

THE FACTORS INFLUENCE ON SOCIAL TRUST OF KHMER PEOPLE IN VIET NAM: THE ROLE OF MEDIATING IN LIFE SATISFACTION

Nguyen Thanh Hung¹, Pham Tiet Khanh²

Abstract

This research aims at explore relationship among life satisfaction and social trust of Khmer people in Viet Nam. The sample size of 302 collected from Khmer people are living in the Mekong Delta, Viet Nam. To do this, the method of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is initially employed, then confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structure equation modelling (SEM) are used. The results showed that four factors such as Social norm, Social network, Information and Communication, Proactivity in a Social Context have a positive influence on social trust through the mediating variable of life satisfaction. This finding provides strong evidence of the important role of life satisfaction to support positive impacts on social trust. In addition, the research results show that the Khmer people's average index of life satisfaction and social trust is 3.67 and 3.95, respectively. Therefore, it is necessary to improve people's awareness and activities in society to increase life satisfaction in order to contributes to improving social trust. It is very important for local authorities and policy makers to develop programs to promote the enhancement of the components of social capital to increase the life satisfaction of the southern Khmer in Viet Nam.

Keywords: Social trust, Social network, life satisfaction, social norm.

1. Introduction

The Mekong Delta has more than 18 million people (accounting for 19.8% of the country's population). In which, the Khmer ethnic group is about 1.2 million people, accounting for 6.7% of the population. The majority of Khmer people live in the countryside in separate small groups, interspersed with hamlets of Vietnamese, Cham, Chinese and other ethnic groups. With the characteristic that the ethnic group has many customs and habits and has a very unique art

¹First Author. Department of Graduate, Tra Vinh University, Vietnam. Email: nthung@tvu.edu.vn

²Corresponding Author. President of Tra Vinh University Council, Viet Nam. Email: ptkhanh@tvu.edu.vn.

and culture in the region. The material and cultural life of the Khmer is very rich and diverse, reflected in a number of aspects of material and spiritual cultural life such as housing, clothing, eating, drinking, transportation, social structure, etc. etc religions, beliefs, festivals and cultural and artistic activities. living... however, the poverty rate of the Khmer community is much higher than that of the Vietnamese and the Chinese. In recent years, the number of Khmer households escaping poverty is relatively low, while the rate of falling back into poverty is higher than that of other ethnic groups. With these characteristics, the level of life satisfaction of Khmer ethnic people is of interest to many researchers.

Life satisfaction levels are almost always variable, positively related to standards of reciprocity and trustworthiness. However, life satisfaction is an assessment embedded in a range of activities. The process of assessing satisfaction is based on a comparison between an individual's life situation and what he or she chooses as a standard for evaluation, which is completely subjective (Campbell, 1981). Whether individuals are satisfied or dissatisfied with their lives is based on their comparison against specific standards, not values. Because individuals can come together to share a value system. Therefore, The assessment of life satisfaction is essential, as it is considered a prerequisite for achieving social trust (Helliwell & Putnam, 2004). This article focuses on analyzing the influence of factors on life satisfaction and social trust of Khmer ethnic people in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam.

2. Theoretical and research model

2.1. Theoretical of social capital and life satisfaction

Social Trust is a general measure of one's trust in another. It is the degree of trust that individuals have in those they know as well as in those they do not know, including trust in official organizations, in this case with local regulatory authorities, local government and law enforcement agencies. Indeed, one of the most important factors in any type of relationship is Trust (T. S. Y. Lim, Hassan, Ghaffarianhoseini, & Daud, 2017). It creates a bridge between individuals, organizations or communities and eases any form of exchange between others.

Thus, it can be said that trust is a resource used when building relationships and interacting with others. Anderson & Milligan (2006) also emphasized trust as a potential resource and proxy when they link social capital to the process of people working collectively in an environment of trust along with a common goals (Anderson & Milligan, 2006)

Life Satisfaction is a cognitive component of a person's subjective ratings of well-being (Andrews & Crandall, 1976), and researchers equate life satisfaction with subjective well-being or personal satisfaction (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). Lemon et al (1972) defined life satisfaction as "the degree to which a person is currently satisfied or satisfied with his/her life". Lou, Lu, Xu, & Chi (2013) conclude that life satisfaction is shaped by two main approaches: (1) present life (i.e., self, other, time, and context scene), and (2) experience domain-specific life in multiple ways. In addition, life satisfaction is considered an important indicator of positive mental health for the elderly (C. Kim & Shen, 2020).

