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A Causal Relationship of Living Behavior Based on Sufficiency Economy Philosophy for Thai University Students

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to conceptualize and investigate a causal relationship model of Thai university students' living behavior based on sufficiency economy philosophy. The model posits that psychological immunity, family factors, and friend factors influence attitude towards sufficiency economy philosophy which in turn predicts Thai university students' living behavior based on sufficiency economy philosophy. Data were collected by means of self-report questionnaires from 800 undergraduate students in public universities. The structural equation model was employed to examine the causal relationship model. Results revealed that (a) attitude towards sufficiency economy philosophy mediated the relationship between friend factors and living behavior based on sufficiency economy philosophy, (b) psychological immunity had a direct positive relationship with living behavior based on sufficiency economy philosophy, and (c) psychological immunity mediated the effects of family factors on living behavior based on self-sufficiency economy philosophy. Implications for theory and practices are discussed.

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Keywords: Immunity, socialization, sufficiency economy philosophy, attitude

1. Introduction

The philosophy of sufficiency economy has been developed by His Majesty King Bhumipol Adulyadej and has been used as the core principle in 10th and the current 11th National Economic and Social Development Plan (Office of National Economic and Social Development Board, 2010). The philosophy provides guidance on

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appropriate conduct covering numerous aspects of life that will lead to a better quality of life and be able to cope appropriately with challenges arising from globalization and other changes. Sufficiency economy is a philosophy that stresses the three principles (moderation, reasonableness, and self-immunity) and requires two conditions: knowledge and morality. Such a way of life based on three principles with the two conditions, Thai people would be able to live securely in harmony amongst rapid socioeconomic, environmental, and cultural changes in the world. Although the philosophy of sufficiency economy are necessary to be instilled our Thai people life, there are quite limited research studies for understanding the antecedents of living behavior based on sufficiency economy philosophy. Thus to be a better understanding of a way of life based on sufficiency economy philosophy, this study is interested in examining antecedents of living behaviour based on sufficiency economy philosophy. Specifically, empirical evidence is needed to test a comprehensive model of living behavior based on sufficiency economy philosophy. The model posits that psychosocial factors such as self-immunity, family factors, and friend factors influence attitude towards sufficiency economy philosophy which in turn predicts Thai university students' living behavior based on sufficiency economy philosophy. This study will facilitate and extend the body of knowledge in a way of life based on sufficiency economy philosophy.

1.1 Conceptual Framework

Socialization and social cognitive theories (Bandura, 1986) suggest reciprocal causation between behavior, intrapersonal, and environmental factors. Intrapersonal factors include individual background (e.g., age and gender) and psychological characteristics. From the perspective of social cognitive theory, environmental factors are typically limited to those in the social and cultural environment. Similarly, the integrative approach proposes the multifactors of internal and external individuals that contribute to quality of life, well-being, and prosocial behavior (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998). This is consistent with the philosophy of sufficiency economy stresses that individuals who have self-immunity will have stable and sustainable life quality (Office of National Economic and Social Development Board, 2010). Based on analyzing and synthesizing the philosophy of sufficiency economy and social cognitive theories, the conceptual model illustrated in Fig. 1 consists of direct effects of psychological immunity, family factors, and friend factors on attitude towards sufficiency economy philosophy, and indirect effects of these factors on Thai university students' living behavior based on sufficiency economy philosophy via attitude towards sufficiency economy philosophy. In other words, attitude towards sufficiency economy philosophy is mediated relationship between the three factors and living behavior based on sufficiency economy philosophy.

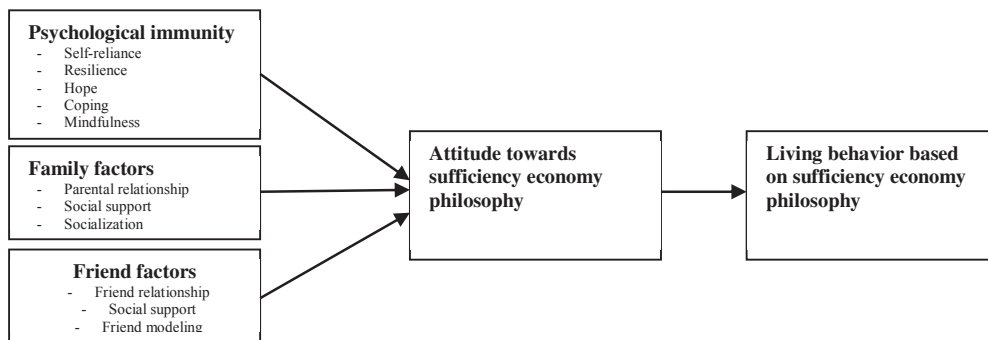


Figure 1. Proposed conceptual model of a causal relationship of living behavior based on sufficiency economy philosophy

