

YOUTH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION THROUGH
SOCIAL MEDIA: A CASE STUDY OF
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF KULLIYAH OF
ISLAMIC REVEALED KNOWLEDGE AND HUMAN
SCIENCES, INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY
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BY

NUR AREYSSA RAMADHA BINTI AZIZUL SYAM

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

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to look into how social media has emerged as a novel venue for political participation. Research has shown that young people's engagement in conventional political participation is declining. Nevertheless, additional research indicates that youth might opt for unconventional political participation via social media platforms. This study examines the young people's political participation on social media. The first research question: How does political interest explain young people's participation in online politics? Next, why did young people use social media to engage in political activities? The third research question is: How do young people use social media in political activities? This thesis is guided by three objectives. The first objective is to explore the role of political interest in online politics. The second objective is to examine the gratifications that motivate youth to use social media to engage in political activities. The third objective is to examine the type of political activities of young people on social media. In pursuit of the objectives, the study is guided by uses and gratification theory to answer the research questions. The study employs a qualitative research method. Data was gathered from transcripts of focus group discussions and thematic content analysis was utilized to examine the data. The study discovers that social media is a platform for young people to receive and communicate political news and information. The findings also show that political interest is a factor that encourages the respondents to participate in online activities. The study contributes to a greater understanding of young people's use of social media to communicate, obtain information and participate in society.

Key words: Youth Online Political Participation, Social Media, Uses and Gratification, Political Interest.

الصلة بالبحث

تهدف هذه الأطروحة إلى دراسة كيفية ظهور وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي كمنصة جديدة للمشاركة السياسية، حيث أظهرت العديد من البحوث تراجع مشاركة الشباب في الأنشطة السياسية التقليدية، في حين تشير دراسات أخرى إلى أن الشباب قد يفضلون المشاركة السياسية غير التقليدية عبر منصات التواصل الاجتماعي. تسعى الدراسة إلى فحص مشاركة الشباب السياسية على هذه المنصات من طريق الإجابة على ثلاث أسئلة بحثية: كيف يؤثر الاهتمام السياسي على مشاركة الشباب في السياسة عبر الإنترنت؟ ولماذا يلجأ الشباب إلى وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي للمشاركة في الأنشطة السياسية؟ وكيف يستخدمون هذه المنصات في الأنشطة السياسية؟ وتهدف الأطروحة إلى تحقيق ثلاث أهداف رئيسية، هي: استكشاف دور الاهتمام السياسي في المشاركة السياسية عبر الإنترنت، ودراسة العوامل التي تحفز الشباب على استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي في الأنشطة السياسية، وتحليل طبيعة الأنشطة السياسية التي يمارسها الشباب عبر هذه المنصات. وتعتمد الدراسة على نظرية الاستخدامات والإشباع للإجابة على أسئلتها البحثية، كما تستخدم منهج البحث النوعي، حيث تم جمع البيانات من طريق نصوص مناقشات المجموعات البورية، وتحليلها باستخدام منهج تحليل المحتوى الموضوعي. وتكشف نتائج الدراسة أن وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي تُعد منصة رئيسية للشباب لتلقي الأخبار والمعلومات السياسية وتبادلها، كما تُظهر أن الاهتمام السياسي يُعد عاملاً أساسياً يشجع الأفراد على المشاركة في الأنشطة السياسية عبر الإنترنت. وتسهم هذه الدراسة في تعميق الفهم حول كيفية استخدام الشباب لوسائل التواصل الاجتماعي كوسيلة للتواصل، والحصول على المعلومات، والانخراط في المجتمع.

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 Political Science.



.....
Rohana Abdul Hamid
Supervisor

I certify that I have 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 Political Science.

.....
Lau Zhe Wei
Examiner

.....
Marzuki Mohamad
Examiner

This dissertation was submitted to the Department of Political Science and is accepted as a fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Human Sciences in Political Science.

.....
Syaza Farhana Mohamad Shukri
Head, Department of Political
Science

This dissertation was submitted to the AbdulHamid AbuSulayman Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences and is accepted as a fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Human Sciences in Political Science.

.....
Shukran Abd Rahman
Dean, AbdulHamid
AbuSulayman Kulliyah of
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DECLARATION

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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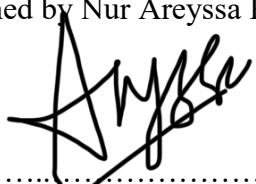
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This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, who always be there for me and encouraged me to complete this journey. Whenever I feel like giving up, the quote of Imam Syafi'i, "If you can't stand the fatigue of study, you will feel the poignant of stupidity," is something my parents frequently reminds me of. Thank you for believing in me. My words can never be enough to thank both of you. I pray that Allah will grant both of you the highest place in Jannah.

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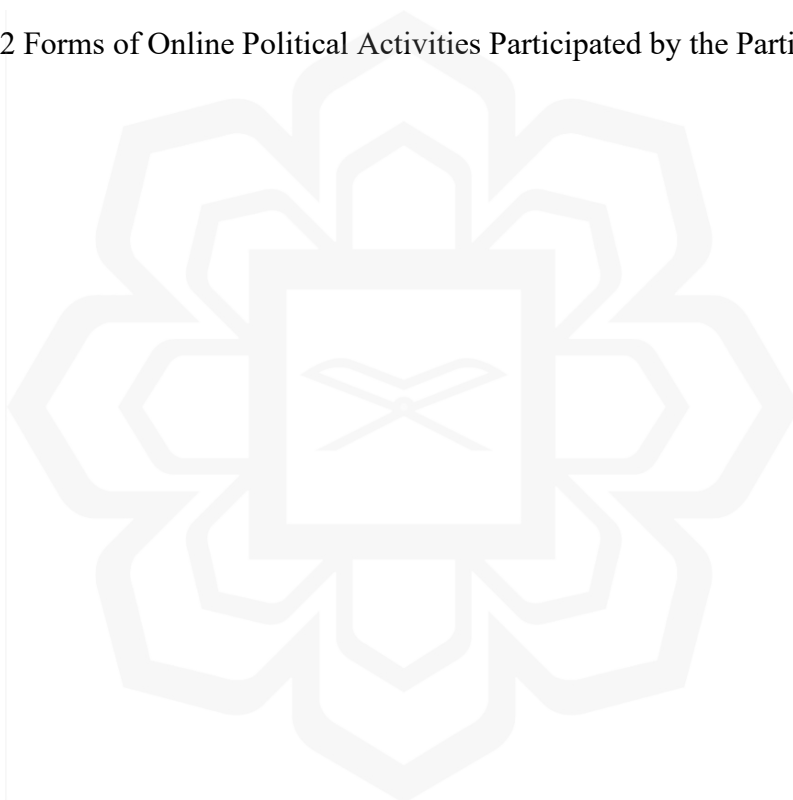
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DM	Direct Message
FB	Facebook
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FYP	For You Page
GE	General Election
ICT	Information, Communication and Technology
IG	Instagram
IIUM	International Islamic University Malaysia
MCMC	Malaysia Communications and Multimedia Commission
MUDA	Malaysian United Democratic Alliance
MYP	Malaysian Youth Policy
OECD	Organization Economic Co-operation and Development
OPP	Online Political Participation
PFC	Prefontal Cortex
PRU	Pilihan Raya Umum
TL	Timeline
UGT	Uses and Gratification Theory
UUCA	Universities and University Colleges Act

CHAPTER ONE

1INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Youth participation in political activities is prominent for a healthy and strong democracy. A vibrant democracy depends on young people participating in politics because they provide creative ideas, different viewpoints, and fresh thinking to the politics. Besides, Brady et al. (2020) claims that by actively participating in politics, young people can make a significant contribution to influencing constructive social change and determining the direction of the country. Several academics in established democracies are concerned that youth in this age are refusing to take part in the political process, especially traditional forms of political participation like voting and joining a political party (Dalton, 2007) and Sloam (2007). However, Halim et al. (2021) argues in response to rising concerns regarding youth disengagement that their involvement has been exaggerated because young people today are engaging in politics in ways that were unthinkable even a generation ago. According to Brady (1998), there are now more explicit kinds of political participation than ever before in the history of the study of political participation, which began fifty years ago.

According to Theocharis & van Deth (2018), since the beginning of the twentieth century, the definitions of political participation have broadened to include non-political activities such as volunteering for social causes and unconventional political acts like protesting; additionally, the Internet has significantly expanded the reach of political engagement with regard to new types of mediated political activity. There are new ways to get involved in politics, especially through social media platforms. These ways are frequently less time, labour, and money-consuming than more conventional formal involvement methods. Additionally, in light of the documented decrease in traditional forms of political participation among youth, these new online modes of participation through social media sparked a sense of hope for increased involvement of marginalised groups such as young people, women, ethnic minorities, and those with lower incomes (Ruess et al., 2021).

Clearly, the development of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT), for instance, has improved youth participation in politics as they acknowledge new media, including social media and the internet as a platform to express themselves, receive political information, have a political discussion and others. According to Oyewole (2023), YouTube is regarded as a platform for sharing recorded videos and is used for the purpose of downloading and uploading videos of political lectures and other types of political movements. Other forms of social media, for instance, Instagram, also serve an extremely important function in the political process. For instance, Instagram allows youth to engage with the political leaders by tagging them in a post or commenting on their post, sending a direct message to them as well as giving a “like” to the political leaders’ post which could indirectly help to increase the popularity of their message (Parmelee & Roman, 2019). On the other hand, Nguyen (2018) expressed that Twitter allows youth to voice their opinions, disseminate information about political topics, and show support for the politicians they care about through tweets and re-tweets.

As of right now, an abundance of studies have been undertaken in a comprehensive and dynamic body of empirical research on online political participation (OPP), utilising numerous measurements that each reveal a distinct picture of online political participation. However, in the case of a developing democratic nation like Malaysia, it is difficult to find explanations for the changing nature of youth political participation that is made possible by social media. Regarding youth shifting patterns in political engagement, there are a lot of unanswered questions. Why did young people decide to engage in political activities online? What made young people decide to use social media to participate?

On the whole, this study will provide evidence-based insight into the current debate over young people's disengagement from politics and how social media is changing the landscape of political participation. Therefore, this study is interested in exploring the trend of youth political participation in political activities specifically through social media. The following sections include the background of the study, problem statement, research questions and objectives, significance of the study, literature review, theoretical framework, research methodology and chapter outline.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Around the globe, youth are being considered as a valuable asset for the country since they are being called the future of tomorrow. The participation of young people in politics is important, especially in maintaining political stability as well as contributing towards the development of the country. Moreover, in the era of globalisation, along with the increasing popularity of technology, youth also come out to take part in the political processes, as there is a realisation that their participation is a primary right of democratic citizenship that should not be neglected. Additionally, youth's participation in the political process has been considered a civic responsibility and may be taken as further proof of a person's devotion to the country. As a matter of fact, the participation of youth in politics is not a concern that just begins today, but the history is as old as the hills.

Historically, Berelson (1954) stated that political participation is restricted to voting or campaigning activities. Later on, Campbell et al. (1960) stated that political participation was viewed generally as voting and other citizen action inside the framework of statutory political institutions, for instance, direct interaction between citizens and government representatives, contacting officials, and donating money to the candidates. Interestingly, the beginning of the 2000s saw the greatest recent change in political participation, when the emergence of new technology led to numerous online political activities, which include actions such as engagement with elected officials, sharing information regarding politics, joining political discussions, and others. (Thun, 2014).

Basically, by taking part in the political process, youth are more vocal about their patriotism, raising concerns regarding problems faced by the country and having campaigns full of national pride. Sharing the same views, United Nations Youth (2012) agreed-upon development objectives, and updating the development agenda depends on realising young people's right to participate and be included in democratic processes and practices. Ahmad and Mohd Zain (2021) clearly expressed that the Malaysian government established the Malaysian Youth Policy (MYP) in 2018 to improve the involvement of youth in the initiatives formulated by policy stakeholders at the national, regional, and international levels.

However, even though the Global Youth Development Report (2020) identified Malaysia as one of the countries with high levels of youth development, there is the other side of the picture too. Basically, the global performance of Malaysia in political and civic participation was quite disappointing compared to the other areas, as Malaysia is ranked 74 out of 181 countries, with a score of 0.311 (Global Youth Development Report, 2020). Fundamentally, the number of youths who participated in the political arena is low, generally due to insufficient access to political knowledge and information on politics and a lack of opportunities for the young people to take part in the political process (Sarok and Azahar, 2017).

At the same time, young people are systematically marginalised because of their young age and lack of experience. In addition, according to Bittman and Wajcman (2000), young women continue to bear the double burden of being both young and female. The Council of Europe (2020) stated that young women frequently encounter numerous discriminations in the political arena, which sooner or later cause their motivation to participate and be actively involved in political processes to decline.

As the development of technology in this era of globalisation brought convenience and advantages to the world, few scholars are actively involved in observing whether youth participation is declining in all forms of activities or whether they are now switching paradigms of participation from a formal form to social media platforms (Booth et al., 2020; Abdul et al., 2017; Hong & Lin, 2017). It is stated that social media has altered youth's perception of politics by giving them a platform for discussing it; on account of Setiawan et al. (2020), it is claimed that social media has overtaken conventional social media platforms like newspapers, radio, and television.

Evidently, Salman and Saad (2015) observed that youth are more attracted to being involved in online discussion groups through social media. However, according to the research, the number of youths who participated in the online discussion groups is still low, and participation in other online activities such as commenting, uploading, and downloading videos as a protest is much lower. Also, offline political participation, youth participation in welfare work, giving opinions for policy formulation at the workplace or area of residence, and volunteering are below average.

According to Sloam (2007), there has been an evolution in political participation rather than a decline, and obviously social media is one of the reasons that change how youth participate in politics. Ahmad et al. (2019) agreed that the emergence of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, plays a prominent role in encouraging youth to take part in online political activities. Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (2020) summarised that the number of sharing content regarding political issues in 2020 was only 17.2%, which shows a reduction compared to 32.1% in 2018. As a matter of fact, since 2018 was the year of a general election, there is no doubt that the sharing of political content would have accumulated.

Previously, before the popularity of social media was rising, youth could not voice their point of view freely nor participate in politics actively through the mainstream media, as the amount of space in newspapers and radio, as well as television broadcasting, was restricted and costly. On the other hand, according to the National Youth Survey 2021, which has been conducted by the Merdeka Centre (2021), 46% of respondents agreed that social media was their main source for political information. Clearly, social media acts as a tool of democratisation and gratifies youth's need for political participation as it gives the opportunity for all to enjoy the right of freedom of information, opinion, and expression.

On the other hand, many people, young and old alike, are engaged with social media to catch up with the latest news, whether economic or political. Unlike mainstream media, social media platforms, as a democratic tool, allow youth to satisfy their specific needs, such as searching for information faster, engaging directly in social conversations, and expressing opinions as well as dissatisfaction freely (Skoric & Zhu, 2015). Statistics from the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) show that for 2020, 43.4% of the internet users are between the ages of 15 and 24. Thus, it is not surprising if youth used social media to have a better understanding of politics. As Hassim et al. (2020) stated that social media is one of the popular interactive technologies among youth in Malaysia, the aim of this paper is to explore the changing patterns of youth political participation, specifically with regard to the use of social media as a platform for online political engagement.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The issue of youth political participation has been discussed for decades in Malaysia and this issue, in fact, still persists in today's modern society. The history of the establishment of the enactment of Universities and University Colleges Act (UUCA) in 1971 was one of the factors that caused low numbers of political participation among youth. Previously, UUCA 1971 has restricted many students' rights in political processes such as attending assembly, associating with political groups and others (Zainon et al., 2017). Individuals who violate the UUCA 1971 tend to get punishment or warning or worse, expel.

Therefore, it was hard to convince the younger generation to be involved in political processes even after the UUCA 1971 was amended as youth were somehow still trapped in the world full of fear and worries. As a result, many are lost in their own world, unaware of life at large, and only interested in unproductive activities such as playing games, watching movies and others to colour the dull in their life. In addition to that, Samsuddin et al. (2019) stated that the number of youths participating in politics in Malaysia is still low even though the government has taken tremendous effort including establishing the national policies in order to deal with the issue. According to research carried out by Merdeka Center (2022), out of 1,216 respondents aged between 15 and 25, only 33% are interested in politics.

From different viewpoints, according to Abdu & Halim (2018), young people have long been under-represented and kept out of the official policy-making process. Denying young people's participation in traditional politics breeds more dissident sentiments. According to earlier research, young Malaysians are very distrustful of their ministers and have low levels of satisfaction with the way the government is performing (Nathen et al., 2021; Transparency International Malaysia & Merdeka Center for Opinion Research, 2021). They also express concerns about social advancement and unfavourable views about their personal status in society. Talking about the fewer opportunities to participate in politics, Wahyutama (2019) argued that all throughout the world, young people are getting involved in politics in unprecedented ways, thanks to the proliferation of social media. It is stated that social media is a technology that goes hand in hand with the societal changes that have occurred, which in turn led to the birth of the new form of political engagement.

Furthermore, research has shown that youth did not engage in politics before the advent of social media platforms like Facebook because they did not find any satisfaction in traditional, offline political participation activities like casting a ballot; instead, youth by definition always prefer to engage in an interactive and participatory medium. Cheung (2019) asserts that young people may utilise social media to break down barriers to political involvement and engagement since they are great users of the platform. According to Matthes (2022), social media definitely has a positive relationship with online political participation. The emergence of social media is definitely a blessing as Zuniga et al. (2012) claimed that it indirectly promotes involvement of youth in politics by encouraging freedom of speech and expression, which is a significant factor of political participation. Additionally, certain forms of social media use, political news sharing for instance, can enhance social relationships and increase social cohesion among youth, which in turn may serve as a catalyst for collective action and group association (Goh et al., 2019).

On the flip side of the coin, young political interest is another area to which attention should be paid. To take part in the political process either formal or informal, it is important that all young people have an interest in politics. Additionally, young people's voices and ideas will be the driving forces behind the nation's progress. Ignoring the problem of lack of political interest would lead to political disinterest. Once more, social media proves to be helpful. Jamilah et al. (2015) claims that social media may pique young people's interest in politics and encourage them to continue taking part in political activities.

