ELECTION AND VOTING INTENTION: DETERMINANTS AND IMPLICATIONS

BY

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ABSTRACT

This research devised a model premised on the theory of reasoned action, investigating the quagmire surrounding voters' tendency for party realignment within the Malaysian political context. The study acknowledged the complex political psychology and its colossal impact on Malaysian voting behaviour, which led to an evident shift in the Malaysian political landscape. This shift, embodied in the cyclic party realignment phenomenon, greatly influences electoral choices and voting intentions. A methodology was designed along quantitative lines, using a proportionately stratified sampling method to explain the phenomenon. The study employed multivariate analysis techniques to scrutinise the nexus between five critical determinants: attitude, social media influence, ethnicity, religiosity, and the candidate's image, which drive the public's intention to switch political allegiances during elections, while descriptive analysis is used to highlight demographic statistics and portray a comprehensive psychological snapshot of voter behaviour concerning politics. All five determinants were operationalised based on Batang Kali's area data, featuring a racial demographic composition of 5:1:1 to elucidate party realignment complexities within the local multiracial society. The data was collected through a proportion-stratified sampling method, surveying about 450 Malay/Bumiputra, Chinese, and Indian respondents within Batang Kali State's constituency. The result shows that six of the seventeen hypotheses were significant, but eleven showed no substantial effect on social norms' role in shaping voting intention. Interestingly, voters' attitudes and candidate images explained more variations in voting intentions than other social norms could. The research birthed a novel Party Realignment Proclivity Model (PRP Model), spotlighting the significance of personal-centric attitude and candidate image in predicting voting intention and overshadowing social pressures like ethnic identity, religiousity and social media within a pluralistic Malaysian society.

خلاصة البحث

ابتكر هذا البحث نموذجًا يرتكز على نظرية الفعل العقلاني، محققًا في المستنقع المحيط بميل الناخبين إلى إعادة تنظيم الأحزاب ضمن السياق السياسي الماليزي. واعترفت الدراسة بعلم النفس السياسي المعقد وتأثيره الهائل على سلوك التصويت الماليزي، مما أدى إلى تحول واضح في المشهد السياسي الماليزي. ويؤثر هذا التحول الذي يتجسد في ظاهرة إعادة تنظيم الأحزاب الدورية، بشكل كبير على الخيارا ت الانتخابية، ونوا التصويت. وقد تمّ تصميم منهجية على أسس كمية، باستخدام طريقة أخذ العينات الطبقية المتناسبة لشرح هذه الظاهرة. استخدمت الدراسة تقنيات تحليل متعددة المتغيرات لفحص العلاقة بين خمسة محددات حاسمة: الموقف، وتأثير وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، والعرق، والتدين، وصورة المرشح، والتي تدفع نية الجمهور إلى تبديل الولاءات السياسية خلال الانتخابات، في حين يتمّ استخدام التحليل الوصفي لتسليط الضوء على الديموغرافية. إحصاءات وتصوير لقطة نفسية شاملة لسلوك الناخبين فيما يتعلق بالسياسة. تمّ تفعيل جميع المحددات الخمسة بناءً على بيات منطقة باتانج كالي (Batang Kali)، والتي تتميز بتركيبة ديموغرافية عنصرية تبلغ 1:1:5 لتوضيح تعقيدات إعادة تنظيم الحزب داخل المجتمع المحلي متعدد الأعراق. تمّ جمع البيات من خلال طريقة أخذ العينات الطبقية المتناسبة، حيث تمّ مسح حوالي 450 من المشاركين من الملايو/البوميبوترا (Malay/Bumiputra)، والصينيين، والهنود داخل دائرة ولاية باتانج كالي الانتخابية. وتظهر النتيجة أنّ ستة من الفرضيات السبعة عشر كانت مهمة؛ لكن إحدى عشرة فرضية لم تظهر أي تأثير جوهري على دور الأعراف الاجتماعية في تشكيل نية التصويت. ومن المثير للاهتمام أنّ مواقف الناخبين ، وصور المرشحين أوضحت اختلافات في نوا التصويت أكثر من الأعراف الاجتماعية الأخرى. وّلّد البحث نموذجًا جديدًا لميول إعادة تنظيم الحزب (Party Realignment Proclivity Model-PRP Model)، يسلط الضوء على أهمية الموقف المتمركز حول الشخصية وصورة المرشح في التنبؤ بنوايا التصويت والتغاضي عن الضغوط الاجتماعية مثل الهوية العرقية، والدين، ووسائل التواصل الاجتماعي داخل مجتمع ماليزي تعددي.

APPROVAL PAGE

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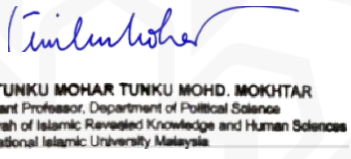

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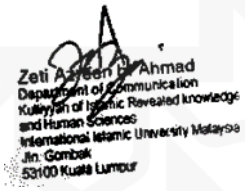

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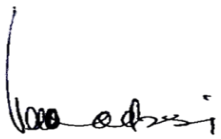

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Signature Date

This thesis is dedicated to my mom and dad, as a testimony of their sacrifice.

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All glory is due to Allah, the Almighty, whose Grace and Mercy have been with me throughout the duration of my programme, and Who gave me ease in the difficult task of completing this thesis.

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LIST OF ABBRIVIATIONS

Amanah	Parti Amanah Negara (National Trust Party)
ASEAN	The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, established on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok by the five original Member Countries, namely, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Brunei Darussalam joined on 8 January 1984, Vietnam on 28 July 1995, Laos PDR and Myanmar on 23 July 1997, and Cambodia on 30 April 1999
AVE	Average Variance Extraction
BA	Barisan Alternatif (Alternative Front)
BN	Barisan Nasional (National Front)
CA	Cronbach Alpha
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CR	Composite Reliability
DAP	Democratic Action Party
DV	Dependent variable
f 2	The effect size measures the impact of each predictor construct on the dependent construct (measuring the strength of the relationship between two variables)
GE11	11th General Election
GE12	12th General Election
GE13	13th General Election
GE14	14th General Election
GE15	15th General Election
GERAKAN	Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (People Action Party)
Gerindra	Partai Gerakan Indonesia Raya (Great Indonesia Movement)
Golkar	Partai Golongan Karya (The Functional Group Party)
HCM	Hierarchical component model
HINDRAF	Barisan Bertindak Hak-Hak Hindu (Hindu Rights Action Force) is a Non-Governmental Organization formed to preserve the rights and heritage of the Hindu community
HOC	High-order construct
IBM-SPSS	The Statistical Package for Social Science. Used to obtain valuable insight into respondents' demographic profiles and the measurement level of respondent's dominant characteristics
IIUM	International Islamic University Malaysia
IV	Independent variables

KEMAS	KEMAS is an extension of the Adult Education Division, which was established by the Malaysian Government in 1961 through cabinet papers No. 385/25/60 and later renamed the "Community Development Department" (KEMAS), emphasizes an effort towards community development, including an illiteracy eradication program.
LOC	Lower-order construct
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MCMC	Suruhanjaya Komunikasi dan Multimedia Malaysia (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission) is a regulator of the communications and multimedia industry
MCO	Government Movement Control Order introduced during the coronavirus pandemic (COVIC-19)
MIC	Malaysian Indian Congress
MITA	Singapore Ministry of Information and the Arts
MOV	Moderating Variable
MRSM	Maktab Rendah Sains Mara (MARA Junior Science College) a group of boarding schools under Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA), a Malaysian government agency, providing learning facilities for bright students in local schools throughout Malaysia
MV	Mediating Variables
N.07	Constituency Code for Batang Kali State Assembly, Selangor, Malaysia
NEP	A New Economic Policy, a social re-engineering and affirmative action program formulated and introduced in 1971 by the National Operations Council (NOC) in the aftermath of 13 May Incident in Malaysia.
PAS	Parti Islam SeMalaysia (Malaysia Islamic Party)
PD	Partai Demokrat (The Democratic Party)
PDI-P	Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (The Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle)
PDM	PUSAT Daerah Mengundi (Polling Districts to cast vote in a constituency)
PEKEMAS	Parti Keadilan Masyarakat Malaysia (Malaysian Social Justice Party)
PH	Pakatan Harapan (The Alliance of Hope)
PKB	Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (The National Awakening Party)
PKR	Parti Keadilan Rakyat (People's Justice Party)
PLS-SEM	The Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling. Used to measure the construct reliability and inter-construct relationships
PPBM	Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Malaysian United Indigenous Party)
PR	Pakatan Rakyat (People's Alliance)

PRP Model	Party Realignment Proclivity Model. Developed to explain, predict, and understand the party realignment phenomenon within the limits of this study
PSCE	Political Stability and Change Effect
PSRS	Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling Technique
RO	Research Objectives
RQ	Research Questions
R^2	The coefficient of determination i.e., a statistical measure in a regression model that determines the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be explained by the IV or how well the data fit the regression model
SN	Subjective Norms
SPR	Suruhanjaya Pilihan Raya Malaysia (Malaysia Election Council)
TPB	The Theory of Planned Behaviour
TRA	The Theory of Reasoned Action
U.S.	United States of America
UEC	The Unified Examination Certificate (UEC), formed in 1975 and known as 统考, is a pre-university exam that is exclusively taken by students studying at Chinese Independent High Schools (华文独立中学) and uses simplified Mandarin Chinese as a medium of instruction. The entire examination system (teaching syllabus, examination timetable and grading criteria) is administered by Dong Zong (董总), The United Chinese School Committees Association of Malaysia
UiTM	University Technology Mara
UK	United Kingdom
UMNO	Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Bersatu (United Malays National Organisation)
UPSI	University Pendidikan Sultan Idris
VIF	Tolerance Level and Variance Inflation Factor
Warisan	Parti Warisan Sabah (Sabah Heritage Party)

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In this study, the focus is on understanding the phenomenon of voting intention and its connection to party realignment. The term voting intention refers to the behaviour associated with casting a vote, which serves as an indicator of party realignment. Throughout the research, these terms are used interchangeably to describe the topic under investigation.

It is widely recognized among scholars that voting intention is a dynamic concept that can change over time. As Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) suggest, measuring voting intention closer to the election day provides a more accurate prediction compared to sporadic measurements in advance. This notion is supported by Blais (2004) and Willocq (2016), who highlight that voters tend to gradually shift their opinions as election day approaches.

The trend of party realignment among voters in Malaysia has been evident in recent elections, starting with the 12th Malaysian General Election in 2008, as noted by Abdillah Noh (2016). This trend further intensified during the 13th General Election (GE13) and reached its peak during the 14th General Election (GE14), where Pakatan Harapan (PH) emerged victorious over Barisan Nasional (BN) to establish a new government. The pattern of voters switching their allegiance from one party to another has continued in subsequent by-elections and state elections in Malacca and Johore states before the GE15. This volatile voting behaviour raises significant concerns for the author.

Chapter 1 of the study aims to provide a concise overview of the voting intention phenomenon and its connection to party realignment. It will address the existing gaps in the literature, establish the research questions and objectives, outline the critical research dimensions, define the scope of the study, and lay the theoretical foundation.

The research will be guided by the theory of reasoned action (TRA) proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). The TRA consists of two core equations: Attitude and

Subjective Norms. The first equation focuses on exploring the development of beliefs regarding feelings and thoughts about voting, while the latter assesses the influence of social pressure to vote based on the conventional wisdom of others. By leveraging the TRA, this research aims to provide valuable insights into the complex dynamics of voting intention and party realignment among Malaysian voters.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Predicting voting behaviour, especially the intention to change a party during elections, has been an enduring preoccupation of political parties, both ruling and opposition parties. However, the challenge is more problematic if there is an indicator of a fundamental change in voting behaviour that happened in Malaysia (Welsh, 2018). Table 1.1 below illustrates the massive change in voting behaviour among Malaysian voters since GE12. The impact had cost BN, as the government party, the two-thirds of the votes in parliament. BN's popular votes decreased from 62% in GE11 to 50% in GE12 and continued until GE14, resulting in BN's popular votes declining to 47%, which was their worst election result in history. PH defeated BN and enjoyed a striking shift of votes by 14% (Moniruzzaman & Farzana 2018). These movements of votes showed that Malaysian citizens are likely to change their vote to another party.

Table 1.1 Vote Movements in Malaysian Election

VOTE MOVEMENTS IN MALAYSIAN ELECTIONS				
	GE11 (2004)	GE12 (2008)	GE13 (2013)	GE14 (2018)
Registered Voters	9.8 mill	10.9 mill	13.3 mill	14.9 mill
Voters Turnout	73.9%	75.99%	84.84%	82.32%
Voters Turnout Growth	-	2.1%	8.85%	-2.52%
Non-attendance		24.01%	15.16%	17.68%
% Popular Votes				
BN	62.10%	50.30%	47.38%	33.80%
PR/PH	33.20%	46.50%	37.10%	47.92%
PAS(Gagasan Sejahtera)	-	-	14.10%	16.99%
Change of Votes				
BN	`	-11.80%	-2.92%	-13.58%
PR/PH	`	13.30%	-9.40%	10.82%
PAS (Gagasan Sejahtera)	`			2.89%

Source: Moten (2013), Moniruzzaman and Farzana (2018), and Suruhanjaya Pilihanraya Malaysia (SPR) report (2019)

PH winning euphoria continued in four (4) by-elections after GE14 in Sg Kandis on 4th, August 2018 against BN, in Seri Setia on 8th, September 2018 against Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS), in Balakong on 9th, September 2018 with Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), and on 13th, October 2018 in Port Dickson with PAS. The scenarios reflected the growing public confidence in PH.

However, this situation changed in January 2019. The level of public confidence was doubtful, and the cycle of political intentions for party realignment eventuated. In four (4) consecutive post-GE14 by-elections, starting in the Cameron Highlands on 26th, January 2019, in Semenyih on 2nd, March 2019, followed by Rantau on 13th, April 2019 and Tg. Piai on 2nd, November 2019, voters showed their keenness to support BN. As a result, BN won against PH with a higher majority in all four (4) by-elections. The swing vote favouring BN was between 14% to 27%, whereas PH was experiencing an erosion of support between -10% to -105%. In short, the enigma enhances the claim of voters' inclination towards realigning a party (details in Table 1.2).

Table 1.2 Voters' Allegiance Pattern

VOTE SWING FLUIDITY										
CONTEXT	Registered Voters	Voters' Turnout		Pre GE14 v/s Post GE14			Turnout	Shift of Votes		
		GE14	Post GE14	BN	PR/PH	PAS	Gap	BN	PR/PH	PAS
GE14 – 9 May, 18	FOR THE FIRST TIME AS AN OPPOSITION PARTY, PH WRESTED THE MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENT									
Sri Kandis 4 Aug. 18	50800	86%	49%	11,518	23,998	7,573	-37%	-1933	-8571	-
				/ 9,585	/ 15,427	/-		-20%	-56%	
Seri Setia Sept 9, 18	52650	84%	44%	9,878	29,250	4,563	-40%	-	- 15525	5135
				/-	/ 13,725	/9,698			-113%	53%
Balakong Sept 9, 18	61659	82%	43%	5,874	41,768	6,230	-39%	-1899	- 19260	-
				/ 3,975	/ 22,508	/-		-48%	-86%	
Port Dickson Oct 13, 18	75212	82%	58%	18,515	36,225	6,594	-24%	-	-5209	862
				/-	/ 31,016	/ 7,456			-17%	12%
Cameron Highland Jan 26, 19	32048	76%	69%	10,307	9,710	3,587	-7%	1731	-910	-
				/ 12,038	/ 8,800	/-		14%	-10%	
Semenyih Mac 2, 19	53257	88%	73%	14,464	23,428	6,966	-15%	5316	-5562	-
				/ 19,780	/ 17,866	/-		27%	-31%	
Rantau Apr 13, 19	20472	-	79%	-/	-/	-/-	-	-	-	-
				10,397	5,887					
Tanjung Piai Nov 16, 19	53528	83%	74%	20,731	21,255	2,962	-9%	4735	- 10875	-
				/ 25,466	/ 10,380	/-		19%	-105%	

Source: Consolidated from SPR report (2019).

Nevertheless, unpredictable voters' inclination towards party realignment is not a new phenomenon and a recurring issue (Kasuya & Sawasdee, 2019). Lebo and Norpoth (2006) stated that the swing of the electoral pendulum between the Labour and Conservative Parties in the UK general elections saw a change in the party control of the British government since 1929 eight (8) times. Another example is the recent U.S. presidential election in October 2020, where Republican Donald Trump lost to Joe Biden after only one term in office. Unlike in the 2016 presidential election, the Democrats lost to the Republicans after two terms in office. From 1932 to 2020, there have been 11 government party control changes, with the Democrats gaining control six times and the Republicans five times (Aldrich et al., 2022; Miller Center, n.d.). Even though party realignment traditionally involves changes in regional and social bases of party support, the incumbents' parties typically have the power to win the election (Aldrich et al., 2022). In Malaysia, BN had the advantage of incumbency, like PAS in Kelantan and the Democratic Action Party (DAP) in Penang. Incumbency was an important factor after 2018.

This phenomenon is also common in ASEAN countries. Since the collapse of Suharto's Functional Group Party (Golongan Karya or Golkar) in 1998, Indonesia has seen five presidential changes involving B. J. Habibie of Golkar (1998–1999), Abdurrahman Wahid (1999–2001) of the National Awakening Party (Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa or PKB), Megawati Sukarnoputri (2001–2004) of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan or PDI-P), Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004–2014) of the Democratic Party (Partai Demokrat or PD), and Joko Widodo (2014) of the Indonesian Democratic Struggle Party (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan or PDI-P). The 2019 presidential election saw Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto continue their battle for the presidency. The incumbent Joko Widodo won the 2014 presidential election and was re-promoted by his party in 2019. Prabowo Subianto, his political opponent and competitor, is the chairperson of the Gerakan Indonesia Raya (Gerindra). Both involve a balanced coalition of major parties (Aryo Wasisto & Prayudi, 2021). The rivalry between the two figures generates a deep interest in voters as a political identity phenomenon. The support cleavages exposed the ideological schisms among voters who identified as Islamic, secularist, or centrist (Fossati, 2019). It is also interesting to understand the character of floating voters, those in the middle, and those who directly evaluate their performance of the

choices made at the ballot box, whether they have a low or high level of political comprehension.

Similarly, Thailand has experienced 32 changes in government from 1946 to date (Hewison, 1997), while Laos has had 13 changes in government from 1945 to date (Jönsson, 2002). Furthermore, Cambodia has changed its government 26 times from 1945 to date (Peou, 2000). On the other hand, two ASEAN countries have escaped from the party realignment phenomenon until today: Singapore and Brunei Darussalam. Both countries have shown promising political, social, and economic developments. Singapore has evolved from an impoverished, backward, and ethnically divided little island in the Third World to an affluent, self-assured, and vibrant nation that now belongs to the First World (Vasil, 2020). With regards to Brunei Darussalam, since its founding in the 14th century, its monarchical system of governance has not only persisted but has consolidated its power, character, and identity. The monarchy's stability and characteristic form of absolute and personalised rule are due to the Melayu Islam Beraja (Malay Islamic Monarchy) concept. It is an ideological and philosophical foundation that has proven to be stabilising and sustainable since the country's independence from the UK in 1984 (King & Druce, 2021).

In essence, attributing the significant impact of similar party realignment phenomena, in which voters shift from their preferred party to another party, to external influences from other countries or neighbouring ASEAN members on Malaysian politics may only be partially substantiated. Therefore, internal dynamics may have shaped and reshaped the political landscape, including Malaysia's voter behaviours and party alignments. Thus, any comprehensive understanding or prediction of Malaysian politics, particularly phenomena like party realignment, must prioritise a thorough examination of these locally grounded factors.

There is a complex combination of factors related to the party realignment predicament in Malaysia. Since the shock wave of vote change in GE12, Idid (2018) observed a changed Malaysian perspective on politics, particularly the intention to participate in elections (refer to Tables 1.1 and 1.2). Public interest in politics has experienced a noteworthy surge, leading to a marked enhancement in political participation. Consequently, the total count of registered voters has seen a significant upswing, as evidenced by studies conducted by Moten (2013) and Moniruzzaman and

Farzana (2018). It seems that the Malaysian public has grown more politically aware and understands the significance of politics. Shamsul (2013) indicated that the political literacy rate among Malaysians has increased from a low of 55% in 1957 to 93% in 2013. Generally, the tendency to switch votes for another party is seen at the state and federal levels (Moten, 2013; Moniruzzaman & Farzana, 2018).

Furthermore, the public's attitude is more critical. The trend of voluntary compliance, obedience, and allegiance towards one party or candidate is diminishing (Noor & Ahmad, 2011). The implication was evident when BN failed to preserve the Malays' political loyalty and only negatively influenced Chinese voters during GE14 (Funston, 2018). The Malays and Chinese urban votes went to support PH, while the traditional Malays vote in rural areas split between BN and PAS. The Malays division saw Malay votes for BN dissipate, while the Chinese support shift significantly impacted the electoral outcome, thus assisting PH in toppling BN in the 2018 general election. Besides, the public forces were also evident, who were mobilizing the masses to vote against the ruling party (Moten, 2011) and hold the government accountable. Leaders were made a laughingstock, like in the case of Mohammad Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak (6th Malaysian prime minister, 2009–2018). The persona of a leader is a subject of public cognitive judgement (Zunar, 2019). Hence, there is a public perception that influences the level of public support for a party to the extent of causing a shift in allegiance.

In addition, Malaysia exhibits a digital democracy, facilitating online engagement via Internet applications and social media (Haslina Halim et al., 2020). This virtual platform offers extensive, prompt access and an interactive sequence of information. Political parties leverage this environment, utilising the media as a powerful campaign tool to persuade voters (Chinnasamy & Mohamed Azmi, 2018). The use of social media in political campaigns became evident when political bloggers dominated cyberspace during the GE12 period. Consequently, GE13 took on the moniker of a 'Facebook election', and GE14 evolved into a live-streaming event online (Leong, 2018). The impact proliferates swiftly, akin to wildfire, and its influence can often be disconcerting and disruptive (Idid, 2018; Zaharom Nain, 2002). The trust placed in the content plays a pivotal role in shaping users' perspectives and convictions (Ireton & Posetti, 2018). However, it is a mistaken assumption to believe that internet

applications and social media will continually sway public sentiment (Samsudin, 2018), despite the yearly increase in internet users and trending usage patterns (MCMC, 2020).

Furthermore, the issue of political identity warrants attention. The inherent plurality and diversity in multicultural societies present considerable challenges in the political sphere, as everyone seeks to preserve their unique beliefs and practices. This often spurs heated debates among citizens and politicians. In the context of Malaysia, a distinctive country known for its multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious fabric, ethnic identity remains a longstanding issue (Yang Razali Kassim, 2018) and has substantially influenced contemporary voter attitudes and preferences (Ratnam, 1965; Welsh, 2020; Goh, 2023). The Malays are asserting their privileged status as the 'bumiputra' or sons of the soil, while Chinese and Indian ethnic groups are advocating for equal rights as Malaysian citizens.

According to the Malaysian Federal Constitution, a person is recognised as a Bumiputera if they are Malays/Orang Asli in West Malaysia, Indigenous Sabah, or Indigenous Sarawak descent, as outlined in Articles 160 (2), 161 A (6) (a), and 161 A (6) (b). Bumiputeras are granted special status under Article 153 of the Constitution. Moreover, the broader definition of Bumiputera includes groups such as native Indonesians, Malaysian Siamese, Muslim Indian Malaysians, Peranakan, and the Kristang people of Portuguese-Eurasian heritage. Many of these groups have historical roots in Southeast Asia, pre-dating the era of British colonial rule, which witnessed significant immigration from China.

At the same time, Malaysian politicians use these racial issues as a strategy to "overkill" their opponents (Crouch, 1996; Welsh, 2018), eventually spreading the seeds of mutual distrust and fear among the three races, Malay, Chinese, and Indian, affecting the Malaysian inter-race relationship gap due to the strong notion of ethnic nationalism (Hirschman, 1986; Mauzy, 2006; Welsh, 2020). The three races seem unprepared to form a pluralistic community of different faiths, cultures, and traditions. Muhammad Izzuddin Jaafar et al. (2020) said that people knew little about each other's cultural backgrounds. Further, there exist ethnic settlements that segregate them from other communities. The Malays live in Malay Kampong, the Chinese in Chinese Kampong Baru, and the Indians in Indian Settlement. Mohd Ridhuan Tee Abdullah (2010 & 2011) argued that the predicament caused the ethnic conflict to be prolonged.

Historically, the British colonial strategy of divide and rule left a profound imprint on identity politics in Malaysia (Mahmood Mamdani, 2012). As the Malay Sultans found their political stronghold eroding, society began to splinter along class lines, and cultural shifts emerged. Over time, a highly segmented societal structure took root: Malays predominantly inhabited rural areas, the Chinese settled in urban hubs, and the Indians resided in plantations. Cultural segregation intensified as each ethnic group formed close-knit communities, pursued distinct occupations, observed unique religious practices, communicated in different languages, and established independent political organizations. This form of compartmentalization unfortunately posed significant barriers to integration.

Nevertheless, Malaysia is advocating a package of proportionality, a grand coalition of communal leaders, group autonomy, and mutual vetoes to protect each ethnic group's interests. It encourages moderation by facilitating moderate social and demographic conditions among the electorate, especially in heterogeneous districts. Indeed, Malaysia has been a consociational regime since its independence during BN as a government, and later followed by Barisan Alternatif (BA) (Bogaards, 2019; Segawa, 2015). Bogaards (2019) described consociation as a way for different community leaders to share power fairly. This includes understanding and considering the needs of all the different ethnic groups involved. Consociationalism involves four essential parts: a big team working together (grand coalition), making sure each group is represented relatively (proportionality), allowing each group to veto decisions that affect them (mutual veto), and letting each group manage some things on their own (segmental autonomy). However, some people have recently questioned how well this idea would work. According to Anderson (2016), it might be turning into something called ethnocracy. Howard (2012) also has doubts about whether consociationalism supports democracy.

There are efforts to de-politicise ethnicity by encouraging moderation between the various ethnic groups in Malaysia. There is a societal transformation from a rural, traditional, and agricultural community to a more secular, urban, and industrial one, thus bringing culture and ideology assimilation among Malaysians (Ismail Abdullah, 2009). In the context of voting behaviour, the ethnic plurality, with its vast array of identities, lends a moderating effect. Nevertheless, it remains uncertain whether this

trend will persist. Weiss (2013) observed a gradual diminution of consociationalism in Malaysia. Concurrently, Horowitz (2013) argued the case for an ongoing erosion of centripetalism. Welsh (2020), on the other hand, noted Malaysians' continued entrenchment in ethno-religious ideologies and affiliations. Finally, Goh (2023) emphasised the continuing racial culture wars.

Some may argue that voters' political psychology differs from one election to another. Pye and Verba (1969) indicated that this political psychology develops at the macro (i.e., governance) or micro (i.e., individual) levels. Likewise, the general election differs starkly from the by-election, which is an extremely localised affair, focusing on local issues and serving as an aggregate of the voters' feelings for the coming election (Khairy Jamaluddin, 2019). In addition, various other elements, including financial politics, and electoral bribery, can affect a voter's emotional attachment to a candidate. However, this is not a new phenomenon. Ghazali in 2004 provided a historical perspective, recounting former Prime Minister of Malaysia Mahathir Mohamad's assertion in 1996: the merit of an individual's work and abilities did not act as legitimate grounds for their nomination. Instead, the extent of bribery they were willing to engage in became the primary measure of potential support. Much earlier, Teh (2002) pointed out that many political leaders view vote-buying and financial politics as deeply rooted customs within most political parties. These practices may significantly affect the intersection of politics and psychology. Nonetheless, this has been a behavioural concern spanning over a decade, challenging individual decisions about whether to engage in such practices. Therefore, determining the exact influences and forecasting Malaysian political psychology based on current developments pose a complex task.

In conclusion, the factors influencing the intention to switch party allegiance during elections, associated with candidate preferences, will continually evolve based on the prevailing circumstances. The continual play of ethnicity-related emotional elements, including cultural practices such as vote bribery and beliefs (adat and religion), can damage the political landscape. Furthermore, the dynamism of domestic politics will be constantly disrupted by online technology, given the continuous evolution and advancements in online media. Finally, blaming the influence of external forces from neighbouring ASEAN countries may not be justifiable.

Several theories can explain the predicament. Denver (2007) suggested electoral behaviour theories, including sociological determinism, valence, and rational choice. However, for this study, the socio-psychological Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) is deemed appropriate to understand the propensity of voting intention to realign with a party during the election. Social psychology involves a scientific method of study and can empirically measure people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours (Batson & Stocks, 2005). Several scholars, like Mohanachandran and Govindarajo (2020), Tatge et al. (2016), and Singh et al. (1995), have used this theory to study political phenomena.

Moreover, from the above deliberation, the researchers assumed that attitudinal and normative beliefs like voters' political attitude, candidate image, ethnic identity, religiosity, and social media are the possible determinants for the intention to realign a party. Given these hypotheses, the quantitative research approach is suitable for examining the causal and correlational relationships between the determinants, aiming to better understand the socio-psychological factors influencing Malaysian general elections.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Malaysian political landscape has witnessed a cyclical pattern of electoral outcomes characterised by unpredictability and significant shifts in voter allegiances across successive elections. This phenomenon has led to lopsided victories for different parties in one election, followed by landslide wins for opposing parties in subsequent polls. The data in Tables 1.1 and 1.2 provide concrete evidence of this phenomenon. After the GE14, a cyclic pattern of political transitions between PH and BN emerged as a prominent feature of Malaysian politics. In GE14, swing votes witnessed a significant decline in support for the BN and a simultaneous rise in support for the PH (Moniruzzaman & Farzana, 2018). However, the political landscape saw a notable shift as voters reversed their allegiance from PH to BN. This pattern of political transitions has since become a defining characteristic of Malaysian politics.

Understanding the impact of societal structures, historical experiences, group identities, and perceptions on voting intentions is paramount. According to Staerkle (2015), the recurring shift in voter support is linked to inconsistencies in political

psychology. Numerous factors contribute to this situation, including political beliefs and values, the cognitive decision-making process, political communication and media effects, racism and ethnic prejudice, ethnic identity, and collective action. Additionally, attributing the significant impact of similar party realignment phenomena to external influences from other countries or neighbouring ASEAN members on Malaysian politics may be challenging to support. These experiences are recurrent and intrinsic features of the political landscape rather than new occurrences. Thus, connecting this external political pressure or influence on Malaysian political psychology is more complex and not straightforward.

Consequently, internal dynamics may have influenced and reshaped the inclination of Malaysian voters toward party alignments. This process, often called ‘party realignment', involves significant shifts in the political landscape, such as changes in party ideologies, voter demographics, or the balance of power among political parties. Although early literature reviews and statistical analyses have identified several potential determinants, such as voters' attitudes, ethnic identity, religiosity, social media, and candidate image, there are conflicting views on the significance of these variables, thus warranting further research. As emphasised by Khairul Azmi et al. (2020), there is a need for a more comprehensive analysis of Malaysian behaviour in casting their ballots. Therefore, a thorough understanding or prediction of Malaysian politics, particularly phenomena like party realignment, and a comprehensive examination of locally grounded factors are imperative.

This research is a crucial step towards this understanding, exploring the psychological underpinnings of volatility and unpredictability in decision-making, specifically in the context of political allegiances.

This study aims to identify the root causes of inconsistency in voters' political psychology and behavioural intentions and to develop accurate methods to predict and understand these shifts in future elections. Additionally, it seeks to thoroughly investigate the impact of voting attitude, ethnic identity, religiosity, social media, and candidate image on political psychological change related to shifts in allegiance that are against traditional norms. For instance, as has been discussed above, the significant cultural segregation and lack of integration among different ethnic groups - Malay, Chinese, and Indian - are factors deeply rooted in the history and psyche of Malaysian

society. The divide instituted by British colonial rule resulted in physical separation and psychological divisions among the groups. There are ethnocentric biases due to language, religion, occupation, and geographical differences. Moreover, there is a long-held historical and societal grievance among these groups. Such emotions could contribute to political polarisation, with voters turning to political entities that they believe represent their specific communal aspirations. This may result in recurring allegiance shifts to different parties as voters seek the best political representation.

Additionally, the endeavour to depoliticize ethnicity by promoting moderation among diverse ethnic groups has also contributed to the current situation. A societal shift from a rural, traditional, and agrarian community to a more secular, urban, and industrial society has led to the assimilation of culture and ideology among Malaysians. As Malaysia develops, people's attitudes toward political ideology may change, consequently influencing their inclinations when choosing candidates or parties in elections. By terminology, assimilation is a cognitive adaptation process involving the creation of new mental schemas that fit existing ones without altering individuals' perceptions of the world, thus aiding the absorption of new information (Kathleen Stassen, 2008). Furnivall's (1939) reference to plural society theory argued that it reduces intergroup competition and suspicion by advocating accepting and imitating other cultures without sacrificing one's own, fostering harmony within diverse societies. Notably in this passage, cultural assimilation intertwines with modernization, instigating a progressive shift in social, cultural, and political structures while preserving cultural identities to maintain a diverse societal tapestry (Lee, 2009).

Furthermore, it will evaluate the influence of technological advancements and digital democracy on political literacy and voter behaviour, particularly within the rapidly evolving Malaysian society. The evolution of technology, coupled with the availability of diverse online media platforms within Malaysia's thriving digital democracy, promotes the diffusion of information on a large scale. This heightens political literacy among citizens. Arming voters with more in-depth knowledge and heightened awareness encourages them to participate actively in democratic processes. This increased engagement could make them more willing to reconsider and alter their political affiliations. Access to a broad spectrum of information paves the way for

exploring varied ideologies and policies that could ultimately influence their inclination to shift.

By addressing these critical aspects, the research endeavours to comprehensively understand the recurring voter inclination towards party realignment in Malaysian elections. It identifies five pivotal determinants—voting attitude, ethnic identity, religiosity, social media influence, and the perceived relevance of candidate image—that potentially shape the individual's voting intention. Accurate predictions of the relationship between these determinants influencing the party realignment issue can enhance our understanding of potential shifts in the political landscape. Thus, promoting political stability and fostering greater public confidence in the nation's future trajectory, as Morton (1992) and Holloway et al. (2019) theorized. Such insights can assist politicians and the government in tailoring strategies and policies to align more closely with constituents' preferences, guiding plans to focus on specific ethnic groups or personalised demographics, effectively strategizing media narratives, and reshaping pre-existing attitudes based on attribute preferences. Ultimately, this knowledge can contribute to more effective governance, improved societal representation, and enhanced political engagement, fostering a more robust and responsive democratic system.

While several established theories, such as the theory of rational choice, affective intelligence theory, and expectancy disconfirmation theory, are commonly utilised to comprehend voters' political psychology related to this vote change phenomenon, it is essential to note that these theories predominantly stem from a Western perspective (Arnett, 2008; Rozin, 2006; Staerkle, 2015; Lago', 2019). More Malaysian studies are needed to understand these dynamics. This gap underscores the need for perspectives and research relevant to the Malaysian context, considering the cultural and regional differences integral to comprehending political psychology. It is imperative to incorporate the socio-political context of Malaysian psychology into future research endeavours to ensure a more comprehensive understanding of voters' behaviour and decision-making processes within the Malaysian electoral landscape.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the determinant factors impacting Malaysian voters' propensity to realign their party allegiances during elections, focusing on elements such as voting attitude, ethnic identity, social media influence, religiosity, and the candidate's image. The specific objectives are delineated as follows:

1. To examine the relationship between voting attitude, ethnic identity, social media, religiosity, and candidate image on voters' intention.
2. To distinguish the relationship between voting attitude and ethnic identity on social media and religiosity influencing voters' intention.
3. To assess the mediating relationship of social media and religiosity between attitude and ethnic identity on voters' intention.
4. To evaluate the moderating relationship of a candidate's image between ethnic identity and attitude.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study, based on the above research objectives and determinants of voting intention, attempted to address the following research questions:

1. Why is there a significant relationship between voting attitude, ethnic identity, social media, religiosity, and candidate image on the intention for party realignment?
2. Why is there a significant relationship between voting attitude and ethnic identity on social media and religiosity influencing voters' intention to realign the party?
3. How do social media and religiosity mediate the relationship between voting attitude and ethnic identity in terms of the intention for party realignment?
4. How does a candidate moderate the relationship between voting attitude and ethnic identity with the intention for realigning the party?

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The state of Malaysian politics stands at a critical juncture, marred by a cyclic trend of party realignment during election periods. This phenomenon has contributed significantly to the current hostile landscape of Malaysian politics. The cyclical nature of party realignment has led to political instability, fostering an environment of uncertainty among voters. The underlying factors contributing to this trend are multifaceted, including the influence of normative elements, ideological shifts, and political-strategic manoeuvres to gain political advantage. These factors further exacerbated the volatile political climate, leading to a fragmented and polarised electorate.

The implications of these political shifts on voter behaviour and the decision-making process cannot be overstated. The electorate faces a complex web of choices extending beyond traditional party affiliations. Many factors, including socioeconomic concerns, ethnic and religious sentiments, and social media, increasingly influence voters in choosing the right candidate. This intricate tapestry of influences has made the decision-making process for voters a daunting exercise, often fraught with uncertainty and apprehension. The impact of party realignment on voter behaviour has thus intensified the volatility of Malaysian politics, making it crucial to understand the intricacies of these shifts.

The intricacy of voters' decisions mirrors the changing face of Malaysian politics, where a spectrum of competing interests contests conventional party loyalties. Historical allegiances no longer solely influence voters; a wide array of considerations mirroring their hopes and worries now motivate them. The interaction of these multifaceted factors highlights the necessity for a thorough understanding of voter behaviour in the Malaysian political landscape.

Grasping the dynamics of party realignment and its influence on voter behaviour is critical to forecasting and shaping future political scenarios in Malaysia. This study can glean insights that steer political strategies and policy directions by unravelling the complex influences that mould voter decisions. This knowledge aids in creating inclusive and responsive political narratives that echo with the electorate, thus creating a more stable and harmonious political environment. Furthermore, it can guide political stakeholders in foreseeing and meeting the evolving needs and expectations of the

Malaysian populace, ultimately fostering a more robust and representative political system.

In conclusion, the cyclic trend of party realignment during elections has engendered a tumultuous landscape in Malaysian politics. This phenomenon places a premium on understanding the multifaceted determinants of voter behaviour, transcending traditional party allegiances. Insights from this study draw attention to the complex interplay of various determinants like voting attitude, ethnic identity, religiosity, social media influence, and candidate image in shaping voters' political psychology and behavioural inclinations, which causes inconsistencies in voter behaviour. By unravelling the complexities, it is possible to navigate the turbulent terrain of Malaysian politics and pave the way for a more cohesive and progressive political landscape.

1.7 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

The current study has limitations in terms of the time, source of research funds, the site for the study, and the respondents' recruitment. However, given the time constraints, the study endeavoured to examine the factors influencing party realignment in GE14 and GE15. This research will focus on Peninsula Malaysia electoral data and the contestation between two major parties, BN and PH. The reasons are:

1. The primary economic and political power source is in Peninsula Malaysia, especially in terms of development and population concentration level (Khoo, 2015).
2. The political parties operating in the Borneo states are, to a certain extent, autonomous from those in the peninsula. Historically, there is a possibility that whichever party or coalition wins in the peninsula can persuade politicians who have won in Sabah and Sarawak to join their coalition (Yusoff, 2001: Gawan & Puyok, 2021).
3. The ethnic composition of Sabah and Sarawak is distinct from their counterparts in Peninsular Malaysia, where the majority are Malays, Chinese, and Indians.

The site for the study is exclusive to N.07 Batang Kali State Legislative Assembly, Selangor, Malaysia. The N.07 Batang Kali experience during the elections in terms of location and characteristics of the population seems sensible and ideal for studying the propensity for party realignment. The ethnic composition for the study is 62.7% Malays/Bumiputra, 19.63% Chinese, and 15.55% Indian, almost reflecting 39 majority Selangor State seats. As of the current date before the GE15, Selangor's population, as quoted by Malaysia Now (July 5, 2023) from the ISEAS survey report, is made up of Malays at about 54%, followed by 32% Chinese, 13% Indians, and 1% other races (Sadiq Sani, 2023). Meanwhile, at the national level, as of July 2023, the ethnic composition is approximately 70.1% Malay/Bumiputera, 22.6% classified as ethnic Chinese, and 6.6% as ethnic Indians (Statista, 2023).

There may be several models based on the population ratio of interest to reflect the reality of elections divided by ethnic demography, such as 60% Malays/Bumiputra and 40% Non-Bumiputra, 40% Malays/Bumiputra and 60% Non-Bumiputra, or even 50% Malays/Bumiputra and Non-Bumiputra. However, within the study's limitations, this research will deal with 60% Malays/Bumiputra and 40% non-Bumiputra, not based on social classes.

In the meantime, the N.07 Batang Kali State Assembly has also witnessed the phenomenon of voters' inclination to switch their support from one party to another, as evidenced by its ethnic composition. The representative for this assembly has changed hands three times: from BN in GE13 to PH in GE14, and, most recently, to PN in GE15. Considering this fact, it is possible to extrapolate the probable research outcomes that predict the voting trend in GE15 to this specific population of interest.

1.8 ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS

The thesis comprises six (6) chapters, starting with a brief introductory chapter. Chapter One is fundamental to understanding the role of party realignment in Malaysia. First, a brief background of the political situation is given to describe this problem and identify the gap in the literature. This is followed by a problem statement with several research questions based on the study's objectives. Next, the propositions are presented to limit the scope of the study and its limitations and guide the research along certain theoretical

and practical lines. Finally, six (6) variables are defined as determinants of party realignment.

The review of relevant literature is the focus of Chapter Two. It presents a synthesis of previous studies and experiences of party realignment behaviour. Definitions of each variable are examined, like intention, attitude, ethnic identity, religiosity, social media, and candidate image, and the significance of their direct and indirect relationships. Consequently, 15 hypotheses provide empirical evidence to propose a research framework.

Chapter Three explains the research methodology, including the research approach, sampling procedures, preparation of questionnaires, data collection, and data analysis techniques.

The statistical research analysis and findings are presented in Chapters Four and Five. Chapter 4 will begin with a brief introduction, analysis, and findings for data captured from the IBM-SPSS application. In contrast, Chapter 5 will focus on data analysis and findings from the PLS SEM application.

Chapter Six will be a discussion and conclusion.

1.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter outlines the research plan to investigate the role of voting behaviour, ethnic identification, social media, religion, and candidate image in predicting the intention to realign a party during an election. As a result, the study developed the research objectives and questions after identifying the problem statement. The study proceeded to delineate the research's scope and limitations. It culminated by summarising the chapter with concise definitions of the measurable variables for data collection.

Chapter Two will deliberate on the variables and determine the hypotheses and proposed research framework.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The primary objective of this chapter is to review relevant literature to form a basis for the study that comprises six main sections politics in Malaysia, the concept for the study, theoretical framework, and development of hypotheses before ending up with a chapter summary.

This chapter begins with a brief review of the previous studies and experiences on Malaysian politics to gain insights from a political psychological perspective, including a brief discussion on the Malaysian political history and system, the government structure, the issue dimensions, and the way forward to understand the political dynamic and it effect on voters' behavioural intention to realign a party in elections.

The next topic is the concept of the study, where essential theoretical determinant factors of the study are defined which include definitions of voting intention, voting attitude, ethnic identity, religiosity, social media, and candidate image.

To understand the voting behavioural intention to realign a party from a pluralistic Malaysian perspective, the next section discussed the new proposed theoretical framework contextualising the theory of reasoned action (TRA) with two core theoretical assumptions: attitudinal factors, and normative factors, and all other potential determinants.

Before the chapter is summarised, a section on the development of hypotheses establishes a parameter and direction for the study.

2.2 POLITICS IN MALAYSIA

Malaysian political psychology is a dynamic field that undergoes constant change, and various geographical, technological, and socio-psychological factors influence its evolution. This study delves into the psychological processes underlying political

behaviour and attitudes, aiming to comprehend how individuals' psychological characteristics, motivations, beliefs, and emotions impact their political actions, decision-making, and interactions within the political system. Mols et al. (2018) emphasised the bidirectional relationship between politics and psychology, where psychology serves as a tool for understanding politics and vice versa.

Briefly, Catellani (2004) said, that political psychology is a dynamic domain within social scientific exploration, originating from the intersection of political science and psychology. It maintains affiliations with various other social sciences such as sociology, economics, communication, business, education, and beyond. Political psychologists aim to delve into the psychological foundations, origins, and impacts of political actions and behaviours.

Different geographic areas have unique demographics influencing voting behaviour and shaping political trends (Young, 1987; Denham, 2018). These factors also play a crucial role in determining why individuals choose specific political parties and candidates (Feinberg et al., 2017). Moreover, historical developments, such as British colonialism and Malaysia's independence on August 31, 1957, have significantly shaped Malaysia's socio-political landscape.

Understanding the interconnection between these historical events and psychological processes is essential for gaining insight into the complexities of political life and contributing to a deeper understanding of the functioning of political systems and institutions. This knowledge aids in comprehending the local political culture and promoting political participation.

2.2.1 British Colonialism Effect

The influence of British colonial rule on Malaysia dates to the late 18th century, when the British East India Company's occupation of Penang in 1786 marked the onset of an enduring period of British colonialism in the region. This 133-year colonial era left a profound and lasting impact on Malaysian political psychology, shaping the socio-political landscape in multifaceted ways. During this extended period, the British expanded their control, establishing colonies in various parts of present-day Malaysia,

further solidifying their influence, and leaving an indelible mark on the country's political and social fabric.

2.2.1.1 Communalism

The Pangkor Treaty of 1874 signified British intervention in Malaysian politics. It introduced British residents to advise the Malay rulers, thus extending UK influence across the Peninsula. British colonisers employed the 'divide and rule' strategy, exploiting existing ethnic, religious, and social divisions to maintain control over their colonies. The influx of labour into Malaya, including Indians for rubber and Chinese for tin, reshaped the demographic landscape, resulting in significant ethnic composition changes. This transformation has profoundly influenced Malaysia's multi-ethnic, multi-cultural character, exacerbated economic disparities, and erected social barriers among ethnic groups, thereby impeding the development of a unified national identity. The adverse effects of British colonial rule continue to reverberate in Malaysia today.

