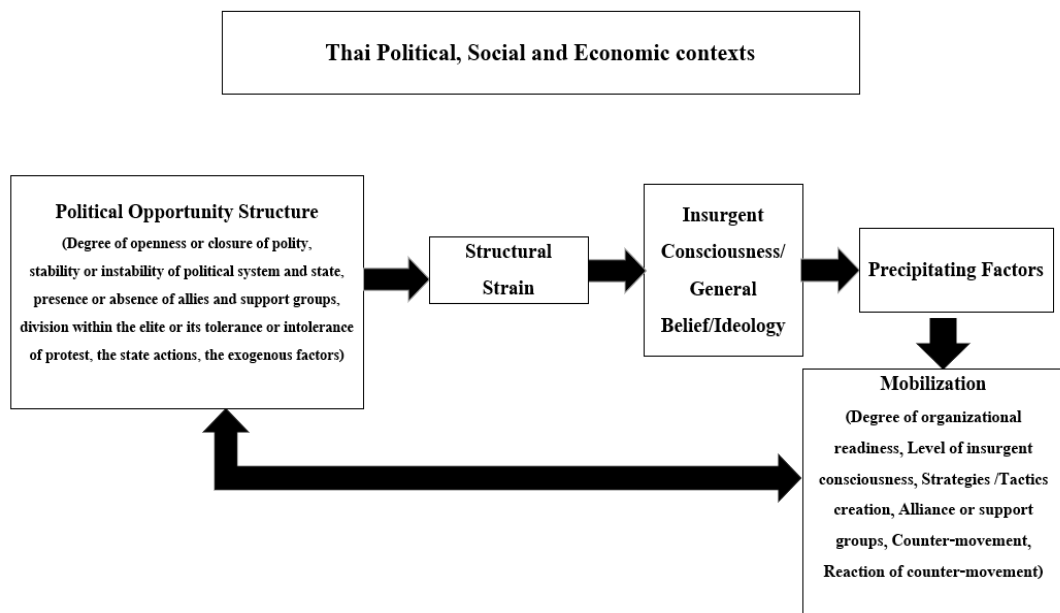
Figure 1 Research Framework

Research Methodology

The research conducted qualitative research using in-depth interviews to examine the political ideals, experiences, and perceptions of the active leaders of youth protestors who organized the flash mob in Phitsanulok province in 2020.

Population and Sample Groups

The research employed purposive sampling to select a sample group of 10 participants who were active leaders of flash-mob in Phitsanulok province. The criteria for selection included age between 18 to 20 years old, birth years ranging from 1994 to 1996, and being first-time voters in the general election of 2019. Additionally, the participants had to have experience participating in and mobilizing flash mobs in Phitsanulok province multiple times throughout 2020.

Purposive sampling is a non-random sampling technique commonly used in qualitative research to select participants who possess specific characteristics or experiences relevant to the research focus. By using this sampling method, the research aimed to ensure that the selected participants would provide valuable insights into the political ideals, experiences, and perceptions of the youth leaders involved in the flash mobs. The sample group of 10 participants, meeting the established criteria, allowed for an in-depth exploration of their perspectives and experiences. The research sought to capture a diverse range of insights from individuals who played active roles in the youth protests, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of their motivations and factors influencing their engagement in the flash mobs.

Methods of Data Collection

The research employed in-depth interviews with 10 active youth leaders of the flash mobs in Phitsanulok province, Thailand. This qualitative approach allowed for detailed and personal insights into their experiences, perceptions, and motivations. Additionally, the research utilized a documentary research approach to supplement the interview data. This involved examining academic documents, research papers, academic articles, and online media sources that discussed and presented the phenomenon of youth mobilization in Thailand from 2006 to 2020. These sources provided valuable background information and contextual understanding of the broader youth movement in the country.

Furthermore, the research incorporated the analysis of social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. By observing the metaphors, hashtags, and political discourses created by the youth for communication during the flash mob phenomena, the researcher gained insights into the online discourse and messaging strategies employed by the youth activists. This analysis helped to understand the ways in which the youth communicated their political messages and engaged with the broader public.

