

**SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND POLITICAL
PARTICIPATION AMONG POTENTIAL YOUNG
MALAY VOTERS: EXPLORING THE MEDIATING
ROLE OF POLITICAL EFFICACY**

BY

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INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

2026

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A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for
the degree of Master of Human Sciences in Communication

AbdulHamid AbuSulayman Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed
Knowledge and Human Sciences
International Islamic University Malaysia

APRIL 2026

ABSTRACT

The lowering of Malaysia's voting age from 21 to 18 under the Undi18 reform has introduced a new generation of voters whose political engagement is increasingly shaped by digital media. Although existing studies have examined the influence of social media use (SMU) on political participation (PP), empirical research focusing on potential young Malay voters (PYMV) remains limited. This study examines the relationships between SMU, political efficacy (PE), and PP, with particular emphasis on the mediating role of PE. A survey was conducted among 463 students from the Centre for Foundation Studies, International Islamic University Malaysia (CFS IIUM), and mediation analysis was performed using Model 4 of the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2022). The findings show that WhatsApp, TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube are central to PYMV's daily routines and political engagement. Levels of PE and PP varied significantly by gender, school background, leadership involvement, and household income. The results further indicate that SMU influences PP mainly through indirect pathways. IE positively mediated the relationship between SMU and PP, EE showed no mediating effect, and VE acted as a suppressor. These findings highlight PE, particularly IE, as a key intervening mechanism linking social media use to PP among Undi18 voters. The study suggests that strengthening IE through civic education, leadership development, and digital literacy initiatives is crucial for fostering meaningful PP among Malaysia's newly enfranchised youth. Future research should involve a broader youth sample and incorporate media-centred theories such as the Uses and Gratifications Theory to further explain the mediating role of PE.

خلاصة البحث

أدى خفض سن التصويت في ماليزيا ١٨ عاماً إلى ظهور جيل جديد من الناخبين، يتزايد انخراطهم السياسي عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي. وعلى الرغم من تناول عدد من الدراسات تأثير استخدام هذه الوسائل في المشاركة السياسية، فإنّ البحوث التي ركّزت على الناخبين الشباب من الملايويين لا تزال محدودة. هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى تسليط الضوء على العلاقة بين استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي والكفاءة السياسية والمشاركة السياسية، مع الأخذ بعين الاعتبار الدور الوسيط للكفاءة السياسية. س. وقد تم توزيع استبانة على عينة مكونة من ٤٦٣ طالباً من مركز الدراسات الأساسية بالجامعة الإسلامية العالمية في ماليزيا، كما تم إجراء تحليل الوساطة باستخدام النموذج (٤) من ماكرو (PROCESS) ضمن حزمة (SPSS). أظهرت النتائج أن تطبيقات واتساب، وتيك توك، وإنستغرام، ويوتيوب تُعد محورية في الحياة اليومية لهؤلاء الناخبين وفي مستوى انخراطهم السياسي. كما توصلت النتائج إلى أن استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي يؤثر على المشاركة السياسية من خلال مسارات غير مباشرة؛ حيث توسطت الكفاءة الداخلية العلاقة بين استخدام التواصل الاجتماعي والمشاركة السياسية بشكل إيجابي، بينما لم تظهر الكفاءة الخارجية أي تأثير وسيط، وعملت كفاءة الناخب كمتغير عكسي. وتُبرز هذه النتائج أهمية الكفاءة السياسية، ولا سيما الكفاءة الداخلية، بوصفها آلية تدخل رئيسية تربط استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي بالمشاركة السياسية بين الناخبين. وأكد الباحث على تعزيز الكفاءة الداخلية من خلال التربية المدنية وتنمية القيادة. توصي الدراسة بإجراء بحوث مستقبلية تشمل عينات أوسع من الشباب، مع دمج النظريات المتمحورة حول الإعلام، لمزيد من التفسير للدور الوسيط للكفاءة السياسية.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Human Sciences in Communication.

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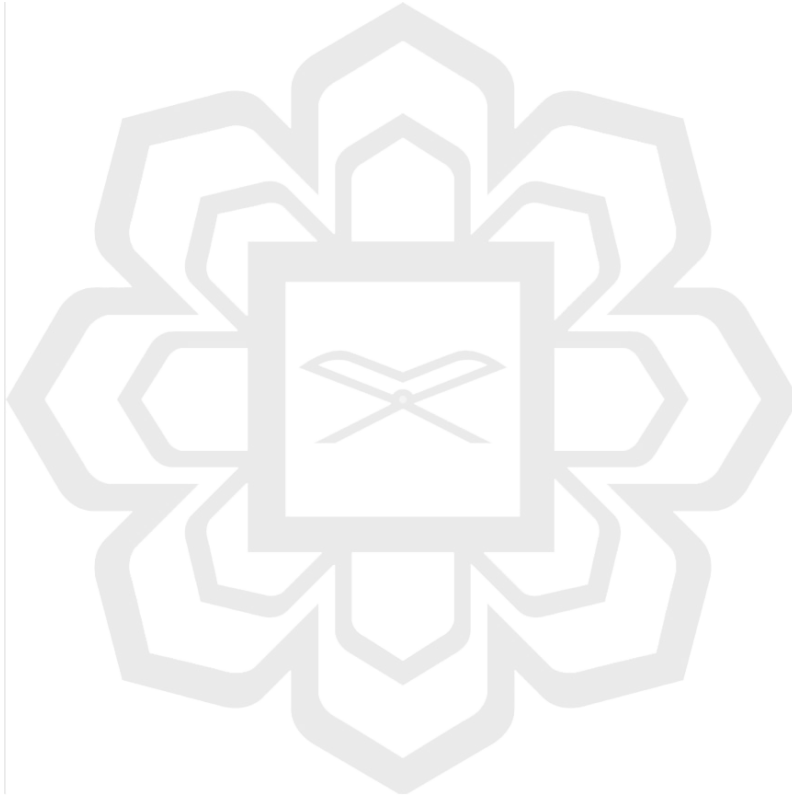
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I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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This thesis is dedicated to my parents for being unwavering supporters in my life, to my beloved wife who has stood by me through all obstacles in life, and to my son and daughter, who accompanied me in this long journey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, praise be upon Allah S.W.T for his uncountable blessings upon me along this journey in completing my Master's programme.

Secondly, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to my honourable supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Ts. Dr. Shafizan Mohamed, and my co-supervisor Dr. Nur Shakira binti Mohd Nasir, for their assistance and constant encouragement through my ups and downs, which enabled me to complete my Master's dissertation.

Thirdly, my sincere thanks to all lecturers in the Department of Communication for their assistance. They are Prof. Dato' Sri Dr. Syed Arabi bin Syed Abdullah Idris, Prof. Dr. Saodah Wok, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Che Mahzan Ahmad, Assoc. Prof. Datin Dr. Aini Maznina A. Manaf, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zeti Azreen Ahmad, Dr. Norbaiduri Ruslan, Dr. Kamaruzzaman Abdul Manan, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Aida Mokhtar, Dr. Nerawi Sedu, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tengku Siti Aishah Tengku Mohd Azzman, Dr. Rizalawati Ismail, Dr. Ruslan Ali, Dr. Helmi Yusoh, Mr. Aznan Mat Piah, Mr. Amran Baharom, and Madam Mazni Buyong,

Fourthly, my heartfelt thank you to Sr. Hartini Wakichan and Br. Karimi Sulaiman for their logistical support and to all my friends who have motivated me throughout my Master's Programme. Among them are Abas, Ridhwan, Fadzly, Zorif, Aizat, Azib, Azamuddin, Hasnah, Mahfuzah, Hafifah, Fathonah, Adlina, Izdiyar, and Madihah.

Last but not least, I would like to express my greatest love to my beloved family members, especially to both my parents, Wan Ahmad bin Wan Yusoff and Maskkah binti Yusoff, for their prayers and encouragement. My deepest gratitude also goes to my beloved wife Nurul Jannah Abd Razak for her love, devotion, understanding, and her continuous support throughout this journey while nurturing our precious Wan Noah Al-Ameer and Wan Sofya Al-Amani at the same time.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Academic Based Society
BN	Barisan Nasional
CFS IIUM	Centre for Foundation Studies at the International Islamic University Malaysia
EE	External Efficacy
IE	Internal Efficacy
M	Mean
MRC	Mahallah Representative Committee
N	Sample Size
OFFPP	Offline Political Participation
ONPP	Online Political Participation
PAS	Malaysian Islamic Party
PE	Political Efficacy
PP	Political Participation
PYMV	Potential Young Malay Voters
SCC	Students Coordination Committee
SD	Standard Deviation
SEM	Standard Error Mean
SMU	Social Media Use
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
VE	Voter Efficacy

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a detailed explanation of the study as a whole. The purpose of this section is to guide readers in understanding topics discussed in terms of the background of the study, problem statement, significance of the study, and research objectives

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The internet plays an important role in shaping Malaysia's political landscape. Previously, information was dominated by institutions related to the ruling government, Barisan Nasional (BN), resulting in a one-way flow of information. Consequently, people depended heavily on traditional media, such as television, radio, and newspapers, for all issues and information. The emergence of the internet sparked changes in the democratic flow of information, providing people with an alternative way to access it. Liow (2012) stated that BN lost its dominance over the flow of information as people could easily access it online. This marked the start of the opposition gaining some control over the flow of information in Malaysia.

The 12th general election in 2008 became a landmark for these changes, as BN lost its traditional two-thirds majority in parliamentary seats for the first time in 40 years since 1969. Miner (2015) noted that the strategy of the long-ruling government to secure hold on power through intensive information and communication-led development to achieve a 60% internet penetration rate by 2008, had backfired. However, this backfired strategy, the promotion of an uncensored internet, also encouraged the rise of opposition blogs and independent news sites. These developments can be considered as unintended outcomes of internet diffusion for the government. While the outcome was not entirely negative, BN still controlled the majority of parliamentary seats and states in Malaysia but it represented a significant loss compared to the 11th general election in 2004 when the government secured a simple majority with more than 90 percent of parliamentary seats. This is supported by Loh (2004), who stated that in the 11th general election on

March 21st, 2004, BN achieved a historic victory by winning 63.8% of the popular vote, securing 198 out of 219 parliamentary seats, which accounted for 90.4% of the total, marking their highest level of parliamentary dominance.

The 13th, 14th, and 15th general elections marked new chapters in Malaysian political history, significantly impacting election outcomes. The 2013 election demonstrated the advancement of ICT as a key player in political results, serving as a major contributor to political information and discussion. Social media, being trendy, affordable, and easily accessible, played a significant role in GE13 by providing a platform for youths, who make up half of the 13.3 million voters, to engage with political parties and leaders, even though it was not the determining factor in the overall election results (Sani, 2014). In the 14th general election, Nazri (2018) points out that Barisan Nasional's fall in 2018 resulted from a stronger, more credible opposition, internal elite conflicts, significant negative issues surrounding Najib's administration, and the rise of an engaged digital society. The political landscape in Malaysia changed drastically for the first time in 60 years, as the long-ruling government lost its power. The opposition utilised social media to spread their political agenda and information to internet users. At that time, WhatsApp emerged as one of the biggest contributors to this shift, as political parties, particularly the opposition, leveraged its privacy features to discuss sensitive political issues, highlighting its importance as a platform for political engagement and agenda advancement (Sedu & Ghazali, 2020). Additionally, users could avoid being charged under the Sedition Act and Communication and Media Act when discussing sensitive issues. The government has taken measures to control the extensive sharing of information and political discussion, particularly on Facebook and WhatsApp, by introducing anti-fake news laws in 2018 (Nazri, 2018).

In the 2022 election, the current opposition primarily utilised TikTok as their main campaign platform, effectively capturing the attention of younger voters who prefer short-length videos for quick information. One of the election parties secured the highest number of parliamentary seats thanks to their dominance of this medium during the campaign. According to Lim (2024), TikTok emerged as a significant factor in Malaysian politics during the 15th general election in November 2022, dubbed as 'TikTok election' due to the lowered voting age, with the Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) unexpectedly securing the most seats. In summary, we should not downplay the

important role of social media as alternative mediums for information, and it is interesting to identify other potential social media that may be primarily used for political discussion in the next general election.

Malaysia, a democratic nation, recently took a significant step toward greater youth inclusion in its electoral process by lowering the voting age from 21 to 18. This historic amendment, implemented in 2022, has introduced over a million new, young voters to the Malaysian political landscape, reshaping the electorate to include a younger, digitally savvy demographic. This change aligns with international trends of empowering youth to actively participate in democratic processes and highlights the need to understand how these new voters form political opinions and engage with the democratic system. Vote18 not only reshapes Malaysian democracy and empowers youth, but also contributes to a significant demographic shift by increasing the number of first-time voters, particularly *Bumiputera* voters, which may impact election outcomes in Malaysia (Ahmad & Hamizal, 2024). Thus, this segment of new voters is increasing in the next general election and will surely have a tremendous impact on the election outcome.

For many newly eligible voters in Malaysia, social media platforms like X, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok serve as primary sources of information on political issues, public policies, and candidates. Social media platforms like TikTok, X, and Instagram significantly boosted youth political participation in Malaysia during the 15th general election by providing election information, fostering discussions, and serving as tools for news and interaction, highlighting the importance of incorporating social media into political campaigns and civic education despite challenges like digital literacy and access (Noorman et al., 2024). This reliance on social media for news and engagement distinguishes these young voters from older generations who are more likely to consume information through traditional media. The evolving relationship between digital and conventional media is reflected in the generational divide, with younger generations consuming more digital media and older generations preferring conventional media (Alzubi, 2023). As social media has become a dominant influence in shaping political views, it is essential to understand how these platforms impact political participation, particularly among the majority ethnic group in Malaysia; ‘the Malays’ who represent a substantial portion of the electorate. A study by Kasmani

(2024) found that among first-time Malay voters, young people are increasingly accessing political information passively on social media, with Twitter and Facebook as key platforms. On the other hand, private WhatsApp groups and Instagram are becoming prominent for political discussions and content sharing, highlighting the evolving ways political messages are communicated and received. This trend might also have happened to potential voters in influencing the result for the 16th Malaysian general election.

This study specifically aims to investigate how social media use (SMU) influences the political participation (PP) of potential young Malay voters (PYMV), focusing on one mediator which is political efficacy (PE). Potential young Malay voters are Malay youth ages 17 to 20 who are eligible or expected to vote in the upcoming general election. Political efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to influence political outcomes. This factor is crucial in motivating political engagement and can be shaped significantly by information and interactions on social media. To gain insights into this phenomenon, this study will focus on Malay students aged 17-20 from the Centre for Foundation Studies at the International Islamic University Malaysia (CFS IIUM), as they are PYMV in the upcoming general elections. By examining the influence of SMU on PE among this group, this study seeks to shed light on how social media can shape the political engagement of young Malays, who are positioned to have a substantial impact on Malaysia's future elections.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In a move to strengthen youth representation in politics, Malaysia has lowered the voting age from 21 to 18, indicating a major change in its democratic development. While numerous studies have explored the influence of SMU on PP in Malaysia, there is limited research specifically examining the new PYMV group. A study conducted by Shahimi et al. (2020) stated that Malaysian Gen Z remains uncertain about their readiness to vote in the next election, as indicated by the low number of respondents confirming their preparedness, with social media, knowledge, and peer factors having little impact. In addition, family influence and attitude showed a negative and significant relationship, suggesting that their voting decisions are not swayed by family

or personal attitudes. On the other hand, Kasmani (2024) found that first-time Malay voters are more comfortable sharing political information via Instagram and WhatsApp stories and are reluctant to engage in political discussion on their social media. This shows that Gen Z has a low level of PP, and their voting decisions remain uncertain and may change unexpectedly. According to Hassan et al. (2024), interactive political communication has changed how campaigns operate in the light of social media enabling, real-time engagement, which can enhance voter involvement and influence voting decisions. With the availability of real-time information, they might make a last-minute decision in voting and social media can be an important tool to influence their final decision before entering the polling centre. Thus, there is a considerable gap for the current research as it focuses on PYMV and who will participate in the next general election. It is interesting to examine their PE and PP, as well as the type of social media favored by PYMV following the changes in the Malaysian government.