Boon (2007) suggests that the deliberate divide-and-rule strategy the British employed against Malaysians is undoubtedly the underlying cause of today's racist ideology. It has had a profound impact on Malaysia's societal structure. Malays, Chinese, and Indians became spatially segregated, with each group primarily concentrated in specific areas, resulting in the formation of distinct ethnic enclaves with close-knit communities within Malaysian society. Furthermore, there were distinct occupational patterns, where Malays were primarily involved in agriculture and government, Chinese in commerce and trade, and Indians in plantations and railways. Religious affiliations, such as Islam for Malays, Buddhism or Taoism for the Chinese, and Hinduism or Sikhism for Indians, contribute to these communities' cultural and social distinctions. The widespread use of distinct languages within their communities, including Malay, Chinese dialects, Tamil, and English, has further reinforced cultural identities. This phenomenon contributed to ethnic-based politics by serving as a significant identity marker within different ethnic groups, developing and perpetuating ethnic-based voting behaviour and political affiliations (Crouch, 1996; Boon, 2007; Welsh, 2020).

The district of Hulu Selangor, previously spelled Ulu Selangor, encompasses the Batang Kali area and has been directly impacted by British colonial policy, with lasting effects still evident today. The society is divided along ethnic lines, with Malays, Chinese, Indians, and Orang Asli residing in separate areas. Malays live in Kampong Melayu, Chinese in Kampong Baru China (New Chinese villages), Indians in Indian settlements, and Orang Asli in Kampong Orang Asli (Awang Besar et al., 2011). Mohammad Bukhari Bin Badrol Hisham (2019) highlighted how the British relocation policy for Chinese squatters led to the establishment of racially segregated village settlements, significantly altering the population distribution in the Ulu Selangor area. Additionally, the influx of labourers from China into Selangor, settling around tin mining areas, and labourers from India predominantly residing in rubber estates, alongside Malays primarily engaged in farming near their Kampong, further illustrates the enduring impact of colonial practices on the region.

Briefly, the Hulu Selangor District existed during the early years of British rule in Kuala Kubu Bharu on May 12, 1883, following nine years of British involvement in the State of Selangor. During the British colonial era, the district administration of Hulu Selangor was referred to as the "Collector and Magistrate of Ulu Selangor." Notable officials who served in this administration included Cecil Ranking and Mac Carthy during Frank Swettenham’s tenure as the British Resident in Selangor (Official Portal of Hulu Selangor Municipal Council, 2023).

Initially, the district administration was situated in Kuala Kubu (old), now known as "Ampang Pecah." However, due to the frequent occurrence of significant floods in the low-lying area, the administrative centre was relocated to its present location on September 1, 1930.

In essence, the impact of British colonial rule in Malaysia, notably exemplified by the Pangkor Treaty of 1874, brought about substantial transformations in both political and societal structures. The British employed a "divide and rule" approach, exploiting ethnic and social divisions, resulting in spatial segregation and distinct occupational patterns among Malays, Chinese, and Indians. This strategy significantly shaped Malaysia's multi-ethnic, multi-cultural character, fostering economic disparities and impeding the formation of a unified national identity. Additionally, it bolstered the strong sense of ethnic identity among Malaysians, leading to the prevalence of ethnic-

based politics, consequently posing challenges to the development of a unified and inclusive political system (Ratnam, 1965; Boon, 2007; Welsh, 2020; Goh, 2023). The influence of British actions, as exemplified in the Hulu Selangor District, notably shaped the region's cultural diversity and ideological role models. The enduring impact of British colonial rule continues to influence societal structures and local political psychology, particularly regarding ethnic-based candidate preference and political ideology subscription. For instance, according to the SPR Report 2018, in the Hulu Selangor Parliament constituency, the Kuala Kubu Bharu state seat, with most non-Malay and Chinese voters, consistently favours Chinese candidates. Conversely, in areas like Hulu Bernam and Batang Kali, where Malays constitute over 60% of the population, there is a tendency to choose Malay candidates, reflecting the influence of ethnic pressure on the selection of representatives.

2.2.1.2 Media

The impact of communalism due to British colonialism also affects how Malaysians use media. Language barriers contribute to the existence of newspapers that focus on specific ethnic interests. This influence extends to different media formats, such as radio, television, newspapers, and online platforms. These media sources are influenced by ethnic alternative media, which cater to the specific preferences, values, and cultural nuances of different ethnic communities. Historically, media development in Malaysia began in 1805 during the colonial era, when newspapers in various languages were published by the British, mainly to strengthen colonialism (Ahmad Saman, 1983).

Meanwhile, in pursuit of serving their respective communities, numerous ethnic newspapers emerged during this period, leaving a lasting impact on the media landscape. Among these, the Chinese community witnessed the establishment of several influential newspapers. For instance, Kwong Wah Yit Poh, or Kwong Wah Daily, founded on December 20, 1910, by the esteemed Dr Sun Yat-sen, was another prominent newspaper within the Chinese community, that played a pivotal role in addressing the specific interests and concerns of the Chinese population (Peng, 2005). With its inception, Kwong Wah Daily sought to provide a platform for the Chinese population to voice their aspirations and contribute to the development of their society. This, followed by Sin Chew Daily, was another influential publication founded on

January 15, 1929, by Aw Boon Par. It played a significant role in promoting Chinese culture, preserving traditions, and addressing the needs and concerns of the Chinese community. Another example is Nanyang Siang Pau, founded on September 6, 1923, by Tan Kah Kee, which further contributed to the rich tapestry of Chinese newspapers. Nanyang Siang Pau aimed to foster a sense of unity among the Chinese community and promote awareness of their cultural heritage.

These newspapers, with their dedicated founders and respective founding dates, symbolise the commitment to serving and empowering their specific societies. By addressing the Chinese community's unique interests, values, and aspirations, they played a vital role in shaping the sociopolitical landscape and nurturing the cultural identity of the Chinese population.

The history of Tamil newspapers in Malaya has limited evidence. However, Ulaga Nesan, founded in 1877, is considered the earliest known Tamil newspaper (Dhandayutham, 1986). It played a significant role in shaping Tamil media. Singai Nesan and Hindu Nesan followed suit. For the Malay community, in 1876, the first Malay weekly newspaper, Jawi Peranakan, was published, leading the way for subsequent publications such as Al-Imam, Lembaga Melayu, and Utusan Melayu. According to Iskandar Haji Ahmad (1973) , in the colonial period, Malaysians witnessed a growing sense of cultural and social awakening among the Malay population. The Malay newspapers played a crucial role in promoting cultural identity, preserving traditions, and fostering a sense of unity and pride among the Malays. Moreover, the establishment of the Malay newspapers also aimed to raise political awareness among the Malay community. These newspapers were platforms to discuss political issues, advocate for Malay rights and concerns, and contribute to political discourse during significant political changes and challenges.

In summary, the emergence and influence of various ethnic newspapers in Malaysia during the colonial period provide valuable insights into the relationship between media and political behaviour, particularly concerning party realignment. Chinese newspapers such as Kwong Wah Daily, Sin Chew Daily, and Nanyang Siang Pau, and Tamil newspapers like Ulaga Nesan and Singai Nesan served as platforms for cultural preservation and community unity. Similarly, Malay newspapers like Jawi Peranakan and Utusan Melayu promoted cultural identity and political discourse among

Malays. These newspapers addressed specific interests and concerns of their respective communities, shaping political awareness and contributing to sociopolitical discourse, potentially influencing party realignment behaviour among different ethnic groups during that period, as explored in this study.

2.2.2 Post-Independence Parliamentary Democracy

The post-independence era brought forth numerous challenges, particularly in managing national development, addressing the communist threat, fostering national identity, and mitigating racial unrest. The extensive experience and migration of the Chinese and Indians during British colonial rule significantly shaped Malaya's demographic landscape and political trajectory. Among the initial challenges was the issue of racism, which sparked racial conflict in Malaysia on 13th May 1969. This happened, according to Milne (1970), due to race issues between the Malays and non-Malays (Chinese) stemming from disputes over Articles 152 and 153 of the Constitution, which sought equality between Malays and non-Malays, including disagreements about establishing University Merdeka, the Chinese language and culture, and claims about Bumiputera's status.

Mohamad Asrol Arpidi Mamat et al. 2020 mentioned that the chaos (the 13th May 1969 racial riot) was incited by the interference of the Communist Party by encouraging a boycott of the 1969 general election, leveraging components of the opposition Democratic Action Party (DAP), Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (Gerakan), and the Labour Party. The communists were perceived to have actively influenced and utilized the Chinese and their affiliated parties to advance their agenda during the riots. This statement suggests that the involvement of the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) and the triad contributes to feelings of racism, prejudice, anxiety, and frustration among the Malays, leading to a lack of mutual trust between the Malays and the Chinese, creating an atmosphere characterised by tension and unease until today (Jamaludin, 2011). The aftermath of these riots has deeply affected the nation's social fabric and political landscape today. Malaysia still grapples with interethnic relations and national identity issues, indirectly affecting Malaysian voting behaviour (Welsh, 2020).

Before the May 13, 1969 incident, the secession of Singapore from Malaysia in 1965, fuelled by a provocative procession involving Muslim Malays to celebrate Prophet Muhammad's birthday, was a clear indication of the communal tensions between the Malays and Chinese that had emerged after Malaysian independence. This situation was exacerbated by two significant racial upheavals on July 21, 1964, and September 2, 1964. The riot served as a tragic turning point in Malaysian history, deteriorating the already fragile relationship between the ethnic communities (Clutterbuck, 1985; Cheng, 2001).

Historically, the British policy of "divide and rule" during colonisation, to some extent, led to racial polarisation and feelings of prejudice. According to Cham (1977) and Rogers (1969), this polarisation persisted in the post-independence era and described Malaysian politics as strongly influenced by communalism, stemming from a solid allegiance to racial, religious, and linguistic ties.

Furthermore, the impact of "Neo-Feudalism" significantly influenced Malaysian politics, particularly within the Malay community. This community, shaped by tradition and customs, perceives politics as an expression of allegiance and loyalty to the King as a patron of the Malaysian people (Tajari et al., 2022). The deep-rooted attachment to customs and culture instils a profound respect for their leaders, leading to unwavering loyalty, as evidenced by solid support for UMNO and PAS in general elections.

Despite all the historical challenges, Malaysia upheld its parliamentary democracy, a political system in which power is vested in the Parliament, the country's most important institution. Under this system, the government is formed based on the support of the majority of elected representatives in Parliament.

In Malaysia, the head of state is His Majesty the King. The monarchy plays a constitutional role, and the King symbolises unity, stability, and continuity in the country. While the King's powers are largely ceremonial, they still hold significant importance in matters such as the appointment of the Prime Minister and the dissolution of Parliament.

Parliament holds a crucial role in Malaysia's democratic system. It serves as the platform for legislative debates, lawmaking, and policy formulation. Members of Parliament (MPs) represent the interests and concerns of their constituents and engage

in discussions and decision-making processes on national issues. Parliament is responsible for ensuring checks and balances in governance and holding the government accountable.

The Parliament of Malaysia consists of two chambers: the Senate (Dewan Negara) and the House of Representatives (Dewan Rakyat). On September 11, 1959, these chambers held their first meeting, marking a significant milestone in Malaysia's political history. The Senate represents the states of Malaysia, while the House of Representatives represents the people.

The House of Representatives consists of 222 elected members who are chosen through a general election held every five years. Each member represents a specific parliamentary constituency, which ensures that various regions and communities are adequately represented in the legislative process. The elected members are tasked with voicing their constituents' concerns and aspirations and working towards improving their respective areas.

The general election is a crucial event in Malaysia's political landscape. It allows citizens to exercise their right to vote and determine the composition of the House of Representatives. Political parties contest the election, and the party that secures the majority of seats forms the federal government. This government is responsible for governing the country, implementing policies, and addressing the needs and aspirations of the people.

To be eligible to serve as a member of the House of Representatives, an individual must be a Malaysian citizen of sound mind. These eligibility criteria ensure that only those with a vested interest in the nation and the ability to contribute to the legislative process can serve as representatives of the people. This requirement emphasises the importance of citizenship and mental competency in upholding the democratic principles of a country.

2.2.3 The Malaysian 2018 General Election

Malaysia has held 14 general elections since 1959. Historically, these elections consistently favoured the ruling coalition, Barisan Nasional (BN), which emerged

victorious in most federal and state elections, except Kelantan, Terengganu, Penang, and Kedah (Crouch, 1996).

However, a noticeable shift in Malaysian politics occurred during the 12th general election (GE12). This election marked a significant political shock as the ruling party, BN, lost its two-thirds majority in parliament (Badrul et al., 2010; Fernando et al., 2011; Moten, 2011).

Simultaneously, despite their diverse ideologies, the opposition parties formed a coalition and challenged the dominance of BN. This historic opposition coalition in West Malaysia, comprising Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR), Democratic Action Party (DAP), and Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS), which had traditionally been at odds with DAP, joined forces. They successfully won Malay-dominated state seats in Kelantan and Kedah, the Chinese-dominated state of Penang, and the mixed states of Perak and Selangor (Fee, 2010).

This shift in political dynamics during GE12 demonstrated a growing inclination among Malaysian voters for change. It ushered in a new political cooperation and competition era between the BN and the opposition coalition.

The demand for political change became more pronounced in GE13. For the first time in Malaysian history, there was a contest in all parliamentary seats. In addition, there was a significant shift in urban support away from BN. BN lost most urban seats for the first time to PH, with 12 out of 14 state capital parliamentary seats except for Kangar and Johor Bahru. In Wilayah Persekutuan, BN lost nine (9) seats out of 13. In Selangor, BN lost all urban and suburban seats. Overall, the BN obtained 45.7% of the votes, while PR obtained 54%. In total, BN secured 133 seats, which was five (5) seats less than in GE12 (SPR, 2019).

GE14 on 9th May 2018 saw a new configuration of Malaysian politics. There was a massive change in party choice at the federal level. The BN lost the government after 61 years in power to Pakatan Harapan (PH), a new opposition coalition consisting of Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM – Malaysian United Indigenous Party), Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR – People's Justice Party), Democratic Action Party (DAP), Parti Amanah Negara (Amanah – National Trust Party), and Parti Warisan Sabah (Warisan – Sabah Heritage Party). BN secured 79 out of the 222 parliament seats contested (SPR,

2018), experiencing a 13.6% erosion of votes from 47.4% in GE13 to 33.8% in GE14 (Moniruzzaman & Farzana, 2018). The scenario may not be strange at the state level because Malaysian voters have changed their government parties in Sabah, Kelantan, Terengganu, and Kedah. Nevertheless, this shift represented the rise of a new order, the end of the BN era, and the birth of the reformation era (Yang Razali Kassim, 2018; Hutchinson & Aun, 2019).

The support for PH (Pakatan Harapan) following GE14 (General Election 14) appeared to have sustained momentum. This winning streak continued for PH in four consecutive by-elections conducted after GE14. They achieved victories in Sungai Kandis on August 4, 2018, against BN (Barisan Nasional), Seri Setia on September 8, 2018, against PAS, Balakong on September 9, 2018, against MCA, and Port Dickson on October 13, 2018, in conjunction with PAS.

However, a significant shift in voter sentiment occurred starting in January 2019. Within eight months of GE14, in May 2018, voters' support seemed to revert to BN, the party defeated in GE14. PH experienced substantial losses in all subsequent by-elections, including the Tanjung Piai by-election, which witnessed a swing vote of 10,875 compared to the GE14 results (refer to Table 1.2 in Chapter One). The recent Malacca and Johor State elections held on November 20, 2021, and March 12, 2022, further demonstrated this vote shift. BN successfully regained control of both states with a commanding two-thirds majority, enabling them to form a government.

Moreover, the elections preceding GE14 unveiled a palpable sense of polarisation among voters, accompanied by a discernible trend of party realignment. Regional and class divisions emerged as significant factors, transcending traditional identity-based voting patterns. Notably, Hing and Pong (2014) highlighted the opposition's strong performance, particularly in mixed constituencies, while Yang Razali's (2018) research underscored voters' willingness to compromise across ethnic lines in their voting attitudes.

Expanding on the previous discussion, it is crucial to acknowledge the substantial voter turnout observed during the elections, which has led to a narrower absenteeism gap ranging from -9% to -15%. This turnout demonstrates voters' strong orientation, commitment, and determination to participate in the electoral process.

Additionally, the data in Tables 1.1 and 1.2 indicate fluidity in voting behaviour. This suggests that voters' preferences may change over time, reflecting the trend of party realignment. For instance, swing votes for the Pakatan Harapan (PH) coalition varied between -10% and -105%, while Barisan Nasional (BN) experienced an increase in support from 14% to 27% in several post-GE14 by-elections.

In essence, the evolving dynamics of Malaysian politics, demonstrated by the fluctuating voter intentions and party realignment preceding General Election 14 (GE14), highlight the inclination for voters to align with different parties. Historically dominated by Barisan Nasional (BN), Malaysian politics witnessed a significant shift with the emergence of Pakatan Harapan (PH) in GE14, signalling a departure from long-standing political norms. Subsequent electoral outcomes, including by-elections and state elections, further highlight the fluidity of voter preferences and the potential for realignment. This propensity for party realignment may stem from various factors. These trends suggest that Malaysian voters are increasingly open to alternative political options, challenging traditional party affiliations and paving the way for continued realignment in future elections, which the study aims to examine.

2.2.4 Issues Dimensions

One notable phenomenon observed among West Malaysian voters lately is the presence of inconsistent political psychological behaviour, as indicated by the data presented in Tables 1.1 and 1.2. These tables suggest a tendency towards party realignment, with voters shifting their support from one party to another. This raises questions about the reasons behind such changes in voting intentions and the underlying cross-cutting issues that have influenced the public's inclination towards party realignment.

To fully comprehend this manifestation, it becomes crucial to explore various socio-psychological variables. Through an examination of historical events and experiences as discussed before, there were interplays of socio-psychological variables like ethnic identity, religiosity, social media, and candidate image that may have contributed to party realignment tendencies.

2.2.4.1 Ethnic Identity and Religiosity

The most intricate and significant influence on public behaviour is ethnic identification (Iwamoto & Liu, 2010; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Politicians in culturally diverse nations should understand the psychological and behavioural consequences of ethnic identification. How politicians deal with matters linked to ethnic identity and religiosity is essential (Welsh, 2020).

As has been discussed before, Malaysia has grappled with the issue of communalism, which can be traced back to British colonial rule. The British employed a "divide and rule strategy," which profoundly impacted identity politics within the country (Mahmood Mamdani, 2012). This colonial policy resulted in a social structure characterised by the uneven distribution of socio-economic rights among different ethnic groups. As a result, societal divisions started to emerge along class lines, leading to cultural shifts. Over time, Malaysia developed a highly segmented societal structure: Malays predominantly inhabited rural areas, the Chinese settled in urban centres, and the Indians resided in plantations. Distinct occupational choices, unique religious practices, different languages, and the establishment of independent political organisations by each ethnic group reinforced this cultural segregation. Unfortunately, this compartmentalization posed significant barriers to integration and social cohesion within Malaysian society. The distinct communities formed close-knit groups, further reinforcing cultural boundaries and impeding the development of a shared national identity. The issues persist until today (Welsh, 2020; Goh, 2023).

According to Chin (2018), the Chinese community still expresses discontent regarding the Bumiputra equity share, and Malay dominance (Ketuanan Melayu). They also raise concerns about their request for the Unified Education Certificate (UEC), which has yet to be approved. Similarly, the Hindus are dissatisfied with religious freedom and the welfare of rural poor Indians. Conversely, the Malays advocate for their rights as Bumiputra (Moten, 2013; Cangià, 2014).

These issues significantly impact inter-racial relationships in Malaysia. Soomo and Memon (2014) noticed that ethnic identification is still visible among the Malay and Chinese communities but appears less tangible among the Indians. This predicament is echoed in a survey conducted in the Parliament of Johor Bahru. Malays

tend to exhibit ethnocentrism, Indians demonstrate greater ethnic tolerance, and Chinese exhibit scepticism towards multi-ethnic politics (Mohd Azmir et al., 2018).

Further, racial sentiments exerted a substantial influence on the political election landscape. The Chinese community, for example, held the MCA, Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (GERAKAN), and other Chinese-based parties aligned with the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) accountable for their perceived failure to protect the interests of the Chinese communities (Fee, 2010). On the other hand, the Malays showed prejudice against non-Malay parties. According to Ostwald et al. (2018), PAS supporters were particularly hesitant to support a Chinese party or a coalition that included DAP, which is staunchly pro-Chinese.

Additionally, the mobilisation of the rural and Indian middle class by HINDRAF (an Indian NGO) led to a shift in support against BN (the ruling coalition). This collective movement resulted in an unprecedented and unexpected electoral setback, causing a decline in Indian support for the BN (Wong & Ooi, 2018; Cangià, 2014).

The ethnic identity issues went beyond mere political campaigns in an effort by political parties to canvass votes. Divisive slogans like "Anything but UMNO" (against Malays), "No DAP" (against Chinese), "Save Malaysia from Najib and UMNO" and "Protect Islam" began dominating the elections (Welsh, 2020). The New Economic Policy (NEP) affirmative action regarding Malay's special rights resurfaced and became material for political propaganda (Ostwald, 2017). In the Semenyih by-election in March 2019, Mohamed Azmin Ali, the Vice President of Pakatan Harapan and the Economic Affairs Minister of Malaysia, was quoted as saying that the Bumiputra agenda must be fulfilled without apology, while Abdul Hadi Awang, the President of PAS, said the Muslims must unite to rule over the non-Muslims (Ooi, 2019). There were also such instances in GE13 where the scaremongers threatened the Malays by saying that if Pakatan Rakyat (PR) won the election, there would be a Chinese or even Christian takeover of the country (Teik, 2013). Similarly, in the 1999 election, the non-Malay voters were intimidated that a vote for DAP meant a vote for PAS (portrayed as Islamic extremist).

The worst part is that the politicians treated this propaganda as an essential platform to ensure voices in the public political arena (Chan, 2018). As a result, the

political elites frequently appeal to racial narratives (Welsh, 2020). We can hear words like 'Malay loyalty' versus 'Chinese loyalty' (Teik, 2013). According to Crouch (1996), politicians have little choice but to voice racial sentiments to stir up ethnic feelings to outbid rival politicians. This predicament is all too common in Malaysia. The racial card is played again and again during elections and has fired election campaigns for decades.

Race-based politics extends to the party level, like candidature and candidate placement (Fee, 2010; Chan, 2018). Tables 2.1 and 2.2 show that BN, PH, and PAS successfully employed the race-biased approach by candidate proportion during elections. They placed more Malays/Bumiputra candidates and fewer Chinese and Indian candidates, respectively. BN had 63.64% Malays/Bumiputra, 29.70% Chinese, and 6.67% Indian, whilst PH placed 70.30% Malays/Bumiputra (about 6.66% higher than BN), Chinese 21.82% (7.88% lower than BN), and Indian 7.88% (1.21% higher than BN). Meanwhile, PAS had 97.73% Malays/Bumiputra candidates with no Chinese and about 2.27% Indians, or one each in Pulau Pinang, Perak, and Pahang.

Table 2.1 GE14 Distribution of Candidates for Parliament by Party in Peninsular Malaysia

GE14 DISTRIBUTION OF CANDIDATES													
Parliament	State	Candidate Composition			BN			PH			PAS		
		M	C	I	M	C	I	M	C	I	M	C	I
3	Perlis	9	0	0	3	0		3			3		
15	Kedah	39	3	1	13	2		13	1	1	13		
14	Kelantan	42	0	0	14	0		14			14		
8	Terengganu	24	0	0	8	0		8			8		
13	Pulau Pinang	15	11	6	5	6	2	5	5	3	5		1
24	Perak	50	17	5	13	10	1	14	7	3	23		1

14	Pahang	35	4	3	10	3	1	12	1	1	13		1
22	Selangor	44	14	8	9	9	4	13	5	4	22		
12	Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur	18	13	1	5	6	1	5	7		8		
8	Negeri Sembilan	19	4	1	5	2	1	6	2		8		
6	Melaka	14	3	0	4	2		5	1		5		
26	Johor	54	16	2	16	9	1	18	7	1	20		
Total		363	85	27	105	49	11	116	36	13	142		3

Source: Consolidated data from SPR report (2019)

On the other hand, Table 2.3 below illustrates how each party places eligible candidates based on the 'race-dominant area'. In other words, candidates' placement is done according to their ethnicity and the total population of a constituency. The higher the race in that area, the more likely the candidate is to be from the same ethnic group. It is composed of 100% Malays and non-Malay candidates placed in their respective heartlands. However, there is some level of ethnic tolerance in Malays majority areas. In about 22 out of 114 seats in Malay majority areas, the candidature were non-Malays, viz., 13 BN candidates and nine (9) PH candidates. However, there are no Malay candidates in any non-Malay majority areas.

Table 2.2 Summary of Candidate Distribution by Party in Peninsular Malaysia

Summary of the Candidate Distribution in %			
	BN	PH	PAS
Malay	63.64%	70.30%	97.73%
Chinese	29.70%	21.82%	0
Indian	6.67%	7.88%	2.27%

Table 2.3 GE14 Distribution of Candidates According to Race Majority Area

GE14 Distribution of Candidates *(Note: M for Malay/NM for Non-Malay)*				
	M in M Area	M in NM Area	NM in M Area	NM in NM Area
Area by Race above 70%				
BN	68/69	0	1/69	10/10
PH	69/69	0	0	10/10
Area by Race below 70%				
BN	26/33	0	7/33	4/4
PH	29/33	0	4/33	4/4
Area by Race below 60%				
BN	7/12	0	5/12	10/10

PH	7/12	0	5/12	10/10
Area by Race below 50%				
BN	4/14	0	10/14	9/9
PH	7/14	0	7/14	9/9
Area by Race below 35%				
BN	0	0	1/1	0
PH	0	0	1/1	0

Source: (Consolidated from SPR report, 2019)

Yang Razali Kassim (2018), referring to the GE14 outcome, disputed the claim that there is still an ethnic identity issue. They believed Malaysian ethnic exclusivism with a race and religion-based voting attitude had disappeared for good. Instead, people were switching to a political design that was more harmonious and centripetalistic. Centripetalism is a form of democratic power-sharing divided along ethnic, religious, or social lines, thereby encouraging political parties to have compromising policies (Reilly, 2012).

Conclusively, ethnic identity is still a significant issue in Malaysian politics. The great success of PH in GE14 does not mean that ethnic identity is no longer relevant for Malaysians. The formation of the multiracial PKR and the consociation of several parties under the banner of PH cannot be taken as a new political configuration. It is just another resemblance of the earlier spirit of the advent of Parti Perikatan in 1952 (Alliance Party) and, later succeeded by BN in 1972, until today. Indeed, the ethnic identity issues discussed above have not ended in GE14 and were carried into the following by-elections. Politicians from both camps continue playing the race card and

invoking racial sentiments whenever it suits their agenda. In addition, the choice and placement of candidates in elections are still race-biassed and proportionate to the constituency. In short, ethnic issues persist today, and there seems to be no easy way out of the politics-ethnicity trap.

2.2.4.2 Social Media

The impact of ethnic issues influences people's media consumption patterns. Language barriers contribute to the existence of newspapers that cater to specific ethnic interests. This influence extends across various media formats, including radio, television, newspapers, and online platforms. These media sources are shaped by ethnic alternative media that cater to the specific preferences, values, and cultural nuances of different ethnic communities.

As discussed before, media development in Malaysia dates back to the colonial era in 1805, when British publications aimed to strengthen colonialism (Ahmad Saman, 1983). With the advent of the internet in 1996, social media emerged as a powerful communication tool during national campaigns, influencing general elections and by-elections. Social media has significantly reshaped the Malaysian mindset, enhanced political literacy, and promoted citizen participation (Idid, 2018; Samsudin, 2019). The decline of controlled media, previously advantageous to the ruling party, was evident (Rahim Abdul Samad, 2001; Idid, 2018). The internet and social media have levelled the playing field for all parties, especially the opposition, offering unique elements that facilitate political engagement, free expression, and dissent (Rajaratnam, 2009; Rahim Abdul Samad, 2001).

Social media has made an active inroad into Malaysian politics, covering a large fragment of Malaysian society since GE12 (Rajaratnam, 2009). Figure 2.1 shows that more Malaysians use online networking applications. The number of users has increased from 55.8% to 88.7% from 2008 to 2020, with yearly average growth between 0.5% and 10.5%. Meanwhile, the number of non-internet users has steadily declined, mainly among senior citizens aged 60 and above, constituting 51.8% of MCMC (2020). The three most frequently cited reasons for not using the internet were lack of interest (52.5%), being too old to learn new things (33.9%) and having no device (30.1%).

Meanwhile, the active users in their 20s and 30s accounted for 46.0% and 21.2%, respectively (MCMC, 2020). The smartphone has been the most popular device to access the internet, and user numbers reached a near-saturation level of 98.7% in 2020 (MCMC, 2020). Most users (93.0%) go online for social purposes via social media platforms, while 86.5% use social media for online content sharing to learn more about current issues. This indicates that the Malaysian public today is more knowledgeable and aware of what is happening around them (Idid, 2018). Politically, the impact was evident as the ruling party, BN, lost two-thirds control of the parliament and ceded five states to the opposition in GE12 (Leong, 2019). Subsequently, in GE14, BN suffered a further setback, resulting in the loss of the government (Nadzri, 2018).

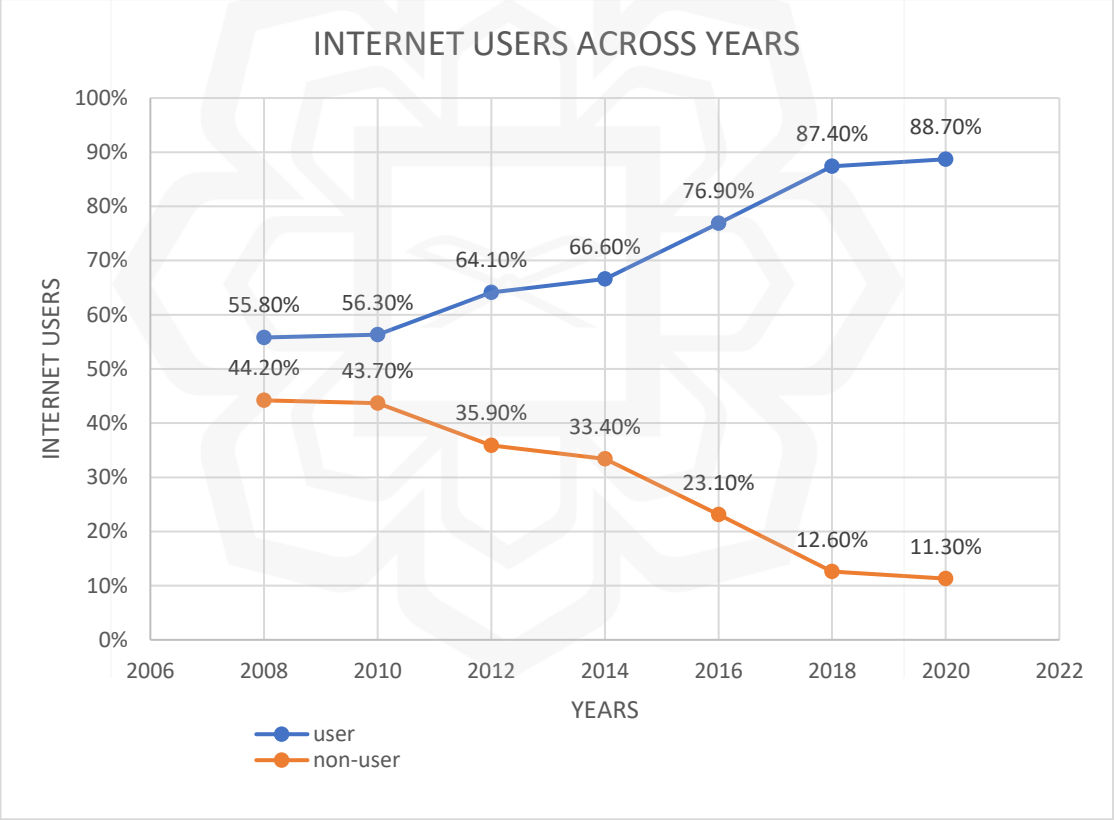


Figure 2.1 Internet Users in Malaysia Across Years

Source: (Global Economy.com)

At the same time, the study observed that both camps, BN and PH, used social media as a potent campaign instrument to canvass new voters (Chinnasamy &

Mohamed Azmi, 2018). Table 2.4 below shows the number of political parties' followers on social networking sites.

Table 2.4 Number of Followers at Social Networking Sites of Political Parties

Number of Followers at Social Networking Sites of Political Parties				
Party	Facebook	Instagram	YouTube	Twitter
Barisan Nasional	353,302	1,973 295	295	114,000
UMNO	69,224	13,900	7,873	85,400
MCA	173,311	-	1,540	4,977
MIC	10,453			8,656
Gerakan	16,867	-	n.a.	450
PBB	78,472	-	-	34
PRS*	543x	-	-	-
SUPP*	16,034			
SPDP*	3,379			
UPKO**	137	528y	-	564
PBS**	593	41	-	92
Pakatan Harapan	39,055	-	-	4,293
PKR	47,008	n.a.	-	85,800
DAP	624,452	-	22,444z	116,000
AMANAH	122,787	17	784	370
PPBM	166,209	-	-	310
Others				

PAS	475,768	52,800	6,777	8,530

Source: (Cassey Lee, 2017)

Note: *Sarawak-based parties, **Sabah-based parties, x - Pergerakan Wanita PRS, y – UPKO Penampang, z – UbahTV

According to the report, political parties invest heavily in establishing their online presence through various social media networking applications. The utilization of social media for political purposes tends to be more intensive. Of the four (4) most popular online networking applications used in GE14, Facebook has the most extensive social interaction with the public, followed by Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. However, the degree of responsiveness may not be organic, as the numbers can be inflated (Lee, 2017). Furthermore, a recent MCMC survey (2020) indicated a downtrend in Facebook popularity, while YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter have experienced an increase. The younger group, 88% of them, use Instagram, which is expected to replace Facebook in the future.

In conclusion, this study asserts that social media has played a crucial role in shaping party realignment, especially among voters during elections. It has become an indispensable tool for political communication, allowing voters to access news and information, engage with others, stay informed, and be aware of the current affairs in the country. Ultimately, social media has effectively influenced the mindset of Malaysians.

2.2.4.3 Candidate Image

The issues stemming from colonialism have posed significant obstacles to integration within Malaysian society. Spatial segregation and the preservation of distinct cultural practices have further deepened ethnic identities, hindering interactions and the development of a shared national identity. Economic disparities between communities have also contributed to social inequality, fostering tensions and grievances. The existence of separate political organisations has perpetuated ethnic-based politics,

impeding the establishment of a cohesive and inclusive political system. The enduring effects of these integration barriers are still apparent in contemporary Malaysian society (Goh, 2023).

Reiterating the scenario above, in today's intricate political landscape, selecting viable candidates at the federal or state levels carries substantial responsibility and needs to be more straightforward. Voters thoroughly evaluate various attributes of a candidate based on their preference. Although, external factors may manipulate and thus significantly impact their decision-making process, The candidate's persona encompasses their personality, background, morality, integrity, and affiliation with the political system, including the candidate's charisma and proficiency in handling public affairs, which are crucial factors.

For instance, Mohammad Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak. He bore the brunt of the blame for the decline in public support for BN, as he was widely characterized as a kleptocrat with questionable morals. In contrast, Mahathir Mohamed, renowned as Malaysia's longest-serving prime minister (1981–2003) and hailed as the 'Father of Vision' and 'Father of Modernisation,' crossed over to PH and assumed the role of chairman in the opposition coalition. This move was well-received by the public, which acclaimed him as the saviour of the country (Welsh, 2018). His personality adequately appealed to the masses and was influential in bridging the credibility gap between the ruling party and the opposition due to his time-proven charismatic leadership (Temiz & Islam, 2019). The importance of the candidate's record and credibility is evident among the Malaysian Chinese, as acknowledged by Mahathir Mohamed during an event organised by Majlis Prihatin Malaysia (PRIMA) on 16th August 2007. Likewise, during the by-election of P.094 Hulu Selangor parliamentary seat, Mohd Zaid Ibrahim of the PKR faced rejection from a majority of Malays due to his alleged involvement in immoral activities (Awang Besar et al., 2011).

Moreover, the party's image can also impact the candidate's image. The credibility and trustworthiness of party policies play a crucial role in influencing voters' choices of candidates. For example, economic issues damaged BN's image during its tenure as a government. It influenced the voter's electoral behaviour **(**Mahathir Mohamad**,** 1995; Sundaram, 1988**;** Mauzy, 1983). The implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) on 1st April 2015, and the mismanagement of 1MDB and

Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA) issues worsened the government's credibility (Nadzri, 2018**;** Moniruzzaman & Farzana, 2018; Yang Razali Kassim, 2018). Similarly, the NEP affirmative action has pushed non-Malay support towards BN (Ostwald et al., 2018). This issue made it into the headlines in local and international mass media at the time and gave BN candidates a negative image.

External factors like (1) image manipulation, (2) character assassination, and (3) ethnoreligious forces also contributed to the positive appeal of candidate images. Regarding image manipulation, it was argued that even clean candidates can lose, and dirty candidates can win. For example, the appeal of PAS candidates portrayed as religious and pious people attracted Malay voters, especially in Kelantan, Terengganu, and Kedah (Amer Saifude Ghazali et al., 2011). Using a plain-folks appeal strategy, Lee Kuan Yew wore a songkok (traditional Malay headgear) during a campaign in the Changi constituency and among supporters among the Malay community (MITA, 1963).

Candidates can also become victims of political character assassination, which is the malicious harming of a person's good image that may hinder voters' support for a candidate. During GE12, Abdullah Badawi, the prime minister from 2003 to 2009, faced criticism from Brown (2005) for being perceived as overly lenient and slow in tackling racial and religious divisions. Mahathir Mohamed launched continuous personality attacks against Abdullah Badawi (Moten, 2013), which ultimately cost BN its two-thirds majority in the election. Subsequently, in GE14, Mohammad Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak faced public humiliation through a political cartoon that portrayed him as a clown and a thief, highlighting the 1MDB scandal (Zunar, 2019). Additionally, he was labelled a kleptocrat, accused of exploiting political power to seize the country's financial resources. In another instance, Mahathir Mohamed used to be labelled "the Greatest Pharao" (Mahafiraun) and "the Greatest Oppressor" (Mahazalim) by PAS in the 1990s before these terms resurfaced in GE14 (Kamaruzzaman, 2018).

Party-specific religious affiliation has a significant impact on the candidate's image. The infliction will influence an individual's voting behaviour. The Malays have a phobia of DAP, which is portrayed as a pro-Chinese and anti-Islamic chauvinist party by its opponents. Lim Kit Siang admitted that this negative public image affected their candidate's performance among Malay voters (Abdillah Noh, 2016). Similarly,

PAS is perceived as an Islamist party, garnering overwhelming support among Malay voters in Kedah, Kelantan, and Terengganu (Amer Saifude Ghazali et al., 2011). However, this very image acts as a strong deterrent for Chinese voters. When PAS candidates adopted radical Islamist positions, the party experienced significant electoral losses. Conversely, Hwang (2010) suggests that PAS made notable gains when it joined opposition coalitions and moderated its rhetoric. In short, Malaysian politicians continue to grapple with ethnoreligious issues, shaping the dynamics of their political landscape.

In summary, candidate image is a factor that influences Malaysian voters. Candidate image can be divided into (1) candidate persona and issue position; (2) external factors manipulation. Voters measure a candidate's persona based on credibility, morality, and integrity, while issue position is associated with handling public issues. Besides, a candidate's image is susceptible to external factors like the reputation of the party, its leaders, and ethno-religious forces. Therefore, exposure can influence the voters. Further, a candidate's image can be manipulated either by figure assassination or impersonation, which can change the voter's mental image of the candidate.

2.2.5 The Way Forward

There have been significant political developments in Malaysia, bringing about a change in the voting behaviour and party identification of the electorate. This trend has persisted since GE14 and, subsequently, in several by-elections and state elections. The voters' cognitive evaluation, orientation, and decision-making processes have been influenced by various determinant factors, including religion, ethnic identity, candidate image, and social media.

Several postulated political challenges may affect both macro (socio-political and systemic) and micro (individual and psychological) determinant factors. The political scene is now fragmented, with no single political party dominant enough to form the necessary majority. There will be about 45% of eligible young first-time voters with the implementation of the 21 to 18 year old Voting Age Eligibility Act. Furthermore, current politics is bereft of ethical principles that govern political

relationships and engagements. The government has changed hands three times; first, Mahathir Mohamed won a PH majority victory with a simple majority in GE14; second, Muhyiddin took over the government on 29th February 2020; third, Ismail Sabri became the ninth Prime Minister on 21st August 2021. The scenario lends credence to the assumption that Malaysian politics is fragile and uncertain.

Meanwhile, Figure 2.2 indicates the voters' strength of support for and loyalty to political parties. The BN strength of support dropped sharply from 16% in December 2020 to 7% in January 2021, with some improvement (1%) in February 2021; however, the support for PH and PAS has remained low. The range of supporters' movement is intangible between 3% and 5% and 3% and 4%, respectively. The situation implies that BN has lost some support, while PH and PAS look static. As argued by Azidin and Ahmad (2011), the tendency towards voluntary compliance and loyalty towards a party or candidates has weakened. The phenomenon is worth considering in manoeuvring party success regarding the inclination to align party issues. In addition, the number of uncertain voters is high, ranging from 37% to 51%, with an average increase of 4.6% between December 2020 and February 2021. Any change in their voting behaviour may challenge the party realignment propensity.

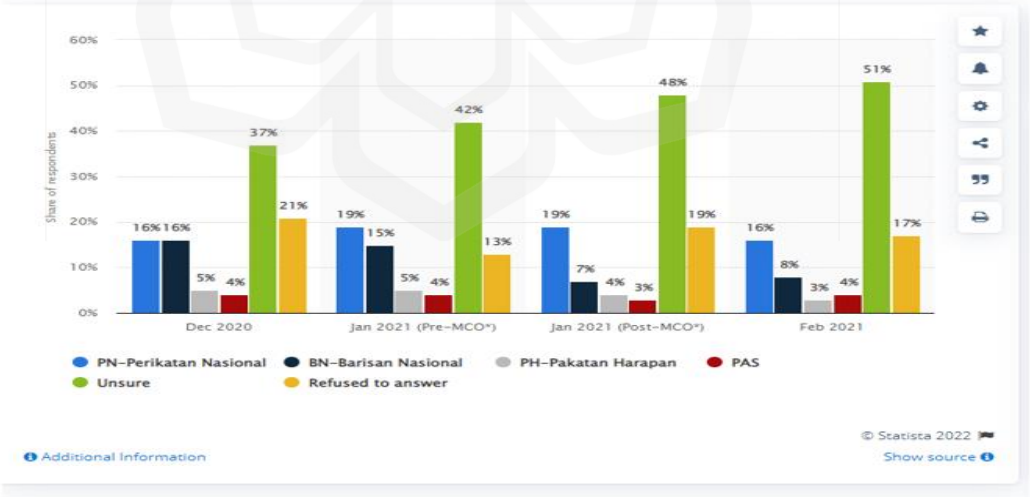


Figure 2.2 Voting Intention for the Next General Election in Malaysia from December 2020 to February 2021, by Political Party

Source: (Statista, 2022)

Nevertheless, accurately assessing the extent of voters' behavioural changes (micro level) and identifying the determining factors and political scenarios discussed above remains challenging in predicting any potential party realignment (at the macro level). The indicators may need to fully justify these changes, as voters' orientations and mobilisation have evolved (macro-level). Furthermore, the root cause of voters' behavioural shifts (at the micro level) requires comprehensive investigation and empirical testing (at the micro level). The TRA model can aid in comprehending vote intention dynamics, particularly concerning attitudinal and normative factors influenced by voters' beliefs and motivations to conform to external pressures, thereby explaining this phenomenon. It has the systematic structure to understand the knowledge discipline of political science based on empirical facts.

2.3 CONCEPTS FOR THE STUDY

This study's primary objective is to analyse and comprehend the importance of relationships and the dynamics of potential factors that impact voting intention. To accomplish this, the study situates itself within the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) framework, drawing upon existing knowledge and beliefs within the realm of voting behaviour and party realignment. The research primarily examines two fundamental theoretical assumptions: attitudinal norms (voting attitude) and subjective norms (ethnic identity), which are believed to be influential determinants of voting intention about party realignment during elections.

In addition to exploring the primary theoretical constructs, the study introduced religiosity and social media as mediators and candidate image as a moderator to assess their effects on the relationships between the independent variables (voting attitude and ethnic identity) and the dependent variable (voting intention).

In summary, the study will define the potential factors that play a role in party realignment, such as voting intention (how people plan to vote), attitudes towards voting, their ethnic identity, the use of social media, their religiosity, and candidate image (how they perceive a candidate).

2.3.1 Voting Intention

In this study, voting intention implies party realignment or the inclination of a voter to switch votes from one party to another party between elections. In Malaysia, there are two types of elections. First, as gazetted in SPR, there is a general election every five (5) years, or any other date proclaimed by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong on the advice of the Prime Minister. However, upon the death of the incumbent or current representative or for any other reason permitted by law within the first three (3) years after the general election, SPR will call for a by-election.

This is a standard electoral roll in which the voters cast their votes to choose their representatives in territorial constituencies mapped by SPR (Moten, 2013; Ab Rashid & Manimaran, 2021). Malaysia adopted a first-past-the-post electoral system. The majority will win even with a single vote. In addition, the vote is the voters' veto power.

In politics, a lopsided victory for one party may change to a landslide for the other party in the next election. Candidates can win or lose. Clearly defining and understanding intention characteristics is essential to anticipating the likelihood of party realignment. Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) mentioned that understanding the early signal sent by cognitive beliefs and normative beliefs antecedent to intention can help anticipate a future planned action.

Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) postulated that personal evaluative (i.e., attitude) and normative constructs (i.e., subjective norms) form the intention (i.e., voting intention). Attitude is a combination of evaluations of behaviours and beliefs about the outcomes of an act. The evaluation strengthened the beliefs. Duran and Trafimow (2000) argued that beliefs can be positive or negative, depending on the consequences the person may face.

