

Role Of Youth In Malaysian Politics: An Analysis From Young Leader's Perspectives

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Abstract

The role of youth in Malaysian politics has always been an issue of concern among the youth and adult citizens of Malaysia. Malaysians have long perceived the political involvement of the youth to be limited, causing disquiet among the Malaysians about the effect such limited participation will have on the future. However, in recent years, this perception has begun to change, with more Malaysians being aware of the increased political engagement of the youth. The objective of this study is to detail the opinions of Malaysian youth political activists regarding the competency of the government in handling the COVID-19 crisis in Malaysia since 2020, to identify the views of Malaysian youth leaders regarding their political tendencies beginning from 2020 and to understand how the Malaysian youth think the landscape of politics in Malaysia should change. Two theoretical frameworks were chosen to explain the findings of this study: the SIRDE model, which describes the increasing political activism of youth in Malaysia because of the frustration of the youth towards political actors within the government, and the theory of political socialization that explains the negative perception that the youths have towards the government. This study uses the qualitative method, specifically semi-structured interviews to gain pertinent data. According to the findings, the increased political participation of the youths is indeed influenced by how the Muhyiddin government handled the pandemic in 2020 and 2021. At the same time, social media usage, and the implementation of the amendment to the minimum age of voting in Malaysia have been significantly responsible for intensifying youth political participation since 2020. Regarding what aspects of the political landscape the youth leaders wishes to change, these aspects are the strengthening of institutions that monitor government accountability and the enactment of policies that ensure a coalition government would not be allowed to collapse quickly. Spreading the proper knowledge through this study regarding the role of the youth in politics would increase their relevance in Malaysian political discourses. From there, Malaysia could better prepare for its future's long-term development by ensuring that the future generation of policymakers feels connected with the current political landscape.

Keywords: Youth political participation, Malaysian politics, COVID-19, Political activism, Political socialization

Introduction

In Malaysia, in July 2019, the Youth Societies and Youth Development Act (Amendment) 2019 (Act 668) bill was passed by the Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives). This new bill demonstrates a growing shift in the youth dynamic in Malaysia, as the bill ensures that the representatives of youth are closer in age to the actual youth, facilitating greater commonality between them. Another change is the appointment of Syed Saddiq. In 2018, at the age of 25, Syed Saddiq became the youngest cabinet minister ever appointed by the government. This is noteworthy because Malaysian politics has long been characterized by stagnation and corruption due to institutional rigidity that has persisted for 60 years (Noh, 2016). While the Malaysian youth has long been perceived as unusually apathetic and submissive to governmental threats, despite student activism already being present before the rise of the "Reformasi" movement (Weiss, 2005). Nevertheless, one could argue that the youth's interest in politics changed in the late 90s with the rise of the Reformasi movement. Frustrated with the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis and angered over the inhumane treatment of political prisoners, such as Anwar, the youth protested in large numbers (Hed, 2018). This demonstrated that the discontent and resentment the youth already felt towards the government could quickly turn into political engagement. The events of Malaysia's 14th General Election in 2018 also reflect this trend. It witnessed significant participation from young voters, who made up 41% of the total voters (Chinnasamy & Azmi, 2018). Therefore, the victory of the PH relied heavily on young voters. In addition to that, two monumental events of 2020 further increased youth involvement in politics due to the foundation laid by the 2018 elections. They are the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the collapse of the Pakatan Harapan (PH) government. The COVID-19 pandemic increased youth involvement in politics because the government during most of the pandemic period in Malaysia committed very significant blunders in how they handled the pandemic. Blunders that caused the pandemic to worsen such as their decision to execute the Sabah State Election in 2020 (Sukumaran, 2020). This action elicited resentment and condemnation from Malaysian youths who are increasingly connected with social media, as it marked a regression in Malaysia's progress in combating the pandemic. While the collapse of the PH government increased youth involvement because the collapse made a lot of youth disillusioned with the sincerity of mainstream politicians. It showed that despite the veneer of progressiveness of the PH government, the alliance itself was structurally weak.

