



Research Article

Educating students' political courage at higher education institutions in Vietnam

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Educating the political courage of the young generation has been one of the key missions of both the political system and higher education institutions in Vietnam. However, the literature offers limited and insufficiently convincing accounts of the conceptualization of political courage, particularly regarding students, as well as the components that form the basis for its implementation and evaluation. This article aims to clarify the conceptualization and key components of political courage by investigating how university students are trained in this area. It presents a case study of institutions in North Central Vietnam to derive lessons for higher education institutions across the country and to offer a reference for other semi-authoritarian regimes in Asia, particularly China. This study employed a quantitative survey method. The findings revealed a correlation between the cognitive and motivational dimensions of student engagement in political courage training activities and the development of political courage itself. The results highlight the effectiveness of pedagogical approaches that promote political courage, especially those that extend beyond classroom instruction and support student autonomy.

Keywords: Civic education, higher education, pedagogy, political courage, student autonomy, student engagement, Vietnam

1. Introduction

The 21st century is known as the age of intellectual civilization and a milestone in science and technology. As a result, nation-state building requires a generation of young, capable, and politically minded individuals who can embrace innovation, face challenges, adapt flexibly, and respond promptly to the rapid changes of modern society. Throughout its revolutionary leadership, the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) has consistently valued the role of youth—particularly students—training them to become a new contingent of intellectuals in service of the revolutionary cause (Doan & Le, 2016; Ha & Vu, 2020; Hoang, 2017).

Under the guidance of the CPV and the direction of the educational sector, instilling political courage in students has long been regarded as a crucial mandate and objective for the country's higher education institutions. This is especially pertinent in the contemporary context, in which the CPV, the State, and the entire educational apparatus have actively worked to promote political courage among the younger generation, following CPV resolutions on "Strengthening the protection of the Party's ideological foundation, fighting against wrong and hostile views in the new situation" (Luong & Nguyen, 2013). This issue has gained prominence as a critical responsibility for Party members, cadres, and youth, particularly given the presence of internal reactionary elements and hostile forces who strategically use social networks and both domestic and foreign resources to advance agendas of "self-evolution" and "self-transformation" within the Vietnamese communist regime. These efforts aim to sow discord within the Party and erode national unity, ultimately seeking to dismantle the Vietnamese socialist regime (Hoang, 2017).

Given this context, higher education institutions in Vietnam have implemented a variety of educational activities and political theory courses to promote students' political courage. However, these efforts remain largely ineffective in terms of training, education, and political communication. Moreover, students' political courage has not been examined thoroughly and

systematically from either theoretical or empirical perspectives by scholars, educators, or activists. As a result, there is a lack of effective solutions to improve the educational quality of political courage among students—something essential for achieving the stated objectives and mitigating adverse impacts on their lives. Therefore, the imperative of instilling political courage in students has become increasingly urgent and pivotal in the current context.

This article seeks to provide a theoretical framework for understanding students' political courage and to assess its manifestation within higher education institutions, using a case study of North Central Vietnam to draw lessons for institutions across the country and other semi-authoritarian regimes in Asia. By conceptualizing students' political courage as a synthesis of political stance, attributes, capacity, and determination, the author highlights how the cognitive and motivational dimensions of student engagement in political courage training activities at the tertiary level influence these four components of political courage.

There are three hypotheses regarding the education of students' political courage in tertiary education. First, students who are exposed to diverse pedagogical approaches demonstrate higher motivation to participate in training activities, resulting in greater cognitive development in political courage. Second, students with higher self-resilience and learning autonomy are more likely to develop political courage, especially in terms of political capacity and political determination. Third, the implementation of diverse curricula, civic education, and inclusive and supportive educational practices is positively associated with enhanced political courage outcomes.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptualizing Political Courage and Political Courage of Students

The concept of political courage remains contested. Existing literature by Vietnamese scholars generally defines political courage as the firmness, consistency, and proactiveness in both thought and action when facing political and life-related difficulties and challenges (Dao, 2011; Pham, 2017; Tran, 2010). Tran (2010, p. 14) defines political courage as "the collection of positive and progressive qualities through which each individual's actions in political activities are oriented in a positive direction (in terms of the ultimate results) to bring a certain victory to a political event." Mai (2019, p. 2) describes political courage as "the determination and bravery to stand up for what is right, even in the face of adversity, criticism or danger." Minh (2008) argues that political courage is a disposition and attribute in which political quality serves as the pivotal determinant. In other words, a lack of political quality renders the development of a strong political character unattainable and may lead to misguided ideological views and actions.

International scholars also conceptualize political courage in various ways. Liew (2013, p. 85) defines it as "the ability to stand up for what is right, even if it goes against powerful interests, and to take difficult decisions that are in the best interest of society." According to Sparks (2009), political courage is a trait rooted in traditional values and shaped by socio-historical and political dynamics. It is cultivated and sustained when individuals face challenges or danger, whether in personal contexts or political events. Barber (2014, p. 18) defines it as "the willingness to make difficult and unpopular choices, even at the risk of personal or political consequences, to serve the public good." Similarly, Alperovitz (2020, p. 219) describes political courage as "the capacity to act against entrenched interests, and to accept the personal and political risks of doing so." Arendt (1998) and Bickford (1996) share the view that political courage functions both as a guiding principle shaping political disposition and as a tangible practice that is demonstrated and enacted through concrete actions.

Notably, a significant body of literature describes students' political courage across cognitive, behavioral, and action-oriented dimensions, often treated separately. From a cognitive perspective, students' political courage is conceptualized as their consistency in acquiring solid knowledge in both theory and practice. Knowledge plays a crucial role in shaping students' worldview, methodology, and understanding of the nature and principles of political movements—factors that

enhance their awareness and critical thinking, thereby fostering political courage (Luong & Nguyen, 2013; Mai, 2018; Phung, 2015; Tran, 2014). From a behavioral perspective, Nguyen (2011) and Bui (2020) argue that attitude forms the behavioral foundation of political courage, driven by students' perceptions and sentiments, which in turn contribute to the development of political qualities. These qualities are expressed through behaviors connected to real-life experiences, often shaped by ethnic, national, and class-based factors. The third dimension—action-based—reflects students' political stance and their courage to manage their actions within societal life. However, this attribute alone does not produce political courage; it must be supported by a strong political stance and a determined will to act in political contexts (Doan & Le, 2016; Nguyen, 2018a; Nguyen, 2020a; Pham, 2016).

Although the literature provides a plausible foundation for understanding students' political courage, particularly in the Vietnamese context, it lacks a precise, unified definition. Isolating any of the three dimensions above to define the concept poses challenges from both theoretical and empirical standpoints. Nguyen (2020a) contends that political courage is a historical category, as it is tied to individual behavior in political activities and often becomes apparent during historical turning points or in moments of crisis. Accordingly, youth political courage is "a composite factor of political stance, political attributes, political capacity, and political will" (p. 164). Based on this reasoning, we conceptualize students' political courage as the dialectical synthesis of political stance, political attributes, political capacity, and political determination—developed and expressed through political practice—demonstrating firmness, perseverance, and resolve in overcoming life's challenges to achieve intended goals.