Beliefs alone do not consistently predict the future. Instead, some behaviours are more suitably predicted by norms, such as subjective norms. The subjective norm is a perceived prevalence of behaviour in a relevant reference group (i.e., descriptive norms) or the perception of what one should do as the injunctive norm. Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) argued that attributes of behaviour can influence the extent to which

norms predict that behaviour. Specifically, norms are less influential when there is no ambiguity about what one should do or when the behaviour is private.

Although one would behave according to one's intention to achieve a particular goal, environmental cues and human attitudes could affect one's choices outside of one's intention. It means that intention changes; Lee et al. (2016) described it as a bounded rationality stance. In other words, factors previously found to affect one's voting choice for the preferred candidate may change on the polling day because of situational cues. For instance, one may be so possessive about environmental sustainability and prefer candidate X, whose platform of struggle includes increasing the protection of the environment, that mirrors the voter's view. However, situational cues on polling day (e.g., a terrorist attack) may create a fear of security that would influence the voter's decision and shift their support to candidate Y, who promises to prioritise national security. According to Ajzen and Fishbein (1974), intervening events may attenuate the intention–behaviour relationship.

In line with the above, Hill (2017) claimed that the tendency for party realignment is not consistent and varies according to time and space. Further, the magnitude of change and the variation across space are relatively different. Blais (2004) found that the intention for party realignment grows higher as the election reaches the final day. The drop is steepest on the last day before polling, as shown in Table 2.5. The figure also shows that it takes time for voters to consolidate their decision. Most voters initially remain with their decision, and within the final two weeks before the election, voting intentions start to wane or shift in response to campaign issues. In addition, Dassonneville (2015) argued that this change is either due to long-term factors like socioeconomic class, religion, and demographics or due to short-term factors like candidate image and issues during the campaign.

Table 2.5 Propensity to Change over Course of Campaign

Propensity to Change over Course of Campaign							
	Days before Election Day						
Country	30	25	20	15	10	5	1
Canada	19%	19%	19%	17%	15%	12%	10%
Britain	13%	14%	13%	12%	10%	8%	7%
Netherlands	18%	19%	18%	16%	14%	11%	9%
United States	8%	8%	7%	7%	6%	4%	4%
New Zealand	30%	31%	30%	27%	24%	20%	16%

Source: (André Blais, Université de Montreal, 2004)

Individuals, regardless of age or gender, environment, external and internal factors, demographic variables, and psychological factors, evolve and may impact one another as circumstances change (Lawrence et al., 2006; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010; Dassonneville, 2015). It is a never-ending process depending on one's self-efficacy or personal grit that can affect one's intensity and persistence to perform an act (Bandura et al., 1977; Pattanaik & Sia, 2015). It means that demographic variables (e.g., gender), psychological factors (e.g., self-doubt, motivation), self-efficacy, and personal determination can interact and influence the individual's intensity and persistence in pursuing a particular act. According to Pattanaik and Sia (2015), self-efficacy and personal grit can influence one's opinion and beliefs, and thus motivate the intention to review an act to the extent that it can affect political appreciation.

In conclusion, voting intention is a deliberate behaviour shaped by an individual's attitudes and subjective norms, which may be descriptive or imperative. The voting intention alludes to the propensity for party realignment; however, it is mutable and based on the repercussions or perceived value that an individual may encounter. The evolution of demographic variables and psychological factors with new knowledge and information may provide a fresh perspective on understanding and

interpreting, thus instigating the tendency to change. However, the change process can be mitigated, like reducing the impact of self-efficacy and personal grit on the intention.

2.3.2 Voting Attitude

There are various definitions of attitude. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) defined attitude as the determinant of behavioural intention. Voting attitude in the context of behaviour (i.e., voting behaviour) is a learned predisposition to respond favourably or unfavourably towards people, an object, an idea, or a situation (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). Campbell (1963) assumed attitude as the residue of past experiences that guide future behaviours. Ajzen (2014) explained that two main factors influence attitude. Firstly, the strength of behavioural beliefs in terms of consequences influences attitude, where people tend to associate the performance with the probable outcome. The beliefs will determine the prevailing attitude towards the behavioural intention before performing an act. Secondly, attitude is the evaluation of the potential outcome, whether it is positive or negative. Attitude is a cognitive function that evaluates, and shapes, or reinforces one's attitude towards an objective. It means that a person develops a positive attitude when an object is substantial; however, when the object is threatening, the perception would be harmful, and people would feel disinterested in the situation.

Ajzen (2014) postulated that the attitude will inevitably form after the person has acquired new information. In this study, the previous stock of political knowledge contributes to building individual attitudes towards politics. The cognitive reaction may not be coherent, depending on the unique way of processing information. Individuals may have a favourable or unfavourable reaction, especially when the attitude is inconsistent with a person's cognitive and affective components and may aggravate the propensity to change one's beliefs. In this study, voters are more likely to choose party realignment. According to Eagly and Chaiken (1993), a person may have decided to adopt an attitude from the outset because of social expectations, personal experience, or a sense of control over the objects or situation's value. Inconsistency leads to conflicting motivations and a sense of change.

Moreover, an individual's attitude is malleable (Strandberg, 2020). Festinger (1957) proposed the theory of cognitive dissonance, where attitude changes when a

situation involves conflicting attitudes, beliefs, or behaviours. The conflict produces a feeling of mental discomfort. Therefore, something must change to eliminate any inconsistency between the attitudes or behaviours (i.e., dissonances). For that reason, the person's attitude requires an alteration to reduce discomfort and restore balance. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) asserted that different evaluative responses when forming beliefs with various attributes like one's goals and characteristics of the object can result in attitude compliance or defiance. In politics, the consequences associated with the malleability of political attitudes may shape political attitudes of partisanship or inclination towards a party (Keford et al., 2023).

In summary, attitude is a tendency to respond to a situation based on cognitive and affective signals. The thoughts or beliefs developed by one's judgement on the probable outcome of an act to be performed in the future will produce a perceived value to enable the attitude to conclude the relevancy of an action before the intention to perform an act. However, cognitive and affective components may not be in harmony and may create conflicting attitudes that affect a person's position. Consequently, a voter would differ or defy their stance for party realignment or remain status quo. It means that one needs to revisit and understand all the attributes that contributed to the formation of the beliefs.

2.3.3 Subjective Norms Indicated by Ethnic Identity

An individual's evaluation of what significant others think a person should do is called a subjective norm, which influences the individual's decision in compliance with the group's beliefs and practices. The pressure comes from the reference group in the form of family, peer groups, culture, or social values (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). The study's assessment of subjective norms is vital to extending the idea of ethnic identity.

The ethnic identity phenomenon is not unusual. Many other parts of the world have this kind of issue, like a study conducted in Pakistan where voters' intention to vote based on one's belonging to a specific ethnic group and what they think of a situation or event (Butt & Awang, 2017). In Malaysia, ethnic appeal shaped Malaysian politics (Ratnam, 1965; Ratnam & Milne, 1970; Welsh, 2020). Tables 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3 show how ethnic background becomes the criteria for choosing a candidate and

determining the place to contest. According to Ostwald et al. (2018), there is a sentiment between Malay loyalists and Chinese loyalists. More importantly, a multi-racial country creates multiple political mental images. Different ethnic groups living in urban, suburban, and rural areas may differ in their political submissions. Parker et al. (2018) said that in the U.S., urban and rural communities are distinct along demographic lines and have become more polarised politically, with diverse opinions on social and political issues.

Ethnicity and religiosity are interrelated. In Malaysia, the ethnicity-religiosity relationship has an impact on society (Owoyemi & Ahmad Sabri, 2014). There were instances of biassed choice based on ethnoreligious appeal when selecting a candidate in an election. For instance, in Malaysia, the Malays rejected DAP due to its image as a pro-Chinese chauvinist party that is anti-Islamic, while the non-Muslims rejected PAS as an extreme Islamic party (Hutchinson & Aun, 2019; Welsh, 2020; Ostwald et al., 2018). Such extreme thinking happened in other countries like Turkey, where Toprak (2005) found that the citizens have accepted the belief that a religious-based party should lead the country.

Previous research has proven the role of elite manipulation in generating conflict among voters during elections. A politician manipulated the communal issue as a weapon to sway the vote. Politicians seek to advance their electoral interests by stoking fear and resentment among members of their ethnic community. Similarly, Malaysian politicians used ethnic sentiments to stir up ethnic sentiments against their rivals. For example, UMNO has been capitalising on Malays' special rights and religious superiority, which are deemed under threat. The strategic manoeuvre involves appealing to the sentiments of the Malay population, with a particular focus on rural constituencies. Additionally, it is essential to recognise that political parties such as UMNO, MCA, MIC, DAP, and PAS have historically emerged from communal interests, as documented by scholars like Ratnam (1965), Mauzy (1983), Bhattacharyya (2021), and Ooi (2014).

Nevertheless, modernisation has brought some changes the Malaysian social setting. The circumstances produced newly defined group awareness and new modes of expression. Berry's (1999) model of acculturation postulated that individuals may get assimilated into new lifestyles. Some scholars argue that the new political culture

acknowledges the people's fundamental values, feelings, and knowledge towards politics. In line with that, Malaysian politics is seen moving towards ethnic consociation and centripetalism. Bogaards (2019) defined the underlying philosophy of consociation as the willingness to share power or a coalition of communal leaders for proportional and mutual understanding across multi-ethnic common interests, while centripetalism is an initiative to moderate the relationship between races for the common interest. Moten's (2011) survey findings substantiate this fact. Generally, Malaysians coexist in harmony most of the time. About 54.2% of Chinese, 52.9% of Indians, and 44% of Malays agreed that ethnic diversity is not a threat to the nation and that their allegiances are primarily to the country and are not influenced by race or religion.

Conclusively, ethnic identity is a cultural characteristic measured by one's compliance with group beliefs and practices. It may be subject to manipulation and assimilation when a new culture is adopted. However, one's level of attachment and belonging to society may force otherwise, especially when it comes to religious matters. Ethnic pressure may differ from location to location.

2.3.4 Social Media

This section highlights social media as one of the concepts of the study. The definition of social media is not straightforward, and Boyd and Ellison (2007) observed that the terminology is unclear. However, several kinds of literature commonly define social media or social network sites as web-based services that permit the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Obar & Wildman, 2015) linked by the internet (Hjorth & Hinton, 2019). In Malaysia, there are two types of social media users: social networking subscribers (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Google+, Twitter) and users on messaging apps (e.g., WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, WeChat, and Telegram). Generally, social networking promotes one-to-many conversations or sharing of contents, files, and opinions on shared interests to acquire a reputation or influence individuals (Bond et al., 2012), while messaging apps are more of a one-to-one text messaging interaction (Bailey et al., 2016). In short, the study defined social media as an online medium for social interactions with faster sharing of media content, reaching people, and targeting messages across audiences with different orientations globally.

Welsh (2018) pointed out that social media like Facebook and WhatsApp play a significant role in mobilising voters through playing on their emotions. Studies on political psychology proved the role of emotion in an election campaign. Emotion triggers negative or positive behaviour attitudes both across and within individuals towards an object (Brader, 2006). According to Vasilopoulou and Wagner (2022), emotional reaction leads to shifting partisan loyalty and electoral change. For instance, as a communication platform, social media arouses emotions of the audience and causes attitudinal changes in their political views (Hasell & Weeks, 2016). Gan et al. (2017) argued that the impact could have positive and negative effects depending on the source of emotion, like anger, anxiety, and fear.

In short, social media can bring about a revolution in ways of thinking about politics (Kanagavel & Chandrasekaran, 2014). Social media's interactive and persuasive power will directly or indirectly impact voters (Diehl et al., 2015). Further, Hasell and Weeks (2016) argued that social media transforms people's attitudes, beliefs, and ideologies due to exposure. In Malaysia, this has even resulted in a change of government. Social media shaped Malaysian public opinion and voting decisions. The voters' attitudes changed according to the news and partisanship (Leong, 2015). Nonetheless, the scenario may differ in urban, suburban, and rural areas. According to Beaudoin and Thorson (2004), the media effects may differ by medium and community type.

2.3.5 Religiosity

According to Angel (2013), religiosity originates in the Western tradition, reflecting religious phenomena. From an etymological point of view, religiosity refers to religiousness and religion. Conceptually, religiosity relates to spirituality, piety, devoutness, or godliness. Obviously, in a semantic sense, the meaning of these religiosity-related terms is different, with overlapping components.

Sociologists and psychologists define the word religiosity in different ways. Everybody is looking at it from their perspective. A theologian would address religiosity from the perspective of faith in God or divinity (Groome & Corso, 1999; Adeyemo & Adeleye, 2008). A psychologist would look at the definition from the devotion,

holiness, and piousness dimensions (Cardwell, 1980), while a sociologist talks about religious membership, and devotees' attendance in religious activities, and dedication to the beliefs related to the daily way of life (Saroglou, 2010). According to Mathur (2012), there is some degree of agreement among scholars that religiosity comprises three integral components: affiliation, activity (i.e., attendance or participation in religious activities), and corresponding beliefs.

From the Islamic perspective, Al-Khalifah (1994) claimed that religiosity consists of two dimensions (i.e., beliefs and conduct or practices). In totality, the first dimension is where an individual has faith in Allah, His Angels, Al Quran, Allah's Messengers, and Judgement Day (tawhid). The second dimension emphasises the degree of beliefs' reflection throughout a believer's daily actions in obedience to God's commands. Additionally, Tiliouine and Belgoumidi (2009) proposed two other dimensions, namely religious altruism (i.e., rational aspects of life-related to a human relationship) and religious enrichment (i.e., related to religious knowledge).

In general, religiosity influences human behaviour, depending on one's association with and commitment to religion. Among the religious influences on humans are orientation, attitudinal set, including thinking, individual characterisation, and way of life (Sedikides, 2010; Adeyemo, & Adeleye, 2008; Esposito & Voll, 1996). In Malaysian politics, the Muslim population do not share a single set of ideologies and includes a wide range of viewpoints (Mohd Izani Mohd Zain, 2014). In terms of election candidature, there is an indicator among Malaysian voters that religious beliefs and practices influence their decision-making, like in the case of the P.094 Hulu Selangor parliamentary by-election, where the candidate lost due to his alleged immorality; however, not by the non-Muslim voters (Awang Besar et al., 2011).

In summary, religiosity influences human behaviour based on individuals' association with and commitment to religion. It can shape orientations, attitudes, thinking patterns, characterizations, and ways of life. In Malaysian politics, religious beliefs and practices can influence voters' decision-making, as seen in instances where candidates faced scrutiny or lost based on perceived immorality, particularly among Muslim voters.

2.3.6 Candidate Image

The candidate's image in an election campaign has become a central theme in many political communication studies. For instance, Rosenberg (1986) emphasised the importance of nonverbal aspects of candidate presentation influence in political communication, while White (2020) discussed political branding. Balmas and Sheafer (2010) also touched on public opinion, which fluctuates in tandem with the saliency of candidate attributes. In essence, image in politics is a form of political communication that aims to make a politician stand out to voters (Gackowski, 2013).

According to Damlapinar and Balci (2005) and Canöz (2010), candidate image refers to the candidate's persona and professional credibility, which would change how people feel about the candidate. However, Popkin (1991) claimed that a candidate's credibility and persona are insufficient. Candidates should demonstrate competence in both presenting themselves and addressing societal concerns effectively. They must possess problem-solving abilities. However, remember that public image favorability can fluctuate over time (Hacker et al., 2000). This malleability implies that candidates can influence and manage their public image, as suggested by Rosenberg and McCafferty (1987). In essence, voters typically evaluate a candidate's qualities for their perceived relevance and importance before making their decisions, in line with the findings of Blais (2004).

In summary, candidate image is crucial in election campaigns and has been extensively studied in political communication. Scholars have highlighted the influence of candidate presentation, political branding, and the saliency of candidate attributes on public opinion. It is recognised that a candidate's image encompasses their persona, professional credibility, and ability to handle problems.

However, scholars also found that credibility and persona alone are not enough. Candidates must possess competency in presenting themselves and addressing societal concerns. The favourability of a candidate image is not static but fluctuates over time and can be subject to manipulation.

Ultimately, voters evaluate the importance and relevance of a candidate's qualities before making their decisions. Therefore, the candidate's image is a significant factor influencing voters' perceptions and decision-making processes during elections.

2.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

TRA is instrumental in this study to unearth beliefs, perceptions, and convictions that shape Malaysian voters' inclination to realign a party during elections. Martin Fishbein was the first to develop TRA in the late 1960s, which was revised and expanded by him and Ajzen in 1975. Like Newton's third law of motion (for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction), TRA applies the same principle to human behaviour. TRA tries to predict the reaction of a person to a particular action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). In principle, TRA postulates that an intention determines one's reaction or behaviour. The intention is the urge for an effort to perform intended behaviour in the form of subjective probability (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

According to TRA, attitude and subjective norms are two critical determinants of behavioural intention. However, the relative importance of these two factors can vary from behaviour to behaviour and from individual to individual, depending on the action, target, context, and time. For example, attitude may predominate the subjective norm, and vice versa.

TRA suggests that attitude is the outcome of one's individual beliefs. Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) observed that beliefs shape one's attitude towards performing the behaviour under consideration. The attitude may be favourable or unfavourable. A favourable attitude produces a positive outcome, while an unfavourable one will have adverse outcomes. However, two individuals with the same general attitude can behave differently.

The attitude changes when the belief changes, which leads to behaviour modification. The behavioural alteration would affect attitude-behaviour consistency and stability, as well as polarity or extremity (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Although TRA was not designed to capture changes in beliefs, a study on the application of the TRA has provided evidence that beliefs can change in systematic ways (e.g., the desirability of an outcome related to a behaviour), which can, in turn, change attitudes and intentions. According to Fishbein and Ajzen (2010), a person's attitude towards any object is a function of his beliefs about the object and the implicit evaluative responses associated with those beliefs. The concept of evaluation is significant in the equation:

A = Sum of Beliefs x Evaluation (p. 29).

As the next component of TRA, subjective norm is a function of normative beliefs and motivation to comply. The theory assumes that the reference group or surrounding community produces social pressure that motivates individuals' intention to perform an act. Generally, the subjective norm is determined by the perceived anticipation of individuals or groups referent and by the individual's stimulus to obey such beliefs. Nevertheless, the stimulus may change that, subsequently affecting the stand of the individuals on whether to follow or not follow. For example, an acculturation process causes culture change and, in return, will influence the group's beliefs.

Figure 2.3 shows the original TRA model (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). It is one of the robust theories widely applied across many disciplines, like the study of determinants of individual behaviour (Sheppard et al., 1988), consumer behaviour in psychology and marketing research studies (Ryan & Bonfield, 1975), and climate risk and recycling in science studies (Nguyen et al., 2018). Meanwhile, Ajzen et al. (1982) examined TRA from the perspective of personality and social psychology with respect to individual differences and their effect on the tendency to act.

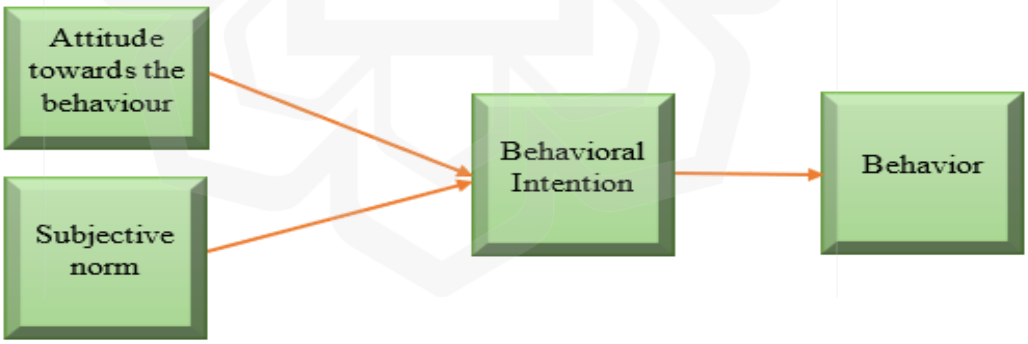


Figure 2.3 Theory of Reasoned Action

Related to the study, TRA was also used to examine behavioural intention in politics, like the impact of attitudes and subjective norms from a political perspective (Mohanachandran & Govindarajo, 2020; Tatge et al., 2016; Singh et al., 1995). Further, Harder and Krosnick (2008) studied how to predict voting intention, while Bali et al. (2020) focused on voting motivation. Granberg and Holmberg (1990) examined the

connection between voting intentions and behaviour. In the same vein, Rogowski (2018) explored the polarisation of voters' choices and conflicting opinions. Further, Granberg and Nanneman (1986) studied voters' expectations, while Chang et al. (2014) and Sinclair and Plott (2012) examined media roles, campaign materials, and third-person discernment persuasion.

In summary, TRA can significantly contribute to understanding the phenomenon under study. Its versatility and wide-ranging applicability have solidified it as a prominent model in psychology, marketing, consumer behaviour, and environmental studies. The theory provides valuable principles for understanding and predicting human behaviour by coining attitudes and subjective norms as significant determinants of behavioural intention. Its application would allow any research to delve into the drivers of individual actions, including choices, environmental practices, and the interplay between personality and social influences.

There is suggestive evidence that Malaysian politics has a voting behavioural issue where voters' intentions were motivated by a need for change. Evidence from the literature review shows that several factors like attitude, ethnic identity, religiosity, social media, and candidate image have influenced vote-switching behaviour to the extent of realigning a party.

Several behavioural change theories or models employing diverse factors may have explained concerns on behavioural change: (1) Fogg's behaviour model focuses on three elements motivation, ability, and a prompt to converge at the exact moment for a behaviour to occur; (2) social learning theory argues that new behaviours can be acquired by observing and imitating others; (3) social cognitive theory observed social interactions, experiences, and media, influences behaviour development; (4) cognitive dissonance theory focuses on contradictory information from a person's actions, feelings, ideas, beliefs, values, and the environment; (5) the transtheoretical or stages of change model assesses an individual's willingness to act on a new behaviour. On a similar note, even though it would be a difficult undertaking, TRA is used to explore the topic of behavioural change with an emphasis on voters' propensity for party realignment phenomena in Malaysian multicultural settings.

There is evidence that TRA has been used in several studies, for example, Singh et al. (1995) in Singapore, Tatge et al. (2016) on the U.S. presidential election, and Mohanachandran and Govindarajo (2020) on the India 2019 by-election. Their studies proved the principles of TRA that the attitude conceived of multiplicative summation of one's beliefs towards performing the behaviour and subjective norm (i.e., motivation to comply with an action derived from a perceived endorsement by social pressure) influences voting behaviour or performance. Ajzen and Fishbein (1974) have mentioned the intention to change issues influenced by attitudinal and normative components. Nguyen et al. (2018) substantiated the argument with their study on climate change. As such, the study believed that TRA is a good model for predicting voting intention associated with realigning a party during elections.

Accordingly, to understand the party realignment situation in Malaysia's multiracial society, the study determined to operationalize the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) as a socio-psychological theory. The study assumes that voters will initially shift their votes from X to Y and then back to X. Furthermore, the research introduces mediating and moderating variables: (1) social media and religiosity as mediators, (2) candidate image as a moderating factor. This facilitates moving beyond examining a straightforward relationship between two variables to gain a more comprehensive understanding of real-world dynamics. Subsequently, a new theoretical framework was developed to accommodate these elements (see Figure 2.4). The definitions of the terms were elaborated upon in the preceding sections.

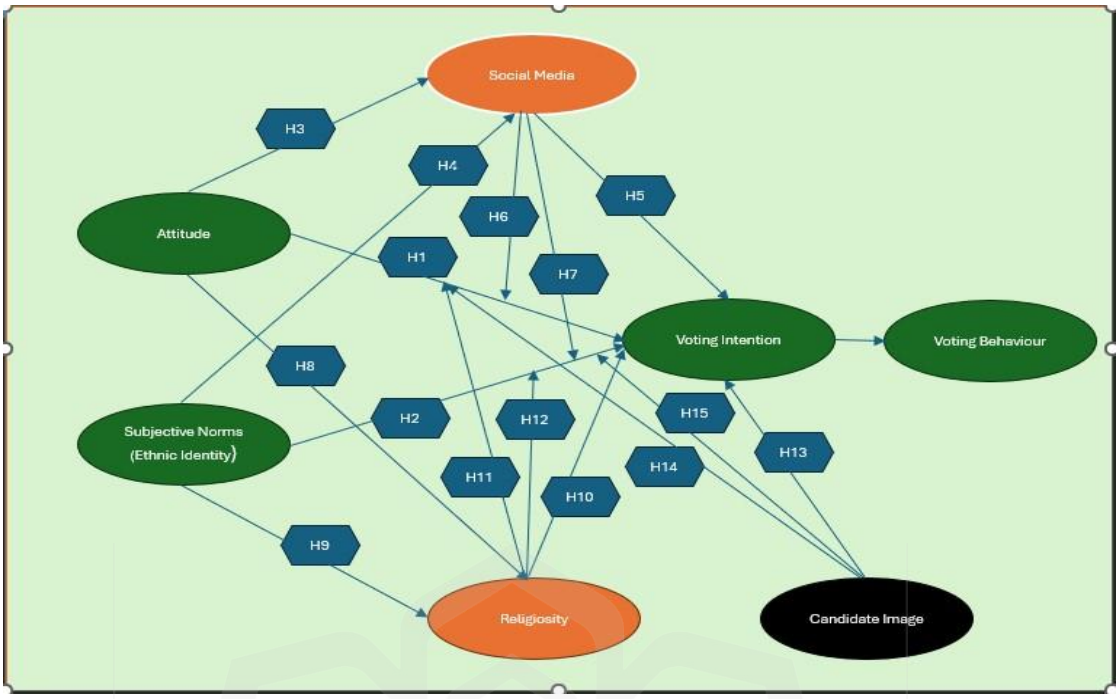


Figure 2.4 Proposed Theoretical Framework

2.5 DEVELOPMENT OF HYPOTHESES

The study's primary aim was to examine the correlation between voting intention and the key concepts or variables investigated in the research, including attitude, ethnic identity, social media, religiosity, and candidate image, by transforming subjective impressions of voters into quantifiable data, representing a significant advancement in knowledge. The study formulated 15 hypotheses based on research questions and subsequently tested them, utilising the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) to achieve the objective.

2.5.1 Attitude and Voting Intention Relationship

In a different discipline, Lam and Hsu (2006) defined intention as the premeditated and anticipated future behaviour of individual behaviour. In political literature and individual election choice, intention may refer to a citizen’s intention to vote for a candidate or party in elections. In this study, voting intention may refer to party realignment propensity among Malaysian voters. Voters are inclined to change their vote for a party during elections, in this case from BN to PH and vice versa.

TRA advocated that attitude determines voting intention. The belief system depends on the evaluation of the surrounding clues, like a party's political situation and contribution to the community, which form the attitude. Cognitive assessment plays a crucial role in shaping one's perception, influencing one's favourability. These perceptions can be influenced by descriptive and injunctive norms, personal beliefs (self-concept), or preexisting beliefs. The resulting inference significantly impacts voting attitude, serving as an antecedent to voting intention.

According to Fishbein and Ajzen (2010), there is a connection between attitudes and the inclination to perform an action. If one feels that conduct will result in a desirable or good outcome, one is more likely to have a positive attitude towards that behaviour. If, on the other hand, one believes that conduct will result in an undesired or unfavourable consequence, one is more likely to hold a negative view of behaviour.

Attitude is malleable (Strandberg, 2020). People can change their attitudes, especially to balance the inconsistency, when there is mental discomfort or dissonance over the expected outcome. The theory of cognitive dissonance postulates that a person will hold their attitude to avoid disharmony or disagreement (Festinger, 1957; Cooper, 2019). When two cognitions are at odds, this situation will affect one's behavioural intention (Bose, 2012; Downs, 1957). Any emotional reaction during this process will stimulate one's attitude and cause them to readjust their preferences. At this stage, ignorance of the primacy of voters' feelings will jeopardise the likelihood of a favourable performance (Marcus, 2002). Nevertheless, one would derive the decision depending on the degree of belief in the probable outcome's quality should the act be performed (Leong et al., 1989). The change vote phenomenon will continue as an individual acquires new information and changes their intention (Ajzen, 2014).

In conclusion, the relationship between intention and attitude influences voters' likelihood to change parties. This understanding can provide valuable insights into voters' decision-making processes and inclination to switch voting preferences. Based on the information presented above, there is a significant relationship between voting intention and attitudes. The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) suggests that attitudes are crucial in determining voting intentions. Attitudes are shaped by various factors, such as evaluating a party's political situation and its contribution to the community.

Cognitive assessment and perception also influence one's attitude, affecting one's voting intention.

Furthermore, attitudes are not fixed and can be influenced by various factors, including normative influences and personal beliefs. People are more likely to have a positive attitude towards behaviour if they believe it will result in a desirable outcome. Conversely, if they believe behaviour will lead to undesirable consequences, they are likely to hold a negative attitude towards it.

Attitudes are malleable and can change to reduce cognitive dissonance or mental discomfort. The Theory of Cognitive Dissonance suggests that individuals will strive to maintain harmony between their attitudes and behaviours. As a result, if there is an inconsistency between their attitudes and their intended behaviour (such as voting for a different party), they may adjust their attitudes to align with their desired outcome.

It is essential to consider voters' feelings and beliefs about the potential outcome's quality when analysing the likelihood of a change in voting behaviour. As individuals acquire new information and their attitudes adjust, their voting intentions may change accordingly. Therefore, the study hypothesised that:

H1 There is a significant relationship between voting attitude and voting intention among Malaysian voters during an election.

2.5.2 Ethnic Identity and Voting Intention Relationship

In this study, the relationship between ethnic identity and voting intention refers to how an individual's sense of belonging to a particular ethnic group influences their voting decision. Ethnic identity encompasses an individual's self-perceived connection to a specific ethnic group, including shared cultural, historical, and social experiences.

Ethnic identity can play a significant role in shaping voting intentions. People may identify strongly with their ethnic group and consider it an essential aspect of their identity. The psycho-ethnic attachment, encompassing ethnic values and practices, significantly influences individuals' political preferences and voting behaviour during elections (Wolfinger, 1974; Horowitz, 2001; Welsh, 2004; Butt & Awang, 2017).

One way in which ethnic identity affects voting intention is through shared values, interests, and concerns within the ethnic community. People often prioritise issues directly impacting their ethnic groups, such as language rights, cultural preservation, or socioeconomic disparities. These shared concerns may align with specific political parties or candidates who advocate for policies addressing those issues, leading individuals to vote in favour of candidates who align with their ethnic interests. They are also called ethnic voters or culture voters who vote for political contenders and recognise political parties mainly from their cultural credentials; such as racial-ethnic and religious identity (Welsh, 2004; Fee, 2010; Hing & Pong, 2014).

Additionally, ethnic identity can shape voting intentions through social networks and community influence. People are more likely to be exposed to political information, discussions, and mobilization efforts within their ethnic communities. Yang and Erives (2015) argued that these social interactions can influence their perceptions of political parties and candidates, leading them to align their voting intentions with the preferences of their ethnic community members.

It is important to note that the relationship between ethnic identity and voting intention is complex and can vary across contexts and individuals. Socioeconomic status, education, and ideological beliefs can influence voting decisions alongside ethnic identity (Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2017). Additionally, the impact of ethnic identity on voting intention may evolve as societal dynamics and political landscapes change due to modernisation which leads to acculturation and assimilation (Imran et al., 2020; Berry, 1999).

In Malaysia, ethnic identity plays a significant role in shaping the political landscape and voting behaviour. Malaysians tend to vote along ethnic lines, with Malays preferring Malay-based parties and non-Malays, mainly Chinese, voting for parties representing their respective ethnic communities. This pattern of ethnic-based voting behaviour has been observed in various studies (Aminnuddin & Wakefield, 2020; Fee, 2010; Nadzri, 2018).

Several factors can influence the intention of identity voting in Malaysia. Politicians exploit ethnic issues and sentiments to sway the votes of specific ethnic groups (Crouch, 1996; Welsh, 2020). For example, UMNO capitalises on Malay special

rights and religious superiority issues to gain support, particularly in rural constituencies. Similarly, Chinese parties like MCA and DAP aim to represent the interests of the Chinese community and preserve their cultural legacy inherited from the Republic of China (Heng, 1996; Ostwald et al., 2018).

Scholars have analysed the trajectory of Malaysian politics as moving towards ethnic consociation and centripetalism (Bogaards, 2019). Consociation refers to power-sharing and coalition-building among communal leaders, promoting proportional representation and mutual understanding across multi-ethnic interests. Conversely, centripetalism aims to moderate race relationships for the common interest, often through multi-ethnic party formation. Some literature presents consociationalism and centripetalism as competing proposals, but further exploring their interaction is necessary.

Ethnic identity and its impact on voting behaviour remain salient in Malaysian politics, with ethnic-based voting patterns and the influence of ethnic issues shaping the political landscape. The relationship between consociationalism and centripetalism in addressing ethnic dynamics requires further investigation and understanding.

In conclusion, the relationship between ethnic identity and voting intention is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. Ethnic identity plays a significant role in shaping voting intentions through shared values, interests, and concerns within the ethnic community. People often prioritize issues that directly impact their ethnic group and may vote for candidates or political parties that align with their ethnic interests. However, it is essential to note that the relationship between ethnic identity and voting intention can vary across contexts and individuals, and it can be influenced by factors such as socioeconomic status, education, ideological beliefs, social media, and societal dynamics. In Malaysia, ethnic identity has a significant impact on the political landscape and voting behaviour, with Malaysians tending to vote along ethnic lines. Politicians often exploit ethnic issues and sentiments to sway the votes of specific ethnic groups. The trajectory of Malaysian politics is moving towards ethnic consociation and centripetalism, which require further exploration and understanding. Based on the arguments, this research hypothesises that:

H2 There is a significant relationship between ethnic identity and voting intention for ethnic based parties during an election.

2.5.3 Social Media Relationship with Attitude, Ethnic Identity, and Voting Intention

Scholars define social media as a borderless, real-time, and virtual two-way online communication medium. It enables individuals, groups, and communities of different demographics and orientations to share content, such as knowledge, opinions, and experiences. In this context, everyone can be a publisher and a critic (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Obar & Wildman, 2015; Idid, 2018).

The advantage of this new medium lies in creating and exchanging user-generated content across a wide range of interests and demographics. Unlike traditional media, which often have gatekeepers and government control, social media bypasses these barriers. It allows for free expression and avoids agenda-setting and media framing (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Idid, 2018; Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, 2008).

Social media, as an online platform transcending ethnic boundaries and embracing diverse thoughts and attitudes, has been observed to pervasively influence attitudes, shape ethnic identity, and even sway voting intentions among diverse demographic groups. It operates outside the control of specific parties, except for legal regulations established by the government.

2.5.3.1 Relationship between Social Media and Voting Intention

Esposito (2012) argued that people use social media for five reasons:

1. To fulfil their cognitive needs (i.e., acquire information and knowledge)
2. For affection (i.e., to satisfy feelings)
3. For personal integrative needs (i.e., to enhance personal credibility)
4. For social integration needs (i.e., to connect with family and friends)
5. For tension release needs (i.e., to escape or have their attention diverted)

Kaye and Johnson (2002) emphasized that these five needs play a significant role in determining one's attitude and could encourage the likelihood of voting, self-efficacy, and trust in politics. In other words, Esposito (2012) and Kaye (2002) argue that the reasons for social media usage about the subject of the study can encourage the intention of voting, self-efficacy, and trust in politics. Through exchanging information, emotional resonance, and social interaction, individuals may feel empowered to participate in the political process and develop a sense of self-efficacy in shaping political outcomes. Exposure to different perspectives and discussions can foster trust in the political system and its institutions.

In the Malaysian context, social media's impact on political engagement, mainly during elections, has been significant. Social media platforms have become instrumental in shaping public opinion, mobilizing voters, and influencing electoral outcomes. Research suggests social media usage can influence individuals' intention to choose a candidate in Malaysian elections (Hamid & Rahman, 2018).

During the 2018 general election (GE14), social media was crucial in disseminating political information, engaging voters, and fostering discussions about candidates and their policies. Malaysians turned to social media platforms to stay informed about the election, share their political views, and connect with like-minded individuals. The accessibility and interactive nature of social media allowed citizens to engage directly with political parties and candidates, leading to increased awareness and participation in the electoral process (Hamid & Rahman, 2018).

Furthermore, studies have shown that exposure to political content on social media can influence individuals' attitudes, perceptions, and, ultimately, their voting behaviour. The ability to access a diverse range of opinions and information sources on social media platforms may shape voters' decisions and contribute to the formation of political preferences (Hamid & Rahman, 2018).

In summary, social media usage in Malaysian elections is closely linked to individuals' intention to choose a candidate. The platform's role in providing information, fostering discussions, and shaping public opinion underscores its significance in influencing electoral outcomes and democratic participation in Malaysia.

2.5.3.2 Relationship between Social Media and Attitude

The messages conveyed through social media can cause attitudinal change. As people become more accustomed to political narratives, their understanding of politics broadens. It can lead to the development of a new perception among the public (Ridzuan et al., 2012; Varan, 1998; Kanagavel & Chandrasekaran, 2014), enhancing their engagement, determination, orientation, and direction in political discourse (Biswas et al., 2014).

The phenomenon in the U.S. presidential election and the 2010 congressional elections is a good example. Bond et al. (2012) observed how social media influenced electoral participation and caused behavioural change. The result of a randomised controlled trial of political mobilisation messages on 61 million Facebook users showed that messages carried by social media directly influenced millions of public political expressions, information seeking, and voting behaviour. The messages brought by social media drive attitudinal change.

On the same note, the impact of social media on Malaysian politics has been significant, as evidenced by the works of Saodah Wok and Shafizan Mohamed (2017) and Tapsell (2018). The internet usage boom has profoundly affected political discourse in Malaysia, with social media platforms playing a crucial role.

Saodah Wok and Shafizan Mohamed (2017) highlight how social media, with its vast array of online applications and activity options, has stimulated and opened up minds, empowering individuals to make informed decisions. This increased access to information and diverse perspectives has played a pivotal role in shaping Malaysian politics. Politically, the impact was evident as the ruling party, BN lost two-thirds control of the parliament and ceded five states to the opposition in GE12 (Leong, 2019). Another notable event that exemplifies the impact of social media on Malaysian politics is the General Election 14 (GE14); held on May 9th, 2018. Tapsell (2018) emphasises that social media significantly influences voting intention, particularly regarding party realignment inclination. The power of social media in mobilizing voters was evident as the Barisan Nasional (BN) government was ousted by the Pakatan Harapan (PH) coalition in GE14 (Nadzri, 2018).

However, it is essential to consider both the positive and negative impacts of social media on one's attitude. While social media can facilitate access to information and diverse opinions, it can also lead to information overload, echo chambers, and the spread of misinformation. These factors may contribute to polarisation, reinforcing existing attitudes rather than promoting open-mindedness and critical thinking. As Yunus (2013) said, the intensity created by the online media can influence people's interests, particularly in politics which can influence voters' participation.

In summary, social media usage can impact one's attitude by fulfilling cognitive, emotional, personal, and social needs. It can encourage the likelihood of voting, self-efficacy, and trust in politics through information exchange, emotional resonance, and social interaction. However, the influence of social media on attitudes should be critically evaluated, considering both the positive and negative effects it can have on political beliefs and engagement.

2.5.3.3 Relationship between Social Media and Ethnic Identity

There are corresponding effects when connecting social media with ethnic identity to align a party during an election. Social media can facilitate interactions between individuals from different ethnic backgrounds. This can have a positive effect by fostering understanding, empathy, and a sense of unity among diverse groups. Such inter-cultural network socialization may reduce or boost the probability of voters shifting allegiance based solely on ethnicity as they become exposed to different perspectives and experiences (Henry, 2012; Gil de Zuñiga et al., 2012).

Social media platforms can serve as spaces for individuals to express and reaffirm their ethnic identity. This can create a sense of belonging and commitment to their community, which may influence their voting decisions. It amplifies the sense of togetherness and collective efficacy of beliefs within ethnic communities. This can create social pressure to conform to the group consensus and voting preferences (Velasquez, 2019). Suppose social media platforms predominantly reinforce ethnic divisions or promote particular party affiliations within a specific ethnic community. This can increase the probability of voters shifting their allegiance towards a particular

party, and if voters feel strongly connected to their ethnic identity, they may be more inclined to support a party or candidate that aligns with their ethnic interests or values.

However, if social media platforms operate along ethnic lines and contribute to societal polarisation, it may lead to out-group denigration (Ismail, 2022). This can further solidify ethnic divisions and reinforce voting patterns based on ethnicity. In such cases, the probability of voters shifting allegiance towards a party that aligns with their ethnic identity may increase as interethnic relationships become jeopardized.

In the context of Malaysia, ethnocentric attitudes and communication within ethnic circles are prevalent on social media. It shows the probability of voters shifting allegiance towards a party may be influenced by ethnic factors. The emphasis on unique norms, value orientations, and ethnic identity within the Malaysian social background can shape the political landscape (Bolong, 2006). This can lead to the fragmentation of Malaysians along ethnic lines, discouraging cross-ethnic friendships and partnerships, and potentially increasing the likelihood of voters aligning with parties that cater specifically to their ethnic group (Shaharuddin et al., 2012; Baharin et al., 2017; Husband, 2005).

In short, social media plays a significant role in the relationship between ethnic identity and party allegiance during elections. It can foster understanding and unity among diverse groups, reducing the probability of voters shifting allegiance based solely on ethnicity. Social media platforms also provide spaces for individuals to express and reinforce their ethnic identity, which can influence voting decisions and create social pressure to conform to group preferences. However, if social media reinforces ethnic divisions and polarisation, it may solidify voting patterns based on ethnicity. In Malaysia, ethnocentric attitudes prevail on social media, potentially fragmenting Malaysians along ethnic lines and increasing the likelihood of voters aligning with parties that cater specifically to their ethnic group. Overall, social media's impact on the relationship between ethnic identity and party allegiance is complex, with positive and negative implications depending on its usage and the social context.

2.5.3.4 Social Media as a Mediator

Scholarly research consistently highlights the significant role of social media platforms as mediators in the relationship between ethnic identity and attitude towards voting intention.

As has been discussed above, social media is a platform that acts as a facilitator, enabling interactions and discussions, particularly related to this study on voting intention to realign a party during elections. By connecting them with shared ethnic identities, social media allows for the exchange of perspectives and the influence of voting decisions. It provides a platform for ethnic communities to express their political preferences, mobilise support, and promote specific candidates or policies.

However, the intercultural interactions on social media can have both positive and negative effects. On one hand, these interactions (accretion effect) can enhance understanding, empathy, and cooperation among different ethnic groups (Velasquez, 2019; Henry, 2012). They promote diversity, multiculturalism, and inclusive dialogue, positively impacting voting intention. However, on the other hand, these interactions (depletion effect) can lead to polarisation and out-group denigration (Ismail, 2022). Exposure to conflicting opinions and inflammatory content can reinforce biases, fuel hostility, and hinder constructive dialogue, negatively influencing voting intention. These negative consequences can have a detrimental effect on voting intentions. In short, voting intention could have a negative impact as a result of this intervention.

The role of social media goes beyond facilitating interactions. It actively shapes public and political discourse by serving as a strategic tool for politicians and parties during electoral campaigns. They disseminate information, engage in direct dialogues, and encourage political discussions with the public. Targeted messaging and personalised political campaigns on social media can influence voting intention by fulfilling users' needs and shaping their attitudes (Zhu, 2019; Toor, 2020). When social media initiates intervention activities, it can alter the individuals’ emotions, including their beliefs and confidence level to act. The perceived values developed by the news media would then influence their desire (Liberini et al., 2018).

The credibility of social media platforms also plays a significant role in mediating the relationship between ethnic identity, attitude, and voting intention.

Trustworthiness, reliability, dependability, and integrity are important factors that influence public trust and perception (Schiffman et al., 2010). When users perceive social media as credible, it enhances their attitude and confidence in the information they consume. Increased credibility positively impacts public trust in the media and influences voting intentions. Although Tsfati and Cohen (2012) said that views towards the media are formed through its news consumption, Sun (2021) is of the opinion that it is subject to the credibility of the news where according to McAllister (1995), credibility shall affect the cooperation among the people.

Furthermore, intercultural exchange and adaptation to social media can have a long-term impact on ethnic identity (Sawyer & Chen, 2012; Phinney & Ong, 2007). Exposure to different cultures and perspectives through social media can shape a person's sense of ethnic group membership, evaluation, and salience of their identity. Social media provides a platform for exploration and interaction with different social and institutional realities, potentially influencing ethnic identity in a changing social setting. Diehl et al. (2015) observed that any instigation or persuasion can affect individual ways of thinking in politics. The voter's cognitive evaluation would provoke their reasoning process (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2007), and politically, it would affect the quality of democratic decision-making (Leong, 2015). Unless otherwise mitigated, the negative media messages may not easily influence voters (Sanders & Norris, 1998; Herman & Chomsky, 2008).

However, it is important to note that social media is not the sole determinant of voting decisions. While it plays a significant role in disseminating information and shaping attitudes, other factors such as personal experiences, socioeconomic status, education, and traditional media also contribute to an individual's decision-making process. As Samsudin (2019) said, media do not wreck direct effects upon their audience but rather function among or through other factors. Social media may reinforce or be a causative agent for existing beliefs or trigger short-term changes; it is just one factor among many influencing voting decisions (Kushin and Yamamoto, 2010).

2.5.3.5 Summary

In the context of the relationship between ethnic identity and attitude towards voting intention, social media can act as a mediator by facilitating interactions and discussions related to political issues and candidates. Users with shared ethnic identities can connect

on social media platforms, share their perspectives, and influence each other's voting decisions. This can lead to collective attitudes and preferences within ethnic communities, shaping their voting intentions.

Based on the discussion, the researcher proposed the following hypotheses:

H3 There is a significant relationship between social media and voting attitude among Malaysian voters during an election.

H4 There is a significant relationship between social media and ethnic identity among Malaysian voters during an election.

H5 There is a significant relationship between social media and voting intention among Malaysian voters during an election.

H6 Social media mediates the relationship between voting attitude and voting intention among Malaysian voters during an election.