Henceforth, following the monumental events of the collapse of the PH government and the poor handling of the pandemic in 2020 by the government that replaced it, there has been a surge in enthusiasm for political activism among Malaysian youth. This activism takes various forms, including protests, social media campaigns, newsletters, NGO participation, voting, and even running for public office. As a result, both citizens and the government need to be aware of this rising social trend among the youth. By paying closer attention to the political initiatives of young people, the government can gain a fresh perspective on social issues affecting the citizenry and foster better rapport with Malaysian youth. This research title was chosen specifically to provide relevant authorities with a better understanding of the role that

young people play in domestic politics and to ensure that they do not harbour any harmful misconceptions about this role. The objectives of this study are as follows;

1. What are the opinions of Malaysian youth political activists regarding the competency of the government in handling the COVID-19 crisis in Malaysia since 2020?
2. What are the views of Malaysian youth leaders regarding their political tendencies from 2020 until 2022?
3. How Does the Malaysian Youth Think Malaysian Political Landscape Should Change?

Literature Review

This research examines numerous articles and journals that focus on the involvement of Malaysian youth in politics and the role they play. Based on these sources, the study identifies four themes that provide an overview of the current understanding of the role of Malaysian youth in politics. These themes are;

Activities of Youth Political Engagement

In a 2016 article by Sloam, it was found that young people are more likely to engage in unconventional forms of political participation, focusing on specific issues. These activities include signing petitions, boycotting participating in flash mobs, and joining demonstrations. These activities are often accompanied by the use of new communication technologies (Sloam, 2016). Her research revealed that most young people who participate in these activities are recent graduates, which may explain their reliance on communication technologies. Furthermore, in 2020 and 2021, Malaysian netizens launched various Twitter campaigns to express their frustrations with the government on specific issues. #KerajaanGagal, #KerajaanZalim, and #KerajaanPembunuh are examples of such campaigns. Consequently, these hashtag campaigns paved the way for other campaigns that directly impacted the real world such as #Lawan (#Protest). The #Lawan campaign encouraged the public to wave black flags on 3 July as a protest against the government's mishandling of the pandemic. Consequently, the youth utilized the popularity of the #Lawan hashtag to generate support and publicity for a real-life street protest on 31 July 2021. In that campaign, the role of youth political activists was significant, highlighting how even passive political activism by Malaysian youth could transform into active political engagement with enough traction and organized support. Such scholarly papers indicate a consistent trend, with findings suggesting that young people are more likely to engage in informal political activities such as social media posts, rallies, forums, and political promotions.

Factors That Lead To Youth Political Activism

There are numerous resources available that explain how young people get involved in politics. According to a study conducted by Brett Levy and Thomas Kiva, political interest and efficacy are the key factors that drive political engagement. Political efficacy refers to the level of belief a person holds in their ability to bring about social or political change. The study reveals that educators play a crucial role in fostering political efficacy and interest among young individuals (Levy & Akiva, 2019). Another article that explains the factors is written by Ismi Arif Ismail. In his article, one section details the factors that contribute to the political

socialization of youth, which also lead to youth political activism. The first factor is political literacy, which refers to a person's level of knowledge regarding political matters. The second factor is political maturity, which measures a person's ability to exercise sound judgment when making political decisions. The third factor is the political landscape, which refers to the prevailing behaviors exhibited by politicians and the government (Ismail et al., 2015). By increasing political literacy, fostering political maturity, and creating a conducive political landscape, the youths will find their political efficacy increased. There are other factors at play that determine the probability of Malaysian youth being politically active. Another important factor is their socioeconomic condition. Norhafizah's study shows that increasing political literacy does not necessarily lead to an increase in political activism. Interestingly, the research also reveals that more youths from rural areas participate in political activities than those from urban areas, suggesting that political literacy alone is not the sole determinant of youth political activism. Socioeconomic factors also play a significant role in promoting political activism among the youth. Thus, their economic background has influenced their decision rather than their ethnicity.

Effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Activism

Nonetheless, the most relevant question regarding the increasing involvement of Malaysian youth in politics since 2020 is the impact of the pandemic on youth activism, or activism in general. There is a direct correlation between the rise of political activism and the pandemic, particularly in ASEAN countries. In these countries, authoritarian leaders have utilized the pandemic as an opportunity to consolidate their power (Corpuz, 2021). Consequently, this increase in authoritarian control fuelled the mobilization of political activists, particularly evident in youth-led protests in countries like Thailand and the Philippines. As mentioned earlier, it is expected that young people would express their political views through social media due to the pandemic, and indeed, subsequent studies shows that the pandemic forced activists to adapt their tactics by utilizing available social media platforms and transforming their public events into online events. For example, the Extinction Rebellion Denmark hung a banner from their members' windows and posted pictures online, or shared links to webinars or relevant websites (Uldam & Askenius, 2020). The knowledge gap addressed in this paper revolves around the relationship between political activism among Malaysian youth and the government's handling of the pandemic, as well as the youth's perception of their own political engagement and their desired changes to the Malaysian political landscape. Understanding these factors is crucial for comprehending the role of youth in Malaysian politics. Previous studies have primarily focused on social media as a determinant of youth political activism (Ahmad & Zain, 2021), overlooking the youth's perception of their own political engagement and their ideas for transforming Malaysia's political system. This research aims to bridge this knowledge gap, thereby promoting greater awareness of pertinent issues like the youth's social experiences, political inequalities, and the significance of robust governmental institutions.

Theoretical Framework

Regarding this research paper, the theoretical framework used to explain the rising political activism of young people is the SIRDE model. The SIRDE model, developed by Peter Grant, is a theory that focuses on social behavior and how the perception of injustice within a group can lead to collective action for social change. A way to understand the SIRDE model is by considering the impact of an existing power structure that creates unjust barriers for a group of people who share a collective identity and suffer from collective deprivation. This combination of collective deprivation and social identity forms the basis for social change according to SIRDE. The model is applicable to understanding the increasing political activism of youth in Malaysia, who are frustrated with the actions of the government. This frustration can be likened to the perception of injustice within the SIRDE model. The actions of Malaysian youth, such as protests and demonstrations, can be seen as activities advocating for social change, similar to the SIRDE model. In the context of Malaysian youth political activism, the SIRDE model can be understood as follows: first, there is a self-identification among Malaysian youth, which can be shaped by societal definitions, such as the official designation of "youth" as defined by the Youth Societies and Youth Development Act. Second, there is a shared concern about the collective deprivation experienced by youth, particularly in relation to the government's handling of the pandemic. This shared concern is expressed through social media, with hashtags like #BenderaHitam trending. Third, there is a growing sense of collective efficacy among Malaysian youth, as they realize the impact their words and actions can have on the political system. This leads to increased political participation, such as protests, as seen in previous Bersih rallies. Additionally, social media plays a crucial role in connecting and mobilizing the youth, similar to how it was instrumental in the emergence of collective perceptions of injustice following the death of George Floyd. Social media platforms, like Twitter, are essential for distributing political information in Malaysia, and Malaysian youth are known for their active social media usage. This study expects that youth will continue to play a significant role in Malaysian politics, following the pattern described by the SIRDE theory.

Methodology

Research Design

For this research, the qualitative method will be used. Qualitative research is a highly suitable approach for gathering information. It helps the researcher gain a better understanding of the experiences of young individuals who take political matters seriously, particularly in the aftermath of the collapse of the PH government and its poor handling of the pandemic. By employing a qualitative method, this research aims to validate the proposed theory of SIRDE that explain why young people behave and think as they do regarding domestic politics. The qualitative methods employed in this study involve conducting semi-structured interviews.

Sample Population

The samples for this study are recruited using a purposive sampling technique. The focus of this research is specifically on Malaysian youths who are representatives of politically active youth organizations. These individuals may hold positions such as leaders, deputies, or chosen