2.2. Components of Students' Political Courage

From a renewed conceptual perspective, students' political courage is not a singular trait but a dialectical synthesis of multiple factors, relationships, and virtues embedded in four core components: political stance, political attributes, political capacity, and political determination. These four components are mutually reinforcing, forming a stable political orientation aligned with the demands of social reality.

2.2.1. Political stance

Political stance is reflected in the firmness and proactiveness of one's thoughts and actions in the face of difficulties and challenges (Luong, 2012; Nguyen, 2020a). According to Nhan and Hong (2021), political stance among young Vietnamese students is defined as "an individual's position on political issues and their overall political beliefs and values" (p. 60). Their study found that the political stance of university students in Vietnam is influenced by various factors, including family background, education, and exposure to diverse political ideas. Similarly, Rosenstone and Hansen (1993, p. 26) define political stance as "a set of beliefs and attitudes that shape how individuals approach and respond to political issues and events," highlighting the impact of family, education, socialization, and media exposure. In another study, Le (2015, p. 79) defines political stance as "the degree of identification with and support for a particular political ideology, party, or candidate," noting that political trust and efficacy shape youth attitudes.

According to the CPV, the most visible sign of political competence is a steadfast stance that does not waver in the face of adversity or deviate from its chosen path. For Vietnamese youth, political stance reflects a socialism-oriented view—"a consistent position on Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh's ideology, the goal of national independence and socialism, and the reform path led by the CPV" (The CPV, 2021, p. 199). To nurture political stance, higher education institutions in Vietnam offer five political theory courses: Marxist-Leninist Philosophy, Marxist-Leninist Political Economy, Scientific Socialism, History of the Communist Party of Vietnam, and Ho Chi Minh's Ideology. In addition, instruction in national laws and policies is also an integral component of enhancing students' political stance (Nguyen, 2019).

2.2.2. Political attributes

Political attributes play a central role in shaping and guiding the development of other qualities, as they reflect both class identity and ideological orientation. Taylor and Vu (2016, p. 6) define political attributes as “a complex mix of cynicism, pragmatism, and idealism.” Vu and Nguyen (2018) argue that these attributes in Vietnamese youth are shaped by generational experiences and core values. Nguyen and Nguyen (2020a) identify education, social media, and the broader political environment as key influencing factors.

In line with the CPV’s political education framework, students’ political attributes are most clearly exhibited through their beliefs in key political subjects – particularly faith in the Party, the People, the Nation, the socialist system, and the country’s future development (Nguyen, 2018b; Vietnam Student Association, 2019). This perspective supports a contextual understanding of political courage education in Vietnamese higher education.

2.2.3. Political capacity

Within the structure of political courage, if political attributes are its foundation, then political capacity represents its most defining quality. Political capacity is assessed by operational requirements and the ability to fulfill expected goals. Nguyen and Ramstedt (2015, p. 78) define it as “the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that enable individuals to participate effectively in the political process.” Similarly, Nguyen and Nguyen (2019, p. 150) describe political capacity as “the ability to understand and participate in the political system and influence political decision-making.” Vu and Hsin-Huang (2016) suggest that this capacity is shaped by both personal factors (such as education and socioeconomic status) and contextual factors (such as the political environment and civil society).

Political capacity ensures that individuals can perform specific tasks effectively. In the case of students, it refers to the ability to master knowledge, conduct scientific research, and apply problem-solving skills in various contexts, including civic engagement and community service. Collectively, these competencies contribute to the betterment of society (Vu, 2012; Vietnam Student Association, 2019).

2.2.4. Political determination

Hoang (2017, p. 187) defines political determination as “a strong determination to engage in political activities for the purpose of achieving desired outcomes.” Similarly, Le et al. (2024, p. 29) describe it as “the willingness to take action and the belief that one’s actions can make a difference in the political system.” Tomanić-Trivundža and Morgenbesser (2018) observe a growing trend of political determination among youth, particularly those who are educated and globally connected. These young activists are often driven by a desire for social justice and democratic reform. Mao (2014) argues that determination and courage are dialectically and systematically linked. Thus, a student’s political determination is reflected in purposeful and independent thinking and action, strong commitment, and the willingness to take risks—to think, speak, act, and accept responsibility.

In sum, understanding and promoting students’ political courage requires a comprehensive conceptualization shaped by the political philosophy and policy directives of the dominant regime. In Vietnam, political courage education is a strategic tool for sustaining the existing system. Therefore, all stakeholders—both state and non-state actors—must clearly define the components of political courage when designing educational programs for youth and mass organizations. Without a solid conceptual foundation, these efforts risk becoming misaligned and ineffective, lacking the evaluative tools necessary to identify strengths and weaknesses and propose meaningful improvements.

3. Method

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative approach to enable statistical analysis of trends and patterns in participants' perspectives regarding their educational experiences and the outcomes of their political courage. The survey questions were structured around the four components of political courage: students' political stance, political attributes, political capacity, and political determination.

3.2. Participants

The author conducted surveys at six higher education institutions located in six provinces of North Central Vietnam. These institutions are categorized as major or mid-level tertiary education providers in the national system. The survey included a total of 1,036 third-year students representing diverse academic disciplines, including teacher education, economics, engineering, information technology, business administration, medicine and pharmacy, and other fields in the social and natural sciences.

Third-year students were specifically targeted because they had completed the five required political theory courses within the Vietnamese higher education system and had participated in a variety of formal and extracurricular activities aimed at fostering political courage.

3.3. Procedure and Data Collection

First, the questionnaire was developed to collect students' feedback regarding the political courage education provided at their institutions, based on the four identified components. Following approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), all participants received informed consent forms before taking part in the study.

Second, a set of thirteen concise questions was administered via Google Forms. Each student received the survey link through their institutional email and submitted their responses online.

Third, after data collection was completed, the responses were analyzed using SPSS software to identify trends, correlations, and underlying factors relevant to the research questions.

3.4. Data Analysis

The statistical analysis focused on descriptive statistics to explore students' educational experiences and their levels of political courage. Based on the findings, conclusions, implications, and recommendations were developed to support and enhance political courage education at tertiary institutions.