Life satisfaction and other indicators of quality of life reflect general assessments of a person's environment, which can be either positive or negative (Scheufele & Shah, 2000). Therefore, an individual's perception and feelings about life can partly assess an individual's subjective happiness in relation to the present life. In addition, perceptions and feelings about life can be greatly influenced by social resources, the relationship of individuals to social systems (Coleman, 1988), collectively known as social capital.

Putnam (1993) and Coleman (1988) both refer explicitly to social norms. Social norms provide a form of informal social control that obviates the necessity for more formal, institutionalized legal sanctions. In particular, the study of (Bullen, 2000) suggested that religious factors act as a social norm to be considered in relation to life satisfaction.

Sinnewe et al., (2014) noted that in those empirical studies which detected a positive association between religion and life satisfaction, the strength of this relationship is significant (Sinnewe et al., 2014). (C. Lim, 2014) conducted one of the most thorough assessments of the link between religious behavior and life satisfaction.

In the life of the Khmer people, they always associate their faith with Buddhism. Therefore, religion is seen as a social norm to regulate their behavior in life. Belief and religious activities have a great influence on the life and beliefs of each individual and society of the ethnic people (Gert, 2008). The hypothesis is proposal

H1. Social norms have a positive influence on life satisfaction

The social network is expressed through the connection of family, friends, and work, which plays an important role for each person in the community. According to (Tomini, Tomini, & Groot, 2016) that the influence of interactions with family and friends on life satisfaction has been recognized by many studies. (Groot, Wim; Maassen van den Brink, Henriëtte; van Praag, 2007) found that the size of the network has a significant effect on social capital.

On the other hand, many studies indicate that the impact of social networks on life satisfaction can vary depending on the composition of the network and the relationships quality (Pinquart & Sörensen, 2000). Accordingly (Pinquart & Sörensen, 2000) found that people without a network of friends have higher depressive symptoms than those with a diverse network. Research by (Dogan, 2016) has shown that social network has a positive effect on life satisfaction and subjective happiness. Thus, the proposed hypothesis

H2. Social network positively affects life satisfaction

Besides that, Information plays an important role in daily life. This is reflected in the ways and means by which households obtain information about markets, public services and communication networks (Jones & Woolcock, 2004). At the same time, communication helps to establish and operate relationships between people, or between people and other social components to satisfy certain needs (Onyx & Bullen, 2000). This takes many forms, such as sharing, strategizing to coordinate activities, and recognizing and getting to know others. Thus, the receipt and transmission of information can contribute to the influence of a person's information. B. J. Kim, Linton, & Lum (2015) suggested that

information sharing and participation in organizations influence life satisfaction. The hypothesis that is proposed

H3. Information and communication have a positive effect on life satisfaction

The individual's consciousness is formed in the individual's communication relationship with others and with society Lu, Jiang, Lou, Zeng, & Liu (2018) assumed that the number of social relationships and interactions in society includes organizational membership, social participation, and civil rights activities. This affects one's subjective well-being and health. In addition,

Proactive personality Active personality is defined as a person's tendency to change his or her life, which is a tendency that explains the ability of individuals to actively affect their environment (Bateman & Crant, 1993). Individuals who proactively seek to develop their existing conditions and persevere until meaningful changes occur in their lives, most of them have higher career success (Fuller & Marler, 2009). Lichtenthaler & Fischbach, (2016) stated that proactive personality is related to university students' life satisfaction, although the relationship between proactive personality and life satisfaction may be influenced by other relevant variables.