On the whole, there is no truth or false to the claim that young people are less interested in politics. Instead, more research has to be done on unconventional modes of political participation. Youth involvement in politics will be implied if the concept of political participation is limited to the elderly and emphasises conventional political participation. However, broadening the term to include more contemporary types of involvement like online political participation through social media could yield different outcomes. Clearly, exploration should centre on social media because of the underlying assumption that it gratifies youth's need for political participation as well as influences youth political engagement around the world and because it is a fundamental element of young people's everyday life.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Primarily, it is undeniable that numerous studies regarding youth online political participation have been carried out by researchers around the globe (Dagona et al., 2013; D. Loader et al., 2014; Mhlomi & Osunkunle, 2017; Wahyutama, 2019; Ahmad & Zain, 2021). However, there is limited explanation and analysis in terms of youth interest as well as preferences in types of political activities via social media. Essentially, there are two basic types of participation in the literature addressing youth online political participation. The first type of participation, the active participation (Gainous et al., 2021) refers to the act of sharing information, commenting as well as involving oneself in online discussion. Meanwhile, the act of simply reading and watching political information on a user's feed is referred to as passive online media use. Hence, acknowledging the preferences of youth regarding the types of political participation is important to assess their involvement in online political activities through social media.

Besides, the finding is hopefully able to provide empirical data in exploring why youth are shifting to participate in political activities through social media. Several scholars argued that social media or the so-called 'democratic tool' allows young people to gain political knowledge along with expressing their opinions and thoughts regarding politics freely (Dimitrova et al., 2018; Kushin & Yamamoto, 2013; Ceron et al., 2014). Hence, as sufficient political knowledge and freedom of expression are very important to continuously spark the interest in youth to join the political activities, the findings of this research will provide useful input to assist youth in ensuring whether they could access and receive sufficient political knowledge as well as rapidly feel empowered by participating in political activities through social media.

Additionally, this research can also help young people who want to get involved in politics but don't have the awareness or opportunities to do so. Through this study, they could require a little guidance on how to use social media to get involved in politics. Apparently, the researcher anticipates that this study would help youth to understand how they can utilise social media to gain political knowledge and express their political views freely.

1.5 JUSTIFICATION OF STUDY

The involvement of youth in the political processes occurs all over the world and Malaysia is no exception. Basically, the inclusion of young people especially students in the political processes is crucial to stabilise and improving the quality of democracy. It is the voice of the next generation, and as such, it has the power to influence the future political landscape in Malaysia and bring about change. Primarily, youth have been discovered to be involved in politics differently from the older people. In contrast to the older generation, youth are most likely participating in informal activities such as demonstrating, having online political discussion with like-minded people, protesting, watching political videos, and signing a petition. Given that social media appears to be one of the most significant platforms for young people to engage as well as participate actively in politics. Thus, this study is conducted centering on social media as a platform for youth political participation in Malaysia. With the help of young people, the researcher will be able to gather authentic information regarding youth online political participation via social media.

Therefore, to give a clear image on youth participation in online politics, university students have been selected as the unit of analysis for this research. Additionally, after a thorough consideration of all the relevant circumstances, the researcher will focus on undergraduate students of Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (IRKHS) in International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). The IRKHS Kulliyyah study plan requires students to take elective courses from any department within the kulliyyah, including political courses like Introduction to Political Science, Malaysian Government and Politics, and many more. For this research, few IIUM IRKHS undergraduate students are chosen based simply on their political understanding and knowledge. Basically, every student included in this research has successfully completed PSCI 1010: Introduction to Political Science, and is essentially exposed to lower-level political theories and practices.

The vast spread of information and communication through internet-based applications around the globe has been a prime indicator of its benefit to politics. As the internet is the treasure trove of information that can be found at users' fingertips, political information and content are accessible which excludes the need for young people to buy the newspaper or join in political talk programs. Social media can be considered as one of the significant platforms to gain information related to politics.

Besides, it provides youth the opportunity to engage directly with the political leaders. Therefore, for the purpose of obtaining genuine data to support the research work, the researcher chooses to concentrate on social media to have a better understanding on why youth choose to be involved in online political participation. It is relevant to conduct more studies on political participation via social media due to its increasing popularity in Malaysia. According to a study conducted by Jun (2022), Malaysian youths use social media for information searching and socialising for several hours each day. Additionally, it is also worth noting that youth nowadays are more likely to interact directly with political candidates, political parties and people they know through social media. Thus, this research is essential and significant as it will help to travel through youth online political participation.

1.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Predominantly, as youth are prominent figures that will determine the future of the country, this study will attempt to identify youth participation in political processes specifically through social media. On the other hand, the study will attempt to discover the significance of social media as one of the prominent platforms used by many youths around the globe in taking part in political activities, gaining reliable political news, and interacting directly with the political leaders. As such, the study has the following objectives:

1. To explore the importance of political interest in encouraging youth to participate in online politics.
2. To examine the gratifications that motivate youth to use social media to engage in political activities.
3. To identify the ways in which young people participate in online politics through social media

1.7 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Social media was claimed to reduce political apathy among youth since youth disengagement from political processes has been recorded in most parts of the globe.

As social media is one of the most famous platforms among young people for having political discussions, this study is conducted to discuss the advantages of social media and its usefulness in future perspectives on youth political participation. In order to deal with this concern, the following research questions are going to be addressed:

1. How does political interest explain young people's participation in online politics?
2. Why did young people use social media to engage in political activities?
3. How do young people use social media in political activities?

1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section displays a concise review of the literature related to the study. The first section briefly describes the overview of the literature regarding youth political participation specifically focusing on online participation through social media. Therefore, this writing will discover what scholars said concerning those aspects that can contribute to this research under the topic of 'Youth Political Participation Through Social Media: A Case Study of Undergraduate Students of Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)'.

In short, it covers the following topics: (i) Youth Political Participation; (ii) Youth Participation in Online Politics via Social Media; and (iii) Political Interest. Basically, the sources provided in this literature review were chosen with the intention of providing an overview of the gaps in earlier research and, they were meant to present a critical and contemporary viewpoint on the discussions regarding youth political participation in online politics via social media.

Moreover, to strengthen the study, the next section of this literature review is going to discuss the theoretical framework used for this study. Uses and gratifications theory is the theoretical framework that has been used for this study. This theory is appropriate for this research because it supports the goal of the study, which is to explore why young people use social media to engage in politics and how social media meets their needs and wants.

1.8.1 Youth Political Participation

1.8.1.1 Definition of Youth Political Participation

The literature of youth political participation has been studied extensively by various experts and researchers in the field of political science. According to Norris (2000), the election of political leaders and the acceptance of their policies are the key focus of youth political involvement as she defined political participation as citizen acts aimed to effect public authorities' decision-making. As mentioned by Dalton (2008), young people have the urge to get active in politics because they feel that political leaders and policies have an enormous effect on their lives, and they believe that their participation is vital in influencing decisions that may affect their future. In this light, youth political participation is explained as the activities designed to influence government structures and policies, most notably through elections. However, Eden and Roker (2002) also define youth political participation as a group of young people who gather together to speak out against policies at the local, national, or global level or to increase awareness of the current issues.

However, further details for the definition of political participation in general are explained by Uhlener (2015) and Deth (2021) as the involvement of citizens in formal politics as well as informal activities that could affect the politics or public policy in a country, for instance, Zuniga et al. (2012) stress on activities such as collecting and discussing political information, going out to vote in the elections, spreading information about politics, engaging with political leaders and taking part in political campaign as well as protesting. Through this definition, it clearly shows that political participation includes not only formal actions but also informal actions and by participating in those kinds of activities, young people are being exposed to and learning about the political processes in society. This is aligned with Verba et al. (1995) opinion, who defined political participation as an activity that intends to influence or has the ability to effect government action, either directly or indirectly. They felt that any action that has an impact on governmental policy is deemed to be political participation.

When it comes to young people, political engagement serves as a platform for empowerment. Therefore, Deth (2001) broadens the definition of political participation by including youth acts such as volunteering and social connection. Later on, the main attention is on the rise of social media and other contemporary technologies have given

opportunity to a new form of political engagement. Lane (2009) explained that new media technologies are not the only things that are drastically altering political communication; they are also having an impact on youths' social, political, and participatory experiences. In essence, these initiatives have addressed young political marginalisation and provided young people with a platform to express their opinions. Basically, definition of political involvement by Thun (2014), which include both online and offline political acts including voting, sharing political information, and taking part in political discourse, is corresponding with this.

Moreover, youth involvement in politics can be classified in a variety of ways since young people have a wide range of interests and responsibilities. Falade (2014) explained that there are six classifications of youth participation in politics: (1) a person who does not show interest in any political activity; (2) a person who is interested only in voting and opposed others form of political activities; (3) an illiberal group which will involve in politics when it affects their self-interest; (4) the community that participated in voting consistently; (5) a group of people who aggressively associated in political campaigns, protests as well as demonstrations and (6) a patriotic person who is devoted to the country by taking part in all political activities; being part of political campaign team, voting, joining in community services as well as contacting public officials.

As previously stated, the range of the participant's participation might be from absolutely minimal to extremely engaged and productive. In a democracy, taking involvement in politics is entirely optional. Individual participation includes things like casting a ballot during an election, giving donations to a political party, watching and listening to political news on television, radio or social media, reading political news. Uhlaner (2015) stated that there is also extensive involvement in politics. It entails participating in political conferences, attending public gatherings, going on protest, organising demonstrations and others. Basically, increased political involvement is a great way to impact governmental policies, as it allows youth to voice their concerns and advocate for change. Furthermore, participation can be either open or secret. However, in general, participation is open since the democratic system honors and encourages widespread public political engagement. Open political participation is restricted under totalitarian countries because there is a significant restriction of individual freedom (Ekman, 2009).

The public prefers hidden participation, especially when it means opposing the government. This kind of political engagement is typically rather covert. To put it briefly, the concept of political participation goes beyond just voting. Its meaning is broader since there are several ways for young people to get involved in politics. Youth that participate in politics may clearly exercise their rights and have an impact on decision-making, especially in a democracy. Additionally, engaging in a variety of political activities is crucial to guaranteeing citizen response, especially among young people.

1.8.1.2 Factors that Influence or Constrain Youth Political Participation

Over and above that, the involvement of youth in political activities has remained to be the crucial area of study around the globe, as it plays a significant role in bolstering inclusive political systems as well as strengthening societal fairness. In particular, the involvement in political activities is now promoted to youth as a means to build a fairer society (Brady et al., 2020). Thus, in order to create a democratic and participatory atmosphere, it is crucial to comprehend the factors that either enhance or constrain youth political participation. Primarily, youth political engagement is largely influenced by the media, especially the social media, which mobilizes participation and influences political attitudes. Youth now have more ways to get involved in politics because of the growth of digital platforms, which make it easier for them to obtain information, develop political identities, and organize for collective action. As highlighted by Hassan et al. (2006), social networking platforms and other new media have a greater effect than conventional media.

Since social media can make democracy work well, youth could express their support as well as dissatisfaction towards political parties and interact with friends or political leaders freely (Olaniran & Williams, 2020). For example, Claudet and Longa (2021) explained that the #ClimateChangedMe campaign was started by the International Federation of Red Cross on social media to raise awareness of climate change, promote public participation, and demand political action. In a different case, Xiung (2023) expresses that Qyira Yusri, a young political activist in Malaysia, raises awareness of political issues on social media in order to promote social change in Malaysia.

Engagement or involvement of youth in the political activities is considered essential in order to ensure their participation in future politics as adults. Youth participation in political activities could definitely contribute to developing policies that will respond to the needs of the younger generation. Moreover, according to Samsi and Rahman (2013), some youth claimed that they got involved in politics because of the influence of social environment, for instance, family traditions, or motivated by other family members. Brady et al. (2020) explained that family members could encourage youth to participate in political activities due to the frequent communication and attitudes. Rajani (2000) expressed that few children whose parents participate in politics, for example, through discussions, campaigns, or joining a political party, are more likely to engage in politics themselves. In addition to family, several studies indicate that peers also have a significant influence on youth political participation (Ajilore & Alberda, 2017; Hassim et al., 2020). According to Samsi et al. (2013), young people are often swayed by their peers and can be convinced to get involved in politics.

Numerous studies have gathered information regarding the importance of youth political participation; few have explored that youth participation in political activities is not a good idea. Shiratuddin et al. (2016) and White et al. (2000) stated that before the age of 25, youth did not attain full maturity as their emotion and intellect are not fully developed. According to Chan and Clayton (2006), one of the main regions in teenagers under the age of 18's brains, the prefrontal cortex (PFC), is going through an important reconstruction and evolution. Basically, PFC plays a prominent role in personality development, including planning, judgement, and decision-making, which also can influence people to make rational decisions in politics.

Oliver (2016) provided information on how age affects political engagement. The participation rate varies depending on the age group: young, adult, and elderly. Political participation was lowest among the younger demographic, particularly among college students. Students' hesitancy to participate was attributed to their poor involvement in political activities and disinterest in politics. In summary, youth felt alienated from society and inferior to adults and the elderly as a result of the historical marginalisation of youth and the withholding of their right to take part in political activities. Youth thus became less interested in political causes, occasions, and gatherings.

In addition, the rise or declination of youth involvement in political participation also occurs due to the different stages of life. Blais and Loewen (2009) demonstrate that young people prefer to concentrate on their education and careers that provide them a higher standard of life rather than trusting political leaders or representational institutions. Sharing the same perspective, Weiss (2020) agreed that 'lifecycle' is one of the many reasons that caused differences between youth and adult political participation, as young people are more focused on studying, looking for a job, finding a spouse, and other things. Youth nowadays will be attracted to taking part in political activities when they start to have a stable life and especially when politics begins to benefit their lives in terms of social as well as economic (White et al., 2000). Nevertheless, due to these reasons, youth could be politically inexperienced and have low levels of political knowledge.

1.8.1.3 Youth and Online Political Participation

According to Velasquez and Quenette (2018), the number of people who go to vote during the general election does not determine the health of democracy in a country, yet the level of engagement as well as the involvement of people in discussing various issues and policies are also taken into account. In the age of technology along with the increasing popularity of technology among youth, it opens a new door for young people who have been disengaged from offline politics to participate in online political activities. Generally speaking, online political participation refers to political engagement that occurs over the internet. Citizens who use the internet to try to influence political decisions are said to be engaging in online political participation (Zhang et al., 2009). Essentially, Valenzuela et al. (2013) share the same opinion that political activity performed online with the purpose of influencing government action is what is supposed to be interpreted as online political involvement. Whiteley (2003) explained that this kind of political participation is becoming more common and is primarily non-electoral, non-institutional, and non-conventional in nature.

Youth in the past had to rely mostly on old-fashioned methods such as attending public events and going to the office to meet political leaders. However, due to factors like social anxiety, time constraints, or financial hardships, many young people find conventional forms of political activity, such as attending political talks or

demonstrations, frightening or unreachable (Kwan, 2021). Over and above that, previous studies (Bhatt & Kumar, 2022; Kwon, 2020; Keating & Melis, 2017) have observed that social media as one of the crucial platforms that managed to encourage youth participation in online activities. Online platforms provide a more inclusive setting where youth may engage in political discourse from the comfort of their homes, reducing barriers to entry and elevating the voices of a wider range of viewpoints. Prior to the emergence of technology, young people could easily interact and communicate with political leaders. Thus, nowadays, youth from all over the world, including Malaysia, have primarily begun to participate in online political activities because they grew up in a society where social media and internet access are readily accessible, and they recognize that social media is seen as an interactive online discussion platform where their voice and opinions will be heard (Organisation Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2018).

In addition, online political participation suggests a more progressive understanding of participation as a mechanism to address youth political marginalisation and alter power dynamics between generations. For instance, Olof Larsson (2021) stated that besides having a political discussion, among the online political participatory activities performed on social media includes providing feedback, such as liking, commenting, or sharing posts related to politics, sending political messages, and others. According to Besar et al. (2012), young people in Malaysia nowadays prefer to believe information they find online above other sources of information. It goes without saying that Salman et al. (2015) agreed that young engagement in expressing their thoughts has expanded due to the opportunities provided by information technology, notably through the new media.

Moreover, Hampton et al. (2016) pointed out that the Internet has developed into a "Discussion Platform" with a strong democratic potential and has had a significant influence on politics and political involvement, coinciding with the advent of technology and the Internet in the 1990s. Thus, according to Ashara (2019), youths are more likely to take part in online political discussion regarding the policies of the government rather than participate in formal political activities such as voting and attending political talk which are normally performed by old people.

Moreover, Bhatt and Kumar (2022) and Zhong et al. (2022) added that online political participation has given youth additional chances to engage in political

processes without neglecting their study as well as family. Given the argument presented above, by taking part in political activities through online platforms, youth could save time, effort as well as financial resources (Ruess et al., 2021). For example, commenting and sending direct messages to political leaders through social media is much faster and effortless than sending an email or letter.

On top of that, in order to become more active in campaigning, young people may also hold seminars as well as discussion forums online. Basically, it is easier for young people to handle their responsibilities and take part in political activity when these activities are scheduled to accommodate their times, especially for students who have obligations to their academics. Clearly, OPP is an ideal platform for young people and other marginalised groups in the political system to engage in internet politics.

1.8.2 Youth Participation in Politics via Social Media

1.8.2.1 Political Use of Social Media

Meijer (2012) explained that with the advent of new media, a virtual communication environment that promotes social interaction and more political involvement has been created. With the flexibility of social media platforms, age and location are no longer limitations; all parties, including youths, are free to utilise them. Compared to the mainstream media, which is often controlled by the government, discussions and debates about current events are more widespread and unrestricted on social media platforms. Over and above that, when discussing the factors that enable youth to participate in political activities through social media, Zúñiga et al. (2014) explained two key factors of social media platforms: 1) Social media gives youths a platform for self-expression and the chance to forge their own identities, and 2) social media helps youth to meet new people and maintain connections with a large number of people and groups at the same time, which in turn creates a variety of opportunities for youth to get involved in politics.

In general, every day, new social media appear, ranging from simple applications that enable youth to send pictures to fancy apps that can record and share video regarding current issues. Social media has gotten more and more popular and influential. In addition to adding tools that make politics easier, these platforms have integrated themselves into today's politics since their audience is open to this shift.

Three widely used social media platforms were focused on because of their ability to foster community interaction and communication as well as the existence of special features that may encourage political participation.