H7 Social media mediates the relationship between ethnic identity and voting intention among Malaysian voters during an election.

2.5.4 Religiosity Relationship with Attitude, Ethnic Identity, and Voting Intention

The influence of religiosity goes beyond shaping personal beliefs and practices; it extends to impacting individuals' attitudes, ethnic identity, and even voting intentions. Esposito and Voll (1996) and Driskell et al. (2008) note that religiosity plays a pivotal role in shaping people's lives and interactions. Understanding this relationship is crucial in unravelling how religiosity intertwines with attitudes, ethnic identities, and voting intentions.

2.5.4.1 Relationship between Religiosity and Voting intention

Stoeckl (2016) further emphasises that the reaction of devotees is contingent upon the strength of their beliefs, leading to a spectrum of conservative, liberal, and fundamentalist tendencies.

The conservative is traditionalist in character, they maintain traditional views or practices and are resistant to change, while the liberal is a progressive type willing to accept behaviour or opinions different from their own and believe in plurality. Religious reasons or scripture interpretation may be subject to rational translation by others. Fundamentalists believe in a strict, literal interpretation of religious scripture.

Different religions may have different practices, beliefs, and ways of influencing behaviour. Indeed, members of the same religion may have a different approach to interpreting and performing it. In this respect, Allport (1954) pointed out that some aspects of religion may contribute to prejudiced attitudes, while others may have opposing attitudes. The influence of religion on belief systems in general means that there is a conflict between the contradictory beliefs inculcated in its adherents. The conflicting attitudinal phenomenon may have implications. For example, some may try to justify their contrasting stances, and an attack on one will automatically be an attack on others. Hoffstaedter (2013) said this is their reaction when they feel challenged.

In short, religious activity significantly influences individuals' intentions to perform various acts. It shapes their lives, interactions, and reactions based on the strength of their beliefs. Devotees may exhibit conservative, liberal, or fundamentalist tendencies, each impacting their approach to maintaining traditional views, accepting diverse behaviours, or strictly adhering to religious scripture, respectively. This diversity in religious interpretation and practice can lead to conflicting attitudes, and even contribute to prejudiced or opposing attitudes. In addition, when challenged, individuals may react defensively, perceiving an attack on one belief as an attack on all, thereby justifying their contrasting stances.

2.5.4.2 Relationship between Religiosity and Attitude

Religion impacts one’s views on political issues and how one forms an attitude. Gibbs (2005) and Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) said that through judgement and cognitive evaluation, religiosity leads someone to opt for the best before reacting or making their social stand readjustment (i.e., political opinion). In Malaysia, Mutalib (1993) argued that religion has permeated Malaysian politics, particularly in the public political discourse with the dominant Malay community. However, it also happened in the case

of urban Christian Chinese using the word 'Allah' for God and Indian Hindus in the case of the Seafield Sri Mariamman Temple demolition issues (Welsh, 2018; Hamayotsu, 2013).

Generally, social and religious groupings formed political groupings (i.e., parties). Members of the political group tend to influence the public (i.e., voters) to subscribe to their political agenda. Schwartz and Huismans (1995) argued that religions affect political attitudes due to social grouping and value systems. The social group with specific religious values would outline their individuals' value system and lower the position of other values. The dominant value system would then affect the political attitudes and beliefs of the public with their political attitudes. We can imply a similar scenario to what happened to PAS in Malaysia. When PAS took charge of Kelantan, they introduced Syariah Criminal CODE Bill II in 1993, the Syariah Criminal Offences (Hudud and Qisas) in Terengganu in 2002, and published the Islamic State Document in 2003, reiterating the party vision of the Islamic State (Norshahril Saat, 2018). In Turkey, the citizens' religiosity level increased the belief that a religious-based party should govern the state (Ali Çarkoğlu & Binnaz Toprak, 2007).

Djupe and Grant (2001) asserted that religion enormously affects individuals' political opinions and actions (i.e., voters). Similarly, Beard et al. (2013) believed that individuals' religious submission significantly impacts political behaviour, whether private or public, individual, or group-oriented, inward-focused or outward-focused. However, they may have a divided political attitude. Smidt and Penning (1982) said that there is a complex relationship between religious commitment and political tolerance. A highly religiously committed individual may not necessarily be prejudiced but may exhibit political intolerance towards behaviours that go against their moral values. It means that when moral values are less directly connected to an object, the influence of religious commitment on political tolerance is less pronounced. Further, the level of political tolerance varies across different segments of religious sects.

The influence of religion on voting is not constant and can change over time, according to Fastnow et al. (1999). Different political parties appeal to voters with varying religious affiliations, and individuals may shift their allegiances based on their religious preferences. The case of Malaysia exemplifies this phenomenon, where faithful Muslim voters tend to support a party that aligns with their Islamic values but

may change their loyalty. Malaysia's Islamist movement has also shifted towards a more moderate stance, abandoning its previously hardline philosophy and methodology. Changes in public perception of Islam, influenced by shifts in structures and institutions, have affected public opinions and political views. The Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) example illustrates this point, as they experienced a decline in votes in GE13 despite adopting more progressive outlooks and religious visions. PAS lost control of the Kedah state government, which they had had since 2008, and their pro-reform leaders, including Dzulkefly Ahmad, Husam Musa, and Salahuddin Ayub, were defeated in Malay Muslim-dominant urban and semi-urban areas. Even the pro-reform leader Mohamad Sabu, who served as PAS Deputy President, lost in a rural constituency. These instances demonstrate the dynamic nature of religious influence on politics and the shifting loyalties of religious voters (Hoffstaedter, 2013; Mohd Izani Mohd Zain, 2014).

There are instances where leaders' partisan approach to religion can impact the public's political mindset. Fastnow et al. (1999) argued that leaders' biassed attitudes towards religion in politics can restrict people's perspectives in a particular direction. For example, some leaders may exhibit xenophobia, leading the public to develop prejudices, fears, and hatred. They may exploit religion as an ideology derived from their beliefs and attitudes to influence individuals' voting choices or political orientations. In Malaysia, religious issues have been excessively politicized to the extent that achieving a democratic society seems bleak (Welsh, 2020; Hamayotsu, 2013).

In contrast, there is instance where religion does not affect people's preferences. Said and Rahman (2021) discovered in it district Buner of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in their 2013 general elections, for example. Although they favoured the role of religion in politics, most electorates did not keep religious affairs in mind when making their choices. The formation of such an attitude has no connection with religiosity. According to Ali Çarkoğlu and Binnaz Toprak (2007), signs of this attitude are prominent among urban citizens. Hamayotsu (2013) observed a similar situation in Malaysia. An increasing number of urban Malay/Muslims began to sympathise with such ideology and join the struggle for civil politics brought forward by Pakatan Rakyat (PR).

2.5.4.3 Relationship between Religiosity and Ethnic identity

The relationship between religion and ethnicity is a social reality. The deep connection between religion and ethnic identity provides a significant foundation for identity, meaning, and community and is responsible for shaping people's way of life (Owoyemi & Ahmad Sabri, 2014; Kim, 2011). Those with a stronger ethnic identity are less likely to leave their religion, and vice versa. The ethno-religious connection will provide a sense of meaning to their community and a high level of belonging (Kim, 2011).

Besides, ethno-religious beliefs have both negative and positive impacts on the behaviour of society. On a negative note, ethnoreligious conflict disturbs the social fabric and challenges the cohesion and tolerance of a relatively stable society or modern society (Yusuf Bangura, 1994; Tariq Farooq, 2015). To a certain extent, religious doctrines during the conflict can cause fear, violence, and insecurity and affect political culture (Mavelli, 2012; May et al., 2014). Religious community members may become more responsive to political mobilisations in the face of the tangible threat to their religious-communal life (Altinordu, 2010). Religiosity also has positive impacts on civic skills and civic norms. Research by Ben-Nun Bloom and Arikan (2013) on the relationship between religion and democracy showed that church attendance increased electoral turnout and party partisanship.

Secularisation theories postulate that modernisation affects society in general and religion in particular. They expect ethnicity and religion to decline, if not disappear, over time. To them, forces of modernity emphasising achievement, rationality, and impersonality will eliminate the need to ascribe ethnicity and religion.

However, the relationship between religion and ethnicity is not dead during modernisation and social assimilation (Kim, 2011; Mutalib, 1993). Referring to Malaysia, Mutalib (1993) said that it is a misconception to assume that modernisation, urbanisation, and technology mean the decline and disappearance of religious belief. Kim (2011) observed a similar view in Judaism and Christianity and argued for the resilience of ethnicity and religion under modernisation. The group identities and affiliations with religion may have changed, but the doctrine and influence may remain. She claimed religion is an influential political force in America, and new religious movements continue to flourish. Likewise, Mutalib (1993) said that the consciousness of Islam is everywhere in Malaysia and has moved beyond personal to Malaysian

politics. Smith (1978) said that the resurgence of ethnicity and religiosity would bring about ethnic and political conflict in highly differentiated societies. However, they may regroup, preserve, and revise their inherited patterns of language, religion, and regional culture and seek to legitimise the new cultural forms in the guise of old ones. At that time, there will again be a formation of new norms with new beliefs, values, and practices that influence how people behave.

In conclusion, religiosity encompasses beliefs and practices, as noted by Sedikides (2010). King and Williamson (2005) further emphasised that religiosity is a multidimensional construct encompassing various personal, intellectual, behavioural, social, and ethnic dimensions. Religion plays a significant role in shaping individual attitudes, orientations, and ways of life, and it is closely intertwined with social change. However, attitudes can evolve due to factors such as assimilation, manipulation of religion, or societal influences. Different individuals and societies may have varying interpretations and practices of religion. The intersection of religion and ethnic identity can present challenges that require intelligence, wisdom, and tolerance to navigate effectively. In the context of this study, religion influenced individuals' mindsets and orientations towards political discourse, with factors such as political affiliations, leadership, and personal interpretations of religion impacting beliefs and future actions. The ethno-religious relationship gave individuals a sense of meaning, identity, and belonging. Additionally, the influence of group dynamics can shape the social perspectives of both groups and individuals within a settled community.

2.5.4.4 Religiosity as a Mediator

Scholarly research consistently highlights the significant role of social media platforms as mediators in the relationship between attitude and voting intentions.

Religiosity as a mediator can affect an individual’s attitude and future undertakings or actions (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Esposito & Voll, 1996). Many studies were conducted with diverse methods, contexts, and outcomes to prove the correlation between the variables. For instance, Turan (2013) indicates that religion has a prominent role in voters’ behaviours. Based on their religious affiliation, religion acts as a critical social trait that defines the relative position of each human being, and they react

differently to the programmes and rhetoric of different political parties. The implication was that religious polarisation prevented the voter's choice to switch from one political party to another from the very beginning of political campaigns. There is also a possibility that the tendency of one's religiosity affects attitude when it comes to adopting a new object, like a new candidate (Muhammad Ateeq & Muhammad Shahbaz, 2010).

Wibowo (2018) hypothesised that religiosity had a significant role in shaping attitudes, thus increasing the intention to perform an act. Using TRA, several scholars indicated the presence of a relationship between the variables discussed (Rahman et al., 2015; Arshia Mukhtar & Mohsin Muhammad Butt, 2012). Syed Shah Alam et al. (2012) used the theory of planned behaviour study framework, and reaffirmed that religiosity and attitude had significant and positive effects on intention before an individual performs an act. The religiosity mediating ability includes reducing the individual's ego-defensive function to avoid conflict due to religious sensitivity (Ariffin et al., 2016; Syed Shah Alam et al., 2012; Ghouri et al., 2018).

In political spheres, there are also indirect effects of religiosity on attitude and voting intention. Lazarsfeld et al. (1944) suggested that religiosity directly influences attitudes and intentions. It highlights the direct impact of religiosity on individual cognitive abilities, ethnic identity, situational awareness, and national homophily. This suggests that religiosity, as a common social identity, shapes individuals' shared perceptions and influences their attitudes and intentions.

However, Dobbelaere and Jagodzinski (1995) argue that religiosity does not necessarily align an individual with a particular political party. Their research found that Protestant voters preferred the Republican candidate, while Catholic voters leaned towards the Democratic candidate, indicating that religious affiliation does not determine party preference within the Christian community. Goldberg (2014) argues that voter preferences are contextual. Religious values may influence some individuals, but others may not.

In summary, the discussion indicates that religiosity intervention affects political attitudes, shaping individuals' value systems and subsequently influencing their stance on political matters. However, there are times when political and religious

attitudes work independently, suggesting that these two dimensions may have different influences on individuals' beliefs and behaviours.

Further to the above discussion, the role of religiosity as a mediator in voting intention becomes more complex when considered in conjunction with ethnic identity. Graafland (2017) suggested that higher levels of religiosity may enhance individuals' social attitudes and motivate them to engage in political acts such as voting. Moreover, Arzheimer and Carter (2009) proposed that religiosity can mediate the effect of electoral choices. Depending on religious individuals' socio-demographic profile, religiosity may decrease or increase their votes. Additionally, they argue that the impact of religiosity on voting behaviour weakens over time due to broader trends of de-alignment, social modernisation, and value change.

Butt and Awang (2017) study in Pakistan present a different perspective, indicating that religious activities do not significantly impact individual political participation and voting intention. Instead, ethnicity appears to influence political attitudes substantially more than religion. These findings align with Mutalib's (1990) study on Malays in Malaysia, which suggests that when confronted with issues related to Malays and Islam, Malays tend to prioritise Malay concerns.

2.5.4.5 Summary

The complex interplay of religiosity, ethnic identity, and voting behaviour underscores the need for further exploration within the Malaysian context. While religiosity may shape political attitudes and intentions, its impact varies based on contextual, personal, and societal factors. Ethnic groups' attitudes toward religion are influenced by historical, sociocultural, and psychological factors (Wang et al., 2018; Fällman, 2010). Once individuals subscribe to specific religious doctrines, communal expectations and social norms can influence their commitment and performance, including voting behaviour (Wang et al., 2018). Despite secularism and societal changes, religious beliefs still significantly impact party preference and voting behaviour (Knutsen, 2004). This discussion suggests a link between religiosity, voting attitudes, ethnic identity, and social constructs, warranting further research to formulate the following hypotheses:

H8 There is a significant relationship between voting attitude and religiosity among Malaysian voters during an election.

H9 There is a significant relationship between ethnic identity and religiosity among Malaysian voters during an election.

H10 There is a significant relationship between religiosity and voting intention among Malaysian voters during an election.

H11 Religiosity mediates the relationship between voting attitude and voting intention among Malaysian voters during election.

H12 Religiosity mediates the relationship between ethnicity and voting intention among Malaysian voters during election.

2.5.5 Candidate Image Relationship with Attitude, Ethnic Identity, and Voting Intention

The role of candidate image in influencing voter behaviour has gained significant attention in political marketing. The impact of this concept on voter decision-making has been established by various scholars (Davies & Mian, 2010; Hüsrev Eroğlu & Sumru Kaleli, 2016). Theories and models related to candidate image and its influence on voters' behaviour have evolved. Downs (1957) initially shifted the prevailing hypothesis by suggesting that voters prioritise candidates who align with their preferred policies, subsequently influencing election outcomes. Abramowitz (1989) later presented a candidate preference model, emphasizing the significance of a candidate's appeal over electability. Pfiffner (1994) highlighted the importance of a candidate's image in the context of election campaigns in the USA, supporting the notion that a candidate's image acts as a moderator, significantly impacting voting intentions. The impact of a candidate's image on voters has been observed to influence voting behaviour, often superseding party ideology.

Additionally, studies have shown that a candidate's image can be manipulated, further affecting voter perceptions. The influence of ethnic identity on voting intention has been a subject of interest, particularly in Malaysia, where communal voting patterns have been observed since early elections. However, how a candidate's image moderates

the influence of ethnic identity on voting intention remains unclear. This study explores the relationship between the variables.

2.5.5.1 Relationship between Candidate Image and Voting Intention

The influence of a candidate's image on voting intention has been widely studied in political marketing. Various scholars have highlighted the significance of a candidate's image and its impact on voter behaviour. The development of theories related to candidate image and its influence on voter behaviour, including models by Downs (1957) and Abramowitz (1989), has emphasised the importance of a candidate's appeal in shaping voter decisions. Negative perceptions of a candidate's image have been linked to a decline in voting intention, while positive images have been associated with an increase in voting intention (Balmas & Sheafer, 2010).

Additionally, the candidate's image has been found to influence voters more than party ideology, and it has been shown to play a more assertive role in voting behaviour than issues linked to the election campaign. The ability to project and float a favourable candidate image has been found to positively affect the success of political marketing (Pfiffner, 1994; Campbell & Cowley, 2014).

Further exploration of the influence of a candidate's image on voting intention reveals that voters' assessments of candidates are not solely based on personal attributes but also perceptions related to leadership qualities, issue positions, and the candidates' intelligence (Benoit et al., 2001; Fridkin & Kenney, 2011; McLeod et al., 1996). The impact of a candidate's image on voting behaviour has been observed to surpass traditional party affiliations and ideologies. It has been noted that a candidate's image can override voters' concerns about electability, thereby significantly influencing voting behaviour. The ability to shape and manipulate a candidate's image has been underscored, demonstrating the substantial impact of the candidate's persona on voter perception and voting decisions (Rosenberg & McCafferty, 1987; Hacker et al., 2000; Osuagwu, 2008). This insight underscores the critical role of a candidate's image in swaying voter intention, highlighting the need to further examine a candidate's image's impact on voting behaviour in pluralistic societies like Malaysia.

2.5.5.2 Relationship between Candidate Image and Attitude

Understanding the intricate relationship between candidate image and voting attitude involves delving into the multifaceted ways in which individuals perceive political figures and how these perceptions shape their attitudes towards the electoral process. Meaning, exploring the impact of candidate image on voting attitude entails an examination of how a candidate's persona, public presentation, and perceived attributes influence the electorate's overall stance and disposition towards electoral choices.

The relationship between candidate image and voting attitude is a key area of interest in political communication. Studies by various researchers have highlighted the nuanced ways in which candidate image influences voter attitudes, providing a rich foundation for understanding the intricate dynamics at play in electoral decision-making. Political communication influences perceptions of candidate images (Benoit et al., 2001; Fridkin & Kenney, 2011; Kaid & Chanslor, 1995; McLeod et al., 1996). Newman (1999) and Osuagwu (2008) said that candidate image shapes public perspectives and opinions, impacting one's political ideologies and election outcomes. Voters perceive and process information about the candidate, including their persona and public presentation, which provides crucial insights into the cognitive and emotional drivers that underpin their attitudes (Hacker et al., 2000; Abramson et al., 1999; Flanigan & Zingale, 1998). The candidate's quality significantly influences voters' intentions in determining election outcomes. Aragones and Palfrey (2004) observed how the difference in quality arises from many reasons, including charisma, experience in leadership, educational accomplishment, incumbency, scandal, and other non-policy dimensions that affect voters' choices.

Moreover, the impact of candidate image on voting attitude has been noted in the work of researchers such as Rosenberg et al. (1968) and Judd et al. (2005), who have indicated that voters' preferences can exhibit both positive and negative inclinations. Additionally, Rosenberg and McCafferty (1987) have emphasised the malleability of candidate image, suggesting that informed guidance and training can significantly influence voter attitudes. As such, by examining these insights and integrating empirical research methods such as surveys, focus groups, and statistical analyses, a clearer understanding of the relationship between candidate image and voting attitude can be

achieved, providing essential knowledge for comprehending the complexities of electoral behavior and decision-making.

2.5.5.3 Relationship between Candidate Image and Ethnic Identity

Scholars have uncovered evidence indicating that ethnic identity plays a significant role in shaping voting intention (Ratnam & Milne, 1970; Welsh, 2004; Sharlamanov & Jovanoski, 2014). However, the extent to which a candidate's image could influence the impact of ethnic identity on voting choices remains unclear. Ethnic identity, regarded as a subjective norm with social influence, is shaped by factors such as family, peer groups, and cultural context. As Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) emphasised, social values have a substantial influence on individual decision-making, and Horowitz (2001) includes language, nationalities, and castes within the concept. In the Malaysian context, communalism, as defined by Ratnam (1965), underscores allegiance to one's ethnicity over broader societal ties (Crouch, 1996). Political parties such as UMNO, MCA, MIC, DAP, and PAS have been described as communal (Ratnam, 1965; Mauzy, 1983; Ahmad et al., 2017).

Multiple research studies have demonstrated that voters often evaluate candidates differently based on their ethnic backgrounds and frequently employ ethnicity as a basis for judgment. Malaysia is no exception to this trend, as communal voting patterns have been evident since its inaugural election in 1955 (Ratnam, 1965). For example, Ratnam (1965) suggested that Chinese voters tend to support candidates from their ethnic group, as seen in the Ipoh-Menglembu constituency, where a significant Chinese turnout secured a Chinese victory. Conversely, turnout was notably lower in cases where all candidates were Chinese, such as in Georgetown.

Similarly, in the 1969 Malaysian election, non-Malays supported DAP, Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (Gerakan), and the People Progressive Party (PPP) in urban and quasi-urban non-Malay concentrated areas, while Malay communities supported Malay candidates in the East Coast and rural areas (Ratnam & Milne, 1970). The phenomenon, in which voting choice probabilities increase automatically if the candidate belongs to the same ethnic group, illustrates that a candidate's image could moderate the relationship between ethnic identity and voting intention. Sharlamanov and Jovanoski

(2014) indicated that some voters bypass rational choice for candidate ethnic source cues during elections, establishing a profound association between candidates and voters (Maldonado & Muehling, 2006). Consequently, assessments might be biassed when involving the same community group.

However, the phenomenon of "homophily perception," rooted in the perceived similarity between individuals, as termed by Lazarsfeld and Merton (1954), can significantly influence a candidate's electoral success (Mcilwain, 2007). Homophily encompasses various dimensions, as McCroskey et al. (2006) identified two: background homophily related to ethnic identity and attitude homophily linked to the perception similarity in values, behaviour, and ideas. Allen and Post (2004) argued that attitude homophily generally impacts voting intention. In essence, candidate images can moderate the link between ethnicity and voting intention, or the inclination to vote for a specific candidate (Yoon & Pinkleton, 2005).

2.5.5.4 Candidate Image as a Moderator

Voting attitude influences voting intentions, which are unstable and can change over time (Chatzisarantis et al., 2005). External factors such as ethnic identity differences, campaign propaganda, fake news on social media, candidate character assassination, and manipulation strategies have been proven to influence individuals' attitudes and voting intentions in politics. As an influential variable, a candidate's image may alter voting intention, resulting from their voting attitude or ethnic identity. The image floating and propagating in the political market during the campaign will influence the public's perception (Rosenberg et al., 1968; Judd et al., 2005). Their persuasive and charismatic appearance would influence voters' performance.

There is indeed an element of moderation where a candidate's image moderates the relationship between attitude, ethnic identity, and voting intention. The evidence suggests that the perception of a candidate's image significantly impacts voting intention. Negative perceptions can lead to declining voting intention, while favourable perceptions can enhance it (Balmas & Sheafer, 2010). Additionally, the phenomenon of "homophily perception" rooted in perceived similarity between individuals, significantly influences a candidate's electoral success (Mcilwain, 2007). This,

combined with the dimensions of homophily identified by McCroskey et al. (2006), supports the role of a candidate's image in moderating the link between ethnicity and voting intention, as suggested by Yoon and Pinkleton (2005). Moreover, the assertion by Rosenberg and McCafferty (1987) that the candidate's image can be shaped and manipulated further underscores its potential as a moderator in influencing voting intention based on ethnic identity and attitudes.

2.5.5.5 Summary

In conclusion, the candidate's persona and issue position are integral elements of candidate image. The impression left behind by the candidate will influence the development of the individual's attitude, whether favourable or not. The result will affect the individual's intention to perform an act, which means party realignment proclivity among voters. Besides, the party's ideology, the party leadership's image, and the candidate's ethnic background also influenced voters' choices. As the voting attitude is unstable and easily undermined, the candidate's image can play a role as a booster or moderator to intervene and correct the situation. There were limited studies of candidate images in the context of pluralistic Malaysia. Hence, this research hypothesises that:

H13 There is a significant relationship between candidate image and voting intention among Malaysian voters during election.

H14 Candidate image moderates the relationship between voting attitude and voting intention among Malaysian voters during election.

H15 Candidate image moderates the relationship between ethnicity and voting intention among Malaysian voters during election.

2.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of previous research on electoral impacts, aiming to clarify the factors that influence voters' voting intentions during elections, with a particular focus on various social and political issues considered pivotal in this process. The study identifies six crucial factors: voting attitude, ethnic identification, religiosity, social media, and candidate image. To contextualize this

phenomenon within the context of Malaysia, the study will employ the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) to test 15 hypotheses. The subsequent chapter will delve into the methods and approaches utilised for this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter outlined the research methodology for the study. It includes procedures for the determination of population (i.e., choice of location, unit analysis, sample size, and sampling technique), construction of measurement (i.e., development of instrument, pretesting, pilot testing, and survey), and data analysis (i.e., data screening, type of data analysis, and type of tools used) within the fulcrum of the research philosophy and research design adopted by the study. Finally, the chapter ends with a summary.

3.2 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

Generally, research philosophy reflects the way in which data about reality and the nature of knowledge should be gathered, analysed, and used to make new inferences. The researchers may opt for systems like positivism, critical realism, interpretivism, past modernism, and pragmatism. However, the study focused on the empirical approach through quantitative and factual elaboration of the research objectives. The researcher believed that an empirical design was appropriate to measure reality and generate scientific inferences, thereby understanding the phenomenon under study. Bhattacharyya (2008) offered that the conclusions are exclusive and derived from concrete, real-world, verifiable evidence. The quantitative method assists in evidence gathering with predetermined survey questionnaires targeting specific populations to measure the gap in the study (i.e., voting intention). According to Collis and Hussey (2013), quantitative research emphasises the scientific testing of hypotheses to find logical proof from statistical analysis. The study is replicable when a similar procedure is conducted again in a different situation, and the result holds in other settings and populations.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is an outline for carrying out research with maximum control over elements that may obstruct the validity of the results to resolve the research problem and meet the research objectives (Creswell, 2008). Avison and Fitzgerald (2006) concluded that research design provides a road map, including the research procedures, techniques, tools, and documentation strategies.

In congruence with the above discussion, the researcher designed the research processes according to the quantitative method as a formal, objective, systematic process to describe and test the cause-and-effect relationships among selected variables in a top-down approach. The researcher established the underpinning theories, identified the research gap (i.e., voting intention), and proceeded to formulate the hypotheses before collecting evidence to address them, ultimately aiding inferences. Considering RQ and hypotheses, the data analysis involved using IBM-SPSS and PLS-SEM applications.

Cooper and Schindler (2008) offered that the research design comprises a blueprint for collecting, measuring, and analysing data. Thus, in this section, the methodology will discuss the following processes and procedures: (1) determination of population; (2) construction of the instrument; (3) data analysis.

3.3.1 Determination of Population

The population in this study refers to the entire group of registered voters in N.07 Batang Kali State Assembly, Selangor, Malaysia. The researcher recruited a specific sample size from the population according to the requirements for data collection and drawing inferences. The discussion included location, justification, population determination and sampling.

3.3.1.1 Location and Justification of Choice

The study was conducted in Batang Kali. Geographically, it is part of Hulu Selangor and has four main sub-districts (*mukim*) managed by the Hulu Selangor District and Land Office; Mukim Rasa, Mukim Batang Kali, Mukim Ulu Yam, and Mukim

Serendah. Batang Kali is a multi-cultural and multi-confessional area. The people consist of four (4) major ethnicities: (1) Malay; (2) Chinese; (3) Indian; and (4) Orang Asli (Awang Besar et al., 2011). The total population as of 2005 is 178,500 people (Majlis Perbandaran Hulu Selangor, 2021) who speak Bahasa Malaysia (Malay), Mandarin, Tamil, and several local dialects and practice the religions of Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Animism, or folk religion.

Demographically, there are three (3) types of household income groups in Batang Kali: (1) B40 groups (MYR1,929 to MYR4,849), (2) M40 groups (MYR4,850 to MYR10,959), and (3) T20 groups (MYR10,960 to MYR15,039), who live compartmentalised in the settlements of their own ethnic community. The main traditional Malay villages are Kg Sg Buaya, Kg Ehsan Ibu, Kg Melayu Rasa, Kg Napi Rasa, Kg Sentosa, Kg Menyorok, Kg Rawang Putar, Kg Sg Masin, Kg Genting Malik, Kg Kuantan, Hulu Rening, Kg Sg Kamin, Kg Hulu Kalong, Kalong Tengah, Kalong Hilir, Kg Dato' Harun Serendah, Kg Tok Pinang, Sg Choh, and Kg Sg Buaya. Kampong Baru China (new Chinese settlements), including Kg Gurney and the old towns Hulu Yam Bharu and Pekan Serendah. On the other hand, the Indian settlements are Kg Koskan, Kg Muhamad Taib, SKC Timah, Jln Dahlia, and Tmn Bkt Teratai, most of them belonging to B40-type households (below MYR 3,166 household incomes). Additionally, there are the five tribal villages (Kg Orang Asli) of Kg Orang Asli Bkt Beruntung, Kg Orang Asli Ulu Melaka, Kg Orang Asli Ulu Tamu, Kg Songkok, and Kg Orang Asli Sungai Kelubi.

Some voters reside in developed areas like Bkt Beruntung, Bkt Sentosa, Bandar Baru Batang Kali, Bandar Sg Buaya, and Serendah and occupy bungalows, semi-detached houses, and single and double-storey link houses. In addition, some live in flats in Taman Bunga Raya, Bkt Beruntung, Bkt Sentosa, and Tmn Serendah Makmur (Majlis Perbandaran Hulu Selangor, 2021).

Moreover, the government provides ample opportunities for education to the residents of Batang Kali. The children receive their early education at 37 kindergartens and pre-schools (tabika and taska KEMAS) from five (5) years onward. There are 16 national primary schools, including a boarding school (Sekolah Menengah Sains Hulu Selangor), and eight (8) national secondary schools. In addition, the government has also provided five (5) Chinese vernacular schools and three (3) Indian vernacular

schools (JPNS, n.d.). There is also one government-sponsored technical college Kolej Komuniti (Community College). The residents of Batang Kali are educated and supposedly possess good literacy skills.

Politically, Batang Kali has been represented in the Selangor state legislative assembly as N.07 Batang Kali since 1974. It is one of the three state legislative assemblies in the P094 Hulu Selangor parliamentary constituency, besides the state legislative assemblies of N.05 Hulu Bernam and N.06 Kuala Kubu Bharu. N.07 Batang Kali comprises 19 sub-divisions called polling districts (PDM). The PDMs are Bukit Rasa, Batang Kali, Hulu Kali, Kampung Padang, Hulu Yam Baru 1, Hulu Yam Baru 2, Serendah, Sungai Choh, Sungai Gapi, Taman Bukit Teratai, Sungai Buaya, Bukit Beruntung, Bandar Sungai Buaya, Bukit Sentosa 1 to 5, Bukit Sentosa 6 to 12, Taman Bunga Raya, Kampung Baharu Serendah, Taman Bunga Raya 2, Seri Serendah (Federal Government Gazette, 2016; Attorney General's Chambers of Malaysia, 2016). The number of registered voters as of 2020 is 53,421 individuals (SPR, 2020). The figure constitutes five (5) categories of voters by ethnicity: (1) Malay; (2) Chinese; (3) Indian; (4) Orang Asli; and (5) Others.

Historically, the Batang Kali state constituency was created during the 1974 redistribution. Since then, there have been contestations in general elections except in 1995 and 1986, which saw BN candidates win uncontested on nomination day (SPR, 2019). The parties involved in the general elections have been BN (11 times), DAP (4 times), PAS (twice), PEKEMAS (once), PKR (four times), and PH (once). The candidate representation based on ethnicity saw 21 Malay candidates (11 from BN and ten oppositions) except an Indian candidate from PKR and DAP in the 1990 and 2013 general elections, respectively, and two Chinese candidates representing DAP in the 1982 and 1978 general elections. The elected state representative (wakil rakyat) is always of Malay ethnicity because Batang Kali is a Malay majority area. The voters' participation in terms of turnout on polling days ranged from 73% to 89%. However, in GE14, the BN dominance wrecked, and PH was able to achieve a majority of 8,315 (SPR, 2021; Ab Rashid & Manimaran, 2021). Compared to the GE13 election result of 5,398 votes, BN experienced a movement of 35.08%, which was the worst in history. In GE15, the situation marked a complex and dynamic change in voters' allegiance. Voters created a significant shift by choosing the new coalition PN over the

amalgamation of BN-PH, the more established parties, resulting in a majority of 2978 votes.

Conclusively, N.07 Batang Kali State Legislative Assembly, Selangor, Malaysia, offers an ideal setting for investigating party realignment trends due to its unique location and population characteristics. With an ethnic composition of 62.7% Malays/Bumiputra, 19.63% Chinese, and 15.55% Indian, closely mirroring the majority demographic makeup of Selangor, this constituency presents a microcosm of broader state-level demographics (Sadiq Sani, 2023; Statista, 2023; ISEAS, 2003). Despite variations in population ratios, the research will focus on a model representing 60% Malays/Bumiputra and 40% non-Bumiputra without stratifying based on social classes.

Moreover, the history of the N.07 Batang Kali State Assembly reflects a pattern of voters' propensity to switch support between political parties, as evidenced by its diverse ethnic composition. With the constituency witnessing three changes in representation from BN to PH in GE14 and subsequently to PN in GE15, it serves as a valuable case study for predicting voting trends in GE15 within this specific population of interest.

Nonetheless, monitoring the dynamics of socio-psychological forces such as timing, belief systems, and culture is essential, as they can influence diverse interpretations of party realignment (Mols et al., 2018). Demographic changes and fluctuating socio-political climates may further complicate voter psychology, requiring adaptable methodologies (e.g., choice of location) to ensure accurate data representation. Young et al. (2023) suggested that opting for the right geographical location enables an accurate depiction (e.g., a representative sample) of the traits of a larger population.

3.3.1.2 Survey Sampling

As mentioned, the total number of registered voters in N.07 Batang Kali was 53,421. The voters were comprised of (1) Malays, (2) Chinese, (3) Indians, (4) Orang Asli, and (5) others. For the study, the Malays and Orang Asli were grouped as Malays/Bumiputra, and ‘others’ as the fifth group was excluded. As such, the final

grouping used for the study is (1) Malays/Bumiputra, (2) Chinese, and (3) Indian, meaning that the population for the study was 51,123 voters.

There are several ways to determine the sample size of the target population. Sekaran and Bougie (2016) suggested that the number of variables for research be multiplied by 10, while for Hair et al. (2013), the desired number is between 15 to 20. Meanwhile, Krejcie and Morgan (1970) developed a table and suggested the sample size should be 384 for a population of 1 million. Hair et al. (2013), referring to structural equation modelling, offered that the ideal number should be between 100 to 400. Any numbers above 500 are prone to type II errors, which means hypotheses get accepted where they indeed should be rejected, resulting in a weak relationship becoming significant (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

Sampling allowed the researcher to gather data on a representative portion of the voters of N07. Batang Kali State Assembly, Selangor, Malaysia. Brick (2011, p. 873) defined survey sampling as "identifying a set of observations from a population and making inferences about the population from those observations". Sharma (2017, p. 749) added that sampling is "a technique (procedure or device) employed by a researcher to systematically select a relatively smaller number of representative items or individuals (a subset) from a pre-defined population to serve as subjects (data sources) for observation or experimentation as per the objectives of his or her study".

The sample for the study was drawn based on a proportional stratified random sampling and found suitable for election behaviour. The stratification strategy can reduce the potential for human bias, provide highly representative samples, and allow us to generalise statistical inferences (Sharma, 2017). Looking at the demography of N.07 Batang Kali with a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-religious composition and a mix of urban, suburban, and village areas, the stratification strategy is appropriate, as recommended by Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006). In addition, this sampling method has been robustly used by several studies on Malaysian politics, like Esa and Hashim (2017) and Al Ramiah and Hewstone (2017).

The researcher applied the SPR list of registered voters aged 21 years and above, who reside in N.07 Batang Kali State Assembly, Selangor, Malaysia, as samples for the survey. According to Memon et al. (2020), Krejcie and Morgan's table (KMT) using

probability sampling, like stratified sampling, fits the research study. For the study, the sample size recommended by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) is a minimum of 381 respondents for a population size of 51,123 individuals. They were stratified accordingly into 19 polling district centres (pusat daerah mengundi, or PDM) and ethnic groups like Malays/Bumiputra, Chinese, and Indians. PDM is a geographical area created by the sub-division of the Batang Kali State Assembly. It has a sample proportion of 5:1:1 by race, equivalent to 265 Malays, 56 Chinese, and 60 Indian voters based on the minimum sample size of 381. Marzudi et al. (2020) find that proportion is necessary when the population is not a homogeneous group. Table 3.1 summarises the details of the survey technique.

The study distributed 450 questionnaires, 69 more than the minimum number proposed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), proportionally distributed across 19 PDMs. The reasons for doing so were to avoid sampling bias due to the likely return rate and the risk of receiving fewer complete questionnaires than required. In this respect, Israel (1992) argued that the sample size might be larger by 10% to make up for eventual non-responses. In another instance, Henry et al. (2021) increased the sample size to 10% of the households surveyed in anticipation of non-responsive issues during a survey done on sustainable forest management.

Table 3.1 Survey Technique

CLUSTER by PDM	AREA CODE	TOTAL VOTER	Race Code/ Set Distribution																	
			Malay/Bumiputra (Race code M)						Chinese (Race code C)						Indian (Race code I)					
			Voters in PDM	Total Set					Voters in PDM	Total Set					Voters in PDM	Total Set				
				%	Distributed	Returned		Set Analyzed		%	Distributed	Returned		Set Analyzed		%	Distributed	Returned		Set Analyzed
						No	%					No.	%					No.	%	
Bukit Rasa	A	1,311	1196	17.8	18				82	1.2	1				33	0.49	0			
Batang Kali	B	3,457	2,781	41.6	42				227	3.39	3				449	6.68	7			
Hulu Kali	C	1,249	1,100	16.4	16				22	0.32	0				127	1.89	2			
Kg Padang	D	1241	1040	15.6	15				130	1.94	2				71	1.05	1			
Hulu Yam Bharu 1	E	1990	351	5.2	5				1414	21.1	21				225	3.34	3			
Hulu Yam Bharu 2	F	3,397	1,937	28.9	29				1315	19.6	20				145	2.15	2			
Serendah	G	3,869	2,643	39.5	40				849	12.6	13				377	5.61	6			
Sg Choh	H	2,117	1,957	29.2	29				34	0.5	0				126	1.87	2			
Sg Gapi	I	514	163	2.4	2				41	0.6	1				310	4.61	5			
Tmn Bkt Teratai	J	2,372	570	8.5	9				41	0.6	1				1761	26.2	26			

Sg Buaya	K	1,843	1,702	25.4	25				4	0.05	0				137	2.03	2		
Bkt Beruntung	L	5,282	3,403	50.9	51				656	9.81	10				1223	19.2	19		
Bdr Sg Buaya	M	2,813	2,562	38.3	38				60	0.91	1				191	2.84	3		
Bkt Sentosa 1 – 5	N	3,223	2,224	33.3	33				459	6.86	7				540	8.03	8		
Bkt Sentosa 6 – 12	O	5,421	4,583	68.5	69				329	4.92	5				509	7.57	7		
Tmn Bunga Raya	P	4,667	4,063	60.8	61				53	0.79	1				551	8.2	8		
Kg Baharu Serendah	Q	2,959	1,074	16.1	16				1368	20.4	20				517	7.69	8		
Tmn Bunga Raya 2	R	780	300	4.4	5				121	1.8	2				359	5.34	5		
Seri Serendah	S	2,618	1,923	28.8	29				351	5.24	5				344	5.12	5		
19		51,123	35,572	265.10	265				7,556	56.31	56				7,995	59.58	60		

3.3.2 Construction of Instruments

The research instrument is a tool that the author used to obtain, measure, and analyse data from subjects around the research topic, herewith referred to as voting intention. Aligned with the quantitative approach, the researcher used questionnaires to obtain the relevant information.

The study's instruments involved six variables and were adapted from established authors: (1) Ajzen (1991) on voting attitude; (2) Alsamydai and Al Khasawneh (2013) on candidate image; (3) Phinney (1992) on ethnic identity; (4) Worthington et al. (2003) on religiosity; (5) Esposito (2012) on social media; and (6) Butt and Awang (2017) on voting intention. The efficacy of the instruments is already proven. The total number of measurement items is 54. They are in the English language. Their level of Cronbach alpha is above the minimum requirement of 0.60, as recommended by Nunnally (1970). A summary of the measurements' details is in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Measurements of Constructs

No	Constructs	Number of Items	Scale	Cronbach Alpha	Reference
1	Voting Attitude	4	5-Point Likert Scale	0.81	Ajzen (1991)
2	Candidate Image	24	5-Point Likert Scale	0.82	Alsamydai & Al Khasawneh (2013)
2	Ethnic Identity	12	5-Point Likert Scale	0.77	Phinney (1992)
4	Religiosity	6	5-Point Likert Scale	0.79	Worthington et al. (2003)
5	Social Media	4	5-Point Likert Scale	0.93	Esposito (2012)

6	Voting Intention	4	5-Point Likert Scale	0.80	Butt & Awang (2017)

The independent variables are Voting Attitude and Ethnic Identity (i.e., subjective norm), while Voting Intention (i.e., party re-alignment propensity) is the dependent variable. The author also introduced two mediating factors (i.e., Social Media and Religiosity) and one moderating factor (i.e., Candidate Image). The objective of the mediating factors is to examine whether the mediators can indirectly produce changes or boost the relationship between variables such as:

H10 Voting attitude and voting intention among Malaysian voters during an election.

H11 Ethnic identity and voting intention among Malaysian voters during an election.

H12 Voting attitude and voting intention among Malaysian voters during an election.

H13 Ethnic identity and voting intention among Malaysian voters during an election.

The moderator was applied to see whether candidate images amplify or weaken the correlation between variables such as:

H14 Voting attitude and voting intention among Malaysian voters during an election.

H15 Ethnic identity and voting intention among Malaysian voters during an election.

The survey instruments comprised two (2) parts. The first part is on the demography of the respondents. The questions include matters of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, income, occupation, and media choice, excluding the names of the respondents. All information gathered from the samples is treated as private and confidential, following the anonymity and confidentiality requirements. Leedy and

Ormrod (2015) said that participants remain anonymous in the publication. The second part attempted to understand respondents' socio-political behaviour involving the six (6) variables mentioned before: (1) Voting Attitude, (2) Candidate Image, (3) Ethnic Identity, (4) Religiosity, (5) Social Media, and (6) Voting Intention. The study employed a five-point Likert scale to measure the opinions of the survey respondents. Therefore, it resulted in a better range of answers to choose from: 1 = totally disagree to 5 = totally agree. Because of that, high reliability is expected (Oppenheim, 1992).

One needs to determine whether respondents will be overly sensitive or unclear about the questions, causing them to hesitate, hold back, or skip the survey items after developing the instruments (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016; Zikmund et al., 2010). For this reason, we need to assess the validity of the survey instruments. This exercise is necessary to ensure the reliability and suitability of the measurement items, making them valid for a full-scale survey, data analysis, and future inferences. Accordingly, we put the instruments through pretesting and pilot tests.

3.3.2.1 Pretesting

Pretesting is a crucial exercise. Sekaran and Bougie (2016) said it helps to determine if respondents understand the instruments, especially the local respondent within their lingo and environment. According to Converse and Presser (1986), this allows the survey to work correctly and accordingly as a valid and reliable social science research tool. The test would include any form of words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes, or communicated messages.

The author prepared two (2) types of questionnaires in English and Malay. The instruments were written in English, as adopted by previous scholars. For a full-scale survey, they needed to be translated into Malay, a language understood by the respondents. Due to that, the study required two (2) separate pre-tests. Pretesting was conducted first for the English version before the instruments in Malay.

A small fraction of 14 respondents of different professions and ethnic backgrounds did the pretesting for the English version. The conduct of the exercise was either face-to-face or online. The pretest took only one day. There were issues around obscure terminology, ambiguous words and phrases, and response latency. The

feedback allows the researcher to gauge the ability of the respondents to answer the questionnaire, thus helping to articulate the questions not just from the author's estimation but from the respondents' viewpoint. The details of the content validation exercise are as per Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 Questionnaires Pretesting for English Version

FEEDBACK				
	Name	**Profession**	**Comments**	**Date/Medium**
1	Augustine Leonard Jen	Researcher	Can understand/can answer	1 Oct. 2020 (online)
2	Dr Ibrahim Ashaari	Pensioner/ Politician	Too long (10 minute)/can answer	1 Oct. 2020 (online)
3	Gerridar Lingam	Politician	Clearly elaborated/ understand	1 Oct. 2020 (face-to-face)
4	Dr Suhaimee Saahar	Lecturer	Very clear	1 Oct. 2020 (face-to-face)
5	Nur Fizah Ahmad	Officer	Easy to understand, Straightforward and Clear	1 Oct. 2020 (online)
6	S. Saravanan	Entrepreneur	Section 2 and 4 on ethnic identity & religious a bit sensitive; need to rephrase	1 Oct. 2020 (online)
7	Aedi Rizwan Suhaimi	Teacher	Can understand/can answer	1 Oct. 2020 (online)

8	Julimaria M. Yassin	Housewife	Grammar/sentence structure issues/can answer	1 Oct. 2020 (online)
9	Arnida Ajimi	Government Officer	Question very clear/easy to understand	1 Oct. 2020 (online)
10	Suhaimi Sari	Villager	Can understand/Can answer	1 Oct 2020 (online)
11	Hanis Afiqah Zulkarnain	Student	Understandable	1 Oct 2020 (online)
12	Khoo Boon Teik	Businessman	Can understand/Can answer	1 Oct 2020 (online)
13	Prof Dr Haim Hilman	Lecturer	Understandable/ Format and structure tricky	1 Oct 2020 (online)
14	Ray Yip Yee Fei	HR Recruiter	Good and all angle covered	2 Oct 2020 (online)

All critiques on the ambiguity, clarity, and appropriateness of the measures used in the English version during the pretesting were corrected. After which, as mentioned earlier, the English version was translated into Bahasa Malaysia as the national language understood by the respondents. The translation was conducted by experts from the University Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) using communicative translation. This method focuses on the subjective and contextual meaning of sentences in each item of the instruments, not a word-to-word or literal translation. Thus, it created an effect close to the experiences of the targeted group of respondents.