Studies have shown that there are direct links between proactive personality and life satisfaction. Moreover, Bullen (2014) refers to individual and collective effectiveness in activities interacting with the surrounding social environment. Therefore, the more effective the interaction, the higher the life satisfaction. Hence, hypothesis is proposal

H4. Proactivity in a Social Context has a positive effect on life satisfaction

Life satisfaction is one of the most common quantitative indicators of subjective wellbeing that is employed in studies of quality of life. Some empirical research emphasises that social trust is positively correlated with life satisfaction (Helliwell & Putnam, 2004), whereas other studies argue that the effects move in the opposite direction. Helliwell & Putnam (2004) theorised that people are more trusting when they think that their lives are going well.

Life satisfaction levels are almost always variable, which is positively related to standards of reciprocity and trust. Helliwell & Putnam (2004) for the first time Life satisfaction is a prerequisite of social trust, It is also possible that life satisfaction and general trust are interrelated. Similarly, Masera & Neira (2012) provides a solid basis for the relationship between optimism and trust, which is also reflected in life satisfaction. Studies show that the level of social trust is high in a society when most of its members are satisfied with their lives. Thus, put forth the following hypothesis

H5. Life satisfaction will positively predict social trust

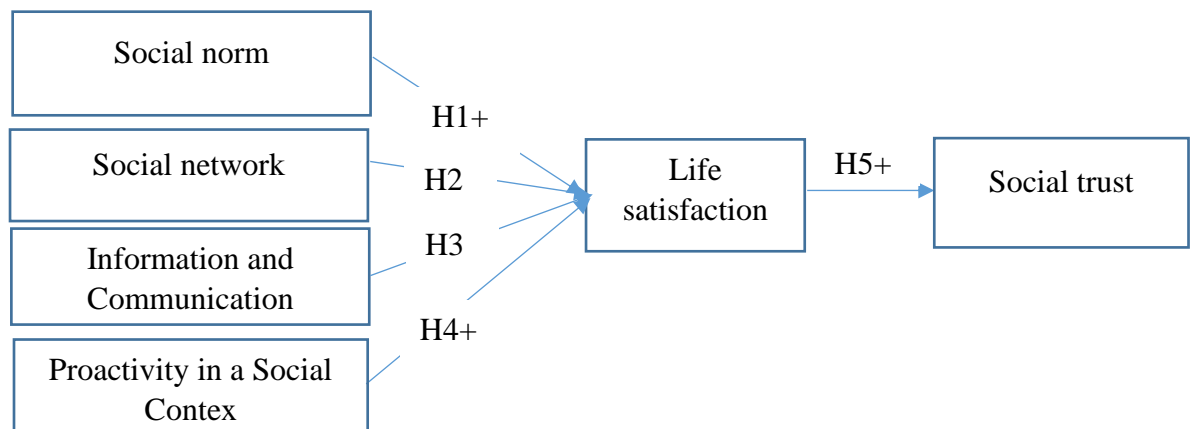


Figure 1. Proposed research model

3. Data and method

Due to the complex structure of the research model, an equally complex research method needs to be applied in order to gain sufficient results. Within economic and social research structural equation models have proven to be a suitable method for analyzing complex model structures with mostly latent variables Hair et al (2006). Therefore, for the specificity of the presented research model structural equation modelling has been used.

3.1 Sample

Sample size plays an important role in the estimation and interpretation of SEM results. In general the literature suggests that sample sizes for structural equation models commonly run in the 200 to 400 range for models with 10 to 15 indicators (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006). It also depends on the number of variables observed and the reliability of each study that can be taken for different survey samples. According to (Hair et al., 2006), the sample size must be at least 4 -5 times the number of observations, There is 30 items in the research so resquested is the minimum sample size is $30 * 5 = 150$ observations. The survey sample was selected by a stratified random sampling method used to interview individuals representing rural Khmer households in the south, the region with the highest proportion of Khmers in Vietnam. Most of the questions in the questionnaire were measured using a seven-point Likert scale in addition to requesting demographic information.

A total of 320 questionnaires were returned and 18 questionnaires were discarded due to incomplete data. Hence, the final number of usable questionnaires was 302 with a response rate of 94.3%. Approximately half of the respondents were woman (47.8%).