Firstly, according to Amaral (2015) as well as Lim and Yazdanifard (2014), Instagram is a social media application for sharing pictures and videos that was introduced in 2010. Basically, youth can post a photo or multiple photos along with a text caption to highlight the image's purpose. Later on, Instagram developed new features and functions that enable young people to engage with the followers through live streaming. On the other hand, Rodrigues (2020) stated that Twitter, which is also known as a microblogging platform, has been used by many people, especially youth, in reading brief political messages on their Twitter timelines and tweeting in order to post or share what's on their minds. Also, Facebook, one of the social media platforms that managed to gather about a billion active youths, has been used to blast and spread political ideologies (Mohamed & Abdul Manan, 2020). Additionally, the popularity of social media among youth caused a number of discussions concerning the probability of the platform to increase youth participation in political activities. For instance, Manan et al. (2020) clarified that social media is definitely one of the main mediums for political knowledge in Malaysia; in actual fact, many youths were using social media to search for political information and share their political opinions.

As discussed, several scholars agree that social media facilitates online political participation among youth as it offers an abundance of chances for political exposure, including the ability to follow political leaders, public figures, publications, and other entities that may enhance users' knowledge about politics (Parmelee & Roman, 2019; Kwon, 2020; Matthes, 2022). For instance, Instagram allows youths to engage with the political leaders by tagging them in a post or commenting on their post, sending a direct message to them, as well as giving a "like" to the political leaders' post, which could help to increase the popularity of their message (Parmelee & Roman, 2019). Facebook's news feed allowed young people to learn about politics and spread that information to others. Youths may post political news and voice their opinions with friends through comments and shares. According to Literal et al. (2023), TikTok is an essential platform for young people to get involved in politics because it allows them to express their own voices while addressing topics that are important to them, such as issues related to civil rights, government policies, and youth development.

Even though some of the findings show that social media provides political knowledge as well as information for youth to have a better understanding of political insights (Hudia & Affandi, 2022; Intyaswati, 2021), it still cannot be considered as the best platform that influences youth online political participation. Instead, several scholars, such as Al-Rawi (2021), Chinnasamy and Manaf (2018), and McCallum (2021), stressed that social media is a toxic platform for political activities as it includes hate speech, fake news, and offensive political memes. Obviously, hate speech is affecting and challenging the health of democracy, as Santos et al. (2020) argued that hate speech would lead to harassment, injury, intimidation, defamation, and dehumanisation of another person or group. For instance, the study by Bajari et al. (2021) finds that citizens on social media use harsh words such as ‘stupid,’ ‘liar,’ ‘hypocrite,’ ‘gambler,’ and ‘traitor’ to attack political leaders as well as other political parties.

The former Malaysian Prime Minister, Dato’ Sri Najib Razak’s corruption case, was a good case in point. Several users spread offensive memes along with hashtags like #corruption, #corruptgovernment, #clevercleversquirreljump, and others to condemn him. Based on the above argument, it could be concluded that instead of providing sufficient political knowledge, social media also could turn peace into chaos, and tolerance becomes commotion. However, in order to address the problems described by Al-Rawi (2021), Chinnasamy and Manaf (2018), as well as McCallum (2021), Jarris and Parker (2018) explain that hate speech, fake news, and misinformation are not limited to social media; hence, it should not be criticised for some users unsavoury behaviour.

In general, social media has definitely been deemed its best in today’s world. It has been a huge stepping stone for youth to participate in political activities. Young people use social media not only as a tool to share their daily lives and stay in touch with their friends but also as a platform to express their opinions and raise their voices in regard to social and political concerns. Plus, the review of the existing literature above has drawn from the evidence in the rise of young people’s engagement in online political activities through various forms of social media. As long as the digital age continues to grow, social media will undoubtedly contribute to the democratisation of the political process and, more significantly, to the empowerment of young people.

1.8.2.2 Characteristics of Social Media

According to Data Reportal Digital Malaysia (2024), in January 2024, there were around 26.68 million active social media users in Malaysia, accounting for 83.1% of the country's total population. As the political space in the contemporary world is gradually becoming digital, social media platforms are in the lead when it comes to what stands out as one of the leading contributing factors to this new development. It is particularly striking just how much the young are politically active and involved in matters of discussion through the contemporary social media platforms—engaged as never before. Therefore, in order to fill in the gaps in the collection of scientific information on youth online political participation through social media, researchers were motivated to look into the characteristics of social media that influence young people's political participation. Besides, previous studies look at many aspects of social media, such as easy access to get and share information, ease of engagement, reliability and accuracy of information, and cost-effectiveness, in order to encourage young political participation (Hassan et al., 2016; Alodat et al., 2023 & Allam et al., 2015).

First and foremost, Alodat et al. (2023) explained that youth feel at ease engaging in politics via social media because such platforms provide them with unlimited access to participation in politics. For instance, young people may now access and spread political news more easily given that social media, in particular, evades the conventional restrictions of traditional media, which are mostly controlled by publishers, editors, and journalists (Adnan & Ramly, 2021). Plus, participation through social media eliminates time and location constraints that occasionally restrict traditional political involvement. In this regard, conventional forms of political engagement such as voting, attending political events, and participating in demonstrations need the actual presence of youth at the scheduled venues. Bauml et al. (2022) justified that youths find this extremely concerning because it takes them some time to get there and they are constantly free because of obligations to their jobs, classes, and other responsibilities. However, the existence of social make it possible for youth to participate in politics even when they are not at the specific venues. Young people may still engage in political discussion when taking the bus home from class, before going to bed, or over lunch. They can also listen to online political speeches and engage in other online political activities anywhere and anytime despite their busy schedules.

Moreover, ease of engagement is another feature of social media that affects young people's political participation. According to Omotayo and Matthew (2020), social media platforms have made it possible for youth to interact with like-minded people and express their opinions on political matters. Additionally, they have given young people a forum to voice their ideas and take part in public discussions in ways that were not conceivable before the emergence of social media. Essentially, Nicoleta (2009) clarified that in the past, young people had to wait for the right opportunity to come to the office in order to speak with the political leader because the leader was not always there. But thanks to social media, it is an absolute blessing that young people can now immediately engage politicians by just sending them direct messages. To put it briefly, social media has given a lot of people especially youth an easy way to interact, social life, and network with political leader and people across the world. Clearly, observations of technology developments throughout the world would demonstrate how social media is becoming a more significant tool for enabling youth to participate in political or social issues.

1.8.3 Political Interest

Another interesting area of study regarding youth and online political participation is the factors that influence youth to participate in politics through social media. Interestingly, scholars had defined political interest in a number of different ways. For instance, according to Lupia and Philpot (2005), political interest refers to a person's drive to devote a substantial amount of time and energy to engaging in politics. Meanwhile, political interest, as described by Riddle (2016), may be associated with political engagement and can be classified as an inherent motivation or an awareness of political affairs. Halim et al. (2020) along with Sheetz et al. (2021) justified that political interest is one of the prominent factors that influence the participation of youth in online politics through social media. Sheppard (2012) also argued that political interest might be seen as a necessary condition for online political participation.

As political interest serves as a driving force for online political participation, making research on it as a component of online political participation and social media as a means of sparking political interest in young people is noteworthy. This statement clearly has correspondence with the work of Carlisle and Patton (2013), in which the

researchers discovered that social media users who are interested in politics are more likely to participate in online politics compared to those users who have less interest in politics. Additionally, research by Conroy et al. (2012) and Steenkamp and Hyde-Clarke (2014) shows that social media positively influences people's political interests, which in turn encourages political participation.

Similarly, Liem and Chua (2013) discovered a favourable correlation between political interest and social media use. In the same vein, research by Conroy et al. (2012) showed that social media positively influences people's political interests, which in turn encourages political engagement. Additionally, social media gives young people the chance to interact with like-minded individuals and learn more about politics. In this context, it is believed that several online political activities through social media, like reading current political issues on political leaders' accounts, posting political content, interacting with political leaders, and discussing politics with friends, may likely spark interest in youth, which then could facilitate them to continue participating in online political activities (Levy & Akiva, 2019). Clearly, it is evident from earlier studies (Liem & Chua, 2013; Levy & Akiva, 2019) that young people's political interest is sparked by social media, and that youth who are more interested in politics are also more likely to be involved in politics.

The use of social media is becoming more and more commonplace worldwide, since it is becoming an integral component of society. According to Rajendran & Thesinghrajaja (2014), social media is becoming a more popular source of information than conventional media. Bae (2014) explored that those with greater political interest are inclined to pay attention to political information in social media, increasing their possibility of participating in politics, and vice versa. Social media, political participation, and interest, however, may not necessarily correlate favorably. Baumgartner and Morris (2009) discovered that social media use had no effect on a person's interest in or participation in politics. Burn (2018) even stated that a sense of a civic duty may serve as a catalyst for political participation rather than interest.

Hence, in order to fill the gap in the available literature, it is pertinent to explore how social media ignites political interest and motivates young people to engage in online political activities.

1.9 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Since “new media” emerged in the latter half of the 20th century, the applicability and adoption of theories in the study of youth online political participation through social media have been a major worry to most researchers. Luckily, a number of the theories that were employed to mainstream media remain pertinent and can be applied to social media as well. In short, uses and gratification theory (UGT) will be adopted for this study in order to explore the social media use in developing youth’s interest to take part in the online political activities.

1.9.1 Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT)

The Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) proposed by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch in 1974 served as the underlying theoretical framework for this research. The view of the uses and gratification theory first appeared in Katz's early work in 1959, in which he stated that users of media visit the media for a variety of different reasons (Ashara, 2019). To phrase it another way, according to Katz et al. (1974), media users are motivated to choose as well as utilise the media to gratify their specific needs in terms of social and psychological.

As a matter of fact, Ruggiero (2000) explained that the applicability of uses and gratification theory has not diminished despite the rise of new media technologies, such as the internet and social media, because it has always given the basis for the theoretical evaluation of each new platform of mass communication. In addition, even though this theory originally was proposed for mass communication studies, later on it has been applied in various fields of studies, including studies related to social media and political participation (Chuan, 2020; Ashara, 2019; Knoll et al., 2018). Katz et al. (1974) classified media gratifications into five main groups, which include cognitive needs (acquiring information, knowledge, and understanding), affective needs (emotions and feelings), personal integrative needs (stability and status), social integrative needs (interaction with family, friends, and society), as well as escapist needs (tension release). Clearly, social media is used as a tool to learn more about politics, express opinions, connect with like-minded individuals, and find satisfaction in the complexity of political issues. This classification offers a thorough understanding of the reasons why young people choose to use social media and how these gratifications impact their behaviors, such as political participation.

The crucial question, "What are the effects of social media on youth political participation?" is one that political scientists raise often. In order to get a reasonable answer to this question, the researcher emphasises McQuail's (1987) categorisation of four main justifications for media use: 1) Providing information on recent political events and issues. It is important in satisfying curiosity and general interest along with gaining a sense of security through knowledge. In essence, Qin et al. (2023) explained that young people use social media constantly to be informed about current events in politics. This is due to social media's ability to disseminate information more quickly and often through breaking news, hot topics, and real-time updates. 2) Personal Identity. To deeply understand oneself and look for behavioural role models. Social media simply provides young people with political knowledge and information that helps them create opinions and reinforce their political ideologies and personal values (Intyaswati et al., 2021). Additionally, young people might benefit from the variety of viewpoints that social media offers. It is crucial because it enables young people to distinguish their opinions from those of others, which obviously aids in the development of their political identities. 3) Integration and Social Interaction. To find a basis for conversations and social interactions and enable interaction with family, friends, and community. Social media information on politics mostly encourages young people to engage in discussion with both like-minded and opposing peers (Alodat et al., 2023). Youth will feel linked via this type of interaction, which obviously satisfies their desire for social belonging. 4) Entertainment. Media could help to escape from problems and give enjoyment.

Gratifications received via the usage of social media platforms have always had a significant relationship with continued desire to use. According to Bhattacharjee (2001), gratifications have a substantial impact on users' intentions to continue using social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. In regard to the statement, Liu et al. (2010) discovered that process gratification, content gratification, and social gratification are the three main types of gratifications that have a substantial association with the intention to continue using social media (see Figure 1). Basically, users return to social media for a variety of reasons, including communication, social interaction, and educational purposes. Clearly, uses and gratification theory is relevant in explaining why youth choose to use social media in participating in online political activities.

Undeniably, social media is considered one of the significant platforms for online political participation in the digital era, as it provides vast amounts of information about news in politics. The existence of social media encourages youth to participate in online political activities since it gratifies youth's need for political participation. According to Kwon (2020), social media provides numerous features that allow youth to consume more knowledge on politics; for instance, youth could seek and gather information by watching political content, joining political leaders live, and other means. With these data, Basak and Calisir (2015) propose that developers be able to review and develop ways to boost user gratifications, which have been shown to eventually lead to an increase in the intention to continue using social media to participate in online politics.

Kholis et al. (2019) explained that Instagram becomes prominent in promoting equality and enhancing democracy. Basically, freedom of expression and speech on social media symbolise human rights as well as democracy in which the unheard and suppressed voices are being heard. For example, there is an abundance of activist accounts on social media that continuously tag political leaders as a sign to force them to take action on certain issues. To sum up, this research seeks to examine the theory of uses and gratifications to understand whether social media is a platform used by youth to participate in online politics.

1.9.2 Assumptions Summary

1. Assumption 1: Youth with high levels of political interest are likely to participate in online political activities.
2. Assumption 2 (i): Quick access is likely to gratify youth consumption of political information.

Assumption 2 (ii): Reliable and trustworthy information is likely gratifying youths' desire for content.

Assumption 2 (iii): Social interaction is likely to gratify youth to interact with a wide range of people.

3. Assumption 3: Social media is likely to motivate youth to participate in passive online activities.

1.10 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this section, the method that will be used for the study of social media as a platform for youth online political participation will be explained. In addition, details on the research design and methods of sample selection also will be provided. Basically, this section examines the richness and the complexity of the research process and methods used to investigate the impacts of social media and its usefulness in future perspectives on youth participation in online politics. Besides, it is expected that the chosen methodology will induce useful information as well as knowledge through the process of collecting and analysing the data on youth online political participation through social media.

1.10.1 Research Design

A research design, according to Parahoo (1997), is a plan that includes decisions on how, when, and where data will be collected and analysed. Creswell (2013) explained that research design is typically described as a methodical strategy or framework for the whole research process, from issue conceptualisation to research question draughting to data collecting, analysis, and interpretation to report writing. Predominantly, in order to design research, it is important for the researcher to recognise the main aim of the study because the purpose of research design is to consciously make sure that the evidence obtained allows us to respond to the main question as clearly as possible (De Vaus, 2001).

In this study, the researcher intends to explore youths' experience in participating in online political activities through social media and why they chose to participate through that platform. Therefore, an applicable and useful research approach for the study is qualitative research. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), qualitative research is useful in assisting researchers to understand certain phenomena based on a person's point of view, experience, and belief. Additionally, Rubin and Rubin (1995) clarified that qualitative research provides in-depth and comprehensive overviews that are difficult to get through other means of research. Plus, in order to get thorough insights into how Malaysian youth perceive online political participation, the researcher decided to conduct focus group discussions with students from Kulliyah IRKHS, IIUM.

Although there are many and varied types of research designs, such as case study, comparative, cross-sectional, longitudinal, experimental, and others, the qualitative study employed for this study was a case study that involved three groups of students from Kulliyyah of IRKHS at International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) and mainly focused on understanding their experiences in participating in online political activities through social media. Case study design was suitable for this study as Ravitch and Carl (2016) explained that a case study can be conducted on either a single case or a series of cases of a specific person, group, or situation, and they use multiple types of data to investigate the real-life phenomena. Among the data sources involved are interviews, discussions, direct observations, and others. As for this study, the researcher relied solely on the focus group discussion as the data source. However, despite offering a comprehensive and insightful result for examining a particular scenario, the case study approach typically depends on a limited number of instances, leading to potential problems with validity and generalisability (Creswell, 2013).

Primarily, there were two dominant phases to the recruiting procedure. Firstly, the researcher started by disseminating recruitment messages to the IRKHS students through a WhatsApp group created by the IRKHS Student Association. However, after two weeks, the number of participants who are interested in taking part in the focus group discussion is still below target. As the number of participants still did not meet the target, the researcher asked for assistance from one of the political science department lecturers to disseminate the recruitment message to the students.

The researcher was able to gather twenty IRKHS students through the recruitment process and divided them into several semi-structured focus group discussions. After the recruitment process is done, the researcher sets the meeting date, time, and location. At first, the researcher intended to conduct the FGD face-to-face, but since there was an issue with the location, the researcher decided to conduct it in two ways: face-to-face discussions in a class at IIUM and an online discussion via Microsoft Teams. Fortunately, switching from physical to online group discussions is not a huge deal because modern technology can maintain participant engagement with features like chat boxes and hand raising that enable participants to interact similarly to face-to-face discussions. Additionally, because it includes open camera features, facial expressions and tone may still be seen during online discussions.

1.10.2 Population and Sampling

In particular, youths are the subject of this study because they have shown the ability to get involved and participate in online political activities through social media. The recent political developments in Malaysia have provided enough illustration of this. For instance, according to Ahmad and Zain (2021), 91.90% out of 130 UUM youth respondents chose social media as a way to learn about political scenarios in Malaysia and get involved in politics. Additionally, in order to gain precise information and data regarding the participation of youth in political activities, the researcher narrowed down the target participants for this research.

The researcher chooses to pick IRKHS students from IIUM as the respondents for this study. The researcher decides to have a focus group discussion with students from the Kulliyyah of IRKHS because it is easier to reach, and it is expected that, based on their knowledge and passion in social and political matters, they can provide broader and more comprehensive views regarding youth online political participation through social media than students from the other Kulliyyah.

Convenience sampling has been used to select participants for this research. Etikan (2016) described convenience sampling as a way of selecting participants who are convenient for the researcher and who satisfy specific requirements, including ease of access, nearby areas, availability at a specific time, or willingness to participate. Basically, convenience sampling is an efficient method that saves time and money while doing research on a specific group.

Carlsen and Glenton (2011) suggested that the appropriate sample size for focus group discussion in a study is two to five groups consisting of 6 to 10 participants. They added that focus groups should serve as the unit of analysis in focus group research, which means that the sample size should relate to the number of groups involved rather than the overall number of study participants. Therefore, the researcher gathered several IRKHS students, comprising both men and women who were aged between 15 and 24 years old, as suggested in the definition of youth by the United Nations, with at least a little experience in participating in online political activities through social media, to ask them about their experience with peer groups. Basically, the participants are divided into three groups, in which each group consists of 6 to 8 persons.

