

## Factors Affecting the Political Culture of First-Time Voters in the General Election of 2023 A.D. in Upper North of Thailand

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### Abstract

This article revisits the traditional political culture framework established by Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, which has been a cornerstone in the study of political culture for over five decades. By incorporating both traditional approaches and the political culture frameworks developed by Ronald Inglehart, Terry Clark, and Vincent Hoffmann-Martinot, which examines political culture in the context of economic and social changes, which are factors influencing the new political culture. Specifically, this study examines how economic, social, and political factors influence the political culture of first-time voters in the upper north of Thailand during the 2023 general election. The study sample size of 400 first-time voters from three provinces—Lamphun, Phrae, and Mae Hong Son. Quantitative research methods, including inferential statistics and multiple linear regression analysis, were employed to analyze the data.

The findings reveal that social factors related to social media significantly influenced the political culture of first-time voters ( $\beta = .340$ ). Economic factors, specifically the family's financial status, also played a significant role ( $\beta = .211$ ), as did social factors concerning social trust ( $\beta = .139$ ). However, economic factors such as state welfare and political factors, including political trust and the leadership of political leaders, were found to have no impact on the political culture of first-time voters in the upper north of Thailand.

Future research should incorporate sociological and psychological dimensions to examine the motivations and obstacles influencing political participation among voters and its effects on political culture. Additionally, employing mixed-methods research for deeper analysis, including comparative studies of political generations, would help assess the impact of economic, social, and political factors on political culture.

**Keywords:** Political culture, First-Time voters, General election 2023, Upper North of Thailand

## Introduction

The study of political culture began with the seminal work of Almond & Verba (1963) in their book *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, which examined political culture in the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, and Mexico. Almond and Verba categorized political culture into three types—parochial, subject, and participant—to explain the variations in individuals' political expressions. They identified key factors influencing these cultural differences, including beliefs, attitudes, political orientations, and political behavior. Political science widely regards this work as a foundational and highly influential contribution, laying the groundwork for subsequent studies on political culture.

The impact of Almond and Verba's research has driven the continued evolution of political culture studies. For instance, Sidney Verba (1965) described political culture as the integration of political systems into the beliefs and values of society. Lucian Pye (1968) further expanded the scope of political culture research to include ideals, norms, and historical political outputs.

From the literature review, it was found that the study of political culture in the late 1980s began to be challenged again by the research of Ronald Inglehart (1988; 1990; 2005), who studied political culture in the context of economic and social changes in Europe during the years 1973 – 1987. He discovered a significant main proposition: that economic and social changes might be influential variables that shape and lead to changes in political culture. The study of political culture within the framework proposed by Almond and Verba may not be able to comprehensively explain political culture due to changes in economic, social, and political contexts occurring in the modern world. Additionally, social changes have led to members of society having materialistic desires, the need for acceptance, self-esteem, higher education, as well as political experiences of both older and newer generations. There is a growing desire for political participation and an effort to question traditional governance, demanding more opportunities for political involvement, which can lead to changes in political culture.

Additionally, in the study by Terry Nichols Clark and Vincent Hoffmann-Martinot (1998), there are proposals consistent with Inglehart's work. The two scholars emphasized the importance of economic and social changes that lead to the emergence of new political cultures in various societies. Clark and Martinot explained that the study of new political culture in an era of economic and social changes is a factor influencing the new political culture. This study has broadened the scope of political culture research, providing a framework for examining political culture to understand changes brought about by economic, social, and political factors, leading to the emergence of new political cultures, similar to Inglehart's study.

In Thailand, economic and social changes over the past two to three decades have given rise to the "New Citizens" group, a politically influential generation with clear demands for structural reforms in society and governance. Emerging as a significant political force, particularly as first-time voters in the 2023 general election, these young individuals have been shaped by profound economic, social, political, and technological transformations. (Sathitniramai, 2023; Wongsatjachock, 2024) Their distinct attitudes, values, and political beliefs are deeply influenced by their digital upbringing, exposure to online platforms, and experiences of political conflict, including two military coups between 2014 and 2019. Unlike previous generations, their political understanding and expectations have evolved, driving them to actively engage in protests, leverage digital technology for political discourse, and push for systemic change. Their rise coincides with a politically charged environment marked by intense

debates and struggles leading up to the election, highlighting their aspirations to reshape society and the future. Additionally, their experiences with Thailand's economic development and social transformation have further influenced their worldview, setting them apart from older generations. (Lertchoosakul, 2021)

The First-Time Voters in the 2023 election serve as a crucial indicator of changes in Thailand's political culture. Having grown up in an era shaped by digital technology, economic and social shifts, and political conflicts from 2014 to 2019, this group exhibits values, attitudes, and political beliefs distinct from previous generations. This study aims to contribute new insights into Thai political culture, aligning with the evolving economic, social, and technological landscape.