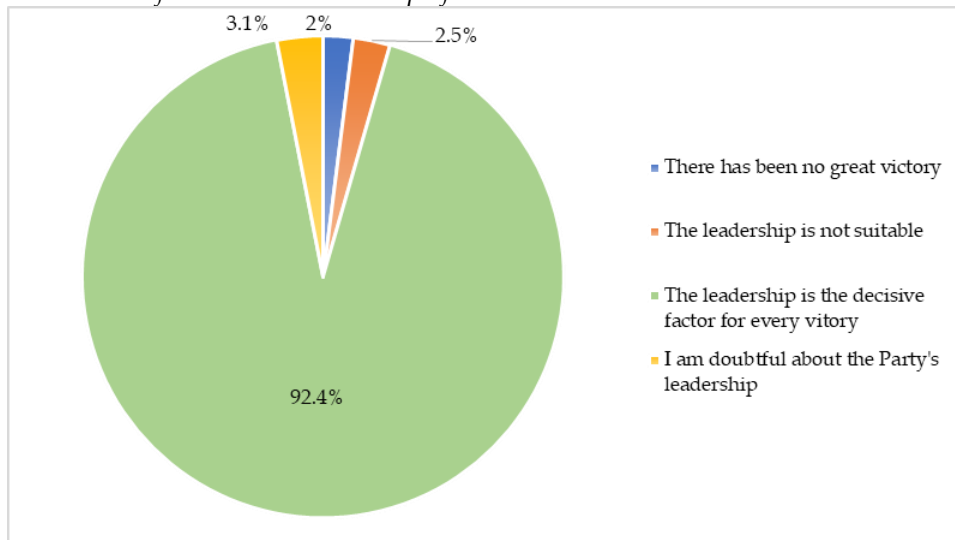
4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Students' Political Stance

Figure 1 shows that 92.4% of respondents affirmed that the Party's leadership is the decisive factor behind every victory of the Vietnamese revolution. This finding aligns with the annual reports of regional institutions, which have highlighted a variety of pedagogical approaches employed over the past decade. These include interaction and role play, simulations, project-based learning, and extracurricular activities organized by the Youth Union and the Students' Association of the respective educational institutions.

Such pedagogical initiatives aim to equip students with foundational scientific knowledge prior to their engagement in more specialized coursework. In line with the directives of the CPV and the guidelines of the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET), these educational strategies are intended to instill in students a deep understanding of the revolutionary path led by the CPV, political theory and doctrine, socialist legal state-building, political ideology, and the processes of policy formulation, legislation, and implementation (To, 2024). These findings underscore the significant impact of diverse, well-structured pedagogical activities—designed by both educators and socio-political organizations—on shaping students' political stance.

Figure 1

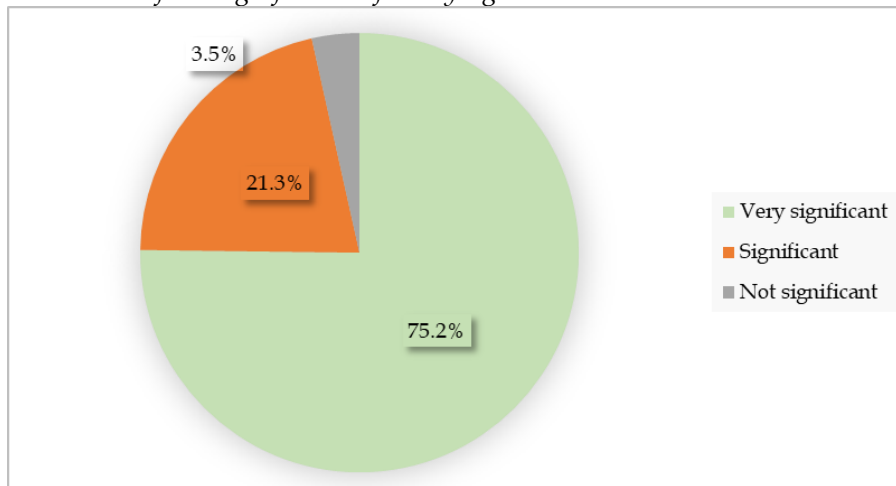
Evaluation of the CPV's leadership of the Vietnamese revolution

Among the components of foundational scientific knowledge, fostering students' understanding of the CPV's political paradigm is particularly significant for ensuring the security of the Party regime and supporting the country's developmental trajectory under Party leadership. Consequently, a large majority of students recognize the importance of studying courses on Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh's ideology. As illustrated in Figure 2, 75.2% of respondents stated that these courses are very significant.

This recognition stems from the essential knowledge these courses provide regarding the Party's core principles and the historical context of Vietnam's revolutionary path. Furthermore, the educational frameworks established by institutions emphasize the necessity for students to comprehend these ideologies in order to actively engage in the nation's socio-political life and uphold the values of socialism in their future professional and civic roles (Dang et al., 2024).

In addition, the CPV and the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) have implemented various initiatives to increase the appeal of these courses, aiming to inspire students with the revolutionary vision and the political theories that form the basis of Vietnam's governance. This approach not only strengthens the ideological foundation of the youth but also aligns with broader national goals of cultivating high-quality human resources for sustainable development and political stability (Ngo & Cao, 2021).

Figure 2

Evaluation of the significance of studying Maxisim-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh's ideology courses

In line with the mastery of political theory courses, students' understanding of state policies and laws is also essential for enhancing their political stance. As shown in Figure 3, 44.2% of students reported regularly researching political theory as well as state laws and policies, while an additional 32.4% stated that they do so quite regularly. These results indicate that a significant portion of students actively seek to deepen their understanding in order to strengthen their political stance.

Regarding students' views on the goal of national independence and socialism within the country's innovation process, 79.4% of respondents demonstrated a firm stance by affirming that this goal represents an objective choice rooted in Vietnamese history and constitutes a consistent ideological foundation throughout the nation's revolutionary process. Furthermore, 87% of students viewed national independence and socialism not only as an ideal and strategic objective but also as a powerful driving force of the Vietnamese revolution (see Figure 4). This strong political stance contributes to fostering spiritual strength, as well as unity in thought, will, and action—crucial elements in countering the distortions and subversive narratives advanced by hostile forces aiming to undermine the CPV's leadership (Nguyen, 2020a).

The findings suggest that educational programs have been effective in conveying political theory, state policies, laws, and the ideological significance of national independence and socialism. Most students regard these goals not merely as abstract ideals but as strategic objectives and motivational forces behind Vietnam's revolutionary path. This level of understanding is critical for cultivating a sense of purpose and political commitment among students—an essential outcome of effective pedagogical practices. The strong political stance demonstrated by students reinforces spiritual resilience and collective unity in ideology and action. Such cohesion is vital in resisting hostile narratives and defending the Party's leadership (Nguyen, 2024a). Through the integration of diverse teaching methods into the curriculum, higher education institutions play a pivotal role in shaping students' political stance and strengthening their commitment to national revolutionary goals. This approach not only deepens students' understanding of their historical and ideological foundations but also prepares them to actively contribute to the country's ongoing development.