Additionally, few studies have emphasised the role of PE, the belief in one's influence on political outcomes in shaping the political engagement of these new voters. These factors are crucial to understanding young voters' motivations and willingness to participate in politics. Most research focuses on the relationship between social media use and political participation (Leong, 2015; Akmal & Salman, 2015; Shiratuddin et al., 2016; and Rauf et. al., 2016), while political efficacy is only considered a construct that has an impact on political participation (Eckstein et. al., 2013; Helal & Hamza, 2015; Valentino et.al., 2009). As such, there is little explanation of the impact of PE as a mediator of PP. Thus, the theoretical framework inspired by the theory of political efficacy by Campbell et al. (1954) will be used to guide the researcher in further linking social media and political participation. With this, a new conceptual framework will be developed to help understand the relationships among social media use (SMU), political efficacy (PE), and political participation (PP).

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant as it addresses an emerging area of political research in Malaysia, focusing on the newly enfranchised PYMV group who were first able to participate in the previous general election following the implementation of Undi18. By

examining the impact of SMU on the PP of PYMV, this research will shed light on how digital platforms shape PP among Malaysia's youngest electorate. Thus, the study extends existing theories of political participation and digital political participation by testing their applicability within non-western and youth-dominated electoral context; a group whose engagement is essential to the future of the country's democracy, especially in Malaysia's 16th general election.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the limited literature on the role of PE in motivating PP among young Malaysians by empirically examining its mediating role between SMU and PP. This theoretical testing offers a more refined understanding of how psychological factors interact with digital media environments to influence participatory behaviours among first-time and young voters. By situating PE within the context of social media-driven PP, the study advances scholarly discourse on digital citizenship and youth participation in contemporary democracies.

The findings of this study have important practical and policy implications. Insights from this research may inform policymakers, educators, and political organisations in designing targeted civic education initiatives, youth engagement programs, and ethical social media strategies to foster informed and active political participation. Additionally, the study provides a framework for understanding how voting, party involvement, and political discourse can be encouraged among Malaysian youth, offering guidance for strengthening democratic participation in Malaysia's socially and politically diverse landscape.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study aimed to achieve the following objectives:

- 1- To analyse the patterns of social media use (SMU), political efficacy (PE), and political participation (PP) among potential young Malay voters (PYMV).
- 2- To assess the relationship between SMU, PE, and PP among PYMV.
- 3- To test the mediating role of PE in the relationship between SMU and PP among PYMV.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the above objectives of the study, the following research questions were developed:

1. What are the patterns of SMU, PE, and PP among PYMV?
2. What is the relationship between SMU, PE, and PP among PYMV?
3. Does PE mediate the relationship between SMU and PP among PYMV?

1.6 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER ONE

This chapter introduced the study on the relationship between social media use (SMU) and political participation (PP) among Potential Young Malay Voters (PYMV), with political efficacy (PE) as a mediating factor. It highlighted Malaysia's lowering of the voting age to 18, creating a new electorate whose PP remains underexplored. While previous studies have examined social media's role in PP, limited attention has been given to PYMV and the influence of PE. The study adopts the theory of PE by Campbell et al. (1954) to guide the development of a conceptual framework linking SMU, PE, and PP. The research aims to provide new insights into how SMU and psychological factors shape youth PP in Malaysia. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to understanding the youngest electorate's participation, offering implications for policymakers, educators, and political organisations in fostering active political involvement. Quota sampling will be applied, focusing on Malay youths aged 17–20 from the Centre for Foundation Studies, IIUM, representing diverse regions across Malaysia. In sum, Chapter One outlined the study's rationale, objectives, and scope, setting the foundation for the next chapter which emphasises a review of literature and research methodology.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents several topics incorporating social media use (SMU), political efficacy (PE), and political participation (PP) related literatures with proposed hypotheses and a conceptual framework.

2.2 POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Political participation (PP) can be divided into two categories as stated by Towner (2013), which are online and offline, giving people the ability to express political opinions and exercise political influence. Offline political participation (OFFPP) can be defined as activities such as attending a rally, donating to a candidate, and talking face-to-face with others about political parties. Other than that, there are a few more actions that can be considered as offline political participation where Cantijoch (2012) stated that there are four modes of participation: representational participation, voting, protest, and consumerism. Thus, it can be concluded that offline political participation is physical.

On the other hand, online political participation (ONPP) refers to activities such as sharing political information and visiting political party websites (Willnat et al., 2013). In addition, online political participation refers to communicating, discussing and expressing opinions using social media (McLeod & Lee, 2012). This study aims to investigate the OFFPP and ONPP exhibited by PYMV, building upon previous research that categorised PP into offline activities. This includes rallies, donations, face-to-face discussions, and online activities such as sharing political information and engaging on social media. While the research shows a distinction between OFFPP and ONPP, it remains to be explored whether the PP patterns of this new generation mirror those observed in earlier studies, given that the nature of engagement has evolved with technological advancements and changes in political ruling in Malaysia. However, this study focuses on political participation as a general construct among PYMV rather than

separating online and offline forms, as distinguishing between them is not necessary for this research.

2.3 SOCIAL MEDIA USE

The term "social media" (SM) was first introduced in 1994 in reference to a Tokyo-based online media environment called Matisse (Bercovici, 2010). Social media refers to the various internet-based and mobile platforms that enable users to engage in online interactions, share user-generated content, or participate in online communities including blogs, discussion forums, social media, text messaging, podcasts and more (Dewing, 2010; Auxier & Anderson, 2021). In research, social media (SM) is commonly used as an umbrella term that encompasses a wide range of online platforms, including blogs, business networks, collaborative projects, enterprise social networks (SN), forums, microblogs, photo sharing, product reviews, social bookmarking, social gaming, video sharing, and virtual worlds (Aichner & Jacob, 2015).

As of January 2024, about 83.1% of the Malaysian population were active social media users, a 4.6% increase from 2023, with Facebook leading all platforms (Siddharta, 2024). On the other hand, the Global Digital Report 2024 on Malaysians aged 16 to 60 found that the most used platforms by the population are WhatsApp (26.8%) followed by TikTok (21.9), Facebook (18.8%), Instagram (14%), and Telegram (1.7%) as mentioned by Howe (2024). As 2025 begins, this research should identify PYMV's preferred social media platforms, so relevant stakeholders can consider targeting these segments for information distribution. In this study, social media use (SMU) is used throughout this paper.

2.4 SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Several studies were conducted on SMU and PP. A study by Baumgartner and Morris (2010) mentioned that youth's ONPP increased due to the emergence of internet accounts such as Facebook or MySpace.com. However, there is no effect on their OFFPP specifically voting. On the other hand, the study by Bode (2012) found that Facebook has a clear and significant effect on the youth's PP. In addition, another study

by Kanagavel and Chandrasekaran (2014) on Facebook use found that ONPP led to many OFFPP activities, and they found that the majority of respondents who followed up a particular politician or party online have an impact on their voting decisions. Other than that, Akmal and Salman (2015) in their study on youth ONPP through new media information democracy space found that there is a positive relationship between social media use and ONPP and OFFPP. Focused mainly on first-time Malay voters, Kasmani (2024) found that although younger people often prefer passive PP on social media, apps like WhatsApp encourage them to discuss and explore political topics due to their private and conversational environment. In addition, a study by Tan (2022) suggested that rather than encouraging wired youth to vote, the use of political information on social media distracts them from their voting responsibilities, with voting behaviour more accurately predicted by factors such as party affiliation and political interest. Other than that, social media (SM) has also been used by teenagers to communicate with politicians online. This is stated by Subre (2023) when SM served as a crucial communication platform for teenagers to engage with politicians during the GE-15 campaign, it enabled them to stay connected and compare political parties through social media posts from politicians themselves.

Findings from different studies yield varying results and relationships, thus presenting an opportunity for the current research to explore the types of online and offline political participation inclusive of which social media platforms will be used by PYMV. Therefore, it is hypothesised that:

H1: There is a relationship between social media use (SMU) and political participation (PP).

2.5 SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND POLITICAL EFFICACY

Social media use (SMU) can help strengthen individual political efficacy (PE). Tufail et al. (2015) in a study conducted at a university in Gujrat, found that SMU positively influences PE and voting intentions among educated youth, with males showing higher political awareness than females while family system and residence have minimal impact on political efficacy. Tufail et al. (2015) added that the majority of respondents are not affiliated with political families and that most have created personal profiles on

Facebook and Twitter. In addition, Zaiter et al. (2023) in their study in Lebanon mentioned there is a positive correlation between the impact of SMU on voters' PP, suggesting that social media platforms have a strong influence on both internal political efficacy (IPE) and external political efficacy (EPE) since the majority of respondents use WhatsApp and Facebook. Sarok and Azahar (n.d.) noted that social media use for political activities is shaped by factors such as PE, political knowledge, and direct PP, with platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, along with online news portals, serving as primary sources of political information for youth.

In addition, Zhang et al. (2010) found that the more users became politically efficacious and discussed politics with others, the more likely they were to participate in politics. Social media can empower ordinary citizens to get involved in a political discourse, a privilege that cannot be provided by traditional media such as television, newspapers, and radio. In terms of traditional media, television and radio use were found to be negatively associated with VE (Idid et al., 2017). Furthermore, Idid et al. (2017) found that internet use has a significant impact only on IE. This suggests that both constructs influence one another, which is particularly relevant to the current study which examines whether SMU is related to PE, as indicated in previous studies. Therefore, the following hypothesis will be tested:

H2a: There is a relationship between social media use and internal efficacy.

H2b: There is a relationship between social media use and external efficacy.

H2c: There is a relationship between social media use and voter efficacy.

2.6 POLITICAL EFFICACY AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Helal and Hamza (2015), in their study on political efficacy (PE), found no correlation between PE and PP, which they attribute to low levels of trust among citizens towards the government. In addition, they found no significant differences between males and females in terms of PE, partisanship and PP. However, a study on the prediction of intentions to participate in politics and actual participation in young adulthood by Eckstein et al. (2013) found that attitudes toward political behaviour and internal

efficacy (IE) influence young adults' intentions to participate in politics. Thus, trust plays an important role in PP.

On the other hand, Valentino et al. (2009) proposed a model showing a causal chain linking IE and PP via emotions. They predicted that IE would boost participation, and it was mostly affected by those who felt threatened by new policies by political representatives. Their findings also indicated that IE continued to exert a significant direct impact on PP when facilitated by anger during political campaigns, but other variables such as fear do not carry a causal impact of IE on PP. The researchers also found that people with high IE are those who were emotionally affected by threatening political events that were going to bring changes later, compared to those who have a low level of IE.

In contrast, there is limited empirical research examining the relationship between VE and PP. Existing studies indicate that only IE has a direct relationship with PP. Therefore, it is of interest to further examine the relationship between VE and PP. Accordingly, the following hypothesis will be tested:

H3a: There is a relationship between internal efficacy and political participation.

H3b: There is a relationship between external efficacy and political participation.

H3c: There is a relationship between voter efficacy and political participation.

2.7 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, SOCIAL MEDIA USE, AND POLITICAL EFFICACY

Bode et al. (2014) defined political SMU as using these sites for new forms of ONPP such as displaying preferences or becoming followers of a politician by publicly affiliating with a group and exchanging information about politics. With these new methods of participation, users can engage in politics even when they are not physically present at political events or discussions. A study by Chen et.al., (2019) stated that political efficacy helps in mediating the relationship between information-oriented SMU and ONPP. The current research will contribute findings on the mediating effect of PE on PP as well as identify specific types of efficacy and participation.

The internet nowadays has become a method for users to discuss political matters easily. It can also exert pressure on political institutions as users can easily express their political thoughts or even form political pressure groups through e-mail lists and newsgroups which can indirectly increase individual political efficacy (Lee, 2006). Colombo et al. (2012) mentioned that “If internet adoption can influence political involvement, it may do so largely through feeling of internal political efficacy (p.115)”. In addition, Reichert (2016) stated that IE improves due to political knowledge which indeed translates into various kinds of indirect PP. Thus, political information enhances PE, which in turn encourages PP with studies suggesting that active social media use and being a well-informed voter significantly increase PE.

Further review on political efficacy was added to identify the influence of PE in terms of three sub-domains which are internal efficacy (IE), external efficacy (EE), and voter efficacy (VE). Internal efficacy (IE) refers to how individuals feel and understand how to participate in politics without being intimidated by challenges, conflicts, or disagreements in that field (Valentino et.al., 2009). Cantijoch (2012) noted that IE has positive and significant relationship with representational participation, voting, protest and consumerism. Reichert (2016) mentioned that research on PE in Germany suggests that IE stems from political knowledge and subsequently impacts various forms of PP, including traditional actions such as voting. A study by Hassan et al. (2021) on Malaysian youth found that IE significantly influences new voters' decision to vote, with knowledgeable and politically informed young people more likely to have a positive voting attitude ($\beta_2 = 0.297, p < 0.05$). Thus, it is expected in the current research that IE also contributes towards PP of PYMV.

H4a: Internal efficacy mediates the relationship between social media use and political participation.

External efficacy (EE) refers to an individual's belief in the openness and responsiveness of the political system (Valentino et.al., 2009). Studies show different results on EE. Cantijoch (2012) found that there is no significant relationship between EE and representational participation, voting, protest and consumerism. EE is linked to the relationship between democratic maturity and voter turnout, with the study finding that the longer the duration of democratic maturity in a region, the higher the level of EE and PP (Novy & Karnak, 2015). This is also supported by students in Malaysian

youth by Hassan et. al. (2021) where EE positively influences the decision to vote, with new voters who have higher levels of EE more likely to actively participate in elections ($\beta_3 = 0.220, p < 0.05$). Therefore, it is expected that, in the current study on PYMV, EE also has a positive relationship with PP.

H4b: External efficacy mediates the relationship between social media use and political participation.

Voter efficacy (VE) refers to voters' confidence in their ability to influence the political system through voting (Idid et al., 2017). This new dimension is important to be explored as it shows significant result in the mentioned study. In addition, the researchers found that "voter efficacy was higher than the other two dimensions, which reflects a confidence among Malaysian voters in influencing the political system through the power of their voting" (p.60). The current research will also include VE as a dimension to contribute more data to this area as it can strengthen the findings of previous studies or yield different results from those of previous studies which either way can also contribute to the literature review related to this new dimension.

H4c: Voter efficacy mediates the relationship between social media use and political participation.