1.10.3 Data Collection

Data collection is one of the most prominent stages in conducting research. Kabir (2016) stressed that even the best research design in the world was completely pointless without a collection of required data. Hence, the data collection phase is very important in order to be able to complete the study. Essentially, the researcher collects the data by conducting semi-structured focus group discussions. Adams (2015) explained that the semi-structured discussions provided not only information and data needed but also in-depth details regarding specific phenomena and issues that have not been clearly defined.

On the whole, by conducting focus group discussions, the researcher is able to have a broad understanding and gain insights into IRKHS students' political participation in online political activities through social media. Plus, discussions conducted in a semi-structured manner tend to be more casual and responsive. In order to give participants greater room to think for themselves, react on their own terms, and voice their own opinions, the question sequence and methods of asking the questions vary from interview to interview.

As for this study, the researcher organised three focus group discussions. Two groups consist of both male and female students; meanwhile, the other group was represented by only female students. In all three discussions, the researcher served as the moderator, and the duration of each discussion ranged from 45 minutes to one hour. Before conducting the group discussions, the researcher explains to the participants the details of the purpose as well as the nature of the study and how it may benefit them. All of the participants in these focus group discussions need to fill in an informed consent form (see appendix II). In order to ease the participants contacting the researcher if they had any questions regarding the discussions, contact information such as phone number and email address was included in the informed consent form. In addition, the informed consent form also stressed that the collected information and data will be kept confidential and will solely be used for the research purpose only. The participants' true names are not revealed, nor is any personal information revealed. Once the researcher received positive feedback from the participants, the data collection process was started.

As stated before, the researcher conducted the FGD in two ways: face-to-face discussions and an online discussion. Microsoft Teams was utilised to perform the online focus group discussion. Biedermann (2017) mentioned that since online discussion is widely used, affordable, and accessible, researchers are using this method more and more to conduct studies in a range of diverse fields of study. However, several factors were taken into account before adopting them due to the diverse nature of the focus groups that were performed, both offline and online. Focus groups conducted offline and online were examined critically in terms of their efficiency, breadth, depth group dynamics, facial expressions, and respondent attitudes. According to the research by Biedermann (2017), the results showed that, with regard to every attribute examined, there was a significant degree of resemblance between the focus groups conducted offline and online.

Basically, the researcher also provides a list of questions ahead of time. There were six main questions in the questions list, as can be seen in the appendix V. Subsequently, the participants were asked a series of questions addressing their experience participating in online politics via social media and how social media influences their decision to join in politics in order to address the three study topics. However, during the conversations, the researcher occasionally asked additional questions to gain more explanation or to stress an intriguing topic raised during the discussions. The list of questions was not rigidly adhered to, but rather the discussions themselves allowed for a free flow of discussion and how well the questions related to the study. The purpose of the FGD is not to reach any broadly applicable conclusions. On the contrary, the discussions advance our understanding of the participants' perspectives toward social media as a platform for political participation.

The first focus group discussion was conducted face-to-face in a class at the International Islamic University Malaysia on 25th October 2023. The second group discussion was conducted online on 25th October 2023. Last but not least, the third group was also held face-to-face on the same day. Later on, the information gained from the semi-structured focus group discussion will be transcribed and analyzed. Throughout the thesis, the researcher uses the data gathered from focus group discussions, especially to examine how youth's use of social media motivates them to participate in online politics and how they participate in online politics.

1.10.4 Research Instrumentation

As mentioned previously, as semi-structured discussions will be employed for this study, participants are allowed to share their own story as well as experiences rather than just answering the structured questions by the interviewer. This approach was used in order to get a complete picture of the political involvement of youth in online politics through social media, as was previously covered in this section. The researcher and the participants had a chance to talk about any worries or uncertainties they had about this study during the discussions. Kakilla (2021) explained that semi-structured discussions make it possible to investigate how individuals think and discuss a subject and how their views are formed, created, or controlled through interaction with others. In general, the semi-structured discussions are valued greatly for their ability to spark new ideas through in-depth discussion.

The researcher created the interview questions according to the research questions of this study as simply as it can be to assure all the participants could understand the questions and provide precise information for this study. Firstly, each group discussion will start with a general question that includes their perspectives on the importance of discussing the topic of social media as an important platform for youth to participate in politics. Later, items addressing the three research questions were then presented. Besides, the researcher also constructed an interview protocol (see appendix III); as Jacob and Furgerson (2012) stated, a successful interview protocol helps to collect and improve the quality of data. In short, the moderator can cover all pertinent subjects and concerns throughout the group discussions by following the guidance, yet it should also be flexible enough to address any unexpected but pertinent issues that may come up.

As Coyne and Carter (2018) expressed, youth may find it more convenient to initiate conversations when icebreakers are used; therefore, all participants, including the moderators, are required to provide some personal information about themselves, including a brief introduction on how their involvement in online politics through social media began, and they need to rate their level of political interest. These kinds of activities can help youths relax and encourage them to keep participating in the focus group.

1.10.5 Data Analysis

The primary method of data analysis for this study was thematic analysis. Kiger and Varpio (2020) explain thematic analysis as a descriptive method that allows the researcher to describe data by going through the process of choosing codes and constructing themes. Basically, thematic analysis may provide unexpected insights from data, making it a versatile research tool. Pontes (2019) suggests that there can be a wide variety of conclusions that can be drawn from the data. This might potentially make it challenging for the researcher to concentrate on the key findings from the data. For instance, during the focus groups held for this study, even though the topics of discussion were around the idea of youth political participation through social media, the young people also came up with recommendations for ways to enhance youth participation in conventional politics.

Primarily, there are many stages involved in thematic analysis of data. Yin (2015) introduced five stages of thematic analysis, which are compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding to analyse the data (Figure 1). According to the stages, the researcher started to compile the collected data by transcribing the recorded discussions. In this phase, the researcher also reviewed the transcript and made some preliminary notes in order to familiarise themselves with the data. As for the next phase, in order to discover the pattern, important context, and similar characteristics, the researcher disassembled the collected data by coding it into several groups. This phase is considered a crucial phase in which the researcher needs to read over each focus group discussion's transcript and highlight any important or relevant phrases as well as sentences. After all of the information is compiled into code-designated groupings, the researcher reassembles these codes to summarise the key ideas and form themes found throughout the data. A table including research questions, codes, and themes based on participants' answers during the interview session was constructed. By using the collected data, the researchers started to analyse each theme to make sure the data was enough to support the research questions. Furthermore, after completing the compilation of the collected data and then disassembling as well as reassembling it, the researchers continued to make a conclusion by interpreting themes that have been pointed out in the data. For the final phase, the researcher managed to conclude this research based on the themes derived from the analysis.

Compile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribing the recorded discussions • Getting Familiarized with the data
Disassemble	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turning raw data into useful information by recognizing similarities and differences • Starting to coding it into several groups
Reassemble	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put the codes back together to form themes
Interpret	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpreting the present data by reflecting to the literature
Conclude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting the data • Making a conclusion based on the themes

Figure 1.1 Data Analysis Plan

In accordance with Yin's method, after transcribing the recorded discussions, the researcher familiarised herself with the obtained data. Luckily, doing and transcribing the focus group discussions made it easier to become familiarised with the information and the themes that were showing up in the various groups. Next, the researcher turned the raw data into some useful information by coding it into several groups. In order to create themes that led to the answers to research questions, the researcher also grouped similar codes and categories. The researcher went over each subject in further detail to make sure it made sense in light of the research questions and that there was sufficient evidence to justify the themes. The researcher began looking for themes and began categorising codes into specific themes by concentrating on the study of the topics from a wider perspective. For instance, one of the general themes that was found was "Social Media Uses and Political Participation," but it also included a variety of other themes, such as "Gratification" and "Interest." The researcher then able to identify themes found in the data to draw analytical conclusions. After this step, the researcher finally began presenting the data, the last step of thematic

analysis, keeping in mind that it was crucial as it provided insight into the importance and reliability of the study.

On the whole, qualitative analysis places a strong emphasis on processes, which helps the researcher contextualise and gain a deeper knowledge of the causes and reasons for political participation through social media. As mentioned before, this is how the qualitative analysis is provided; it is based on discussions with a few youths from Kulliyyah of IRKHS. In doing so, the researcher is able to identify any patterns that are consistent as well as similarities and differences between groups, which helps the researcher to address the main study issues. As this study used thematic analysis, the themes and categories gathered during the focus group discussions were organised and presented in this section (see Table 1.1). After compiling the findings of the coding procedure, three themes emerged that link the identified codes into categories based on their meaning or topic matter. The following are three of the dominant themes: (1) political interest, (2) gratifications received, and (3) forms of OPP.

Table 1.1 Key Themes and Sub-Themes that Emerged from the FGD

Key Themes	Sub-Themes	Description
Political Interest	Engagement	Frequency of youth participating in online politics
	Social media influence	Impact of social media in influencing youth's interest
Gratifications Received	Content gratification	Reliability, Accuracy, Trusted
	Process gratification	Quick access, Convenience
	Social gratification	Connection with like-minded

Forms of Online Political Participation	Active	Producing and Sharing Content like making a political video, participating in online political discussion
	Passive	Consuming Content like reading political news, watching political videos

Among the themes that will be included in this study are online political participation, gratification and political interest. The operationalisation of key concept and theme of this study are discussed as follows:

1.10.5.1 Political Interest

Political interest refers to a person's drive to devote a substantial amount of time and energy to engaging in politics (Holt et al., 2013). Tang and Lee (2013) believe political interest sparks due to the fact that it forces people to get political information that might help them understand the current situation in politics. Clearly, this shows that involvement in politics is motivated by political interest. According to Church et al. (2003), motivations refer to the factors or key issues that can influence as well as impact a person's performance. On the surface, there is broad agreement among academics that, above all other predictors, political interest is one of the prominent factors that influence the participation of youth in online political activities through social media. Additionally, Vissers and Stolle (2014) agreed that possibilities for youth to participate in online political activities through social media are more likely to happen if there is a high level of political interest among youth in particular.

In order to assess young political interest for this study, the researcher asks them to self-report their interest in politics on a scale of "1-Not interested at all" to "5-Extremely interested" based on how frequently they perceive themselves to participate in political activities, such as following political news, having political conversations, and others. Furthermore, the concept of political interest in the context of this study

comes from the uses and gratifications theory, which links political participation among youth to learning, understanding, and acquiring information; affective needs (feelings and emotions); and social integrative needs (interacting with friends, family, and society). The frequency and depth with which young people engage with political information will be the focus of their cognitive needs. Affective needs, meanwhile, focused on how young people felt about politics in particular. Furthermore, young engagement in online political activities is a key component of social integrative needs.

1.10.5.2 Forms of Online Political Participation

Bakker and De Vreese (2011) claimed that online political participation could be grouped into two forms which, are passive participation and interactive participation. Basically, Qin et al. (2023) mention youth that engage in online political content consumption without actively producing personal content are considered to be participating in passive online politics. In short, passive participation refers to one-way communication such as reading online political news, watching political content videos, and looking through comments on posts related to politics. Through focus group discussions, the researcher also decided to discover how young people make decisions about what political information to read or watch.

On the other hand, youth that actively participate in social media interactions or produce political content are examples of interactive participation (Omotayo and Folorunso, 2020). This clearly shows that interactive participation incorporates two-way communication which includes making a political video, posting political context either photos or videos, commenting as well as sharing matters related to political issues and taking part in online discussion (Kwon, 2020). As this research focuses on social media as the platform for young people to participate in politics, it is important to analyse forms of activities that manage to attract youth. Primarily, focus group discussions will mostly focus on examining the participants' perspectives and experiences with both active and passive online political engagement. The participants are required to share any political activity in which they are involved online and provide an explanation for their decision to do so.

Addressing both passive and interactive online political engagement, it is necessary to look into the reasons behind why youth decide to engage in these activities

as well as the difficulties they encounter while participating in online political activities. Hence, youth online political participation will be assessed by measuring the frequency of youth participation in both passive and interactive online activities through social media and why they prefer those types of activities.

1.10.5.3 Gratification

Katz, Blumer, and Gurevitch (1974) explained that the uses and gratifications are predicated on the notion that users have specific motivations and reasons for choosing media that best suits their own personal needs. According to the theory, users have a wide range of media to pick from, and each user will have different motivations and reasons for choosing a certain medium. Therefore, as this study focuses on social media as the platform for youth to participate in politics, the researcher adopts a model by Stafford (2014) to measure the characteristics of social media that gratify youth to continue participating in online politics. Stafford (2014), in his study, identified a model consisting of three constructs, which are content gratification, process gratification, and social gratification.

According to Cutler and Danowski (1980), content gratification relates to the messages conveyed by social media. Basically, the content gratification construct is compatible with how people perceive the reliability and accuracy of information. Hence, in this study the term `content gratification` refers to young people's trust in the political information they acquired through social media, which encourages them to engage in politics.

On the other hand, process gratification is primarily about how social media is actually used, for instance, web browsing and surfing. It is about assessing the process by which participants utilise social media to get information on politics as well as the types of activities performed through social media. Furthermore, social gratification will also be assessed through youth interactions with friends and other people using social media. In the context of this study, the researcher focuses on how much youngsters utilise social media to feel satisfied as a result of social interactions.

1.10.6 Ethical Issue

Brinkmann and Kvale (2008) explained that ethical considerations play a significant role in the research process from the development of the research topic to the actual interviews, transcriptions, and analyses, and even further when the results and conclusions were drawn. The ethical guidelines for researchers typically address three primary fields, all of which are pertinent to the current study. These include the researcher's role, informed consent, and confidentiality.

In essence, the researcher is responsible for creating an informed consent form for the focus group discussions to make sure that participants understand that the project's purpose is to collect data on young people's involvement in online politics via social media and that their rights are protected. For instance, the informed consent form made it very apparent that they were participating in the discussions voluntarily, free from coercion, and their privacy and confidentiality will be protected. Basically, the anonymity of participants was protected as the name used in the description and reporting of the results is fictitious and named.

All study data, including the discussion tapes, voice recordings, and transcripts, were kept in a safe place and will be destroyed after a reasonable period of time. In short, for this study, the participants in the focus groups were fully informed about the nature of the research, the consequences of their involvement, and the possibility to withdraw their data from the study at any time (as well as how to do so) in the informed consent form provided to them (see Appendix II).

1.10.7 Conclusion

The research design, population and sampling, data collection, research instrumentation, data analysis as well as ethical issues are all briefly discussed in this chapter, which also offers a thorough explanation of the research methodology employed in this thesis. Considering the study relied mainly on a qualitative methodology, thematic analyses were also required to clarify and elucidate the findings.

1.11 THE STRUCTURE OF THIS THESIS

In order to address the main objectives as well as the research questions, the thesis is organised as follows. In the first chapter, the issue of youth's online political participation through social media is introduced, along with the purpose of the study, the statement problem, and the significance of the study. Besides, it also includes a review of literature, consisting of three fundamental sections. The first section comprises a crucial review of the literature that explores the concept of youth political participation. This is a conceptual discussion covering the importance of youth participation in politics and the classification of youth in political participation. Next, the literature discovers the shifting trends in young people's political participation. Finally, there is a general discussion regarding political use of social media in online political participation. A comprehensive description of the research methods used in this study is given in this chapter.

Since political interest is one of the catalysts for youth to participate in politics, the second chapter presents a study of data pertaining to the importance of political interest in encouraging young people in Malaysia to participate in online politics. Plus, as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok in particular have evolved in Malaysia in a very interesting way, this chapter will essentially discuss how young participation in politics is changing and what factors encourage young people to switch to online politics via social media.

The third chapter then focuses on the sense of satisfaction or gratification that young people get from social media, which encourages them to continue using it to participate in online politics. Meanwhile, the fourth chapter focuses on the type of activities and forms of online political participation that young people prefer via social media. It is crucial to do exploration to determine if young people participate in politics online interactively or passively.

In drawing things to a close, chapter five provides a summary and discussion of the research findings, along with the study's suggestions, limits, implications, and conclusions.

CHAPTER TWO

2POLITICAL INTEREST AND YOUTH ONLINE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In essence, this chapter seeks to explain how political interest explains young people's involvement in online politics. It also observes the participants to understand their perspectives on Malaysian politics and explores the viewpoints of young people regarding the shifting paradigm of youth political participation in Malaysia. Furthermore, the focus group discussion participants for this study include a range of backgrounds, including genders, specialised fields of study, and political interests. This variation allowed the researcher to investigate the ways in which various demographic characteristics affect youth participation in politics. Participants in the political science department, for instance, could be more concerned with politics than students in other departments, and those who are more or less interested in politics might have different political perspectives. Besides, through the analysis of participant viewpoints, this study has illuminated the political interest as a driving force behind youth political participation. Since political interest is a straightforward construct that encompasses people's level of curiosity, concern, and attention to political topics and events, it provides a significant contribution to the study of young online political involvement.

2.2 RELEVANT SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

This chapter will begin with an analysis of the participant demographics, with an emphasis on gender, study specialisation, frequency of participation in online politics, and political interest, before delving deeper into the topics of political interest and young online political participation. Table 2.1 provides a prominent overview of the background of the participants in the focus group discussion. The respondents were also asked to rank their level of political interest on a scale of "1-Not interested at all" to "5-Extremely interested" during the data gathering process. It was surprising that not a single participant said they were extremely interested in politics.