Figure 3

Students' research on political theory and the State law and policies

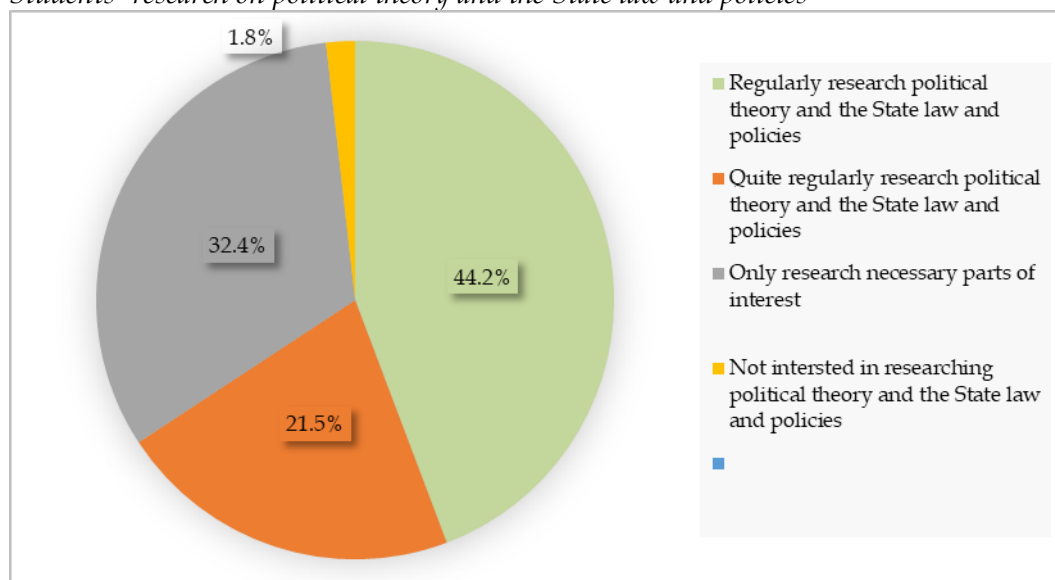
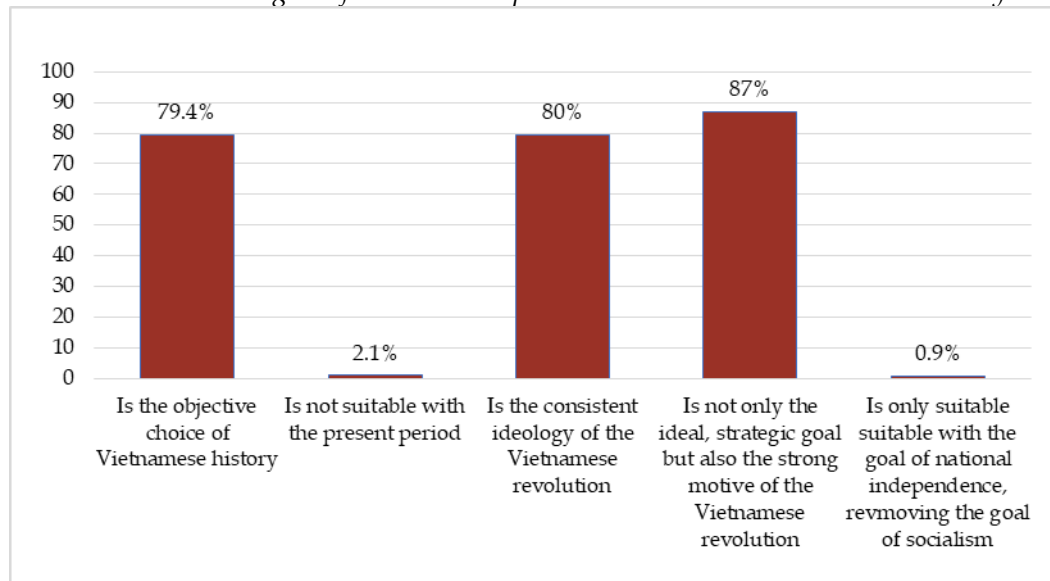


Figure 4

Students' view on the goal of national independence and socialism in the the country's innovation process



4.2. Students' Political Attributes

The survey results revealed that the majority of students—77% and 20.2%, respectively—*strongly believe* and *believe* in the country's success in its pursuit of innovation and socialist development (see Figure 5). This finding aligns with previous research on students' political attitudes, which showed that 92.68% of pedagogical students at higher education institutions in the region expressed their belief in and support for the socialist path of the country (Vu, 2012). These results are further supported by the traditionally strong political qualities of students in the region, including deep-rooted patriotism, ideological consistency, and solidarity—attributes shaped by cultural identity and geographical context.

Over the past decade, colleges and universities in the region have increasingly focused on innovating the delivery of political education. This has included the integration of field trips to historical sites and museums to highlight national achievements and foster awareness of the country's development journey. Additionally, extracurricular activities organized by the Youth Union and Students' Association have contributed to students' deeper understanding of Vietnam's revolutionary heritage and the country's major accomplishments under the leadership of the CPV.

It is also noteworthy that the Party Committees of higher education institutions in the region place strong emphasis on student admission to the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), viewing it as a vital task for fostering students' political attributes. According to CPV data (2020), between 200 and 250 students from each institution are admitted as new Party members annually. Survey results further show that striving for Party membership is a legitimate aspiration for most students: 84.2% of respondents expressed their motivation to join the CPV, seeing it as a source of personal and familial pride. Similarly, 86.4% of students regarded Party membership as a valuable condition for gaining employment opportunities after graduation (see Figure 6).

These results reflect both a genuine motivation and a growing ideological conviction among students in the region regarding the leadership of the CPV. They demonstrate that students' political attributes are shaped not only by tradition and education but also by institutional strategies that promote civic engagement and political commitment.

Figure 5

Students' belief in the country's success in innovation and socialism building

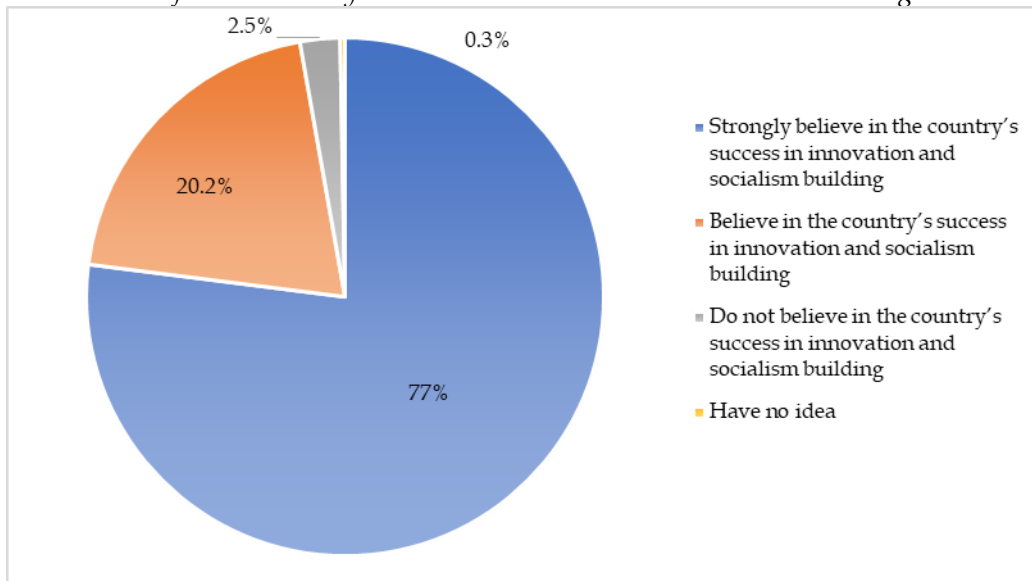
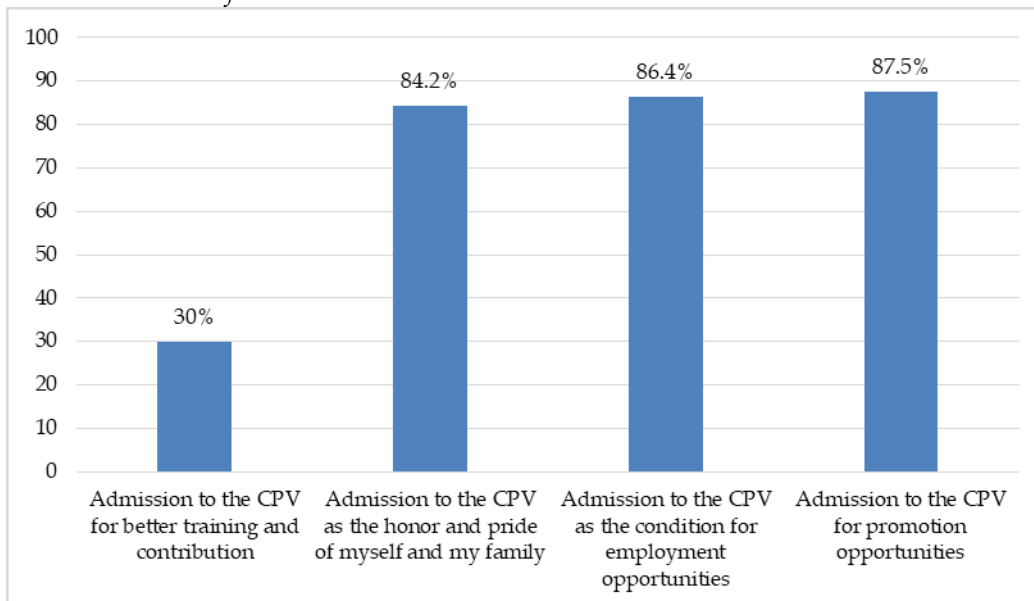