The combination of in-depth interviews, documentary research, and social media analysis provided a comprehensive approach to exploring the political ideals, experiences, and perceptions of the youth leaders involved in the flash mobs. It allowed for a multi-faceted understanding of the phenomenon, drawing on both the personal narratives of the youth leaders and the broader socio-political context in which the mobilization took place.

Data Analysis

The research employed the content analysis method to analyze the data gathered from the in-depth interviews, documents, and media sources. Content analysis is a systematic approach to interpret and understand the various notions expressed by the youth protestors who actively participated in the flash mob in Phitsanulok province. It involves analyzing the content of the data to identify common themes, ideas, and emotions that emerge from the participants' narratives.

Through content analysis, the researcher aimed to gain insights into the construction of meaning within the experiences, perceptions, and motivations of the youth protestors. It sought to understand how they interpreted and made sense of their participation in the flash mob, and what they considered to be true and important to them. The analysis focused on uncovering their values, motivations, and the factors that influenced their decision to join the flash mob.

Furthermore, the research aimed to examine how the political actions of the youth protestors reflected the underlying conflicts within the social and political structure of the Thai state. By applying political structure theory, the study sought to analyze the motivating factors behind the youth's involvement in the flash mob movement. It aimed to understand their political and social ideals, intentions, political ideologies, perceptions, and the structural conflicts that served as driving forces for their participation in the flash mob.

Overall, the content analysis method was utilized to uncover and interpret the rich and diverse narratives of the youth protestors, shedding light on their experiences, motivations, and the broader socio-political context in which the flash mob movement emerged

Research Results

Perceptions, Experiences, Political Ideals and Motivation Factors of the Thai Youth in Flash-Mobs of Phitsanulok Province

Based on this research, it has been observed that middle-class youths, in addition to other groups within the new generation, demonstrate a higher level of awareness and enthusiasm regarding their own

welfare issues and rights. They perceive themselves as part of the emerging middle class within a society characterized by significant levels of inequality. Their understanding of these issues is shaped by their family experiences and the educational environment they are exposed to. As a result, they consider the issue of inequality to be a personal matter, deeply affecting their own lives. They recognize the importance of the welfare state as a fundamental right of the people, understanding its significant impact on their overall well-being.

The flash mob movement of Thai youth in Phitsanulok was driven by several crucial factors:

1. Intolerance towards the administration of the Prayuth government: The youth voiced their discontent and dissatisfaction with the policies and actions of the Prayuth government. This growing frustration with the government's performance and governance played a significant role in motivating their participation in the movement.

2. Economic deterioration and its impact on families and future prospects: The declining economic conditions had a direct impact on the lives of the youth, their families, and the wider population. The adverse economic situation served as a catalyst for their activism as they sought to address the economic challenges and secure better future prospects.

3. Dissolution of the Future Forward Party: The dissolution of the Future Forward Party was seen as a severe setback to the democratic process in Thailand. The youth perceived this move as disregarding the voices and votes of over 6 million Thai citizens, particularly the new generation. This event further fueled their determination to advocate for democratic principles and participation.

4. Criticism of undemocratic structures and controls: The Thai youth displayed a keen understanding of power dynamics within political institutions. They criticized the undemocratic aspects of the electoral mechanism, senator elections, the Constitution, and the national strategy. These institutional structures, perceived to be designed by the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO), were regarded as limiting the democratic rights and representation of the Thai people.

These factors collectively played a crucial role in mobilizing the Thai youth in Phitsanulok, empowering them to voice their concerns and demand changes in governance and democratic processes. Moreover, the Thai youth rejected patronage relationships and the network of interests that perpetuate corruption and authoritarianism. They recognized that these issues were not adequately addressed within the political discourse propagated by Thai elites and the conservative middle class. Consequently, the

youth's new political perceptions and their direct involvement in political conversations and actions challenged the existing social hegemony dominated by Thai elites, unsettling older generations who were accustomed to the stability of traditional political culture. This discomfort, worry, and discontent among older Thais reflects the tension arising from the youth's challenge to the established norms and power structures.

According to Collective Action Theory, first introduced by Mancur Olson in 1965, the triggering factor for collective actions can be attributed to the socially turbulent circumstances following the military coup in 2014. The initial social reactions against the coup and the power exerted by the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) created a circular reaction and collective excitement among the people, which was further amplified through social media and social contagion, leading to the emergence of flash mobs across the country (Phintobtang, P., 2009).