representatives within their respective organizations. The study will take place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The participants in this study will be youths between the ages of 15 and 30. For the qualitative method, the sample size will consist of 18 participants who will be interviewed using a semi-structured format. The recruitment for this qualitative research will involve representatives from various youth-based social and political movements such as Angkatan UM, Demokrat UniSza (Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin), Suara Mahasiswa UMS (Universiti Malaysia Sabah), Idealis Mahasiswa, UMANY (University Malaya Association of New Youth), Persatuan Belia Harmoni, PEMBINA (Persatuan Belia Islam Nasional), PKPIM (Persatuan Kebangsaan Pelajar Islam Malaysia), GAMIS (Gabungan Mahasiswa Islam Se-Malaysia), Arus Anak Muda, GPMS (Gabungan Pelajar Melayu Semenanjung), and members of the IIUM student union. However, it is important to note that the study will not solely focus on youth from NGO organizations. The participants will also include members from the student wings of established political parties such as Mahasiswa Amanah, Mahasiswa Keadilan, Mahasiswa Rokat, Malaysian United Democratic Alliance, Mahasiswa United, and Kelab Mahasiswa Penyokong PAS. The selection of participants will not be based on their ethnicity, religion, or gender. Instead, the focus will be on choosing leading representatives from various political youth wing organizations, university student unions, and NGO youth organizations. Therefore, the ethnicity, religion, or gender of the participants will be coincidental and not a manipulated variable.

Research Procedure

For the qualitative method, semi-structured interviews will be used as the research method. These interviews allow researchers to ask open-ended questions and gain a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives. It is important to keep the interviews relatively informal, as most participants are not professionals. Each interview is expected to last approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes. The interview will begin with the interviewer explaining the interview process to the participant, which will take about 5 minutes. During this time, the interviewer will outline the number of questions to be asked, reassure the participant that they are not obligated to answer any questions they are uncomfortable with, and emphasize that their identity will remain anonymous if desired. Most importantly, the interviewer will seek the participant's consent to either record or transcribe the conversation. Following this, the interviewer will ask a total of 22 interview questions based on the proposed research questions, which should take approximately 60 minutes. Once the participant has answered these questions, the interview will be concluded by allowing the participant to share any final thoughts on the research topic.

Research Instrumentation

For qualitative research that involves interviews, it is common practice to prepare a hypothetical script outlining the flow of the interview. This script, which can be found in the Appendix section of this research, is referred to as "Appendix: Interview Script". It provides the interviewer with a set of 22 questions that are aligned with the research objectives of this study.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the semi-structured interviews will be analyzed and interpreted to derive research findings. The collected data will be qualitative in nature, as it will come from the results of the interviews. To analyze the details of the responses, thematic content analysis will be used. However, the qualitative analysis codes will be determined prior to recording the participants' responses. To determine the data to be categorized as codes, one should refer to the elements of the research title. Once the responses from the semi-structured interviews are recorded, common themes will be identified by identifying frequently repeated words and phrases. These themes will then be analyzed in relation to the predetermined codes. The analysis findings can then be compared to the research objectives (Dudovskiy, 2022). The detailed analysis process is as follows: first, all the interviews are transcribed verbatim. Then, an inductive approach called thematic content analysis is employed to analyze each transcription. In this approach, researchers examine the data to identify recurring themes, which can be topics, ideas, or patterns that appear repeatedly. The main points of the interviewees' responses are coded by highlighting them. These points are then categorized as codes.

Results & Discussions

From the findings of this study, there are several key points that have been identified in explaining the role of youth in politics from the perspective of young leaders. They are, 1) the opinions of young Malaysian leaders regarding the government competency in handling the pandemic, 2) the views of Malaysian youth leaders regarding their political tendencies beginning from 2020 and 3) how the Malaysian youth think the landscape of politics in Malaysia should change.

Opinions of Young Malaysian Leaders Regarding the Government Competency in Handling the Pandemic

The majority of the respondents find government competency to be underwhelming. Their disappointment stems from various factors such as the lack of constitutional conformity of the government, insensitive attitude toward citizens suffering from the pandemic and weak decision-making process the problem with the lack of constitutional conformity comes from the precedent it makes. If political parties realize that they can form a government without needing to adhere to the constitution, then that would only encourage them to further ignore the constitution in the future. Which is exactly what happened. On July 31, 2021, the government declared a state of emergency and suspended Parliament following advice from health ministry officials after eleven COVID-19 infections were detected in Parliament on July 29 (Ananthalakshmi, 2021). However, a state of emergency can only be declared with the consent of the Yang-Di Pertuan Agong, as stated in the constitution. Nevertheless, it still happened anyway and youths fear that soon the government's conduct could be left unchecked.