Regarding marital status, there are 75 single people (accounting for 24.8%) and 227 people are married (accounting for 75.2%). Regarding education of interviewee, there are 37.7% primary school, secondary school (24.2%); high school (18.9%); university degree (17.5%) and graduate degrees (1.7%). About occupation, 12 people work for government (accounting for 4.0%); 49 people

are workers (accounting for 16.2%); there are 34 people doing business, trading (accounting for 11.3%); there are 83 freelancers (accounting for 27.5%); 10 people are teachers (accounting for 3.3%); 60 people are farmers (accounting for 19.9%); 34 people are Housewives (accounting for 11.3%) and 20 people are in the occupational group (accounting for 6.6%).

3.2 Analytical methods

Qualitative method: on the basis of an overview of previous studies, the research team built an initial scale, then the questionnaire was sent to experts and conducted a trial survey of 30 employees to control the survey. edit and supplement concepts in the questionnaire.

Quantitative methods: used with methods such as Cronbach's Alpha, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and multivariate regression.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Cronbach's Alpha

The scale of the study is inherited and developed based on previous studies (Table 1)

Table 1. Summary of scale's reliability

Factors	Scales	Code	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Source of Scales
Social norm (NOR) Alpha = 0,851	Religion is important for me	NOR1	0,704	0,805	(Forsell, Tower, & Polman, 2020), (Stone & Hughes, 2002)
	Belief in Buddhism as a meaningful goal in life	NOR2	0,712	0,804	
	My faith is hooked up to Buddhism	NOR3	0,773	0,777	
	My faith greatly influences my decisions	NOR4	0,593	0,855	
Social network (SNE) Alpha = 0,793	Support neighbors when having problems (illness, difficulties, etc.)	SNE1	0,588	0,749	Jones & Woolcock (2004), (Forsell et al., 2020)
	Regularly meet neighbors when shopping	SNE2	0,576	0,756	
	The own circle of relatives frequently meets and eats	SNE3	0,560	0,762	
	Often go out to eat with friends	SNE4	0,693	0,697	
Information and	I even have sufficient facts withinside the network wherein I live	IAC1	0,679	0,720	Jones & Woolcock

Factors	Scales	Code	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Source of Scales
Communication (IAC) Alpha = 0,801	I without difficulty get entry to facts across the location wherein I live	IAC2	0,691	0,713	(2004), (Stone & Hughes, 2002) (B. J. Kim et al., 2015)
	I am proactive in communication, I do not discriminate against people	IAC3	0,603	0,758	
Proactivity in a Social Context (PSC) Alpha = 0,720	He/she often take initiative in work	PSC1	0,483	0,676	(Stone & Hughes, 2002) (Winkelmann, 2009)
	Always help your relatives, friends and colleagues	PSC2	0,567	0,623	
	Always seek mediation in the event of a dispute	PSC3	0,583	0,612	
	Awareness of public hygiene (waste collection, street washing)	PSC4	0,408	0,713	
Life satisfaction (LSA) Alpha = 0,903	Currently, my life is almost ideal.	LSA1	0,779	0,878	(Stone & Hughes, 2002) (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991)
	The situations of my existence are perfect	LSA2	0,741	0,885	
	I am glad with my life	LSA3	0,767	0,880	
	I am happy with my current job and career	LSA4	0,736	0,886	
	I am satisfied with my current standard of living and income	LSA5	0,772	0,879	
Social trust (STR) Alpha = 0,720	You can go out any time	STR1	0,372	0,748	Jones & Woolcock (2004), Bullen (2000), (Han, Kim, & Lee, 2012) (Forsell et al., 2020)
	The living area is safe	STR2	0,501	0,662	
	Almost everyone around can be trusted	STR3	0,561	0,631	
	I believe that if I help others, they will help me back	STR4	0,630	0,586	