2.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: POLITICAL EFFICACY

Political efficacy (PE) is widely recognised as a critical mechanism linking political knowledge to political action, influencing individuals' engagement in various forms of PP (Helah & Hamza, 2015). In essence, PE reflects the extent to which individuals believe their actions can meaningfully affect political processes, thereby serving as a key driver of PP. Campbell et al. (1954) conceptualised political efficacy as "the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, namely, that it is worthwhile to perform one's civic duties" (p.1002) as cited in Caprara et al. (2009). This suggests that individuals with higher PE are more confident that their PP can lead to tangible outcomes, which in turn strengthens their overall PP.

Empirical studies have further refined the understanding of PE by identifying multiple dimensions. For instance, Idid et al. (2017) examined PE among Malaysian voters and identified three dimensions: voter efficacy (VE), internal efficacy (IE), and external efficacy (EE). These dimensions capture different aspects of an individual's perceived influence and competence in the political domain. Additionally, research indicates that various factors can influence PE. Notably, both traditional and new media use, along with media trust, have been found to significantly correlate with PE, though the type of media and its perceived credibility may differentially affect each efficacy dimension (Idid et al., 2017).

Within this framework, PE serves not only as an outcome influenced by SMU but also as a mediating mechanism that translates digital engagement into tangible PP. Understanding this mediating role is crucial for explaining how and why individuals' interactions with political content online may lead to their PP.

2.9 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Building upon the theoretical underpinnings of political efficacy, this study examines the relationships among social media use (SMU), political efficacy (PE), and political participation (PP). The conceptual framework suggests that social media use influences political efficacy, which in turn affects political participation. This framework is illustrated in Figure 2.1:

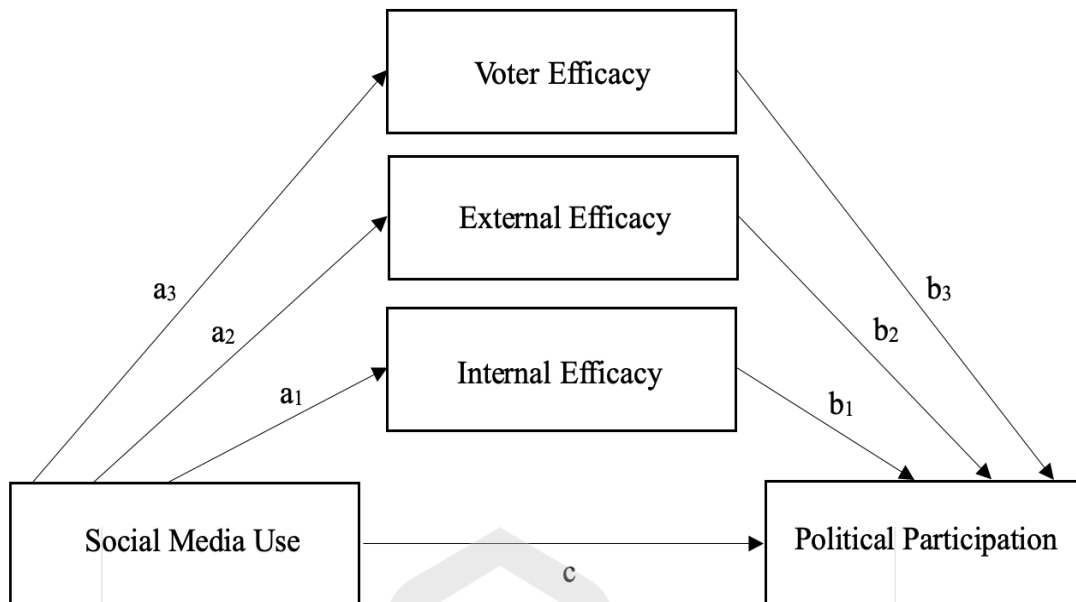


Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework of the Social Media Use Influences Political Efficacy, and Political Efficacy, in turn Influences Political Participation

There are three main constructs in this study: (a) social media use (SMU), (b) political efficacy (PE), and (c) political participation (PP). PP is the dependent variable, SMU is the independent variable, and PE serves as the mediating variable. The constructs are explained as follows:

1. Social Media Use: Refers to the frequency and types of social media use.
2. Political efficacy: Refers to individuals' beliefs and perceptions regarding the impact of their political actions, encompassing three dimensions: internal efficacy, external efficacy, and voter efficacy. PE acts as a mediating variable between social media use and political participation. Internal efficacy (IE) refers to how individuals feel and understand how to take part in politics without being intimidated by challenges, conflicts, or disagreements in that field. External efficacy (EE) refers to an individual's belief in the openness and responsiveness of the political system. Voter efficacy (VE) refers to voters' confidence in their ability to influence the political system through voting.

3. Political participation: Refers to individuals' engagement in political activities, both online and offline, analysed here as a single construct without separating the two dimensions in testing the mediating effect of three domains of political efficacy.

This conceptual framework is grounded in political efficacy theory, which provides a lens to understand how social media use may empower individuals, increase their sense of political efficacy, and ultimately encourage active political participation. By positioning political efficacy as a mediating variable, the study aims to clarify the mechanisms through which social media use can influence political behaviour among potential young Malay voters.

2.10 SUMMARY OF THE HYPOTHESES

Table 2.1 presents the summary of the study's hypotheses, which examine the relationships between social media use (SMU), political efficacy (PE), and political participation (PP), as well as the mediating effects of internal, external, and voter efficacy.

Table 2.1 Summary of the Hypotheses

No.	Hypotheses
H1	There is a relationship between social media use and political participation
H2a	There is a relationship between social media use and internal efficacy
H2b	There is a relationship between social media use and external efficacy
H2c	There is a relationship between social media use and voter efficacy
H3a	There is a relationship between internal efficacy and political participation

H3b	There is a relationship between external efficacy and political participation
H3c	There is a relationship between voter efficacy and political participation
H4a	Internal efficacy mediates the relationship between social media use and political participation
H4b	External efficacy mediates the relationship between social media use and political participation
H4c	Voter efficacy mediates the relationship between social media use and political participation

2.11 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER TWO

This chapter focuses on the previous literature reviews that is in line with the current study. Other than that, each subtopic supports and highlights the formed hypotheses. Those hypotheses are presented in the form of a conceptual framework to show the relationship among variables. The next chapter clarifies the methodology used for this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the methodology used in this study. The discussion predominantly focuses on the research design, data collection procedure, sample selection, pre-testing of the research instruments, reliability analysis, skewness and kurtosis analysis, data collection procedure, and data analysis.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey design using a questionnaire as a tool for data collection. According to Wang and Cheng (2020), this approach involves minimal ethical concerns, collects data at a single point in time, allows multiple variables to be examined simultaneously, and is useful for generating hypotheses and informing more in-depth future research. Thus, a cross-sectional survey is suitable for studying causal mechanisms because it allows researchers to examine relationships between variables at a single point in time, providing insights into potential influences such as SMU and demographic factors on PE and PP. Other than that, Kelley et al. (2003) mentioned that surveys can obtain information from large samples of the population and data collected from individuals can be used to make inferences about the wider population. The questionnaire was divided into four main sections which are on demographic profile, media use, political efficacy and political participation which were self-developed and adopted from studies. Details of the questionnaire are provided in Table 3.1. The first section on demography included details such as gender, age, types of secondary schools, courses taken, involvement in leadership, position held in leadership, state of residence, mother and father's occupations, together with family's monthly income. The second section includes closed-ended questions which are used to measure social media use. The respondents will be asked questions on their subscription to the internet and frequency of internet and social media use by types such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, X, Telegram, YouTube, and TikTok. The third

4	Online Political Participation	Likert-scale level of agreement	13	Adopted from Gil de Zúñiga, Molyneux, & Zheng (2014), Akmal & Salman (2015), Waeterloos, Walrave, & Ponnet (2021).	.82 .942
	Offline Political Participation	Likert-scale level of agreement	13	Adopted from Gil de Zúñiga, Molyneux, & Zheng. (2014), & Akmal & Salman (2015)	.79 .87
TOTAL			55		.941

3.3 SAMPLE SELECTION

This study will employ quota sampling to ensure diverse representation by gender and region in Malaysia, providing a well-rounded analysis of how social media influences political participation among young voters across different demographics. The sampling will include participants from key regions of Malaysia to capture potential regional variations in political attitudes and engagement. The east coast states will include respondents from Kelantan and Terengganu, while the central region will include respondents from Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, and Kuala Lumpur. The northern states will cover Perlis, Kedah, Penang, and Perak. The southern states will include Malacca

and Johor. Finally, participants from Borneo represent Sabah, Sarawak, and Labuan. To focus on the PYMV perspectives, the study will select students from the Centre for Foundation Studies at the International Islamic University Malaysia (CFS IIUM) aged 17-20 years. While it is true that the proposed respondents could limit generalisability, the focus is rather on providing in-depth insights into the specific group being studied, which can still be valuable for understanding the context intended and can serve as a starting point for future studies.

The decision to select students from CFS IIUM is grounded in the institution's unique demographic structure, where the overwhelming majority (99%) of students are Malay. Additionally, CFS IIUM serves as one of the educational institutions for young Malaysians from diverse states, ensuring that the sample includes students from various geographic regions. This diverse representation provides a comprehensive perspective on the educational experiences and needs of Malaysian youth in a multi-regional context.

These respondents, who represent the Malay demographic across regions, are well-suited to provide insights into the influence of social media on political participation, especially as they approach voting eligibility in the next general election. By incorporating gender and regional representation, the study aims to capture a comprehensive view of how social media impacts political efficacy and participation within this critical group of emerging voters.

Quota sampling is a non-probability sampling method that involves selecting a portion of the population to be studied (Lavrakas, 2008). In quota sampling, the entire population is divided into relevant strata, also known as quota controls, such as gender, age, class, and other characteristics relevant to the topic of interest (Yang & Banamah, 2014). Quota sampling will be used in this study to select respondents who meet the research data requirements, specifically Malay youths aged between 17 and 20 years old. This sampling method was chosen because it is suitable for studies that require respondents from a specific subgroup to represent a proportion of the sample (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). There are specific criteria that respondents must meet to be selected for this study; they must be Malay youth, eligible to vote in the upcoming election, and social media users. For this research, the sample size was calculated using the formula provided by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) which determined that 357 respondents were

required to be the representative of the total population of 5000 CFS IIUM students. However, 381 respondents from CFS IIUM will be selected for this research to match the ratio needed for representation which is 8 percent of respondents by gender, according to each state in Malaysia (refer to Appendix B).

3.4 PRE-TESTING OF THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The questionnaire was pre-tested prior to the actual data collection. In mid-May 2025 (Semester 3, Session 2024/2025), 35 potential young Malay voters (PYMV) from CFS IIUM completed the survey. This pre-test aimed to identify any issues related to the questionnaire’s wording, clarity, and overall reliability. Any necessary adjustments would be made based on the feedback received during this pre-testing phase.

3.5 RELIABILITY ANALYSIS

Table 3.2 portrays the results of the reliability and validity assessments conducted prior to further statistical analysis. Reliability testing was first performed to assess the internal consistency and coherence of the measurement items for each construct. Cronbach’s alpha was employed as the primary indicator of internal consistency. The reliability coefficients obtained for the main constructs were social media use ($\alpha = 0.691$), political efficacy ($\alpha = 0.851$), and political participation ($\alpha = 0.954$), indicating satisfactory to excellent internal consistency.

Table 3.2 Reliability Test for Scaled Variables

Section	Constructs	Dimensions	No. of items	Cronbach’s Alpha (α)	
				Pilot study (N=35)	Actual study (N=463)
1.	Social media use		7	.691	.583

2.	Political Efficacy	15	.851	.790
	Voter Efficacy	5	.880	.863
	External Political Efficacy	6	.773	.674
	Internal Political Efficacy	4	.766	.820
5.	Political Participation	26	.954	.923
	Offline Political Participation	13	.917	.868
	Online Political Participation	13	.933	.908
TOTAL		48		

In addition to reliability testing, the validity of the measurement instrument was established through content and construct validity procedures. Content validity was ensured by adapting measurement items from established and widely used instruments in prior political participation and political efficacy studies, with minor contextual modifications to suit the population of potential young Malay voters (PYMV). The questionnaire items were further reviewed with supervisors to ensure clarity, relevance, and representativeness of each construct.

Construct validity was assessed by examining the internal consistency of each dimension within the constructs, as shown in Table 3.2. The political efficacy construct demonstrated strong construct validity across its dimensions, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.674 to 0.863 in the actual study, while political participation recorded high internal consistency across both offline ($\alpha = 0.868$) and online ($\alpha = 0.908$)

dimensions. These results indicate that the items within each dimension consistently measured the underlying theoretical constructs.

Overall, the Cronbach's alpha values for all constructs exceeded the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.60, indicating acceptable reliability as suggested by Landis and Koch (1977). Political efficacy ($\alpha = 0.851$) and political participation ($\alpha = 0.954$) demonstrated strong internal consistency. Although the social media use construct recorded a slightly lower alpha value in the actual study ($\alpha = 0.585$), this value remains acceptable for exploratory research, particularly for scales with a limited number of items or newly adapted measures (Nunnally, 1978; Peterson, 1994).

A comparison between the pilot study ($N = 35$) and the actual study ($N = 463$) shows consistent reliability patterns across all constructs: (a) social media use (pilot: $\alpha = 0.691$; actual: $\alpha = 0.585$), (b) political efficacy (pilot: $\alpha = 0.851$; actual: $\alpha = 0.790$), and (c) political participation (pilot: $\alpha = 0.954$; actual: $\alpha = 0.923$). This consistency further supports the stability and validity of the measurement instrument.

Following data screening and cleaning procedures, 30 cases were removed due to incomplete or invalid responses. Consequently, all subsequent analyses were conducted using the final sample of 463 participants.

3.6 SKEWNESS AND KURTOSIS ANALYSIS

Malaysia, a democratic nation recently took a significant step toward greater youth inclusion in its electoral process by lowering the voting age from 21 to 18. Table 3.3 shows the descriptive statistics for the main variables in this study: social media use, political efficacy, and political participation. On average, participants scored 22.64 ($SD = 3.72$) on social media use, 54.42 ($SD = 7.04$) on political efficacy, and 50.45 ($SD = 14.30$) on political participation. According to Kline (2011), data may be considered non-normal if skewness exceeds ± 3 or if kurtosis is greater than ± 10 , as these values suggest potential issues with the distribution shape.

The skewness values for social media use, political efficacy, and political participation were -0.018, -0.125, and 0.529, respectively. Their corresponding kurtosis values were 0.154, 0.113, and -0.299. All values fall within the acceptable range of ± 3

for skewness and ± 10 for kurtosis, as recommended by Kline (2011), indicating that the data do not deviate significantly from normality. Therefore, the data were considered suitable for parametric analyses, such as Pearson correlation.

Table 3.3 Skewness and Kurtosis Values of Study Variable

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skewness	Kurtosis
Social Media Use	22.64	3.72	-.018	.154
Political Efficacy	54.42	7.04	-.125	.113
Political Participation	50.45	14.30	.529	-.299

3.7 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Democratic Malaysia recently took a significant step toward greater youth inclusion in its electoral process by lowering the voting age from 21 to 18. Data from CFS IIUM students will be collected via Google Forms to meet the quota sampling requirements for the research. Evans and Mathur (2005) mentioned that online surveys offer significant advantages over other formats, including flexibility, time efficiency, convenience, ease of data entry and analysis. Furthermore, Couper and Miller (2008) stated that web surveys are more accessible to respondents during data collection compared to face-to-face and telephone surveys and are more cost-effective. This method was chosen for the study because it addresses political inclinations, a topic considered sensitive among Malaysians. Therefore, an online survey ensures anonymity for those who might hesitate to respond to sensitive questions. This aligns with Wright (2005), who stated that the internet facilitates communication and enables individuals to gather information from those who may be reluctant to engage in face-to-face methods.

