

THE POLITICAL ROLES OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS TOWARD A LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION: A CASE STUDY OF BANGKOK

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Abstract - The main objective of this study was to examine the political roles of civil society organizations toward a local administrative organization. This research is a mixed method research. An interview was employed to collect the data from 20 leaders of civil society organizations. In addition, questionnaires were employed to collect the data from 190 members of the organizations. The data then were analyzed using descriptive statistics (percentage, mean, and standard deviation), and inferential statistics (One-way ANOVA). The findings indicated that the civil society organizations had moderate level of political roles in petition movement ($\bar{x} = 3.39$, $SD = 0.91$), political communication ($\bar{x} = 3.10$, $SD = 1.06$), local election ($\bar{x} = 3.03$, $SD = 1.25$), public policy process ($\bar{x} = 2.99$, $SD = 0.98$) democracy support ($\bar{x} = 2.84$, $SD = 1.02$) and monitoring state's use of power ($\bar{x} = 2.78$, $SD = 1.14$). We found the relationship between the characteristics of organizational establishment and the role in public policy process ($F = 6.61$, $Sig. = 0.00$). The objective of the organizational establishment was associated with the role in democracy support ($F = 2.78$, $Sig. = 0.02$). The association between the number of organizational members and the role in public policy process was also found in this study ($F = 3.07$, $Sig. = 0.03$). Finally, the age of the civil society organizations was associated with all political roles ($F = 15.16$, $Sig. = 0.00$); petition movement ($F = 13.63$, $Sig. = 0.00$), political communication ($F = 7.68$, $Sig. = 0.00$), local election ($F = 3.05$, $Sig. = 0.03$), public policy process ($F = 11.42$, $Sig. = 0.00$), democracy support ($F = 16.17$, $Sig. = 0.00$), and monitoring state's use of power ($F = 20.73$, $Sig. = 0.00$). Recommendations and suggestions were discussed in the latter part of this article.

Keywords - Political Role, Civil Society Organization, Local Administrative Organization

I. INTRODUCTION

Democracy in Thailand nowadays has been developed and focused more on social and public participation, especially political participation. This situation can be reflected from the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2550 which explains and places importance on political participation in many sections. Some sections are directly associated with the general election while the others are associated with civil society's role in public policy planning process (Boonchai, 2013).

Today, the civil society has played an important role in participating in the administration, management, development, and political matters of the local administrative organizations. The civil society is the organization consisting of the people who have a common consensus. They gather in order to do some activities for the benefits of the public and society. This civil society has become the third power in addition to the state and business power. This power is associated with small groups scattered throughout the nation. They are associated in the form of a small network as either a juristic person or an informal group. The occurrence of the civil society results in a new social structure which has an equal horizontal relationship among each group. Whenever this civil society can vertically cooperate well with other social structures, the whole society will be strengthened. A study on the of civil society organizations toward a local administrative organization, therefore, is a very interesting issue since it will explore the political roles

of the civil society toward a local administrative organization. This study will examine the influence of the civil society's action on its political roles toward the local administrative organization. This will enhance the civil society to improve and develop more efficient political roles, and to provide guidelines for related organizations in supporting appropriate political roles of each civil society.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the political roles of the civil society in Bangkok.
2. To examine the political roles of the civil society toward a local administrative organization in Bangkok.
3. To study the influence of the characteristics of an organizational establishment, the type of civil society organization, the objective of the organizational establishment, the number of organizational members, and the age of the civil society organizations on the local administrative organization in Bangkok.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study was a survey research consisting of both qualitative and quantitative methods. The 20 key informants in this study consisted of 20 leaders of the civil society organizations in Bangkok; public interest and community welfare organizations. The interview was conducted with 11 leaders from public interest

organizations, and 9 leaders from community welfare organizations. According to the quantitative method, the sample size was calculated using Yamane's formula providing 190 respondents (Vanichbuncha, 2007) who were asked to fill in the questionnaire during March – April 2018. The gathered data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Inferential statistics namely One-way ANOVA was employed to test the hypotheses.

IV. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

H₀: The characteristics of the organizational establishment, the type of civil society organization, the objective of the organizational establishment, the number of organizational members, and the age of the civil society organizations have similar political roles toward the local administrative organization.

H₁: The characteristics of the organizational establishment, the type of civil society organization, the objective of the organizational establishment, the number of organizational members, and the age of the civil society organizations have different political roles toward the local administrative organization.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings indicated that the civil society organizations had a moderate level of political roles in petition movement, political communication, local election, public policy process, democracy support, and monitoring state's use of power. The role in the petition movement had the highest meanwhile the role in monitoring the state's use of power provided the lowest mean. These findings supported the previous studies (Vanichbuncha, 2007), (Prapsrt, 2017), (Thamrongthanyawong, 2002) which explained the civil society organization as a people power. The civil society was claimed as the tool for people to communicate and present their problems, troublesome, and any other social impacts to related public organizations. Hence, the problems could be solved. These previous studies suggested that the civil society organizations should have 6 political roles which are the petition movement, political communication, local election, public policy process, democracy support, and monitoring state's use of power as illustrated in Table 1.

