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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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POLITICAL MOTIVATION AND CAMBODIAN YOUTH: A HISTORICAL AND SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT FACTORS IN EMERGING DEMOCRACIES

***Sovanna Huot**

Department of Political Science, University of Delhi, New Delhi, India

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ABSTRACT

This theoretical review examines the critical role of community support in shaping youth political motivation in emerging democracies, with a specific focus on Cambodia. As Cambodia continues its transition from a history of political repression to a more democratic system, understanding the factors that drive youth engagement in the political process is crucial for ensuring the sustainability of democratic institutions. This review synthesizes existing literature on how community support factors, including social capital, social networks, and perceived social support, contribute to political efficacy and political participation among Cambodian youth. Drawing from a variety of studies in Southeast Asia and beyond, the review highlights the role of family support, peer influence, and local community networks in encouraging political participation, especially in the context of Cambodia's unique socio-political environment. The findings underscore that strong community ties significantly enhance youth motivation to vote, participate in political discussions, and engage in civic activism. Furthermore, the review identifies significant gaps in the literature, particularly the need for longitudinal studies, rural-urban comparisons, and further exploration of the role of digital media in facilitating political engagement. It concludes by offering recommendations for future research, such as the importance of mixed methods approaches and a more detailed understanding of contextual factors influencing youth political behaviour. Finally, the review emphasizes the need for targeted policy strategies, including civic education and community-building initiatives, to increase youth political participation in Cambodia and other emerging democracies. This paper contributes to the broader understanding of how community-driven engagement can empower youth and enhance the democratic development of countries undergoing political transitions.

*Corresponding author: *Sovanna Huot*,

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INTRODUCTION

Emerging democracies are political systems in transition, moving from authoritarian or hybrid regimes toward more democratic governance. These countries often face significant challenges in developing stable political institutions, ensuring accountability, and fostering public trust in government. The process of democratization is often marked by political instability, weak political parties, and significant inequalities in access to political resources. Despite these challenges, emerging democracies also offer opportunities for increased political participation, the development of civil society, and the active engagement of citizens, particularly youth, in democratic processes. The success of democratic transitions hinges largely on the ability to engage young people, who represent a substantial proportion of the population, in the political sphere (Diamond, 2008). In Southeast Asia, several countries have undergone political transitions in the past few decades, with varying degrees of success and stability. In Southeast Asia, countries such as Indonesia, Thailand, and Myanmar have been at

different stages of democratic transition. Indonesia serves as a success story, having moved from an authoritarian regime to a thriving democracy with high levels of youth political engagement (Lussier, 2016; Murti, 2016; Schwarz, 2018). However, Adam Schwarz is the author of *A Nation in Waiting: Indonesia's Search for Stability*, originally published in 1994, with subsequent editions that delve into Indonesia's political evolution. In this work, Schwarz analyzes Indonesia's political landscape, including the challenges and progress in its democratization process (Kamstra et al., 2013; Ostwald et al., 2016). However, countries like Myanmar have faced setbacks, as military coups and political repression have undermined youth engagement and political stability (Henderson & Tudball, 2016). In Cambodia, the political landscape is shaped by a unique combination of historical factors, including its experience under the Khmer Rouge regime. Though Cambodia held multi-party elections in the 1990s, political participation has been limited due to government control, political repression, and limited political freedom (Freedom House, 2021, 2024). Despite these challenges, Cambodia's youth, who make

up over 60% of the population (World Bank, 2021), have the potential to drive political change, provided they are politically motivated and engaged. In emerging democracies, youth political motivation is a crucial element for strengthening democratic institutions and ensuring long-term stability (Davies, 1959). Political motivation refers to the psychological drive and willingness of individuals, particularly youth, to participate in political activities such as voting, political discussions, activism, or membership in political organizations (Verba et al., 1995). A motivated youth electorate is essential for the development of a healthy, participatory democracy, as they are key to political legitimacy and the advancement of democratic norms (Niemi & Weisberg, 2001). Youth political motivation is directly linked to their belief in the effectiveness of political participation and their sense of empowerment to bring about change in the political system (Campbell & Miller, 1954). One of the most significant factors influencing youth political motivation is the level of community support they receive. Community support, which includes social capital, social identity, and perceived social support, shapes political motivation by providing the resources and encouragement necessary for youth to engage in political processes. Social capital is a concept that emphasizes the value of social networks, trust, and shared norms within a community.