Figure 6

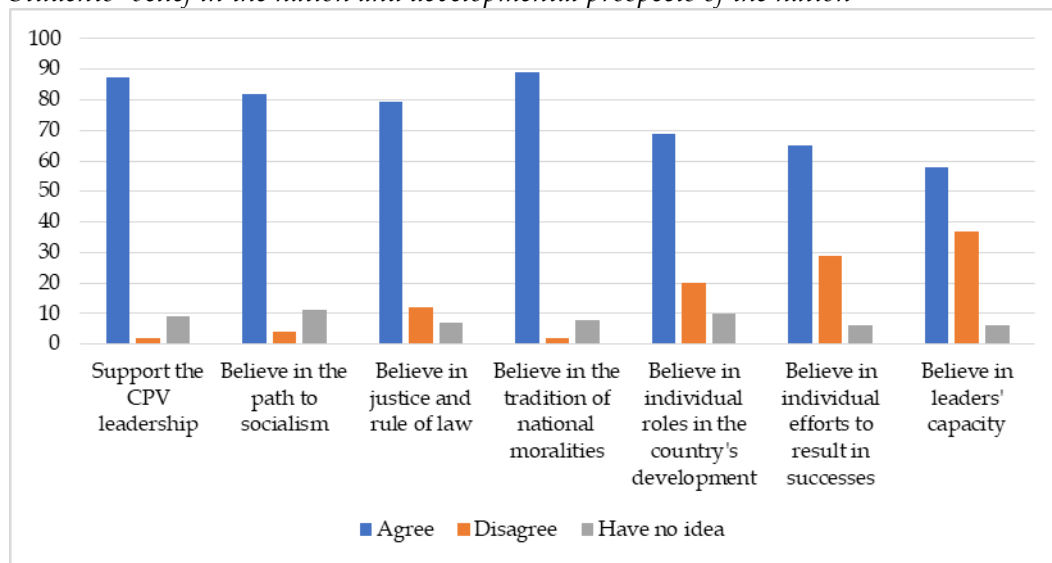
Students' motives for admission to the CPV



With reference to students' belief in the nation and its developmental prospects, the survey results revealed that a majority of students expressed strong confidence in national values and leadership. Specifically, 89% of students indicated their belief in the tradition of national moral values, 87.5% voiced support for the leadership of the CPV, and 82% expressed belief in the country's path toward socialism. Notably, students also acknowledged their individual role in national development and demonstrated a willingness to contribute to the country's progress while striving for personal success (Figure 7).

Examining the correlation between youth belief in Party leadership and their outlook on the nation's developmental trajectory, Nguyen (2020a, pp. 35–37) argues that universities and colleges play a pivotal role in cultivating students' political attributes in alignment with the Party's leadership. Through fostering confidence in the socialist path and inspiring civic responsibility, educational institutions motivate students to channel their energy and intellectual potential toward the continued development and prosperity of the nation.

Figure 7

Students' belief in the nation and developmental prospects of the nation

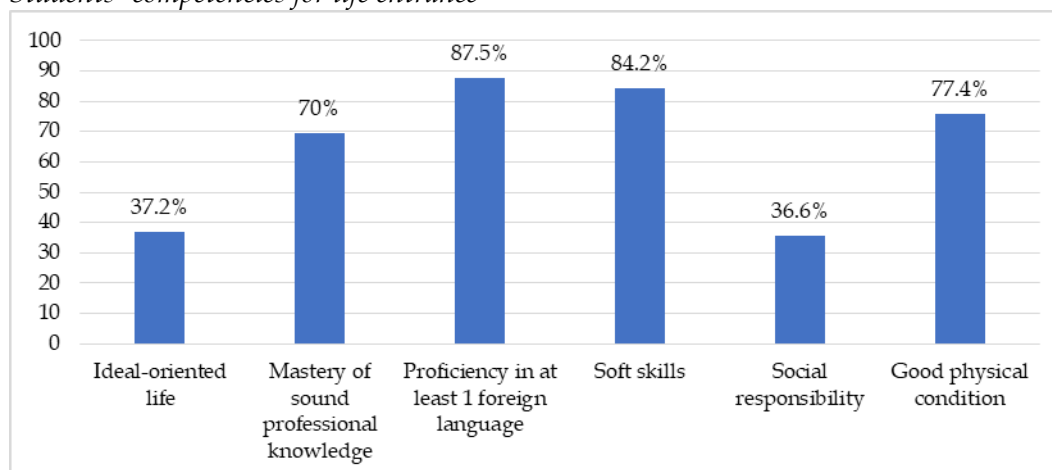
4.3. Students' Political Capacity

When asked about the competencies and conditions necessary for entering professional life, the majority of students (87.5%) identified proficiency in at least one foreign language as the most essential, followed by soft skills (84.2%), and then good physical health and mastery of sound professional knowledge (Figure 8). These priorities align closely with the current trend of Vietnam's increasing integration into the global economy. In this context, the ability to communicate in a foreign language is viewed as crucial (Huynh, 2020).

Students recognize that foreign language proficiency not only enhances their employability but also enables meaningful engagement with international markets and cultures. This awareness is in line with the objectives of the Vietnamese government's *National Foreign Languages Project*, which aims to significantly improve students' language skills to meet the demands of economic globalization (Ngo & Tran, 2024).

Furthermore, students are aware that soft skills—such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving—complement their academic knowledge and are essential for both entering the workforce and advancing in their careers. In addition to these competencies, maintaining good physical health is also regarded as important, as it contributes to overall personal well-being and national productivity (Luu & Lai, 2023).