Source: Summary of data analysis results

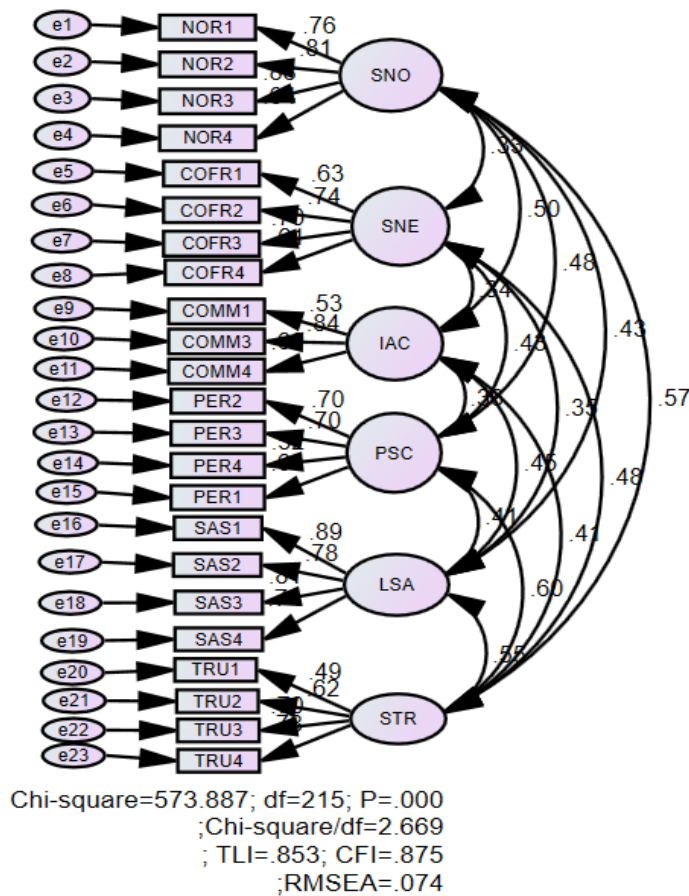
The results of Table 1 show that the aggregate reliability of all scales has a combined confidence factor greater than Cronbach's alpha value (greater than 0.8). In addition, the correlation coefficients of the total variables are all > 0.3. The indicators showed that the component concepts of the scale all meet the requirements (Nunnally, 1994).

4.2. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

The CFA analysis results of the critical model have $p = 0.000 < 0.05$; $df = 215$ degrees of freedom; index $CMIN/df = 2.669 \leq 5$ in accordance with analytical data requirements (Bentler & Bonett, 1980); CFI indicators = 0.875 approximately 0.9; TLI = 0.853 approximately 0.9; RMSEA index = 0.074 < 0.08 is acceptable (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). The indicators satisfy the requirements to conclude the model is consistent with the official data.

The test results showed that the composite reliability coefficient (CR) ranges from 0.778 to 0.910 satisfying the requirements (≥ 0.70) and the total variance extracted ranges from 50.9% to 62.5% satisfying the requirements (≥ 0.50). These indicators showed that the scale of factors ensures reliability.

The results of CFA analysis showed that standardized load factors with values from 0.524 to 0.810 are larger than or equal to 0.5; Therefore, it can be concluded that the observed variables used to measure the factors and components in the research model reached the convergent value, the model fits the data (Gerbing & Anderson, 1988).



The results of testing discriminant validity between concepts showed that the estimated correlation coefficients associated with standard error (S.E) have p-values less than 5% so that the correlation coefficient r of each pair of scales is different from 1 ($\neq 1$). It means it is not a unit matrix and has statistical significance ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, it can be concluded that the scale has discriminant validity.

4.3. Structural equation modeling (SEM)

Results of the SEM model test showed that the indexes met the following requirements: CMIN/df = $2.691 \leq 5$; CFI index = 0.880 approximately 0.9; TLI = 0.860 is approximately 0.9 and RMSEA = $0.062 < 0.0$ (Garver & Mentzer, 1999). Model estimates are statistically significant at the 5% level, which implies that the measurement model is consistent with the actual data.