Consistent with the objectives of the study, the use of the communicative translation method allows the intended meaning to be easily understood by common people (Newmark, 1988). For example, the language sources are “I am convinced that I will vote for the same party as I did in the last election”, “I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs”, and “I use social media to learn more about the candidate/campaign”. The semantic Malay translation would be “*Saya yakin bahawa saya akan memilih parti yang sama seperti saya pada pilihan raya yang lalu*”, “*Saya telah meluangkan masa untuk mencari tahu lebih banyak mengenai kumpulan etnik saya, seperti sejarah, tradisi, dan adat istiadatnya*”, and “*Saya menggunakan media sosial untuk mengetahui lebih lanjut mengenai calon / kempen*” respectively. However, for communicative translation, they may be translated as “*Saya yakin bahawa saya akan mengundi parti yang sama seperti yang saya lakukan pada pilihan raya lepas*”, “*Saya telah menghabiskan masa cuba untuk mengetahui lebih lanjut mengenai kumpulan etnik saya, seperti sejarah, tradisi, dan adat*”, and “*Saya menggunakan media sosial untuk mengetahui lebih lanjut mengenai calon / kempen.*”

Accordingly, the Bahasa Malaysia version went through similar pretesting procedures. Five (5) people of different backgrounds, like a UPSI publisher officer, a UiTM lecturer, self-employed staff, the chairman of the Hulu Selangor club, and a politician, involved in the validation process. Overall, they understood and were able to answer the questionnaires. The details of the exercise are as per Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 Questionnaires Pretesting for Malay Version

FEEDBACK				
No.	**Name**	**Profession**	**Comments**	**Date/Medium**
1	Sofiatul Nazira Ahmad Subki	Officer	Understood and able to answer	10 Oct '20 (online)
2	Dr Suhaimi Saahar	UiTM Lecturer	Okay can answer	10 Oct '20 (face-to-face)
3	Muhammad Anas Musa	Unemployed	Can answer/took 4 minutes	10 Oct '20 (face-to-face)
4	Oghanesh Appalasuwami	Youth Leader	Can answer	11 Oct '20 (online)

3.3.2.2 Pilot Testing

A pilot test involved the distribution of survey instruments to a small, representative population. Following Zikmund et al. (2010), the pilot test concerned population segmentation, determination of sample size, and reliability testing using the IBM-SPSS application. A pilot test is a trial run of the entire study to test the methodological standpoint in actual field conditions.

The location for the pilot test was N.07 Batang Kali State Constituency of Negeri Selangor. The study used a selectively representative population. The population was grouped by PDM according to the SPR mapping, comprising the three ethnic groups of Malays/Bumiputra, Chinese, and Indian.

The pilot testing used a proportionate stratified sampling method, where Hoinville and Jowell (1978) said that the samples for the pilot could vary from 30 to 100 participants. The study recruited 50 residents of Batang Kalian for that purpose,

and the method required them to be sub-populated, so three smaller groups formed. The fraction of the population based on the 50 respondents was 32 Malays/Bumiputra, nine (9) Chinese, and nine (9) Indian, recruited within 10 selected PDMs. There was no specific age group, but the respondent had to be a registered voter of the N.07 Batang Kali and above 21 years old.

To facilitate the pilot test process, every set of questionnaires carried a certain code at the edge to indicate the PDM, ethnic group, and serial number. For example, CM1 means C = PDM, M = Malays/Bumiputra, 1 = serial number, CC2 means C = PDM, C = Chinese, 2 = serial number, and CI3 means C = PDM, I = Indian, 3 = serial number. The study used coding to signify the area surveyed, the ethnic grouping, and the required quota to facilitate the data analysis process.

Following the mainstream of social science research, this study used Cronbach's alpha (CA) to evaluate measurement reliability. The author believed CA could be used to measure internal consistency or how closely related the set of items is as a group. Therefore, the study adopted a CA of 0.64 as a benchmark of reliability set by Nunnally (1970).

Finally, the study described the operational definitions for the six variables proposed in the theoretical framework: voting intention, voting attitude, candidate image, ethnic identity, religiosity, and social media. These operational definitions explain the specific activities or operations needed to measure each variable accurately before they can be utilised in research surveys.

3.3.2.2.1 Measurement of Voting Intention

Intention is the conscious plan of a person to exert effort to conduct a future behaviour. According to Fishbein and Ajzen (2010), an individual's intention (i.e., voting intention) is to accomplish an assumed behaviour (i.e., change of vote) that incorporates components of willingness, behavioural expectation, and risk acceptance. In this study, voting intention is used as the reason for people being willing to support another party, the effort they are planning to exert, and to perform the behaviour (i.e., party realignment).

As per Table 3.5, this study used a four-item instrument of Ajzen's (1991) behavioural intention to measure the voting intention of the citizens and their exertion towards future elections. The study used CA for reliability measurement. It assessed the internal consistency of the questionnaire, which comprised a five-point Likert scale and four (4) items. The score for reliability was 0.92, above the benchmark of 0.64 set by Nunnally (1970).

Table 3.5 Measurement of Voting Intention

Code	**Items in the Questionnaire**
VI 1	I am convinced that I will vote in the coming elections.
VI 2	If I had to decide, I would vote in the next election.
VI 3	I would recommend others to vote in the coming elections.
VI 4	I have positive things to say about voting in elections.

3.3.2.2.2 Measurement of Voting Attitude

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) defined attitude as a positive or negative feeling concerning achieving an objective. It is a psychological tendency (i.e., strength of choice) expressed by evaluating a particular object with some degree of favour or disfavour. In politics, attitude is the degree of attitudinal intensity in making decisions or a predisposition to political interest and participation (Kirkpatrick, 1970). According to Wan Asna et al. (2013), attitude is critical in shaping electoral behaviour. However, the formation of voters' attitudes towards an election can vary depending on time, place, and context, and their commitments to a candidate may also change over time. Noor and Ahmad (2011) further argue that voters' compliance, obedience, or loyalty attitudes may recede. During an election, voters may be exposed to various stimuli and a barrage of information, leading to changes in their predisposed mental state or attitude (Boninger et al., 1995).

Accordingly, for this study, four (4) items (see Table 3.6) on voting attitude adapted from Ajzen (1991) were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = totally disagree to 5 = totally agree). The scale has been used in studies like Hansen and Jensen (2007) to investigate the relationship between attitude and voting intention in understanding voters' decisions. The study used CA to assess the instrument's internal consistency, comprised of a five-point Likert scale and four (4) items. The voting attitude measurement score is 0.92, which is higher than Nunnally (1970), with a standard requirement of 0.64.

Table 3.6 Measurement of Voting Attitude

Code	Items in the Questionnaire
B 1	I am convinced that I will vote for the same party as I did in the last election.
B 2	If I had to decide, I would vote on the same party as I did in the last election.
B 3	I would recommend others to vote on the same party as I did in the last election.
B4	I have positive things to say about the same party as I did in the last election.

In line with the current study's research objectives (RO) and research questions (RQ), the four (4) items of the voting attitude measurement indicate the tendency of the voters to give their voices to candidates or recommend them to other people. However, this element can change depending on the circumstances and candidates' traits.

3.3.2.2.3 Measurement of Candidate Image

Hacker (2004) defined candidate image as "clusters of voter perceptions of candidates" (p. 4), which are more concerned with personality traits. He stated that judgement on the part of individuals on candidate image is focused on cognitive representations through the process of voter awareness of candidate communications. Hence, the

candidate's image is the function of campaign communication. Gackowski (2023) mentioned it as the substance of political communication. In this study, candidate image is not an actual characteristic but a discernment of an attribute that stimulates voters and significantly influences their choices (Miller & Miller, 1990).

Accordingly, the study developed a survey instrument adapted from Alsamydai and Al Khasawneh (2013) containing 24 questions (see Table 3.7 below) to find insight into the voters' expectations of the image of a candidate. However, for study purposes, CI5 was broken into two parts: (1) characterised by patience with the new code CI5, and (2) a good listener with the new code CI6. The study used CA to assess the instrument's internal consistency, comprised of a five-point Likert scale and 25 items. The score for the reliability measurement on the candidate image is 0.97 above (Nunnally, 1970) the standard requirement of 0.64.

Table 3.7 Measurement of Candidate Image

Code	**Items in the Questionnaire**
CI 1	The strong personality of the candidate
CI 2	The external appearance of the candidate
CI 3	The ability to manage dialogue
CI 4	The ability to influence and persuasion
CI 5	Characterize by patience and good listening to others
CI 6	Qualifications of the candidate
CI 7	Political history of the candidate
CI 8	Mental political picture of the candidate at individual
CI 9	Mental image of the party which the candidate belongs to
CI 10	Popularity of the party which the candidate belongs t
CI 11	Reputation of the political candidate

CI 12	Individuals' confidence in promises assumed by the candidate
CI 13	Realistic of promises, which assumed by candidate to public
CI 14	Public feelings in candidate's ability to implement the promises he made
CI 15	Personal reputation of the candidate
CI 16	Presence among the public
CI 17	Appearing in the traditional and electronic media
CI 18	Reaching the target audience
CI 19	Continuous communication with the public
CI 20	Experience in teamwork who manages the electoral campaign
CI 21	The electoral program of the candidate
CI 22	Public support by the supporters of the candidate
CI 23	Electoral strategy
CI 24	Financial support

3.3.2.2.4 Measurement of Ethnic Identity

Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) observed that one's evaluation of what a person should do or influences the individual decision in compliance with the group's beliefs and practices is a subjective norm. The pressure could come from reference groups like family, peer groups, culture, or social values. In this study, ethnic identity was the subjective norm. Horowitz (2001) defined ethnic identity as a group differentiated by colour, language, and religion, including tribe, race, nationality, and caste. In addition, loyalty and kinship connect them (Evans et al., 2010; Butt & Awang, 2017). Meanwhile, ethnic identity is involuntary, due to role models, or it could be due to adaptation to experiences of one's transit from one social milieu to another (Oppong, 2013). In this study, ethnic identity is conceptualised as a normative belief in individual personal and

social normative beliefs that would influence their intention to perform an act (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

Consistent with the explanation above, the study utilized a measurement tool developed by Phinney (1992) but revised it to suit local ethnic circumstances. This measure was designed to gain insights into the respondents' exploration of their ethnic identity and their sense of belonging, affirmation, and level of commitment to it. A five-point Likert scale (1 = disagree to 5 = agree) described the respondents' level of agreement with the 12 questions (see Table 3.8). For example, "I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me" and "I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group". Meanwhile, CA assessed the internal consistency of the instrument. The score for the reliability of the ethnic identity measurement is 0.93, above the standard requirement of 0.64 set by Nunnally (1970).

Table 3.8 Measurement of Ethnic Identity

Code	Items in the Questionnaire
E 1	I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs.
E 2	I am active in organizations or social groups that include most members of my own ethnic group.
E 3	I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me.
E 4	I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership.
E 5	I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to.
E 6	I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.
E 7	I understand well what my ethnic group membership means to me.
E 8	To learn more about my ethnic group background, I have often talked to other people about my ethnic group

E 9	I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group.
E 10	I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music or customs.
E 11	I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group.
E 12	I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background.

3.3.2.2.5 Measurement of Religiosity

According to Angel (2013), dependent upon historical associations and attitudes, religiosity relates to religious practice, which covers cognition, emotion, attitude, and self-concepts. From a political perspective, religion can change one's political beliefs but is not always a constructive force (Appleby, 2000). In this study, religiosity can be a force to create consensus and mobilise society (Agbiboa, 2014). With its dynamicity, both as a social force and as a psychological force, religiosity can affect individual social life, political attitude, and behaviour (Aslan & Erbay, 2017).

This study utilised an instrument on religiosity, which was adopted from Worthington et al. (2003) work. The measure involved a five-point Likert scale ranging from total disagreement (1) to total agreement (5). Respondents were asked to indicate their corresponding level of agreement with the six questions presented (see Table 3.9). For example, "My religious beliefs lie behind my whole approach to life" and "I enjoy spending time with others of my religious affiliation". Meanwhile, the assessment of the measurement reliability using CA is 0.90, surpassing the standard requirement of 0.64 set by Nunnally (1970).

Table 3.9 Measurement of Religiosity

Code	Items in the Questionnaire
RG 1	My religious beliefs lie behind my whole approach to life.
RG 2	I enjoy spending time with others of my religious affiliation.
RG 3	Religious beliefs influence all my dealing in life
RG 4	It is important to me to spend periods in private religious thought and reflection
RG 5	I enjoy working in the activities of my religious organization.
RG 6	I keep well informed about my religious group and have some influence in its decision-making.

The rubrics of religious experiences vary, especially among devotees. Some have been obsessed, others may be liberal, and the rest may be ignorant. In line with the current study's research objectives and research questions, the six (6) items of the religiosity measurement (see Table 3.8) indicated the voters' religious characteristics, activities, and commitments. The author wished to understand the range of disciplinary approaches and, more importantly, the connections and linkages between their beliefs and practices and their interaction within the group.

3.3.2.2.6 Measurement of Social Media

Conceptually, social media is a unique communication platform. Its attributes can influence exposure to political information (Mumtaz Aini Alivi et al., 2018). From a political communication perspective, social media enables politicians to personalise their campaigns and target voters who may be decisive for the outcomes of elections. In addition, it develops interpersonal links between candidates and the public via indirect communication experiences. To some extent, social media is being deployed to reach the voters by offering more information about party policies, achievements, and

programmes like daily notices on time and location for campaign talks (*ceramah*) and to counter allegations (Chinnasamy & Roslan, 2015; Liberini et al., 2018; Moten, 2013).

This study used Esposito's (2012) instrument of gratification of needs (see Table 3.10) to measure the social media influence on voters. The instrument comprised four (4) items emphasising voters' cognitive needs. The study used CA for reliability measurement. It assessed the internal consistency of the questionnaire, made up of five Likert scales and four items. The score for the reliability measurement on social media was 0.88, above the standard requirement of 0.64 set by Nunnally (1970).

Table 3.10 Measurement of Social Media

Code	Items in the Questionnaire
SM 1	I use social media to learn more about the candidate/campaign.
SM 2	I use social media to learn more about issues that is important to me.
SM 3	I use social media to keep up to date with this candidate's campaign and events.
SM 4	Social media help me decide who to vote for in the election.

3.3.2.3 Research Survey Process

The study conducted a full-scale survey after the pilot test result was satisfied. The procedure was necessary for the author to collect data from the respondent directly and enable the author to obtain information to describe and explain the party realignment process. In addition, Zikmund et al. (2010) found that the survey facilitated quickly obtaining and assessing the respondent's feedback (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010).

Specifically, the survey method is practically a feasible approach to investigating the population's motivation, orientation, and direction in the field of politics (Hoffman, & Young, 2011). It is suitable to assess voters' attitudes, cognitions, and behaviours, and the purpose of the study is to understand the party realignment phenomenon. As Kotler et al. (2009) and Kerlinger and Lee (2000) explained, a survey

assists the researcher in collecting information, including candidate preferences and satisfaction and respondents' beliefs and attitudes relating to the subjective norms.

3.3.2.3.1 Survey Process

The full-scale survey used self-administered questionnaires as a research instrument, where each respondent answered 55 questionnaires themselves. The survey lasted from 1st October to 30th November 2020 for approximately 60 days. All the respondents were approached individually. Given the ethnic make-up of the population of Batang Kali, the author distributed 450 sets using proportional stratified random sampling with a ratio of 5:1:1 by race, which was more than the minimum number of 384, according to Krejcie and Morgan (1970). The reasons were to avoid sampling bias due to the estimated return rate, as the percentage of people who returned and completed the questionnaires might vary. This variation could have jeopardised the precision required to obtain the desired or significant responses based on the sample size. Standard precisions were 5% and 10% following Syed Muhammad Sajjad Kabir (2016) and Israel (1992) techniques. All 450 sets of research instruments were collected during the full-scale survey.

3.3.2.3.2 Data Screening

Data aptness is a criterion before any descriptive or explanatory analysis. Hair et al. (2014) and Curran et al. (1996) proposed data screening for validity and reliability. Data screening is a crucial procedure for further data analysis (Hair et al., 2014). Data screening is the initial step in data analysis, focusing on assessing and preparing the data for further analysis. It helps identify and address data errors, missing values, outliers, and inconsistencies. Data screening is crucial because it ensures that the subsequent analysis is based on accurate and reliable data. Before the collected data were appropriately coded and entered into a master chart for processing, 83 sets were eliminated for several reasons: incomplete answers, unclear options with more than one tick for a question, and blank returned sets. Finally, 367 sets of research instruments were considered for data cleaning.

Data screening involves several steps, as follows:

1. Data Cleaning: This step involves identifying and correcting errors in the dataset. It includes handling missing values, correcting formatting issues, and resolving inconsistencies. Techniques like imputation, deletion, or estimation were used to handle missing data. However, the results found no missing data.

2. Data Transformation: In this step, data was transformed to meet the assumptions of statistical analysis. The transformations include normalisation, standardisation, logarithmic transformation, and categorical variable encoding. The study observed that the distribution of all items was normal and adequate, with estimates of skew < 1.03 and kurtosis < 1.42 against the recommended values of skew outright esteem < 2 and kurtosis supreme esteem < 7.

3. Outlier Detection: Outliers are extreme values that can significantly impact analysis results. Visual inspection, and statistical tests (e.g., Mahalanobis distance) were used to detect and handle the outliers. In this study, the univariate and multivariate–Mahalanobis distance analysis showed no outliers.

4. Data Validation: This step involves checking the accuracy and validity of the data. It includes verifying data against predefined rules, comparing it with external sources, or conducting logical checks to ensure data integrity.

Since the outcomes of the screening using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM-SPSS) application are in order, as Hair et al. (2014) suggested, the author continued with further data analysis.

3.3.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis systematically applies statistical and logical techniques to churn data into order, structure, and meaning ideal for inferences (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Shamoo and Resnik (2003) reasoned that it provides a way of drawing inductive inferences from data and distinguishing the signal on the phenomenon of interest from the noise in the data. The study used IBM-SPSS and SmartPLS SEM to analyse the survey data.

3.3.3.1 Data Analysis Tools and Approach

The study conducted data analysis by employing a combination of descriptive and inferential statistics. The author sought the IBM-SPSS Statistics application for descriptive statistics like nominal and interval data to understand the demographic profiling and opinions of the respondents. According to Agresti and Finlay (2009), the application helps produce a frequency of occurrence of various measurement items. Sekaran and Bougie (2016) argued that it helps summarise data to describe opinions on phenomena of interest. Conclusively, the descriptive data is beneficial for further arguments and justification of the study in understanding the relationship between socio-demographic factors and voter behaviour in the party realignment phenomenon.

The study deployed SmartPLS software for inferential statistical analysis and model construction, which is commonly used in PLS-SEM analysis. It enables the computation and analysis of survey data to test the research hypotheses and the proposed research framework. In this respect, Hair et al. (2014) explained that it allows the estimation of cause and effect relationships in a path model with latent variables. Additionally, Fornell and Bookstein (1982) offered that PLS-SEM estimates the latent variable scores as exact linear combinations of their associated manifest variables. Besides, it has minimal demand on sample size and generally achieves a high level of statistical power (Reinartz et al., 2009). Further, PLS-SEM can handle reflective and formative constructs (Diamantopoulos & Winklhofer, 2001). After all, PLS-SEM is a widely used tool for empirical studies like Doloi et al. (2012) in management, Rathachatranon, (2018) on public administration issues, and Haslina Halim et al. (2021) on Malaysian political participation. The study took two critical steps into consideration for structural equation modelling (SEM): evaluation of the measurement model and assessment of the structural model.

3.3.3.2 Development of Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is a powerful statistical method used to explore intricate relationships among observed and latent variables. It uniquely combines factor and regression analysis, enabling the assessment of observed and unobserved variables within a unified model. SEM is particularly valuable for understanding direct and

indirect interactions between these variables and illuminating interrelations among variables based on the study's theoretical framework (research hypotheses). This approach provides the author with a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study, allowing for a nuanced interpretation of the data and the relationships among the variables.

The model consists of two main components: measurement and structural models. The measurement model employs questions in questionnaires, also known as indicators or items, to assess latent variables that are not directly measurable. On the other hand, the structural model examines the hypothetical relationships between these variables through path analysis, as discussed by Hoyle (1995) and Kline (2011).

Little (2013) argued that it is vital for SEM to begin with measurement model evaluation before the structural model. The reason is that it may jeopardise the performance of the structural model; for example, if the confirmatory analysis (CFA) run during the measurement model for the independent latent variables (i.e., Voting Attitude and Ethnic Identity) and dependent variable (i.e., Voting Intention) shows poor fit (Little et al., 2002), It is possible to conduct CFA in SmartPLS by running the Bootstrapping option in the application. The purpose of initiating the CFA is to identify any loading below 0.5 that ought to be deleted to improve the AVE and composite reliability (CR).

3.3.3.2.1 Measurement Model (Outer Model) Assessment

Hair et al. (2013) described the measurement model as assigning numbers to a variable based on a set of rules that accurately represent the variable. It specifies the relationship between indicators and latent variables. The direction of the path linkages per measurement model and, thus, the causality between the latent variable and the indicators can either be described through a reflective construct or a formative construct. The reflective measurement model (see Figure 3.1) is a type of measurement model (i.e., outer model) setup in which the direction of the arrow is from the construct to the indicator (i.e., manifest variable), indicating the assumption that the construct causes the measurement model (more precisely, the covariation) of the indicator variables (Hair et al., 2013a). A formative model is used when the statement is related to the effect

of the variable. A formative measurement model is a type of measurement model setup in which the direction of the arrow is from indicator variables to construct, indicating the assumption that the indicator variable causes the measurement of the construct (Hair et al., 2013a). The study employed a reflective-formative model (see Figure 3.2).

Usually, researchers apply a reflective construct, as it is much better than the formative one. However, PLS-SEM defies this assumption as the application enables a second higher-order construct in structural equation modelling. Further, these two measurement models have various purposes, and one cannot assume all measurement models are reflective constructs. Henseler et al. (2009) established an article about confirmatory tetrad analysis in PLS-SEM (CTA-PLS) to differentiate between reflective and formative constructs. In this instance, the researcher should meet the requirements of bootstrapping confidence interval, composite reliability, and VIF. This article intends to address the hierarchical component model (HCM), known as the higher-order construct (HOC), to facilitate modelling the construct using the PLS-SEM type II (reflective-formative) model (Wan Afthanorhan, 2014). HOCs provide a framework for the author to model a construct on a more abstract dimension (i.e., higher-order dimension) and its more concrete subdimension (i.e., lower-order components). There are three (3) key reasons why the study used HCM in the PLS path model (Hair et al., 2017): (1) HCM helps reduce the number of path model relationships, thereby achieving model parsimony; (2) HCM minimises collinearity and solves discriminant validity problems; (3) HCM is beneficial when high collinearity happens among formative indicators. Then, we can split the indicators to generate separate first-order latent variables to form a higher-order structure. Further, studies on higher-order constructs in PLS-SEM show reflective-formative higher types feature prominently in many fields (Becker et al., 2012; Hwa et al., 2018; Ringle et al., 2012).

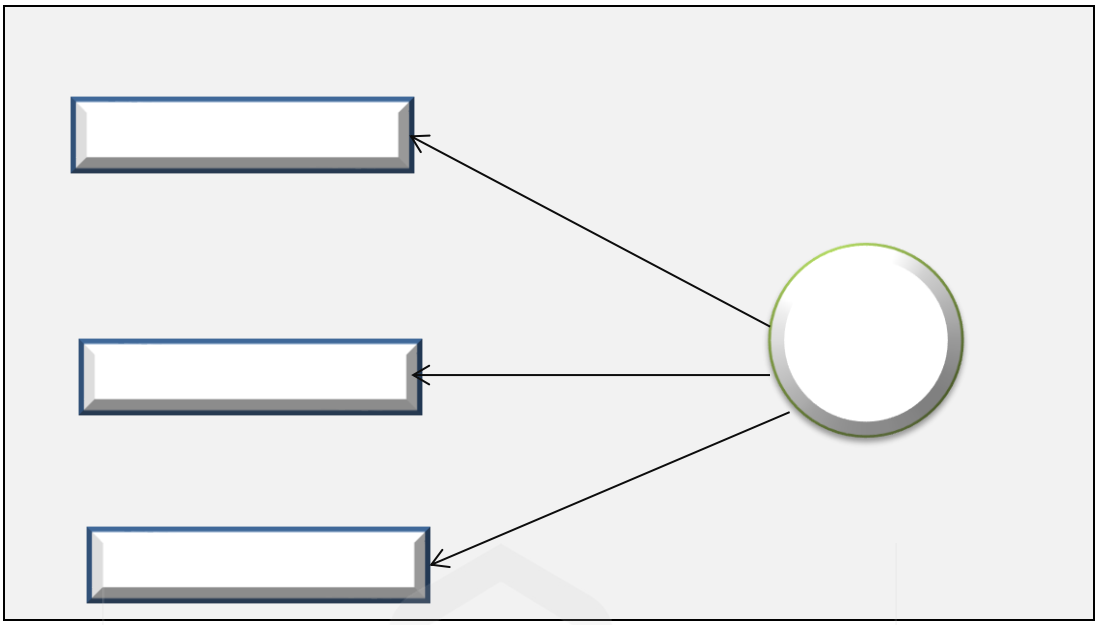


Figure 3.1 Reflective-Formative Type

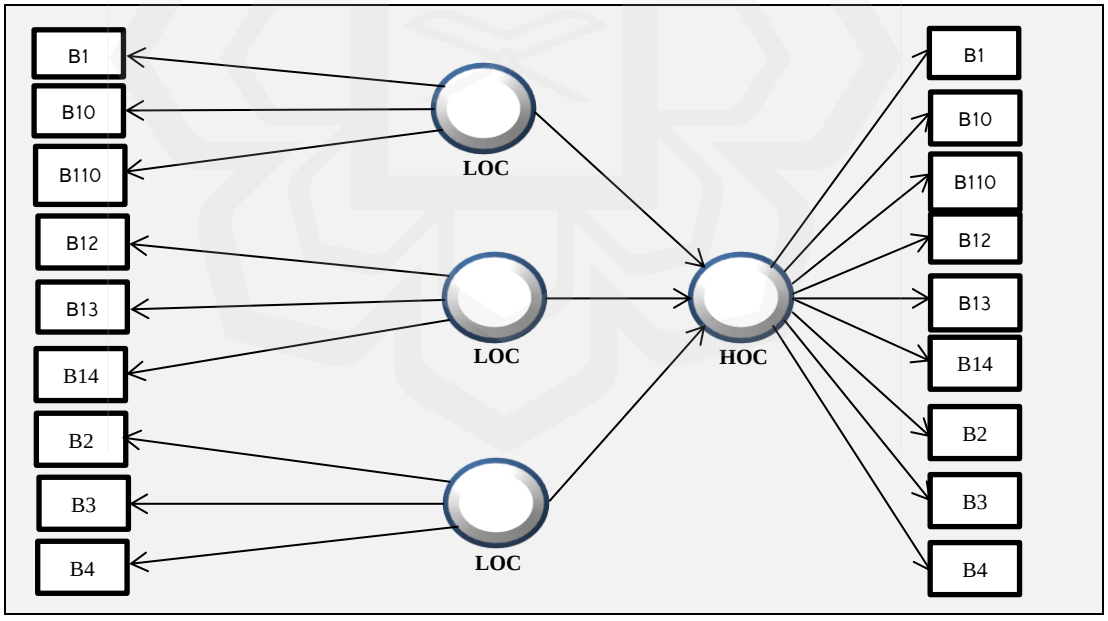


Figure 3.2 Reflective-Formative Type II

Source: (Hair et al., 2014)

Figure 3.2 illustrates the reflective-formative type II model with two (2) elements: (1) HOC, which captures the more abstract entity; (2) lower-order construct (LOC), which captures subdimensions of the abstract entity. The reflective mode has causal relationships between the LOC and the manifest variables (i.e., indicators or B). Thus, the observed measures are assumed to reflect variation in the latent variable, where any changes in the construct are expected to manifest in changes in all the indicators (Henseler et al., 2009). For formative mode, the LOC is exercised on the HOC, which is needed to play a formative construct automatically.

Conclusively, numerous guidelines exist for assessing PLS-SEM results (Chin, 1998; Hair et al., 2017). This study followed the structure of the guidelines recommended by Hair et al. (2014) and is illustrated in Figure 3.3. Assessing PLS-SEM results requires the researcher to complete two stages. Stage 1 focuses on assessing reflective measurement models (Stage 1.1), formative measurement models (Stage 1.2), or both. If the evaluation supports the measurement quality, the researcher proceeds with the structural model evaluation in Stage 2 (Hair et al., 2017). Briefly, Stage 1 investigates the measurement theory, while Stage 2 encompasses structural theory that involves testing the proposed hypotheses and addresses the relationships among the latent variables.

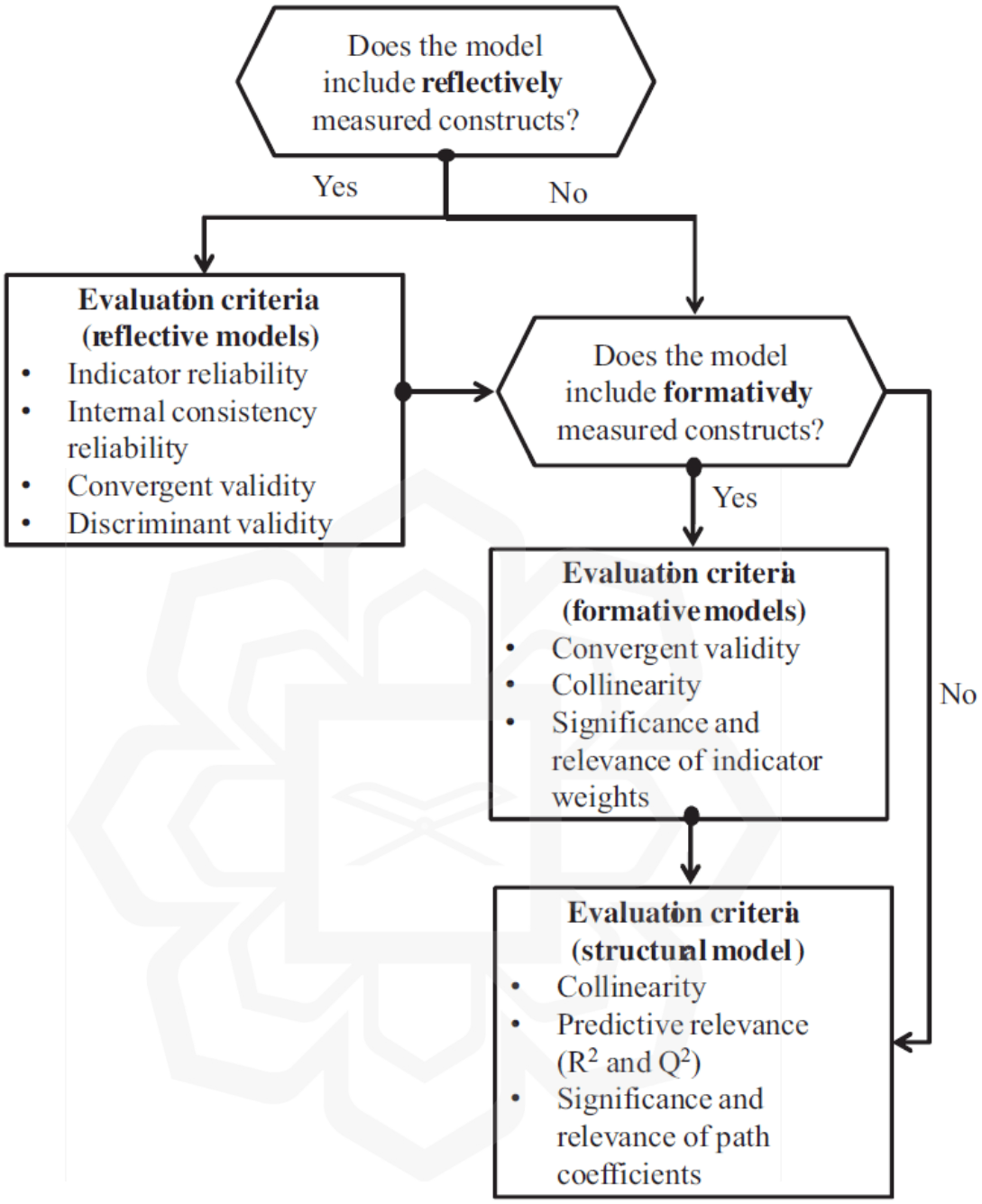


Figure 3.3 PLS-SEM Evaluation Stages

Source: (Sarstedt, Ringle, Smith, Reams, & Hair, 2014)

Furthermore, the researcher also used CFA to test the representativeness of the constructs in measuring the variables. CFA aims to assess latent psychological behaviours like attitude and satisfaction (Pearson & Lee, 1903). It is a fundamental step in running most structural equation models (SEM) to verify the measurement quality of

latent constructs using CFA. It is a multivariate statistical procedure that is used to test how well the number of constructs represents the measured variables based on (1) factor loading, (2) CR and Cronbach's alpha, (3) convergent validity (CV), (4) indicator reliability (IR), and (5) discriminant validity (DV). As indicated in Table 3.8, each criterion has its own justification to ensure that all constructs are distinctive from each other. Briefly, the criteria and their importance are explained below.

1. Construct Reliability Test

Construct reliability is also known as composite reliability. It is a procedure for measurement models to establish the consistency and reproducible estimates of a construct by measuring the items or questions correlated with the construct. In other words, construct reliability acts as a yardstick against which stability, representativeness, and equivalent reliability of the measurement on the same subject are repeatable under identical or similar conditions to test the hypothesis. In a way, it measures the gap in the study herewith on the voting intention phenomenon. Using PLS-SEM, the quality of each item is measured based on (1) factor loading, (2) average variance extraction (AVE), (3) and CR. The standard reliability benchmark for each item is (1) factor loading >=0.70, (2) AVE >=0.50, and (3) CR >=0.70 (Creswell, 2008). Generally, factor loading is used as a reduction method to explain the correlations between observed variables using a smaller number of factors. The factor loading for each item should exceed the standard value or be deleted from the measurement model. Removing lower-value items (i.e., offending items) will automatically improve the quality of CR and AVE, thus, CV. At the same time, it resolves the discriminant validity issue. Any non-validity issues may distort the study findings and future inferences.

2. Convergent Validity (CV)

According to Hair et al. (2014, p. 102), convergent validity refers to "the extent to which a measure (indicators) correlates positively with alternative measures (indicators) of the same construct". In other words, the indicators (i.e., questions in the questionnaires) are spread out from the means and one another. The study conducted a convergent validity assessment to know how correlated the items of a latent construct are where the value

must always be higher. The cut-off points may be arbitrary. Generally, convergent validity is adequate if more than 75% of hypotheses are correct or if a correlation with an instrument measuring the same construct is >0.50 (Abma, Rovers, & van der Wees, 2016).

3. Discriminant Validity (DV)

Discriminant validity refers to the extent to which factors are distinct and uncorrelated. In other words, the degree to which a measure of different constructs differs from one another. Determining variables are strongly related to one factor rather than another is critical. Using PLS-SEM, the author assessed the discriminant validity to ensure that the reflective construct has the most substantial relationship with its indicators. Rönkkö and Cho (2022) explained that CFA (see Table 3.11) is used to establish whether the validity and reliability of the construct are adequate. Farrell (2010) argued that inferences regarding the relationship between the variables under study would not be perfect if we failed to establish discriminant validity. There would be an overestimation of the significance of the relationship. Alternatively, the relationship was confirmed, but there is no real relationship. Generally, offending items will be removed during cross-loading to improve DV. The discriminant correlations should always be lower (i.e., near zero).

Table 3.11 Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Criteria	**Value Range**	**Explanation**	**References**
Factor Loading	$\geq$ 0.5 (acceptable)	Correlation between the observed value and the latent value for a given factor	
Internal Consistency Reliability [Cronbach alpha	0.70 and higher for both	CA- Based on the average inter-item correlation of an instrument CR - Determines reliability	Nunnally (1978) Nunnally

(CA) and Composite Reliability (CR)]		based on the outer loadings of the indicator variable	and Bernstein (1994)
Convergent Validity (based on AVE)	0.708 is preferred > 0.50 is acceptable	Measures correlations with alternative measures of the same construct Convergent validity measures the extent to which a construct converges in its indicators by explaining the items' variance (Sarstedt et al., 2014)	Fornell and Lacrcker (1981)
Indicator Reliability.	0.070 and higher .40 and higher for exploratory research	The variation of an item explained by the construct	
Discriminant Validity	Outer loadings should be greater than all cross-loadings on other constructs	The uniqueness of constructs compared to other constructs Discriminant validity determines the extent to which a construct is empirically distinct from other constructs in the path model (Sarstedt et al., 2014)	Fornell and Lacrcker (1981)

3.3.3.2.2 Structural Model Assessment

The researcher progressed to the appraisal of the structural model, also known as an inner model, in Stage 2 of the PLS-SEM processes (see Fig. 3.3) once the measurement model evaluation showed satisfactory quality. The structural model assessment is necessary to see how the independent variables (i.e., exogenous latent variables) and dependent variables (i.e., endogenous latent variables) interlink and how significant their relationship is. In short, the researcher should observe the following criteria when embarking on the structural model. After verifying for potential collinearity issues among the constructs during the measurement assessment, Stage 2 concentrates on examining the predictive capabilities of the model, as indicated by the following criteria: assessment of collinearity, coefficient of determination (R^2) and f^2, cross-validated redundancy (Q^2), and path coefficients.

1. Assessment of Collinearity

As part of the regression analysis, the researcher assessed collinearity to predict the correlation between two indicators, which is the strength of the linear relationship. This process is vital to determining any multicollinearity issue, which means the correlation between variables is poor. The study assessed the collinearity based on the tolerance level and variance inflation factor (VIF). According to Allison (1999), the tolerance level ranges from 0 to 1, but there is no strict cut-off, while anything below 0.40 is a cause for concern, while Weisburd and Britt (2013) suggested that those under 0.20 have a serious multicollinearity issue. As mentioned, VIF can also indicate collinearity. Although it is not arbitral, generally, any VIF of 1 indicates that two variables have a poor correlation; a VIF between 1 and 5 indicates a moderate correlation; and a VIF above 5 indicates a high correlation (Everitt & Skrondal, 2010).

2. Identify the Value of Determination Coefficients (R^2 or r^2 and f^2)

The second step was identifying the value of the determination coefficients (R^2). The value of R^2 or r2 is an internal model assessment that represents the amount of variance explained for each endogenous latent variable (Hair et al., 2013). R^2 values can range

from 0 to 1, and the better the predictive accuracy, the higher the number. For example, R^2 values of 0.75, 0.50, or 0.25 described the predicting power of the linear model as either substantial, moderate, or weak, respectively. In other words, R^2 measures the strength of the relationship between the linear model and the dependent variables on a 0 - 100% scale.

Suhan et al. (2018) observed that f^2 is determined after calculating the R^2 value. The effect size measures the impact of each predictor construct on the dependent construct. When an independent construct is omitted from the model, the PLS path model measures the changes in squared correlation values. It determines whether the omitted independent construct has a substantive effect on the value of the dependent construct. The effect of the predictor-independent construct is significant at the structural level if f^2 is 0.35, medium if f^2 is 0.15, and small if f^2 is 0.02 (Cohen, 1992).

3. Identify Path Coefficient Size and Significance

In this step, the researcher identified the path coefficient and its significance in building positive relationships between the hypotheses. Path coefficients represent the hypothesised relationship between the constructs. Path coefficient values are generated from the PLS algorithm function in SmartPLS software for all constructs of the structural model. The strength of relationships may range from -1 to 1. A value closer to 1 means a strong positive relationship. Hair et al. (2017) and Aibinu and Al-Lawati (2010) said that the higher the coefficient value indicates, the stronger the effect of predictor exogenous variables on the endogenous variable.

3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Considering some ethical issues given by Kumar (2011), a few ethical considerations are taken care of before the survey process to collect information from the subjects.

3.4.1 Gathering Information

Before the data collection or any subjects enrolled in the survey, the individuals must agree to participate, know their involvement is voluntary, and know they can quit the study at any time. They will be reminded of the consensus twice: when we approach the respondents to join the face-to-face survey and once again before they participate in the survey.

3.4.2 Seeking Consent

Before obtaining consensus from the participants, the researcher ensured that they were adequately aware of the type of information collected, the reason behind the information gathering, the purpose for conducting the survey, the way to participate in the study, and the direct or indirect effect the study would have on them.

3.4.3 Sensitive Information

To protect the secrecy and confidentiality of survey data, the anonymity of all participants is vital. All parties involved in the survey should acknowledge the fundamental principles of data privacy and confidentiality. Since this study evaluated party realignment propensity among voters, the questions asked related to voting behaviour, including certain sensitive information on voting intention, voting attitude, ethnic identity and religiosity, social media roles, and candidate attribute choice. Information obtained is treated as strictly confidential. The names or personal particulars would not appear in any reports or publications of the study.

3.4.4 Providing Incentives

This study involved answering questionnaires. Most researchers would provide incentives, either monetary or non-monetary rewards, to motivate participants' response rates. It is not unethical to give incentives to recruit subjects if they follow general moral practices (Grant & Sugarman, 2004). In this study, the survey respondents were given a small token of appreciation (a ballpoint pen engraved with the names of the researcher and IIUM) after the face-to-face survey. As such, to compensate for the respondent’s

enduring discomfort associated with the time spent and willingness to disclose personal information for the survey (Kimmel, 2001).

3.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter briefly describes the steps taken in the research process to review and gather knowledge based on research philosophy and methodology. Accordingly, the study described the details, including procedures to determine population, create measurements, and analyse data within the scope of the research.

Chapter Four will discuss data analysis and the outcomes.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The study conducted data analysis using a combination of descriptive and inferential statistics to explain the voting intention related to the party realignment phenomenon. The IBM-SPSS and PLS-SEM applications were deployed for that purpose. However, the data analysis and findings from the applications will be presented separately in chapters four and five.

This is Chapter Four. It presents a description of the data analysis and findings of the research from IBM-SPSS assessment outcomes. It gave valuable insights into respondents' demographic profiles and the measurement level of respondents' dominant characteristics, which will be summarised at the end of this chapter. Understanding the socio-demographic factors and voter characteristics towards party realignment will help the author's future discussion.

Briefly, data for the statistical analysis and basis for the final inferences were obtained from 450 respondents with a proportion of 5:1:1 according to the ethnic composition of the Batang Kali State Assembly, Selangor, Malaysia, via self-administered questionnaires. The questionnaires were collected and screened, with an aggregate of 367 legitimate reactions (N = 367) used for statistical data analysis.

4.2 DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part covered the demographic data of the respondents' demography (i.e., ethnicity, education, career and income, religion, and marital status), thus understanding their probability trend and lifestyle, including their beliefs and practices. The second part was used to examine the respondents' dominant characteristics for each variable (i.e., voting intention, voting attitude, ethnic identity, religiosity, social media, and candidate image) based on a five-point Likert scale.

4.2.1 Respondents' Demographic Profile Analysis

Table 4.1 shows the demographic profiles of the respondents. Out of 367 respondents, 192 were males (52.3%), and 175 were females (47.7%). Most of the respondents were Malays (n=259, 70.6%) followed by Indians (n=54, 14.7%), Chinese (n=53, 14.4%), and Bumiputera (n=1, 0.3%). More than half of the respondents were married (55.3%) and some were single (42.2%), while 2.5% did not determine their marital status.

263 respondents (71.7%) were Muslims, 43 (11.7%) were Hindus, 41 (11.2%) were Buddhists, 15 (4.1%) were Christians, and 5 (1.4%) were other. Regarding the respondents' occupations, nearly half of them were employed in the private sector, with a total of 183 respondents (49.9%). The rest of the participants' occupations were identified as government (n=30, 8.2%), business (n=55, 15%), retired (n=14, 3.8%), housewife (n=32, 8.7%), student (n=26, 7.1%), and unemployed (n=27, 7.4%).

Finally, most of the respondents were within the age range of 21 to 30 years (n=54, 42%). followed by the age range of 31 to 40 years (n=107, 29.2%), 41 to 50 years (n=47, 12.8%), 51 to 60 years (n=45, 12.8%), and above 60 years (n=14, 3.8%).

Table 4.1 Demographic Profiles of Respondents

Profile			**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Gender				
	Male		192	52.3
	Female		175	47.7
		Total	*367*	*100*
Ehnicity				
	Malays		259	70.6
	Chinese		53	14.4
	Indian		54	14.7

	Bumiputra		1	0.3
		Total	*367*	*100*
Marital Status				
	Single		155	42.2
	Married		203	55.3
	Others		9	2.5
		Total	*367*	*100*
Religion				
	Islam		263	71.7
	Buddha		41	11.2
	Hindu		43	11.7
	Christian		15	4.1
	Others		5	1.4
		Total	*367*	*100*
Occupation				
	Private		183	49.9
	Government		30	8.2
	Business		55	15
	Retired		14	3.8
	Housewife		32	8.7
	Student		26	7.1
	Unemployed		27	7.4
		Total	*367*	*100*

Age				
	21 – 30		154	42
	31 – 40		107	29.2
	41 – 50		47	12.8
	51 – 60		45	12.3
	60 Above		14	3.8
		Total	*367*	*100*

4.2.2 Five-Point Likert Scale Measurement Analysis

The researcher used a five-point Likert scale for the field survey, consisting of a measurement value of 1 = Totally Disagree to 5 = Totally Agree (see Table 4.2). To make the data more actionable and for simple reporting, the outcome of the five-point Likert scale was consolidated to a three-point Likert scale and rearranged into three (3) categories as follows: (1) Totally Agree combined with Agree = Agreement (2) Undecided = Neutral, and (3) Totally Disagree combined with Disagree = Disagreement (Bonnie Lakusta, 2021). Below are the discussions for the descriptive analysis of respondents' responses on attitude, candidate image, ethnic identity, religiosity, social media, and voting intention.