According to Putnam (2000), communities with high levels of social capital foster greater political engagement because individuals within these communities can access political resources, share political knowledge, and offer emotional and informational support. Similarly, social identity theory explains how individuals' sense of belonging to certain groups, e.g., ethnic, social, or political groups, influences their attitudes and behaviours toward political participation (Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In Cambodia, community-based networks, including family, local peer groups, and religious organizations, play a vital role in shaping youth political motivation by providing a sense of belonging and collective responsibility (Chheang, 2011). In Cambodia, the role of perceived social support, the belief that one can rely on others for emotional or practical help, also influences political motivation. Youth who perceive high levels of social support from family, friends, and community leaders are more likely to participate in political activities because they feel encouraged and empowered to act. In a country like Cambodia, where political trust is low due to historical trauma and political repression, the strength of community support can either mitigate feelings of political disillusionment or reinforce them. Understanding how these community support factors contribute to youth political motivation is essential for fostering greater youth participation in Cambodia's emerging democracy.

Purpose of the Review

The purpose of this review is to systematically explore how community support factors, such as social capital, social identity, and perceived social support, influence youth political motivation in emerging democracies, with a focus on Cambodia. By examining the relationship between community support and youth political motivation, this review aims to (1) evaluate existing research on how social capital and community networks impact youth political behaviour in emerging democracies, particularly in Cambodia, (2) assess how social support factors, such as trust, familial ties, and peer networks, shape youth political engagement and participation, (3) examine historical data and trends in youth political motivation in Cambodia and other similar emerging democracies, providing a broader context for understanding political behaviour in these regions. This review aims to bridge the gap in the literature by providing a comprehensive systematic evaluation of the factors that influence youth political motivation in the context of democratic transitions. Given the importance of youth involvement in strengthening democratic institutions, this review will also offer insights into strategies for improving youth engagement in political processes. The findings from this study will significantly enhance our understanding of how community support influences the political motivation of youth in emerging democracies. This research is particularly important for several reasons. First, it contributes to youth empowerment by demonstrating how elements such as social capital and community support can instil confidence, provide resources, and

motivate young people to engage in political processes, examining these factors, the study helps inform the development of targeted strategies aimed at increasing youth participation in democratic life. Second, the research has broader implications for democratic development. In countries like Cambodia, where democratic institutions are still consolidating, understanding the ways in which community support shapes youth political behaviour is essential. The insights gained from this can support efforts to strengthen democratic structures by promoting active citizenship and political involvement among the younger, thereby enhancing political stability and democratic resilience. Third, the study offers practical implications for policymakers and civic actors. By identifying the specific community-based factors that encourage youth political engagement, the research can inform the design of more effective civic education programs, youth empowerment initiatives, and political reforms. These initiatives can play a crucial role in fostering inclusive and participatory democratic practices in Cambodia and other similar contexts. It contributes to a deeper comprehension of the relationship between community support and youth political motivation. It offers valuable insights into how emerging democracies can harness community networks and social capital to improve youth political participation and support the long-term development of democratic institutions.