Figure 2. SEM results for the theoretical model

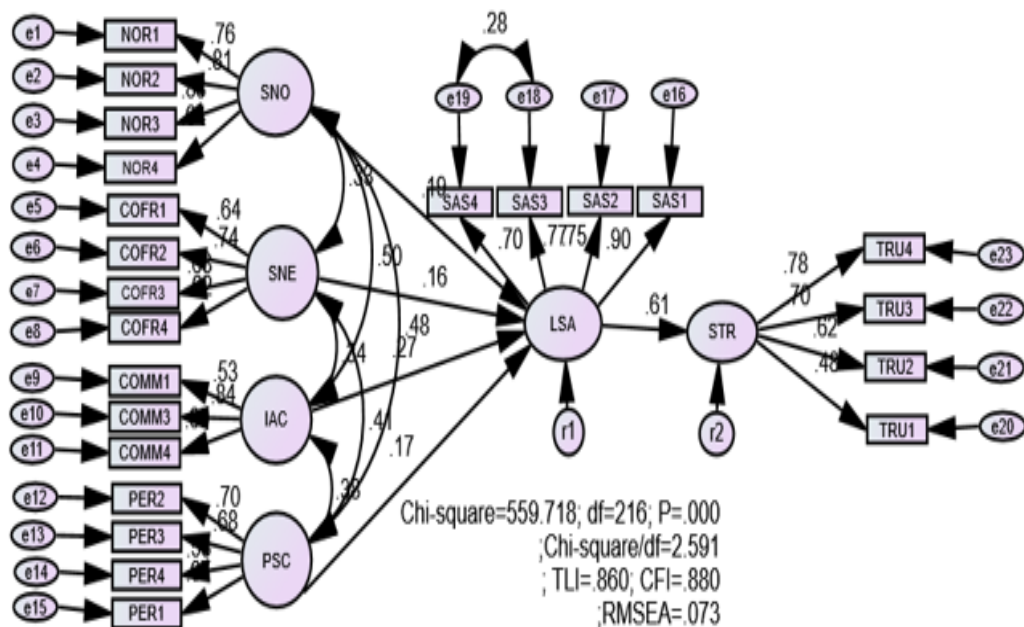


Table 2. Results of testing the relationship between concepts in theory model

Hypothesis		Relationship	Estimate	S.E	C.R	P	Result
Ho	Exp Sign						
H1	(+)	Social norm (SNO) → Life satisfaction (LSA)	0.190	0.075	2.531	0.011	Accepted
H2	(+)	Social network (SNE) → Life satisfaction (LSA)	0.180	0.078	2.302	0.021	Accepted
H3	(+)	Information and Communication (IAC) → Life satisfaction (LSA)	0.458	0.137	3.349	***	Accepted
H4	(+)	Proactivity in a Social Context (PSC) → Life satisfaction (LSA)	0.240	0.108	2.225	0.026	Accepted
H5	(+)	Life satisfaction (LSA) → Social trust (STR)	0.470	0.059	7.932	***	Accepted

Source: Analysis results from survey data in 2022

Note. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$

The standardized coefficients shown in Table 2 confirm that the relationships are statistically significant at the 5% level. Factors affecting Life satisfaction include Social norm

Social network, Information and Communication, Proactivity in a Social Context. in which Information and Communication has the highest impact on Life satisfaction (0.458). Research results also showed that there is a positive relationship between Life satisfaction and Social trust.

For hypothesis H1. The result show that there is a statistically significant relationship between SNO and LSA ($\beta = 0.190$). Regarding region practice of Khmer people will contribute to an increase in pride. They proud of about their participation in activities like religious rites and contribution to the temple. Through these activities help the Khmer community to continue preserving and promoting traditional religious values and develop in a sustainable related to material and spiritual values. This created an self- satisfaction, consistent with research Sinnewe et al., (2014), C. Lim, (2014), Gert, (2008) . They suggested religious behavior can be influenced by social norms

Hypothesis H2. SNE have positively influenced on LSA ($\beta = 0.180$). SNE includes neighbor connections, friends and work Good social relationships will boost an individual's satisfaction. This is similar to the study of (Tomini, Tomini, & Groot, 2016), (Pinquart & Sörensen, 2000) and (Dogan, 2016). Positive social relationships exert the power to influence on life satisfaction and promote social trust.