Table 4.2 Three Categories of Re-Arranged Likert Scale

MERGED MEASUREMENT SCALE	NEW CATEGORY
The measurement value of 1 (Totally Agree) and the Measurement value of 2 (Agree)	Agreement
The measurement value of 3 (Undecided)	Neutral
The measurement value of 4 (Totally Disagree) and the Measurement value of 5 (Disagree)	Disagreement

Table 4.3 below presents the respondents' responses on voting attitude, represented by four (4) items in the questionnaire. First, the respondents were convinced (58.1%) they would vote for the same party as they did in the last election. However, about 36.8% of them were still undecided, and 5.1% disagreed. Second, most respondents agreed (61.3%) that if they had to decide, they would vote for the same party as they did in the last election, while some (30.2%) were undecided or disagreed (8.5%) with the statement. Third, more than half of the respondents (54%) would recommend others vote for the same party as they did in the last election; however, some were undecided (32.4%) and some disagreed (13.6%). Fourth, the respondents (58.9%) had positive things to say about the same party as they did in the last election, while others (33.8%) were undecided or disagreed (7.3%) with the statement.

Based on the responses, the respondents showed positive attitudes towards their votes for the same party as in the previous election. Among the four (4) items, item number two ("If I had to decide, I would vote for the same party as I did in the last election") has the highest percentage of agreement (61.3%). On the other hand, the highest percentage of undecided responses was for item number one ("I am convinced that I will vote for the same party as I did in the last election") namely 36.8%. In comparison, item number three ("I would recommend others vote for the same party as I did in the last election") has the highest disagreement rate at 13.6%.

Table 4.3 Demographic Analysis of Respondents' Attitude

Code	Items in the Questionnaire	Agreed	Undecided	Disagreed
B 1	I am convinced that I will vote for the same party as I did in the last election.	58.1	36.8	5.1
B 2	If I had to decide, I would vote for the same party as I did in the last election.	61.3	30.2	8.5
B 3	I would recommend others to vote on the same party as I did in the last election.	54	32.4	13.6
B4	I have positive things to say about the same party as I did in the last election.	58.9	33.8	7.3

Table 4.4 below shows the responses to candidate image, which consisted of 25 items under five (5) categories: Personality Attributes (7 items), Political Background of the Candidate (5 items), Credibility of the Candidate (4 items), Contact and Communication Means (4 items), and Management of the Electoral Campaign (5 items). First, most of the respondents agreed with the candidates' personality attributes, especially as a good listener (94.6%), patient (94%), and strong personality (92%). On the other hand, some of the respondents gave undecided responses, particularly for influencing and persuasion (12.3%) and managing dialogue (6.8%). Almost similarly, the respondents entirely disagreed with the external appearance of the candidates (3.3%) and their ability to manage the dialogue.

Second, most of the respondents indicated high agreement with the political background of the candidates. The top three (3) items were the candidate's political reputation (91%), the mental political picture of the candidate as an individual (90.7%),

and the mental image of the party to which the candidate belongs (90%). Meanwhile, some participants chose undecided (16.1%) or disagreed (4.4%) with the statement.

Table 4.4 Demographic Analysis of Respondents' Candidate Image

Code	Items in the Questionnaire	Agreed	Undecided	Disagreed
CI 1	The strong personality of the candidate	92.1	6.5	1.3
CI 2	The external appearance of the candidate	90.1	6.5	3.3
CI 3	The ability to manage dialogue	90.5	6.8	2.7
CI 4	The ability to influence and persuasion	86.6	12.3	1.1
CI 5	Characterize by patience	94	5.7	0.3
CI 6	Good listener	94.6	5.2	0.3
CI 7	Qualifications of the candidate	93.2	6.0	0.8
CI 8	The political history of the candidate	89.4	7.9	2.8
CI 9	Mental political picture of the candidate at individual	90.7	9	0.3
CI 10	Mental image of the party to which the candidate belongs to	90	8.7	1.4
CI 11	Popularity of the party to which the candidate belongs to	80.5	16.1	4.4
CI 12	Candidate political reputation	91	7.4	1.6

CI 13	Individuals' confidence in promises assumed by the candidate	92.7	6.3	1.1
CI 14	Realistic promises, which assumed by the candidate to public	91.9	7.6	0.5
CI 15	Public feelings about the candidate's ability to implement the promises he made	94.3	4.9	0.8
CI 16	The personal reputation of the candidate	94.6	5.2	0.3
CI 17	The presence among the public	93.2	6	0.8
CI 18	Appearing in the traditional and electronic media	81.2	14.7	4.1
CI 19	Reaching the target audience	91.6	7.4	1.1
CI 20	Continuous communication with the public	91.8	7.9	0.3
CI 21	Experience in teamwork who manage the electoral campaign	91.3	7.6	1.1
CI 22	The electoral program of the candidate	90.8	8.4	0.8
CI 23	Public support by the supporters of the candidate	89.4	9.8	0.8
CI 24	Electoral strategy	92.3	7.1	0.5
CI 25	Financial support	84.5	14.2	1.3

Third, the candidate's credibility had the highest agreement among the respondents. Out of four (4) items, the personal reputation of the candidate (CI 16) received the strongest positive response (94.6%). However, despite the agreement among the respondents, some of them showed undecided (7.6%) choice for realistic promises assumed by a candidate to the public (CI 14) and disagreement (1.1%) for an individual's confidence in promises assumed by the candidate (CI 13).

Fourth, the data exhibited similar responses from the respondents to contact and communication means. Most of them agreed with the four (4) items in this category, which are the presence among the public (93.2%), continuous communication with the public (91.8%), and reaching the target audience (91.6%). However, a small number of the respondents chose undecided (14.7%) or disagreed (4.1%) with the items, specifically for the item "appearing on traditional and electronic media."

Fifth, most respondents agreed on the four (4) items regarding electoral campaign management, the top three (3) items were electoral strategy (92.3%), experience in teamwork when managing the electoral campaign (91.3%), and the electoral programme of the candidate (90.8%). Meanwhile, the item receiving the most negative responses was financial support, where some were undecided (14.2%) or disagreed (1.3%). Another small number of undecided choices was public support by the supporters of the candidate (9.8%), and one other disagreement was teamwork experience when managing the electoral campaign (1.1%).

Table 4.5 shows the demographic analysis of respondents' responses on ethnic identity. It contained 12 items of the questionnaire, and similar to attitude and candidate image, the respondents had a majority agreement on ethnic identity. The top three (3) agreed items chosen by the respondents were "I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background" (91%), "I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group" (90.4%), and "I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group" (89.4%). On the other hand, a small number of respondents were undecided and disagreed with the items under ethnic identity. Among the top three (3) undecided items were "I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership" (27.2%), "In order to learn more about my ethnic group background, I have often talked to other people about my ethnic group" (21%), and "I am active in organisations or social groups that include most members of my own ethnic group" (14.7%). On the other hand, the top

three (3) disagreed items include “I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership” (6.8%), “I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me” (3.6%), and “I am active in organisations or social groups that include most members of my own ethnic group” (5%).

Table 4.5 Demographic Analysis of Respondents’ Ethnic Identity

Code	Items in the Questionnaire	Agreed	Undecided	Disagreed
E 1	I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs.	87.7	11.2	1.1
E 2	I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of my own ethnic group.	80.4	14.7	5
E 3	I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means to me.	88.3	8.2	3.6
E 4	I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership.	75.9	27.2	6.8
E 5	I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to.	88.8	10.1	1.1
E 6	I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.	90.4	7.9	1.6
E 7	I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me.	84.2	14.4	1.4
E 8	In order to learn more about my ethnic group background, I have often	76	21	3

	talked to other people about my ethnic group			
E 9	I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group.	86.4	12.3	1.4
E 10	I participate in the cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music or customs.	85.6	12.8	1.7
E 11	I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group.	89.4	9.8	0.8
E 12	I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background.	91	8.4	0.5

Table 4.6 displays the respondents' responses on religiosity. It covered six (6) items of the questionnaire, and most respondents showed positive responses and agreed with them. The informants mostly agreed that their religious beliefs lie behind their whole approach to life (90.2%), they enjoy spending time with others of their religious affiliation (87.2%), and they enjoy working in the activities of their religious organization (85.8%). Nonetheless, there were also a small number of responses for the undecided and disagreement. For instance, 16.3% of the respondents were undecided whether they needed to spend periods in private religious thought and reflection, and 2.7% of the respondents disagreed that they keep well-informed about their religious group and have some influences in its decision-making.

Table 4.6 Demographic Analysis of Respondents' Religiosity

Code	Items in the Questionnaire	Agreed	Undecided	Disagreed
RG 1	My religious beliefs lie behind my whole approach to life.	90.2	9	0.8
RG 2	I enjoy spending time with others of my religious affiliation.	87.2	11.7	1.1
RG 3	Religious beliefs influence all my dealing with life	84.7	13.4	1.9
RG 4	It is important to me to spend periods in private religious thought and reflection	82.8	16.3	0.9
RG 5	I enjoy working in the activities of my religious organization.	85.8	13.6	0.6
RG 6	I keep well informed about my religious group and have some influence in its decision-making.	81.2	16.1	2.7

Table 4.7 presents the respondents' responses on social media. It consisted of four (4) items in the questionnaire. The respondents mostly agreed that they use social media to learn more about critical issues (86.1%). More specifically, they agreed that they use social media to learn more about the candidate or campaign (81.8%), while some respondents were neutral (23.4%) or disagreed (3.5%) that social media helps them decide whom to vote for in the election.

Table 4.7 Demographic Analysis of Respondents' Behaviour on Social Media

Code	Items in the Questionnaire	Agreed	Undecided	Disagreed
SM 1	I use social media to learn more about the candidate/campaign.	81.8	16.6	1.7
SM 2	I use social media to learn more about issues that are important to me.	86.1	11.4	2.5
SM 3	I use social media to keep up to date with this candidate's campaign and events.	80.6	18	1.4
SM 4	Social media helps me decide who to vote for in the election.	73	23.4	3.5

Finally, Table 4.8 highlights the respondents' responses on voting intention. This part of the questionnaire contains four items that most respondents agreed upon. First, most respondents agreed they were convinced to vote in the coming elections (89.5%). More importantly, they have positive things to say about voting in elections (87.7%). Consequently, they might have to decide whether they will vote in the next election (85.6%). On the other hand, some respondents were undecided (17.4%) or disagreed (3%) when recommending others to vote in the coming elections.

Table 4.8 Demographic Analysis of Respondents' Voting Intention

Code	Items in the Questionnaire	Agreed	Undecided	Disagreed
VI 1	I am convinced that I will vote in the coming elections.	89.5	9.5	0.8
VI 2	If I had to decide, I would vote in the next election.	85.6	13.6	0.8
VI 3	I would recommend others to vote in the coming elections.	79.6	17.4	3
VI 4	I have positive things to say about voting in an election	79.6	17.4	3

4.2.3 Chapter Summary

The IBM-SPSS assessment provided crucial insights into the respondents' demographic profiles and dominant characteristics. The findings revealed diverse responses regarding voting attitude, candidate image preferences, ethnic and religious commitments, social media reliance, and future voting intentions. In sum, as detailed in Tables 4.1 to 4.8, the respondents' attitudes towards candidates' personality traits strongly influence voter perception, with uncertainty and disagreement in certain traits indicating potential variability in voter perceptions. Ethnic identity and religiosity significantly shape voter attitudes, as evidenced by high agreement with cultural background and religious beliefs, highlighting the complexities of these influences on voter behaviour. The study underscores social media's influence on critical issue awareness. However, uncertainty exists regarding its impact on decision-making, suggesting a potential area of influence in the voter decision-making process. Overall, the study reflects strong intentions to vote in upcoming elections, a positive perception of voting, and complexities in influencing others' voting behaviours.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter continues from Chapter 4, focusing on data analysis and findings. It utilises Smart PLS 3.0 to evaluate the research framework. The assessment follows two-stage analytical procedures suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988): the measurement model assessment for validity and reliability, and the structural model for hypothetical dependencies through path analysis. Little et al. (2002) suggested that the measurement model be assessed first to prevent incorrect insights due to poor model fit. PLS-SEM relies on a bootstrap procedure for statistical inferences (Ringle et al., 2015). For this study, a bootstrapping method (1,000 re-samples) is used to test the significance of path coefficients and loadings. All constructs in the research model are multi-item and reflective to detect inter-correlated measures, ensuring unidimensionality and strong internal consistency.

5.2 MEASUREMENT MODEL (OUTER MODEL) ASSESSMENT

The measurement model, also called the outer model, evaluates the relationships between measurement variables and their corresponding latent variables, considering their reliability and validity. This study will assess (1) internal consistency reliability, (2) outer loading, and (3) convergent validity, with the findings summarised in Table 5.1.

5.2.1 Internal Consistency Reliability (ICR)

The first assessment was conducted to evaluate internal consistency and reliability. Two tests were performed using CA and the Composite Reliability Index. Based on Table 5.1, the values for CA in this research range from 0.877 to 0.973, which met the threshold of 0.7 recommended by Hair et al. (2013).

There have been arguments about using CA (α) to measure reliability; it can underestimate true reliability (Hair et al., 2017; Sijtsma, 2009). Therefore, McNeish (2017) suggested an alternative reliability test, namely the Composite Reliability Index (CRI), due to its deficiency. Chin (1998) considered composite reliability a more rigorous estimate of reliability than CA because it can determine whether the specific indicators are sufficient in representing the respective constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The composite reliability should be higher than 0.7 to indicate adequate internal consistency (Hair et al., 2013a). For each data group, Table 5.1 shows that the composite reliability for all constructs exceeded the minimum cut-off value of 0.7 with a range from 0.917 to 0.975. These results indicated that the measurement model possessed acceptable reliability.

5.2.2 Indicator Reliability (Outer Loadings)

Once the internal consistency reliability is confirmed, the indicator reliability is then measured. As shown in Table 5.1, all items have satisfactory indicator reliability (ranging from 0.691 to 0.922), achieving the threshold value set by Byrne (2016) with all AVE scores higher than 0.5. Therefore, none of the items were dropped.

5.2.3 Convergent Validity (CV)

Convergent validity (CV) refers to the extent to which individual indicators reflect the constructs compared to indicators measuring other constructs (Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010). The average variance extracted (AVE) is measured to access the CV. The value of AVE should be higher than 0.5, which explains at least 50% of the assigned indicators' variance (Chin, 1998; Hair et al., 2017). Using the PLS algorithm in SmartPLS 3.0, the AVE value was calculated. Table 5.1 shows the AVE values of all the constructs that recorded higher than 0.5 for each group of data. The lowest AVE reported value is for Ethnic Identity (0.593), followed by Candidate Image (0.627), Religiosity (0.695), and Social Media (0.661). Voting Attitude and Voting Intention obtained a higher AVE value, which explained more than 80% of the total variance. These results show that the measurement model demonstrated adequate convergent validity.

Table 5.1 Results Summary for Reflective Measurement Models

Construct	**Item**	**Indicator Reliability**	**Convergent Validity**	**Internal Consistency Ability**	
		Outer Loadings	AVE	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
		>0.65	>0.50	>0.70	'0
Voting Attitude	B1	0.884	0.827	0.950	0
	B2	0.940			
	B3	0.904			
	B4	0.908			
Candidate Image	CI1	0.818	0.627	0.977	5
	CI10	0.786			
	CI11	0.630			
	CI12	0.866			
	CI13	0.848			
	CI14	0.840			
	CI15	0.852			
	CI16	0.841			
	CI17	0.828			
	CI19	0.624			
	CI20	0.854			
	CI21	0.715			
	CI22	0.867			
	CI23	0.813			

	CI24	0.795			
	CI25	0.815			
	CI3	0.838			
	CI4	0.680			
	CI5	0.716			
	CI6	0.711			
	CI7	0.790			
	CI8	0.796			
	CI9	0.815			
Ethnic Identity	E1	0.794	0.593	0.945	6
	E10	0.799			
	E11	0.808			
	E12	0.833			
	E2	0.680			
	E5	0.678			
	E6	0.561			
	E7	0.816			
	E8	0.828			
	E9	0.818			
Religiosity	RG1	0.843	0.695	0.932	1
	RG2	0.879			
	RG3	0.877			
	RG4	0.849			

	RG5	0.838			
Social Media	SM1	0.922	0.661	0.879	3
	SM2	0.887			
	SM3	0.912			
	SM4	0.416			
Voting Intention	VI1	0.879	0.800	0.941	7
	VI2	0.896			
	VI3	0.914			
	VI4	0.889			

5.2.4 Discriminant Validity (DV)

Subsequently, the study assesses the discriminant validity of the model. Discriminant validity (DV) is the degree to which items differentiate among constructs or measure distinct concepts and is measured by determining the correlations between the measures that have the potential to overlap (Ramayah et al., 2018). In this study, discriminant validity was measured based on the HTMT technique introduced by Henseler et al. (2015). HTMT is the "ratio of the between-trait correlations to the within-trait correlation (Hair et al., 2017). This study opts for two techniques for assessing DV.

For the first technique, if the HTMT value is more significant than the HTMT 0.85 value (Kline, 2011), it shows evidence of DV issues. Using the PLS Algorithm, as seen in Table 5.2, none of the respective constructs violate HTMT 0.85, which concludes that the measurement model established construct validity.

In addition, bootstrapping was applied to test whether the HTMT value is significantly different from 1.00 (Henseler et al., 2015), as recommended by Hair et al. (2019). If the confidence interval contains the value, it indicates a lack of discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). More specifically, as seen in Table 5.2, none of the upper bounds of the 95% confidence interval of HTMT were higher than 0.9 or 0.85.

To conclude, since the conservative HTMT threshold of 0.85 already supported DV, the bootstrap confidence interval results of the HTMT strengthened the evidence, indicating that DV has been ascertained in this study. It could, therefore, be concluded for this study that both reliability and validity requirements are met. Subsequently, the data could be further analysed for structural measurements.

Table 5.2 Discriminant Validity (DV)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Voting Attitude						
Candidate Image	0.212					
Ethnic Identity	0.425	0.606				
Religiosity	0.213	0.646	0.708			
Social Media	0.228	0.503	0.596	0.606		
Voting Intention	0.356	0.600	0.468	0.442	0.380	

5.3 STRUCTURAL MODEL (INNER MODEL) ASSESSMENT

The study evaluated the structural model after assessing the measurement model. The structural model evaluation aims to determine the models' capabilities to predict one or more target constructs (Hair et al., 2017). The process involves (1) assessment of the structural model for collinearity issues, (2) assessment of the significance of structural model relationships, and (3) the coefficient of determination (R^2).

5.3.1 Assessment of the Structural Model for Collinearity Issues

The first step in the structural model is to assess collinearity issues. Safeguarding against collinearity issues between the constructs is vital before performing a latent variable analysis in the structural model. In this research, assessing the collinearity issue is essential for several reasons:

1. Avoid misleading results: Collinearity occurs when a statistical model's two or more predictor variables are highly correlated. This can lead to misleading or unstable results. By assessing collinearity, researchers can identify and address this issue to ensure the accuracy and reliability of their findings.

2. Interpreting the effects of individual predictors: When predictor variables are highly correlated, it becomes difficult to determine the unique contribution of each variable to the dependent variable. Collinearity makes it challenging to interpret the effects of individual predictors separately from their shared influence. By assessing collinearity, researchers can better understand the unique impact of each predictor.

3. Enhancing model stability: Collinearity can lead to unstable model estimates and inflated standard errors. This makes the model less reliable and can impact the precision and validity of the estimated coefficients. Identifying and addressing collinearity helps improve the stability of the model and ensures more accurate and trustworthy results.

4. Identifying redundant variables: Collinearity often indicates that variables measure similar or redundant aspects of the phenomenon under study. Identifying such redundancy allows researchers to select the most relevant and informative variables, leading to a more parsimonious and interpretable model.

5. Improving model generalizability: Collinearity can affect the generalizability of the research findings. If collinearity is present in the data used for model development, the model may not perform well when applied to new or unseen data. Assessing and managing collinearity helps improve the generalizability of the research results to a broader population or future scenarios.

In this study, the collinearity is measured by measuring the VIF value. The threshold value for the assessment is 5, following Hair et al. (2013), or 3.3, following Diamantopoulos and Siguaw (2006). Table 5.3 shows that all the inner VIF values for the constructs were between 1.042 to 2.380, indicating no collinearity issue.

5.3.2 Assessing the Significance of Structural Model Relationships

The bootstrapping procedure is employed to produce results for each path relationship in the model, as shown in Table 5.3. Bootstrapping in PLS is a non-parametric test that comprises repeated random sampling with replacement from the original sample to produce a bootstrap sample and to attain standard errors for hypothesis testing (Hair et al., 2013). Regarding the number of resampling, Chin (1998) suggested performing bootstrapping with 1,000 re-samples.

For this study, 17 hypotheses are developed for the constructs. To test the significance level, SmartPLS 3.0 bootstrapping generates t-statistics for all paths. The bootstrapping is set to a 0.05 significance level, a one-tailed test, and 1,000 subsamples. The critical values for a significance level of 1 percent (α =0.01), 5 percent (α =0.05), and 10 percent (α =0.1) are 2.33, 1.645, and 1.28, respectively, for the one-tailed test (Ramayah et al., 2018). Based on the findings in Table 5.3, the typical path coefficient values were between -1 and +1 (values from -0.072 to 0.694). According to Hair et al. (2017), estimated path coefficients close to +1 show strong positive relationships, and the closer the value to 0, the weaker the relationships.

For the following t-test, the result shows that Voting Attitude (β=0.182, t=3.920, p<0.05) and Candidate Image (β=0.441, t=5.918, p<0.05) were significantly related to Voting intention but the Religiosity-Voting intention relationship was not significant with β=0.598, t-value=15.789, and p<0.01. However, Social Media (β=0.062, t-value=1.235, p<0.05) and Ethic Identity (β=0.059, t-value=0.696, p<0.05) showed insignificant results. For the direct relationship with social media, the predictors of Ethic Identity (β=0.537, t-value=9.809, p<0.05) showed that the constructs were positively related to Social Media. Besides, Voting Attitude (β=0.006, t=0.102, p<0.05) showed insignificant towards Social Media. Further, Ethic Identity (β=0.694, t=17.224, p<0.05) was significantly related to Religiosity. However, Voting Attitude (β=-0.072, t-

value=1.742, p<0.05) showed insignificant results. For another direct relationship with Candidate Image, the predictors of Religiosity (β=0.598, t-value=15.789, p<0.05) and Voting Attitude (β=0.080, t-value=2.125, p<0.05) showed that the constructs are positively related to Candidate Image. Table 5.3 below summarises the findings.

Table 5.3 Structural Model Assessment

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient (β)	Std. Error	BCI LL	BCI UL	t-value	p-value	Decision	f^2	VIF
H1	Attitude -> voting intention	0.182	0.047	**0.091**	**0.271**	3.920	0.000	Supported	**0.041**	**1.317**
H2	Ethnic identity -> voting intention	0.059	0.084	**-0.114**	**0.225**	0.696	0.487	Not Supported	**0.002**	**2.380**
H3	Attitude -> social media	0.006	0.059	**-0.111**	**0.119**	0.102	0.919	Not Supported	**0.000**	**1.183**
H4	Ethnic identity -> social media	0.537	0.055	**0.435**	**0.642**	9.809	0.000	Supported	**0.343**	**1.183**
H5	Social media -> voting intention	0.062	0.050	**-0.039**	**0.160**	1.235	0.218	Not Supported	**0.004**	**1.547**
H6	Attitude	-0.072	0.041	**-0.153**	**0.015**	1.742	0.082	Not Supported	**0.008**	**1.183**

	->religiosity									
H7	Ethnic identity -> religiosity	0.694	0.040	**0.615**	**0.767**	17.224	0.000	Supported	**0.736**	**1.183**
H8	Religiosity -> voting intention	0.021	0.068	**-0.116**	**0.163**	0.300	0.764	Not Supported	**0.000**	**2.380**
H9	Candidate image -> voting intention	0.441	0.075	**0.304**	**0.580**	5.918	0.000	Supported	**0.156**	**2.026**
H10	Religiosity ->candidate image	0.598	0.038	**0.522**	**0.673**	15.789	0.000	Supported	**0.557**	**1.042**
H11	Attitude ->candidate image	0.080	0.038	**0.000**	**0.152**	2.125	0.034	Supported	**0.010**	**1.042**

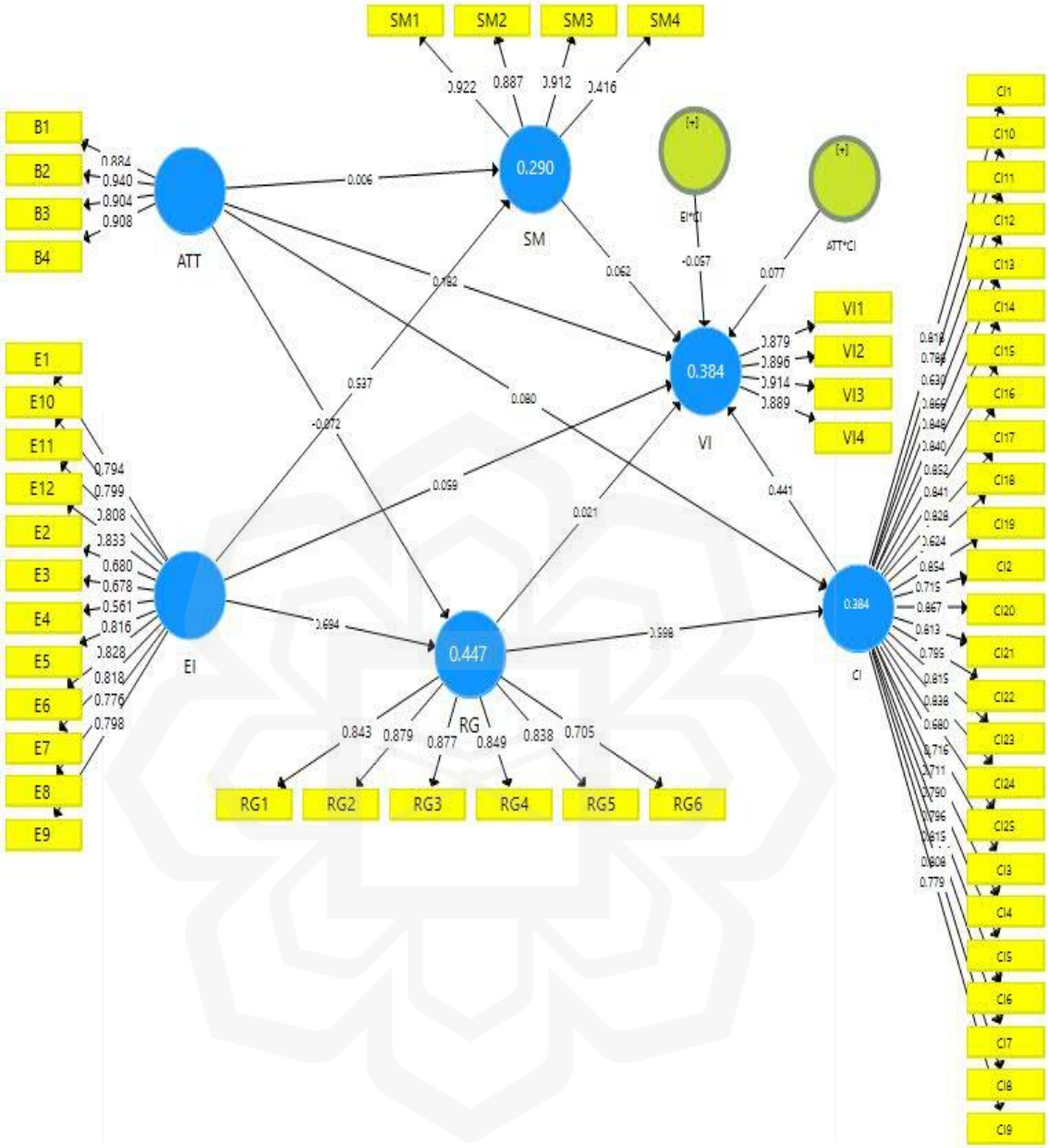


Figure 5.1 Structural Model

5.3.3 The Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The next stage evaluated the model's predictive accuracy through the coefficient determination score (R^2). The R^2 computes the model's predictive power, and the value ranges from 0 to 1, with a higher value indicating a higher level of predictive accuracy (Hair et al., 2017). The SmartPLS algorithm calculated R^2. As there are various sets of rules on acceptable R^2, this study followed the guidelines set by Cohen (1988). Figure

5.1 shows that Voting Attitude, Ethic identity, Social media, Religiosity, and Candidate Image explained 38.4% of the variance in Voting Intention, indicating moderate predictive accuracy.

Meanwhile, Ethic Identity and Voting Attitude explained 29.3% of the variance in Social media, indicating substantial predictive accuracy. On the other hand, Ethic Identity and Voting Attitude explained 44.7% of the variance in Religiosity. The R^2 values are typical and reported in most studies and literature (e.g., Stocchi et al., 2018).

In general, the model used in this study can predict up to 41% of the factors influencing Voting Intention. The R-square value is permissible and not inherently negative in social science research (Ozili, 2022), The opinion was shared by Weerakkody et al. (2023), who said that social science research is not to predict human behaviour but to evaluate whether predictors or explanatory variables significantly influence dependent variables. Therefore, a low R-square in between 0.10 (10 percent) to 0.50 (50 percent) is acceptable.

Unlike inanimate objects or physical processes studied in the natural sciences, human behaviour is subject to individual differences, emotions, beliefs, and social contexts, introducing a high degree of variability (Ozili, 2022). In other words, **t**he complexity of human behaviour is influenced by various cultural, social, psychological, and economic variables that interact in intricate ways, making it challenging to predict the behaviour accurately. Hence, what holds in the social context of others may be different in Malaysia.

5.4 MEDIATORS AND MODERATOR ANALYSIS

The cause-effect relationship in PLS path models suggests that exogenous constructs directly affect endogenous constructs without any methodical effect on other variables. In many cases, this assumption does not hold. A third variable in the analysis can change our interpretation of the model relationship. The most notable illustrations of such extensions include mediation and moderation. In this study, we will assess the effect of religiosity and social media as mediators and candidate image as moderators on the voters' proclivity to realign parties in future elections.

5.4.1 Assessment of Mediating Effect of Social Media and Religiosity

Baron and Kenny (1986) explained the mediator variable as a generative mechanism in which the independent focal variable affects the dependent variable under research. However, mediation arises when a significant relationship exists between the predictor and criterion variables. Therefore, a mediating variable produced an indirect effect via which the independent focal variable affected the criterion variable under investigation (Baron & Kenny, 1986). In addition, mediator variables had the capability of shifting the causal effects of the earlier variables to the following variables. According to Hair et al. (2014), mediating variables have a significant role in psychological research on such variables, thus clarifying their relationship. However, different researchers have used several approaches in the past two decades to assess mediation. A mediating analysis identified the fundamental processes underlying human behaviour and was important across behaviours and situations (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

This section presents the assessment results of the social media and religiosity mediating effects. The following four (4) hypotheses were constructed to examine the mediating effect:

H12 Social media mediates the relationship between voting attitude and voting intention.

H13 Social media mediates the relationship between ethnic identity and voting intention.

H14 Religiosity mediates the relationship between voting attitude and voting intention.

H15 Religiosity mediates the relationship between ethnic identity and voting intention.

In PLS-SEM, evaluating the mediating effect of Social Media and Religiosity uses a bootstrapping procedure. By assessing the indirect effect report, it can be validated if there is a mediation effect. Table 5.4 displays the indirect effect report. All the indirect effects were not supported. H12 had ß = 0.000 with p-values of 0.935, followed by H13 with ß = 0.033 and p-values of 0.232. In addition, H14 had ß = -0.001 and p-values of 0.804. Further, H15 had ß = 0.014 with p-values of 0.767. The 95% bootstrapping confidence interval results were as follows: [LL=-0.009, UL=0.010],

[LL=-0.021, UL=0.087] and [LL=-0.016, UL=0.008], and [LL=-0.021, UL=0.087], straddled at 0 in between the upper and lower intervals, thus suggesting that there was no mediation. The calculation followed the formula recommended by Preachers and Hayes (2008), as below.

Lower limit (LL)a*b-z (SE) (z value, for 0.05 level is 1.96)

Upper limit (UL) a*b + z (SE)

Table 5.4 Indirect Effects

	Path	Std Error	BCI LL	BCL UL	T-Value	P Values	Decision	R	f	VIF
Attitude → Social Media→ Voting Intention	0.000	0.005	-0.009	0.010	0.082	0.935	Not Supported	0.087	0.05	2.247
Ethnic identity → Social Media→ Voting Intention	0.033	0.028	-0.021	0.087	1.198	0.232	Not supported		0.001	2.247
Attitude → Religiosity → Voting Intention	-0.001	0.006	-0.016	0.008	0.248	0.804	Not supported			
Ethnic identity → Religiosity → Voting Intention	0.014	0.048	-0.021	0.087	0.298	0.767	Not supported			

In summary, the study concluded that the hypotheses for H12 until H15 on the mediating effect of Social Media and Religiosity were insignificant.

5.4.2 Assessment of Moderation Analysis

The moderation hypothesis test is after the testing of the direct effect. A moderator is a third construct that can change or affect the relationship between the independent and dependent variables (Dawson, 2014; Hair et al., 2017). This study used continuous data types for moderation and analysis using SmartPLS 3.

This study hypothesised that:

H16 Candidate image moderates the relationship between attitude and voting intention.

H17 Candidate image moderates the relationship between ethnic identity and voting intention.

The moderation assessment followed the orthogonalising approach, which builds on the indicators approach and requires creating all product indicators of the interaction terms (Ramayah et al., 2018). The first step was to create an interaction effect between the two indicators of attitude and initial trust. The R^2 for the primary model (without interaction) was 0.379, and with the interaction effect model, the R^2 was 0.384. The R^2 change of 0.005 indicated that by adding one interaction term, the R2 changes by about 0.5% (i.e., additional variance). Next, calculate the effect size using the following formula:

$$f^2 = \frac{R^2 \text{ included moderator} - R^2 \text{ excluded moderator}}{1\text{-}R^2 \text{ included moderator}}$$

Based on the guidelines by Kenny and Judd (2016), 0.005, 0.01, and 0.025, respectively, show the standards for small, medium, and large effect sizes. Therefore, based on the value of 0.0068, it can be concluded that the effect size is small (Kenny & Judd, 2016). Although the beta confidence for the interaction of Voting Attitude*Candidate Images is 0.077 and Ethnic Identity*Candidate Images is -0.057 (refer to Table 5.5), there is no confirmation whether it is statistically significant or not. Therefore, bootstrapping procedures were applied to determine the significance of the relationship. The cutoff value for the test was 1.96 (α=0.05). From Table 5.5 below, the interaction terms Voting Attitude*Candidate Images and Ethnic Identity*Candidate Images were insignificant (t= 1.332; t=1.186) for the two-tailed test with a significant level of 5%. Therefore, in conclusion, hypotheses H16 and H17 were rejected.

Table 5.5 Moderation Model Assessment

		Path Coefficient	Standard Error	t-value	f^2	p-values
H16	Attitude* Candidate Image → Voting Intention	0.077	0.058	1.332	0.006	0.184
H17	Ethnic Identity * Candidate Image → Voting Intention	-0.057	0.048	1.186	0.005	0.236

5.4.3 Assessment of PLSpredict

Additionally, to demonstrate the model's predictive significance, the researcher employs the PLSpredict algorithm to anticipate the efficacy of PLS models (Shmueli et al., 2016). PLSpredict techniques include cross-validated case-wise and average-case point predictions, root mean squared error (RMSE), mean absolute error (MAE), and mean absolute percentage error (MAPE). As Shmueli et al. (2016) proposed, this research analyses employed RMSE and MAE. The PLSpredict algorithm used the K-fold cross-validation concept, which also applied to the validation of holdout samples (Shmueli et al., 2016). The PLSpredict test was executed with ten folds (k=10) and ten repetitions (r=10). PLSpredict provided two (2) rudimentary benchmarks: 1) linear model (LM) predictions; 2) mean value Q2 to assess the predictive accuracy of the estimated PLS path model. A Q2 predicted value of zero or less indicates that the PLS-SEM analysis's predictive capacity for that indicator does not exceed the naivest benchmark.

Researchers should compare the RMSE and MAE values for those indicators with Q2 predict > 0 to the naive LM benchmark. The model has excellent predictive

potential if all indicators in the PLS-SEM study have lower RMSE and MAE values than the naive LM benchmark (Shmueli et al., 2016).

In the first phase, the researcher identified that all the endogenous constructs' indicators exceeded the naivest benchmark since all the indicators provide Q^2 predictive values greater than zero. Following that, the researcher did a more in-depth analysis of the prediction errors to determine the critical prediction statistic. For all indicators, the PLS-based prediction produces more accurate out-of-sample predictions (i.e., low prediction errors). In addition, the researcher found that the PLS-SEM analysis yielded fewer prediction errors for all indicators when the RMSE and MAE values from the PLS-SEM analysis were compared to the naive LM benchmark.

The researcher concluded that the research model tested in this study has predictive power (i.e., out-of-sample prediction) that can predict values for new observations of voting attitudes, Ethnic Identity, Religiosity, Social Media, Candidate Image, and Voting Intention using data that were not included in the dataset used to test the research model (Dolce et al., 2017). Table 5.6 shows the results of PLSpredict's statistical analysis.

Table 5.6 PLSpredict Assessment

	PLS-SEM				**LM**		**PLS-LM**	
	RMSE	MAE	MAPE	Q^2_predict	RMSE	MAE	RMSE	MAE
VI3	0.715	0.564	15.337	0.184	0.714	0.562	0.001	0.002
VI1	0.655	0.516	13.989	0.163	0.661	0.500	-0.006	0.016
VI4	0.662	0.517	13.731	0.150	0.667	0.521	-0.005	-0.003
VI2	0.707	0.546	15.221	0.162	0.728	0.556	-0.022	-0.009

5.5 SUMMARY OF HYPOTHESES TESTING

Based on the previous evaluation of the structural model, the assessment of the path coefficient and the t-value are used to assess the hypotheses in this study. As seen in Figure 5.1, supported hypotheses were significant at least at the level of 0.05, had expected significant directions (i.e., positive), and consisted of a coefficient value (β) between -0.072 and 0.694. Table 5.7 shows a summary of all the hypotheses tested in this study.

Table 5.7 Summary of Hypotheses Testing

No	**Hypothesis Statement**	**Decision**
H1	There is a positive relationship between voting attitude and voting intention.	Significant
H2	There is a positive relationship between ethnic identity and voting intention.	Not Significant
H3	There is a positive relationship between voting attitudes and social media.	Not Significant
H4	There is a positive relationship between ethnic identity and social media	Significant
H5	There is a positive relationship between social media and voting intention.	Not Significant
H6	There is a positive relationship between voting attitude and religiosity.	Not Significant
H7	There is a positive relationship between ethnic identity and religiosity.	Significant
H8	There is a positive relationship between religiosity and voting intention.	Not Significant
H9	There is a positive relationship between candidate image and voting intention.	Significant

H10	There is a positive relationship between attitude and candidate image.	Significant
H11	There is a positive relationship between religiosity and candidate image.	Significant
H12	Social media mediates the relationship between voting attitude and voting intention.	Not Significant
H13	Social media mediates the relationship between ethnic identity and voting intention.	Not Significant
H14	Religiosity mediates the relationship between voting attitude and voting intention.	Not Significant
H15	Religiosity mediates the relationship between ethnic identity and voting intention.	Not Significant
H16	Candidate image moderates the relationship between voting attitude and voting intention	Not Significant
H17	Candidate image moderates the relationship between ethnic identity and voting intention.	Not Significant

5.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The PLS-SEM assessment effectively examined the relationships between variables, revealing six significant and 11 insignificant associations among the 17 studied. In this context, "insignificant" signifies a weaker predictive strength. The datasets were confirmed to be reliable and valid, with no missing values. Additionally, all items displayed normal and adequate distribution, with skewness measuring less than 1.03 and kurtosis less than 1.42, supporting data validity. Furthermore, univariate and multivariate Mahalanobis distance analyses found no outliers, further strengthening the dataset's reliability.

The study believes in data analysis, insignificant correlations may arise despite reliable and valid data due to various factors, including statistical noise, random

variation, and the complexity of real-world relationships. These factors, alongside other limitations in sample representation, can also lead to correlations that lack statistical significance despite the validity or reliability of the data. Sample size, the nature of variable relationships, and chance also impact the significance of correlations. Hole, (2023) reminds that do not assume when two things are strongly connected, it means one causes the other. In other words, do not assume causation from correlation.

However, insignificant correlations do not necessarily imply the absence of a relationship; they may signal the need for further investigation or alternative statistical techniques to uncover meaningful associations. When discussing statistical significance, we are looking at whether a result is likely due to something real or just a random occurrence. If something is statistically significant, the result is probably not just by chance. On the other hand, practical significance is about whether that result matters in the real world. Even if something is not statistically significant, it does not mean there is no relationship; it might just mean we must look at it differently. Practical significance means understanding if the result has any meaningful application or importance in real-life situations. Hyde (2007) discusses this difference, highlighting that statistical significance is not one of many things we should consider; we need to consider whether the results are valuable or necessary in the real world.

At the same time, the analysis also found the role of mediators (i.e., religiosity and social media) and moderators (candidate image) in this study to be less effective. But this is not a distinct case. Prior research has presented conflicting findings regarding the role of social media as a mediator (Zhang et al., 2023). Its consistent mediation in specific behavioural contexts appears limited due to the diverse nature of user interaction across different behaviours and user groups, leading to variations and inconsistent mediating effects. Moreover, external factors such as real-life experiences and information overload on social media platforms can overshadow its mediating impact, posing challenges for users to translate their attitudes into concrete stances. Beaudoin and Thorson (2004) suggested that the media effect may vary by medium and community types, while Leong (2015) argued that it might influence users through news and specific areas. Additionally, concerns about the credibility and authenticity of shared information on social media significantly influence users' trust and, consequently, the platform's effectiveness in mediating variable relationships.

Ultimately, Samsudin (2019) noted that social media does not necessarily directly impact effectiveness but rather reinforces existing attitudes.

Similarly, religiosity may not consistently function as a mediator between the variables (Villani et al., 2019). The diverse beliefs and practices, coupled with individual interpretations of religious teachings, result in varying levels of commitment, leading to inconsistencies in its mediating role. As noted by Goldberg (2014), voters' preferences are contextual and may impact some individuals but not others. Therefore, it is reasonable to assert that external factors such as cultural norms and personal experiences can overshadow the mediating impact of religiosity, thereby diminishing its influence within specific behavioural contexts. Additionally, it is noteworthy that religious identity commitment positively predicted life satisfaction among religious individuals but not among those who were uncertain about their religious affiliation and identity.

In conclusion, Chapters 4 and 5 discovered several pertinent findings that will be elaborated, discussed, and concluded in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an overview of the research findings, followed by an in-depth discussion of the theoretical implications, practical implications, and contributions of the study. Finally, the limitations of the study and several recommendations are also provided accordingly.

Understanding the party realignment predicament for political stability is essential to sustaining a stable government from psychological causes and societal consequences. However, the socio-political situational threats may vary in political systems given the various change agents the study attempts to determine. The variations might not align with the previous scholars' viewpoints. The study hypothesised that the two main elements of TRA, voting attitudes and subjective norms indicated by ethnic identity, explain the phenomenon. The study also includes social media, candidate image, and religion to have a more substantial explanatory capacity for defining and forecasting the level of propensity among voters.

6.2 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

This study discusses voting intention from the perspective of TRA. The theory states that attitudinal factors (e.g., voting attitude) and normative factors (e.g., ethnic identity) can affect voting intention as the variable to be explained. The study examines attitudes towards voting for party realignment and the normative beliefs that would expend the effort for change. Singh et al. (1995) conducted a similar study using the same TRA in the background of Singaporean plural society. They found the TRA was generally effective in predicting the functions of attitudes and subjective-norm components on voting intention. Others asserted that attitude and subjective norms are constructive components of the TRA influencing voting intention (Butt & Awang, 2017; Mohanachandran & Govindarajo, 2020).

Besides the two (2) core theoretical assumptions, voting attitude and ethnic identity factors, contained in the TRA, the present study introduced religiosity and social media as mediators and candidate image as a moderator in the theoretical model. The objective is to examine the likely changes and the impact on the relationship between voting attitude and ethnic identity as independent variables and voting intention as a dependent variable due to religiosity, social media, and candidate image intervention. Hence, to understand the voters' commitment, direction, thinking, and character on the party realignment issue.

The research in N.07 Batang Kali, Selangor, employed a quantitative approach utilising proportionate stratified random sampling. Questionnaires were distributed based on ethnicity to examine Malaysian voters' propensity for party realignment during elections. Six variables, including voting intention, attitude, ethnic identity, social media usage, religiosity, and candidate image, were measured using established methodologies. The self-administered questionnaire targeted voters aged 21 and above.

The study used two types of software for data analysis: IBM Statistical Package for Social Science (IBM-SPSS) and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). IBM-SPSS provided insights into respondents' demographics and characteristics, such as party preference, candidate expectations, societal commitment, religious obligations, social media influence, and political participation. The goal was to understand voters' political views based on their beliefs and practices.

SmartPLS-SEM examined how voting attitude and ethnic identity influenced party realignment during elections. It also examined intervening factors like religiosity, social media, and candidate image as mediators and moderators. This involved assessing the measurement model and structural relationships to measure construct reliability and inter-construct connections. The results indicated internal consistency, dependability, and adequacy above the reliability threshold, with all constructs being distinct and well-distributed.