The survey was distributed with a letter explaining the study's objectives and an informed consent form for participants agreeing to take part. Data collection took place from July 7th, 2025, to July 10th, 2025 (Semester 1, Session 2025/2026). The Google

Form survey link was distributed through official classes, departments, and Mahallah's WhatsApp and Telegram groups to gather responses from CFS IIUM students. Students were also required to answer a question about their CFS IIUM course to ensure they were the intended participants in the study. All data will be treated as confidential and used solely for academic purposes. With the help of fellow lecturers at CFS IIUM, Academic Advisors from all departments, Mahallah fellows and principals, the researcher was able to collect the data in a short period. A total of 493 respondents completed the Google Forms provided by the researcher and 30 were deleted after skewness and kurtosis analysis.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

In this study, the independent variable is social networking site use, and political efficacy serves as the mediating variable. On the other hand, the dependent variable is political participation. Data analysis will be performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 30). The data will be entered into the software to produce results in both descriptive and inferential statistics, addressing the research questions, objectives, and hypotheses. Descriptive statistics will be used to explain the demographic information, while the frequency procedure will be used to analyse the frequency data. In addition, Spearman Correlation will be used to study the relation between all constructs and Hayes (2022) analysis strategy will be employed to test the mediation hypothesis.

The researcher will explain in detail the data analysis process in accordance with the research questions. To identify the frequency of social media use, political efficacy, and political participation among young Malays, the researcher will use T-tests. Secondly, it examines the relationship between social media use, political efficacy, and political participation among young Malays, employing correlation analysis. Thirdly, is to test the mediating effect of political efficacy between social media use and political participation among young Malays, using Hayes (2022) analysis strategy. Based on the normality test, the data fall under an acceptable range. Thus, Pearson's correlation was used for the data analysis.

3.9 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER THREE

In general, this chapter discusses the method selected for this study. Firstly, this study focused on the research design related to the reason why the quantitative research design and survey questionnaire were selected in conducting this study. Other than that, the questions used in this study were also presented. The advantages of the procedure for data collection used in this study were explained. Then, sample selection for this study was tabled and the sampling method that was chosen in this study was selected to assist the researcher in identifying suitable participants. Last but not least, for data analysis, the Statistical Package for Social Science SPSS (Version 30) was selected by this study to identify the relationship among all constructs namely social media use, political efficacy and political participation. This includes descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis. Other than that, Hayes' Mediation analysis (2022) was used to identify the relationship between social media use, political efficacy and political participation.



CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the study's data and findings. They were 463 final respondents selected for the study. Chapter Four will focus on the analysis of data using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 30 software. This includes descriptive statistics and Pearson Correlation analysis. Other than that, Mediation analysis by Hayes (2022) was used to identify the relationship between all three variables.

4.2 RESULTS

4.2.1 Demographics of the Respondents

Table 4.1 shows the respondents' socio-demographic information analysed by the researcher including gender, age, types of schools, course taken in CFS IIUM, involvement in leadership at CFS IIUM, position held in leadership, state of origin, mother's occupation, father's occupation, and family income. Female respondents made up the majority of the sample at 70.8%, while male respondents accounted for 29.2%. The majority of respondents were 19 years old (91.1%), followed by 18 years old (4.5%) and 20 years old (4.3%). Most respondents came from national secondary schools (37.8%), followed by religious secondary schools (SMKA) at 20.5%, and fully residential schools (SBP) at 17.7%. In terms of academic programs, the majority were AED students (14%), followed by HS students (13.2%) and ECONS students (11.2%). The percentage of students with and without leadership involvement at CFS IIUM was nearly balanced, with 51.6% not involved in any leadership roles and the remaining involved in various committees. Among those involved in leadership, the majority held ordinary member positions (58.1%), followed by subcommittee members (27.9%), and mainboard positions (14%). The majority of respondents were from Selangor (27.4%), followed by Kelantan (10.6%), and both Terengganu and Pahang at 9.3% each. Regarding mothers' occupations, the majority were government employees (49.2%),

followed by housewives (30.2%) and private-sector workers (11.7%). For fathers' occupations, the majority were government employees (33%), followed by private sector workers (32.2%) and pensioners (17.3%). In terms of family income, the majority of respondents reported household incomes of RM11,120 or more (29.6%), followed by those earning RM5,250–RM11,119 (16.8%) and those earning below RM2,560 (16.6%).

The observed gender imbalance in the sample, where female respondents constitute 70.8%, reflected the actual population distribution of students at CFS IIUM, as shown in Appendix II, female students consistently outnumber male students across nearly all states and regions. Based on the total student population of 4,772, the proportional allocation of respondents (N=381) using approximately 8% representation from each state and gender category resulted in a naturally higher number of female respondents. Therefore, the imbalance in gender distribution is not a result of sampling bias but mirrors the existing demographic composition of the student population at CFS IIUM.

In conclusion, the socio-demographic analysis in Table 4.1 indicates that most respondents were female, 19 years old, and mainly from national secondary schools. Most enrolled in AED, HS, and ECONS programmes at CFS IIUM, with leadership involvement distributed almost equally between those who participated and those who did not. Among student leaders, most held ordinary or subcommittee roles rather than mainboard positions. The respondents predominantly originated from Selangor, followed by Kelantan, Terengganu, and Pahang. In terms of parental occupations, most mothers were government employees or housewives, while fathers were primarily employed in the government or private sectors. Additionally, the largest proportion of respondents came from families with higher incomes, particularly those earning RM11,120 or more, reflecting a relatively well-off socioeconomic background among the sample.

Table 4.1 Demographic Background of Participants

Demographic	N	%
Gender		
Male	135	29.2
Female	328	70.8
Age		
18	21	4.5
19	422	91.1
20	20	4.3
Types of schools		
National Secondary School (Daily)	175	37.8
Fully Residential School (SBP)	82	17.7
Religions Secondary Schools (SMKA)	95	20.5
MARA Science Junior College (MRSM)	29	6.3
Royal Military College (MTD)	1	0.2
Government Aid Religious School (SABK)	61	13.3
Private school	20	4.3
Course taken in CFS IIUM		
LAWS	26	5.6
ECONS	52	11.2
TPHM	7	1.5
IRK	38	8.2
BAR	18	3.9

ACOM	5	1.1
BEN	12	2.6
ECOM	20	4.3
HS	61	13.2
MCOM	14	3.0
MEDIC	31	6.7
DENTI	14	3.0
PMACY	29	6.3
AHS	33	7.1
BIOSC	11	2.4
NURS	3	0.6
SCFIZI	8	1.7
ENGIN	3	0.6
ICT	11	2.4
AED	65	14.0
Involvement in leadership at CFS IIUM		
Student Coordination Committee	3	0.6
Mahallah Representative Committee	20	4.3
Hisbah Representative Committee	40	8.6
Academic Based Society	69	14.9
Non-Academic Based Society	92	19.9
No involvement in any leadership position	239	51.6

Position hold in leadership at CFS IIUM

Main board	65	14.0
Subcommittee	129	27.9
Ordinary member	269	58.1
State		
Kelantan	49	10.6
Terengganu	43	9.3
Pahang	43	9.3
Selangor	127	27.4
Negeri Sembilan	14	3.0
Federal Territory, Kuala Lumpur	28	6.0
Federal Territory, Putrajaya	8	1.7
Perlis	7	1.5
Kedah	23	5.0
Penang	10	2.2
Perak	31	6.7
Malacca	9	1.9
Johor	39	8.4
Sabah	18	3.9
Sarawak	14	3.0
Mother's Job		
Student	2	0.4
Business Owner	13	2.8

Private sector employee	54	11.7
Government employee	228	49.2
Homemaker (housewife)	140	30.2
Pensioner	26	5.6

Father's Job

Business Owner	54	11.7
Private sector employee	149	32.2
Government employee	153	33.0
Politician	1	0.2
Homemaker (househusband)	26	5.6
Pensioner	80	17.3

Family Monthly Income

Below RM2560	77	16.6
RM2560 – RM5249	78	16.8
RM5250 – RM7689	55	11.9
RM7690 – RM9449	40	8.6
RM9450 – RM11819	75	16.2
RM11820 – and above	137	29.6

TOTAL	463	100.0
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4.2.2 Subscriptions of Internet at Home and Mobile Data

According to Table 4.2, the majority of respondents reported having internet subscriptions both at home and via mobile data. Specifically, 77.5% of participants indicated that they subscribe to the internet services at home, whereas 22.5% reported not having a home internet subscription. Additionally, a higher percentage (95.9%) of respondents reported subscribing to mobile data for internet access, while only 4.1% did not subscribe to mobile internet services. These findings suggest that mobile internet access is more dominant than home internet subscriptions among participants.

In conclusion, the findings reveal that while most respondents have access to both home and mobile internet services, mobile data usage is notably more prevalent. A significant majority (95.9%) reported subscribing to mobile internet, compared to 77.5% who have home internet subscriptions. This indicates a stronger reliance on mobile data for internet connectivity among the respondents, suggesting that mobile access plays a more essential role in their daily online activities and communication.

Table 4.2 Subscription of Internet

Subscriptions of internet/response	Yes (%)	No (%)
Subscribe internet at house	77.5	22.5
Subscribe to Internet mobile data	95.9	4.1

4.2.3 Duration of Internet Use and Time Spending Per Access

As shown in Table 4.3, the majority of respondents have used the internet for an extended period. Specifically, 74.3% reported using the internet for more than five years, while smaller proportions reported using it for 3–4 years (18.1%), 1–2 years (6.3%), and less than one year (1.3%).

In terms of time spent per access on social media, the largest proportion of respondents (45.1%) reported spending between 4 and 7 hours per access. This was

followed by 29.8% who spent 1–3 hours, 20.7% who spent 8 hours or more, and only 4.3% who spent less than one hour. These results indicate that most participants are long-term internet users and tend to spend several hours per session on social media.

In conclusion, the data indicate that most respondents are experienced internet users, with most having used the internet for more than five years. Additionally, the findings show that social media engagement among respondents is relatively high as most spend between four and seven hours per session online. This suggests that the participants are not only well-acquainted with digital platforms but also dedicate a substantial amount of time to social media use, reflecting its significant role in their daily routines and online interactions.

Table 4.3 Duration of Internet Use and Time Spending Per Access on Social Media

Items	Duration	Percentage
Duration of internet use	Less than 1 year	1.3
	1 – 2 years	6.3
	3 – 4 years	18.1
	More than 5 years	74.3
Time spend per access	Less than 1 hour	4.3
	1 – 3 hours	29.8
	4 – 7 hours	45.1
	8 hours and above	20.7

4.2.4 Frequency of Social Media Usage Based on Types

Table 4.4 presents the frequency of different types of social media use in a week, categorised by percentage of respondents who reported using each platform on a 5-point scale (1 = never, 5 = always).

WhatsApp emerged as the most frequently used platform, with the majority of respondents reporting they used it either often (35.0%) or always (41.7%). Similarly, TikTok was highly used, with 52.9% indicating they always use it and 29.2% reporting frequent (often) use. In contrast, Facebook was the least used platform among respondents. Nearly half reported that they never (47.5%) or rarely (43.4%) used Facebook in a given week. Only 0.4% of respondents reported using Facebook always. Instagram also showed high engagement, with 39.1% of participants using it often and 26.3% using it always. A small percentage (2.4%) reported never using the platform. With regard to YouTube, usage was also high, with 32.4% using it often and 22.5% always. Very few respondents (0.4%) indicated they never used YouTube. Telegram showed moderate usage, with 25.9% using it often and 11.9% always, while 0.6% reported never using it. Lastly, usage of X (formerly Twitter) was relatively low, with 44.9% never using the platform and only 4.8% indicating they always use it.

Overall, results show that WhatsApp, TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube are the most frequently used platforms among participants while Facebook and X are the least used.

Table 4.4 Frequency of Social Media Use by Types in a week by Percentage

Type of Social Media Use	1=never	2=rarely	3=sometimes	4=often	5=always
WhatsApp	0	6.9	16.4	35.0	41.7
Facebook	47.5	43.4	7.8	0.9	0.4
Instagram	2.4	10.4	21.8	39.1	26.3

X	44.9	27.2	13.6	9.5	4.8
Telegram	0.6	21.6	40.0	25.9	11.9
YouTube	0.4	13.0	31.7	32.4	22.5
TikTok	5.8	2.6	9.5	29.2	52.9

4.2.5 Political Efficacy by Gender

A descriptive analysis was conducted to examine gender differences in three dimensions of political efficacy: voter efficacy (VE), external efficacy EE, and internal efficacy (IE). The data comprised responses from 135 male and 328 female participants.

Results in Table 4.5 indicate that female respondents ($M = 22.52$, $SD = 2.81$) reported higher levels of VE compared to male respondents ($M = 21.73$, $SD = 3.09$). The standard error of the mean was smaller for females ($SE = 0.16$) than for males ($SE = 0.27$), likely due to the larger female sample size.

In terms of EE, perceptions of governmental responsiveness, females ($M = 20.02$, $SD = 3.82$) also scored slightly higher than males ($M = 19.55$, $SD = 3.93$). The standard errors were 0.21 for females and 0.34 for males.

IE captures individuals' confidence in their understanding of politics; male respondents ($M = 12.46$, $SD = 3.48$) scored marginally higher than female respondents ($M = 12.16$, $SD = 3.02$). The standard error was 0.30 for males and 0.17 for females.

Overall, gender-based differences in PE were minimal. Females demonstrated slightly higher levels of VE and EE, while males scored marginally higher in EE. However, these results are descriptive; inferential statistical tests such as independent samples T-tests, would be necessary to determine the statistical significance of these observed differences.

Table 4.5 Political Efficacy by Gender

	1.1 Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Voter Efficacy	Male	135	21.7333	3.09357	.26625
	Female	328	22.5152	2.80995	.15515
External Efficacy	Male	135	19.5481	3.93173	.33839
	Female	328	20.0213	3.81965	.21091
Internal Efficacy	Male	135	12.4593	3.48293	.29976
	Female	328	12.1585	3.02374	.16696

4.2.6 Political Participation by Gender

Table 4.6 presents descriptive statistics calculated to examine gender differences in offline participation (OFFPP) and online participation (ONPP) among 135 male and 328 female respondents. For OFFPP, males ($M = 26.63$, $SD = 8.27$) reported slightly higher involvement than females ($M = 24.88$, $SD = 6.98$).

Similarly, males also scored marginally higher on ONPP ($M = 26.34$, $SD = 9.69$) compared to females ($M = 24.53$, $SD = 8.13$). These differences suggest that males tend to engage more in both offline and online participation, although further inferential analysis is required to determine statistical significance.

In conclusion, results indicate that male respondents were slightly more active than their female counterparts in both ONPP and OFPP.