Figure 8

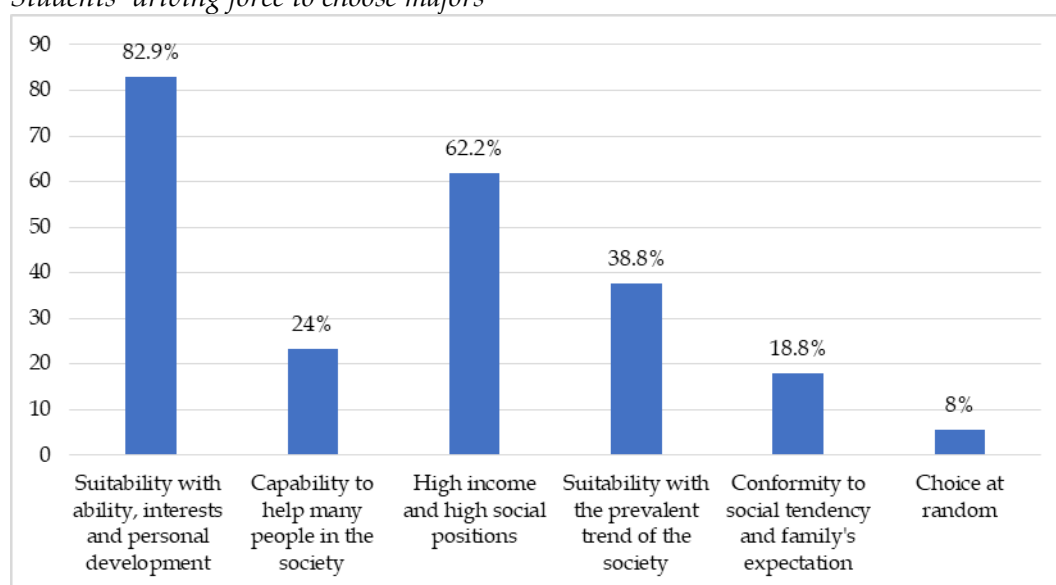
Students' competencies for life entrance

The political capacity of students is also reflected in their choice of academic majors that align with their abilities, interests, and personal development goals, as reported by 82.9% of respondents (see Figure 9). This finding is entirely consistent with the previously mentioned competencies – language proficiency and soft skills.

Notably, some students selected their majors based on the prospect of high income and elevated social status, reflecting a pragmatic orientation. This trend aligns with the broader psychological outlook of Vietnamese youth today, shaped by recent developments in the country's market-oriented economy. Although students' motivations for choosing majors may differ, the majority show a clear orientation toward and concern for their future careers. This future-oriented mindset serves as a strong motivational driver, enhancing their determination to achieve personal goals. Importantly, educational institutions have increasingly focused on fostering students' learning autonomy, recognizing it as a critical factor in improving foreign language proficiency and in helping students make well-informed academic choices aligned with their interests and potential. Students are encouraged to take ownership of their learning processes, which empowers them to select language courses and academic programs that align with their individual goals and aspirations. This self-directed learning approach not only strengthens their language skills but also contributes to their broader academic and professional development, enhancing engagement and motivation (Truong & Nguyen, 2024).

Figure 9

Students' driving force to choose majors



Globalization and the deepening of the market economy have led to the commodification of genuine human values in the development process. However, student volunteering stands as a meaningful counterbalance – representing the investment of time, effort, and skills with positive impacts on the lives of disadvantaged individuals.

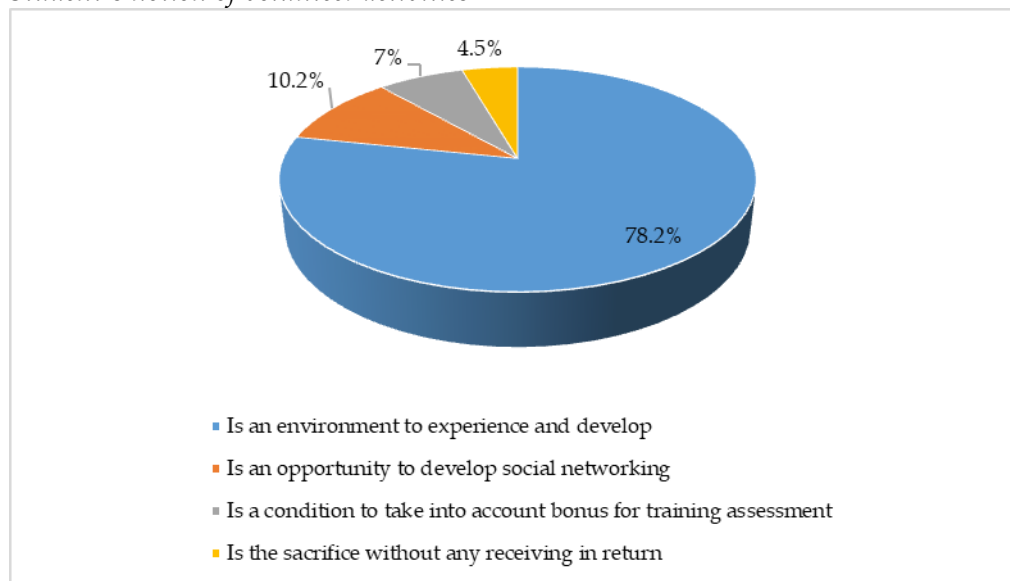
Over the past decade, the Youth Union and Students' Association of colleges and universities in North Central Vietnam have organized a wide range of student volunteer activities. These include on-site traffic instruction, environmental protection, tutoring for disabled and disadvantaged children, aid for victims in flood-affected areas, support for ethnic minority communities in improving production, summer volunteer campaigns, blood donation drives, promotion of CPV guidelines and state policies, cultural exchanges, and more. Such activities have allowed students not only to engage in community service but also to apply and develop their political capacity in real-world settings. As a result, 78.2% of surveyed students considered volunteering an opportunity to gain experience and foster personal development (Figure 10). Indeed, student volunteerism has significantly contributed to the economic, cultural, and social advancement of

local communities, as well as to the implementation of local political initiatives. Furthermore, volunteering plays a critical role in helping Vietnamese students accumulate valuable life experiences and cultivate a strong sense of personal responsibility toward both the community and the nation-state.

Enhancing political courage education by promoting youth participation in community service and social activism is crucial in tertiary education. According to Patten (2019), political socialization and social media usage are associated with increased activism and political engagement among young adults. Likewise, volunteering, community involvement, and social activism provide young people with opportunities to practice political courage, build social capital, and develop a sense of agency and political efficacy (Civicus, 2013).

Figure 10

Student's notion of volunteer activities



4.4. Students' Political Determination

Students' political determination is reflected in their willingness to resolutely condemn and resist wrongful actions (Vu, 2012). This implies that students must possess the courage to confront inappropriate behavior in order to eliminate negative influences. The survey findings revealed that 46% of students reported they would firmly oppose and speak out against unlawful or harmful actions by others—an encouraging indicator of students' political determination and courage (see Figure 11).