Theoretical Framework

Political Motivation: Definition and Importance: Political motivation refers to the psychological factors that drive individuals to engage in political activities, such as voting, engaging in political discussions, attending protests, or participating in civic organizations. Political motivation is considered a central element of political engagement, as it underpins the decision-making process that leads individuals to participate in political processes. The concept of political motivation can be broken down into several dimensions, including motivation to vote in which this is the most fundamental form of political motivation and involves the desire to participate in elections by casting a vote. The motivation to vote is influenced by various factors, such as political beliefs, trust in political institutions, and the perceived significance of one's vote in influencing election outcomes (Niemi & Weisberg, 2001). Secondly, engagement in political discussions, which the political motivation also manifests in the willingness to discuss political issues with others, whether within the family, among peers, or in public forums. These discussions foster political awareness, deepen political knowledge, and encourage active participation in the political sphere (Verba et al., 1995). Thirdly, participation in civic activities, in which political motivation can also inspire involvement in civic organizations, activism, and volunteering, which extend beyond voting or discussing political issues. Participation in these activities helps build a sense of political agency, as individuals feel that their actions contribute to social change or political reform (Putnam, 2000). Political motivation is essential for the functioning of democracy, as it directly affects the level of political engagement within a country. In emerging democracies, where institutions may be unstable or underdeveloped, political motivation among youth can determine whether the political system becomes inclusive, participatory, and responsive to citizens' needs. Motivating youth to engage politically is crucial for sustaining democratic development and ensuring the stability of democratic institutions (Galston, 2001). When youth are politically motivated, they are more likely to participate in elections, public demonstrations, and other forms of civic participation, which in turn promotes political legitimacy and strengthens democratic governance (Campbell & Miller, 1954).

Community Support and Its Dimensions: Community support encompasses the resources, networks, and social relationships that individuals gain through their involvement in various spheres of social life, including family, peer groups, local associations, and broader political or civic organizations. This form of support plays a crucial role in shaping political behaviour, particularly among youth, by offering both emotional reinforcement and practical assistance that promote political participation. One of the foundational dimensions of

community support is *social capital*, a concept widely popularized by Putnam (2000), which refers to the networks of relationships and shared norms that facilitate cooperation for mutual benefit. Social capital is typically categorized into two types: bonding and bridging. *Bonding social capital* involves strong ties within homogenous groups, such as close family and friends, while *bridging social capital* connects individuals across diverse backgrounds, offering broader access to social and political resources. Both forms have been shown to enhance political participation on by cultivating trust, reciprocity, and collective efficacy (Coleman, 1990). Another important dimension is the *sense of belonging support*, which reflects an individual's perception of being an integral part of a community, whether familial, local, or political. This psychological connection fosters internal political efficacy by instilling feelings of solidarity and shared responsibility. When young people feel that they belong to a community that values their participation, they are more likely to view political engagement as a communal duty and act accordingly (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). *Social networks* represent another key component of community support. These refer to the connections among individuals, groups, and institutions that facilitate the flow of political information, resources, and encouragement. For youth, these networks may include family members, peers, teachers, community leaders, and political organizations, all of which contribute to the development of political knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour (Bourdieu, 1986). In emerging democracies such as Cambodia, where access to formal political education may be limited, informal social networks are critical in transmitting civic values and opportunities for engagement. Finally, *perceived social support* refers to the belief that one can rely on others for emotional, informational, or instrumental support. This subjective perception of being supported significantly enhances both political efficacy and engagement. Youth who believe that their social environment is supportive of their political interests are more likely to feel empowered to act it. In the context of emerging democracies, where institutional trust may be weak, support from family, friends, and local organizations can fill the gap by boosting the confidence of youth to participate in civic and political life (Berkman & Glass, 2000). Together, these dimensions of community support, social capital, sense of belonging, social networks, and perceived support, form the foundation for understanding how young people become politically motivated and engaged, especially in contexts where democratic institutions are still developing. Understanding how community support contributes to political motivation is essential for analysing youth engagement in emerging democracies such as Cambodia. Theoretical models across political science, sociology, and psychology offer compelling explanations for how various forms of community support, such as social networks, social capital, identity-based affiliations, and interpersonal trust, act as powerful motivators for political action among young people. These theoretical insights reveal not only the pathways through which community support fosters engagement but also the mechanisms that sustain political participation over time.