What exacerbates this insensitivity is that Malaysia had the highest death toll from the pandemic among ASEAN countries (Mathieu et al., 2020). This high death toll highlights the

weak decision-making process of the government. The government's horrible decision to carry out the Sabah state election in 2020 is responsible for making the pandemic situation in Malaysia worse. This is not just an opinion by this study's participants, academic research itself has shown that the 2020 state election is indeed responsible for a resurgence of Covid-19 cases as demonstrated by the study conducted by the United States National Library of Medicine (NLM) (Lim et al., 2021).

Views of Malaysian Youth Leaders Regarding Their Political Tendencies Beginning from 2020

On the view of the participants concerning the political tendency of Malaysian youths since 2020, they believed that the youths have an increasing tendency to be involved in politics since 2020 because of the Undi18 amendment and social media. It should come as no surprise that the youths in this study believe that the Undi18 amendment has a significant impact on the near close results between the PH and the PN coalition parties in the 15th GE. Since the amendment was a significant shift in Malaysian politics, expanding the voting base and giving Malaysian youth greater political efficacy in choosing their leaders and policies (Zain et al., 2023). As a result, many Malaysian youth leaders believe that the Undi18 amendment has affected the trend of youth political activism. The more youth perceive that Malaysian politics can change, the less apathetic they become towards political engagement. This can be further explained with the SIRDE model of social change. The minimum age amendment represents the "efficacy" component of the SIRDE model. According to this model, higher collective efficacy among the youth is more likely to result in normative political actions such as protests and other forms of political advocacy (Grant et al., 2017). This is because the amendment to the voting age increases the sense of efficacy that youths feel towards Malaysian politics by significantly expanding the number of eligible young voters in GE15 (James, 2023).

Though the participants in this study believe that social media is a factor for increasing youth political involvement because it is a fashionable media among the youth, it is not the only reason. Another reason is the features of social media itself. More specifically it is instant notification features makes it easier and more convenient for users to share information. Consequently, political information shared online becomes more easily accessible to Malaysian youth, thus increasing political activism due to its convenience. Another explanation for the increased prominence of online engagement on youth political activism is the pandemic. During the pandemic, the entire world was confined to their homes or rooms, and as a result, people could only interact with the outside world through the internet and online platforms. Therefore, the need to connect with people they could not meet in person, and the desire to stay informed about the pandemic makes them more exposed to political discourse (Karhu et al., 2021). Thus, this situation aligns with the SIRDE model theory. Online engagement reinforces youth social identity, as the more posts and memes they create regarding their perceived deprivation under the Muhyiddin government, the stronger their social identity becomes. The growing awareness among young people of their collective suffering further fosters feelings of solidarity, thereby reinforcing their social identity (Freelon, 2018). While the increasing online engagement of Malaysian youth increases collective efficacy. As discussed earlier, Malaysian youth have become highly active in social interactions

on the internet since the government implemented strict MCO measures. This active online engagement among young people leads to a heightened sense of collective efficacy. The more youths engage with one another online, the more they realize that the deprivation they experience under the Muhyiddin government is shared by other Malaysian youths. This realization boosts their confidence in engaging in political activism, as they believe they are more likely to affect social change by working together as a group (Grant et al., 2015).

How the Malaysian Youth Think the Landscape of Politics in Malaysia Should Change

The changes proposed by the youths in this study are mostly themed around legislations or policies that the government could introduce to change the landscape of politics in Malaysia. The first change they propose is legislation for the abolishment of AUKU. Though in this case, there has already been some amendments made to the provisions within the AUKU act during tenure of the Mahathir government in 2018. At the time, they made amendments such as the removal of subsection (c) of Section 15 (2) of AUKU, which banned students from participating in political party activities within universities and colleges and the removal of subsection (c) of Section 47 (2) of PHEIA (Private Higher Educational Institutions Act 1996), which banned students from engaging in political activities on private higher education institution campuses. Despite that, even though the current government is very supportive of allowing the youths, especially university students, the freedom of political expression, there is still no plans by the current government to abolish the AUKU act itself (Carvalho, 2023).