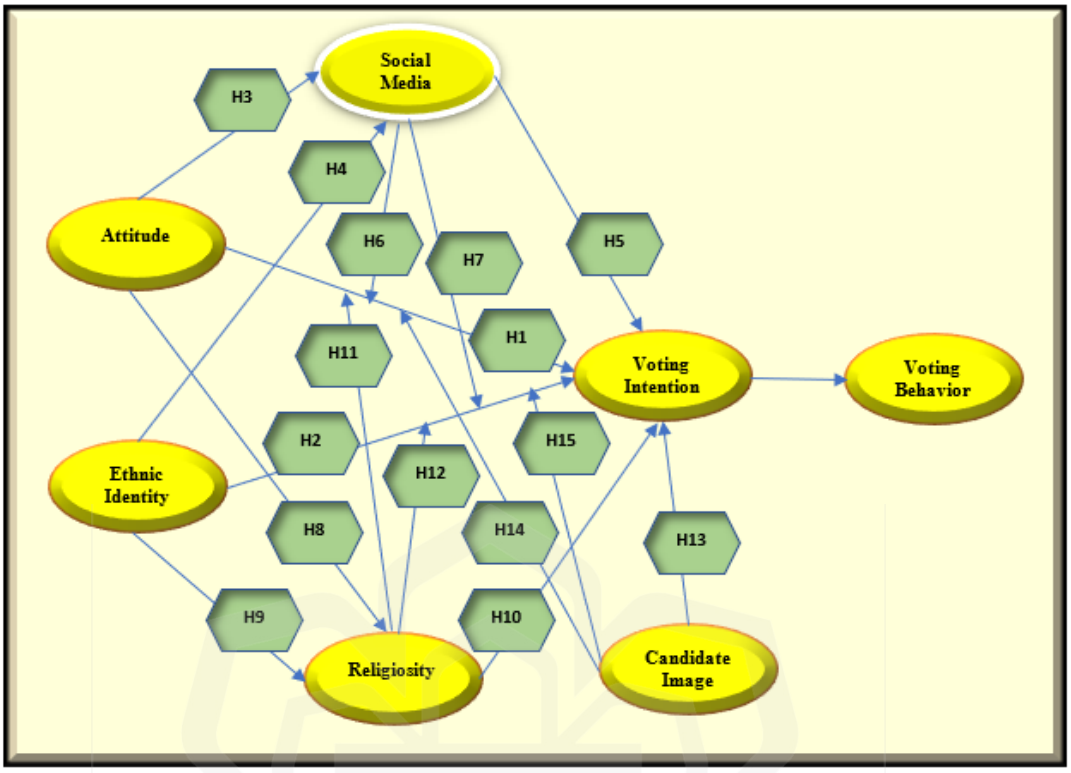


Figure 6.1 Theoretical Framework

Guided by the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), the study proposed a theoretical framework (Figure 6.1) to illustrate how attitudes and social norms influence voting intentions, representing voters' inclination for party realignment during elections. Voting intention reflects shifts in partisan strength, as supported by Allsop and Weisberg (1988). Additionally, religiosity and social media were introduced as mediators. At the same time, candidate image served as a moderator, exploring their impact on the relationship between voting attitude and ethnic identity as independent variables and voting intention as the dependent variable. This analysis aims to deepen our understanding of voter behaviour and the propensity for party realignment. The study tested 17 hypotheses, revealing six significant and 11 insignificant results.

The current study's statistical results are shown in the structural model (see Figure 5.1 and Table 5.7). The sections that follow will talk about the relationships between the constructs based on the order of the research questions (RO).

6.2.1 Research Question 1 (RQ1)

Why is there a significant relationship between voting attitude, ethnic identity, social media, religiosity, and candidate image on the intention for party realignment?

Conclusively, Figure 4.1 illustrates the relationship for each hypothesis crafted from RQ1. Hypothetically, two (2) core theoretical assumptions, attitudinal (i.e., voting attitude) and normative (i.e., ethnic identity) factors, are applied to measure voters' orientation, commitment, and direction towards the party realignment. At the same time, the study also explained the relationship between social media, religiosity, and candidate image and voting intentions. It was hypothesised that:

H1 There is a significant relationship between voting attitude and voting intention among Malaysian voters during an election.

Voting Attitudes ⟶ Voting Intention

Model 1: Voting Attitudes – Voting Intention Relationship

The current study indicates that voting attitude significantly influences voting intention, as demonstrated in Model 1. Voting attitudes provide high direct effects on voting intention. The path coefficient indicated the p-value was 0.000 and the t-value was 3.920. Numerous studies have shown that attitude is a strong predictor of behavioural intentions. For example, Mohanachandran and Govindarajo (2020) and Singh et al. (1995) proved that the attitude of voters has a good relationship in determining the pattern of casting ballots. The findings from these studies support the significance of voters' voting attitudes and intentions towards voting for political parties.

The result is consistent with TRA. The attitude effectively forecasts the intentions. TRA posited that cognitive judgement forms one's beliefs. The salient set of beliefs developed a perceived value and inspired the attitude. The conative component of the attitude influenced the general level of intention's favourability and may affect future undertakings accordingly. Given a similar process related to the current situation in the case of this study on an election, the conative component of the attitude may influence the proclivity to align with a party. It is also suggested that any changes in attitude will consequently affect such intentions. Based on empirical findings, the research model successfully predicts voters' attitudes towards voting intention, which

is determined by how they feel about political candidates, and political parties **(**Duran & Trafimow, 2000**).** People would adjust their attitudes in response to their emotional assessments of an object, like political parties and candidates during election days **(**Fiske et al., 2007). This shows that voters' attitudes and related characteristics will align with the consequences.

Therefore, voting behaviour represents people's voting attitudes, which are based on how they view the overall political factors that affect their belief systems and perceived values antecedent to voting intention.

In line with the above notion, the second hypothesis of the current study postulates the correlation between ethnic identity and voting intention:

H2 There is a significant relationship between ethnic identity and voting intention for party realignment during an election.

Ethnic Identity ⟶ Voting Intention

Model 2: Ethnic Identity – Voting Intention Relationship

Previous studies like Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), Patton et al. (2016), and Butt and Awang (2017) asserted that ethnic identity is a constructive subjective norm (SN) that influences intention (i.e., party realignment). Similarly, in Malaysia, several scholars postulated that ethnic identity had been active in forming Malaysian voting behaviour (Ratnam, 1965; Crouch, 1996; Welsh, 2020). These findings suggested that the dominant political party has demonstrated significant linkages to ethnic identities to support the candidates, which affects voters' intentions to support political parties as well as the candidates. To appeal to a particular racial or ethnic group, candidates may want to emphasise shared racial or ethnic identity and customs. Hence, voters' decisions are significantly influenced by the SN component of TRA (i.e., ethnicity).

In contrast, the research findings of the current study found that the relationship between ethnic identity and voting intention was insignificant. The path coefficient shows a p-value of 0.487 and *a t*-value of 0.696. In this study, ethnic identity conceptualised as SN had a negligible effect on voting intention and contradicted the fundamental precept of TRA. The outcome implied that SN is no longer about the beliefs of others, where the individual tends to respect and follow the community

consensus. Conclusively, ethnic identity and voting intention may have different interpretations or concepts of party realignment in a pluralistic society like Malaysia.

The phenomenon is not distinct. In a study conducted in Singapore, within the diverse cultural backgrounds, including ethnicity, manners, customs, and religious role models, Singh et al. (1995) found that SN as an interpersonal referent did not explain the intention. In this case, people's interpersonal relationships are weak. Thus, we can expect similar effects on Malaysians who have the characteristics of the pluralistic nature of ethnicity and culture, such as psycho-ethnic attachments, compartmentalised living, and long-standing psychological ties with tradition and religion.

In addition, the third hypothesis of the current study postulates the correlation between social media and voting intention:

H3 There is a significant relationship between social media and voting intention among Malaysian voters during an election.

Social Media ⟶ Voting Intention

Model 3: Social Media – Voting Intention Relationship.

Generally, scholars assume that social media is constructive in developing a convincing social belief and can create a favourable perceived value to influence voting behaviour (Bond et al., 2012; Idid, 2018; Biswas et al., 2014). In line with the current study, Lee (2017) found that social media was a crucial political communication tool in GE14. Social media plays a part in influencing voters' intentions to vote. Based on the information they receive, social media may or may not favourably affect a voter's decision. According to Mohanachandran and Govindarajo (2020), voters' intentions to vote or changes in their choice to vote are affected by political communication on social media that encourages unfavourable assessments and disrespectful beliefs about political parties and candidates during campaigns.

However, the path co-efficient assessment of the current study shows that social media had an insignificant relationship with voting intentions, with a p-value of 0.218 and a t-value of 1.235. This analysis showed that online networking could not influence voting intentions for a party realignment in Malaysia. The media needs to be more functional in creating support. However, the phenomenon is not unusual. Moreover, Samsudin (2018) asserted that it is a misconception to say that the media influences

individuals' voting behaviour. It is only a medium to reach people, not a causative agent that directly or indirectly causes people to believe in the media. The favourability of consumption may depend on the individuals' predispositions and pre-existing attitudes. In this case, Jacks and Cameron (2003) argued that it may be rejected or neutralized, and users can lose persistence, hold back, or be adamant with their decision rather than shift quickly according to the media narratives.

Furthermore, the fourth hypothesis of the current study postulates the correlation between religiosity and voting intention:

H4 There is a significant relationship between religiosity and voting intention among Malaysian voters during an election.

Religiosity ⟶ Voting Intention

Model 4: Religiosity – Voting Intention Relationship.

Conceptually, religion influences and shapes human behaviour, including how they behave and interact, which depends on the strength of an individual's beliefs (Esposito & Voll, 1996; Rashid Menhas et al., 2015; Stoeckl, 2016). Regarding politics, religion impacts one's views on political issues and how one forms an attitude on the subject (Gibbs, 2005). Nonetheless, the current study found that the measurement centred on the understanding of the association and commitment of religiosity towards party realignment was less pertinent. The findings showed that religiosity and voting intentions had an insignificant relationship. The path co-efficient assessment reported that the p-value is 0.764, below the standardly accepted value of <0.5 and the t-value of 0.300.

The phenomenon is not distinct. Omelicheva and Ahmed (2017) argued that religiosity is a deterrent rather than a force for political participation, irrespective of their doctrinal differences in religious praxis. The adherents' political decisions are usually affected by their experiences, especially regarding matters against religious values. They will be more alert and try to avoid getting stuck again with similar mistakes or discontent. Moreover, the individual's intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity may discourage one's political participation or withdrawal from politics (Brown, 2000; Pace, 2014). It means that personal intimacy with religious beliefs and practices and religion

as a source of social connection and personal benefit influence individuals' motives, benefits, and cost considerations in politics.

Finally, the fifth hypothesis of the current study postulates the correlation between candidate image and voting intention:

H5 There is a significant relationship between candidate image and voting intention among Malaysian voters during a political election.

Candidate Image ⟶ Voting Intention

Model 5: Candidate Image – Voting intention relationship.

The current study proves that candidate image directly correlates with voting intention. The relationship implied that candidate image floated and propagated in the political market during the campaign, inviting public reactions towards party realignment. The p-value was 0.000 and the t-value was 5.918.

Scholars agreed that a candidate's political attributes affect voting intention. Among the pushing factors are leadership credibility and charismatic traits (Temiz & Islam, 2019). In addition, the candidate's experiences and previous performance report cards became the yardstick for choice. In this respect, Markwat (2021) argued that voters would adjust or fix any dissatisfaction with the candidate through elections. This scenario will encourage a high tendency to vote and put the candidate's image at high stake. The study demonstrates the trend. Voters have a high turnout propensity and high expectations of candidate image, signalling its significance for party realignment. Therefore, the list of voters' preferences for a candidate's image and the mechanism to promote the attributes are vital to managing interest in change or aligning the party.

6.2.2 Research Question 2 (RQ2)

Why is there a significant relationship between social media and religiosity on voting attitude and ethnic identity in influencing voters' intention to realign a party?

This section explains the relationships between social media-voting attitude, social media-ethnic identity, religiosity-voting attitude, and religiosity-ethnic identity.

The sixth hypothesis of the current study postulates the correlation between social media and voting attitudes:

H6 There is a significant relationship between social media and voting attitudes among Malaysian voters during an election.

Social Media ⟶ Voting Attitudes

Model 6: Social Media – Voting Attitudes Relationship

Scholars generally agree that social media influences voters' attitudes. The information and knowledge acquired through social media increased awareness. In the case of politics, it increased political participation to the extent that it could change public opinion to follow the direction of the news exposed by social media (Persily, 2017; Ward, 2018). It infers that social online networking applications are influential in developing, modifying, and changing political efficacy, as well as voting intention (Tufail et al., 2015).

Contradictorily, the research findings show that the relationship between social media and voting attitudes is insignificant. The path-coefficient assessment showed a p-value of 0.919 and a *t*-value of 0.102. It indicated that what the voters learned from the up-to-date information and the inferences they made from social media did not increase their tendency to realign the party. In other words, they relied on social media to decide and had high intentions to go out and vote, but the narratives brought by social media did not cause an attitudinal change.

The above phenomenon is not distinct. In the study of Malaysian youth, Tan (2022) found that social media does not help predict voting behaviour but rather distracts from their obligation as voters. Further, social media may invite heavy use of online networking but may not necessarily encourage voters to vote (Baharin et al., 2017). Additionally, although the public's opinion towards political parties and politicians has developed after many years of engagement, during election seasons, social media dispersal of false information and the sharing of unverified and inauthentic information about political parties and politicians may divert voters' attention, like the emerging threat of AI-powered deepfakes manipulating videos for malicious ends (Appel & Prietzel, 2022).

Moreover, the voters' attitudes may not be firmer with the overload of social media news. Instead, they become critical and selective with the media feeds. The findings show that voters would filter the messages according to their interests or what

is important to them before making inferences for decision-making. In this situation, Jacks and Cameron (2003) said they tend to delay or hold their decision rather than shift quickly. The excessive information would affect their problem-solving efficiency, causing them to resist persuasion (Chernev et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2021).

In summary, information overload and trust in the news contribute to the relationship between social media and attitude. The credibility of news content undermines or may recondition the mindset, perceptions, and modes of expression. Meanwhile, overexposed information causes a reduction in the persuasion effect and thus tends to delay or hold voters' decisions rather than shift quickly, which may affect people's inclination towards party realignment.

Moreover, the seventh hypothesis of the current study postulates the correlation between social media and ethnic identity:

H7 There is a significant relationship between social media and ethnic identity among Malaysian voters during an election.

Social Media ⟶ Ethnic Identity

Model 7: Social Media – Ethnic Identity Relationship

The current study indicates that social media has a significant relationship with ethnic identity. The path co-efficient assessment showed a beta value of 0.537 and a p-value of 0.000. Furthermore, it has a strong effect on ethnic identity value at 0.343. It implies that social media shapes people's norms as a social force.

Scholars agreed that social media influences one's political culture and discourse (Saodah Wok & Shafizan Mohamed, 2017; Shaharuddin et al., 2012) to the extent of how one adapts to a situation and views ethno-relative and empathy among communities (Mostafa Radwan, 2022), but any threat to their identity may affect their attitude towards future undertakings (Muhammad Ateeq & Muhammad Shahbaz, 2010).

The eighth hypothesis of the current study postulates the correlation between religiosity and voting attitudes:

H8 There is a significant relationship between religiosity and voting attitude among Malaysian voters during an election.

Religiosity ⟶ Voting Attitudes

Model 8: Religiosity – Voting Attitude Relationship

Using TRA, several scholars indicated a significant relationship between voting attitudes and religiosity (Rahman et al., 2015; Arshia Mukhtar & Mohsin Muhammad Butt, 2012). Furthermore, the theory of planned behaviour also assumes that religion is a background factor that influences attitudes and subjective norms (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005; Syed Shah Alam et al., 2012).

However, the statistical analysis of the current study showed that religiosity has an insignificant effect on attitude. The p-value was 0.082, and the effect size was 0.008, which was too small to explain the relationship between religiosity and voting attitude. The situation indicates that the strength of religious affiliation and commitment with attitude needs to be adequate to explain the voting decision, herewith, it is whether to realign a party.

The phenomenon is not unusual. For example, Omelicheva and Ahmed (2018) found that religiosity is a deterrent rather than a mobiliser for political participation, except for those seculars who would engage in political activities. Generally, their motive (e.g., need or a grievance), political opportunity structure (e.g., political positions and power), and incentives (e.g., consideration of benefit and costs) become considerations and strategic assessment factors for decision-making. Furthermore, some religions would promote strong political participation, while others would be detached from politics depending on their interpretations of religious scriptures and responsibilities to defend the faith. Therefore, the path coefficient of religiosity and attitude would not be significant until the desire for self-interest synced, their worries elicited, and egoist beliefs rationalised (Overall & Gedeon, 2022; Sarkissian, 2012; Huda, 2010). Therefore, political behaviour could not be concluded based on religious beliefs alone but on other external factors with which the religion interacts.

The ninth hypothesis of the current study postulates the correlation between ethnic identity and religiosity:

H9 There is a significant relationship between ethnic identity and religiosity among Malaysian voters during an election.

Ethnic Identity ⟶ Religiosity

Model 9: Ethnic Identity – Religiosity Relationship

Both religion and ethnic identity are social norms. Social norms play a pivotal role in defining one's cultural characteristics and providing individuals with a sense of meaning, identity, and belonging. In other words, ethnic identity and religion have desirable functions as the foundation for meaning construction and consistency. In line with this notion, Kim (2011) stated that ethnic identity is a foundation to build values and practices, while religion prioritises providing the fundamental way to understand the meaning in individuals' walks of life. In Malaysia, ethnic identity and religion coexist and influence the Malaysian way of life, behaviour, and interaction **(**Owoyemi & Ahmad Sabri, 2014**;** Rashid Menhas et al., 2015; Welsh, 2020).

The current study proves the matter discussed above. Ethnic identity's relationship with Religiosity was significant. The path co-efficient assessment showed a strong P-value of 0.000 and a significant size determination co-efficient effect of 1.196. It implies that the ethnic identity-religiosity relationship has a compelling social pressure to influence individuals' orientation, commitment, and direction (e.g., for party realignment).

6.2.3 Research Question 3 (RQ3)

How do social media and religiosity mediate the relationship between voting attitude and ethnic identity on the intention for party realignment?

This section explained the function of social media and religiosity as a mediator between ethnic identity and voting attitude on voting intention. The tenth hypothesis of the current study postulates the mediating effect of social media between voting attitudes and voting intention:

H10 Social Media mediates the relationship between voting attitudes and voting intention among Malaysian voters during political elections.

Voting Attitude ⟶ Social Media ⟶ Voting Intention

Model 10: Social Media Mediating Voting Attitude with Voting Intention.

The current study shows that social media's mediating role between Attitude and Voting Intention is insignificant. This phenomenon goes against the general belief

that social media plays an important role in shaping public opinion and intention. For instance, Tsfati and Cohen (2013) said social media increases positive impacts (i.e., perception) by developing the level of confidence (i.e., voting intention) before committing a probable act. Nonetheless, the statistical data showed the opposite. The indirect effect ß = 0.000 was insignificant with p-values of 0.935, while the 95% bootstrapping confidence interval result was [LL=-0.009, UL=0.010]. It did not straddle the value of 0.0 between the upper and lower confidence intervals (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

The findings implied that social media has little role in party realignment. It may facilitate electoral campaigns but may not help predict voting behaviour. Social media is not a causative agent that can change one's attitude and favourability on a subject, like interest in realigning the party (Dimitrova et al., 2014). They may even reject the idea (e.g., party realignment) if it contradicts their predisposition or pre-existing attitudes or does not meet their intrinsic and extrinsic psychological needs (Foster, Francesscucci, & West, 2010). Scholars agreed that any threat to local culture and beliefs may affect public attitudes towards their undertakings (Muhammad Ateeq & Muhammad Shahbaz, 2010).

Similarly, too much information may not help one's attitude more firmly. Indeed, it will distract from one's obligation to vote (Tan, 2022) and increase resistance to change (Wang et al., 2021). Moreover, age cohort and party affiliation differences may further affect the social media mediating ability. For example, Bachmann et al. (2010) offered that they might have different interests, motives, and inferences on the subject.

Furthermore, the eleventh hypothesis of the current study postulates the mediating effect of social media between ethnic identity and voting intention:

H11 Social Media mediates the relationship between ethnic identity and voting intention among Malaysian voters during political elections.

Ethnic Identity ⟶ Social Media ⟶ Voting Intention

Model 11: Social Media Mediating Ethnic Identity with Voting Intention

Generally, social media could mediate the relationship between ethnic identity and intention. For instance, a study by Tao and Fisher (2022) found that social media

influences the credibility of individual judgements of a subject. The perceived benefit provided by social media rebuilds, maintains, or switches people's intention to perform an act, such as party realignment. Existing research tends to conceptualise and measure social media (e.g., in terms of voters' affiliation and general indications of the importance of social media) to mediate the relationship between ethnic identities (e.g., with regards to the voters' social affection, commitment, and belonging) and the individuals voting intention to realign party.

Nonetheless, the findings of the current study indicate that the indirect relationship is insignificant. The ß = 0.033 and p-values of 0.232. The 95% bootstrapping confidence interval result was [LL=-0.021, UL=0.087] straddled a 0 between the upper and lower intervals, suggesting there was no mediation. The insignificant relationship implied that social media's persuasive power and freedom of interaction are not enough to encourage the relationship between ethnic identity and voting intention.

Concerning such a result, Samsudin (2019) explained that it is a misconception to think that social media influences voters in totality. Although social media could shape normative beliefs (Chinnasamy & Roslan, 2015), where ethnic identity is also normative, their combination is not adequate to increase the voters' political participation. It could not directly affect the voters' minds and broaden their political involvement. This situation is affected, especially under the circumstances of unfiltered and less-focused, overloaded media biases on political news (Heblich, 2016) that are against the voters' predisposition beliefs.

Additionally, the twelfth hypothesis of the current study postulates the mediating effect of religiosity between voting attitudes and voting intention:

H12 Religiosity mediates the relationship between voting attitude and voting intention among Malaysian voters during political elections.

Voting Attitude ⟶ Religiosity ⟶ Voting Intention

Model 12: Religiosity Mediating Voting Attitude with Voting Intention

Generally, religion can influence voters' general system of values that could affect attitudes and behavioural intentions to perform an act (Beard et al., 2013). Existing research tends to conceptualise and measure religiosity (e.g., in terms of voters'

affiliation, commitment, and importance) that would mediate the relationship between voting attitude (e.g., cognitive belief to vote) and individual voting intention (e.g., to realign party). For instance, Ben-Nun Bloom and Arikan (2013) postulated that religion offers doctrines, values, and narratives that can motivate the mediating process and boost one's attitude towards performing an act.

However, the findings of the current study indicate that the indirect relationship is insignificant. The indirect effect ß = -0.001 and p-values of 0.804. The 95% bootstrapping confidence interval result was [LL=-0.016, UL=0.008] straddled a 0 between the upper and lower intervals, suggesting no mediation. This evidence means that Religiosity was inadequate to mediate Voting Attitudes to realign the party. As discussed before, there were even weak relationships between Religiosity and Voting Attitudes and Voting Intention, meaning that Religiosity has a different concept or measurement from Voting Attitude and Intention. This phenomenon would automatically discourage intervention.

On top of that, it is evident from a study conducted by Omelicheva and Ahmed (2017) that religiosity can be a deterrent instead of developing an interest in participating in politics because of one's motive, political opportunity, and cost-benefit considerations. Voters may also distance themselves from politics for reasons influenced by religious scriptures and obligations to defend their beliefs (Sarkissian, 2012). In short, it means that one's spiritual intimacy as a source of social connection and self-interest may discourage one's political participation (Brown, 2000; Pace, 2014).

Moreover, the thirteenth hypothesis of the current study postulates the mediating effect of religiosity between ethnic identity and voting intention:

H13 Religiosity mediates the relationship between ethnic identity and voting intention among Malaysian voters during political elections.

Ethnic Identity ⟶ Religiosity ⟶ Voting Intention

Model 13: Religiosity Mediating Ethnic Identity with Voting Intention

Existing research tends to conceptualise and measure Religiosity (e.g., in terms of voters' affiliation, commitment, and importance) that would mediate the relationship between Ethnic Identity (e.g., affection, commitment, and belonging) and individual

Voting Intention (e.g., to realign party). However, the findings of the current study indicated that the indirect relationship was insignificant. The indirect effect is ß = 0.014 and p-values 0.767. The 95% bootstrapping confidence interval result is [LL=-0.021, UL=0.087] straddled a 0 between the upper and lower intervals, suggesting no mediation.

Although religiosity and ethnic identity had similar chemistry in determining the orientation and commitment of individuals, religiosity could not mitigate the weak ethnic identity relationship with voting intention. This phenomenon is against the arguments that religiosity mediates ethnic identity with voting intention (Graafland, 2017; Butt & Awang, 2017; Mutalib, 1990). In line with this notion, Arzheimer and Carter (2009) postulated that religiosity may reduce or increase the mediating effect.

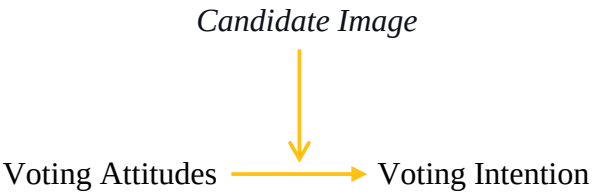
The inability of religiosity to mediate ethnic identity in the relationship with voting intention (i.e., to realign party) is not odd. The findings show that Malaysians are still trapped by ethnoreligious issues that affect their political stance. As explained by Omelicheva and Ahmed (2018), religiosity might be a deterrent because of individuals' predisposition motives, political opportunities, and cost-benefit consequences. Therefore, it is better not to violate their norms and rules or accept the repercussions (Désilets et al., 2020). However, whether the phenomenon is temporary or permanent is worth further research.

6.2.4 Research Question 4 (RQ4)

How does candidate image moderate the relationship between voting attitude and ethnic identity on the intention of realigning the party?

This section explains the function of candidate image as a moderator between Voting Attitude - Voting Intention, and Ethnic Identity – Voting Intention. The fourteenth hypothesis of the current study postulates the moderating effect of candidate image between voting attitudes and voting intention:

H14 Candidate image moderates the relationship between voting attitudes and voting intention among Malaysian voters during a political election.



Model 14: Candidate Image Moderating Voting Attitude with Voting Intention.

Generally, scholars agree that candidate image moderates the relationship between voting attitudes and intentions (Ditonto, 2017; Anisa Aisya, 2013). Previous studies showed that candidate image touches people's emotions (Akhmad Farhan & Azhar Ahmad, 2015; Aygoren & Yilmaz, 2015; Khatib, 2012), broadening their awareness and familiarity, and increasing the chances of converting or reconditioning their perception of the candidate (Banducci et al., 2008; Hsieh & Li, 2008). It can be said that the existing research conceptualised and measured the candidate image (e.g., in terms of candidate persona and commitment) that is assumed to moderate the relationship between attitude (e.g., commitment to vote) and the individual voting intention (e.g., to realign party).

However, the results of the current study showed that candidate image is not the third force that would moderate the relationship between voting attitude and voting intention. The images are inadequate to change or enhance the direction, commitment, and orientation of public attitude towards party realignment. The effect size is small at 0.006. The beta confidence for the interaction of Voting Attitude*Candidate Images is 0.077. The bootstrapping procedure was conducted to confirm the significance of the Candidate Image. The cut-off value for the test is 1.96 (α=0.05). It shows that the interaction term of Voting Attitude*Candidate Images was insignificant (t= 1.332) for the two-tailed test with a significant level of 5%.

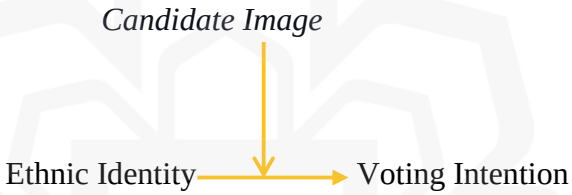
To justify the above findings, Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) explained that external factors (e.g., physical threats or consequences like the GE14 aftermath experiences) and internal factors inferences process (i.e., cognitive evaluation) affect one's belief system (i.e., voting attitude) and cost trust and loyalty thus could not intervene to explain voting intention or one's intention not to realign a party. In another instance, the demography of the voters may also cause Candidate Image to fail to moderate the relationship between Voting Attitude and Voting Intention. Gender, age, dwelling, and context may have different levels of favourable influences on risk-taking, submission, tolerance,

emotion, and empathy, thus triggering different layers of impact on attitude. Individuals with different cognitive judgements may develop different levels of perception and favourability (Lynott & McCandless, 2000; Balmas & Sheafer, 2010).

To sum up, the analysis shows that the candidate image is not functioning as a moderator. The main reasons might be external (e.g., experiences and demography) and internal (e.g., cognitive assessment) factors that contribute to the situation.

Furthermore, the fifteenth hypothesis of the current study postulates the moderating effect of candidate image between ethnic identity and voting intention:

H15 Candidate image moderates the relationship between ethnicity and voting intention among Malaysian voters during political elections.



Model 15: Candidate Image Moderating Ethnic Identity with Voting Intention

The study observed that the effect size was small at 0.006. Although the beta confidence for the interaction of Ethnic Identity*Candidate Images was -0.057, there was no confirmation whether it was statistically significant or not. Therefore, the study used bootstrapping to determine the relationship's significance. The cut-off value for the test was 1.96 (α=0.05). The analysis showed that the interaction term of Ethnic Identity*Candidate Images was insignificant (t=1.186) for the two-tailed test with a significant level of 5%. Hence, the study concluded that hypothesis H15 was insignificant.

This research conceptualised that candidate image (e.g., in terms of candidate persona and commitment) would moderate the relationship between ethnic identity (e.g., affection, belongings, and commitment) and the individual voting intention (e.g., realigning party). However, the study observed that candidate image is not moderating the relationship.

Some previous findings support the above notion. For instance, Horowitz. (2001) argued that in an ethnically divided society, voting is not a rational choice but a way to show a non-negotiable obligation to one's group. This is true in the case of

Malaysian society. Therefore, it is not distinct for individuals to reject a candidate of a different identity. However, although they might not share the identity images, group pressure might affect their voting behaviour to the extent that it provides negative traits of non-partisans (Hoffman & Long, 2013; Tajfel & Turner, 2004). It is happening in Malaysian GE15. They rejected party realignment for a more centripetal democratic government and maintained the status quo with ethnic voting (Welsh, 2023).

Consequently, the sixteenth hypothesis of the current study postulates the relationship between candidate image and voting attitudes:

H16 There is a Significant Relationship between Candidate Image and Voting Attitude

Candidate Image ⟶ Voting Attitude

Model 16: Candidate Image – Voting Attitude Relationship

The current study's findings support the existing scholarly consensus on the significant influence of candidate image on voting attitudes. Numerous studies have demonstrated the importance of gender stereotypes (Dolan & Lynch, 2013), candidates' attributes (McAllister, 2007), sociodemographic characteristics (Arnesen et al., 2019; Kirkland & Coppock, 2018), and issue positions in shaping public evaluations of candidates (Garzia, 2014). Moreover, these studies have emphasised the excellent value placed on substantive representation over descriptive representation and the impact of candidate image on voting decisions compared to social traits.

The current study provides empirical evidence to support these claims, showing a significant relationship between candidate image and attitude. The statistical analysis revealed a p-value of 0.034 and a t-value of 2.125, indicating a meaningful association between candidate attributes and public perception. This suggests that the images projected and disseminated during an election campaign can significantly influence public perception.

Furthermore, the study recognises the role of emotional reactions and the awareness they stimulate when voters encounter candidates with specific images. Past research has also highlighted the impact of salient candidate images on individual preferences and party realignment (Akhmad Farhan & Azhar Ahmad, 2015; Aygoren & Yilmaz, 2015; Khatib, 2012). The descriptive analysis in the current study further

supports the argument that voters actively seek out and are influenced by distinct candidate images, which can shape their stance on party realignment.

Overall, this study reinforces the understanding that candidate image plays a crucial role in shaping voting attitudes. Empirical evidence aligns with previous research, highlighting the significance of candidate attributes and the impact of emotional reactions on public perception. These findings emphasise the need for political campaigns to strategically craft and propagate candidate images that align with desired perceptions and voting intentions.

Finally, the sixteenth hypothesis of the current study postulates the relationship between candidate image and religiosity:

H17 There is a Significant Relationship between Candidate Image and Religiosity

Candidate Image ⟶ Religiosity

Model 17: Candidate Image – Religiosity Relationship

The result of this study showed that the candidate image and religiosity path coefficient were significant. The p-value for the relationship between candidate image and religiosity was 0.000. At the same time, in the assessment of the determination coefficient, the value of the candidate image was 0.557, which indicated a medium effect size.

In line with the above findings, candidate-religious affiliations manipulate image appeals and rhetoric (Bradberry, 2016; Green, 2007). Additionally, Djupe and Smith (2019) agreed that such inducement of religious doctrine into a candidate's image could slowly coalesce a solid base of beliefs among the public. Therefore, we must accept that an average of 90% of the research's respondents are religious. It reflects how religious elements could easily get induced among the voters and influence their candidate preference. The facts support Welsh's (2020) argument that the polarity of religion shaped their political stance to the extent of how they engage with and accept others.

In short, a significant relationship exists between Candidate Image and Religiosity. The religious values injected and manipulated as Candidate Image during the relationship will have an impact on voters' voting proclivity.

6.3 ADDITIONAL CORRELATION AND REGRESSION TEST

After conducting the initial hypothesis test, we proceeded with two additional tests to validate our findings further and provide a more comprehensive study analysis. The first test examined the relationship between Voting Attitude and Ethnic Identity and the connections between Social Media and Religiosity and Social Media and Candidate Image.

To summarise the overall correlation between these variables, we created a correlation matrix table (refer to Table 6.1) adapted from Kossack's work in 1948. This table helps us understand the extent to which these variables are related to each other.

The purpose of these additional tests was to enhance our understanding of the relationships among the variables in question. By analysing the correlations, we can gain valuable insights into how Voting Attitude, Ethnic Identity, Social Media, Religiosity, and Candidate Image are interconnected.

We aim to provide a more comprehensive and nuanced analysis of the study's findings by conducting these tests and utilising the correlation matrix table. This will contribute to a better understanding of the relationships between the variables under investigation.

Table 6.1 Correlation Matrix

Correlation Matrix						
Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6
Voting Attitude		0.394[a]	- 0.072[b]	0.006[b]	0.080[a]	0.182[a]
Ethnic Identity	.394[a]		0.694[a]	0.537[a]	0.315[a]	0.059[b]
Religiosity	- 0.072[b]	0.694[a]		0.308[a]	0.598[a]	0.021[b]
Social Media	0.006[b]	0.537[a]	0.308[a]		0.125[a]	0.062[b]
Candidate Image	0.080[a]	0.315[a]	0.598[a]	0.125[a]		0.441[a]
Voting Intention	0.182[a]	0.059[b]	0.021[b]	0.062[b]	0.441[a]	

Notes: [a] Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level. [b] correlation is insignificant

In the second analysis, we utilised SmartPLS-SEM and SPSS to examine the relationship between the dependent variable, Voting Intention, and several independent variables, including Voting Attitude, Ethnic Identity, Religiosity, Social Media, and Candidate Image. The aim was to identify which variables impact the equation most when included in the regression model, thus enhancing the explanatory power and predictive capability of Voting Intention.

By employing regression coefficients, we sought to quantify the individual contributions of these independent variables in predicting Voting Intention. This analysis allows us to determine each variable's relative importance and collective influence on the outcome.

This analysis aimed to establish a more robust understanding of the factors influencing Voting Intention. Identifying the variables contributing to the equation can enhance our ability to explain and predict individuals' voting behaviours.

Notably, using the SmartPLS-SEM, Candidate Image followed by Voting Attitude highly predicted Voting Intention with coefficients of 0.459 and 0.202, respectively. The distinct point is that Candidate Image outweighed Voter’s Attitude as a core equation in TRA. Meanwhile, using SmartPLS-SEM, other variables had low values, like Social Media at 0.058, Ethnic Identity at 0.046 and Religiosity at 0.025, indicating a negligible contribution (Figure 6.2).

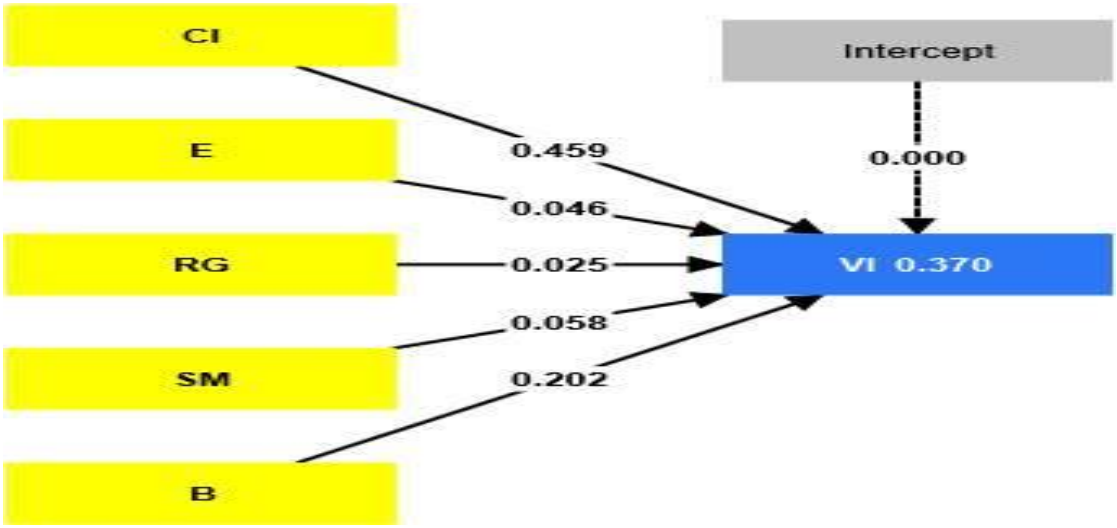


Figure 6.2 Regression Coefficient Summary (using PLS-SEM)

6.4 PARTY REALIGNMENT PROCLIVITY MODEL (PRP MODEL)

The Party Realignment Proclivity Model (PRP Model), presented in Figure 6.3 below, was promoted to explain, predict, and understand the party realignment phenomenon from a Malaysian perspective while considering critical assumptions. The findings of this study have challenged some existing knowledge and expanded practical applications in the field.

Building upon the findings discussed above through the optics of the PRP model (refer to Figure 6.3), four distinct relationships among the study's variables require further exploration and analysis. These relationships are as follows:

1. Attitude – Voting Intention
2. Attitude – Candidate Image – Voting Intention
3. Attitude – Ethnic Identity and Religiosity – Candidate Image – Voting Intention
4. Attitude – Ethnic Identity – Social Media – Candidate Image – Voting Intention

These relationships highlight vital aspects that deserve attention and deliberation. By studying the interaction between attitude, voting intention, candidate image, ethnic identity, religiosity, and social media, we can better understand the factors influencing the phenomenon under investigation and thus contribute to advancing knowledge in the field and offer practical implications.

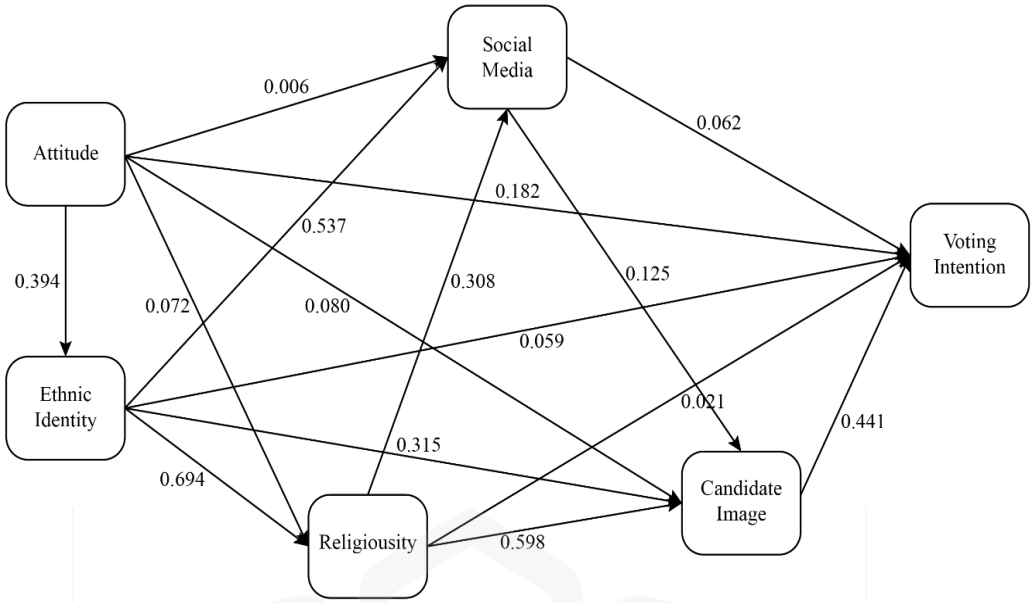


Figure 6.3 Party Realignment Proclivity Model (PRP Model)

6.5 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study has significant theoretical implications that can enhance our understanding of the party realignment propensity theory. These implications can potentially impact and reshape our current comprehension of the functions of two core theoretical assumptions: attitudinal (voting attitude) and normative (ethnic identity). The study measures voters' orientation, commitment, and direction in relation to their intention for party realignment. Additionally, it will explore the correlation between social media usage and religiosity and examine the role of candidate image in shaping voting attitudes and intentions. The findings from this research will contribute to explaining the theory and expand our knowledge regarding the factors that influence party realignment.

6.5.1 Voting Attitude - Voting Intention

The study explored the relationship between voting attitude and intention, specifically regarding party realignment among Malaysian voters. The findings indicated a significant and consistent relationship between Voting Attitudes and Intentions (β=0.182). This result aligns with previous studies by Mohanachandran and

Govindarajo (2020) and Singh et al. (1995), highlighting the crucial role of voting attitude in the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). Therefore, the study contributes to the understanding that voting attitude remains a fundamental and influential factor in shaping voting intentions.

The strong relationship between the two also presents challenges that significantly influence how dominant human attitudes impact the level of public support for a political party participating in an election. Amid this relationship, the study highlights a shift in people's attitudes, favouring personal over societal inclinations. Specifically, despite the positive link between attitudes and subjective norms based on ethnic identity (0.39), which should collectively impact voters' choices, their combined influence on voters' intentions differs from expectations. Subjective norms are found to be ineffective, not significantly influencing people's intention to change ($\beta = 0.059$). This underscores the more significant impact of an individual's self-concept attitudes over societal norms, leading people to personalise their decisions, aligning with observations by Park (2000).

In conclusion, the study underscores the fundamental role of voting attitude in shaping intentions, aligning with the Theory of Reasoned Action. It highlights a shift towards personal over societal inclinations, showcasing the significant impact of individual attitudes on voting decisions. This emphasises the importance of understanding how personal attitudes influence public support for political parties.

In congruence with the above discussion, personal attitudes wield significant influence over political engagement, as they underscore individual responsibility, independent decision-making, and the importance of character and integrity in shaping voting behaviour. Briefly, personal attitudes significantly influence political engagement through the weight of personal responsibility, fostering informed voting and civic engagement. Independent decision-making enhances the democratic process by embracing diverse perspectives, contributing to a robust and inclusive political landscape. Individual character and integrity profoundly impact choices at the polls, directly influencing trust in the electoral system and bolstering its credibility. Moreover, personal values collectively shape the political landscape and policy outcomes, reflecting the amalgamation of individual beliefs and priorities within the broader political sphere. Understanding these influences is crucial for comprehending the

complexities of political engagement and its subsequent impact on governance and society, enabling policymakers and politicians to manage voter behaviour directly and inclusively.

From a religious perspective, these behaviours encapsulate fundamental values, especially within Islamic teachings, emphasising the accountability of individuals for their actions and decisions. The teachings encourage individuals to assume personal responsibility for their choices, including voting-related ones. However, individuals should prioritise making well-informed decisions guided by their genuine convictions and values, ensuring autonomy, and avoiding undue external influences. This underscores the importance of evaluating candidates based on their character and continuously reassessing their attitudes and beliefs, upholding justice for the betterment of society. In sum, comprehending these influences is crucial for understanding the complexities of political engagement and its subsequent impact on governance and society. Ultimately, this understanding enables policymakers and politicians to manage voter behaviour directly and inclusively.

6.5.2 Voting Attitude – Candidate Image – Voting Intention

The study delves into the complexities of political behaviour and voter alignment in Malaysia, specifically focusing on the impact of the relationship between 'Attitude,' 'Candidate Image,' and 'Voting Intention' on party realignment. The analysis aims to clarify how a candidate's image influences both voting attitudes and intentions, acting as a moderator while also directly affecting voting intention.

The existing literature underscores the pivotal influence of 'Candidate Image' on voting attitudes and intentions. Studies by Banducci et al. (2008), Hsieh & Li (2008), Akhmad Farhan & Azhar Ahmad (2015), Aygoren & Yilmaz (2015), and Khatib (2012) have collectively demonstrated that a candidate's image profoundly touches people's emotions, expands awareness and familiarity, and significantly increases the likelihood of reshaping voter perceptions.

However, the results of the study showed that candidate image is not the third force that would moderate the relationship between voting attitude and voting intention. The effect size is small at 0.006. The beta confidence for the interaction of Voting

Attitude*Candidate Images is 0.077. The bootstrapping procedure was conducted to confirm the significance of Candidate Image. The cut-off value for the test is 1.96 (α = 0.05). It shows that the interaction term of Voting Attitude*Candidate Images was insignificant (t = 1.332) for the two-tailed test with a significant level of 5%.

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) relate the predicament to external factors (e.g., physical threats or consequences like the GE14 aftermath experiences) and internal factors inference process (i.e., cognitive evaluation) affect one's belief system (i.e., voting attitude) and cost trust and loyalty thus could not intervene to explain voting intention or one's intention not to realign a party. In another scenario, the demographics of voters could also hinder the Candidate Image's ability to moderate the connection between Voting Attitude and Voting Intention. Factors such as gender, age, residence, and surroundings may exert varying degrees of influence on risk-taking, compliance, tolerance, emotional response, and empathy, thereby eliciting diverse effects on attitudes. Individuals with differing cognitive assessments might have varying levels of perception and favorability (Lynott & McCandless, 2000; Balmas & Sheafer, 2010).

Nevertheless, the revelation that 'Candidate Image' does not significantly moderate the relationship between voting attitudes and intentions carries substantial implications. This finding challenges previously held assumptions by Ditonto (2017), and Anisa Aisya (2013) and emphasises the need for a deeper understanding of the multifaceted influences on voter behaviour, including the role of external and internal factors beyond candidate images.