Theoretical Frameworks Connecting Community Support and Political Motivation: Social Capital Theory serves as a foundational explanation of how community-based relationships influence political behaviour. As Putnam (2000) argues that social capital, the networks of trust, reciprocity, and civic norms within a society, serves as a critical enabler of political engagement. Individuals embedded in strong social networks have greater access to political resources, such as information, mentorship, and opportunities for civic participation. For Cambodian youth, whose political environments are often constrained by institutional limitations, community networks can act as alternative structures for political learning and mobilization. These networks not only foster internal political efficacy, defined as one's confidence in understanding political matters, but also external political efficacy, or the belief that political systems will respond to civic input (Coleman, 1990). Both dimensions of efficacy are central to fostering political motivation and participation. Social Identity Theory further complements this understanding by emphasizing how group membership influences individual behaviour. Tajfel and Turner (1979) contend that individuals derive a significant portion of their self-concept from their association with social groups, which can be

familial, ethnic, political, or religious. Political motivation is heightened when youth strongly identify with a group whose values and interests align with civic action. In the Cambodian context, group-based affiliations, such as involvement in student unions, youth-led NGOs, or community-based organizations, offer a collective identity that reinforces civic responsibility and encourages participation in elections, protests, or advocacy campaigns. As Polletta and Jasper (2001) have shown, a strong sense of belonging support to a political or social group increases the likelihood that individuals will engage in political activities aimed at defending or promoting the interests of that group. Collective Action Theory, as articulated by Olson (1965), explains political motivation as the product of shared goals and perceived efficacy of joint action. Individuals are more inclined to participate in political activities when they believe that their contributions will result in tangible social or political change. Community support systems, comprising both formal organizations and informal peer networks, play a critical role in reinforcing this belief. In Cambodia, where youth often perceive formal political institutions as inaccessible or unresponsive (Heng, 2010; Vong & Hok, 2018), local community networks serve as intermediary structures that connect individual action to broader political outcomes. These networks increase the perceived value of participation and thus motivate youth to engage in collective political behaviour. Political Socialization Theory adds yet another layer of understanding by examining how individuals acquire political values, knowledge, and behaviours. Almond and Verba (1963) and Jennings with colleagues (1974) highlight that political socialization occurs primarily through key agents such as families, peer groups, schools, and the media. In emerging democracies where civic education may be limited or uneven, community support structures act as critical sites of political learning. Family discussions about national issues, peer debates on social media, and local group participation all contribute to the shaping of political beliefs and intentions. These interactions provide young people with the interpretive tools and motivational energy to engage politically, thus transforming passive subjects into active citizens.

Community support influences youth political motivation through several interrelated mechanisms, which operate both at the psychological and structural levels. Establishing Norms of Political Participation is one of the most prominent mechanisms. Within cohesive community networks, participation in political activities, such as voting, attending town hall meetings, or engaging in civic protests, is often normalized and even expected. When youth perceive these behaviours as social norms, they are more likely to internalize them as part of their civic duty. In Cambodia, where youth political engagement has traditionally been low due to historical repression and institutional distrust, localized community norms play an essential role in creating a new participatory culture among the younger generation (Chheang, 2011). Fostering Trust in Institutions is another critical mechanism. Community support, especially from respected local leaders, educators, or family members, can reinforce youth trust in political systems by validating the belief that participation yields results. Trust in institutions correlates strongly with external political efficacy, which is essential for sustained motivation. Local leaders who bridge community and institutional spheres serve as trust brokers, encouraging youth to see formal political engagement as both legitimate and effective (Putnam, 2000; Vong & Hok, 2018). Group Identity and Collective Responsibility also drive political motivation by reinforcing a sense of solidarity among youth. When individuals perceive their actions as part of a broader group effort, their motivation to act politically increases. This is especially relevant for youth movements, where shared identity, based on generational experience, socio-economic struggle, or national aspiration, mobilizes collective action. As social identity theory suggests, identification with a group committed to political change can significantly elevate the willingness of youth to protest, campaign, or vote in alignment with group objectives (Polletta & Jasper, 2001; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social Influence and Peer Pressure further amplify political motivation. The behaviour of peers, particularly within tightly connected networks, often serves as a model for political engagement. If youth observe their friends