Table 2.1 Participants' Profile

Group	Participant	Gender	Department	Self-Reported Frequencies of OPP	Level of Political Interest (1-5)
1	Participant 1	Male	COMM	Often	3-Moderately Interested
	Participant 2	Male	COMM	Always	4-Very Interested
	Participant 3	Male	PSYC	Often	3-Moderately Interested
	Participant 4	Female	COMM	Often	3-Moderately Interested
	Participant 5	Female	PSCI	Often	3-Moderately Interested
	Participant 6	Female	RK	Rarely	2-Slightly Interested
2	Participant 7	Male	PSCI	Always	3-Moderately Interested
	Participant 8	Male	PSCI	Often	3-Moderately Interested
	Participant 9	Female	COMM	Rarely	1-Not Interested at All
	Participant 10	Female	PSCI	Rarely	2-Slightly Interested
	Participant 11	Female	PSCI	Often	3-Moderately Interested

	Participant 12	Male	PSCI	Often	3-Moderately Interested
3	Participant 13	Female	PSYC	Rarely	2-Slightly Interested
	Participant 14	Female	PSYC	Rarely	2-Slightly Interested
	Participant 15	Female	BENL	Always	3-Moderately Interested
	Participant 16	Female	BENL	Rarely	1-Not Interested at All
	Participant 17	Female	BENL	Rarely	2-Slightly Interested
	Participant 18	Female	BENL	Often	3-Moderately Interested
	Participant 19	Female	PSCI	Often	3-Moderately Interested
	Participant 20	Female	PSCI	Often	3-Moderately Interested

Table 2.2 Demographic Table

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	6	30
	Female	14	70
Study Specialisation	Communication	4	20
	Psychology	3	15

	Political Science	8	40
	Revealed Knowledge	1	5
	English Language & Literature	4	20
Frequencies in Online Politics	Rarely	7	35
	Often	10	50
	Always	3	15
Political Interest	Not Interested at All	2	10
	Slightly Interested	5	25
	Moderately Interested	12	60
	Very Interested	1	5

The table indicates that six participants are male, making up 30% of the total, and fourteen participants are female, accounting for 70% of the participants. Participants are all undergraduate students of the Kuliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, IIUM. The participants come from a variety of study specialisations, as the table illustrates: 20% come from the Department of Communication; 15% come from the Department of Psychology; 40% come from the Department of Political Science; 5% come from the Department of Revealed Knowledge; and 20% come from the Department of English Language and Literature.

All of the participants acknowledged that they had completed an introductory course in political science which is Introduction to Political Science, despite not being

political science majors. Thus, because of their educational background, all the participants have some awareness of Malaysian political concerns, albeit there are differences in their levels of political participation due to their demographic background as well as political interest. Additionally, fifty percent of participants engage in online politics frequently, fifteen percent do so consistently, and 35 percent do so seldom. This suggests that a sizable fraction of the participant has engaged in online politics. It is also worth noting that two males and one female make up three of the twenty participants who have always participated in online politics.

2.3 YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEWS ON MALAYSIAN POLITICS

The initial topic of discussion in the focus groups was the youth's perspectives on youth politics in Malaysia and its importance. Compared to past years, Malaysian youth now have a greater awareness of the importance of politics (Zaidi, 2021). For instance, Participant 15 stated that, "It is noticeable that today's youth are more politically engaged and aware than they were in the past. Ermmm ... I think this has happened since the government lowered the voting age to eighteen. Like, as we can see, a large number of young people have begun to participate in the discussion about politics. If we look at the social media like Instagram and TikTok, some young people have even gone so far as to voice their disapproval of the government, and some even share their ideas for a better Malaysia." Apart from that, according to Participant 3, "Youth nowadays actively get involved in politics because we started to be aware of the importance of politics in our lives."

However, views on the importance of politics in youths' lives may differ based on a participant's level of political interest. Of the 20 participants in the focus group discussion, more than half (16 out of 20) felt that politics matters to young people because it affects their lives. As indicated by Participant 3, who is moderately interested in politics, "It is very important for all of us to engage in politics since our lives rely on the decisions that we make. Participant 2 adds, "I know that there are some youths saying that politics is not as important as maybe they didn't or still can't see how politics did affect our lives, but just please don't be a politically ignorant person. Like, I don't mind if a person doesn't care about politics, but I think it is important for us as Malaysian citizens to have some knowledge about our country and its current political situation."

Both of the views support research by Asri (2023) that demonstrates the importance of political literacy for youth and their participation in politics in order to assist them in comprehending how the decisions they make impact their lives.

Nevertheless, a participant with little interest in politics expressed that politics in Malaysia revolve around power abuse and corruption rather than the citizens themselves. Participant 17 explains, "I'm not saying that politics is unimportant. I simply think that politics is not a priority for me, as I have a lot of other important things to do. And I believe in Malaysian politics, it is more about corruption and the abuse of power instead of citizens welfare, which causes the rich to get richer and the poor to go poorer. As you can see, salaries remain low despite price increases in Malaysia."

Furthermore, Participant 8 holds differing opinions from Participant 17 on the significance of politics for young people. He emphasises that politics is crucial because it influences the current economy, which in turn impacts the lives of young people and their prospects for work in the future. As participant 8 noted, "I think that politics is really important for young people, especially students like us, because politics affects the economy, and of course after studies we will need to find internship places and work, so if our economy is okay, then it will be easy for us to find work, but if the economy is not okay, it will be hard for us."

2.4 POLITICAL INTEREST AS A DRIVING FORCE FOR YOUTH ONLINE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

To begin with, a few fundamental factors, including individual psychological, social, and other aspects, influence young people's participation in online politics. Therefore, it is important to explore the factor that might shed light on why certain young people choose to participate in online politics mainly through social media. As for this study, the researcher focuses on individual factors that may be anticipated to influence the political participation of youths in online politics. Basically, the selection of individual factors was supported by the results of the conducted focus group discussions in this study as well as the extensive body of research on youth political participation. Levy and Akiva (2019) claim that the individual factor in the political viewpoints focuses on internal elements that may affect their engagement in online political activities.

Additionally, Reichert (2016) essentially clarified that the person element includes motivations, political efficacy, political interest, political knowledge, and much more.

However, in particular, political interest is one of the most crucial elements in the individual factors that are taken into account in this study. Basically, previous studies have continuously demonstrated that people with greater political knowledge and interest are more likely to become involved in politics (Galston, 2001; Danke, 2023; Li & Yu, 2023). Both of these factors are said to be related in influencing youth's participation in online politics since social media is thought to be the best source of high-quality information for youngsters and a driving force for getting them interested in actively participating in political activities online.

As previously mentioned, each participant in the focus group discussions needed to rate their level of interest on a scale from "1-Not interested at all" to "5-Extremely interested (see Table 1.1). Basically, based on the table, 10% of participants had no interest in politics at all, 25% had a little interest, and 60% had a moderate interest. Just 5% of participants have a strong political interest. This indicates that the group's degree of political interest is typically slight to moderate. Interestingly, around 65 percent of them concurred that having political interests is a major factor in inspiring them to get involved in politics. This is consistent with study by Halim et al. (2022), which found that political participation is significantly correlated with social media usage and political interest.

Fundamentally, worthy information, reducing barriers to political participation, and interesting content were some of the factors that ignited political interest and resulted in continuous political participation through social media. These are reactions from a few participants regarding their level of political interest and how that interest led them to engage in online politics:

To be honest, I'm not really interested in politics; like when it popped on my TL (timeline), then I will just read it, but if it doesn't, I don't even put an effort into searching for it {...} (Participant 9, Group 2).

As for me, I didn't like to have any engagement. Like I never comment on or post anything about politics on my social media, and I think I will never do that even in the future. But of course, if I see interesting issues that have been trending on Twitter, I will open them and read about them. It's because I don't want to be seen as someone who doesn't care about what is happening in our country (laughing). (Participant 6, Group 1).

As for me, I didn't say I'm not interested at all because, of course, there's a time when we feel like we should know about it even if we don't really like it because, obviously, sometimes it does affect us. So, I can say that I might be slightly interested in politics, and, yeah, obviously when I am interested in a thing, it pushes me to know more about it. So, I follow our Prime Minister and a few other ministers on Instagram and Facebook to know more about current issues, the government's aid for people, and so on (Participant 13, Group 3).

In essence, this response demonstrates that youth who become interested in politics are likely to follow politicians on Instagram and other platforms to stay up to date on current events. This finding has been supported by international academics, such as Alodat et al. (2023), who discovered that young people with a strong interest in politics participated online mostly out of a deeper desire to keep up with national affairs and current issues. Besides, another participants expressed:

I like to learn about politics, and sometimes when I listen to or read anything about politics that catches my attention, I will search for and read more about it to have a better understanding of it. For example, the 1MDB scandal, involving Malaysian politicians and many more. But, to rate, I will just rate myself as someone who is moderately interested in politics because I'm not the kind of person who is too obsessed with it (Participant 8, Group 2).

I am very interested in politics. This is because politics affect us and everything around us. We can't run away from politics. Education is politics. Transportation is politics. Economy is also politics. I'm not only active in online political participation; I also used to be actively involved in offline political participation, like going to assemblies, becoming a member of this one political party, and so on {...} (Participant 2, Group 1).

The fact that the participant emphasised how government policies affect their lives in terms of transportation, education, and, most significantly, the economy, indicates that they are interested in politics in order to be conscious of issues that may have an influence on them. This validates findings from studies (Mayer, 2011; Asri, 2023; Early et al., 2023) showing that typically, young people's growing interest in politics originates from their understanding of how government actions and decisions impact their lives. Clearly, political interest may consistently increase the rates of young political participation.

2.5 SHIFTING PARADIGM OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: FROM OFFLINE TO ONLINE

Young people, who range in age from 15 to 35, are the future leaders of the country, which makes their participation in politics crucial. Their participation in politics has the potential to improve democratic governance. Thus, every government in the world, including Malaysia's, encourages young people to get more involved in politics and government functions, such as voting, joining political parties, and having political conversations as well as gatherings. Clearly, the emphasis on the participation of young people in politics is a quite highly relevant priority. However, according to Sani & Saad (2018), young Malaysians are not only under-represented in political parties but also in youth organisations, in which only 2.7 million out of 13.88 million youths in Malaysia are active in youth organisations.

Hed (2017) argued that the ethnic riot of 1969 was the reason behind the low rate of young engagement in politics. Even Crouch (1996) reveals the ethnic riot of 1969 was a watershed event that transformed Malaysia's political system from democratic to semi-democratic. As a result of that incident, people's political rights and freedoms are essentially severely constrained. To suppress free expression and protest, the government has employed strict legislation through the Universities Colleges Act of 1971. This restriction prohibits students from participating in a variety of extracurricular activities and from belonging to or endorsing any political party.

This research has shown that the participants were active in online political activities. As mentioned on page 43, the result has shown that fifty percent of participants engage in online politics frequently, fifteen percent do so consistently, and 35 percent do so seldom. This suggests that a sizable fraction of the participants has engaged in online politics. It is also interesting to note that 95 percent of participants said that youth in Malaysia understood their responsibility to contribute to national development. However, when probed, their views on youth political participation differ. For instance, young people who experienced exclusion gave up on politics, believing it was a waste of time. Participant 18 from Group 3 saying that:

No one wants to listen to us as young people. The closest example is what happened to MUDA. Although it is a party that establishes youth, since its founding, senior political figures have consistently criticised it and offered no support at all. So why should we participate in politics if they did not even listen to what we want? It's just a waste of time.

Predominantly, the Malaysian United Democratic Alliance (MUDA), a political party dedicated to youth, was founded in 2020 in an effort to gain the influence and support of young people. According to Yaakub et al. (2023), the goal of MUDA's founding is to include young people more deeply in party leadership across the entire organisation, not simply within the youth wing like the Puteri and Pemuda wing of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO). However, youth involvement in nation-building in Malaysia appears to be limited and receives insufficient support from adults (Fadzil et al., 2022). Another participant expressed that when limitations were imposed and the right to free speech was not upheld, young people got discouraged and lost interest in politics. For example, two out of the twenty participants stated that:

They just want our vote; they did not care about our voices. Sometimes when we speak our mind, we might be in trouble. For example, just look at what happens to Fahmi Reza. He got caught just because he posted his artwork on social media (Participant 3, Group 1).

Yes, I totally agree with him. When Fahmi Reza came here last year, many students joined his democracy lecture. So, it was disappointing when UITM drove him away because many UITM students are waiting for him. I think that governments are not really giving freedom of speech and expression to the citizens (Participant 1, Group 1).

On the other hand, another participant points out that despite the fact that young people nowadays are less involved in politics, they are nevertheless aware of it and keep track of it on social media. As stated before, although the prevalent view in the literature on political participation and involvement over the past few decades has been that young people's political participation is declining (Yaakub, 2023; Zhang, 2022; Weiss, 2020), few scholars argued that young people are still interested in politics; nevertheless, their modes of participation have evolved toward different forms of political participation (Mohamad et al., 2018; Hafizah et al., 2021). Other types of political participation include online participation, which is becoming increasingly important as the Internet grows in popularity. Fundamentally, youth in Malaysia participate in online political activity in a variety of ways. They share links to political content, discuss as well as share their thoughts on politics, look up political facts and topics online, and use social media to hear other people's points of view. During the focus group discussions, Participant 12 from Group 2 even mentioned that:

Not getting involved in a political party or not going for a protest doesn't mean that we didn't care. I believe that many youths, including me, are still aware of what has happened in our country right now. After all, everything that happens in our lives involves politics. We can't run away from it. Even our education involves politics. Basically, we are using a more simple platform to engage. Like, why should we go to a political gathering if we can just listen to or watch it on Facebook? And of course, as youth we did not have a proper medium to reach the political leader, but now, we can just DM them on IG or Facebook.

Undoubtedly, young people nowadays are currently changing their political participation paradigm from offline participation to online participation. In short, youth participation in expressing their opinions as well as gaining information has expanded as a result of the opportunities provided by information technology, particularly through social media. This is consistent with the claim made by Wahab and Rahim (2013) that young people in Malaysia like sharing their ideas on social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. In addition, the capacity of information technology platforms to create room for diverse information has encouraged the usage of new media among young people in Malaysia (Ahmad et al., 2012). Thus, the next section will go into more detail on Malaysian youth's use of social media to participate in online politics.

2.6 MALAYSIAN YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN ONLINE POLITICS THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

Table 2.3 Youth Use of Social Media Platforms for Online Political Participation

Source: (Researcher's Fieldwork, 2023)

Rank of Usage	Social Media Platform	Number of Users
1 st	TikTok	17
2 nd	Twitter	15
3 rd	Instagram	12
4 th	Youtube	9
5 th	Facebook	2

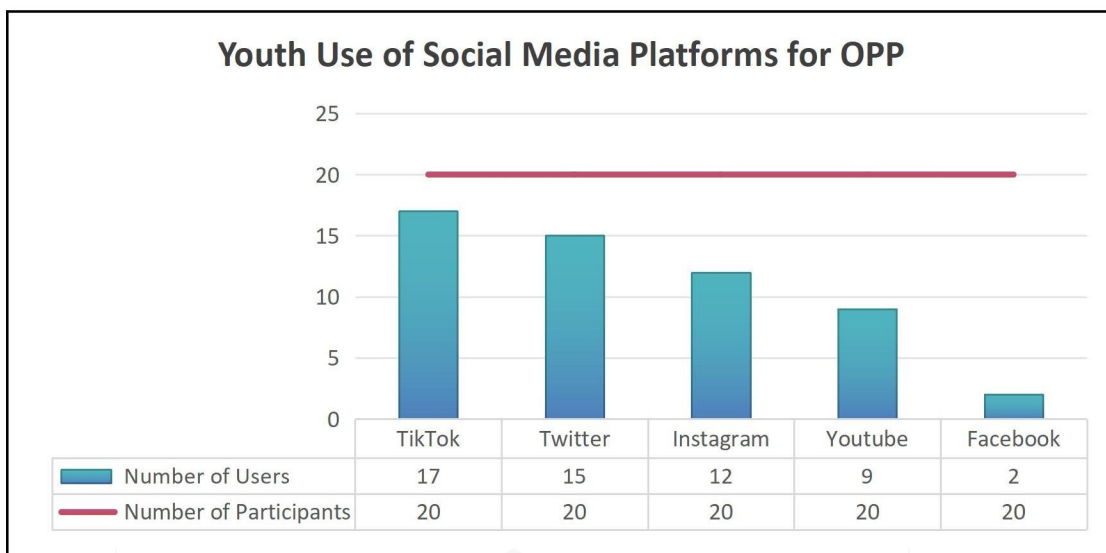


Figure 2.1 Youth Use of Social Media Platforms for Online Political Participation

Source: (Researcher’s Fieldwork based on Table 4, 2023)

Based on the focus group discussions, it was discovered that, all of the participants had accounts on some or all of the social media platforms listed. The researcher began by asking participants which social media platforms they used for online political activity. It is clear from Figure 2 that some young people use only one social media platform for online political participation, whereas some use multiple platforms at once. Out of the 20 participants in the FGD, Figure 2 shows that 17 of them use TikTok platforms for political purposes, whereas 15 of them use Twitter to participate in politics. Additionally, over half of the participants 12 out of 20 use social media to participate in online politics. Facebook and YouTube had less than half of the participants; of these, just 9 use Facebook and 2 use YouTube to participate in online politics.

A participant disclosed during one of the sessions that she utilises two distinct social media platforms for two different purposes. according to her;

I think every social media platform has a special function and area of expertise. For example, like Instagram, it is more private where people post about their daily routine, works, and others. But as for TikTok, it is more informal and you can gain a lot of information from various perspectives. Like me, I personally use TikTok to stay updated on current issues and I use Instagram to monitor important official statements issued by politicians and government agencies (Participant 5, Group 1).

Another participant refuted that claim by saying that all social media platforms are the same. He asserted that every social media platform serves the same purpose. In addition to having identical characteristics, the contents of each platform occasionally seemed to be identical as well.

I just use one social media to participate in politics which is TikTok because I think all social media has the same use. Let say if IG can provide current news, TikTok also provides us with up-to-date news. You can also like, comment and repost on TikTok. Basically, TikTok allows you to do whatever you can do on Instagram or Twitter (Participant 2, Group 1).

During the discussions, the researcher noticed that Facebook adoption rates for the political participation among them are rather low. The researcher was further motivated to inquire about participants' reasons for not using Facebook by this finding. In response, one of the participants said:

I think Facebook is outdated. Only old people are still interested in using it. The features were not really interesting unlike Instagram, TikTok and Twitter which provide more appealing and trendy content (Participant 4, Group 1).

The aforementioned claims are consistent with a study conducted by Baumer et al. (2013), which found that 69 young people who stopped using Facebook said they did so because the platform's features had become outdated and uninteresting. Briefly, Facebook may no longer be seen as a platform for young people. Even De Veirman et al. (2020) expressed that youth nowadays are no longer using Facebook; instead, they are switching to alternative social media platforms like Instagram and Twitter.

Furthermore, the researcher is doing a thorough exploration of Malaysian youth participation in online politics via social media by looking at the early stages of youth participation in online politics in Malaysia. According to Hafizah et al. (2021), Malaysian youth involvement in online politics through social media began to gain popularity during the 12th General Election in 2008. Information about elections, including posters, political rallies, text messages, online campaigns, and discussions, is disseminated via social media, and young people undoubtedly utilise it to stay up to date on events that occurred during that period. For instance, Samsudin (2008) surveys 8,823 young Malaysians between the ages of 21 and 40 to investigate the impact of social media and topics brought up during the electoral campaigns on the outcome of

the 2008 general election. The study concludes that young people, especially those who are dissatisfied with their socioeconomic circumstances, mostly rely on social media as their information source while making election decisions.

