

Determinants of Non-Participation in Student Politics: A Study among the Undergraduates of Public Universities in Sri Lanka

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Student politics is a crucial phenomenon in university education in Sri Lanka. Since the establishment of the first university; the University of Ceylon in 1942, participation of students in politics is reflected, and has always represented the social and political pressures of the country. However, it is evident that participation of students in politics in Sri Lankan public universities has drastically decreased during last two decades. Hence, this exploratory, cross-sectional, field study was designed with the prime purpose to identify the significant determinants of non-participation in student politics among the undergraduates in Sri Lankan public universities. Purposive-convenience sampling was applied to select the sample in which 500 undergraduates are included, selected from six public universities in Sri Lanka, which have a long lasting history for students' political movements.

Primary data was collected through a self-developed questionnaire, developed based on extant literature and a preliminary investigation conducted via social media; Facebook. Simple ranking method and the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) were employed to analyze data with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Factor Loading (FL) values and the Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings (ESSL) were used to draw conclusions. Fear of being suspended (FL=0.831), fear of losing the degree (FL=0.790), idea that parents' hopes cannot be fulfilled (FL=0.789), external political impact on student unions (FL=0.779) and ragging in universities (FL=0.769) are found to be the prominent five determinants of non-participation in student politics, among twenty determinants identified. Further, all together those twenty determinants were loaded into five components representing the ESSL value of 65.135%. Moreover, a significant difference of determinants of non-participation in student politics is found among public state universities selected for the current study. Building on the reported findings, the current study provides insights for both university administration and student unions to reconsider and adopt management strategies of student politics in public universities in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: public universities; Sri Lanka, student politics; university undergraduates