participating in political activities, whether online or offline, they are more likely to follow suit. This peer influence is reinforced by perceived social support, as individuals are more likely to engage in activities when they feel encouraged and validated by those around them (Berkman & Glass, 2000). In contexts where political education is limited, social influence becomes a vital mechanism through which motivation is nurtured and sustained. In sum, multiple theoretical and empirical perspectives demonstrate that community support, through its various dimensions such as social capital, group identity, and interpersonal influence, plays a pivotal role in shaping youth political motivation. These mechanisms are particularly salient in Cambodia's emerging democratic context, where formal political pathways may be limited, and informal community structures often become the primary engines for youth engagement and empowerment. Future studies should continue to investigate these relationships using longitudinal and context-sensitive methodologies to deepen our understanding of how community support can be harnessed to strengthen democratic participation as shown in table 1.

increasing political awareness, participation in elections, and social movements, particularly around issues of governance, political freedoms, and social justice (Verba et al., 1995). Social capital, including family support, peer influence, and community networks, has been identified as a crucial factor that enhances youth political motivation in these contexts (Putnam, 2000). In emerging democracies, political motivation is often multidimensional, encompassing factors such as the desire to vote, engage in political discourse, and participate in social movements (Campbell & Miller, 1954). Research shows that youth who are politically motivated tend to have strong social networks and trust in their communities, which facilitates their engagement in civic activities. In Southeast Asia, young people who are connected to community organizations and social networks are more likely to engage in voting and protest activities, which strengthens democratic development (Fukuyama, 2001). The role of community support in motivating youth in emerging democracies is therefore critical, as these factors provide resources, e.g., political knowledge, social connections, and social

Table 1. Theoretical Framework – Community Support and Political Motivation

Component	Description
Political Motivation	Refers to the psychological drive that leads individuals, especially youth, to engage in political activities such as voting, protesting, or participating in civic organizations (Davies, 1959).
Motivation to Vote	A fundamental form of political motivation characterized by the desire to participate in elections. Influenced by trust in political institutions and the perceived efficacy of one's vote (Niemi & Weisberg, 2001).
Political Discussions	Expressed through conversations about political issues with family, peers, or in public. These discussions deepen political understanding and foster engagement (Verba et al., 1995).
Civic Participation	Involvement in community organizations, activism, and volunteerism. This form of motivation builds a sense of agency and participation in social and political change (Putnam, 2000).
Community Support	Encompasses the emotional, informational, and instrumental resources provided by family, peers, and local institutions that encourage political behaviour.
Social Capital	Defined by Putnam (2000) as the norms and networks that foster trust and cooperation. Bonding social capital strengthens ties within close groups, while bridging connects across diverse social groups.
Sense of Belonging Support	Refers to an individual's emotional attachment to a community, reinforcing feelings of solidarity and shared responsibility which increase political efficacy (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).
Social Networks	The relational ties through which individuals gain political knowledge, access, and encouragement. These include family, peers, leaders, and civil society organizations (Bourdieu, 1986).
Perceived Social Support	The belief that individuals can rely on their social environment for political encouragement. Strengthens both internal and external political efficacy (Berkman & Glass, 2000).
Social Capital Theory	Explains how trust, reciprocity, civic norms in communities promote political participation, particularly when institutional engagement is weak (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 2000).
Social Identity Theory	Suggests that identification with a social or political group increases motivation to act in alignment with the group's interests (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).
Collective Action Theory	Proposes that individuals participate politically when they perceive their actions will contribute to achieving shared goals (Olson, 1965). Community support reinforces this perception.
Political Socialization Theory	Describes how political attitudes and behaviours are learned through interactions with family, peers, schools, and media (Almond & Verba, 1963; Jennings et al., 1974).
Norms of Participation	Community networks normalize civic behaviour, making political participation an expected and accepted social practice, especially in traditionally disengaged contexts.
Trust in Institutions	Local leaders and support networks help youth build confidence in political institutions, which is essential for sustaining external efficacy (Putnam, 2000).
Group Identity & Collective Action	Youth who identify with a political or civic group feel a stronger sense of duty and solidarity, encouraging participation in protests, campaigns, or voting (Olson, 1965).
Social Influence & Peer Pressure	Youth are more likely to participate in political activities when they observe peers doing so. Supportive networks reinforce engagement, especially where formal education is lacking (Berkman & Glass, 2000).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of Youth Political Motivation in Emerging Democracies:

Youth political motivation in emerging democracies plays a pivotal role in the development and stability of democratic systems. Emerging democracies are characterized by a transition from authoritarian regimes to more democratic governance systems, often accompanied by social, economic, and political challenges. As young people represent a large proportion of the population in these countries, their political motivation is critical for ensuring inclusive participation, political stability, and the legitimacy of democratic processes (Diamond, 2008). Historically, youth political behaviour in emerging democracies has been shaped by the socio-political context in which these countries transition. In many Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines, youth have been at the forefront of political movements, advocating for political reforms, democratic values, and human rights (Ostwald et al., 2016; Schwarz, 2018). In these countries, youth activism has been linked to

encouragement that empower young people to become more politically active and engaged.

Historical Context of Youth Political Motivation in Cambodia:

Cambodia presents a unique case within the broader context of emerging democracies. After the Khmer Rouge regime (1975-1979) devastated the country, Cambodia faced a long period of political repression, which significantly hindered political participation and youth engagement in political processes. Following the fall of the Khmer Rouge, Cambodia transitioned towards a multi-party system in the 1990s, culminating in the adoption of a constitutional monarchy and the establishment of regular elections (Len & Sokphea, 2021; Vong & Hok, 2018). Despite these efforts towards democratization, youth political motivation in Cambodia has remained relatively low due to the persistence of political corruption, patronage systems, and limited political freedoms. Historically, Cambodian youth have had a complex relationship with the political system. During the Khmer Rouge era, youth were coerced into participating in the regime's revolutionary activities. However, after the fall of the Khmer Rouge,

political disillusionment prevailed among the younger generation, who were skeptical of the effectiveness of the political system. The country’s subsequent transition into a multi-party system was not without its challenges, as youth were faced with a political landscape marked by authoritarian tendencies, political suppression, and limited civic freedoms (Chheang, 2011; Han, 2007). Political motivation among Cambodian youth in this context has been hindered by these historical and political barriers. In recent years, there has been a rise in youth political engagement, with increased involvement in protests, political discussions, and civil society movements. Voter turnout has shown some signs of improvement, though participation remains lower than in more established democracies (Heng, 2010; Henn et al., 2002). The role of community support, including family encouragement, local peer networks, and political organizations, has been shown to have a positive impact on youth motivation. Youth in Cambodia are increasingly turning to community-based organizations and local networks to gain political knowledge, express their political views, and take part in democratic processes. These networks help foster a sense of political efficacy among youth, motivating them to engage in political activities such as voting and activism (Fukuyama, 2001). The importance of community support in Cambodia’s evolving political landscape cannot be overstated. Youth who are part of social networks that promote civic engagement and political participation are more likely to develop a sense of political efficacy and trust in the political process, which enhances their motivation to participate in elections and political movements. The role of community support in shaping youth political motivation has been well-documented in research across emerging democracies. As outlined earlier, social capital, social networks, and perceived social support are key factors that motivate youth to engage politically.