The second change is legislation that strengthens the power of the judiciary. In this case, strengthening the judiciary by making it more independent from the influence of the executive government. This is because the function of the judiciary that makes it a useful tool in improving the political process in Malaysia is in its ability to check the power of the executive government through a process called the judicial review, which empowers the judiciary to revise and reject decisions and laws made by the executive and legislative branches if they exceed their constitutional boundaries (Aziz et al., 2023). By minimizing the influence of external forces on the judiciary, it will guarantee that any legislation passed by parliament does not infringe on the rights of Malaysians to express themselves. If parliament were to propose another act that restricts the freedom of expression of Malaysian youth, an independent judiciary can ensure that such an act would not be approved. Thus, ensuring that Malaysian youth would not be left out of the policy making process.

All two aspects of these findings are crucial for understanding the youth's role in Malaysian politics. Examining the influence of pandemic governance on youth political engagement will shed light on their relationship with Malaysia's political framework. Exploring their views on their own political involvement will provide insights into their perception of their political efficacy. Lastly, studying their ideas on the desired changes in the political landscape will offer understanding of how Malaysian youth may influence the nature of politics in the country in the future.

Conclusions

In this study, we aim to answer three research questions, and the results have provided us with those answers. The first research question focuses on the opinions of young political activists in Malaysia regarding the competency of the government in handling the pandemic since 2020. The study's findings confirm this relationship. Not only do the results indicate that the participants and their organizations are disappointed with how the Muhyiddin government managed the pandemic, but they also reveal that it was the government's actions that fuelled a surge in youth political activism. The Social, Identity, Relative Deprivation, Efficacy (SIRDE) model provides a social theory that explains the relationship between the rise of activism and the government's handling of the pandemic. According to this model, collective perceptions of injustice within specific groups trigger anger, which then motivates actions aimed at advocating for social change, such as protests and demonstrations. Peter R. Grant conducted a study in 2021, examining how the pandemic affected Americans' reactions to social injustice. Grant supports the SIRDE model by highlighting the contagious nature of emotions, particularly in the age of internet connectivity. Grant's study confirms the hypothesis presented in this section, suggesting that non-conventional forms of political participation, like social media, have become significant avenues for youth to express their political engagement (Grant, 2021). This phenomenon is amplified by people's increased susceptibility to negative emotions during lockdowns, creating a fertile environment for the manifestation of the SIRDE model in countries where authoritarian regimes compromise freedom. Previous studies have demonstrated that negative emotions, such as anger, fear, and anxiety, are more likely to spread contagiously than positive emotions (Fan et al., 2018).

The second research question focuses on the views of Malaysian youth leaders concerning their political tendencies from 2020 to 2022. Two factors stand out as the most influential in shaping the political tendencies of these youths during this period: social media and political efficacy. Regarding social media the study confirms that the increasing usage of social media and the internet, in general, resulted in a rise in political engagement among the youth starting in 2020. This increased usage was not solely due to the participants recognizing the utility of social media for political activism. Rather, it was driven by the convenience social media offered amidst the pandemic. Turning to the second influential factor, political efficacy, the youth leaders believe that it not only increases political activism among Malaysian youths but also shapes their patterns of political activism. This is particularly evident in the context of the recent amendment to the minimum voting age in Malaysia, lowering it from 21 to 18 years old (Annuar, 2019). This significantly increased the number of young voters participating in elections, making the political opinions of the youth more valuable to various political actors in Malaysia. As a result, the political efficacy of Malaysian youth has increased, leading to a greater tendency for political activism. The youth leaders recognize that their views are being taken seriously and understand that political parties that ignore the youth may suffer in elections as a result.