2. Method

2.1. Sample

Subjects were 800 undergraduate students from Kasetsart University, Ramkhamhamng University, Srinakharinwirot University, and Thammasart University. 200 students from 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th year were randomly

selected in each university. Sixty-two percent of subjects were female, and 38% were male. The average age for participants was 21 with range 18-25 years old.

2.2. Measure

Self-report inventories with 5 rating scales ranging from always true to never true designed to measure antecedents and consequences of psychological immunity were administered to collect data. Each type of variable measures is described below.

- *Self-immunity*. Mindfulness, self-reliance, hope, resilience, and coping were used as indicators of psychological immunity. The self-immunity scale (Choochom, 2013) with 30 items was used to assess psychological immunity. Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .91.
- *Attitude towards sufficiency economy philosophy*. Attitude towards sufficiency economy philosophy was measured with a 10 item scale concerning individuals' beliefs and affects to a way of life based on sufficiency economy philosophy. Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .79.
- *Family factors*. Parental relationships (8 items), social support from family (8 items), and socialization based on sufficiency economy philosophy (8 items) were used as indicators of family factors. Parental relationships assessed individuals' perception of loving, caring, and understanding from their parents. Social support from family assessed individuals' perception of information, appreciation, and emotion support from their parents and relatives. Socialization based on sufficiency economy philosophy assessed individuals' perception of parental socialization practices for living with self-sufficiency, mindfulness, reliance, and reasonableness. The internal consistency reliability estimates for parental relationships, social support from family, and socialization based on sufficiency economy philosophy were .86, .87, and .89 respectively.
- *Friend Factors*. Friend relationships (8 items), social support from friends (5 items), and friend modeling in sufficiency economy philosophy (14 items) were used as indicators of friend factors. Friend relationships assessed individuals' perception of loving, caring, and understanding from their friends. Social support from friends assessed individuals' perception of information, appreciation, and emotion support from their friends. Friend modeling in sufficiency economy philosophy assessed individuals' perception of friend modeling of living with self-sufficiency, mindfulness, reliance, and reasonableness. The internal consistency reliability estimates for friend relationships, social support from friends, and friend modeling in sufficiency economy philosophy were .86, .84, and .87 respectively.
- *Living behavior based on sufficiency economy philosophy*. It was assessed a 10 item scale concerning individuals' living behavior based on 3 principles: moderation, reasonableness, and self-immunity. Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .89.

2.3. Data Analysis

A structural equation modeling (SEM) employing AMOS program was used to test the causal relationship model. Measures of absolute fit, incremental fit, and parsimonious fit were used to determine how well the data fit the proposed model of living behavior based on sufficiency economy philosophy.

3. Results

3.1 The Causal Relationship Model of Living Behavior Based on Sufficiency Economy Philosophy

The empirical data fitted with the alternative causal relationship model of living behavior based on sufficiency economy philosophy for Thai university students. Fit statistics of the model are as follows: ($\chi^2/df = 4.84, p < .05$; GFI = .95; AGFI = .85; CFI = .96; RMSEA = .06). Results indicated that psychological immunity ($\beta = .30$) and attitude towards sufficiency economy philosophy ($\beta = .52$) had positively direct effects on living behavior based on sufficiency economy philosophy, whereas family ($\beta = .23$) and friend ($\beta = .45$) factors had positively indirect effects. The findings suggest that (a) attitude towards sufficiency economy philosophy mediated the relationship

between friend factors and living behavior based on sufficiency economy philosophy, (b) psychological immunity had a direct positive relationship with living behavior based on sufficiency economy philosophy, and (c) psychological immunity mediated the effects of family factors on living behavior based on sufficiency economy philosophy (see Fig. 2). The alternative causal relationship model could account for 63 percent of variance in living behavior based on sufficiency economy philosophy. In other words, psychological immunity and attitude towards sufficiency economy philosophy were served as mediators of the relationship between socialization agent factors and living behavior based on sufficiency economy philosophy.