Table 4.6 Political Participation by Gender

	1.1			Std.	Std.	Error
	Gender	N	Mean	Deviation	Mean	
Offline Participation	Male	135	26.6296	8.27308	.71203	
	Female	328	24.8780	6.98034	.38542	
Online Participation	Male	135	26.3407	9.68779	.83379	
	Female	328	24.5305	8.13113	.44897	

4.2.7 Political Efficacy by School Type

Table 4.7 presents descriptive statistics for VE, EE, and IE across various school types. For VE, the overall mean was 22.29 ($SD = 2.91$). Students from national secondary schools reported the highest average ($M = 22.45$, $SD = 2.66$), followed closely by students from religious secondary schools and MRSM. The lowest average was observed among students from fully residential schools ($M = 21.71$, $SD = 3.08$), excluding the single participant from the Royal Military College.

Regarding EE, the overall mean was 19.88 ($SD = 3.85$). The highest score was reported by students from MRSM ($M = 19.97$, $SD = 3.19$), while the lowest was reported by students attending private schools ($M = 17.60$, $SD = 2.60$). Other school types generally clustered around the overall mean.

For IE, the total mean was 12.25 ($SD = 3.16$). Students from national secondary schools again reported the highest mean ($M = 12.56$, $SD = 3.19$). On the other hand, the lowest IE scores were observed among students from Government Aid Religious Schools (SABK) ($M = 11.49$, $SD = 2.90$), followed closely by private school students.

Overall, the findings indicate that students from national secondary schools consistently demonstrated the highest level of PE across the three dimensions which are VE, EE, and IE. This suggests that students in these schools may feel more confident in their ability to influence political outcomes and understand political

processes. On the other hand, students from private schools and government-aided religious schools (SABK) generally showed lower levels of PE, particularly in the internal dimension, implying a weaker sense of personal political competence. The variation across school types highlights potential differences in civic education exposure, political discussion culture, or institutional emphasis on citizenship values within different educational environments.

Table 4.7 Political Efficacy by School Type

Political Efficacy	School Type	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	SE	95% CI (Lower)	95% CI (Upper)	CI Min	CI Max
Voter Efficacy	National Secondary School	175	22.45	2.66	0.20	22.04	22.84	15	25
	Fully Residential School (SBP)	82	21.71	3.08	0.34	21.03	22.38	10	25
	Religious Secondary School (SMKA)	95	22.51	3.10	0.32	21.87	23.14	5	25
	MARA Science Junior College (MRSM)	29	22.52	2.52	0.47	21.56	23.47	18	25
	Royal Military College (MTD)	1	25.00	–	–	–	–	25	25
	Government Aid Religious School (SABK)	61	22.31	3.09	0.40	21.52	23.10	11	25
	Private School	20	21.70	3.44	0.77	20.09	23.31	15	25

Political Efficacy	School Type	n	Mean	SD	SE	95% CI (Lower)	95% CI (Upper)	CI Min	CI Max
	Total	463	22.29	2.91	0.14	22.02	22.55	5	25
External Efficacy	National Secondary School	175	20.26	3.83	0.29	19.70	20.84	11	30
	Fully Residential School (SBP)	82	19.85	3.96	0.44	18.98	20.72	10	29
	Religious Secondary School (SMKA)	95	19.87	4.00	0.41	19.06	20.69	12	30
	MARA Junior College (MRSM)	29	19.97	3.19	0.59	18.75	21.18	13	29
	Royal Military College (MTD)	1	22.00	–	–	–	–	22	22
	Government Aid Religious School (SABK)	61	19.52	4.05	0.52	18.49	20.56	10	29
	Private School	20	17.60	2.60	0.58	16.38	18.82	11	23
	Total	463	19.88	3.85	0.18	19.53	20.24	10	30
Internal Efficacy	National Secondary School	175	12.56	3.19	0.24	12.08	13.03	5	20
	Fully Residential School (SBP)	82	11.89	3.53	0.39	11.12	12.67	6	20

Political Efficacy	School Type	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	SE	95% CI (Lower)	95% CI (Upper)	CI Min	CI Max
	Religious Secondary School (SMKA)	95	12.60	2.96	0.30	12.00			

Note. SD = standard deviation; SE = standard error; CI = confidence interval. Dashes (–) indicate values not reported due to $n = 1$.

4.2.8 Political Participation by School Type

Descriptive statistics were calculated to explore differences in OFFPP and ONPP among students from various school types (see Table 4.8). For OFFPP, the overall mean was 25.39 ($SD = 7.41$). The highest average participation was reported by students from Government Aid Religious Schools (SABK) ($M = 27.38$, $SD = 8.58$) and private schools ($M = 27.40$, $SD = 7.54$). Students from MARA Science Junior College (MRSM) also scored above average ($M = 26.14$, $SD = 7.03$). In contrast, students from Fully Residential Schools (SBP) reported the lowest level of OFFPP ($M = 24.46$, $SD = 6.98$), closely followed by National Secondary School students ($M = 24.79$, $SD = 6.97$). The single-case outlier from Royal Military College (MTD) recorded the maximum score of 33.00.

For ONPP, the mean was slightly lower, at 25.06 ($SD = 8.64$). Students from private schools reported the highest mean for ONPP ($M = 29.40$, $SD = 8.83$), followed by students from Religious Secondary Schools (SMKA) ($M = 26.15$, $SD = 8.05$). The lowest levels were again found among students from Fully Residential Schools ($M = 23.32$, $SD = 8.45$). Students from National Secondary Schools and MRSM reported comparable averages, around 24.31 to 24.83. The Royal Military College student again showed a perfect match between offline and online scores (33.00).

Overall, political participation both offline and online varied slightly by school type. Students from private and religious schools tended to report higher levels of political activity, especially online. Meanwhile, students from fully residential schools consistently reported lower engagement.

Table 4.8 Political Participation by School Type

Political Participation	School Type	N	Mean	SD	SE	95% CI		Min	Max
						Lower	Upper		
Offline Participation	National	175	24.79	6.97	0.53	23.75	25.83	13	55
	Secondary School								
	Fully Residential School (SBP)	82	24.46	6.98	0.77	22.93	26.00	13	44
	Religious								
	Secondary School (SMKA)	95	25.28	7.71	0.79	23.71	26.85	13	45
	MARA Junior College (MRSM)	29	26.14	7.03	1.31	23.46	28.81	18	48
	Royal Military College (MTD)	1	33.00	—	—	—	—	33	33
	Government Aid Religious School (SABK)	61	27.38	8.58	1.10	25.18	29.57	13	51
Private School	20	27.40	7.54	1.69	23.87	30.93	17	40	
Total		463	25.39	7.41	0.34	24.71	26.07	13	55
Online Participation	National	175	24.83	8.49	0.64	23.56	26.09	13	48
	Secondary School								
	Fully Residential School (SBP)	82	23.32	8.45	0.93	21.46	25.17	13	51

Political Participation	School Type	N	Mean	SD	SE	95% CI		Min	Max
						Lower	Upper		
	Religious Secondary School (SMKA)	95	26.15	8.05	0.83	24.51	27.79	14	52
	MARA Science Junior College (MRSM)	29	24.31	8.21	1.52	21.19	27.43	13	42
	Royal Military College (MTD)	1	33.00	—	—	—	—	33	33
	Government Aid Religious School (SABK)	61	25.16	9.91	1.27	22.62	27.70	13	52
	Private School	20	29.40	8.83	1.98	25.27	33.53	14	48
	Total	463	25.06	8.64	0.40	24.27	25.85	13	52

Note. SD = standard deviation; SE = standard error; CI = confidence interval. Dashes (—) indicate values not applicable due to $n = 1$.

4.2.9 Political Efficacy by Leadership Involvement

An analysis was conducted to examine PE across different leadership positions. Table 4.9 presents the descriptive statistics.

Students in the Mahallah Representative Committee reported the highest PE ($M = 57.65$, $SD = 7.86$), while those in the Student Coordination Committee had the lowest mean ($M = 53.00$, $SD = 7.00$). Students with no involvement in leadership positions scored an average of 54.32 ($SD = 6.81$). Overall, the mean PE score across all groups was 54.42 ($SD = 7.04$).

The 95% confidence intervals for the group means ranged from 35.61 to 70.39 for the Student Coordination Committee, 53.97 to 61.33 for the Mahallah Representative Committee, 53.09 to 57.36 for the Hisbah Representative Committee, 52.41 to 55.85 for the Academic-Based Society, 52.32 to 55.42 for the Non-Academic Based Society, and 53.45 to 55.19 for students with no leadership involvement.

The analysis reveals that students holding leadership roles, particularly those in the Mahallah Representative Committee, demonstrated the highest levels of PE, suggesting that greater leadership responsibility and involvement may enhance students' confidence in their political influence and understanding. In contrast, members of the Student Coordination Committee reported the lowest mean score, indicating possible differences in the nature of leadership experiences or exposure to decision-making processes across committees. Interestingly, students without any leadership positions demonstrated political efficacy levels comparable to some organisational groups, implying that leadership involvement alone may not fully determine PE. Overall, the findings suggest that while leadership experience generally contributes to higher PE, the type and scope of leadership role play a significant role in shaping students' political confidence. In addition, this study noticed that PE also varied due to their leadership involvement.

Table 4.9 Political Efficacy by Leadership Involvement

Political Efficacy all	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	SE	95% CI		Min	Max
					Lower	Upper		
Student Coordination Committee	3	53.0000	7.00000	4.04145	35.6110	70.3890	45.00	58.00
Mahallah Representative Committee	20	57.6500	7.86247	1.75810	53.9703	61.3297	39.00	71.00

Political Efficacy all <i>n</i>	Mean	SD	SE	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	Min	Max
Hisbah Representative Committee	40	55.2250	6.66213	1.05338	53.0943	57.3557	43.00 69.00
Academic Based Society	69	54.1304	7.15770	.86169	52.4110	55.8499	35.00 69.00
Non-Academic Based Society	92	53.8696	7.47335	.77915	52.3219	55.4173	30.00 69.00
No involvement in any leadership position	239	54.3222	6.80712	.44032	53.4548	55.1896	39.00 73.00
Total	463	54.4168	7.03648	.32701	53.7742	55.0595	30.00 73.00

4.2.10 Political Participation by Leadership Involvement

Political participation (PP) was compared across different leadership positions (see Table 4.10). The Student Coordination Committee reported the highest mean score of PP ($M = 52.67$, $SD = 19.04$), although the very small sample size ($n = 3$) makes this estimate less stable. The Mahallah Representative Committee scored similarly high ($M = 52.30$, $SD = 12.77$), followed closely by the Academic Based Society ($M = 51.16$, $SD = 15.43$).

The lowest PP score was observed among members of the Hisbah Representative Committee ($M = 45.75$, $SD = 13.17$). Students with no leadership involvement had a mean score of 50.78 ($SD = 14.50$), which was comparable to the overall sample mean ($M = 50.45$, $SD = 14.30$).

The 95% confidence intervals indicate substantial overlap among groups, ranging from 5.38 to 99.95 for the Student Coordination Committee, 46.32 to 58.28 for

the Mahallah Representative Committee, 41.54 to 49.96 for the Hisbah Representative Committee, 47.45 to 54.87 for the Academic Based Society, 47.82 to 53.42 for the Non-Academic Based Society, and 48.93 to 52.63 for students with no leadership involvement.

Overall, the findings suggest that students in leadership positions, particularly those in the Student Coordination Committee and Mahallah Representative Committee, demonstrated higher levels of PP compared to other groups, although the small sample size for the Student Coordination Committee limits the reliability of this result. Members of the Academic Based Society also showed relatively strong engagement, suggesting that leadership involvement, especially in active and academic contexts, may encourage participation. In contrast, students in the Hisbah Representative Committee reported the lowest participation levels, while those without leadership roles exhibited scores close to the overall mean. The overlapping confidence intervals across groups suggest that differences in PP were minimal, indicating a generally similar level of engagement regardless of leadership position.

Table 4.10 Political Participation by Leadership Involvement

Political Efficacy	n	Mean	SD	SE	95% CI		Min	Max
					Lower	Upper		
all								
Student Coordination Committee	3	52.6667	19.03506	10.98989	5.3810	99.9524	33.00	71.00
Mahallah Representative Committee	20	52.3000	12.76962	2.85537	46.3236	58.2764	26.00	78.00
Hisbah Representative Committee	40	45.7500	13.16512	2.08159	41.5396	49.9604	28.00	91.00

Political Efficacy all	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	SE	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	Min	Max
Academic Based Society	69	51.1594	15.42689	1.85718	47.4535	54.8654	27.00	87.00
Non-Academic Based Society	92	50.6196	13.51502	1.40904	47.8207	53.4184	28.00	84.00
No involvement in any leadership position	239	50.7782	14.50315	.93813	48.9301	52.6263	26.00	90.00
Total	463	50.4471	14.30031	.66459	49.1411	51.7531	26.00	91.00

4.2.11 Political Efficacy by Income Group

To examine differences in political efficacy (PE) across income groups, descriptive statistics were computed (see Table 4.11). Household income was categorised according to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM, 2022) thresholds, namely B40 (below RM2,560 up to RM5,249), M40 (RM5,250–RM11,819), and T20 (RM11,820 and above). Table 14 presents the mean scores, standard deviations, and 95% confidence intervals for political efficacy across income groups.

The findings indicated that PE scores were relatively similar across income groups, with means ranging between 53.39 and 55.70. Respondents in the M3 category (RM7,690–RM9,449) reported the highest mean PE score ($M = 55.70$, $SD = 6.51$), while those in the B1 category (below RM2,560) reported the lowest ($M = 53.39$, $SD = 7.39$). Interestingly, the T20 group (RM11,820 and above) did not record the highest score ($M = 54.38$, $SD = 6.74$), suggesting that greater household income does not necessarily correspond with higher perceptions of PE.

Overall, the results suggest that PE is not linearly associated with income levels. While the lowest-income group tends to feel less politically efficacious, the highest

scores were observed among upper middle-income earners (M40) rather than the wealthiest respondents (T20). This finding implies that individuals in the upper middle-income bracket may feel more empowered or confident in political processes, whereas both lower- and higher-income groups report comparatively lower efficacy.

Table 4.11 Political Efficacy by Income Group

Political Efficacy all	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	SE	95% Lower	CI 95% Upper	CI Min	Max
Below RM2560	77	53.3896	7.39160	.84235	51.7119	55.0673	35.00	69.00
RM2560 – RM5249	78	54.9103	7.56648	.85673	53.2043	56.6162	30.00	69.00
RM5250 – RM7689	55	54.5091	7.38836	.99625	52.5117	56.5064	40.00	69.00
RM7690 – RM9449	40	55.7000	6.50917	1.02919	53.6183	57.7817	40.00	69.00
RM9450 – RM11819	75	54.2667	6.69072	.77258	52.7273	55.8061	41.00	71.00
RM11820 – and above	138	54.3841	6.74491	.57416	53.2487	55.5194	38.00	73.00
Total	463	54.4168	7.03648	.32701	53.7742	55.0595	30.00	73.00

4.2.12 Political Participation by Income Group

Descriptive statistics were also calculated for political participation (PP) across income categories. As displayed in Table 4.12, mean scores ranged from **48.61 to 53.58**. The **M3 group (RM7,690–RM9,449)** reported the highest PP (M = 53.58, SD = 13.20),

while the **M4 group (RM9,450–RM11,819)** reported the lowest ($M = 48.61$, $SD = 12.23$). The **lowest-income group (B1, below RM2,560)** recorded a mean of 50.62 ($SD = 15.92$), while the **T20 group (RM11,820 and above)** reported a comparable mean of 50.68 ($SD = 13.52$).