This study proposes a new approach to examining Thai political culture through the concept of Political Generation, emphasizing that younger generations possess different values, thoughts, and political experiences compared to previous generations due to economic, social, and technological changes. Political, economics, society and technology transformations over the past two decades have led to the emergence of a group of "new citizens" who hold higher expectations of the government and advocate for structural changes. (Sathitniramai, Mukdawijitra, & Phawakran, 2013) Meanwhile, highlights that traditional frameworks for studying political culture are no longer sufficient to explain Thailand's current political landscape. (Sathitniramai, 2023)

The area in the upper northern region of Thailand consists of 8 provinces: Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Mae Hong Son, Phayao, Lampang, Lamphun, Phrae, and Nan. This area was chosen for the study because it has the highest Human Achievement Index in terms of participation in the country. It is also a region with diversity in various dimensions of the population, including economic, social, and political factors. The Human Achievement Index, as reported by the National Economic and Social Development Council for 2022, indicates that this area has the highest participation index in the country. The researcher selected these provinces for the study, with Lamphun showing a very high level of participation, Phrae showing a high level, and Mae Hong Son showing a moderate level. Provinces with a high Human Achievement Index in terms of participation include Phrae, while Mae Hong Son has a moderate level of participation.

The main argument of this article is the debate on whether economic, social, and political factors influence the political culture of first-time voters in the general election of 2023, and whether these factors can lead to a transformation of Thai political culture into a new political culture. Previous explanations or studies of Thai political culture may no longer be able to understand the present context, and this research may lead to new explanations or understandings of Thai political culture arising from economic, social, and political changes. These changes affect the adaptation of important political institutions, such as political parties, or the policies of political parties that may need to adjust their policies to gain more votes from this group in the future under the context of economic, social, and political changes in Thailand.

Therefore, this article presents the influence of economic, social, and political factors on the political culture of first-time voters in the 2023 general election in the context of Upper Northern Thailand. Additionally, this new study on political culture has not been previously documented or researched. Over the past five decades, research on Thai political culture has continued to rely on the conceptual framework of Almond and Verba, revealing variations in political culture across different target groups. However, it has lacked a connection to changes in economic, social, and political contexts, which significantly influence individual attitudes, values, and needs. Therefore, this study aims to expand knowledge for a more comprehensive understanding of political culture by incorporating new conceptual approaches to systematically enhance the understanding of political culture in Thailand. It aims to expand knowledge about first-time voters, who represent a new generation that will play a significant

role in Thailand's future politics. Furthermore, this study may clarify whether Thailand's political culture is trending toward a new direction and whether economic, social, and political factors influence the political culture of the new generation, especially among first-time voters. This group may determine the future direction of Thai politics, a topic that has not been studied in-depth in Thailand, contributing to the development of Thailand's political landscape in the future.

### **Research Objective**

The objective of the research aims to study the influence of economic, social, and political factors on the political culture of first-time voters in the general election of 2023 in the upper north of Thailand.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Background Political Culture Theory**

The study of political science in the 1960s and 1970s increasingly focused on behavioral approaches, particularly the expansion of democratic regimes and the development of political systems worldwide. This included research on democracy, political development, political institutions, and political culture. Almond & Verba (1963) published *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, a seminal work that examined political systems, governance, and political participation across societies. Their study aimed to understand individuals' attitudes, beliefs, political preferences, ideologies, and inclinations, identifying patterns to explain political culture across different societies. This work became a foundational contribution to the study of political culture in early political science. The study found that individuals' beliefs, attitudes, and political expressions shape political culture and significantly impact the development of democracy in their respective countries.

Almond & Verba (1963) divided political culture into three main types: Parochial Political Culture, which is found in traditional societies where people lack knowledge and understanding of politics, show little interest or participation in the political process, and are often influenced by traditional structures such as local leaders or religion; Subject Political Culture, found in societies where people understand the political system and government policies but lack enthusiasm for political participation. Although they recognize the role of the state and accept the government's authority, most people feel they have little influence over political decisions; and Participant Political Culture, found in societies with political and economic development, where people are educated about politics, aware of their roles in the democratic process, and eager to participate in activities such as elections, government criticism, or political movements.

Additionally, Almond and Verba proposed that no society possesses a single, pure form of political culture; instead, societies exhibit a mix of different types at varying levels, a concept they refer to as mixed political culture. For example, a society with a predominantly parochial political culture may begin to develop characteristics of a subject political culture, while a society with a subject political culture may have groups of people displaying traits of a participant political culture. This concept highlights how social, economic, and political changes influence people's behaviors and attitudes, making political culture diverse and dynamic depending on the context of each society.

The challenge to traditional political culture studies, as seen in Inglehart's numerous writings—including *The Silent Revolution* (1977), *The Renaissance of Political Culture* (1988), and *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society* (1990)—reflects an effort to explain the economic, technological, and political changes that have led to the emergence of industrial societies. The cultural transformation accompanying the shift toward advanced industrial society is particularly significant. Inglehart proposed that changes in economic and social

contexts, driven by high levels of economic development and the rise of advanced industrial and democratic societies, may lead to transformations in political culture. These shifts result in generational differences in value systems, where younger generations develop distinct political orientations compared to their predecessors. In advanced industrial societies, these generational shifts inevitably reshape political culture. Furthermore, Inglehart emphasized that as younger generations replace older ones, their evolving political values will play a crucial role in shaping the future of political society.