These factors contributed to the development of shared emotions, ideals, expectations, and consciousness among the protesters who were living under the control and threats of an undemocratic structure in Thailand. Additionally, the shortcomings of the Thai justice procedures created political opportunities and facilitated the continuous growth of social movements.

The presence of common emotions and the dissemination of information through social media and social contagion played a significant role in mobilizing individuals and fostering a sense of collective identity and purpose. These circumstances, combined with the prevailing undemocratic structure and issues with the justice system, provided the necessary conditions for sustained political activism and the continuation of social movements.

Indeed, the undemocratic political structure of Thailand served as a structural strain that shaped the political perceptions, experiences, and ideologies of the Thai youth. This strain, resulting from the limitations and challenges of the political system, played a significant role in motivating the flash mob movements. Moreover, the political awakening and activism of youth groups in central Bangkok had a ripple effect and inspired youths in other regions, such as Phitsanulok, to mobilize and join the flash mob movements. The actions and achievements of their peers in the capital city served as a source of inspiration and motivation for youth in other areas to voice their concerns and participate in collective actions.

Additionally, there was a loose network connection among youth groups in Thai universities. This network facilitated the sharing of information, experiences, and ideas, contributing to the

coordination and organization of the flash mob movements across different regions. The exchange of knowledge and collaboration among these youth groups played a crucial role in creating a broader and more impactful movement.

According to Tarrow (1994), the diverse movements, groups, and networks of the new Thai generation reflect not only their opposition to the military-dominated government but also their aim to bring about significant changes to the Thai social and political system. These social movements, groups, and networks have emerged through the exchange of ideas and information facilitated by social media and knowledge creation, challenging the dominant ideology and authoritarian regime.

The cycle of contention, as described by Tarrow, refers to a process where one wave of protest and contention leads to subsequent cycles of activism and mobilization. These cycles of contention challenge the traditional political and social establishment, gradually increasing the political opportunity structure and creating openings for other social and political groups to engage in collective action.

The movements of Free Youth and the Free People Party, in particular, have played a significant role in inspiring other groups of new generation activists through ideological interaction and the development of a new political culture. These cycles of contention create opportunities for unions to form and for success in terms of inspiration, leading to the amalgamation of various groups into a cohesive movement. The spread of information and rapid dissemination, coupled with techniques for organizing gatherings and the unrestricted access to information for group members, are crucial factors in this process.

Overall, the cycles of contention serve as catalysts for change and provide opportunities for various social and political groups to come together, inspired by the movements of Free Youth and the Free People Party, as well as by the wider ideological transformation and the access to information enabled by social media.

Political Aspirations of Thai Youth in Flash-mob

The undemocratic political structure, along with the triggering factors, played a significant role in fostering a shared sense of political purpose among the youth movements. This sense of purpose extends both to the realm of social media and real-life activism, as the youth challenge the prevailing social and political orders. The youths who played an active role in mobilizing the flash mobs in Phitsanulok had political demands that extended beyond a simple call for democracy. They sought a democracy that

embraced new concepts of Thai political culture and values, one that prioritized the rights of the people and aimed to dismantle authoritarian regimes present in Thai society. They recognized that true democracy was a crucial precursor for reforming and developing the political landscape of Thailand, ultimately shaping the future lives of its citizens.

By emphasizing the importance of a democracy rooted in the rights of the people, these youth activists highlighted the need to address fundamental issues such as political oppression, lack of transparency, and power imbalances within the existing system. They sought a political culture that was more inclusive, participatory, and responsive to the needs and aspirations of all Thai citizens, particularly the new generation.

For these youths, the demand for democracy went beyond superficial changes and aimed to bring about a fundamental transformation of the political regime. They recognized that a reformation of Thai political culture and values was essential for ensuring a more just, equitable, and democratic society. By championing these ideals and demanding a democracy based on new concepts of political culture and values, the youth activists in Phitsanulok demonstrated their deep commitment to creating a better future for themselves and their fellow citizens.