Over and above that, research conducted by Norshuhada et al. (2016), which involved interviewing 1029 youths between the ages of 15 and 25, demonstrates that social media is an important instrument that youth use to express their opinions and to participate in the decision-making process. They made the case using the 13th General Election in 2013 as an example that social media, which this generation heavily relied upon to gather information, engage in discussions, and connect with politicians. Verily, youth participation in online politics during general elections continues until the 15th Malaysian General Election in 2022. As previously noted, social media continued to be one of the primary platforms that youth used to seek information regarding politics and elections. During the general election, almost every day, people receive messages and videos on the election, which they then forward to their friends and family chat groups.

Some participants even share their experience of using social media during the general election.

{...} I'm a first-time voter, so I have no idea who to vote for, which party is better, and so on. When my sister and I were discussing who to vote for, she suggested that we should check what others had to say about the candidates on Twitter. It is a good thing that social media allows us to do some research on the candidates before voting so I think it helps us making decision (Participant 19, Group 3).

Another participant says she got interested in politics during the general election because of social media, identifying it as one of her primary sources of election news.

I think that the last time I invested in online politics was during the previous PRU, when I used social media to keep up with the latest news regarding the elections. To begin with, I'm not very interested in politics, but at that time, news about the election kept appearing on my TL, so I started to pay attention to what was happening (Participant 11, Group 2).

In addition, besides being used during the general election in Malaysia, according to Maszlee (2023), during the 2019 corona virus outbreak, which resulted in a months-long lockdown in Malaysia, Malaysian youths have also become politically engaged on social media, utilising this medium to voice their discontent and dissatisfaction with the government. Young people in Malaysia began to aggressively use social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter to disseminate political

messages to their friends, drawing the attention of public and political leaders during the lockdown. Basically, during the COVID-19 lockdown, youth are expressing their demands on social media, including the guarantee of their financial security, the reopening of the parliament, the empowerment of education for everyone, and employment opportunities for youth, especially new graduates.

Following the slowing down of Covid-19 restrictions and the country's increasing inflation rate, youth demands in Malaysia evolved to include the dissolution of parliament, a pay cut for ministers, and price controls for goods and food. These incidents amply demonstrate that, in contrast to the widely held belief among scholars that youth political participation is declining, young people are actually starting to take action, are growing more aware of their rights, and are publicly demanding them.

It is interesting to note that 80 per cent participants in the focus group discussions acknowledged that they were less engaged in offline political participation and more inclined to participate in online political activities because they believed that the existence of social media provides opportunities for the youths to be politically active:

I believe that many young people out there are still interested in politics; they just haven't had the opportunity to get involved because, you know, offline politics is usually dominated by older people, who always assume that we don't know anything about politics. Luckily, social media today makes it easy for us to discover more about politics and interact with the minister... (Participant 9, Group 2).

Because of social media, politics is now accessible to everyone, regardless of background, social status. It helps us to gain knowledge about politics and most importantly social media makes it possible for us to have direct interaction with the politicians so we don't have to wait for them to come to our place to reach them (Participant 18, Group 3).

However, there is also participant who mentions that despite their busy and packed schedule as a student, they can also get involved in politics because of social media.

As a student, we are busy with our class, assignment, program and so on. So, it is hard for me to participate actively in offline activities. And, since we are living in the era that everything can be done online, so, I think it is more ... you know ... easier for us to participate in politics by using social media rather than attending a political gathering and so on (Participant 4, Group 1).

Clearly, the absence of young people from traditional political activities such as attending political events and joining political parties does not necessarily mean that they are disengaged from politics; rather, it speaks to their capacity to participate in politics in more convenient ways in contemporary times. All things considered, youth have undoubtedly changed society by bringing with them a more skeptical attitude toward politics and by embracing social media as a platform for participation. The willingness of an individual to be aware of matters related to politics is a necessary for political participation. In short, in the information age, social media is the most effective medium that young people may use to engage, socialise, and gain knowledge. Without a doubt, youth in Malaysia participate in online politics in an indirect way thanks to the internet.

2.7 SOCIAL MEDIA'S IMPACT ON POLITICAL INTEREST

According to earlier studies by Holt et al. (2013) and Seo et al. (2014), youth that use social media platforms will be more interested in politics and will motivate them to participate in online political activities. The focus group discussions' results revealed that social media's ability to provide worthy information sparked young people's interest in politics and enhanced their online political participation. For example, although the two respondents in the following examples have different levels of political interest - one is moderately interested in politics, while the other is slightly interested, they both hold the same views about the importance of worthy information in igniting political interest, which in turn fuels political participation:

Having interest is important. I had no idea what politics was about and had no desire in learning about it before I developed an interest in it. Later on, I became interested in politics because of KJ's tweet. I always read what he tweet in his Twitter and I think that the information he shared was relevant and attract youth like me to know more about politics. Now I followed almost every episode of his podcast on Youtube and after watching it, I feel more interested in understanding about the situation of Malaysia's politics (Participant 3, Group 1).

Having knowledge and information on politics is very important because if don't have knowledge, we would not be interested to take part in politics. I think not only in politics but in everything. Like if you don't know about that thing, would you still do it? No, right? Same like participating in politics, if you are clueless about it, how can you participate (Participant 13, Group 3).

Another participant claims that social media ignites a spark for political interest, which encourages young people to get involved in politics by reducing the barriers to political engagement and eradicating the gap between young and politics. For instance, social media promotes public political engagement by allowing youth to provide opinions through comments on social media platforms.

I think that I would never be interested in politics if all I did was watching television or read newspapers because it seemed distant and I didn't have much opportunity to discuss, interact and stating my opinion. Eventhough things are different on social media. It makes everything easy for us. We don't need to go to demonstrations anymore because nowadays we can just sign in petition through social media. We don't need to go to the politician office to see them because we can just reach them through FB, IG or Twitter (Participant 12, Group 2).

Furthermore, the political expression that youngsters are exposed to through social media may impact their political interests and online political participation. The following is an example which demonstrates the reaction of a participant toward visually interesting content that has the power to raise awareness among youth, encourage them to participate in online politics through social media.

I still remember that during the PRU (election), this one video where a young guy chooses this one party over another party popped out on my FYP and that video become viral and I see that a lot of young people also join the trend by posting a video of them choosing their preference party to be voted during the PRU. To be honest, the video really attracted me, and I almost did it for myself (laughs). So, I think that TikTok is one of the best mediums to spark political interest in young people like us to join or get involved in online politics, directly or indirectly (Participant 5, Group 1).

2.8 CONCLUSION

To sum up, this chapter has discussed how young people are using social media to change their viewpoint and participate in politics online, as well as the factors that lie for this shift. Basically, the rise of social media has drastically changed how young people participate in politics. The conventional obstacles to political participation are being dissolved as new channels for involvement provided by digital platforms make politics more approachable and inclusive. Basically, the survey shows that the most widely utilised social media sites for young people to engage in online politics are TikTok and Twitter. Besides, one of the most noteworthy factors of young shifting

engagement were identified throughout the focus group discussions: political interest. Young people who have greater interest are more inclined to get involved in politics. Additionally, based on the group discussions, it is observed that young people's interest in politics serves as an encouragement for their active engagement. Young people are more inclined to look for information, engage in online political discussion, and take part in various political activities when they have a sincere interest in politics. Many young people in Malaysia are preferring to participate in online politics via social media rather than more conventional means of political participation, such as attending political talks or attending street protests, according to research from the three focus group discussions.



CHAPTER THREE

3 GRATIFICATIONS THAT MOTIVATE YOUTH TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO ENGAGE IN POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the gratifications that young people derive from social media, which encourages them to use social media in order to get involved in online politics. Thus, it appeared that social media offers distinct forms of gratification. Subsequently, analysing empirical data from three semi-structured focus group discussions, the researcher examines the three types of gratification that result from it: process gratification, content gratification, and social gratification.

Basically, when asked about their motivations for engaging in politics on social media, participants gave a variety of responses. Based on the participants' responses, it was observed that the main reasons for using social media for participation were ease of access, reliable information, interaction with the community, and engagement. As a matter of fact, social media can provide satisfaction which may be the component in the development of youth participation in online politics. Participant 8 expressed:

{...} I think social media like Facebook and TikTok is a good platform for us to get involved in politics as it satisfies our needs and you know hmm ... social media ... it provides us with the greatest amount of satisfaction. This is because we can have interaction with others; we can simply obtain information related to politics and many more. And, if we want to attend political talk, we don't have to travel to the place anymore because they are now conducted live, allowing us to listen to them whenever and anywhere. This saves us time and makes life simpler you know.

In light of this, the participants expressed varying opinions on the satisfactions they experienced in social media use. Clearly, youth who are hooked on social media, for instance, could look for information, social connection, or affirmation as a means of satisfying their needs. Through likes, comments and shares, social media gives youth a way to interact with others, get feedback and get social approval.

As this study intends to examine the relationship between the uses and gratification theory and social media use, it is crucial to consider how the satisfactions derived from social media could result in continuous political participation. Basically,

the use of social media by young people to get involved in politics explains more than just how it satisfies their knowledge needs about current events and political concerns; it also explains how young people communicate and engage with one another.

Therefore, the results of the study might be used to a wider explanation of how gratifications obtained from social media motivates young people to get involved in politics. The gratifications of social media use for youth political participation are summarised in Figure 2.

Process Gratification	Content Gratification	Social Gratification
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quick Access • Convenience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliable Information • Trustworthy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Communication and Engagement • Interaction with like-minded people

Figure 3.1 The Gratifications of Social Media Use for Youth Political Participation

Source: (Adapted from Stafford, Stafford and Schkade, 2004, p. 273)

3.2 GRATIFICATION GAINED FROM THE PROCESS OF CONSUMING POLITICAL INFORMATION VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

This section shows how the satisfaction that comes from using social media motivates young people to continue participating in online politics, especially the consumption of political information. Basically, Kwon (2020) explained that political information consumption includes searching for and obtaining information through reading news, viewing videos about political matters, following sources of political news, and looking for political or social issues. In essence, young people will experience process gratification when they use social media in a manner similar to searching and browsing. Process gratifications refer to the user's sense of fulfillment derived mostly from participating in the medium's use (Jang et al., 2019). Due to the advancements in technology, social media is growing in importance and becoming a medium that can satisfy all of the needs of youth, including the ones related to politics. Process gratification, according to Stafford et al. (2004), relates to the actual experience of using

social media and is most likely linked with words like consumption, searching, time usage, as well as web browsing, and is centred on the social media's accessibility and ease of use. Therefore, participants in the focus group discussions revealed that factors like quick access, convenience, and ease of use, all of which are related to process gratification should be taken into account in order to assess the youths' satisfaction experienced when using social media to consume political information.

3.2.1 Quick Access

Primarily, social media offers quick access that allows youth to promptly obtain political information, enabling them to stay informed about the most recent political issues or concerns in real time. Several participants in the focus group discussions agreed that quick access to political information is a crucial requirement in defining how social media satisfies youth's needs and motivates them to keep participating in online politics. Basically, by having quick access to the information as well as news, youth can keep updating with current news or always be aware of what is happening in the Government of Malaysia.

Social media is the best platform to get involved in politics. It is free. You can get information about politics and government anytime and everywhere even at midnight. For instance, during the last general election, I know the result of who's gonna win in my parliament much earlier compared to my family because I keep on updating with the results in the Twitter meanwhile my parents were waiting for the announcement in the television (Participant 4, Group 1).

{...} social media allows me to easily and quickly obtain the information I need, and it can be used at anytime and anywhere {...} (Participant 7, Group 2).

On the other hand, based on the focus group discussions, it is discovered that young people are using social media to participate in online politics because it offers instant access to a wealth of information and broader political viewpoints that can aid in youth's comprehensive understanding of political issues in Malaysia.

{...} social media definitely the best platform for us to gain information and understanding on politics because it provides countless of information. Just with one click, you can get like hundreds or thousands of the information that you are searching for (Participant 16, Group 3).

The aforementioned claim unambiguously shows how the rise of social media as a platform for young people to engage in politics contributed to a decline in the usage of print and offline media. Youth favour online sources over conventional print media because social media offers instantaneous, infinite access to information. If social media continues to gain popularity over time, younger generations may eventually render print and offline media.

Another participant stated that she no longer watches television or buys newspapers to find out about politics in Malaysia since social media has all the information she needs. "Since every information can be found instantly and readily on social media, I don't have to buy newspaper or wait until 8 pm to watch for news anymore," said Participant 9, Group 2. This demonstrates how young people shift to watch broadcast media because print media is not as powerful as before. In a nutshell, it is obvious that youth are able to participate in politics instantly through social media because it has an easy access to political information.

3.2.2 Convenience

On the other side of the fence, another participant emphasised that social media is a convenient platform to consume political information as well as enhance online political participation. According to Collier and Sherrell (2010), convenience consists of three components: effort, time, and space. When referring to social media, it refers to its capacity to allow users to access information easily and effortlessly without regard to time or place. As politics is constantly evolving and broad in nature, social media provides youth with greater freedom and serves as a vital information conduit. Social media provides youth with a wide range of knowledge and information that is available promptly.

The existence of social media saves us time, money and energy. We can know everything about politics with just one click so we don't have to waste our money to buy newspaper and so on (Participant 13, Group 3).

By the same token, one of the primary reasons youths consume political information from social media is because it allows them to stay up-to-date on what is going on around them without requiring a significant time investment. Participant 2 from Group 2 stated that:

As students, we usually have a lot on our minds, including classes, assignments, and, for some of us, commitment in organisations like POSSA, MRC, and others. So, we don't always have time to keep up with the latest news in our surroundings. Luckily, social media makes things simple for us; in other words, it saves us a lot of time and eliminates the need for us to spend time searching for the information. While we wait for our lecturers, we may just browse social media, look up news stories or watch quick political videos that slide over our feeds, and many more to gain information regarding politics and things that happening around us.

In addition, another participant stated that social media is 'let users to control' platform by providing instances of how it gives freedom for them to control their information consumption.

I think many youths prefer to participate in politics through social media because we have the choice to select what we want to read or watch and who we want to follow or not follow. So, for example, if I'm not interested in what I'm reading or watching, I will just skip it (Participant 19, Group 3).

It is obvious that young people are gaining process gratification by utilising social media to quickly and effortlessly consume political information since the platforms allow them to stay up to date on current events even with busy schedules. Clearly, social media has made it easier than ever to obtain current information. Information may spread far more quickly, widely, and interactively through social media retweets, comments, and mentions than it does through traditional media.

3.3 GRATIFICATION GAINED FROM THE INFORMATION FOUND IN SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT

This section highlights how social media provides content gratification for young people that encourages them to keep engaging in online politics. According to Li (2013), content gratification refers to the satisfaction derived from knowledge and information found in social media content. In regards to process gratification, social media provides a platform for young people to seek anything they want, which subsequently satisfies their desire for content.

During the Focus Group Discussion sessions, many participants state that social media provides them with facts about government, political news as well as relevant information. For instance, one participant from Group 2 and one participant from Group

1 stated that reliable and comprehensive information offered by social media was thought to be a significant component in the usefulness of social media for political participation.

{...} definitely social media gives all of us a lot of information on what happening in Malaysia right now. At first I use social media for entertainment, to kill the boredom but later on I realized that social media provides a lot of knowledge including knowledge in politics (Participant 11, Group 2).

At first I didn't really interested in knowing about politics. But, I still remember during general election there are many reels and videos related to politics that popped out on my Instagram and TikTok during that time. So, as a first voter, I think social media provides information that helps me to understand my rights and responsibility to vote, issues related to politics and how government works. Since that until now, I depend on Instagram and TikTok to give me information related to politics (Participant 5, Group 1).

As previously stated, young people are using social media to look into political matters and stay up to date on latest news. As a result, focus group participants disclosed that factors like trustworthy and reliable, all of which are related to content gratification, should be taken into account when assessing satisfaction that young people had as a result of the informations they gained through social media content. Basically, these gratifications resulted in young people continuing to engage and participate in passive activities like speech as well as political news reading or watching videos.

3.3.1 Reliable and Trustworthy Information

Participants also acknowledge that social media may be a helpful tool for finding trustworthy sources of information on politics, the government, and current issues. The participants stated that since information on social media comes directly from the users themselves, it is more trustworthy as well as reliable than information found in traditional media. One of the participants mentioned that she trusted the information disseminated by the political leader through social media and used it to help her understand more about politics.

{...} Instead of reading newspapers, I like to read and find information regarding politics or government on social media since the news comes from social media usually is directly from politicians, but in newspapers, journalists tend to create and manipulate actual events (Participant 17, Group 3).

As of today, with false information circulating so quickly, a lot of individuals rely on social media as a reliable source for information validation. This indicates how young people still have a lot of faith and trust in the social media. Social media offers an extensive range of perspectives along with information from professional journalists, grassroots activists, political figures, and political influencers. This is consistent with findings by Qin et al. (2023), which proves that youths trust in it as a source of political information is growing because social media allows young people to explore a variety of points of view and feel more well-informed.

Nonetheless, some participants disagree with the idea that information obtained via social media is reliable and trustworthy. One participant even goes so far as to say that information found on social media platforms is frequently inaccurate and riddled with mistakes. Participant 4 stated that:

In my opinion, it's okay for us to browse or watch any content on social media, but we shouldn't put all of our trust in the information, especially when it comes to politics, since we live in a time where people are free to write insulting statements about others. So, after reading it, double-check it before sharing it with friends and family.

Participant 7, Group 2 expressed the same viewpoint, stating that:

{...} sometimes when I see unpleasant political news on my timelines, I often quickly scroll past it out of concern that it might be false news or that someone is creating a sensational headline to attack others.

In general, it seems reasonable to draw the conclusion that encouraging young people to become more active in online politics requires access to reliable and trustworthy information. However, since certain irresponsible people use social media to deceive and mislead young people rather than provide information, it is impossible to fully trust and rely on the information obtained from social media.

3.4 GRATIFICATION GAINED FROM SOCIAL INTERACTION THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

Asemah (2011) indicates that social interaction or engagement is a primary motivator for young people to utilise social media and shift their engagement to online platforms. Social media provides a space for public communication, sharing, and engagement. Online forums and social media sites may be a crucial platform for youth to express and share their opinions and thoughts with the world as well as improve their friendships

with peers as it allows users to interact and converse about a variety of subjects including politics.