The third research question focuses on the desired changes the youth want to see in the Malaysian political landscape. Participants expressed a desire for the political landscape to

evolve through the reinforcement of governmental institutions, thereby promoting greater government accountability. They emphasized the need for a system that ensures the stability of coalition governments, rather than experiencing quick collapses like the previous PH coalition in 2020. In response to the question, many participants expressed a desire to reduce the reliance on fragile alliances among political parties to form a government. They also called for a decrease in political discourse centered around religion and ethnicity, while advocating for increased confidence in youth politicians within political parties. These proposed changes are closely tied to the challenges faced by Malaysian politics during and after GE15 election. Following the release of the GE15 results, Malaysians grappled with uncertainty over which party would govern, as neither the PH nor PN parties secured a majority of parliamentary seats required to form a government (Chin, 2023). This uncertainty is exactly why the youths' desire to minimize the need for parties to form fragile alliances. While the political campaign leading up to the GE15 also involved a significant amount of fearmongering related to religion and ethnicity. Politicians from both sides frequently made claims that one ethnic or religious group's rights would be undermined if the opposing side won the elections. This rhetoric influences the youth leaders' desire, highlighted in this study, to reduce political discourse based on religion and ethnicity. It is possible that the results of the 15th General Election influenced the participants' views in this study and the emotions surrounding the elections still impacted their perspectives on the necessary changes to Malaysia's political landscape.

Suggestions For Future Research

There are various research papers on the involvement, activities, and political roles of Malaysian youths. However, due to the significant political changes in Malaysia caused by a four-year political turmoil, there is a need for new research materials that specifically focus on the role of Malaysian youth during this period. Throughout this period, Malaysia witnessed the rule of four different Prime Ministers and four different cabinets, which was an unprecedented situation in the country's history. Therefore, it is necessary to critically assess what was previously known or assumed to be true about Malaysian politics. This critical assessment should also include a thorough examination of the role of Malaysian youth in politics during this four-year political turmoil, as it has led to substantial changes in the various factors influencing the role of youth in Malaysian politics.

Through the inspiration drawn from the findings of this study, future research could concentrate on exploring the variations in political activism among different ethnic and religious groups in Malaysia. Although this qualitative study succeeded in recruiting a substantial number of participants, totaling 18 individuals, it is important to note that the demographics of this study do not accurately represent the ethnic and religious composition of Malaysian youth. Out of the 18 participants, 16 are Malay youths who are automatically considered Muslim by virtue of being Malay. This does not adequately represent the entire Malaysian youth population, as Malays constitute only 69.7% of the total population, with the remaining 29.3% comprised of Chinese and Indian communities. Chinese and Indian youths in Malaysia belong to distinct ethno-linguistic and religious groups from Malays. Consequently, their preferred methods of political activism and the factors that drive their political

engagement may differ from those of the Malay youths interviewed in this study. Even their suggestions for enhancing the political landscape may vary from those provided by the participants in this study. Therefore, future research should focus on addressing the same research questions posed in this study, but with a specific focus on Chinese or Indian youth participants.

Another suggestion for future research would be to conduct studies on the role of Malaysian youth in domestic politics in Eastern Malaysia. Unfortunately, when scholars investigate political elements in Malaysia, they tend to focus on events and factors in Western Malaysia. This inadvertently marginalizes the political conditions in Eastern Malaysia, making ordinary Malaysians less aware of them. As a result, there is a false impression that the events in Eastern Malaysia are not relevant to the country. Additionally, this study only includes one participant from Eastern Malaysia, Naiem Zikry, who is from Sabah. Therefore, future studies on the role of youth in Malaysian politics should give more emphasis to the role of young people in Borneo. Specifically, in the current political climate, the events in Borneo have had a significant impact on the political turmoil that has affected Malaysians over the past four years. Whether it is the Sabah General Election or the role of political coalitions from Borneo in GE15, the political relevance of Eastern Malaysia is becoming more pronounced. Consequently, the political significance of young people in Borneo will also become more prominent.

Another study that would help broaden the perspective of Malaysian youth regarding their role in politics is like this study. However, the new study will specifically focus on female Malaysian youths. As mentioned earlier, the participants in this study only represent a portion of the Malaysian youth population. Not only are the participants predominantly Malay Muslims from peninsular Malaysia, but most of them are also males. Out of the total 18 participants, only 2 are females, while the rest are males. This gender imbalance could result in a significant gap in understanding the overall role of Malaysian youths in politics if female youths are not adequately represented in such studies. Hence, it is important for future studies to focus on the role that female Malaysian youths play in politics.

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