1. The study's identification of external factors, such as physical threats and demographic variables, as potential influencers of voting behaviour hold societal implications. This highlights the need for a comprehensive assessment of environmental and demographic influences on political engagement, underscoring the importance of addressing societal challenges that may impact voter perceptions and decisions.

2. As discussed in the study, the role of internal cognitive processes in shaping voting behaviour and party alignment points to the intricate nature of individual decision-making. It underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of cognitive evaluations and their impact on political attitudes, calling for a deeper exploration of the psychological factors that shape voting intentions.

These findings can inform future political strategies and governance by emphasising the need for inclusive and comprehensive approaches to address the multifaceted influences on voter behaviour. Recognising the impact of external threats, demographic variables, and cognitive evaluations on political engagement can help policymakers develop more tailored and practical strategies to engage voters and address societal concerns, ultimately contributing to more informed and inclusive democratic participation.

In the meantime, the outcome of the Regression Coefficient test (refer to Figure 5.2) gave a new proposition. Candidate Image has a significant relationship with Voting Intention, even superseding the strength of Voting Attitude by 0.257. Meanwhile, a multiple linear regression test shows similar outcomes on R and R2 values (refer to Table 5.2). The R-value comparison between Candidate Image and Voting Attitude, where the Candidate Image R-value was higher (0.471 against 0.299), signifies a notable difference of 0.172, or approximately 17%. The R2 for Candidate Image (0.222) compared to the voting attitude (0.089) indicates a difference of 0.133, or roughly 13% of the voting intention accounted for by Candidate Image.

Those outcomes suggest that candidates' image behaves more as an independent variable that significantly influences voting intention than attitude. Aligning with psychological and sociological theories, particularly referencing Weeden and Kurzban (2017), it indicates that individuals may recondition their thoughts, feelings, and inclinations in response to new candidate images. In other words, people would adjust their concerns and self-interests based on moral judgments and ideological positions, thus influencing their predisposition attitudes and voter intention to realign a party during elections.

Elaborating on the belief that a candidate's image significantly influences voting intention, surpassing the impact of voting attitude, suggests the following implications:

1. Individuals' moral judgements and ideological positions may be redesigned based on the perceived attributes of a candidate. This alignment can significantly influence voting decisions, highlighting the role of values and beliefs in electoral choices.

2. In addition, it underscores the profound impact of visual and perceptual elements in political decision-making. This emphasises the need to understand and manage the candidate's image to engage and mobilise voters effectively.
3. Regarding sustainability, the enduring impact of Candidate Image on the democratic process suggests the ongoing significance of visual and perceptual factors in shaping electoral outcomes. Therefore, strategies to manage and cultivate candidate image will likely remain critical in the long-term sustainability of effective democratic participation and representation.

Relating the above discussion from a religious perspective, especially Islam, individual moral judgement aligns with Islamic teachings on leadership, emphasising the importance of character, integrity, and ethical conduct, meaning the significance of personal character in governance. The candidate's attributes that resonate with these qualities may significantly influence voting decisions. From an Islamic standpoint, a candidate's image's visual and perceptual elements should embody qualities that uphold the ethical standards and integrity expected of a leader, ultimately influencing political decision-making. The long-term impact of candidate image and public perception in the context of Islamic democratic participation and representation underscores the need for sustained ethical behaviour and continuous improvement of the political process. Islamic teachings advocate for enduring ethical conduct, accountability, and transparency in governance (Ebrahimi & Yusoff, 2017). Therefore, strategies to manage and cultivate a candidate's image should align with these principles to ensure sustained trust and confidence in the democratic process. This approach fosters the long-term sustainability of effective democratic participation, reflecting Islamic values of justice, integrity, and continuous improvement in political decision-making.

6.5.3 Voting Attitude – Ethnic Identity and Religiosity – Candidate Image – Voting Intention

It can be concluded that a complex and challenging relationship exists between Voting Attitude, Ethnic Identity, Religiosity, Candidate Image, and Voting Intention. While the connection between attitude and voting intention is robust, a challenge arises in predicting changes in voting intention due to the intricate interplay of variables such as Ethnic Identity, Religiosity and Candidate Image.

The research unearthed fascinating insights that shed light on the factors influencing voters' decision-making. As has been explained before, there is a strong and consistent relationship between Voting Attitude and Voting Intention ($\beta = 0.182$), indicating that individuals' attitudes towards voting significantly influence their voting choices. Contrary to popular belief, our study challenged the assumption that subjective norms, including Ethnic Identity and Religiosity, are influential predictors of Voting Intention (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010; Welsh, 2020). Specifically Ethnic Identity, and Religiosity, did not exhibit significant relationships with Voting Intention ($\beta = 0.059$ & $\beta = 0.021$ respectively), proving that these normative components do not play a substantial role in determining voting behaviour.

The conclusion gives a new proposition. Personal attitudes and beliefs about potential outcomes are more critical in determining voting intention than societal attitudes. It means that individuals can generate their personal stance based on their solid internal beliefs about the potential outcome of an action instead of external factors such as social influences (Park, 2000). Singh et al. (1995) said, this phenomenon is not distinct in a multi-racial population with diverse cultural backgrounds, manners, customs, and religious role models. However, this shift in behaviour implies that politicians need to be mindful of this change and align their political philosophies with individual voters. Voters now evaluate their interests and objectives based on their moral compass rather than relying solely on community identity.

Moreover, there is a notable correlation between Candidate Image and Ethnic Identity and Religiosity implies that Ethnic Identity and Religiosity may indirectly contribute to enhancing the perception of a candidate, which subsequently influences voting intentions. For example, aligning the candidate's image with the ethnic identity of the target demographic, like the cultural nuances, traditions, and values of the specific ethnic groups within the voter base, helps craft messaging and visual content that authentically reflects and respects the diversity of these identities. Furthermore, when considering the impact of religiosity, it is crucial to assess how the candidate's religious beliefs and practices correspond with the prevailing values and beliefs of the voter base. This assessment fosters understanding and enables the candidate's communication to genuinely resonate with these values, all while acknowledging the diverse religious beliefs present within the community.

In short, the significant relationship between Ethnic Identity and Religiosity with Candidate Image cannot be neglected, especially in all communication efforts. We can avoid generalisations or stereotypes by gaining a nuanced understanding of their perspectives. As such, we can ensure that campaign materials and messaging are respectful, inclusive, and reflective of the diversity within the target demographic.

The complexity and challenges in the relationship between Voting Attitude, Ethnic Identity, Religiosity, Candidate Image, and Voting Intention suggest the following implications:

1. The robust relationship between Voting Attitude and Voting Intention consistently indicates that individual attitudes towards voting significantly influence their voting choices. The highlight is the significance of personal attitudes in shaping voting behaviour, suggesting that understanding and addressing voter attitudes remain crucial for political strategies.
2. Unexpectedly, the study found that Ethnic Identity and Religiosity do not significantly predict Voting Intention, challenging the assumption that these normative components play a substantial role in determining voting behaviour. This suggests that societal norms related to ethnicity and religiosity may have less impact on voting decisions than previously assumed.
3. However, the research noted significant correlation between Candidate Image, Ethnic Identity, and Religiosity, implying that these factors may indirectly contribute to shaping a candidate's perception, subsequently influencing voting intentions. Aligning a candidate's image with the ethnic and religious values of the voter base could significantly impact voter resonance and support.

Based on these findings, political strategies should focus on aligning with individual voter beliefs by addressing personal attitudes and beliefs about potential outcomes. This shift suggests the need for politicians to adapt their political philosophies to resonate with individual voters, acknowledging and respecting diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. Crafting messaging and visual content that authentically reflects and respects the diversity of these identities is crucial for effective communication and voter connection. Moreover, it emphasises the importance of inclusive and respectful campaign materials that reflect the diversity within the target demographic, thereby avoiding generalisations or stereotypes. Respecting the diverse

cultural and religious backgrounds in political strategies and campaign materials, is in line with the principles of Islam. The Quran (Surah al-Ruum, verses 20-22) refers to these diversities as "God's signs." It emphasises that humans should benefit from this diversity and prevent it from causing harmful divisions and conflicts within their community (Nik Mustapha bin Nik Hassan, 2009) to achieve real acceptance and integration, meaning not to tolerate but to accept and understand the diversity (Abdullah et al., 2010).

6.5.4 Voting Attitude – Ethnic Identity – Social Media – Candidate Image – Voting Intention

The research consistently showed a significant correlation between Voting Intention and Voting Attitude (β=0.182). Meanwhile, subjective norms had insufficient explanatory power for Voting Intention (=0.059). In addition to this finding, social media had a negligible connection with Voting Attitude and Intention (=0.006 and =0.062, respectively) that differs from several scholars' observations like Mostafa Radwan's (2022), Leong, (2015), and Kanagavel and Chandrasekaran's (2014) research, which highlighted that media exposure influenced voters' mindset, beliefs, and ideologies.

Furthermore, Ethnic Identity (β=0.059) and Social Media (β=0.062) alone could not adequately account for Voting Intention. Interestingly, there was a significant relationship between Social Media and Ethnic Identity (β=0.537), suggesting a synergy. However, this combined influence did not sway voters' voting intentions towards party realignment. People no longer prioritise communal agreement over their own opinions, indicating that social pressure is an ineffective persuasive tool.

Moreover, social media showed an insignificant relationship with Voting Attitude (β=0.006) and Voting Intention (β=0.062), indicating that it cannot shape voters' political agendas. Samsudin (2019) and Kushin and Yamamoto (2010) commented that it is typical that social media is not significantly related to self-efficacy and political involvement. Instead, individuals selectively engage with news narratives that align with their personalised attitudes. Descriptive survey evidence supports this, revealing that voters filter incoming messages, only choosing information that suits their interests. As a result, individuals follow their personalised attitudes, disregarding

the opinions of others. This finding aligns with the argument put forth by Jacks and Cameron (2003) that news content can undermine voters' trust and lead them to reject messages. Consequently, individuals may maintain the status quo rather than immediately changing their attitudes.

Meanwhile, Ethnic Identity (β=0.315) and Social Media (β=0.125) were found to be related to Candidate's Image while not with voting intention, suggesting that these factors can influence the perception of a candidate's image. This relationship between Ethnic Identity, Social Media, and Candidate Image provides further insight into the predicament of voters' voting intentions. This phenomenon was commented on by several scholars. Chirco and Buchanan (2022) said that the intersection of Ethnic Identity with candidate image (e.g., skin tone and race) affects voting preferences and interpersonal judgement. Meanwhile, Hultman et al. (2019) found that social media helps to build voter-candidate relationship equity in United Kingdom politics.

The correlation between ethnic identity, social media, and a candidate's image shows it can further contribute to understanding voter behaviour. Although ethnic identity and social media positively correlate with a candidate's image, their direct influence on voting intentions is constrained. This implies that ethnic identity and social media could act as intervening variables, influencing the perception of a candidate's image rather than directly impacting voting intentions.

In conclusion, intricate and interconnected relationships exist among Voting Attitude, Ethnic Identity, Social Media, Candidate Image, and Voting Intention. While the link between attitude and voting intention is robust, predicting changes in voting intention becomes challenging due to the complex interplay of variables such as Ethnic Identity, Social Media, and Candidate Image. The correlation between ethnic identity, social media, and a candidate's image is essential for understanding voter behaviour. Although ethnic identity and social media positively correlate with a candidate's image, their direct influence on voting intentions is limited. This suggests that ethnic identity and social media may serve as intervening variables, influencing the perception of a candidate's image rather than directly impacting voting intentions. Moreover, the positive connections between ethnic identity, social media, and a candidate's image can significantly bolster the influence of the candidate's portrayal, addressing uncertainties

in voters' minds and potentially impacting their allegiance to political parties during elections.

In addition, from a religious angle, especially an Islamic perspective, the intricate interplay between Voting Attitude, Ethnic Identity, Social Media, Candidate Image, and Voting Intention underscores the ethical dimension of political participation. It guides individuals to approach voting decisions with a deep sense of moral duty and social responsibility (Al-Qaradawi, 2009). Despite their complex and challenging relationships, all of these variables should be considered. They are intertwined in ways that are not always obvious; for example, while Ethnic Identity and Social Media may not directly explain voting attitude and intention, they can indirectly exert significant influence through their impact on a candidate's image. This underscores the importance of truthful communication and ethical portrayal in shaping the candidate's image, aligning with the ethical principles emphasised in an Islamic perspective on political participation for the interest of the ummah (Mowlana, 1996).

6.5.5 Summary of Theoretical Implications

The study's findings shed light on the complex dynamics of political engagement, providing insights into the role of personal attitudes, candidate image, and the interplay of cultural and religious factors within an Islamic context. These insights are crucial for understanding and managing voter behaviour, and they have broader implications for effective democratic participation and representation.

This study underscores the pivotal role of personal attitudes in shaping voting behaviour, emphasising the Theory of Reasoned Action. It emphasises a significant shift towards individual inclinations over societal influences, demonstrating the substantial impact of personal attitudes on voting decisions. Additionally, the research reveals that Candidate Image exerts a more significant influence on Voting Intention than Voting Attitude. This emphasises the powerful impact of Candidate Image on shaping predisposition attitudes and influencing voter intention, aligning with moral judgements and ideological positions.

Furthermore, within an Islamic context, the interplay between Voting Attitude, Candidate Image, Ethnic Identity, Religiosity, and Social Media underscores the ethical

dimension of political participation. It guides individuals to approach voting decisions with a deep sense of moral duty and social responsibility, aligning with Islamic teachings' principles of justice and accountability.

This research also highlights the intertwined influence of ethnic identity, religiosity, and social media on political perceptions, emphasising the need for inclusive, respectful campaign materials that authentically represent diverse audiences, reflecting shared values of ethical conduct and respect for diversity within the broader community.

Moreover, the study emphasises the enduring significance of ethical conduct and integrity in political leadership, particularly as these qualities resonate within the Islamic community and align with broader ethical frameworks upheld by diverse communities.

In conclusion, the intricate interplay among Voting Attitude, Ethnic Identity, Religiosity, Social Media, Candidate Image, and Voting Intention underscores the ethical dimension of political participation. It guides individuals to approach voting decisions with a deep sense of moral duty and social responsibility. Despite their complex and challenging relationships, these variables should be considered. They are intertwined in ways that are not always obvious; for example, while Ethnic Identity, Religiosity, and Social Media may not directly explain voting attitude and intention, they can indirectly exert significant influence through their impact on a candidate's image. This underscores the importance of truthful communication and ethical portrayal in shaping the candidate's image, aligning with the ethical principles emphasised in an Islamic perspective on political participation for the community's interest, particularly in people's attitudes inclined towards being self-centric.

6.6 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study offers insight into the intricate dynamics of voter behaviour, shedding light on the factors that influence our choices during elections. It delves into how personal traits and external influences are pivotal in shaping our inclination to align with a particular political party. The findings underscore the necessity of unravelling these

complexities to better understand and effectively manage the phenomenon of party realignment.

The research revealed the efficacy of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) in accurately predicting voter attitudes. Furthermore, it demonstrated that demographic and psychological elements influence voters' decision-making in a different way. These factors emerged as crucial determinants that impact voter behaviour, emphasising the importance of comprehending them for precise prediction and strategic shaping of voter behaviour.

The psychological aspect of the study, precisely the attitudinal factor, plays a crucial role in influencing voter choices. This factor encompasses the favorability of choice, indicating that individuals' attitudes and beliefs have a more powerful impact than societal attitudes. This finding suggests that voters rely on their convictions rather than feeling obligated to conform to public consensus. Personal attitudes are associated with self-regard and anticipation of consequences, indicating the significance of understanding voters' beliefs and values. This finding underscores the importance of understanding voters' beliefs and tailoring political strategies accordingly.

The study observed that demographic variables like ethnic identity, religiosity, and social media have a limited impact on creating social pressure for party realignment. It suggests that group beliefs and practices do not influence voters' intentions to realign with a political party. This finding also implies that voters are no longer strictly bound by ethnic lines or considerations of group pride. Additionally, the study highlights the ineffectiveness of social media in influencing voters' decisions, as voters tend to screen and consume information that is personally relevant to them, meaning they tend to be selective. Any communication effort should conform to their self-centric attitudes. It has significant implications for political strategies in shaping voter perceptions. Politicians must recognise the importance of personalised approaches, that target individuals' expectations and values. Mass activities and generic narratives may not be effective in influencing voter intentions. Instead, a selective, focused, and tailored strategy is necessary. Furthermore, the study underscores the need for politicians to be mindful of people's demands and expectations, particularly in the digital age, where media platforms and public opinion can rapidly shift.

The candidate image was found to correlate significantly with voting attitude and intention. It was identified as a determining factor in party realignment and the reconditioning of voters' political thoughts, feelings, and inclinations. The study emphasises the importance of a substantive candidate image beyond mere characteristics and value propositions. Emotional and physical traction, including iconic imagery, are crucial in attracting voters. The study implies that candidates with unattractive images may need to increase perceived value to avoid losing voter support. In short, in politics, it is crucial to understand that a candidate's public image can significantly sway voter decisions, often eclipsing their political stance. This underscores the importance of relatability and authenticity in shaping voter behaviour. In addition, the Candidate Image ability to influence Voting Intention superseding voting attitudes indicates its strength to recondition or reposition voters predisposition viewpoints. However, it is essential to avoid automatically believing that images are accurate, legitimate, or trustworthy sources of information, especially over time. The candidate must always project a sense of reciprocity, harmonising party goals with the electorate’s expectations. According to Wade et al. (2002), images are open to manipulation and may also go unnoticed (Lilleker et al., 2019).

Notably, the correlation between Candidate Image and Ethnic Identity and Religiosity implies that Ethnic Identity and Religiosity were significant. Cultural sensitivities are paramount in all communication efforts. The significant relationships between Ethnic Identity and Religiosity with Candidate Image cannot be neglected. By gaining a nuanced understanding of their perspectives, we can avoid generalisations or stereotypes. As such, we can ensure that campaign materials and messaging are respectful, inclusive, and reflective of the diversity within the target demographic. We ought to emphasise unity and shared values to celebrate the community's unique cultural and religious tapestry. For example, aligning the candidate's image with the ethnic identity of the target demographic, like the cultural nuances, traditions, and values of the specific ethnic groups within the voter base, helps craft messaging and visual content that authentically reflects and respects the diversity of these identities.

When considering the impact of religiosity, it is crucial to assess how the candidate's religious beliefs and practices correspond with the prevailing values and beliefs of the voter base. This assessment fosters understanding and enables the

candidate's communication to genuinely resonate with these values, all while acknowledging the diverse religious beliefs present within the community.

Overall, this study sheds light on the complex dynamics of voter attitudes and party realignment in Malaysian elections. It highlights the interplay between psychological and demographic factors, emphasises the importance of personalised strategies, and underscores the significance of candidate image in shaping voter perceptions. The findings provide valuable insights for political researchers and practitioners to navigate the evolving landscape of voter behaviour.

In addition to the above discussion, several considerations are worth noting regarding the practical application of this concept within religious contexts, such as the Islamic perspective. For example, by incorporating the Islamic Maqasid Syariah perspective into political strategies, practical applications can be developed that prioritise candidates with solid character, address social dynamics, appeal to personal beliefs, promote integrity to align with Islamic values, and effectively engage with voters.

1. The findings suggest that attitude significantly influences voting intention, but candidate image outweighs voting attitude. From the Islamic Maqasid Syariah perspective, this highlights the importance of considering the character and integrity of candidates. When crafting political strategies, priority should be given to candidates who align with Islamic values and exhibit qualities that resonate with voters' expectations.
2. While social forces like ethnic identity, religiosity, and social media may not directly impact voting intention, their correlation with candidate image emphasizes their practical importance as intervening variables. From the Islamic Maqasid Syariah perspective, this underscores the need to understand the social context and dynamics to connect with voters and address their preferences and concerns effectively.
3. The text highlights that voters rely on their personal beliefs rather than being obligated to follow public consensus. From the Islamic Maqasid Syariah perspective, this aligns with the principle of individual responsibility and autonomy in decision-making. Political strategies should appeal to voters'

personal convictions and values while promoting the broader principles of justice, compassion, and good governance.

4. The study emphasises the significance of candidate image in predicting voting intentions. From the Islamic Maqasid Syariah perspective, this underscores the importance of integrity, trustworthiness, and transparency in candidates' conduct. It highlights the need for candidates to project a sense of reciprocity, align party goals with voters' expectations, and avoid manipulative or misleading image-building tactics.

In conclusion, this study holds practical implications for understanding and managing party realignment. By recognising the intricate interplay of personal traits, external influences, and psychological elements, we can better navigate the forces driving voter behaviour, thus enabling more informed and effective strategies for managing party realignment. Furthermore, integrating Islamic principles into politics presents both potential benefits and challenges. On the one hand, embracing Islamic values may resonate with a significant portion of the population, fostering a sense of political inclusion and representation. Conversely, challenges may arise in reconciling diverse subscriptions to religious principles and addressing concerns regarding the separation of religion and state.

6.7 STUDY LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To the researcher’s limited knowledge, this is one of the few studies on party realignment behaviour undertaken in Malaysia from the standpoint of the sociopsychology of voters. However, despite effectively investigating the party realignment phenomenon following TRA, the study also had some limitations.

Generally, scholars who think about party realignment are primarily interested in those who realign parties between elections, as changes typically happen between two elections. However, due to time constraints, the study was conducted within a short time frame and may not be able to reflect the long-term effect of the change in totality.

The survey was conducted as political, economic, and health issues raged between October and November 2020. There were numerous political uncertainties. The political power struggle among the political elite made the government unstable

and hurt the economy. In addition, the government movement control order (MCO) and health crisis brought on by the coronavirus pandemic worsened the situation and caused anxiety and distress among the public. Most Malaysians were apprehensive and underestimated politics due to the entire situation. Therefore, the researcher assumed such hostile circumstances affected the respondents' responses during the data collection.

The study collected data from respondents of different races using a self-administered questionnaire. They have different beliefs, cultures, customs, and backgrounds. Therefore, understanding and properly handling the differences in an environment of pluralistic society could significantly affect the respondents' participation or cause them to refrain from answering. Gaining basic knowledge about the local ethnic identity and diverse values of the respondents helped facilitate the field survey.

While mindful of the study's limitations, the findings offer a valuable foundation for future research, emphasising the need for a more holistic approach to comprehend the intricacies of voter behaviour within multicultural societies such as Malaysia.

1. The implications of these findings are critical for understanding the dynamics of voting behaviour. While voting attitude emerges as a pivotal determinant of voting intention, the limited influence of subjective norms, such as ethnic identity and religiosity, raises intriguing questions about the nuanced factors shaping electoral choices. This suggests that normative components interact with other variables in intricate ways, underscoring the need for further exploration into the complexities of decision-making processes in the electoral context.

2. In line with prior discourse, moderators (e.g., candidate image) and mediators (e.g., religiosity and social media) have demonstrated ineffectiveness in influencing the intention to realign a political party during electoral processes. This observation underscores the limited impact of these variables on the strategic decision-making processes associated with party realignment. Such revelations prompt a reevaluation of the prevailing assumptions regarding the determinants of party realignment and call for a more nuanced exploration of the underlying dynamics governing this phenomenon in a multi-cultural context.

3. While theoretical and practical implications suggest a notable impact of Islamic values on political behaviour, integrating these principles into politics is worth further exploration to understand how Islamic values shape political landscapes and foster stability in Malaysia. A potential avenue for future research could involve conducting a comprehensive empirical study to assess the effectiveness of the Theory of Reasoned Action in explaining voting volatility behaviour among majority Muslims in Malaysia, particularly in the context of party realignment propensity. This research could delve into examining how beliefs influence the development of perceptions and subsequent attitudes, ultimately shaping intentional behaviour, with a specific focus on the Islamic perspective. Such an investigation could offer valuable insights into understanding the underlying factors that drive Muslim voting behaviour in Malaysia. This could contribute to a deeper comprehension of the influence of belief systems and attitudes on voting decisions, particularly among Islamic believers, who constitute the majority of Malaysian voters. It may shed light on how they define their intention to perform an act, in line with the concept as narrated by Umar bin Al-Khattab from the Messenger of Allah (saws), who said: 'Deeds are but with intention (نِيَّةٌ), and for the man is what he intended.'

In conclusion, the study offers valuable insights into the phenomenon of party realignment by delving into the socio-psychological aspects of Malaysian politics. It reveals how voters' attitudes, beliefs, and cultural affiliations can play a pivotal role in shaping party realignment. However, readers and users of the research findings should exercise caution and consider the limitations. Party realignment may be interpreted differently based on factors such as time, location, beliefs, and culture, which are influenced by socio-psychological dynamics. Moreover, the ever-changing political landscape is not immune to the impact of socio-psychological forces. Technological advancements, demographic shifts, and the social and political climate can all interact with individuals' psychological processes, influencing their engagement with survey questions and political decision-making.

Additionally, cultural and linguistic factors, survey design, and mode of administration can affect the accuracy of data collection, reflecting the intricate interplay of socio-psychological factors in political research. Researchers must be mindful of social desirability bias and question framing, considering respondents'

cognitive biases and attitudes that are shaped by socio-psychological influences. By addressing these challenges and exploring socio-psychological dimensions, political researchers can enhance the reliability and validity of their findings, gaining a deeper understanding of political attitudes and behaviours in the context of party realignment in a multi-cultural society.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRES (ENGLISH)

The objective of this research is to understand the phenomenon, trends and contributing factors to voter's change behaviour. The results of this study will help us in formulating and proposing ways to effectively manage political campaigns in the country efficiently. Researchers are assured opinion given is confidential and used solely for the purposes of psycho-sociological research of voters in general.

Part A:

Data Peribadi/Personal Details

Sila tanda (/) pada jawapan yang anda pilih/Please tick (/) your answer.

Jantina **Gender**	Lelaki Male		Perempuan Female								
Umur **Age**	21-30		31-40		51-60		61 ke atas				
Bangsa **Race**	Melayu Malay		Cina Chinese		India Indian		Bumiputra Sabah/ Sarawak		Lain2/ Others		
Agama **Religion**	Islam		Buddha		Hindu		Christian		Lain2/ Others		
Taraf Perkahwinan **Marital Status**	Bujang Single		Berkahwin Married								
Pendidikan **Education**	LCE/SRP/ PMR/PT3		MCE/SPM/ SPMV/SPA M		HSC/ O Level/ STPM/ST AM		Diploma /A Level		Sarjana Muda/ First Degree		Master/PhD	
Pendapatan Isi Rumah	Bawah/		RM1001 –		RM2001 –		RM3001 –		RM4001 –		RM5000 ke atas/	

Household Income	Below RM1000		RM2000		RM3000		RM4000		RM5000		Above	

Pekerjaan	Swasta		Kerajaan		Berniaga		Pesara		Surirumah		Lain2/	
Occupation	Private		Government		Business		Pensioner		Housewife		Others	

Media pilihan/ Media Choice	**Berapa kerap anda menggunakan media ini pada seminggu yang lepas? How often do you use the media in the past week? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 hari**							
	0	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6s**	**7**
Surat Khabar/ News Paper								
Radio								
TV								
Facebook								
Whatsapp								
Tweeter								
WeChat								
Instagram								

Part B:

First section: This section consists of questions in association with voting attitude of the citizens. Five-point scale items ranging from "**SD** = strongly disagree" to "**D** = disagree," "**U** = undecided" to "**A** = agree," and "**SA** = strongly agree" is used to measure the items. Please choose the degree of agreement with your current circumstances by ticking (√) on the space provided in every question.

1. I am convinced that I will vote for the same party that I voted for in the last election.	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
2. If I had to decide, I would vote for the same party that I for voted in the last election.	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
3. I would recommend others to vote for the same party that I voted in the last election.	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
4. I have positive things to say about for the party that I voted in the last election.	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**

Second section: This section consists of questions in association with ethnic identity. Five-point scale items ranging from "**SD** = strongly disagree" to "**D** = disagree," "**U** = undecided" to "**A** = agree," and "**SA** = strongly agree" is used to measure the items. Please choose the degree of agreement with your current circumstances by ticking (√) on the space provided in every question.

1. I spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs.	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
2. I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of my own ethnic group.	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
3. I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me.	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**

4. I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership.	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
5. I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to.	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
6. I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
7. I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me.	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
8. In order to learn more about my ethnic background, I have often talked to other people about my ethnic group.	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
9. I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group.	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
10. I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs.	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
11. I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group.	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
12. I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background.	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**

Third section: This section consists of questions in association with social media. *(Such as Internet, Facebook, Whatsapp, Tweeter, Instagram et cetera.)* Five-point scale items ranging from "**SD** = strongly disagree" to "**D** = disagree," "**U** = undecided" to "**A** = agree," and "**SA** = strongly agree" is used to measure the items. Please choose the degree of agreement with your current circumstances by ticking (√) on the square provided in every question.

1. I use social media to learn more about the candidate/campaign.	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
2. I use social media to learn more about issues that is important to me.	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**

3. I use social media to keep up to date with the candidate's campaign and events.	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
4. Social media help me decide who to vote for in the election.	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**

Fourth section: This section consists of questions in association with religiosity of the citizens. Five-point scale items ranging from "**SD** = strongly disagree" to "**D** = disagree," "**U** = undecided" to "**A** = agree," and "**SA** = strongly agree" is used to measure the items. Please choose the degree of agreement with your current circumstances by ticking (√) on the space provided in every question.

1. My religious beliefs lie behind my whole approach to life.	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
2. I enjoy spending time with others of my religious affiliation.	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
3. Religious beliefs influence all my dealing in life.	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
4. It is important to me to spend periods in private religious thought and reflection.	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
5. I enjoy working in the activities of my religious organization.	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
6. I keep well informed about my religious group and have some influence in its decision-making.	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**

Fifth section: This section consists of questions in association with candidate image. Five-point scale items ranging from "**SD** = strongly disagree" to "**D** = disagree," "**U** = undecided" to "**A** = agree," and "**SA** = strongly agree" is used to measure the items. Please choose the degree of agreement with your current circumstances by ticking (√) on the space provided in every question. I like my candidate to have the following attributes:

1. Strong personality	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
2. Good external appearance	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**

3. Able to manage dialogue	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
4. Able to influence and persuade	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
5. Patient	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
6. A good listener	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
7. Good Qualifications	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
8. Long experience in politics	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
9. A good Mental picture of politics	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
10.A good mental image of the party that he/she belongs to	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
11.Candidate is associated with a party that I like	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
12.Has Good political reputation	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
13.Able to keep his promises	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
14.Assumed to champion realistic manifesto	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
15.Good public feelings in the candidate's ability to implement the promises he made	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
16.Good personal reputation	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
17.Well received in public	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
18.Always appear in the media	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
19.Actively engaged with the voters	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
20.Active with the community	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
21.Has a good team to manage the election campaign	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
22.Has a good election programmes	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
23.Party machinery is well received by the public	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
24.Has a good election strategy	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**

25. Has good financial support from internal and external party	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**

Sixth section: This section consists of questions in association with voting intention of the citizens. Five-point scale items ranging from "**SD** = strongly disagree" to "**D** = disagree," "**U** = undecided" to "**A** = agree," and "**SA** = strongly agree" is used to measure the items. Please choose the degree of agreement with your current circumstances by ticking (√) on the space provided in every question.

1. I will surely vote in this election.	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
2. I have decided to vote this election.	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
3. I have made up my mind to recommend others to vote in this election.	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
4. I am optimistic to be part of this election.	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**

5. In this election I am inclined to vote for: (choose one)

Perikatan Nasional (PN).	
Muafakat Nasional (MN)	
Pakatan Harapan (PH)	
Barisan Nasional (BN)	
Democratic Action Party (DAP)	
Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR)	
Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS)	
Parti Amanah Negara (AMANAH)	

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND COOPERATION.
WE APPRECIATE IT.

APPENDIX B: SOAL SELIDIK (MALAY)

Objektif penyelidikan ini adalah untuk memahami fenomena, trend dan faktor penyumbang kepada perubahan tingkah laku pengundi. Hasil kajian ini diharap dapat membantu penyelidik merumus dan mencadangkan satu formula bagi mengurus kempen politik di negara ini dengan lebih baik. Penyelidik memberi jaminan bahawa pendapat anda adalah sulit dan digunakan semata-mata untuk tujuan penyelidikan psikologi pengundi secara umum sahaja.

Bahagian A:

Data Peribadi

Sila tanda (/) pada jawapan yang anda pilih.

Jantina	Lelaki		Perempuan									
Umur	21-30		31-40		41-50		51-60		61 ke atas			
Bangsa	Melayu		Cina		India		Bumiputra Sabah/Sarawak		Lain2			
Agama	Islam		Buddha		Hindu		Christian		Lain2			
Taraf Perkahwinan	Bujang		Berkahwin									
Pendidikan	LCE/SRP/ PMR/PT3		MCE/SPM/ SPMV/SPAM		HSC/ O Level/ STPM/STAM		Diploma /A Level		Sarjana Muda/ First Degree		Master /PhD	
Pendapatan Isi rumah	RM1000 ke bawah		RM1001 – RM2000		RM2001 – RM3000		RM3001 – RM4000		RM4001 – RM5000		RM5000 Ke atas	
Pekerjaan	Swasta		Kerajaan		Berniaga		Pesara		Suri rumah		Pelajar	

Media pilihan	Berapa kerap anda menggunakan media ini pada seminggu yang lepas? (0) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 hari							
	Tidak pernah (0)	1 hari	2 hari	3 hari	4 hari	5 hari	6 hari	7 hari
Surat Khabar								
Surat Khabar elektronik								
Radio								
TV								
Facebook								
Whatsapp								
Twitter								
WeChat								
Instagram								
Telegram								
YouTube								

Bahagian B/Part B:

Bahagian pertama: Bahagian ini terdiri daripada soalan yang berkaitan dengan pemikiran pengundi bertaraf warga negara. Jawapan adalah mengikut skala lima mata bermula daripada "**1 = STS** (Sangat Tidak Setuju)", "**2 = TS** (Tidak Setuju)", "**3 = TP** (Tidak Pasti)", "**4 = S** (Setuju)" dan "**5 = SS** (Sangat Setuju)" digunakan untuk mengukur setiap soalan.

Sila pilih tahap persetujuan anda dengan menandakan (√) pada ruang yang disediakan bagi setiap soalan.

1	Saya yakin bahawa saya akan mengundi parti yang sama seperti yang saya lakukan semasa pilihan raya lepas.	**STS 1** | **TS 2** | **TP 3** | **S 4** | **SS 5**
2	Jika saya terpaksa membuat keputusan, saya akan mengundi parti yang sama seperti yang saya lakukan semasa pilihan raya yang lepas.	**STS 1** | **TS 2** | **TP 3** | **S 4** | **SS 5**
3	Saya akan mengesyorkan kepada pengundi lain supaya mengundi parti yang sama seperti yang saya pilih pada pilihan raya yang lepas.	**STS 1** | **TS 2** | **TP 3** | **S 4** | **SS 5**
4	Saya mempunyai perkara positif untuk diceritakan tentang parti yang saya pilih pada pilihan raya yang lepas.	**STS 1** | **TS 2** | **TP 3** | **S 4** | **SS 5**

Bahagian kedua: Bahagian ini terdiri daripada soalan yang berkaitan dengan identiti etnik pengundi bertaraf warga negara. Jawapan adalah mengikut skala lima mata bermula daripada "**1 = STS** (Sangat Tidak Setuju)", "**2 = TS** (Tidak Setuju)", "**3 = TP** (Tidak Pasti)", "**4 = S** (Setuju)" dan "**5 = SS** (Sangat Setuju)" digunakan untuk mengukur setiap soalan.

Sila pilih tahap persetujuan anda dengan menandakan (√) pada ruang yang disediakan bagi setiap soalan.

1	Saya sentiasa berusaha untuk mengetahui dengan lebih lanjut mengenai sejarah, tradisi dan adat budaya bangsa saya.	**STS 1** | **TS 2** | **TP 3** | **S 4** | **SS 5**

2	Saya aktif dalam organisasi atau kumpulan sosial yang kebanyakan ahlinya terdiri daripada bangsa saya sendiri.	**STS 1** | **TS 2** | **TP 3** | **S 4** | **SS 5**
3	Saya sangat jelas tentang latar belakang bangsa saya dan ia mempunyai makna yang besar kepada saya.	**STS 1** | **TS 2** | **TP 3** | **S 4** | **SS 5**
4	Saya banyak memikirkan bagaimanakah hidup saya akan terjejas dengan penglibatan saya dalam kumpulan etnik saya.	**STS 1** | **TS 2** | **TP 3** | **S 4** | **SS 5**
5	Saya berbangga saya adalah sebahagian daripada kelompok bangsa saya.	**STS 1** | **TS 2** | **TP 3** | **S 4** | **SS 5**
6	Saya mempunyai rasa kecintaan yang tinggi terhadap kelompok bangsa saya.	**STS 1** | **TS 2** | **TP 3** | **S 4** | **SS 5**
7	Saya sangat memahami apa makna keahlian saya dalam kelompok bangsa saya.	**STS 1** | **TS 2** | **TP 3** | **S 4** | **SS 5**
8	Saya sering bercakap dengan orang lain tentang bangsa saya bagi mempelajari lebih banyak tentang bangsa saya.	**STS 1** | **TS 2** | **TP 3** | **S 4** | **SS 5**
9	Saya sangat berbangga dengan kelompok bangsa saya.	**STS 1** | **TS 2** | **TP 3** | **S 4** | **SS 5**
10	Saya mengamalkan budaya kelompok bangsa saya seperti makanan istimewa, muzik, atau adat.	**STS 1** | **TS 2** | **TP 3** | **S 4** | **SS 5**

11	Saya mempunyai ikatan yang kuat dengan kelompok bangsa saya.	**STS 1** | **TS 2** | **TP 3** | **S 4** | **SS 5**
12	Saya berasa senang dengan latar belakang bangsa atau budaya bangsa saya.	**STS 1** | **TS 2** | **TP 3** | **S 4** | **SS 5**

Bahagian ketiga: Bahagian ini terdiri daripada soalan berkaitan dengan sosial media seperti Internet, Facebook, Whatsapp, Tweeter, Instagram dan lain-lain. Jawapan adalah mengikut skala lima mata bermula daripada "**1 = STS** (Sangat Tidak Setuju)", "**2 = TS** (Tidak Setuju)", "**3 = TP** (Tidak Pasti)", "**4 = S** (Setuju)" dan "**5 = SS** (Sangat Setuju)" digunakan untuk mengukur setiap soalan.

Sila pilih tahap persetujuan anda dengan menandakan (√) pada ruang yang disediakan bagi setiap soalan.

1	Saya menggunakan media sosial untuk mengetahui lebih lanjut mengenai calon / kempen politik.	**STS 1** | **TS 2** | **TP 3** | **S 4** | **SS 5**
2	Saya menggunakan media sosial untuk mengetahui lebih lanjut mengenai isu-isu yang penting kepada saya.	**STS 1** | **TS 2** | **TP 3** | **S 4** | **SS 5**
3	Saya menggunakan media sosial untuk mengikuti perkembangan kempen dan aktiviti calon.	**STS 1** | **TS 2** | **TP 3** | **S 4** | **SS 5**
4	Media sosial membantu saya membuat keputusan siapakah calon yang akan saya pilih pada pilihanraya akan datang.	**STS 1** | **TS 2** | **TP 3** | **S 4** | **SS 5**

Seksyen keempat: Bahagian ini terdiri daripada soalan berkaitan dengan agama. Jawapan adalah mengikut skala lima mata bermula daripada "**1 = STS** (Sangat Tidak Setuju)", "**2 = TS** (Tidak Setuju)", "**3 = TP** (Tidak Pasti)", "**4 = S** (Setuju)" dan "**5 = SS** (Sangat Setuju)" digunakan untuk mengukur setiap soalan.

Sila pilih tahap persetujuan anda dengan menandakan (√) pada ruang yang disediakan bagi setiap soalan mengikut situasi semasa anda.

1	Kepercayaan agama saya terletak kepada pendekatan keseluruhan hidup saya.	**STS 1**	**TS 2**	**TP 3**	**S 4**	**SS 5**
2	Saya merasa seronok untuk meluangkan masa bersama orang yang seagama dengan saya.	**STS 1**	**TS 2**	**TP 3**	**S 4**	**SS 5**
3	Kepercayaan agama mempengaruhi semua urusan dalam kehidupan saya.	**STS 1**	**TS 2**	**TP 3**	**S 4**	**SS 5**
4	Adalah penting kepada saya untuk meluangkan masa bersendirian memikirkan hal agama dan muhasabah diri.	**STS 1**	**TS 2**	**TP 3**	**S 4**	**SS 5**
5	Saya seronok terlibat dalam aktiviti persatuan keagamaan saya.	**STS 1**	**TS 2**	**TP 3**	**S 4**	**SS 5**
6	Saya sentiasa peka tentang kelompok agama saya dan mempunyai pengaruh dalam membuat keputusan.	**STS 1**	**TS 2**	**TP 3**	**S 4**	**SS 5**

Bahagian kelima: Bahagian ini mengandungi soalan berkaitan dengan imej calon. Jawapan adalah mengikut skala lima mata bermula daripada "**1 = STS** (Sangat Tidak Setuju)", "**2 = TS** (Tidak Setuju)", "**3 = TP** (Tidak Pasti)", "**4 = S** (Setuju)" dan "**5 = SS** (Sangat Setuju)" digunakan untuk mengukur setiap soalan. Sila pilih tahap persetujuan anda dengan menandakan (√) pada ruang yang disediakan bagi setiap soalan.

Saya memilih calon yang mempunyai ciri-ciri berikut:

1	Keperibadian yang tinggi.	**STS 1** | **TS 2** | **TP 3** | **S 4** | **SS 5**
2	Penampilan yang baik.	**STS 1** | **TS 2** | **TP 3** | **S 4** | **SS 5**
3	Mampu menguasai perbahasan.	**STS 1** | **TS 2** | **TP 3** | **S 4** | **SS 5**
4	Mampu mempengaruhi dan memujuk.	**STS 1** | **TS 2** | **TP 3** | **S 4** | **SS 5**
5	Penyabar.	**STS 1** | **TS 2** | **TP 3** | **S 4** | **SS 5**
6	Pendengar yang baik.	**STS 1** | **TS 2** | **TP 3** | **S 4** | **SS 5**
7	Pendidikan yang baik.	**STS 1** | **TS 2** | **TP 3** | **S 4** | **SS 5**
8	Berpengalaman luas dalam bidang politik.	**STS 1** | **TS 2** | **TP 3** | **S 4** | **SS 5**
9	Gambaran mental calon politik yang baik.	**STS 1** | **TS 2** | **TP 3** | **S 4** | **SS 5**
10	Gambaran baik imej parti dibawa oleh calon.	**STS 1** | **TS 2** | **TP 3** | **S 4** | **SS 5**
11	Calon terlibat dengan parti yang saya suka.	

		STS 1 **TS 2** **TP 3** **S 4** **SS 5**
12	Reputasi calon yang baik.	**STS 1** **TS 2** **TP 3** **S 4** **SS 5**
13	Calon yang menunaikan janji.	**STS 1** **TS 2** **TP 3** **S 4** **SS 5**
14	Manifesto yang munasabah.	**STS 1** **TS 2** **TP 3** **S 4** **SS 5**
15	Keyakinan rakyat bagi melaksanakan janji-janji yang dibuat.	**STS 1** **TS 2** **TP 3** **S 4** **SS 5**
16	Reputasi peribadi yang baik.	**STS 1** **TS 2** **TP 3** **S 4** **SS 5**
17	Seorang yang disenangi rakyat.	**STS 1** **TS 2** **TP 3** **S 4** **SS 5**
18	Selalu muncul di media sosial.	**STS 1** **TS 2** **TP 3** **S 4** **SS 5**
19	Aktif bersama pengundi.	**STS 1** **TS 2** **TP 3** **S 4** **SS 5**
20	Aktif bersama rakyat.	**STS 1** **TS 2** **TP 3** **S 4** **SS 5**
21	Mempunyai pasukan yang baik untuk menguruskan kempen pilihanraya.	**STS** **TS** **TP** **S** **SS**

		1 **2** **3** **4** **5**
22	Program kempen pilihanraya yang baik.	**STS 1** **TS 2** **TP 3** **S 4** **SS 5**
23	Jentera parti calon disenangi oleh rakyat.	**STS 1** **TS 2** **TP 3** **S 4** **SS 5**
24	Strategi kempen pilihanraya yang baik.	**STS 1** **TS 2** **TP 3** **S 4** **SS 5**
25	Sokongan kewangan yang kuat dari parti dan juga orang luar.	**STS 1** **TS 2** **TP 3** **S 4** **SS 5**

Bahagian keenam: Bahagian ini terdiri daripada soalan berkaitan dengan niat untuk mengundi. Jawapan adalah mengikut skala lima mata bermula daripada "**1 = STS** (Sangat Tidak Setuju)", "**2 = TS** (Tidak Setuju)", "**3 = TP** (Belum Pasti)", "**4 = S** (Setuju)" dan "**5 = SS** (Sangat Setuju)" digunakan untuk mengukur setiap soalan.

Sila pilih tahap persetujuan anda dengan menandakan (√) pada ruang yang disediakan bagi setiap soalan.

1	Saya pasti akan mengundi dalam pilihanraya ini.	**STS 1** **TS 2** **TP 3** **S 4** **SS 5**
2	Saya telah membuat keputusan untuk mengundi dalam pilihanraya ini.	**STS 1** **TS 2** **TP 3** **S 4** **SS 5**
3	Saya akan mengesyorkan kepada orang lain untuk menjadi sebahagian daripada pengundi dalam pilihanraya ini.	**STS 1** **TS 2** **TP 3** **S 4** **SS 5**
4	Saya optimistik menjadi sebahagian daripada pengundi dalam pilihanraya ini.	**STS 1** **TS 2** **TP 3** **S 4** **SS 5**

5	*Di dalam pilihanraya ini, saya cenderung untuk mengundi parti:* *(Pilih satu parti sahaja)* *Pakatan Harapan (PH)* *Muafakat Nasional (MN)* *Perikatan Nasional (PN)* *Barisan Nasional (BN)* *Democratic Action Party (DAP)* *Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR)* *Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS)* *Parti Amanah Negara (AMANAH)* *Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM)* *Others*	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

TERIMA KASIH ATAS

KERJASAMA DAN MASA YANG ANDA BERIKAN.

KAMI SANGAT MENGHARGAINYA.