The issue of injustice in Thai society was a central concern for the flash mobs. This encompassed human rights violations, particularly those carried out under Sections 112 and 116 of the Thai criminal code, as well as instances of state violence, such as the prosecution of political opponents and the use of force to disperse the Red Shirt protests. Furthermore, the problems within the judicial system and organizations in Thailand were also significant contributing factors. The youth movement recognized that the undemocratic structure suppressed political and social opinions concerning sensitive and critical issues. The judicial process in Thailand was seen as limiting freedom of expression and inhibiting discussions on important matters affecting the people. These issues converged under the backdrop of an undemocratic structure, which stifled political and social discourse and hindered progress on addressing the concerns of the people. The flash mobs in Phitsanulok served as a platform for the Thai youth to express their discontent with these issues and demand justice, democracy, and a more inclusive society.

Moreover, the flash mob movement in Phitsanulok was driven by a sense of "hopelessness" in the political system, the courts, and the justice system, which was deeply felt by the youth in Thai society. This feeling of hopelessness was a result of their continuous perception and experience of injustice within

these institutions. It was this sentiment that motivated them to join the flash mobs and advocate for justice and good politics, which they saw as crucial for a fair and equitable distribution of values in society.

The youth in Phitsanulok were inspired by the ideal of state welfare and justice, which served as a driving force behind their political movements. They called for the state to protect people's rights and freedoms and ensure true justice for all. They had personally experienced an environment of injustice and political suppression in their daily lives. Youth leaders, in particular, faced scrutiny, surveillance, and threats from the police, military, and university administrators due to their active involvement and their willingness to express their political opinions and criticize what they deemed unfair, such as student welfare and the lack of free and safe spaces for political expression in universities and schools.

The youth demanded a fairer political and social structure, one that prioritized the demands and sovereignty of the people rather than serving the interests of a select few or specific social classes. They firmly believed that politics should be designed to address the needs of the people and ensure a just society. Through their activism, they sought to challenge the existing power dynamics and advocate for a more inclusive and democratic political system.

The youth in the flash mobs of Phitsanulok sought to establish connections between their personal experiences, political phenomena, and the broader political structure at the national level. They demanded a space where they could freely express their political opinions and engage in creative politics, with the ultimate goal of cultivating a new political culture and advancing the process of democratization.

Their call for political free speech and the creation of a new political culture reflected their desire for a more inclusive and participatory democracy. They aimed to challenge the existing political space and establish one that is free and fair for all individuals, where their voices can be heard and their rights respected. They emphasized the importance of genuine politics and a constitution that truly serves the interests and needs of the people.

Moreover, the youth in the flash mobs embraced socialist ideals within the framework of a liberal democracy. They recognized the significance of state welfare in addressing the needs and well-being of every individual in society. They emphasized the importance of social justice and advocated for policies and structures that would ensure a more equal and just distribution of resources and opportunities. By combining their demands for political space, a new political culture, and the incorporation of socialist ideals, the youth in Phitsanulok demonstrated their commitment to shaping a political system that is inclusive,

responsive, and aligned with the welfare and interests of all members of society.

The youth in the flash mobs of Phitsanulok firmly believed in the importance of initiating political change from the grassroots level. They recognized that meaningful change starts with a clear and uncorrupted set of ideals, and they were determined to create a new ethical value system that aligns with the evolving perspectives, opinions, and norms of Thai society and the global community. They understood that this process begins at the family level, where individuals are exposed to new ideas and develop their own consciousness and identity in relation to political struggles.

To build a solid foundation for democratic thinking, the active youth in Phitsanulok engaged in studying and discussing local history. By understanding the historical context and heritage of their community, they aimed to shape their ideals and develop a strong sense of political consciousness. They recognized the value of history in informing their political aspirations and actions. Moreover, the youth in the flash mobs were passionate about making politics tangible and relatable to everyone's lives and future. They sought to bridge the gap between politics and everyday existence, ensuring that political discussions and decisions were connected to the concerns and aspirations of the people. By encouraging individuals to question and imagine a better political system with the thought-provoking question, "If politics were good, what would it be like?" (The Matter, 2020), they aimed to foster critical thinking and collective envisioning of a more ideal and just political reality.