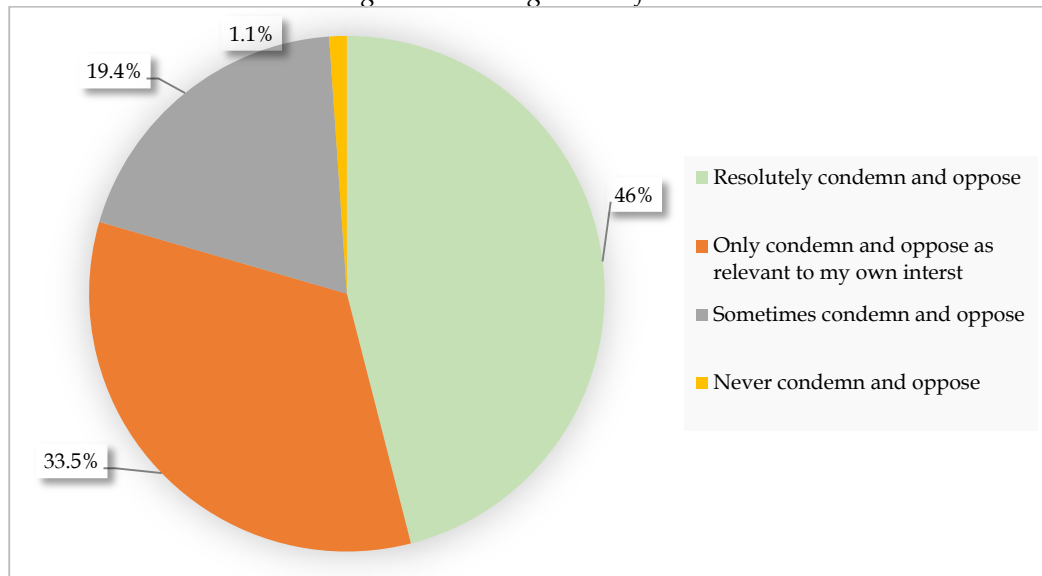
These results suggest that expressing opposition to misconduct is no longer a "taboo" in the academic environment. This shift is largely attributed to the efforts of higher education institutions in the region to equip students with practical legal knowledge. According to institutional annual reports, in addition to the required course "*General Theory of State and Law*," each institution hosts an average of three law practice events per year. These events allow students to apply legal knowledge to real-life situations involving illegal acts, encouraging them to engage with real-world challenges and avoid negative influences. Moreover, to strengthen civic education, university faculties, along with Youth Unions and Students' Associations, have focused on raising students' awareness of their rights and responsibilities as citizens. These initiatives aim to promote the knowledge and skills needed to participate actively and effectively in civic life. This pedagogical approach fosters students' understanding of democratic principles, civic rights and duties, and the importance of community involvement. Kahne and Sporte (2008) found that civic learning opportunities significantly enhance students' commitment to civic participation, including the development of political courage. Civic education programs that prioritize open

dialogue, critical thinking, and experiential learning help youth appreciate diverse perspectives and feel empowered to express their beliefs in public settings (Sibii et al., 2019).

In addition to civic education, cultivating a supportive and inclusive learning environment also plays a crucial role in fostering political courage. Wang et al. (2024) found that positive teacher-student relationships and an encouraging school climate positively influenced students' ideological and political learning outcomes. This finding underscores the importance of creating safe, respectful educational settings where students are motivated to speak up and engage in meaningful dialogue.

Figure 11

Students' attitude towards negative and illegal acts of others



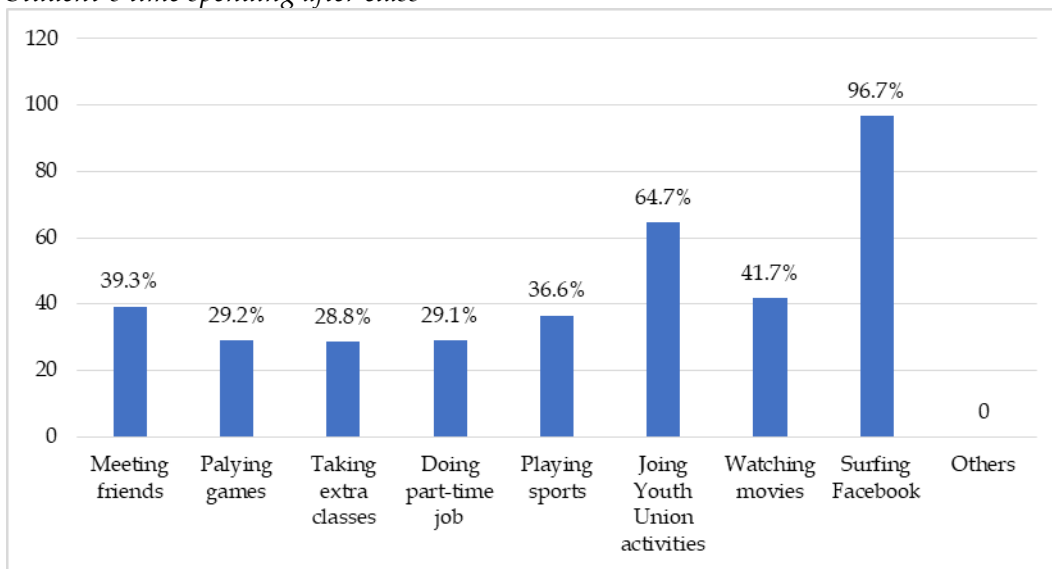
To further explore students' political determination, the author examined their participation in extracurricular activities, as illustrated in Figure 12. The survey results indicated that students with strong political determination have managed to resist the temptations and distractions of modern life—nearly 65% reported participating in Youth Union and Students' Association activities outside of class time.

Interestingly, approximately 30% of students reported working part-time jobs to support their education and daily living expenses due to challenging family financial conditions. Participation in socio-political organizational activities, coupled with part-time employment, significantly contributes to the development of students' political determination. These experiences offer students valuable opportunities to cultivate leadership skills, foster a sense of community, and understand the importance of civic engagement.

Through active involvement, students gain insights into the political landscape and the role of the CPV, which in turn strengthens their commitment to national goals (Nguyen, 2024b). Additionally, part-time jobs help students develop practical skills and financial independence, further empowering them to contribute positively to society and reinforcing their political determination and sense of civic responsibility.