One of the participants mentioned that social media had become a platform for them to have direct engagement and communication with the political leader.

{...} I once directly DM MB Selangor, Dato' Amirudin on Facebook to inform him about water supply interruption in my area. Unbelievable, the next day, the water lorry tankers are going around to deliver water at my area (Participant 18, Group 3).

I kinda agree that social media makes it easy for us to communicate with the politicians. This is because if we want to meet them, we need to set an appointment first and there are a lot of procedures need to be done. But social media solves the problems for us. I still remember that during COVID-19, I DM KJ directly on Instagram to ask her about vaccines. I didn't think he would read the message, but he responded to it two or three days ago, telling me to wait for the Ministry of Health to make the announcemen {...} (Participant 15, Group 3).

Clearly, social media provides a platform for citizens especially youth to communicate with political leaders without intermediaries. By making it possible for people from all backgrounds to speak with decision-makers directly about their issues and viewpoints, accessibility helps democratize political discussion.

Besides, as social media is a tool that young people utilise to spread their political opinions, it could encourage young people to interact, communicate, and exchange opinions with like-minded people. More interestingly, having a connection with like-minded people may be especially helpful when talking about political concerns since it provides a convenient and familiar atmosphere for the sharing of views and support, which in turn encourages them to keep becoming involved in politics. Basically, through shares and re-tweets, their posts and tweets may go viral rapidly and reaching a large audience, for instance, according to the participants:

One thing that I love about social media is it can connect you with like-minded people. I once tweet something like 'gives PMX a chance to govern the country, and if he fails, we will change it in the next election.' and surprisingly that tweet got so many re-tweets and likes. Of course, there are people who agree and disagree with my statements, but the most important thing is that I have made a friend among those who share my views. Even now, we are still in contact with one another and talks about so many things like economy, politics and so on (Participant 12, Group 2).

Social media obviously makes it simple for us to connect with a lot of people. I mentioned before, I have direct experience with engaging in offline and interactive politics. I still remember that during COVID 19, when we wanted to have a demonstration on 'Kerajaan Gagal', I was asked to gather the participants. After posting it on Twitter for just an hour, around 50 people that I didn't even know who, messaged me asking to join (Participant 2, Group 1).

Clearly, the ability to interact and exchange opinions with others on social media is what attracts young people to it. Young people may connect with a wide spectrum of people through social media, regardless of their region or cultural background. Their wide range of exposure exposes students to many viewpoints and facilitates significant discussions and exchanges of thoughts. This finding is further strengthened by plenty of international findings that claim social media enhances youth social interaction by making it easier for young people to connect with and reach a broader group of people (Fatema et al., 2022; Alodat et al., 2023; Keating et al., 2017).

Interestingly, another participant brought up social media as a place where they may go for feelings of support from others who have similar political views. Basically, when they have no one to share with or find it difficult to communicate to others, young people will resort to the social media. Participant 11 explains,

It is difficult to discuss politics with my family because we hold different political beliefs. There is a time when we are discussing about politics and they are not be able to accept my opinion. So, starting that day, I just express my thoughts by tweeting on Twitter and some even respond it by commenting or liking or retweeting my post. I feel much better because Twitter allowed me to express myself fully and also connect me with like-minded people.

This statement essentially correlates with research by Pennington and Palagi (2023), which highlighted that young people are more likely to use social media to get involved in politics because it gives them a platform to express their thoughts and opinions, get support from like-minded others, and develop their emotional strength, all of which encourages them to get involved in politics longer.

3.5 CONCLUSION

Above all, the study has shown that social media is a significant factor in encouraging young people to engage in online politics. Popular behaviours among young people include searching for and acquiring political information by reading news, watching

movies about political problems, following political news sources, and seeking out political or social issues. Therefore, social media's convenient use and speed of access might meet young people's need for political information. In addition, participants in the focus group revealed that elements such as reliability and trustworthiness are critical to their decision to continue utilising social media to gain insight into politics. Nonetheless, the findings indicate that the young participants in this research did not perceive information on social media to be entirely reliable and credible. Furthermore, the results of this study demonstrate that youth political participation is positively impacted by interactions with others and like-minded individuals. As a whole, this study contributes to the body of literature on how young people are motivated to continue engaging in online politics by the satisfaction or gratification that social media provides.



CHAPTER FOUR

4 FORMS OF ONLINE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Regardless of the platform they ultimately choose, the activities in which they engage should be given consideration. Basically, youth can participate in politics in a variety of ways. Youth can take independent action by sending direct messages to the political leader or giving donations for political campaigns. Protest movements and attending political gatherings are two examples of political actions when a large number of people collaborate to draw the attention of elected leaders and societies. However, based on the previous chapter, it clearly shows that nowadays more and more youths are using the media, particularly the social media, to participate in politics.

According to Gainous et al. (2020), online political participation can be classified as either "interactive" or "passive" depending on the sort of activity. The central aspect of interactive online political participation is initiating and participating in political activities facilitated through digital platforms like social media and others. It allows youths to engage by expressing their opinions and views, forming groups, and determining political interests. Disseminating content about politics through social media is also an integral part of interactive participation. Youth share articles, videos, and viewpoints to ensure that more people find their views and get attention. Moreover, debating and discussing political issues online is also considered interactive political participation.

Passive online political participation consists of reading about politics, following political leaders as well as parties on social media, and watching political videos without taking part in it. Passive people do not participate in political discussion or activity, even when they observe the developments in politics. Observing political discussion on social media without actively participating in it is a prime example. Another way to participate passively is to keep up with political leaders, parties, or communities via social media by following their activities in order to be informed about their views and actions. Through passive online political participation, youth can still get knowledge about political context even in the absence of active

involvement. Additionally, this chapter analyses the form of political online activities that young people are most likely participating in.

The researcher classified few activities mentioned by the participants as interactive and passive forms of online political participation in Table 4.1. This, once more, indicates the researcher's desire to encompass not only youth-performed activities on social media but also types of participation that may be highly relevant for future manifest political action.

Table 4.1 Types of Online Political Activities Participated by the Participant

Name of Online Political Activities	Social Media Platforms Involved	Type of Online Political Activities
Reading Political News	Instagram, Facebook, Twitter	Passive
Commenting	Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, Youtube	Interactive
Contacting Political Leader	Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok	Interactive
Liking and Sharing	Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, Youtube	Interactive
Watching Political Videos	Instagram, TikTok, Youtube	Passive
Signing Online Petition	Instagram, Facebook, Twitter	Interactive
Listening to Political Speech	Youtube	Passive
Reading Comments on Political Post	Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, Youtube	Passive
Online Discussion	Instagram, Facebook, Twitter	Interactive

Table 4.2 Forms of Online Political Activities Participated by the Participants

Forms of Online Political Activities	Number of Participants
Interactive	2
Passive	12
Both	6

4.2 INTERACTIVE ONLINE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Table 4.2 displays the distribution of participants' participation in interactive, passive, or both forms of online political activities. Basically, the data from the focus group discussions shows that only eight out of the twenty participants acknowledged having participated in interactive political involvement through social media. In actuality, though, only two of the twenty participants engaged in solely interactive political activity, while the remaining six engaged in both interactive and passive online activity.

On top of that, based on the focus group discussions, several interactive activities that are popular among young people are discovered to be online discussions, sharing as well as liking political content, contacting political leaders, and leaving comments on political posts. Additionally, the participants reported that these activities help youth in overcoming self-doubt and boosts their confidence. In short, as social media provides a platform for discussion and freedom of expression, it encourages insecure and introverted youth who have difficulty having face-to-face interaction to freely express their opinions as well as point of view online. Participant 13 Group 3, in this context, added:

I beg to differ; as for me, I don't have the courage to voice out my opinion or asking question when we are having face-to-face discussion because I am afraid that people will judge me. But, honestly speaking, I didn't mind expressing my thoughts on Twitter because no one would judge me there or even if they do, I don't mind because they don't know me.

Additionally, online forums of discussion such as Facebook and Twitter provide a place to share ideas and challenge perspectives leading to political arguments and

exchange of ideas on various matters. This makes people converse and argue to articulate opinions and gain knowledge. One of the participants stated that:

I love to share political contents in my social media. I like to re-tweet anything related to politics especially when I agree with it either from the politicians or from political activists (Participant 1, Group 1).

Besides, another participant in the focus group discussions emphasised how social media makes it simpler for them to discuss politics with people from different states and countries and how they frequently notice variations in people's points of view.

{...} one good thing about having a discussion in social media is we can discuss with people from all over the world so that we can have wider perspective on that issue (Participant 10, Group 2).

Additionally, one of the participants discloses that social media facilitates their participation in online petitions and virtual protests, giving them the opportunity to raise their voices, campaign for a cause, raise awareness of political concerns, and get support through the platforms. Plus, politicians are now more accessible and reachable to the public thanks to social media. In this regard, Participant 12 from Group 2 stated:

As a student, of course we also have something in mind. Sometimes, we didn't even agree with the government policies and decisions. But, some of us are afraid to raise our voice because if we join the street protests or demonstration, we might face detention or punishment if we get caught. So, social media gives us a chance that we might never get before. We don't have to worry about being discovered and punished when we participate in internet petitions and protests.

Clearly, few of young people still believed that they were not allowed to join any traditional or active offline political activities like joining the street protests or demonstration. Though they might not be actively involved in all those traditional activities, they are using social media to participate in several interactive online politics.

4.3 PASSIVE ONLINE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

It is also interesting to note that 12 out of 20 of the participants in the discussion groups indicated that they merely preferred passive online activities instead of participating in online political debates or discussions or other interactive online political activities. Yet, six of the twenty individuals who engaged in passive participation also engaged in active online political activity. This is consistent with a relatively limited amount of empirical research suggesting that passive forms of participation encourage people to

become interested in politics in the first place (Boulliane, 2019; Cantijoch et al., 2016). In contrast to interactive activities, passive activities are mostly concerned with consuming content as well as information on social media. According to Gainous et al., (2020), this behaviour is referred to by internet users as "lurking." Basically, youth just monitor the news feeds and status updates of other users while staying out of the conversation. Therefore, the following are some of the most common types of passive political activity that the participants chose to highlight:

4.3.1 Watching Political Videos

Almost seventy percent of the participants had gone online to watch a political or governance-related video. Primarily, by watching political videos or contents, youth may become more politically conscious and educated. The spread of political information on social media like YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and TikTok has given young people unlimited access to a wide range of viewpoints, informations, and analyses on a wide range of political topics. Participant 7 from group 2 explained that young people are more likely watching political videos on social media to learn about political news and information. In this regard, he stated:

I am not really into online discussion and had never commenting on any political post before. Honestly, I'm not interested in getting involved in politics. Currently, I really enjoy listening to the KJ and Shahril's podcast on Keluar Sekejap on YouTube. I think that podcast helps me a lot in understanding more about politics that have happened in our country.

In the same context, Participant 20 feels that watching political videos offers a more reliable way of learning about politics than discussing with random individuals on social media. She said the following to convey her opinion:

I agree with him because you know at least we got the information from people who really have experiences in politics rather than having a discussion with peoples that may not be understanding politics at all.

On the other hand, few participants think that youths who view political videos would be motivated to engage in other political activities. Participant 15 from group 3 demonstrates her viewpoint as follows: "Watching political videos can occasionally encourage us to engage in other political activities, such as liking, commenting, and so on." She continued by saying that social media platforms provide features like shares, likes, and comments. This interactivity allows young people to interact with the

information by liking and sharing the videos, as well as express their thoughts and participate in online discussion through the comments' section with others.

Participant 10, a participant in Group 2 during the discussion, expressed the same belief as Participant 15 that watching political videos might inspire others to engage in political activities. She used the following examples to highlight her point:

{...} Sometimes when I watch videos related to politics in TikTok, and I think that video is good and knowledgeable, I will like it or re-post it. So, we can see that by watching the videos, we will also participate in others political activities {...}

In a broader sense, young people seeing political videos represents a higher level of political engagement than simply watching for fun. Basically, by staying informed about the developments in politics and political changes, participants who were previously inactive will likely be able to comprehend issues better from the standpoint of political leaders and how the political system functions. Even though passive participation may not result in direct connection, it does prepare the path to educate youth along with enhancing young people's political awareness.

4.3.2 Reading Comments on Political Posts

Another popular online political participation among the Focus Group Discussions' participants is the practice of young people reading comments on political posts. Basically, reading the comments on political posts is seen as a type of political surveillance, meaning young people actively keep an eye on current political events and issues as well as political information. According to McQuail (2010), in this context, the term "surveillance" is synonymous with the phrase frequently used in uses and gratification research, which refers to the monitoring of information and news regarding what's going on around us. This activity is essential in influencing the political landscape because it raises youth's level of political awareness.

I know this might sound weird, but I just like to read what others comment on the social media. For example, when a minister posts something, I will read through the comments on that post (Participant 18, Group 3).

I would much prefer read than publish anything on social media. I would rather watch than to comment. To be quite honest, I rarely ever even make personal posts about myself. I just use social media to read and keep updated on the topics that are now trending (Participant 16, Group 3).

The responses made by the participants above suggests that young people keep an eye on the political issues occurring in their local surroundings to stay informed of any updates. Despite the fact that this activity may appear passive, it equips young people with the information and awareness needed to engage in political involvement in the future. In an atmosphere of intense political polarisation that discourages young from engaging in politics, reading comments on political posts may also be seen as a substitute for youth involvement in politics.

In the same context, some of the participants believe that they can learn more about an issue by reading comments that offer a variety of viewpoints and ideas. Fundamentally, by reading the comments on political post, they may widen their perspectives, question their own presumptions, and gain knowledge from the experiences of others.

I am one of the people who enjoy reading comments. Reading comments is the most enjoyable activities among others online political participation in my opinion since they provide me with others' thoughts and perspectives. And, by reading the comments, we also can see if people agree or disagree with our opinions (Participant 4, Group 1).

Generally, youth may gain important insights into a range of viewpoints and ideas on political topics by reading the comments on political posts. Social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, TikTok and Instagram function as online community forums where people from different ideologies and backgrounds come together to share their opinions. Youth who read the comments on political posts are exposed to a diverse array of viewpoints, some of which they would not come across in their own social groups. Their comprehension of complicated political topics is enhanced by this exposure to other points of view, which also encourages a more inclusive and sophisticated style of political conversation.

On the other side of the coin, few participants shared the opinion that active online political activities lead to harassment and dehumanisation of another person. Basically, cyber bullying and malicious comments have been detrimental to young people's interest to participate in active online political activities. Participant 6 from group 1 explained:

As for me, I once join a TikTok Trend 'Kalau aku Like, aku Like Kalau Tak Aku Swipe'. And as I expected, people from the party I swipe mock me and mad at me. They left a comment like 'Penjilat', 'Kena bayar

berapa?’ and many more. It hurts me you know even there are some people who support me. And slowly it causes me to become less interested in doing those kinds of activities.

In the same context, Participant 15 from group 3 shared about how receiving hate speech made her lose interest in active online political activities specifically having a political discussion:

I think social media is not a suitable platform for political discussion. I once participated in Spaces conversations on Twitter, emm ... when my opinions are different from them, I receive harsh words from them and they don't stop until I quit arguing with them. Since that I never participated in online discussion anymore and only use social media to stay up to date on what is happening now.

And Participant 2 from Group 1 also shared the same opinion:

I still remember that I got attacked by the netizens after I left a comment on this one politician's post. And aaa ... the worst part is they not only attack me in the comment section but they also stalk my Facebook and leave rude comments on my post. Maybe they are angry because I criticize their favourite politician but they should respect it because that is my point of view. Since that I never comment anything on any politician post again.

In general, social media has definitely deemed its best in today's world. It has been a huge stepping-stone for youth to participate actively in both active and passive online political activities. On the whole, passive political participation promotes political awareness and education because it enables youth to be familiar with various opinions, analyses, and debates. For example, youth can read news, watch educative videos or follow the political debate on social media, which helps them to improve their level of political understanding.

4.4 CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, based on the focus group discussions, this study indicates that young people's opinions of online engagement, particularly passive online participation, have been increasing upward in Malaysia; nevertheless, there is a dearth of statistical evidence to support this idea. Nonetheless, they all agreed that young people are often less likely to engage in interactive online political activities. On the flip side of the coin, there are drawbacks to the emergence of active online politics, such as the circulation of hate speech and offensive remarks that discourage young people from being involved

in it. In order to make sure that social media continues to be a useful tool for active or passive political engagement, it is essential that these problems are resolved.



CHAPTER FIVE

5DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter primarily summarises the results found in Chapters Two, Three, and Four. In short, this chapter will include results of the study, recommendations, limitations, implications, and a conclusion. In addition, the outcome is covered in this chapter in order to address the research questions and achieve the objectives for the study. Despite the relatively small sample size, the discussions can be deemed noteworthy because all of the participants had engaged in online politics, both directly and indirectly, and they shared pertinent information about their experiences on social media. Therefore, the discussion and information provided by the participants help to shed light on the actual picture of youth online political participation through social media and how it gratifies youth to participate in politics. Thus, the sections below provide a further discussion of the findings in relation to the hypothesis of this study.

5.1.1 How Do Political Interest Explain Young People's Participation in Online Politics?

Since political participation is not something that happens on its own, young people must have a motivation to get involved. Kahne and Bowyer (2018) explained clearly that those who are interested and have knowledge in politics are more inclined to get involved in it. Youth political interest has been found to be a strong predictor of their tendency to participate in political activities online. Research indicates that young people who have a strong interest in politics are more likely to look for and take part in political activities, particularly on social media platforms. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, the findings indicate that individuals who are very interested in politics are always involved in politics. Ten of the twelve participants with a moderate interest in politics admit to often participating in online politics, and two more individuals with a moderate interest admit to always engaging in online political activities. At the same time, the six participants who had no interest in politics or a slight interest in politics were rarely involved in politics. In general, findings show that young people who are very interested

in politics are more likely to find out about politics and participate in political discussions on social media platforms. Obviously, when youth become interested, they keep informed, share their opinions, and take part in the online political activities. In addition, today's young people are motivated to participate in politics since they have come to understand the importance of politics in their daily lives and the significant influence politics has on their future.