In 1998, Clack and Martinot (1998) conducted a study on the New Political Culture to establish a conceptual framework for understanding how economic, social, and political changes influence political culture. They sought to explain the factors contributing to the formation of this new political culture and found that, in advanced industrial societies in the Western world, political culture had undergone significant transformations. Clack and Martinot proposed a framework for analyzing these changes, offering insights into the evolution of political culture in response to modern societal developments.

### **Economic Factors and Political Culture**

The study of political culture is linked to the economic development of a country, which will lead to the development of democracy. Political scientists such as Inglehart (1990) and Putnam (1993; 1995), who were prominent in the 1980s, pointed out that economic development affects political culture and can lead to the development of democracy. This is not only because the people in the country will have a better quality of life, but it also results in changes in political culture. Particularly, Putnam emphasized issues related to social capital.

Public welfare is one of the key factors that influence the creation and shaping of political culture. Providing comprehensive and quality welfare services helps build confidence in the government and fosters trust in the political system. When the state can offer fair and inclusive welfare, such as education, health care, and economic security, it contributes to a positive public perception of government performance, which in turn affects political participation and support (Rothstein, 1998; Hetherington, 2005).

The financial status of a family plays a crucial role in shaping political attitudes and behaviors, as it affects access to educational opportunities, political knowledge, and political participation. Families with stable financial status often encourage their members to be aware of their rights and responsibilities, leading to higher political participation (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995).

While families in poverty often lack access to resources, resulting in a political culture characterized by apathy and distrust in the political system (Dalton, 2004). Additionally, a family's financial status affects social trust and democratic attitudes, with individuals from financially stable families often having more confidence in the political system. This helps to foster a political culture that supports democracy (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). This concept is also supported by the study of Clack and Martinot (1998), which proposed that political culture is a result of economic changes.

### **Social Factors and Political Culture**

Social trust is a crucial factor that influences political culture and the stability of democratic regimes. It refers to the level of confidence individuals have in each other and in society, which helps promote cooperation and reduce conflicts within the community (Putnam, 2000; Newton, 2007). Soltz and Lubell (1998, as cited in Kanjanakij, 2002) categorize social trust into three levels: interpersonal trust, community trust, and trust in modern society. This aligns with the work of Almond & Verba (1963), who pointed out that interpersonal trust is a crucial condition for forming political associations and effective political participation. Meanwhile, Inglehart (1988) noted that trust in political institutions and leaders is a secondary factor compared to interpersonal trust in creating the stability of democracy. Additionally, Putnam (2001) and Seligson (2002) proposed that social trust directly affects social capital and



citizen participation, which are related to the development of democracy at the macro level. Therefore, social trust is considered a fundamental foundation that helps strengthen political culture and supports political development in a democratic regime (Putnam, 1995).

Social media has become an important tool in creating and transforming political culture by providing opportunities for the public to access information and participate in political debates on a broader scale. This has resulted in a more democratic and open political culture (Loader et al., 2014). Economic and social changes in societies that develop economically and politically have increased the use of social media in politics, which influences political behavior and the transformation of political culture (Shirky, 2011). The youth in Thailand are increasingly using social media to gather information and engage in political activities. It is explained that first-time voters use social media to access political information, which influences their political decisions and participation in various forms of political engagement (Pankaew, 2019).

### **Political Factors and Political Culture**

Political trust refers to the level of confidence that the public has in political institutions and government leaders, which affects the stability of democracy and public participation in political activities such as elections and support for state policies (Hetherington, 2005; Levi & Stoker, 2000; Norris, 2011). This trust is a crucial factor that helps reduce political conflict, as when the public feels that the government is transparent and capable of governing the country, they are more likely to support the political system (Chanley, Rudolph & Rahn, 2000; Dalton, 2004). However, the decline in political trust may lead to protests, government opposition, and non-participation in political activities, which pose a challenge to the stability of the democratic system (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Dalton & Welzel, 2014).

Moreover, political trust is linked to political culture, which encompasses the attitudes and behaviors of the public towards the political system (Newton, 1997; Norris, 1999). This level of trust reflects the public's assessment of the government's efficiency and integrity, as well as external factors such as the economic situation and corruption issues (Miller, Goldenberg & Erbring, 1979). The decline in trust in the government may lead the public to turn to other means of participation, such as political movements through online media (Dalton & Welzel, 2014). Therefore, building and maintaining political trust is crucial for the stability of democracy and public participation in the political system (Hetherington, 2005; Norris, 2011).

Political leadership is the ability of a leader to successfully carry out political actions, requiring acceptance and trust from the people. This differs from general leadership, which may not need the same level of public acceptance. Political leaders can coordinate political values and influence the sentiments of the people, which requires an understanding of the people's values and the ability to build trust in the leader (Sukontharangsri, 1973).

Additionally, Mohammed (2007) conducted a study on Leadership and Political Culture: A Brief Look at the Malaysian Political Landscape. The study found that changes in political leadership affect public trust. Various factors, such as the leader's personality and behavior, influence the creation of political culture in each era, which can stimulate trust or distrust in the political system.