In summary, the youth in the flash mobs of Phitsanulok were driven by the desire to initiate political change from the grassroots level. They focused on creating new ethical values, studying local history, and making politics accessible and relevant to people's lives. Their goal was to establish a foundation of democratic thinking that reflects the evolving needs and aspirations of Thai society while fostering active citizen participation in shaping a better political future.

Discussion

In this paper, the focus is on the emergence of a vibrant youth movement in Thailand, particularly in Phitsanulok province. The movement aims to bring politics closer to everyday life and foster a new political culture. It seeks political reform for a true democracy where the monarchy operates within the Constitution and people have safe spaces to express their opinions. The paper emphasizes the need for a transition in Thai political thought and culture to accommodate new ideas and aspirations.

The emergence of a new political culture in Thailand challenges the traditional authoritarian regime and undemocratic structure. Justice issues play a critical role in delegitimizing the power of the modern Thai state. This challenge creates opportunities for freedom of speech and expression on sensitive political and social matters, as well as the protection of rights from the state. The youth strongly believe in the importance of a real democratic culture and a transformation of Thai political structure and culture. They see politics as crucial to everyday life, and their struggle revolves around achieving social justice and a better future. They envision a politics that can address injustice and lead to positive changes in their lives and country.

The politics of everyday life have become crucial for the youth, who prioritize issues of social justice in their struggle. They firmly believe that addressing these injustices is key to improving their lives and securing a positive future (Jarernpanit, T. 2019). They recognize that politics is the means through which they can bring about the necessary changes. As a result, they aspire to create a vision of good politics that can positively impact their lives and shape the future of their country.

The political ideals, emotions, and intentions of the youth in Phitsanulok province have been shaped by their experiences and perceptions of the political landscape since the military coup in 2006. Growing up amidst the coups of 2006 and 2014, as well as the ongoing conflicts between different political factions, they have come to realize that coups are not an effective solution for Thai politics. Instead, they believe that political change should originate from the grassroots level of society.

The youth have developed a keen interest in understanding the inner workings of society and the importance of open communication with the people. They no longer rely solely on organizing large-scale demonstrations or mobs but instead focus on smaller, decentralized groups that spread across various regions of the country. They employ symbolic movements, cultural weapons, and social media as tools for mobilization and expression. However, this change in approach by the new generation has also prompted political intervention from the military and elite groups. These external forces have sought to counter and suppress the youth movements, recognizing their potential for challenging the established political order.

Research by Lertchoosakul (2018) supports the observation that the current Thai student movements employ distinct strategies and mobilization tactics compared to earlier generations. They operate in smaller, decentralized groups, relying on symbolism, cultural influence, and the power of social media to garner support

and convey their messages. Overall, the political landscape and the youth's experiences have influenced their approach to political activism, emphasizing the need for grassroots involvement, open communication, and the utilization of diverse strategies to bring about meaningful change.

The flash mob in Phitsanulok reflects both the people's reaction and their political movement rooted in a new thinking and political culture. It signifies the frustration and desperation regarding politics and the prevailing injustices in Thai society. Several trigger factors contributed to the emergence of the flash mobs, such as the dissolution of the Future Forward Party by the Constitutional Court, the functioning of the Election Committee and judicial organizations, ongoing human rights violations, and the political awakening among Thai youth in Bangkok and other parts of the country.

In Phitsanulok, the desire for a free and fair political system and a democratic structure served as a strong motivation for the youth to engage in the flash mob movements. Their experiences of political suppression by state institutions further fueled their determination and political actions. These factors collectively led them to take an active stand against the existing political order and strive for a more just and democratic society.

The flash mob movements in various places and academic institutions across Thailand are characterized by their vibrant nature and extensive use of social media platforms to advance their objectives. Their collective goal revolves around bringing about a transformation in the unfair political, social, and economic structures of the country. A study conducted by Lertchoosakul (2021) focused on the protests led by Thai high school students in 2020 and revealed that these students not only fought for democracy but also criticized conservative norms and institutions within the education system, family, and monarchy. Their aim was to reshape the political structure to ensure fairness and freedom.

Therefore, the flash mobs and youth movements in Phitsanulok and nationwide serve as expressions of their desires and demands to challenge the established power dynamics, promote justice, and reshape the power relationships within Thai society. These movements are driven by a collective aspiration for a more equitable and democratic future.

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