Like PE, the results indicate **no linear relationship between income and PP**. Participation levels did not systematically increase with income. Instead, the **upper-middle-income category (M3)** demonstrated the highest engagement, whereas higher-income households (T20) did not report higher participation levels compared to other groups.

Table 4.12 Political Participation by Income Group

Political Efficacy all	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	SE	95% Lower	CI 95% Upper	CI Min	Max
Below RM2560	77	50.6234	15.92254	1.81454	47.0094	54.2374	26.00	87.00
RM2560 – RM5249	78	50.1795	15.42787	1.74686	46.7010	53.6579	28.00	91.00
RM5250 – RM7689	55	50.2182	15.71469	2.11897	45.9699	54.4665	26.00	89.00
RM7690 – RM9449	40	53.5750	13.19652	2.08655	49.3545	57.7955	28.00	84.00
RM9450 – RM11819	75	48.6133	12.23077	1.41229	45.7993	51.4274	27.00	87.00
RM11820 – and above	138	50.6812	13.51506	1.15048	48.4062	52.9562	27.00	86.00
Total	463	50.4471	14.30031	.66459	49.1411	51.7531	26.00	91.00

4.2.13 Mediation Analysis

A parallel multiple mediation analysis was conducted to examine whether internal efficacy (IE), external efficacy (EE), and voter efficacy (VE) mediate the relationship between social media use (SMU) and political participation (PP) (see Figure 4.1). Bootstrapping with 5000 resamples was employed to estimate total, direct, and indirect effects.

The total effect of SMU on PP was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.43$, 95% CI [0.08, 0.78], $t = 2.42$, $p > 0.001$), indicating that higher levels of SMU are associated with greater PP, supporting Hypothesis 1 (H1). However, when the mediators were included in the model, the direct effect of SMU on PP was reduced and became marginally non-significant ($\beta = 0.33$, 95% CI [-0.00, 0.67], $t = 1.95$, $p > 0.001$), suggesting the presence of mediation.

SMU was positively associated with all three efficacy dimensions of political efficacy. Specifically, SMU use significantly predicted IE ($\beta = 0.11$, 95% CI [0.03, 0.12]), EE ($\beta = 0.11$, 95% CI [0.02, 0.20]), and VE ($\beta = 0.13$, 95% CI [0.06, 0.20]), with all effects statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). These findings indicate that social media engagement enhances individuals' perceptions of political competence, system responsiveness, and confidence in their role as voters, supporting Hypotheses 2a, 2b and 2c (H2a, H2b and H2c).

Regarding the paths from PE to PP, IE showed a strong and positive effect on participation ($\beta = 1.60$, 95% CI [1.22, 2.03], $p < 0.001$), supporting Hypothesis 3a (H3a). In contrast, EE was not significantly related to political participation ($\beta = 0.07$, 95% CI [-0.27, 0.40], $p > 0.001$), rejecting Hypothesis 3b (H3b). Notably, VE exhibited a significant negative association with political participation ($\beta = -0.66$, 95% CI [-1.11, -0.21], $p < 0.001$), supporting Hypothesis 3c (H3c).

Analysis of indirect effects revealed that IE significantly mediated the relationship between SMU and PP (indirect effect = 0.17, 95% CI [0.05, 0.31]), supporting Hypothesis 4a (H4a). The indirect effect through EE was not significant (indirect effect = 0.01, 95% CI [-0.05, 0.06]), rejecting Hypothesis 4b (H4b). Meanwhile, VE produced a significant but negative indirect effect (indirect effect =

0.08, 95% CI [-0.17, -0.02]), indicating a suppressor effect and supporting Hypothesis 4c (H4c).

Overall, the results demonstrate a multiple mediation model with mixed directional effects, where IE enhances PP, EE plays no mediating role, and VE suppresses PP despite being positively influenced by SMU.

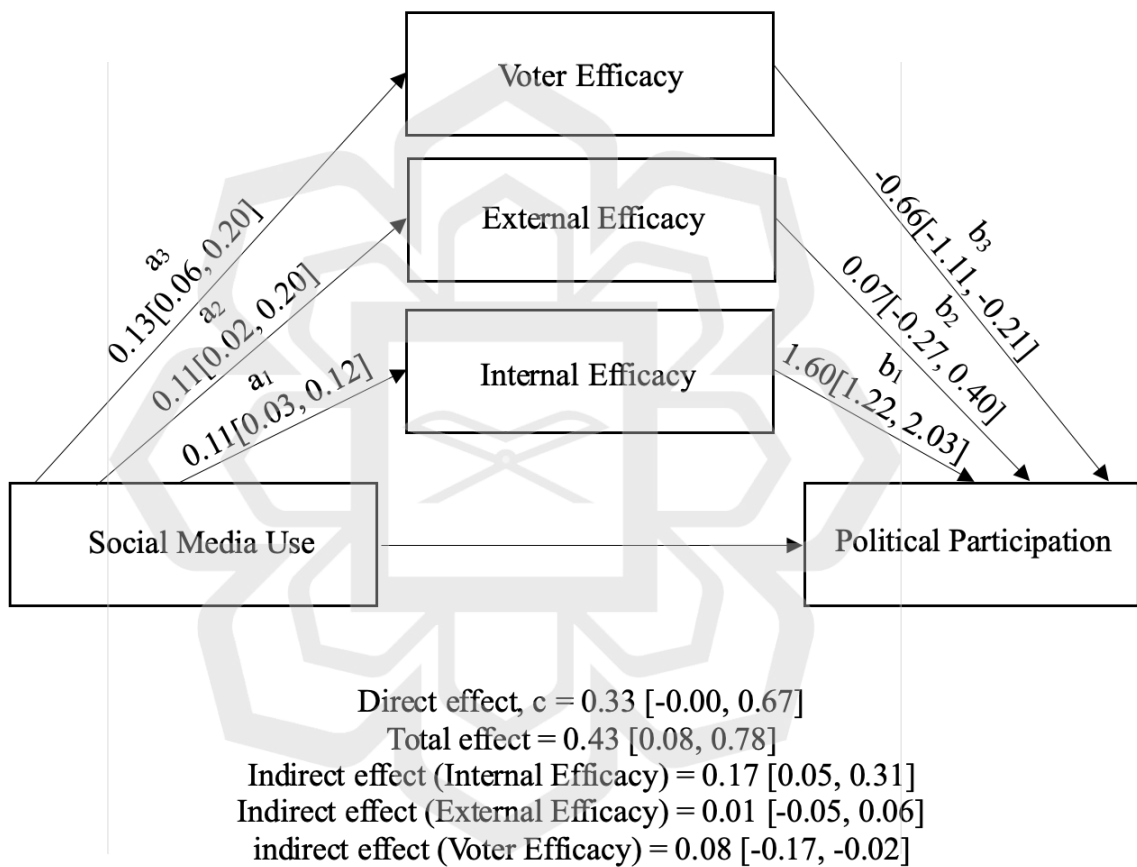


Figure 4.1 Model of the Social Media Use as a Predictor of Political Participation, Mediated by Political Efficacy

4.3 HYPOTHESES TESTING SUMMARY

Table 4.1 presents the summary of all hypothesis results, which examine the relationships between social media use (SMU), political efficacy (PE), and political participation (PP), as well as the mediating effects of internal, external, and voter efficacy.

Table 4.13 Hypotheses Testing Summary

No.	Hypotheses	Results	Comment
H1	There is a relationship between social media use and political participation	Accepted	Significant positive relationship established
H2a	There is a relationship between social media use and internal efficacy	Accepted	Significant positive relationship established
H2b	There is a relationship between social media use and external efficacy	Accepted	Significant positive relationship established
H2c	There is a relationship between social media use and voter efficacy	Accepted	Significant positive relationship established
H3a	There is a relationship between internal efficacy and political participation	Accepted	Significant positive relationship established
H3b	There is a relationship between external efficacy and political participation	Rejected	Not significant
H3c	There is a relationship between voter efficacy and political participation	Accepted	Significant negative relationship established
H4a	Internal efficacy mediates the relationship between social media use and political participation	Accepted	Significantly mediated

H4b	External efficacy mediates the relationship between social media use and political participation	Rejected	Not Significant
H4c	Voter efficacy mediates the relationship between social media use and political participation	Accepted	Significant but negative indirect effect

4.4 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER FOUR

This chapter presents the results and data analysis of the study, beginning with respondents' demographic profiles and reliability testing for both the pilot and actual studies, which confirmed the adequacy of the measurement instruments. Hypotheses were tested using Hayes' (2022) PROCESS mediation analysis to examine the relationships among social media use, political efficacy (internal, external, and voter), and political participation. The findings indicate that social media use is positively associated with political participation and all three dimensions of political efficacy. IE shows a significant positive relationship with PP and significantly mediates the relationship between SMU and PP, whereas EE neither predicts PP nor mediates this relationship. VE demonstrates a significant but negative direct and indirect effect on PP. Overall; these results underscore the multidimensional nature of PE and its varying roles in explaining youth PP in a digitally mediated context. The next chapter discusses these findings in relation to existing literature, limitations, and directions for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study enhances understanding of political participation (PP) among potential young Malay voters (PYMV) by demonstrating the central role of social media use (SMU) and political efficacy (PE) in shaping PP. Grounded in the theory of PE, the findings provide empirical evidence that SMU is positively associated with both PE and PP, while PE itself significantly predicts participation in general. Importantly, the study contributes to the existing literature by establishing PE as a partial mediating mechanism linking SMU to PP in the Malaysian youth context. This chapter discusses these findings in relation to prior studies, highlights their theoretical and practical implications, and considers the study's limitations and directions for future research.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDING

The findings of this study revealed that social media use is an important part of daily life routine among PYMV, with platforms such as WhatsApp, TikTok, and YouTube serving as primary spaces for their communication and political participation, as shown in results indicating gender and types of schooling. Leadership involvement and income level significantly influence levels of PE and PP. Female students exhibited higher EE and EE while their male counterparts demonstrated a higher level of IE. In addition, students from national schools together with those holding leadership roles such as MRC, reported a higher level of PE, whereas PP was more obvious among males from private and religious schools, especially with the middle-income group family. Notably, the finding indicates that SMU influences PP primarily through indirect pathways. While SMU strengthens IE, EE, and VE, only IE positively mediates participation. EE shows no mediating effect, and VE operates as a suppressor, reducing broader PP despite increased confidence in voting. These results underscore the need for a multidimensional approach to PE when assessing the political consequences of SMU. Overall, these findings highlight the importance of enhancing civic education, leader

module development, and digital literacy as strategic measures to cultivate politically informed and participative youth in Malaysia's evolving democratic landscape.

5.3 DISCUSSION

This study significantly contributes to the field of knowledge by clarifying how SMU and distinct dimensions of PE influence PP among PYMV, a newly enfranchised group following the implementation of Undi18. By focusing on youths who will first be able to participate in the next general election, the findings provide timely insights into how digital platforms influence political engagement within Malaysia's youngest electorate. In doing so, the study extends existing theories of political and digital political participation by testing their applicability in a non-Western, youth-dominated electoral context that is increasingly central to the country's democratic future, particularly in anticipation of Malaysia's 16th general election.

Beyond contextual relevance, this study advances theoretical understanding by empirically examining the mediating role of PE in the relationship between SMU and PP. The results offer a more refined account of how psychological factors interact with digitally mediated political environments to shape participatory behaviour among PYMV. By unpacking the different roles of IE, EE and VE, the findings provide a more nuanced understanding of the psychological mechanism through which SMU influences youth PP. Thus, this study contributed to the body of knowledge by providing a framework for understanding the influence of PE within the context of youth in Malaysia.

Beyond theoretical implications, the results offer practical insights for policymakers, educators, and political organisations in designing civic education initiatives, youth engagement programmes, and responsible social media strategies aimed at fostering informed and active PP.

Research objective 1 (RQ1): To analyse the patterns of social media use (SMU), political efficacy (PE), and political participation (PP) among potential young Malay voters (PYMV).

In relation to RQ1, the findings reveal several notable patterns in SMU, PE, and PP among PYMV. Firstly, the findings indicate that higher levels of social media use are associated with slightly higher political efficacy and political participation among PYMV, suggesting that young voters who are more confident in their political understanding are more likely to engage in political activities. This is in line with the study by Tan (2024) which stated that political efficacy partially mediates the relationship between political participation and social media political information use. Although the relationships are modest, the results demonstrate that political efficacy partially explains how social media use translates into political participation. Notably, when PE is included in the model, the direct relationship between SMU and PP becomes non-significant, indicating that social media primarily encourages participation by strengthening young voters' confidence, awareness, and perceived ability to engage politically.

This finding is particularly meaningful in the Malaysian Malay context, where cultural norms emphasise respect for authority, social harmony, and cautious political expression. For many young Malays, direct PP may be shaped by considerations of adab, communal responsibility, and avoidance of open confrontation. In this context, social media functions less as a direct mobilising tool and more as a space for information-seeking, reflection, and confidence-building, which gradually enhances PE before translating into participation. This may explain why PE plays a central mediating role rather than social media exerting a strong direct effect.

Furthermore, within the IIUM environment, where Islamic values, structured civic education, and ethical discourse are emphasised, political engagement is often approached thoughtfully rather than impulsively. Social media exposure may therefore strengthen political efficacy by aligning political information with moral reasoning and personal responsibility, reinforcing the belief that participation should be informed and purposeful. These contextual dynamics help explain why PE remains a critical mechanism linking social media use to their political participation. Other than that, the findings resonate with prior research in Malaysia by Tan (2024), where social media

use for political information predicts political efficacy. In this regard, the study extends existing findings by demonstrating that the influence of social media on political participation among young Malays is shaped by cultural, religious, and institutional factors rather than operating in isolation.

Secondly, it concerns the role of political efficacy in motivating PP. This study produced significant findings that highlight gender-based differences. Female respondents scored higher in both VE and EE, whereas male respondents scored higher in internal political efficacy. This pattern aligns with findings by Idid et al. (2017), who reported that male respondents exhibited stronger IE than females. Similarly, Ting and Ahmad (2017) observed that female students generally demonstrated lower political efficacy and openness in political discussions compared to male students. Consistent with these results, Lai and Beh (2025) also found that women scored higher in external political efficacy, while men scored higher in internal efficacy. Collectively, these findings suggest that gender affects political efficacy differently, where female students tend to feel more confident in understanding political matters, while male students feel more confident in their ability to influence the political process. This study also found that political efficacy varied according to students' secondary education background. Respondents from national secondary schools exhibited the highest levels of political efficacy across all dimensions, indicating greater confidence in both understanding and influencing politics. In contrast, students from private and SABK schools showed lower levels of efficacy, particularly in internal political efficacy, is possibly due to differences in civic education exposure.

Additionally, students holding leadership positions in the Mahallah Representative Committee (MRC) reported the highest levels of political efficacy, suggesting that leadership roles that involve active engagement in decision-making can enhance political confidence. However, members of the Student Coordination Committee (SCC) scored the lowest, and non-leaders displayed similar efficacy levels to some groups, implying that the impact of leadership depends on its scope and nature. Interestingly, this study also revealed that political efficacy does not increase proportionally with income. Respondents from upper-middle-income households displayed the highest efficacy levels, while those from both lower- and higher-income groups showed lower efficacy. This indicates that socioeconomic status alone does not

determine political confidence. It rather includes factors such as education, school environment, and leadership opportunities, which may play a more significant role. In summary, the findings suggest that political efficacy among young Malaysians is influenced by gender, school type, leadership involvement, and household income. Females tend to exhibit greater voter and external efficacy, while males display stronger internal efficacy. Students from national schools and those in leadership roles, particularly within the MRC, demonstrate higher political confidence.