The study of political culture focuses on the attitudes, values, and political behaviors of the people. Several studies have been influenced by the work of Almond and Verba in explaining political culture in Thailand (Almond & Verba, 1963). However, recent studies have proposed that economic, social, and political factors are crucial in shaping a new political culture. Ronald Inglehart's work (1988, 1990, 2005) found that economic and social changes in Europe have influenced the transformation of political culture. Additionally, Clark and Martinot emphasized the economic and social changes that affect the development of political

culture in modern times, expanding the scope of political culture studies to include the analysis of external factors influencing these changes (Clark & Martinot, 1998).

Therefore, in this research article study, the economic, social, and political factors will be used as independent variables to serve as a framework for studying the new political culture as the dependent variable.

### **Hypothesis**

Economic, social, and political factors affecting the political culture of first-time voters in the general election of 2023 in upper north of Thailand.

## **Methodology**

### **Population**

This research article focuses on the population of first-time voters in the general election of 2023, held on May 14, 2023, in the upper northern region of Thailand. This region consists of eight provinces: Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, Mae Hong Son, Lamphun, Lampang, Phayao, Phrae, and Nan. The criteria for selecting the sample group were based on the Human Achievement Index (HAI), a significant social data set for Thailand that presents human progress along with analysis and evaluation at the national, regional, and provincial levels. Specifically, the study considered the HAI index related to participation in these 8 provinces, as reported by the National Economic and Social Development Council for the year 2022.

When the researcher considered the human progress index in terms of participation specifically in 8 northern provinces in 2022, along with the number of first-time voters, they then selected provinces based on the grouping of the human achievement index in terms of participation. After that, researcher chose from provinces with a similar number of first-time voters and the context of the area from the general election in 2023, thus selecting the following areas.

1) Areas with a very high human achievement index (HAI) in terms of participation include Lamphun Province.

2) Areas with a high human achievement index (HAI) in terms of participation include Phrae Province.

3) Areas with a moderate human achievement index (HAI) in terms of participation include Mae Hong Son Province.

The population of first-time voters is defined as individuals who are registered in the household registry of Lamphun, Phrae, and Mae Hong Son. Additionally, individuals who have relocated to these provinces must have been registered in the household registry for a minimum of 90 days.

### **Sampling Methods**

The researcher determined the sample size using Taro Yamane's formula, (Yamane, 1973) ensuring a 95% confidence level and a .05 margin of error. Quota Sampling was employed to select a proportionate sample based on the population distribution in each province. After calculating the sample size, the researcher compiled lists of first-time voters, researcher obtained the area for sampling, the researcher proceeded to determine the sample size categorized by province, specifically Lamphun Province, Phrae Province, and Mae Hong Son Province, to achieve the specified sample size. The researcher calculated the sample size of first-time voters in proportion to each province, resulting in a total sample size of 400 sampling. (see Table 1)

**Table 1** Sample Selection Details

Province	HAI	Populations	Calculation Method	Calculated Value	Sample Size
Lamphun	very high	18,358	$n = \frac{18,358 \times 398}{58,317}$	125.29	126
Phare	high	21,319	$n = \frac{21,319 \times 398}{58,317}$	145.50	146
Mae Hong Son	moderate	18,640	$n = \frac{18,640 \times 398}{58,317}$	127.21	128
<b>Total Population</b>		<b>58,317</b>	<b>Total Sample</b>		<b>400</b>

(Source: Office of Registration Administration, Department of Provincial Administration, 2022)

The researcher has calculated the sample size. The researcher used probability sampling to determine the likelihood of each sample unit being selected, ensuring that each unit in the population has a chance of being chosen. This method of sample selection allows the results to be generalized to the population. The technique for sampling groups using the multi-stage sampling method begins with clustering, which can divide a large population that does not reside in the same area. (Suksawas, 2021)

### Research Tool

The instruments utilized in this study consist of questionnaires developed by the researcher, derived from a thorough review of pertinent documents and research studies. These questionnaires comprehensively address the study's objectives and relevant issues. Structured into three parts aligned with the study's objectives, Part 1 The questionnaire will include personal information of the respondents. Closed-ended, Part 2 questionnaire on factors influencing the political culture of first-time voters in the general election of 2023. Closed-ended, Part 3 questionnaire on the political culture of first-time voters in the 2023 general election. Closed-ended, the researcher has formulated multiple-choice questions on specific topics using a rating scale based on the Likert's Scale. Validity testing the researcher took the completed questionnaire and presented it to experts to assign weights to each aspect of the questionnaire. Content Validity Check the consistency of the content with the objectives and the appropriateness of the language. Construct Validity The researcher used a questionnaire that had passed the validity test and adjusted the questions according to the experts' suggestions, then conducted a tryout with a group of 53 samples who part of the study sample were not. The reliability of the questionnaire was analyzed using SPSS Statistic Version 29.0 by calculating the alpha coefficient from Cronbach's Alpha, which used questions measuring feelings or attitudes. The test results showed a reliability value of 0.943, which is considered to be above 0.70, indicating high reliability and suitability for data collection.