Moreover, according to Bimber et al. (2015), social media is anticipated to raise youth's political interest, which may then result in political participation. As a matter of fact, in the context of political interest, which was found in this study, the researcher discovered that young people's usage of social media may spark their interest in politics, which in turn inspires and encourages them to get involved in online politics. The findings from this study corresponded with other research (Zi Qin et al., 2023 & Allam et al., 2015) that found social media influences youth's political interest and can eventually lead to online political participation.

Additionally, the study's conclusions also indicate that young people are eager to participate in online politics through social media because of its capacity to disseminate credible information and opportunity to raise their voices. According to Buchanan and Benson (2019), the credibility of the communication source is likely to have an impact on young people's desire to get involved in politics. As a matter of fact, social media is a popular platform for political leaders, journalists, and the public to express their knowledge and perspectives on political topics and events. As mentioned by one of the participants in this study, youth may broaden their knowledge of current issues and be exposed to well-informed viewpoints by following these credible people on social media.

Moreover, youth are turning to online politics through social media as it reduces barriers to political engagement and bridges the gap between young people and politics. Many people, especially young people who might not have access to traditional political spaces or resources, can simply use social media platforms to participate and get involved in politics. Social media reduces the obstacles to political involvement by offering a more accessible way and enabling young people to join in political conversations and actions from any location and at any time. In short, young people have many opportunities to voice their opinions, engage in online discussions, and

interact with others through likes, comments, and shares in a post through social media platforms. Furthermore, social media platforms frequently arrange live streaming as well as political talk, giving young people the chance to engage in more casual and approachable interactions with political leaders. In general, social media acts as a medium to ease youth into participating in politics by eliminating conventional barriers to political engagement, giving them access to information, encouraging meaningful interactions, and elevating the voices of young people in the political arena.

Briefly, youth's shift to online political participation through social media is a sign of a sea change in how politics is performed. Social media is clearly a powerful spark plug that inspired youth to shift to online politics. Social media platforms offer a range of features and functions that enable youngsters to connect directly with political information, politicians, and like-minded people. This allows them to voice their thoughts, engage in meaningful conversations, and participate in online political discussions. However, although online participation does open up opportunities like never before for increased participation, mobilisation, and information sharing, it also raises issues that must be resolved to guarantee that this online participation is inclusive and healthy.

5.1.2 Why Did Young People Use Social Media to Engage in Political Activities?

Given that social media offers youth chances to fulfil a variety of needs, including varied sources of information, self-expression, as well as communication and interaction with others, the data gathered from this study offers important insights into the motivation of youth in using social media to participate in political activities. Clearly, after analysing participants' responses to focus group discussions, this study revealed that social media platforms are now effective tools for encouraging and influencing young people's political participation.

By providing a range of gratifications, social media attract young people to get involved in politics and help create a more dynamic and accessible political landscape. Furthermore, in line with the discoveries of a previous study by Lu and Lin (2022), the researcher of this study highlights three types of gratification: process, content, and social. These gratifications may influence how people use social media to participate in politics. It is presently reasonable to state that social interaction, accessibility, worthy

information, and convenience are the primary benefits of utilising social media. This conclusion is also in line with the findings of Hossain et al. (2019), which show that the three main reasons individuals use social media are for interaction, gaining reliable and trustworthy information, and quick access.

On the other side of the picture, youth may have greater opportunities to voice their opinions, participate in political discussions, and obtain political information thanks to social media, which simplifies the process of being involved in politics. Social media essentially makes political engagement more approachable and interesting by streamlining it. Sheets et al. (2021) shared this same view when they came to the conclusion that young people use social media platforms to engage in online politics because they find process gratification there in a variety of ways, particularly when they use them for self-expression and access to political information. This study found that youths gain satisfaction when they can easily and quickly access political information and are free to choose what activities they want to participate in on social media.

Besides, social media offers young people an extensive amount of material related to politics by presenting a variety of viewpoints, news, and information. This allows youth to search for anything to satisfy their content desires. Youth may keep informed partly due to this content satisfaction, which also helps to create a more dynamic and informed political environment by locating reliable information. Supplemented by the findings of the focus group discussions, this study identifies that social media did not gratify youths' need for trustworthy and reliable information on politics and current issues, which decreases youths' satisfaction and faith in using social media as a platform for online political participation.

As justified by Calderaro (2018), social media presents a variety of viewpoints on significant political issues that provide youth with content satisfaction and encourage them to keep participating in politics. However, these findings demonstrate how youth, as the social media users, use the platform for seeking information, but finding irrelevant and untrustworthy information on social media makes them feel bad, which discourages them from using it frequently. Plus, the participants claimed that because there is a lot of fake news circulating, the content and knowledge shared on social media these days are not sufficiently trustworthy or reliable.

On the other hand, social media platforms foster a feeling of connection and interaction among young people with a passion for politics. Briefly, social media promotes active involvement in political activities by allowing youth to connect with like-minded peers, exchange experiences, and discuss together political as well as current issues. As a result, an atmosphere that encourages young people to keep participating in politics was created. This finding is congruent with Whiting and Williams (2013), which highlights the importance of social media in giving youth a sense of social gratification by making it easier for youth to interact and communicate with people who have the same interests or political views.

To sum up, researchers may draw the conclusion that the results of this study completely support the Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory, which claims that youth's motivations for engaging with media determine how satisfied they are with their usage of it. The study's findings show that youth's satisfaction with using social media platforms for political engagement is highly correlated with their underlying motivations, which include process gratification and social gratification. In contrast, young people dispute that social media meets their need for trustworthy and reliable content since it spreads hate speech, fake news, and inaccurate information from irresponsible individuals. Basically, other researchers and scholars may improve studies on social media as a platform for youth to participate in politics by understanding and utilising these underlying reasons.

5.1.3 How Do Young People Use Social Media in Political Activities?

This study focuses on the ways in which youth are engaged and participate in politics, primarily in light of Henn & Foard's (2012) and Abdu et al.'s (2017) statement that youth nowadays are shifting from traditional forms of political participation to online political participation. Accurately, this study also indicates that young individuals may differ from previous generations. However, it does not mean they are disengaged from politics. Youth have a distinctive viewpoint on politics and are attracted to diverse types and forms of participation. To be more precise, prior to the focus group discussion, every participant in this study admitted that they had engaged in some sort of online political activity via social media. In essence, the participants are engaging in politics through a variety of social media platforms.

Interestingly, the sampled youth in this study demonstrated that social media led to higher levels of participation in passive online political activities. The data is consistent with the findings of Gürel & Eyüboğlu (2023), which indicate that young people are aware of political issues and follow what's happening but tend to be unresponsive. Briefly, youths express their existence in politics as silent followers by displaying passive online political participation. According to the findings, watching political videos, reading political content or news on social media, and reading comments on Instagram as well as Facebook are among the most popular passive online political activities among the participants.

Participants in the discussions also discussed how social media motivates individuals to engage in passive rather than active online political activities. Consistent with the results of Cheung's (2019) previous study, the findings from this study also support the idea that social media access to online news material acts as a gateway for political participation. In this study, the usefulness of social media platforms in providing an abundance of political education materials and information, such as podcasts, political videos, infographics, and articles, is highlighted. Verily, young people nowadays utilise social media to understand politics more deeply. Besides, this somewhat supports the findings of Stamenković and Mitrović (2023), who found that young people nowadays seldom express anything about their aspirations, ideas, or opinions on social media. It is more probable that they are hiding behind the role of passive user, in which the least amount of participation is achieved, mostly by liking or disliking, seldom leaving comments, and rarely sharing or producing new content (Stamenković and Mitrović, 2023).

On the flip side of the coin, engaging in active online political participation, such as online political discussions, comments, and others, can expose individuals to potential backlash, harassment, or cyberbullying from those who have different points of view. As a result, youths may decide to participate in politics passively rather than risk facing negative consequences for expressing their opinions openly. This idea is tied to the fact written by the National Institute of Mental Health (2022) that some people may experience unease or anxiety when they actively participate in online debates or discussions because they are afraid of being judged, criticised, or rejected by others.

5.2 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Even though this research addressed many prominent things regarding political participation of youth through social media, there are still a few unavoidable limitations that should be highlighted. Firstly, the participants of this research were only focusing on students from the Kuliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences. As this study was specifically targeted at political science students, its relevance to understanding social media as the platform for young people to participate in politics may be limited. Thus, the data gained through this study may not be applicable to students from the other departments. On the other hand, another prominent challenge that might be faced by the researcher while conducting the research is the limited number of participants. The findings in the research may not be generalisable as the number of the participants does not truly represent the whole population of students in IIUM. Small sample numbers may further raise the possibility of sampling bias, which would further restrict the validity of the results in the research.

The second limitation of this study is that it was not tailored to a single social media platform, making it difficult to determine which social media platforms influence youth the most to participate in politics. In this instance, though, the researcher will obtain a discussion covering a broad spectrum of the subject matter. It will present a variety of users from various social media platforms, such as Twitter, TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram. As a result, the study's findings will be brief and general, and it is unlikely that the researchers will be able to predict which social media platforms have a conducive and significant influence on political participation.

5.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

First and foremost, this study suggests that future researchers make the effort to conduct further studies on each social media site in order to provide readers and other researchers with additional references. Basically, by looking at how young people participate on different social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok, researchers can determine whether or not these platforms encourage young people to get more involved in politics and how platform-specific features affect participation trends.

Furthermore, it is recommended that future research expand the research area, encompassing research participants of all races, including 17- to 18-year-old secondary

school students who meet the United Nations' definition of youth. We may gain a better grasp of young people's involvement in politics through social media and whether social media itself is influencing young people to get involved in online political activities.

Next, the future researcher could explore the social media engagement of young people with politics in various nations and cultural settings. Examine the ways in which media environments, political institutions, and sociocultural elements affect how young people interact with politics online. Find out what patterns of engagement are similar and different in various circumstances. Fundamentally, learning about diverse cultures broadens your perspective, which is an excellent way to take in new knowledge and adopt fresh perspectives.

Furthermore, studies in the future might look into the possibility that young involvement in social media-based online politics may have an impact on their offline political participation. This is because offline political participation is still essential to democracy for reasons that cannot be satisfied by acts taken just online, even in spite of the enormous influence that social media and the internet have over public opinion on a large scale. Basically, offline political involvement is important in order to enhance the Malaysian political system. Plus, parties involved and activists may create more successful campaigns that capitalise on the advantages of both online engagement and offline activities by understanding why participation on social media leads to actions offline. A more involved community with greater levels of involvement in democratic processes might result from this. Basically, a meaningful political environment cannot be produced just by online or offline interaction; rather, when combined, they create a more dynamic and effective environment.

It is also advised that future researchers use quantitative methods to carry out relevant studies. The use of quantitative methods can provide information on larger populations or groups of individuals. Most significantly, it makes it simple for the researcher to compare several groups to identify similarities or differences, for instance, based on factors like ethnicity, gender, or educational background. Additionally, a rational, analytical, thorough discussion of the data that is objectively and reliably collected is one of the main benefits of quantitative research, which also emphasises important results.

5.4 CONCLUSION

Numerous studies have been conducted in an effort to gain a better understanding of young people's political participation through social media and the data gained from this study has explored how social media might be used as a platform for young people to get involved in politics. The focus group discussion proved to be a very effective way for gathering empirical data for this investigation. Students may brainstorm, engage one another, and exchange ideas throughout the conversations, which produces richer data than a survey or one-on-one interviews.

The focus group discussions have proven to be an effective strategy for gathering empirical data for this research. Youth may brainstorm, add to each other's ideas, and argue among themselves throughout the discussions, which produces more data than just survey questions or one-on-one interviews. The results of the study show that social media platforms make it possible for political knowledge to spread quickly, allowing young people to remain up to date on topics and political issues that directly impact them. Social media also gives young people the freedom to voice their opinions and discuss politics with like-minded people. Basically, youth have the opportunity to reach a larger audience and amplify their views.

Nevertheless, it is also important to recognise the limitations and challenges of using social media as a platform for young people to get involved in politics. The proliferation of disinformation, the technological gap, and hate speech provide formidable obstacles to political empowerment and genuine participation. Even while social media gives young people never-before-seen chances to get involved in politics, the success of these platforms ultimately rests on how they are used and controlled. In a nutshell, youth, the future leaders of the country, may help to create a more inclusive and participatory political environment if social media is used appropriately.

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APPENDICES

7 APPENDIX A: INVITATION MESSAGE TO FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS – YOUTH’S ONLINE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

Assalamualaikum w.b.t.

Dear Participants,

I am delighted to announce the upcoming focus group discussions that will provide an excellent opportunity for us to engage, collaborate, and share our thoughts on various topics of mutual interest. These discussions aim to explore the way youth experience politics through social media where we can learn from each other’s perspectives and enhance our knowledge together.

Date : 25 October 2024

Time and Location : Session 1 - 11.30 a.m., HSC LR 26, IIUM
: Session 2 - 12.50 p.m., ONLINE MICROSOFT TEAM
: Session 3 - 3.30 p.m., HSC LR 28, IIUM

I look forward for your enthusiastic participation and insightful contributions to these group discussions. Your presence will enrich the collective knowledge and make this event a resounding success.

For any inquiries regarding the study or the procedures, you may contact me: 010-5185126 (Sr. Areyssa) or via email at nurareyssaramadhan@gmail.com.

Thank you and *Wassalam*.

8APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

The following consent form was provided to all participants prior to the interview to ensure a full understanding and consent was provided prior to embarking on the interview process.

Consent for Participation in Focus Group Discussion

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Nur Areyssa Ramadha binti Azizul Syam from International Islamic University Malaysia. I understand that the project is designed to gather information on the participation of youth in online politics through social media. I will be one of the participants in the focus group discussion.

1. My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for participation. No one shall know about my participation or I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.
2. I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview if I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session.
3. Nur Areyssa Ramadha binti Azizul Syam will be the moderator for this focus group discussion. The discussion will last approximately one hour. Notes may be written during the interview. Plus, a recording of the interview and subsequent dialogue will be made.
4. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. The anonymity of individuals will be protected.
5. I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the International Islamic University Malaysia.
6. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

7. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

Name:

Nur Areyssa Ramadha

Date:

Date:

Any inquiries, please contact: nurareyssaramadhan@gmail.com / 0105185126



9 APPENDIX C: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

<p>WELCOMING MESSAGE (3 MINUTES)</p>	<p>First of all, I want to thank you for your willingness in participating in this interview. Let me start by saying just a few words about my background. I am Nur Areyssa Ramadha binti Azizul Syam, a postgraduate student from the department of Political Science of International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). I am currently conducting a research on youth online political participation and this study will try to find out the participation of political science students in online political activities through social media. Basically, I will be the moderator during this interview session, in which I will facilitate this discussion and ask questions related to the topic of the study. I hope that all of you would participate actively in the discussion so that at the end of the discussion, we could gain benefit as well as wider perspective of the issue.</p>
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GROUND RULES

(7 MINUTES)

1. Before we start, I would like to explain further to all of you the ground rules for this group discussion session.
2. Your participation in this discussion is voluntary. You will not be paid for this interview session.
3. Several questions will be asked. No particular for answering the questions but hopefully everyone will participate. However, if there is any question that makes you feel uncomfortable, you can refuse to answer to that question.
4. Please feel free to respond or comment to what others are saying as the purpose of this interview is to gather your experience in participating in politics through social media. Remember, there is no right or wrong answer. I wish that you could be sincere and honest in answering as well as responding to the questions. Plus, I will be delighted if you are willing to open yourself up in this discussion.
5. Your identity and answers will be kept confidential. Only the interviewer will have access to the information in this interview. All information will be stored in compliance with IIUM guidelines.
6. Please respect others who have different views from you.
7. I guarantee that I will keep your identity and answers confidential and only use your

fictitious name instead of your real name for the data collection.

8. I would also like to ask for your permission to use an audio as well as video recorder to gather genuine and true information from the respective informants. I hope you have no problem with this.

[GET VERBAL CONSENT TO RECORD THE INTERVIEW]

9. You need to read and sign a consent form prepared by the researcher before continuing the discussion session.

10. Finally, this interview will take around 45 minutes to one hour. I hope we could have an interesting discussion. Do you have any questions before we start?

<p>INTRODUCTION</p> <p>(8 MINUTES)</p>	<p>[START RECORDING]</p> <p>I would like to have each person to introduce yourself and briefly share how your involvement in online politics through social media began, for instance, the social media platforms you use and the types of activities you enjoy the most when using social media to take part in online politics</p>
<p>DISCUSSION (RQ 1)</p> <p>(12 MINUTES)</p> <p>What form of political participation through social media do young people prefer?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What prompted or inspired you to engage in those activities? How would you contrast your experience engaging in online politics through social media and in the offline politics? 2. Which political activity has you never engaged in and is unlikely to do so in the future? Why?

<p>DISCUSSION (RQ 2)</p> <p>(15 MINUTES)</p> <p>How does social media gratify youth to participate in politics?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Based on your own experience, what do you like about social media? Is it because of the reliability of the information, accessibility to the information or social interactions? Explain. 2. ‘Social media gives me a platform to discuss political issues with friends and others community’. Do you agree with that statement? Discuss.
<p>DISCUSSION (RQ 3)</p> <p>(15 MINUTES)</p> <p>How social media sparks political interest in youth and motivates them to participate in politics through it?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you think social media encourages you to participate in online politics? Why or why not? 2. Do you agree that accessibility to political information gained from social media sparks interest in youth to participate in online political activities?

<p>FINAL THOUGHTS</p> <p>(3 MINUTES)</p>	<p>Our discussion session has come to an end. Alhamdulillah, Allah eases everything. Do you have any final thoughts about youth's online political participation through social media that you want to share but did not get a chance to share earlier?</p>
<p>REVIEW AND WRAP UP</p> <p>(2 MINUTES)</p>	<p>Again, I really appreciate and thank you for the time that you spent in sharing your experience as well as opinion today. I hope you enjoyed today's session. May Allah bless and ease you.</p>

10 APPENDIX D: LIST OF FGD'S QUESTIONS

1. What prompted or inspired you to engage in those activities? How would you contrast your experience engaging in online politics through social media and in the offline politics?
2. Which political activity has you never engaged in and is unlikely to do so in the future? Why?
3. Based on your own experience, what do you like about social media? Is it because of the reliability of the information, accessibility to the information or social interactions? Explain.
4. 'Social media gives me a platform to discuss political issues with friends and others community'. Do you agree with that statement? Discuss.
5. Do you think social media encourages you to participate in online politics? Why or why not?
6. Do you agree that accessibility to political information gained from social media sparks interest in youth to participate in online political activities?