family, peers, or groups, are more likely to participate in political events, vote in elections, and become involved in activism. These networks help increase both internal and external political efficacy, fostering the belief that youth can make a meaningful difference in the political system (Fukuyama, 2001). In Cambodia, community-based political engagement is crucial for overcoming the barriers that prevent youth from participating in the democratic process. Perceived social support and group identity further enhance the connection between community networks and youth political motivation, as individuals feel empowered to act collectively and contribute to political change (Berkman & Glass, 2000). The increasingly active role of community leaders and youth organizations in mobilizing youth for political causes plays a central role in shaping youth political motivation.

Systematic Review of Community Support and Political Motivation Research: A systematic review of the literature reveals that research on the relationship between community support and youth political motivation has been growing, though gaps remain, particularly in the context of Cambodia. Studies have generally shown that social capital and community-based networks are positively correlated with youth political participation, with stronger networks leading to higher levels of political engagement. However, research specifically focused on Cambodian youth remains limited, with many studies drawing conclusions from broader regional trends in Southeast Asia (Chheang, 2011; Vong, 2022; Vong & Hok, 2018). A few systematic studies have compared youth political motivation in emerging democracies, with a focus on social capital and community engagement. These studies suggest that countries with stronger community networks and greater levels of political engagement tend to see higher levels of youth

Table 2: Literature Review – Community Support and Youth Political Motivation

Literature Review Theme	Key Insights
Youth Political Motivation in Emerging Democracies	Youth play a critical role in ensuring the democratic legitimacy and stability of emerging democracies. In Southeast Asia, particularly in countries like Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines, youth activism has driven political reform, supported democratic values, and increased civic engagement. Social capital, including familial and peer networks, has been found to strongly enhance youth political motivation (Diamond, 2008; Putnam, 2000).
Historical Context of Youth Motivation in Cambodia	Cambodia’s turbulent political history, especially the Khmer Rouge regime and its aftermath, has significantly influenced youth political engagement. Political skepticism and disillusionment prevailed due to authoritarian governance and limited freedoms. In recent years, youth participation has begun to increase through community-based efforts, local networks, and civil society initiatives that provide knowledge and encouragement (Chheang, 2011; Heng, 2010).
Community Support’s Impact on Youth Political Motivation	Community support in the form of family encouragement, peer groups, and non-governmental organizations provides youth with emotional and practical resources needed for political engagement. In both Cambodia and other Southeast Asian countries, such networks enhance youth political efficacy and inspire participation in voting, protests, and civic discussions (Fukuyama, 2001; Verba et al., 1995).
Systematic Review of Research on the Topic	Comparative studies across Southeast Asia indicate a strong relationship between social capital and youth political participation. However, in Cambodia, the literature remains limited, especially in terms of longitudinal research. Most existing studies rely on cross-sectional data. Future research should focus on the long-term impact of community support on political behaviour, particularly in Cambodia’s evolving democratic context (Chheang, 2011; Vong & Hok, 2018).

In emerging democracies, where institutional trust is often low, and political systems may be perceived as unresponsive, community-based networks offer a critical source of social and political capital. Youth who are connected to political organizations, civic associations, and family or peer networks tend to be more politically active because they are provided with resources such as political education, civic knowledge, and social encouragement (Putnam, 2000). For instance, in countries like Indonesia and Thailand, youth political participation has been linked to strong community networks that provide access to political information and the support necessary to engage in political activities (Verba et al., 1995). Cambodian youth have benefitted from the growing role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and youth organizations, which provide them with platforms for civic education, political discussions, and collective action. These community organizations help mitigate the feeling of political disempowerment by connecting youth to broader networks of political influence, thus enhancing their motivation to engage politically. The impact of social capital on youth political motivation has also been demonstrated through studies that link youth political efficacy to the strength of their community networks. Youth who have access to a wide array of social networks, whether through

