Propensity of Political Participation among Young Japanese

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Abstract—Young Japanese has been seen as indifferent to politics and political parties have not represented their concerns. This is a blow to the Japanese democracy when the great majority of youth are political apathetic and they are moving away from actively participate in politics. This paper describes the growing political apathy among young Japanese (citizens aged between 20-35) that need to be changed and concentrate on policies that advocate issues of interest to younger voters. The Japanese youth engagement reflected in three major issues: the feminist movement, community service and environmental protection which will be discussed in the paper to portray the more young Japanese engaged in issues involving the relationship between the economic and political matter. Finally, the paper argued that young Japanese political involvement is not being attended seriously but the political parties are securing votes from the largest group of voters, hence the increase of political apathy among young voters contributed to the Japanese democracy in declination.

Keywords—Political apathy, political participation, young Japanese, voter

I. INTRODUCTION

Political participation reflects the way people with various attitudes utilize their opportunities. Civic involvement is indeed necessary to reach the ‘expectation’ of democratic ideals. Among activities which the society involves in are the conventional, which is limited to vote casting and political campaign, the unconventional such as protests and women’s participation, and the recent civil activities such as volunteering and social engagement. These forms of participation are consistent with the actual civic engagement practices.

Takahashi and Hatano (1999) [15] stated that the Japanese youth engagement focused on three major issues: feminist movement, community service and environmental protection. The movements are indirectly political matters.

Utter (2011) [7] explored the incident of March 11, 2011 which used to happen earthquake and followed by tsunami has brought into the shutdown of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.

According to White (1994) [17], youth are defined by marital and employment status rather than by age, and “such institutional definitions have more weight than social and psychological identities. The regulatory and protective functions of institutions such as family and school still dominate the lives of Japanese youth into their twenties.

This paper is focusing on the propensity or tendency of the young Japanese towards their political parties and how they react towards the political involvements.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Historical Experience

The historical period of Japanese development brought tremendous changes in the political system. Utter (2011) [7] found that Japan has faced economic reversal in 1990s as well as scandals involving government officials, bankers and industrialists.

B. Cultural Politics/Political participation

Postwar Japanese urban culture has featured a succession of highly visible but transient youth subcultures, often led by young women as mentioned by Itô (2003) [11]. Skov and Moeran (1995) [14] describe how young Japanese women’s central posting in media imagery and cultures of consumption are an invasion of their weak position in the labor market.

C. Japanese Nationalism

Ishihara (2006) [10] offers a place to begin because he offers a paradigmatic example of a Japanese nationalism that begins with a kind of historical revisionism related to World War II. Ishihara blames the Allied Occupation Forces for distorting Japan’s educational system, and argues that now, 60 years later, is the time to revise the educational system to incorporate policies aimed at producing “patriotism” or aikokushin in Japan’s youth.

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Base on previous empirical studies, the conceptual framework has been developed on the discussion of historical experiences, cultural politics, political participation and Japanese nationalism. The issues that Takahashi and Hatano (1991) [15] have been discussed in looking at the political participation among young Japanese have coined the term of