### Data Collection

Data collection for research from a sample group in the area designated by the researcher is an important step in conducting research. The researcher will request information from the provincial election commission, obtained through random sampling, to acquire the names of voters who participated in the first election of members of the House of Representatives in the general election of 2023. The sampling process will ensure that every unit has an equal chance of being selected as a representative of the population until a total of 400 individuals is reached. The researcher has already completed the sampling at the district and sub-district levels and has used the data of eligible voters from the provincial election commission to randomly select the sample group, ensuring the data is accurate and reliable, until a total of 400 sets is completed.



This research was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of Naresuan University, IRB No. P2-0028/2567, on March 5, 2024

### Data Analysis

Data analysis in research studies Once the researchers have completed data collection, they check the completeness of the questionnaires after data collection and conduct a data review. Code the data and analyze the statistical data using a ready-made program for statistical data analysis for social sciences, or IBM SPSS Statistics version 29.0 (IBM Corp, 2023). REF ID: TH-03-0224

The use of inferential statistics to analyze the influence of economic, social, and political factors on political culture. By using Multiple Linear Regression Analysis to find the multiple regression coefficients and Pearson Correlation.

### Basic Assumption test

Normal distribution test the researcher conducted the Kolmogorov- Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests, with the test results showing a significance level or Sig. = <.001, which is less than .05, indicating that the sample variables have a non- normal distribution. The researcher conducted tests for skewness and kurtosis before hypothesis testing of the questions from the data collection and the variables used in the hypothesis testing. It was found that the skewness and kurtosis values from the tests did not exceed -2 and +2, indicating that they were not significantly skewed or kurtotic at the .05 level. Therefore, these values can be used in inferential statistical tests for multiple linear regression analysis. (Cramer, 1997; Kline, 2016) and Geoff Norman (2010), it is explained that parametric statistical analysis can be used for testing in cases where the data have unequal variances, and the data distribution is not normal. The test regarding the problem of Multicollinearity, which affects the estimation of regression coefficients, found that the Tolerance values ranged from 0.196 to 0.556, which are greater than 0, and the results of the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) test ranged from 1.797 to 5.113, which are less than 10. It can be explained that the Tolerance test results are greater than 0 and the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values are less than 10, indicating that all independent variables have low correlations with other independent variables. Therefore, it can be concluded that all independent variables are independent of each other and there is no Multicollinearity problem. They can be used for inferential statistical testing in Multiple Linear Regression analysis.

## Results

### General Characteristics of the Sample Group

The analysis of general data from respondents who are first-time voters in the general election of 2023 can be summarized as follows: Most respondents are female and 20 years old, primarily pursuing a bachelor's degree in higher education institutions. During their studies, they do not engage in employment or work. The highest educational qualification most have attained is high school/ Vocational Certificate. They practice Buddhism, are single, and most families have 4-6 members. They have lived in the electoral district for 16-20 years. In terms of income, since most are still studying, they receive less than 3,000 baht per month from parents or work. Most families have a household income of 10,000-20,000 baht and have expenses exceeding their income each month. Additionally, in terms of political information tracking through social media, most primarily use Facebook and spend 1-2 hours per day on it.

Testing Research Hypothesis 1: Economic factors, social factors, and political factors influence the political culture of first-time voters in the general election of 2023 in the upper north of Thailand. This can be formulated into a statistical hypothesis as follows:

$H_0$  = Economic factors, social factors, and political factors do not influence the political culture of first-time voters in the general election of 2023 in the upper north of Thailand.

$H_1$  = Economic factors, social factors, and political factors influence the political culture of first-time voters in the 2023 general election in the upper north of Thailand.

The statistics used for hypothesis testing is Multiple Regression Analysis, where independent variables are entered into the regression equation using the Enter method. A confidence level of 95% is used, so the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) will be rejected only if the obtained Sig. value is less than .05, as shown in the following table 2

**Table 2** Results of the multiple regression analysis with political culture

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	53238.843	6	8873.141	22.883**	.001 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	152389.997	393	387.761		
Total	205628.840	399			

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

From Table 2, it can be explained that political culture has a statistically significant linear relationship with the independent variables at the .05 level and can create a linear prediction equation. Therefore, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is accepted. From the multiple regression calculation, the multiple correlation coefficient can be computed. as shown in the following table 3

**Table 3** The results of the Multiple Linear Regression Analysis in forecasting the relationship between economic factors, social factors, and political factors ( $X_1$ - $X_6$ ) and the political culture of first-time voters in 2023 in the upper north of Thailand (Y)

Variables	Beta	Std. Error	$\beta$	$t$	Sig.
Constant	2.293	5.161		.444	.657
EONWL ( $X_1$ )	-.428	.261	-.112	-1.636	.103
ECONFS ( $X_2$ )	1.153	.359	.211	3.214**	.001
SOCTRS ( $X_3$ )	.604	.282	.139	2.142*	.033
SOCMDA ( $X_4$ )	1.481	.254	.340	5.838**	<.001
POLTRS ( $X_5$ )	.021	.239	.009	.089	.929
POLLED ( $X_6$ )	-.273	.297	-.079	-.919	.359

Multiple R = .509<sup>a</sup> R Square = .259

Adjusted R Square = .248 Std. Error = 19.69164

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

From Table 3, can be explained in the following order.