Thus, different strategies should be used to cater to the needs according to gender. Ultimately, this study contributes to the growing body of research on how political efficacy motivates political participation among Malaysian youths, offering valuable insights for enhancing civic education and engagement initiatives. Overall, all sectors ought to develop comprehensive strategies to enhance citizens' political efficacy, such as incorporating lessons on government structure, democracy, and political participation into school syllabi, while public and private institutions organise annual political literacy workshops to encourage informed discussions and critical thinking. Through these continuous efforts, Malaysians, especially PYMV can progressively build stronger political understanding, confidence, and participation in the democratic process.

Thirdly, this study significantly helps by providing insights to guide policies, education, and social media strategies aimed at fostering a politically informed and active youth demographic. In relation to political participation, the study shows a slight demographic difference. It was found that male respondents were somewhat more active than females in both online and offline participation. Prior to Malaysian studies that support this pattern, men are more likely to take part in visible political activities, whereas women's engagement is often shaped by social roles and structural constraints (Ahmad Zakuan, 2023). Tan (2022) also stated that men are more involved in higher levels of political interest, even though the government has come up with an initiative to place more women in decision-making positions in the government. Further studies ought to be conducted specifically among women to identify and understand the actual reason why women have less interest in politics. In the Malaysian context, the differences observed in this study may also be explained by sociocultural factors. While women have made significant gains in education and labour force participation, political

participation remains male-dominated, with women constituting only a minority of elected representatives (Ahmad Zakuan, 2022). This structural underrepresentation may contribute to men's higher reported political participation, as they encounter fewer cultural and institutional barriers to engagement.

Hence, to improve this situation, female ought to be given opportunities to be involved with leadership position since primary school. At the same time, the higher voter efficacy and external efficacy amongst women suggest that female citizens are not apathetic but may express their political agency more through voting and civic support rather than direct political involvement. Respondents' political participation also varies according to school type, with students from private and religious schools showing higher political participation especially online while those from fully residential schools were less involved. This concluded that different educational system also has an impact on political participation; seen from the result of this study. Though overall differences across group were small in political participation, leadership appeared to encourage participation especially among SCC, MRC and ABS. From these findings on political participation, it can be inferred that political participation among PYMV is influenced by multiple demographic factors rather than single determinant. Gender, school background, leadership involvement, and household income level all appear to shape participation patterns in different ways. Male students from private and religious school are slightly more engaged in politics, suggesting that exposure to diverse environment and or open discussion may foster political participation.

Some of the educational institutions in Malaysia came up with different initiatives to deal with this situation. In Malaysia, Islamic education initiatives such as JAIS provide lots of modules that can increase students' civic engagement and community participation (Shukri, 2025). Private institutions, on the other hand, provide resources and opportunities for political participation. The high participation among private school students could reflect greater access to resources and networks that enable them to engage in political activities (Shakeel, 2013). Leadership and commitment in society seem to have an influence on political participation, indicating that the sense of responsibility and decision-making opportunity help to strengthen civic engagement. Similarly to political efficacy, the result from this study also found that political participation is led by middle-income rather than lower and higher-income

households. These findings are consistent with research in the Malaysian context which shows that socioeconomic status (SES) is not always a direct predictor of political participation. For instance, a study by Nor et al. (2011) suggested the association between socio-demographic factors and political participation. In addition, a study by Abdul Rahman (2002) shows that Malay middle-class score higher than the working class in terms of involvement in political parties. This implies that political participation is driven more by interest, opportunity and social environment than by socioeconomic status. Based on these findings, the government could develop a comprehensive political education module starting in primary school. Early exposure on political information could be introduced to the concept of voting such as electing representatives for the main student bodies, to help them become familiar with the voting process and the values of democracy from a young age across demographic differences.

Finally, this study significantly helps provide a clearer understanding for future strategies to encourage political participation such as voting, party membership and political discourse among Malaysian youths. When it comes to social media use, the majority of respondents subscribed to internet and mobile data. This is in line with the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2024) which reported that almost all households (96.8%) have internet access, while mobile phone ownership is nearly universal (99.5%). This claim is supported by DataReportal (2025), which reports that 34.9 million internet users in Malaysia and that the internet penetration rate stood at 97.7 % of the total population. In addition, national reports indicate that 98% of Malaysians are internet users, with urban areas recording even higher usage at 99% (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2024). Furthermore, research shows that Malaysians spend about 8 hours and 17 minutes online every day, of which about 2 hours and 48 minutes are on social media (Meltwater, 2024). This proves that almost all have internet connection through their mobile phone and can stay connected anywhere and anytime which suggests that the internet, especially social media, has become a central part of everyday routines. When it comes to time spent on social media in a single session, many respondents reported long usage. These reflect wider national trends, where Malaysians are among the highest social media users in the world (Meltwater, 2024).

Thus, it is indisputable that the younger generation can be labelled as internet citizens. Looking at platform preferences, WhatsApp is the most popular, followed closely by TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. This is consistent with Malaysian social media trends, where WhatsApp is the top choice for communication, especially for staying in touch with family and friends. Sedu and Gazali (2020) found that users prefer WhatsApp for political discussions because it offers privacy. Facebook use was very low among respondents, showing that young Malaysians are moving away from it. Before 2018, Facebook was popular for political engagement, but its use declined after the Anti-Fake News Law was introduced (Nazri, 2018). Recent studies show that political parties now use TikTok most for campaigns (Lim, 2024), as young people prefer short, creative videos (DataReportal, 2025). Instagram and YouTube remain popular for their visual and interactive features, while X (formerly Twitter) is less used. This shows that over the years, new social media will emerge to cater to the needs of the new generation, and the present platforms can still be considered relevant if they evolve accordingly. Overall, social media is a major part of PYMV's lives, with preferences shifting toward visual platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. WhatsApp remains popular due to its privacy. These findings show that social media is a key part of young PYMV lives, suggesting that popular platforms like WhatsApp, TikTok, Instagram and YouTube can be utilised for voter education, civic awareness videos, and interactive online political discussions can help increase PYMV political discussion.

Overall, the findings for Research Objective 1 demonstrate distinct patterns of SMU, PE, and PP among PYMV, shaped by demographic characteristics, educational background, leadership experience, and sociocultural context. These patterns provide an important descriptive foundation for understanding how SMU, PE, and PP coexist among PYMV.

Research objective 2 (RQ2): To assess the relationship between SMU, PE, and PP among PYMV.

In relation to RQ2, the findings indicate that social media use (SMU) is positively associated with political participation (PP) among PYMV, although the strength of this

relationship varies across dimensions of political efficacy (PE). Specifically, SMU was found to significantly enhance all three dimensions of political efficacy namely internal efficacy (IE), external efficacy (EE), and voter efficacy (VE). This suggests that social media platforms provide access to political information, exposure to political discourse, and opportunities for expression, thereby strengthening young voters' perceptions of political competence and engagement. These results support theoretical perspectives that conceptualise social media as facilitators of political learning and psychological involvement, particularly among young or emerging voters. At the same time, existing literature suggests that social networking sites may have varying influences on offline political participation. While some evidence indicates that their impact is not always consistent, Bode (2012) found that social networking sites, particularly Facebook, have a clear and significant effect on youth political participation. Similarly, Kanagavel and Chandrasekaran (2014) reported that online political participation on Facebook often translates into offline political engagement. Supporting this view, Akmal and Salman (2015) found in their study on youth online political participation through new media as a democratic information space, a positive relationship between social networking site use and both online and offline political participation. Their findings indicate that youths who are actively engaged with political information online are also more likely to participate in offline political activities.

Further analysis shows that the relationship between PE and PP differs by efficacy dimension. IE demonstrated a strong and positive association with PP, indicating that individuals who feel knowledgeable and capable of understanding politics are more likely to engage in political activities. In contrast, EE was not significantly related to political participation, suggesting that perceptions of government responsiveness alone are insufficient to motivate engagement. This finding aligns with existing studies that identify external efficacy as a weaker, more context-dependent predictor of participation compared to IE. Helal and Hamza (2015) reported that political efficacy was not significantly associated with political participation, a finding they linked to generally low levels of public trust in government institutions. Their study also indicated no significant gender differences in political efficacy, partisanship, or political participation. In contrast, Eckstein et al. (2013), in their examination of political participation during young adulthood, found that favourable

attitudes toward political behaviour and higher levels of internal efficacy significantly increased young adults' intentions to engage in political activities. These findings highlight the importance of trust and perceived political competence in motivating political participation.

One of the more notable relationship-based findings is the negative association between voter efficacy and political participation. While individuals with higher VE expressed confidence in their role as voters, this confidence was associated with lower levels of broader political participation. This suggests that VE may be linked more closely to institutionalised forms of engagement, such as voting, rather than to sustained or non-electoral political activities. Overall, the findings for RQ2 indicate that while SMU is positively related to PE and PP, the strength and direction of these relationships depend on the specific dimension of political efficacy.

Research objective 3 (RQ3): To test the mediating role of PE in the relationship between SMU and PP among PYMV.

With regard to RQ3, this study examined whether political efficacy (PE) mediates the relationship between social media use (SMU) and political participation (PP). The findings demonstrate that although SMU is positively associated with PP overall, this relationship operates primarily through indirect pathways rather than through a strong direct effect. Internal efficacy (IE) emerged as the key mediating mechanism, while external efficacy (EE) did not mediate and voter efficacy (VE) functioned as a suppressor.

Specifically, IE significantly mediated the relationship between SMU and PP. Increased SMU increased young voters' confidence in their political understanding and competence, which in turn translated into higher levels of PP. This finding reinforces the central role of IE as a psychological mechanism through which social media exposure is converted into participatory behaviour, supporting models that emphasise competence-based motivation in political engagement. This interpretation is consistent with Reichert (2016), who argued that internal political efficacy is strengthened through increased political knowledge and subsequently encourages engagement in various forms of indirect political participation.

In contrast, EE did not mediate the relationship between SMU and PP. Although SMU increased perceptions of system responsiveness, these perceptions did not translate into higher participation. This suggests that in contexts where institutional trust may be uneven or contested, believing that political institutions are responsive does not necessarily encourage active engagement. This interpretation is consistent with Helal and Hamza (2015), who found no significant relationship between PE and PP, attributing this outcome to generally low levels of public trust in government institutions.

Interestingly, VE produced a significant negative indirect effect on PP, acting as a suppressor in the mediation model. Although SMU increased VE, higher levels of VE were associated with lower levels of broader PP. This suppressor effect is particularly relevant in the Malaysian context, where PP has historically been centred on formal electoral processes. Confidence in voting procedures may reduce the perceived need for engagement beyond elections, such as campaigning, discussion, or collective action.

Overall, the mediation analysis demonstrates that PE does not function as a uniform mechanism linking SMU and PP. While IE facilitates political engagement, VE may constrain it, highlighting the importance of distinguishing between different efficacy dimensions when examining the political consequences of social media use. These findings extend existing literature by showing how social media can simultaneously mobilise and limit participation through distinct psychological pathways.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

While this study provides valuable insights into the relationships between social media use (SMU), political efficacy (PE), and political participation (PP) among potential young Malay voters (PYMV), several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings.

Firstly, the sample comprised young Malay students enrolled at the Centre for Foundation Studies, International Islamic University Malaysia (CFS IIUM). Although this context is theoretically meaningful given its emphasis on Islamic values and

structured civic education, the findings may not be generalisable to the broader population of Malaysian youth. PE and PP may manifest differently among youths from other universities, regions, or ethnic backgrounds. As such, the observed mediating role of internal efficacy (IE) and the suppressing effect of voter efficacy (VE) may be context-specific rather than nationally representative.

Secondly, the study relied on self-reported survey data, which may be subject to social desirability and recall bias. Respondents may have overstated socially approved behaviours such as voting intention or political awareness, while underreporting disengagement or political apathy. This limitation is particularly relevant in the Malaysian context, where political expression can be sensitive and shaped by norms of caution and conformity. Consequently, the measured levels of PP and PE, especially voter efficacy, may not fully reflect actual behaviour.

Thirdly, the cross-sectional research design limits the ability to establish causal relationships between SMU, PE, and PP. Although the mediation analysis suggests that IE functions as a key mechanism linking social media use to PP, the temporal ordering of these variables cannot be confirmed. It remains unclear whether increased social media exposure enhances PE or whether individuals with higher efficacy are more inclined to seek political content online. Longitudinal or experimental designs are therefore needed to validate the causal pathways implied by the findings.

Fourthly, although this study examined differences across secondary school backgrounds, the relatively small and uneven sample sizes for certain categories, such as private, religious, and fully residential schools, may have limited the robustness of group comparisons. As a result, observed variations in PE and PP by school type should be interpreted with caution, particularly when drawing inferences about educational systems and civic exposure.

Fifthly, the study did not incorporate several potentially influential variables, including family political socialisation, peer networks, offline civic engagement, or exposure to traditional media. Prior research suggests that these factors play a significant role in shaping youth political behaviour in Malaysia. The absence of these variables may partially explain why EE showed weak effects and why VE demonstrated a suppressing relationship with broader PP.

Finally, although the study examined the role of SMU empirically, it did not employ a media-centred theoretical framework that explicitly explains how and why individuals engage with different platforms. The lack of theories such as Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), which emphasises goal-oriented media use (Katz et al., 1973), limits the ability to distinguish between informational, expressive, and entertainment-driven social media behaviours. This theoretical gap may have constrained a deeper interpretation of why certain forms of social media use strengthen IE while others fail to encourage broader PP.

Taken together, these limitations suggest that while the study offers important empirical contributions, its findings should be interpreted as contextually grounded rather than universally generalisable. Addressing these limitations in future research would strengthen both theoretical precision and empirical validity in studies of youth political participation in Malaysia.

5.5 SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study makes a clear theoretical contribution by extending the literature on youth political participation (PP) in Malaysia by integrating social media use (SMU) and multiple dimensions of political efficacy (PE) within the context of potential young Malay voters (PYMV). By empirically demonstrating that PE, particularly internal efficacy (IE), mediates the relationship between SMU and PP, while voter efficacy (VE) may exert a suppressive effect, this study highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of how digital media shapes political engagement. Building on these findings, several directions for future research are proposed.

Firstly, future studies could extend this research by applying alternative or complementary theoretical frameworks, such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Given that this study shows political participation is not driven solely by social media exposure but by psychological factors such as perceived competence, incorporating attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control may provide deeper insights into how intentions to participate politically are formed among PYMV. Such frameworks would be particularly valuable in explaining why increased exposure to political content does not always translate into active participation.

Secondly, as this study reveals differing roles across dimensions of PE, where IE mobilises participation while voter efficacy may constrain broader engagement, future research should further disaggregate political participation into electoral and non-electoral forms. Longitudinal or experimental designs would be especially useful in examining whether confidence in voting reduces engagement in other participatory activities over time, or whether this effect varies across political cycles, such as election versus non-election periods.