Role	Mean	SD	Level
Democracy support	2.84	1.02	Moderate
Public policy process	2.99	0.98	Moderate
Petition movement	3.39	0.91	Moderate
Monitoring state's use of power	2.78	1.14	Moderate
Local election	3.03	1.25	Moderate
Political communication	3.10	1.06	Moderate
Total	3.02	1.06	Moderate

Table 1 Mean and standard deviation of the roles of the civil society organizations

According to the hypotheses testing, we found the relationship between the characteristics of organizational establishment and the role in public policy process ($F = 6.61$, $Sig. = 0.00$). The relationship between the objective of the organizational establishment of the civil society and the role in democracy support was also found in this study ($F = 2.78$, $Sig. = 0.02$). The civil society organization having the different number of the organizational members had the different role in public policy process ($F = 3.07$, $Sig. = 0.03$). In addition, the age of the civil society organizations was associated with the total political roles toward the local administration organization ($F = 15.16$, $Sig. = 0.00$). When considering each political roles, we found the relationship between the age of the civil society organizations and role in democracy support ($F = 16.17$, $Sig. = 0.00$), role in public policy process ($F = 11.42$, $Sig. = 0.00$), role in petition movement ($F = 13.63$, $Sig. = 0.00$), role in monitoring the state's use of power ($F = 20.73$, $Sig. = 0.00$), role in local election ($F = 3.05$, $Sig. = 0.03$), and role in political communication ($F = 7.68$, $Sig. = 0.00$). These results supported the study of Milbrath and Goel (1997) who described that there are two factors influencing the political participation of an individual. These two factors are environmental stimuli and personal factor. In this study, the characteristics of the organizational establishment, the type of civil society organization, the objective of the organizational establishment, the number of organizational members, and the age of the civil society organizations represented the environmental stimuli and personal factors. These five factors were associated with the political role of the civil society organizations toward the local administrative organization as illustrated in Table 2.

Role	Stats	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5
DS	F-test	1.06	1.47	2.78	1.38	16.17
	Sig.	0.35	0.23	0.02	0.25	0.00
	Result	N	N	Y	N	Y
PP	F-test	6.61	0.16	1.90	3.07	11.42
	Sig.	0.00	0.85	0.10	0.03	0.00
	Result	Y	N	N	Y	Y
PM	F-test	2.35	0.56	0.11	1.67	13.63
	Sig.	0.10	0.57	0.99	0.18	0.00
	Result	N	N	N	N	Y
MS	F-test	0.39	0.05	1.45	0.79	20.72
	Sig.	0.68	0.95	0.17	0.50	0.00
	Result	N	N	N	N	Y
LE	F-test	2.29	1.22	1.21	0.50	3.05
	Sig.	0.10	0.30	0.31	0.68	0.03
	Result	N	N	N	N	Y
PC	F-test	0.67	0.98	0.56	1.20	7.68
	Sig.	0.51	0.38	0.73	0.31	0.00
	Result	N	N	N	N	Y
Total	F-test	2.27	0.48	0.99	1.09	15.16
	Sig.	0.11	0.62	0.43	0.35	0.00
	Result	N	N	N	N	Y

Table 2 Hypotheses testing results

Note:

- V1- the characteristics of organizational establishment
- V2- the type of civil society organization
- V3- the objective of the organizational establishment
- V4- the number of organizational members
- V5- the age of the civil society organization
- DS- democracy support
- PP- public policy process
- PM- petition movement
- MS- monitoring state's use of power
- LE- local election
- PC- political communication
- Y- Supported
- N- Not supported

SUGGESTIONS

As the finding indicated that the civil society organizations in Bangkok had a moderate level of political roles toward the local administrative organization, it could be implied that the promotion of people's political participation as stated in the constitution is not met. To promote the political participation of the civil society organizations toward the local administrative organization, the organizations should focus on the followings guidelines;

- (1) The role in democracy support: The civil society organizations should play an important role to support people to have an opportunity to vote for the general election, and push forward the political revolution in order to transfer the power from representatives to the people. They should inform and disseminate the people some information about their rights, duties, and roles. They, especially the organizations having an objective to promote participative democracy or the organizations established more than 20 years, should promote the participation of the people to protect their rights, freedom, equality, and justice in the society.
- (2) Role in the public policy process: The civil society organizations should place importance on participation in the public policy process which is associated with the way of life of the people in the local communities. They can play an important role in a committee set up to solve the local community issues or as a negotiator in a public policy which directly affects the communities. In addition, they should push forward setting up a committee to study the impacts of each policy and uses the results of the study for public policy's consideration and decision making. These recommendations are suitable for the collectivism organizations or an organization established 20 years or older since they still have less

political roles than the other types of civil society organizations.

(3) Role in petition movement: The civil society organizations, especially the organizations established 20 years or older, should increase their roles as a channel for people to present their problems, troublesome, and policy implementation impacts to the government. Hence, the problems occurred will be solved.

(4) Role in monitoring the state's use of power: The civil society organizations should play important role in monitoring cheating and corruption in local administrative organizations. The use of state's power without the general consensus of the people and the injustice use of power by local administrative organizations should be monitored. In addition, the organizations should participate in withdrawing local administrative organization leaders. These are suggested for the civil society organizations established 20 years or older.

(5) Role in the local election: The civil society organizations, especially the organizations established 20 years or older, should play a role in promoting and informing people to vote in the general election. They should participate in monitoring the transparency and justice in the general election. These will enhance obtaining the representatives truly selected by the people so the elected representatives can definitely develop and improve the people quality of life.

(6) Role in political communication: The civil society organizations, especially the organizations established 20 years or older, should have the freedom to run their activities. They should not be controlled by the government. However, they should be politically neutral. Furthermore, they should distribute clear, precise, and true information to the people. Finally, they should act on behalf of the people they serve.

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