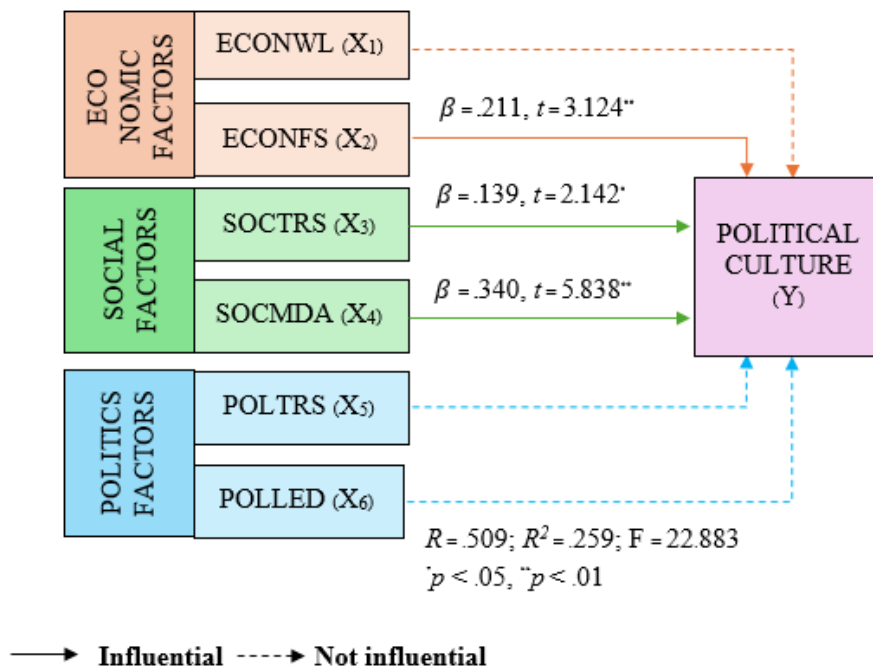
1) The social factor in social media has the highest coefficient ( $\beta = .340$ ,  $t = 5.838$ ) and a  $p$ -value less than .001, indicating that this variable has a significant influence and is a crucial factor with a significantly positive impact on the political culture outcomes of the studied population group, ranking first.

2) The economic factor regarding the financial status of the family has a coefficient ( $\beta = .211, t = 3.214$ ) and a  $p$ -value of .001, indicating a statistically significant positive relationship with the dependent variable. The increase in the family's financial status leads to a significant change in the political culture of the studied population group as the second order.

3) The social factor of social trust has a coefficient ( $\beta = .139, t = 2.142$ ) and a  $p$ -value of .033, which is statistically significant at the .05 level. This indicates a positive relationship between social trust and significant changes in the political culture of the studied population, ranking third.

It was found that various factors influence the political culture of first-time voters in the 2023 general election in the upper northern region, with a predictive power of 25.9% ( $R^2 = .259$ ) affecting the political culture.

The analyzing data from multiple linear regression between economic factors, social factors, and political factors on the political culture of first-time voters in 2023 in the upper northern region, influential factors and sub-variables influencing political culture will be found, as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1** Factors impacting the political culture of first-time voters in the 2023 elections in the upper north of Thailand (Source: Researcher, 2025)

From Figure 1, it is found that when considering the regression coefficients of the independent variables, the social factor in the online social media variable ( $X_4$ ) can predict the relationship with the political culture of first-time voters in the 2023 general election in the upper northern region at the highest level. The statistical significance level is (Sig.) =  $< .001$ , with a regression coefficient in raw score (Beta) equal to 1.481 and a value of = .340, indicating a positive relationship.

Social media significantly influences political culture by shaping public opinion, promoting political participation, and serving as a primary channel for disseminating information. It enables users to express their opinions and engage with diverse viewpoints, thereby increasing political participation, particularly among first-time voters in the upper northern region, who rely on social media as their main source of news and platform for political expression. Additionally, research has found that social media serves as a space where

young people engage in discussions, exchange opinions, mobilize politically, and encourage participation in the democratic process. (Sawadee & Damjan, 2024), which indicates that young people, regardless of their economic status, use social media to express their political views in various ways. As a result, the younger generation has experienced shifts in political attitudes and beliefs, demonstrating greater confidence in their political rights and a decreased tendency to adhere to the political ideologies of previous generations.

The next factor is the economic aspect, specifically the family's financial status variable ( $X_2$ ), which has a statistical significance level of (Sig.)  $<.001$ , with a regression coefficient in raw score (Beta) equal to 1.153 and a value of  $= .211$ .