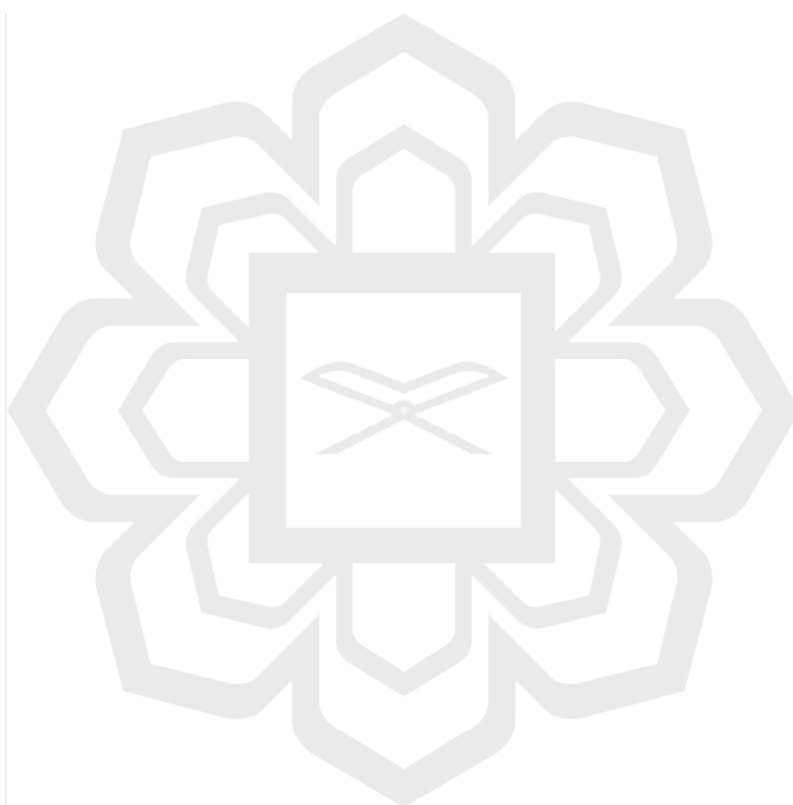
Thirdly, while this study adopted a quantitative approach to identify patterns and relationships, future research could benefit from a mixed-methods design. In-depth interviews or focus group discussions would allow researchers to explore how PYMVs interpret political content on social media, how they perceive their own political roles, and why some forms of efficacy translate into action while others do not. Qualitative insights would help uncover the motivations, moral considerations, and cultural constraints that shape political engagement among Malay youth.

Fourthly, to enhance generalisability and reflect Malaysia's multicultural political landscape, future studies should expand the sample to include youths from different ethnic groups, regions, and institutional contexts. Comparative analyses between Malay and non-Malay youths, or between urban and rural settings, would allow researchers to assess whether the mediating and suppressing roles of political efficacy observed in this study are context-specific or more broadly applicable across Malaysia.

Finally, future research may adopt Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) to examine how different motivations for social media use influence political efficacy and participation. Given this study's findings on platform preferences and high social media engagement, UGT would allow scholars to distinguish between informational, expressive, social, and entertainment-based uses of platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, WhatsApp, and X. Understanding these motivations could clarify why certain forms of social media use strengthen internal efficacy while others reinforce procedural confidence without encouraging broader political mobilisation.

In summary, future research that incorporates alternative theoretical perspectives, longitudinal and mixed-methods designs, more diverse samples, and motivation-based frameworks such as UGT would not only advance scholarly

understanding of youth political participation but also provide practical insights for policymakers, educators, and civil society actors seeking to foster meaningful and sustained democratic engagement among PYMV.



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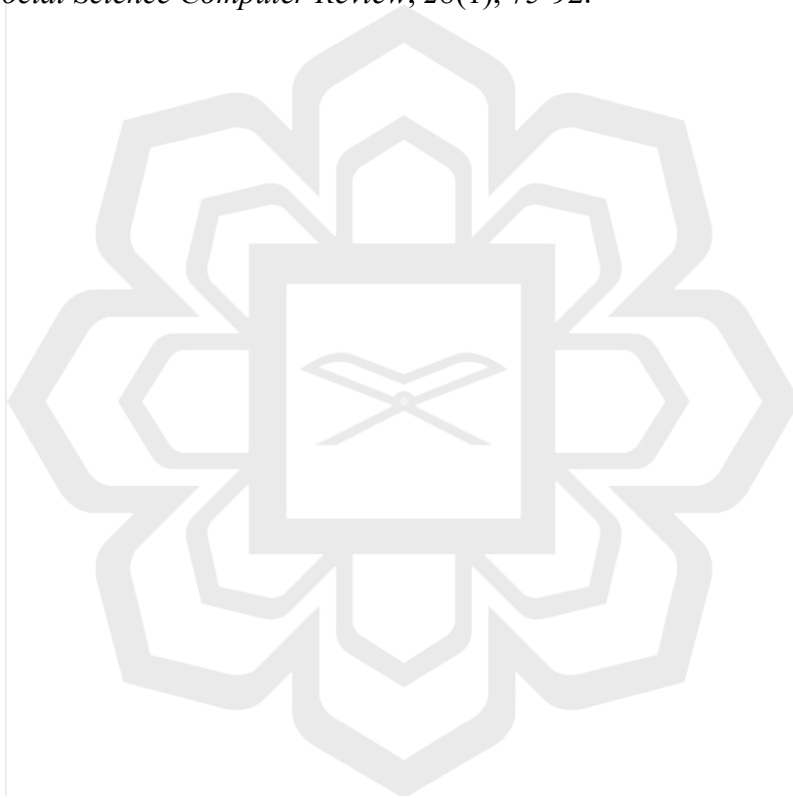
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRES



الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية ماليزيا
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA
يُونَيْتِي اِسْلَامِي اِنْتَار اِبْحْسَاب مِلْدِيَا

SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AMONG POTENTIAL YOUNG MALAY VOTERS: EXPLORING THE MEDIATING ROLE OF POLITICAL EFFICACY.

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is part of academic research for the fulfilment of my master's degree. This study identifies the moderating role of political efficacy between social media use and political participation of Potential Young Malay Voters (PYMV). An information given will be treated as confidential and will only be used for academic purposes only. Thank you for participating in this study. Your assistance is highly appreciated.

Researcher

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Research supervisor & co supervisor

Assoc. Prof. Ts. Dr. Shafizan Binti Mohamed
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International Islamic University Malaysia

I have read and understood the instructions, degree of confidentiality, as well as the risks and benefits involved.

Respondent's Signature: _____ Date: _____

SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please **tick** (✓) the answer that reflects your personal information or fill in the blank space provided.

1.1 Gender:

1. Male ()
2. Female. ()

1.2 Age (*years old*):

1. 17 ()
2. 18 ()
3. 19 ()
4. 20 ()

1.3 Types of Secondary Schools:

1. National Secondary School (Daily) ()
2. Fully Residential School (SBP) ()
3. Religions Secondary Schools (SMKA) ()
4. MARA Science Junior College (MRSM) ()
5. Vocational Colleges and Technical Institutes ()
6. Royal Military College (MTD) ()
7. Government Aid Religious School (SABK) ()
8. Others, Specify: _____

1.4 Course taken in CFS IIUM:

Arts Programme:

1. LAWS ()
2. ECONS ()
3. TPHM ()
4. IRK ()
5. BAR ()
6. ACOM ()
7. BEN ()
8. ECOM ()
9. HS ()
10. MCOM ()

Sciences Programme:

11. MEDIC ()
12. DENTI ()
13. PMACY ()
14. AHS ()
15. BIOSC ()
16. NURS ()
17. SCFIZI ()
18. ENGIN ()
19. ICT ()
20. AED ()

1.5 Involvement in leadership at CFS IIUM:

1. Student Coordination Committee ()
2. Mahallah Representative Committee ()
3. Hisbah Representative Committee ()
4. Academic Based Society ()
5. Non-Academic Based Society ()
6. No involvement in any leadership position ()

1.6 Position hold in Leadership at CFS IIUM :

1. High Committee ()
2. Sub Committee ()
3. Ordinary member ()

1.7 Region & State (*Kawasan &Negeri*):

Peninsular Malaysia:

Eastern:

1. Kelantan ()

Central:

4. Selangor ()

- | | | | |
|---------------|-----|------------------------------------|-----|
| 2. Terengganu | () | 5. Negeri Sembilan | () |
| 3. Pahang | () | 6. Federal Territory, Kuala Lumpur | () |
| | | 7. Federal Territory, Putrajaya | () |

Northern:

8. Perlis ()
 9. Kedah ()
 10. Penang ()
 11. Perak ()

Southern:

12. Malacca ()
 13. Johor ()
 ()
 ()

East Malaysia:

Borneo

14. Sabah ()
 15. Sarawak ()
 16. Federal Territory, Labuan ()

1.8 Mother's Job:

1. Student ()
 2. Business Owner ()
 3. Private sector employee ()
 4. Government employee ()
 5. Politician ()
 6. Homemaker (housewife) ()
 7. Pensioner ()

1.9 Father's Job:

1. Student ()
 2. Business Owner ()
 3. Private sector employee ()
 4. Government employee ()
 5. Politician ()
 6. Homemaker (househusband) ()
 7. Pensioner ()

1.10 Family Monthly income (Combination of father and mother's income):

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Below RM2560 () | 4. RM7690 – RM9449 () |
| 2. RM2560 – RM5249 () | 5. RM9540 – RM11819 () |
| 3. RM5250 – RM7689 () | 6. RM11820 – and above () |

SECTION 2: SOCIAL MEDIA USE

2.0 This section aims to identify the social media use such as Facebook, X, TikTok, WhatsApp and many more. Please **tick** (✓) in the box provided or fill in the blank with the appropriate answer.

2.1 Do you subscribe internet at your house?

1. Yes ()
2. No ()

2.2 Do you subscribe to Internet mobile data?

1. Yes ()
2. No ()

2.3 How long have you used the Internet?

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Less than 1 year () | 3. 3 – 4 years () |
| 2. 1 – 2 years () | 4. More than 5 years () |

2.4 On the average, how much time (in hour) do you spend on social media in a day?

1. Less than 1hour ()
2. 1 – 3 hours ()
3. 4 – 7 hours ()
4. 8 hours and above ()

2.5 Please **circle** the frequency of social media use, where 1=never, 2=rarely, 3=sometimes, 4=often, and 5=always. Other than that, please circle the answer that reflects your frequency of use in a week.

No.	Type of Social Media Use	Level of Agreement				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	WhatsApp	1	2	3	4	5
2	Facebook	1	2	3	4	5
3	Instagram	1	2	3	4	5
4	X	1	2	3	4	5
5	Telegram	1	2	3	4	5
6	YouTube	1	2	3	4	5
7	TikTok	1	2	3	4	5
8	Others Specify: _____	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION 3: POLITICAL EFFICACY

3.0 This section tries to assess your level of political efficacy. Please **circle** the following statements reflect you, where 1=strongly disagree (1-20%), 2=disagree (21-40%), 3=slightly agree (41-60%), 4=agree (61-80%), 5=strongly agree (81-100%).

3.1 Voter efficacy

No.	Voter Efficacy	Level of Agreement				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	My vote is important to decide the country's future.	1	2	3	4	5
2	The Malaysian government is set-up through election.	1	2	3	4	5

3	Voting is one way for me to express my opinion towards the government.	1	2	3	4	5
4	Voters in Malaysia are free to go out to vote.	1	2	3	4	5
5	Parliament has the power to enact laws.	1	2	3	4	5

3.2 External efficacy

No.	External Political Efficacy	Level of Agreement				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	I do not mind who becomes Prime Minister if he is eligible, regardless of race.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I do not mind who becomes Prime Minister if he is eligible, regardless of religion.	1	2	3	4	5
3	The government cares about the people's welfare.	1	2	3	4	5
4	Elections (GE & By elections) in Malaysia are handled fairly.	1	2	3	4	5
5	The government officers are professional in their work.	1	2	3	4	5
6	Federal government can still govern although lacking two thirds' seats in parliament.	1	2	3	4	5

3.3 Internal efficacy

No.	Internal Political Efficacy	Level of Agreement				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	I understand sufficiently the country's political issues.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I am confident when I talk about politics.	1	2	3	4	5

3	3.3.3 I am confident when I talk about administrative issues. (corruption, budget, lack of accountability, political interference etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
4	I am free to voice my concern on government politics.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION 4: POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

4.0 This section tries to assess your political participation. Please **circle** the following statements reflect you, where 1=strongly disagree (1-20%), 2=disagree (21-40%), 3=slightly agree (41-60%), 4=agree (61-80%), 5=strongly agree (81-100%).

4.1 Offline Political Participation

No.	Offline Political Participation	Level of Agreement				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	I make voting decisions on candidates based on information from the new media.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I participate in a political organization as a member.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I attend a forum on political discussion.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I participate in politically based volunteerism.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I make my voting decisions based on influence from friends.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I make my voting decisions based on influence from family.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I have signed up for political petitions.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I have attended a demonstration/political march.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I have donated money related to political orientation.	1	2	3	4	5

10	I discuss politics when i go out with my friends.	1	2	3	4	5
11	I actively campaign for a political organization.	1	2	3	4	5
12	I have contacted an elected representative in issue related to politic.	1	2	3	4	5
13	I have attended political meetings or forum in my community.	1	2	3	4	5

4.2 Online Political Participation

No.	Online Political Participation	Level of Agreement				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	I like political content on social media (e.g., TikTok).	1	2	3	4	5
2	I share political content on social media (e.g., TikTok).	1	2	3	4	5
3	I voice my political opinion in the comment section on social media.					
4	I signed an online petition for a political cause.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I participate in political discussion on online forums and social media.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I used social media to organize a political event.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I used social media to promote a political event.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I Interact with online friends about political issues.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I follow political accounts or pages on social media	1	2	3	4	5
10	I follow the progress of political leaders on social media.	1	2	3	4	5
11	I participate in online communication with political leaders.	1	2	3	4	5

12	I contributed financially to any online political campaign or cause.	1	2	3	4	5
13	I have written a direct message/private message to politician on social media about political issue.	1	2	3	4	5

THANK YOU



APPENDIX B: POPULATION TABLE: MALAY STUDENTS BY STATES AND GENDER IN CFS IIUM AS OF 2024

	Region	State	Sex	Population (4,772)	8% from each gender by states	N=381	
1	Eastern	Kelantan	Male	163	13	37	
			Female	302	24		
2		Terengganu	Male	130	10	29	
			Female	241	19		
3		Pahang	Male	172	14	35	
			Female	260	21		
4	Central	Selangor	Male	567	45	109	
			Female	797	64		
5		Negeri Sembilan	Male	74	6	16	
			Female	119	10		
6		W.P Putrajaya	Male	14	1	5	
			Female	46	4		
7		W.P Kuala Lumpur	Male	106	8	18	
			Female	130	10		
8		Northern	Perlis	Male	20	2	3
				Female	13	1	
9	Kedah		Male	127	10	27	
			Female	217	17		
10	Penang		Male	61	5	14	
			Female	109	9		
11	Perak		Male	114	9	23	
			Female	176	14		
12	Malacca	Male	44	4	11		
		Female	83	7			

13	Southern	Johor	Male	181	14	39
			Female	315	25	
14		Sabah & W.P Labuan	Male	52	4	10
			Female	78	6	
15	East Malaysia	Sarawak	Male	27	2	5
			Female	34	3	

Source: (Retrieved from Information Technology Department, CFS IIUM)