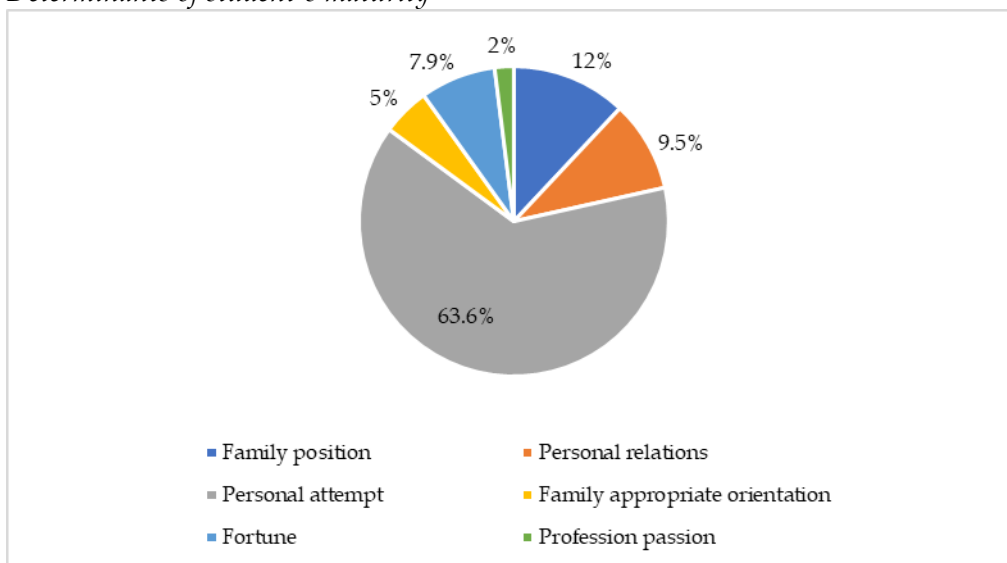
Students' political determination is also reflected in their ability to identify *mutuality* as a determining factor—one that is often undermined by the negative influences of modern society. Nevertheless, 63.6% of respondents affirmed that personal effort is the most critical factor contributing to students' maturity today (Figure 13). This belief resonates with the long-standing cultural values of the North Central region of Vietnam, where generations have persistently strived to overcome poverty. As a result, the region is known for its strong tradition of studiousness and a deep eagerness to learn—rooted in a courageous spirit of self-reliance. This

Figure 12

Student's time spending after class

attitude has historically contributed to many success stories and serves as a foundation for political will among the local population, including students. Self-affirmation through personal effort, diligence, and creativity in learning – aimed at acquiring knowledge and developing the capacity for success – represents the highest expression of this political determination.

Figure 13

Determinants of student's maturity

Students' personal attempt, however, has been built up by appropriate educating methods through which they are enabled to showcase their competency in critical thinking and autonomously and proactively execute courses of action. For the past decade, the higher education institutions in the region have provided students with a variety of educational activities to bring positive results in their training and studying, such as academic clubs, volunteer clubs, hobby clubs, aptitude clubs, job-oriented projects, start-up clubs, E-commerce, and talk shows, and many beyond. Engaging in these activities inspires students to cultivate their confidence and determination in the pursuit of specified goals, refining their career trajectory, and expanding their job prospects.

5. Conclusion

Research on students' political courage is a new perspective in Vietnam and worldwide alike. The clear-cut identification of the components of students' political courage is a crucial factor to implement educational activities and make comprehensive assessment of educating students' political courage at higher education institutions. This study sheds new light on the existing literature on the subject area in both theoretical and empirical perspectives. It provides significant insights into the relationship between cognitive and motivational dimensions of student involvement in political courage training activities and the resulting political courage outcomes. The findings underscore that students' political stance, attributes, capacity, and determination are not only shaped by their intrinsic motivations but also profoundly influenced by the pedagogical approaches employed within higher education institutions. Also, the diverse pedagogical approaches need to align with students' self-training capabilities and foster learning autonomy to be effective. By promoting an environment that encourages active participation and critical thinking, educational institutions can cultivate informed and engaged citizens who are willing to confront challenges and advocate for their beliefs. Furthermore, integrating practical experiences with theoretical knowledge enhances students' understanding of political processes and their roles within them. Therefore, fostering political courage among students is not merely an academic endeavor, but it also is a vital component of nurturing responsible and proactive members of society.

6. Suggestions

6.1. Suggestions for Higher Education Institutions

To effectively cultivate students' political courage, higher education institutions need to consider a multifaceted approach.

In terms of fostering students' political stance, a diverse curriculum of the political theory courses needs to be designed, covering a wide range of political theories and social movements to direct students' political viewpoint while fostering their critical thinking and encouraging them to develop informed political positions. In addition, it is imperative to encourage open dialogues by creating platforms, such as debates, forums, and seminars for discussions on various political ideologies, the Party's guidelines, the State's policies and laws, and current issues, all of which are significant to help students articulate their views and confront differing opinions.

Regarding students' political attributes, it is crucial to employ a comprehensive approach that aligns with fostering their belief in the political regime and its legitimacy through national victories and achievements. This can be done by incorporating modules on political paradigm principles, theories, and historical successes into the curriculum combined with discussions, case studies, and open forums. It is also significant to plan students' regular visits to museums, historical landmarks, and sites significant to the country's revolutionary history, followed by group discussions, reflective essays, or project-based tasks where students can share their insights and how these experiences influence their understanding of the nation's path, development issues, and contemporary challenges. This encourages students' critical thinking and articulates their political beliefs, thereby fostering a sense of pride and a deeper understanding of a country's development trajectory and providing clear pathways for interested students to engage with the ruling party.

Regarding students' political capacity, engaging students effectively in civic life and contributing to society are vital approaches. This involves fostering students' critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and problem-solving by providing spaces for them to evaluate political arguments, assess policies, and understand complex social issues. This method helps students articulate their views, consider multiple perspectives, and develop reasoned arguments. Tran and Do (2021) find that students who received civic education were more likely to participate in political activities. In addition, Nguyen and Nguyen (2020b) and Nguyen (2020b) found that social media played an important role in encouraging political discussion and mobilizing youth

participation in political activities. For this reason, the shortage of educational programs promoting civic engagement, democratic attitudes, and political participation among university students have demotivated student's engagement in political education. It is also important to consider offering training sessions focused on public speaking and effective communication, especially in foreign languages, and engaging them in simulations that mimic real-world political scenarios, such as legislative processes or diplomatic negotiations. This experiential learning enhances students' skills in advocacy and negotiation, allowing them to practice their skills in real-world contexts and understand the importance of civic engagement. In addition, higher institutions need to consider providing mentorship opportunities where students can be guided in navigating political landscapes and developing their career paths, at the same time encouraging them to seek internships in government agencies, NGOs, or political organizations, providing them with hands-on experience and professional connections. Another approach is to foster a campus culture that values civic engagement and encourages students to take an active role in community services and social justice initiatives. This exposure helps them understand the perspectives of diverse groups and cultivates a sense of responsibility to contribute to a more informed and engaged society.

With reference to students' political determination, it is essential to involve cultivating students' mindset of resilience and active engagement in addressing societal challenges. This can be done by creating an active learning environment where students can express their positions against mistaken acts or ideologies, engaging them in constructive criticism. At the same time, universities and colleges should implement role-playing exercises that simulate confrontational situations to enable students to practice standing firm against unethical actions and developing strategies for resistance. In addition, it is needed to motivate students to pursue individual or group projects that require initiative and creativity. This could involve community service, advocacy campaigns, or innovative solutions to local issues. Offering workshops on resilience and stress management can also be a significant approach to equip students with tools to resist peer pressure and societal temptations, empowering them to make thoughtful choices.

6.2. Further Studies

Future research should explore diverse educational settings and demographic factors to further understand how different contexts influence the development of political courage. The further methodology may involve sociological surveys, empirical implementation of curricula, along with in-depth personal interviews with targeted correspondents.

Data availability: The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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