Hypothesis H3: IAC directly impact on LSA ($\beta = 0.458$). This implies exchanging information, meeting and interacting with optimistic people lead to positive outlook on life (Jones & Woolcock, 2004), B. J. Kim, Linton, & Lum (2015). By creating positive relationships with those around the individual, a positive self-perception will be created (Onyx & Bullen, 2000).

Hypothesis H4. PSC in the social has positively affects LSA ($\beta = 0.240$). The result is consistent with the research of (Bateman & Crant, 1993), (Fuller & Marler, 2009). Both authors showed that individuals living in a society must display a deep sense of responsibility and high responsibility. Individuals who are more proactive may be more involved in new experiences and creations, which can affect life satisfaction.

Hypothesis H5. hypothesis is accepted. LSA is an intermediate variable that has a direct positive impact on STR ($\beta = 0.470$) which is similar to studies such Helliwell & Putnam (2004), Maseda & Neira (2012) or the study of (Bibi, Karim, & Shafiq-ur-Rehman, 2017), it showed that there is a relationship between SLA and STR.

The results also show that the level of interpretation of concepts in the model to social trust of the khmer people in Viet nam is relatively large ($R^2 = 62.3\%$).

5. Conclusions and implications

This research contributes to the field of civic behavior, both academically and practically in management. By exploring the main factors affecting social trust of citizens through life satisfaction, this article fulfills the main research requirement.

The research results provide some valuable insights and feedback on the factors that increase the life satisfaction and social trust of Khmer people in Vietnam. The findings of the research indicate that the main factors affecting life satisfaction and social trust are social network, social norms, Information and Communication and Proactivity in a Social Context. Additionally, the research also highlights the importance of social cohesion and social support in fostering social trust and life satisfaction among Khmer people.

In terms of social network, in order to improve the life satisfaction of Khmer people, it is essential to have an influence on their social networks. Social networks are an integral part of life for many of us, providing us with a sense of connection and belonging. Currently, the living standard of the Khmer community in particular and of Vietnamese society in general is much higher than before. However, there are still many limitations in countryside areas like Khmer village, remote areas,... Hence, local government have to focus to develop these areas in order to hunger eradication and poverty alleviation, raising people's intellectual level, avoid racial discrimination. Additionally, create opportunities for Khmer people's to connect with each other and build stronger relationships. This could be done by introducing them to new networks, providing them with the resources to form new networks, or simply encouraging them to reach out and interact with their existing networks.

Before starting holidays of Khmer people, local governments should organize propaganda laws regarding security and order to people by Vietnamese and Khmer. In addition, Encourage people to attend sessions on economic development, balancing life, the latest news in society's integration period, and information associated with social networks. Therefore, it is necessary to create a social network system like village or commute to support and share information in a timely and accurate manner.

Building a community library to provide the general public with access to information resources. Such libraries are typically established in partnership between the local government and the residential community, and are located in community learning centers, cultural and sports centers of communes, wards, and townships, commune cultural post offices, and cultural houses of villages, as well as other communal areas. This type of library offers an invaluable service to the local community, providing resources for research, learning, and leisure. They can also be used as meeting places for the public, allowing people from the community to interact, network, and share experiences.

In addition, it is necessary to have electronic information for households to grasp in a timely manner, and to involve local officials in connecting electronic information to easily exchange and answer questions and concerns. A local electronic community group serves as a platform for communication, information sharing, and responsive communication.

By organizing cultural activities and festivals, it is possible to strengthen communication channels and increase people's awareness in proactively performing personal and social related works, while also creating attachment and improving trust with the surrounding community.

It is important to improve the quality of religious activities, Khmer people can benefit from increased social norms. This can include developing a stronger sense of community, creating an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding, and fostering a sense of purpose and belonging. In addition, better quality religious activities can help to teach and promote important values, such as respect for diversity and commitment to social justice.

Generally, Life satisfaction is an important factor in increasing social trust of Khmer people. When people are content with their lives, they are more likely to trust those around them. This is because those with higher life satisfaction are more likely to recognize the mutual benefits of trusting others and engaging in cooperative and beneficial relationships.

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