The financial status of a family significantly influences not only access to education and political information but also shapes political attitudes and behaviors. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) found that economic resources, such as income and financial stability, along with social resources like education and social networks, play a crucial role in political participation, with individuals from wealthier backgrounds having greater access to political information and engagement. Similarly, Schoon & Cheng (2011) highlighted that financial stability impacts political trust, as those with economic security tend to have higher confidence in the political system, while those facing financial difficulties are more likely to distrust it. Economic conditions also contribute to variations in political culture, with wealthier individuals more likely to support and participate in political activities, whereas lower-income groups may hold negative perceptions of the political system and engage less. Additionally, Inglehart (2005) emphasized that economic status influences life satisfaction, which in turn affects political culture.

Additionally, social factors were found in the variable of social trust ( $X_3$ ), which had a statistical significance level (Sig.) of  $.033$ , a regression coefficient in raw scores (Beta) of  $0.604$ , and a value of  $.139$ , respectively.

Social trust is an important factor influencing political culture. Trust between individuals helps build relationships and cooperation in society, leading to increased political participation and strengthening democracy (Putnam, 2000; Newton, 1997). High levels of social trust contribute to stability and security in the political system and enhance citizens' involvement in expressing opinions and political action. It also impacts trust in political institutions and politicians, making the public more willing to support changes that promote democracy (Rothstein & Stolle, 2008).

Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results: Economic, social, and political factors have a significant impact on political culture, with statistical significance at the 0.01 level.

## Discussions

The study of the impact of family financial status on changes in political culture reveals that family financial status significantly influences political awareness and participation. The research findings show that families with stable financial status tend to place more importance on political participation and have greater confidence in political processes compared to families with unstable financial status. This results in differences in interest and political involvement among individuals from different groups, such as support for democracy and changes in political systems (Dalton, 2004; Verba et al., 1995).

The research also finds that differences in family financial status affect political awareness and participation. Families with better financial status are more likely to support the political system and engage more in political processes, while families with poor financial status often feel excluded and voiceless in political matters, which may lead to disengagement and apathy toward politics (Mair, 2013; Lipset, 1959). Similarly, the study discusses the impact of economic structural factors, life satisfaction, and the emergence of younger generations. They highlight

that economic status, whether affluent or impoverished, significantly influences the change in the political ideas, attitudes, beliefs, values, access to political information, political expression, and political participation of these populations, ultimately leading to a change in political culture that characterizes this group. (Chandoevwi & Suriyanrattakorn, 2022; Sawasdee & Damchan, 2024)

The changes in economic structure over the past few decades, including the emergence of industry and the growth of the service economy, have created economic disparities that impact politics. This is particularly true in countries with high economic inequality, such as Thailand, leading to a decline in trust in political systems and reduced political participation. As people gain more education and economic stability, they tend to place more importance on their rights and freedoms, increasingly demanding participation in democratic processes, which contributes to strengthening democracy and positively impacts changes in political culture (Inglehart, 1998; Stiglitz, 2012). When people achieve greater economic stability, they are more likely to value their rights and political participation, thus fostering democratic processes and contributing to the evolution of political culture (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Fukuyama, 1995).

Social structure plays a crucial role in the transformation of political culture, particularly among first-time voters who grew up during periods of social change. Social media has a significant influence on the political attitudes and values of this group, helping to stimulate political participation and social movements (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). Research findings align with those of Kanokrat Leartchusukul (2021), who presents that social media has a high influence on the political culture of first-time voters in northern Thailand. Access to information and the expression of political opinions via social media affect the openness of political views and the transformation of political attitudes (Tufekci & Wilson, 2012; Boulianne, 2015). The development of digital technology and the expansion of social media contribute to enhancing political participation and movements on important issues (Sawasdee & Damjan, 2024).

Social trust plays a crucial role in the formation and transformation of political culture, especially among first-time voters. Trust in society helps create a sense of stability and justice, which boosts people's confidence and encourages them to participate more in political activities (Brehm & Rahn, 1997). Additionally, social trust strengthens political participation and social movements, particularly among youth (Putnam, 2000; Newton, 2001). When individuals trust that others will follow societal rules, it fosters cooperation and collaboration within society, contributing to the stability and strength of democracy (Zmerli & Newton, 2008). In the context of social and economic changes in Northern Thailand, the emerging political culture has been influenced by social trust and social interactions through social media, which drives increased political participation and responsibility among first-time voters (Tufekci & Wilson, 2012; Boulianne, 2015).

Conversely, economic and social structures with inequalities hinder some groups from participating in political processes, leading to an authoritarian political culture that is not conducive to democratic change (Inglehart, 1997). Economic and educational disparities are key factors that make some people feel unfit for political participation (Newton, 2001). At the same time, the Thai political system, which still has hierarchical and patronage-based structures, leads citizens to believe that those with higher status should govern the country (Putnam, 2000). Therefore, changes in economic and social structures are necessary to promote democracy and political participation in Thailand (Zmerli & Newton, 2008).

This study emphasizes that economic factors, particularly the financial status of households, influence political culture. Economic disparities, especially among different socioeconomic groups, significantly impact the political culture of the studied population. Structural economic differences highlight that family financial status plays a key role in



shaping political attitudes and participation, especially among young people. For this group, economic inequality limits opportunities for full participation in the democratic system, aligning with Western research that shows a decline in democratic support when people perceive economic conditions as unjust. Those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds often feel voiceless in political systems, leading to disengagement or reduced support for democracy, thus shaping the political culture within society.