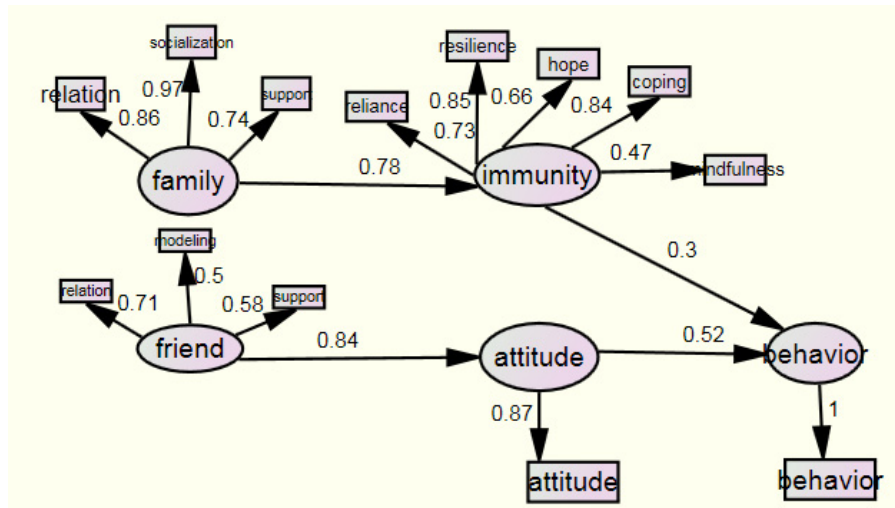


Fig. 2. The empirical model of causal relationship of living behavior based on sufficiency economy philosophy

4. Discussion

Findings of the current study suggest that psychological immunity mediates the relationship between family factors and living behavior based on self-sufficiency economy philosophy. Such mediating effects of psychological immunity are consonant with the philosophy of sufficiency economy (Office of National Economic and Social Development Board, 2010) suggesting that self-immunity is an important protective factor against behavioral problems and adversity. In addition, self-immunity serves as an essential role in helping individuals to adapt functionally in the midst of challenges and difficulties. Similarly, attitude towards sufficiency economy philosophy mediates the relationship between Friend factors and living behavior based on self-sufficiency economy philosophy. The results generally acknowledge that attitudes determine behavior. Specifically, attitude and behavior have similar specific contexts. Results of this study also confirm the integrative approach that stresses multifactor effects of internal and external individuals on behavior and quality of life (Bandura, 1986; Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998). In general, the findings support personality theories that psychological characteristics play an important role to determine and develop behavior (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998). The results of this study also showed that family and friend factors had indirect effects on living behavior based on sufficiency economy philosophy. The findings also support the significant roles of family and friend. This is consistent with socialization approach that social agents such as parents and friends influence individuals' psychological, emotional, and social development (Berns, 2004). Similarly, based on observation learning, individuals will adopt behavior of others with whom they identify and with whom they have a strong emotional bond (Bandura, 1986). Specifically, the findings suggest that parents (friends) who socialize self-sufficiency living to their children (friends) along with social support and good relationship have their children's (friends') living behavior based on self-sufficiency economy philosophy.

4.1 Implications for Theory and Practice

The study contributes to applications of sufficiency economy philosophy in several ways. Firstly, the study has made a contribution to a better understanding of effects of socializing agents on a way of life based on sufficiency economy philosophy. Secondly, the findings of the present study provide evidence for how socializing agents influence psychological characteristics and ultimately affect a way of life based on sufficiency economy philosophy. Finally, the results suggest an important link of self-immunity and a way of life based on sufficiency economy philosophy. Several practical implications emerge from the results of this study. First, the findings provide evidence that may lead to formulate policies and guidelines in enhancing a way of life based on sufficiency economy philosophy. For example, the enhancement of university students' living behavior based on sufficiency economy philosophy needs to take into consideration, both socializing agent influences and individual differences. Specifically, interventions to develop a way of life based on sufficiency economy philosophy seem to be a promising point at universities.

4.2 Limitations and Future Research

The current study has some limitations that should be addressed in the future research. The first limitation of this study is that the findings come from a cross-sectional design so the inference of causal relationships might be problematic. Future research should be designed as a longitudinal study to examine the proposed processes and confirm that the reported causal relationships hold true over time. A second limitation is that all the data were based on self-reports so the mono-method bias cannot be ruled out. Similarly, this study used only undergraduate students from public universities in Bangkok, limiting the generalizability of findings. It would therefore be interesting for future studies to expand on the present study by using different samples (e.g., students from various education levels), variables, and measures to advance knowledge of sufficiency economy.

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