participation. In countries like Indonesia and Thailand, political education programs, community-driven political campaigns, and youth mobilization efforts have shown significant improvements in youth voter turnout and political activism (Verba et al., 1995). Cambodia’s relatively low youth participation rate, despite its growing youth population, may be linked to weak political trust, limited access to political information, and a lack of political diversity in the media, further emphasizing the importance of community support in motivating youth to engage politically. One limitation in the literature is the lack of longitudinal studies that track the long-term impact of community support on youth political motivation. Most research relies on cross-sectional data, which only provides a snapshot of youth political behaviour at a specific point in time. Future research should aim to address this gap by conducting longitudinal studies that assess how community support influences youth political engagement over time, particularly in the context of Cambodia’s political transitions. Community support factors such as social capital, social networks, and perceived social support play a critical role in shaping youth political motivation in emerging democracies. In Cambodia, where youth participation has traditionally been low, these community-based networks offer vital resources and motivation for youth to

engage in political processes. As Cambodia continues its transition towards a more inclusive democracy, strengthening community support structures will be essential for enhancing youth political motivation and democratic development as indicated in table 2.

DISCUSSION

The literature clearly demonstrates that community support, encompassing social capital, social networks, family influence, and perceived social support, plays a pivotal role in shaping youth political motivation across emerging democracies. Youth embedded in strong community ties are consistently more likely to vote, protest, and participate in political discussions, as these networks provide access to information, emotional reinforcement, and civic encouragement that enhance political efficacy. In Cambodia, these findings are especially salient. The country's political history, marked by authoritarianism and repression, has long marginalized youth from formal political engagement. However, as the nation gradually moves toward democratization, the role of community support is gaining prominence. Studies reveal that family support, peer influence, and local political organizations foster a sense of belonging and collective purpose among youth, encouraging participation in elections and civic activism. Bonding social capital reinforces internal political efficacy, while bridging capital connects youth to broader networks, increasing their trust in institutions and external efficacy. These findings underscore the need for community-based policy strategies to enhance youth engagement. Strengthening civic education, youth-led initiatives, and localized forums can build the social capital needed for sustained political participation. Empowering young people through such structures will be vital to cultivating a democratic political culture. However, several gaps remain. Most studies overlook Cambodia's unique historical and socio-political context, lack longitudinal data, and rely heavily on quantitative methods. There's limited exploration of rural youth engagement and the growing influence of digital platforms on political behaviour. Addressing these limitations through mixed-methods and context-sensitive research will be critical for fully understanding how community support shapes youth political motivation in Cambodia.

CONCLUSION

This review has underscored the vital role of community support, particularly in the forms of social capital, social networks, and perceived social support, in fostering youth political motivation in emerging democracies like Cambodia. Youth embedded in strong familial, peer, and community ties are more likely to participate in political processes, including voting, civic activism, and policy discussions. These community connections not only provide essential political knowledge and encouragement but also enhance both internal and external political efficacy. In the Cambodian context, where political engagement has long been hampered by historical repression and institutional distrust, community-driven strategies are particularly important. Initiatives such as civic education, youth-led organizations, and local forums have the potential to strengthen political trust and empower young people to contribute meaningfully to democratic development. Strengthening such networks is essential for nurturing a generation of politically motivated and engaged citizens. Nonetheless, several limitations persist in the literature. There is a lack of longitudinal research examining how community support influences political motivation over time, as well as insufficient exploration of Cambodia's unique historical and socio-political context. Rural-urban differences and the emerging role of digital communities also remain underexplored. Future research should adopt mixed methods approaches to capture these dynamics more comprehensively and offer contextually grounded insights. In sum, community support remains a foundational element in mobilizing Cambodian youth for democratic participation. As the country continues its political evolution, empowering youth through inclusive, community-based networks will be key to sustaining democratic resilience and long-term civic engagement.

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