The impact of social media on political attitudes is significant, as access to diverse political information through online platforms encourages citizens to adopt more open political views and respond to rapid changes. The dissemination of critical information and political communication can occur freely, allowing the public to assess news from multiple perspectives. Additionally, social media enables individuals with similar ideologies to meet and exchange opinions more easily, leading to stronger ideological connections. This, in turn, promotes political participation and activism on important issues (Tufekci & Wilson, 2012).

### Conclusion and suggestions

The research objectives to study the influence of economic, social, and political factors on the political culture of first-time voters in the general election of 2023 in the upper northern region. From the research results, the following can be summarized in descending order: The social factor in terms of social media has the highest coefficient ( $\beta = .340$ ) and a p-value less than .001, indicating that this variable has a significant influence and is a crucial factor with a significantly positive impact on the political culture of the studied population, ranking first. The economic factor regarding the family's financial status has a coefficient ( $\beta = .211$ ) and a p-value of .001, indicating a significant positive correlation with the dependent variable. The increase in the family's financial status leads to a significant change in the political culture of the studied population, ranking second. The social factor concerning social trust has a coefficient ( $\beta = .139$ ) and a p-value of .033, which is statistically significant at the .05 level. It indicates a positive relationship between social trust and significant changes in the political culture of the studied population, ranking third. It was found that various factors mentioned above influence the political culture of first-time voters in the general election of 2023 in the upper northern region, with a predictive power of 25.9% ( $R^2 = .259$ ) affecting political culture.

### Theory Implication

This research highlights the relevance of integrating classical and contemporary political culture theories, offering a comprehensive framework for understanding the political behaviors of first-time voters. By combining the foundational concepts of Almond and Verba with Inglehart's and Clack & Martinot's modern perspectives, the study encourages the expansion of political culture research into other dimensions, such as rural versus urban sociology and psychological motivations behind political participation. The findings imply that further comparative research between generational cohorts (e.g., Generation Z and previous generations) can offer valuable insights into how economic, social, and political factors shape political culture differently across age groups. This approach could enrich our theoretical understanding of political engagement and behavior, ultimately informing policies to promote more inclusive and effective democratic participation.

### Practical Implication

Practical recommendations for economic and social development involve the creation of an integrated economic plan that prioritizes job creation, income generation, and the reduction of inequality. This plan should incorporate tax reforms that support low-income

groups and businesses fostering sustainable employment, alongside initiatives such as a minimum income guarantee. Expanding access to welfare systems is essential to ensure equity, while enhancing education through curriculum updates and providing equal educational opportunities remain crucial for long-term development. Furthermore, the national economic strategy should focus on clear objectives to improve citizens' well-being, with the Ministry of Finance playing a key role in implementing these reforms. Policies should also aim to reduce economic disparities and promote quality education through government-supported initiatives for equal opportunities and improved educational institutions.

For political participation of young people, policy recommendations include developing transparent and accessible data management systems and secure online platforms for public expression. Continuous and effective communication between the government and the public is necessary, along with creating public spaces for young people to express their opinions. Additionally, public campaigns should foster trust in society, and supporting youth group activities and exchanges between regional youth will help reduce distrust and promote understanding.

### **Suggestions**

The formulation of an integrated economic plan at the national level should focus on clear objectives to enhance the well-being of citizens, emphasizing job creation, income generation, and reducing inequality. Additionally, the Ministry of Finance should implement tax reforms and financial support measures, such as tax reductions for low-income groups and businesses that foster sustainable employment. Furthermore, policies aimed at reducing economic disparities and improving education should be promoted, including equal educational opportunities and the development of quality educational institutions with government support.

There should be the creation of public spaces for expression, with government agencies establishing youth-friendly public areas, such as forums or community centers, to allow young people to freely voice their opinions and organize various activities. Additionally, there should be measures to implement public awareness campaigns that emphasize the importance of trust and life satisfaction. These campaigns should encourage the public, especially the younger generation, to recognize the significance of mutual trust and the creation of a society conducive to happiness, facilitated through mass media.

### **New knowledge and the effects on society and communities**

This research aims to challenge the traditional framework for analyzing Thai political culture, as the traditional frameworks of Almond and Verba, which emphasize the stability of political culture, may not fully respond to the structural changes occurring in Thailand. Over the past two decades, Thailand has faced intense political dynamics and social, economic, and technological contexts, leading to the proposal of a more flexible political culture concept that is connected to the current context, particularly among first-time voters in northern Thailand. This group has grown up under rapidly changing political and economic contexts.

Additionally, this research also attempts to explain the formation of political culture that responds to changes in uncertain social and political environments, without adhering to traditional fixed frameworks. It has expanded the knowledge regarding the study of Thai political culture in terms of content and the demographic groups studied by using economic, social, and political factors as frameworks for analysis in the study of the formation of political culture among first-time voters, which is a new target group for research.

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