

ROLE OF YOUTH IN MALAYSIAN POLITICS: AN
ANALYSIS FROM YOUNG LEADER'S PERSPECTIVES

BY

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

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JULY 2024

ABSTRACT

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



خلاصة البحث

لقد كان دور الشباب في السياسة الماليزية دائماً مسألة مثيرة للقلق بين الشباب والمواطنين البالغين في ماليزيا. لقد نظر الماليزيون منذ فترة طويلة إلى المشاركة السياسية للشباب على أنها محدودة، الأمر الذي تسبب في قلق الماليزيين بشأن التأثير الذي قد تخلفه هذه المشاركة المحدودة على المستقبل. ومع ذلك، في السنوات الأخيرة، بدأ هذا التصور يتغير، مع إدراك المزيد والمزيد من الماليزيين للمشاركة السياسية المتزايدة للشباب. الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو تفصيل آراء الناشطين السياسيين الشباب الماليزيين فيما يتعلق بكفاءة الحكومة في التعامل مع أزمة كوفيد-19 في ماليزيا منذ عام 2020، والتعرف على آراء قادة الشباب الماليزيين بشأن ميولهم السياسية بدءاً من عام 2020، وإلى فهم كيف يعتقد الشباب الماليزي أن المشهد السياسي في ماليزيا يجب أن يتغير. تم اختيار إطارين نظريين لشرح نتائج هذه الدراسة: نموذج SIRDE الذي يصف النشاط السياسي المتزايد للشباب في ماليزيا بسبب إحباط الشباب تجاه الفاعلين السياسيين داخل الحكومة، ونظرية التنشئة الاجتماعية السياسية التي تفسر النظرة السلبية لدى الشباب تجاه الحكومة. تستخدم هذه الدراسة المنهج النوعي، وتحديدًا المقابلات شبه المنظمة للحصول على البيانات ذات الصلة. ووفقاً للنتائج، فإن زيادة المشاركة السياسية للشباب تتأثر بالفعل بكيفية تعامل حكومة محي الدين مع الوباء في عامي 2020 و2021. وفي الوقت نفسه، فإن استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي وتنفيذ تعديل الحد الأدنى لسن التصويت في ماليزيا كانت مسؤولة بشكل كبير عن تكثيف المشاركة السياسية للشباب منذ عام 2020. وفيما يتعلق بجوانب المشهد السياسي التي يرغب قادة الشباب في تغييرها، فإن هذه الجوانب هي تعزيز المؤسسات التي تراقب مساءلة الحكومة وسن السياسات التي تضمن عدم تشكيل حكومة ائتلافية، والسماح لها بالانهيار بسرعة. إن نشر المعرفة الصحيحة من خلال هذه الدراسة فيما يتعلق بدور الشباب في السياسة من شأنه أن يزيد من أهميتهم في الخطابات السياسية الماليزية. ومن هنا نستطيع ماليزيا أن تستعد بشكل أفضل لمستقبلها التنموي البعيد الأمد من خلال ضمان شعور جيل المستقبل من صناعات القرار السياسي بالارتباط بالمشهد السياسي الحالي.



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.

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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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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All glory is due to Allah, the Almighty, whose Grace and Mercies have been with me throughout the duration of my program. Although it has been challenging, His Mercies and Blessings have made it easier to complete this thesis.

I am most grateful to my supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Lau Zhe Wei, whose enduring disposition, kindness, promptness, thoroughness, and friendship have greatly helped me complete my work. I would like to express my appreciation for his detailed comments, valuable suggestions, and inspiring queries, which have significantly improved this thesis. His excellent understanding of the aim and content of this work led to insightful comments, suggestions, and questions that were extremely helpful to me. Despite his busy schedule, he always made time to listen and assist me whenever I needed it. The moral support he provided undoubtedly helped me construct and write the draft of this research work.

Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to my beloved family members, siblings, and parents, who have continuously supported me throughout the writing of this dissertation.

Once again, we glorify Allah for His endless mercy upon us, including enabling us to successfully complete the efforts of writing this thesis. Alhamdulillah.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1MDB	1Malaysia Development Berhad
AMANAH	Parti Amanah Negara
AUKU	Akta Universiti dan Kolej Universiti 1971
BERSATU	Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia
BN	Barisan Nasional
DAP	Democratic Action Party
EIDA	Educational Institutions Discipline Act
GAMIS	Gabungan Mahasiswa Islam Se-Malaysia
GE14	14 th General Election
GE15	15 th General Election
GPMS	Gabungan Pelajar Melayu Semenanjung
IUM	International Islamic University Malaysia
MACC	Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MCO	Movement Control Order
MIC	Malaysian Indian Congress
MP	Members of Parliament
MTEN	Majlis Tindakan Ekonomi Negara
MUDA	Malaysian United Democratic Alliance
PEMBINA	Persatuan Belia Islam Nasional
PEMERKASA	Program Strategik Memperkasa Rakyat Dan Ekonomi
PENJANA	Pelan Jana Semula Ekonomi Negara
PH	Pakatan Harapan
PHEIA	Private Higher Educational Institutions Act
PKPIM	Persatuan Kebangsaan Pelajar Islam Malaysia
PKR	Parti Keadilan Rakyat
PKRC	COVID-19 Quarantine and Low-Risk Treatment Centres
PN	Perikatan Nasional
PRIHATIN	Prihatin Rakyat Economic Stimulus Package
SIRDE	Social, Identity, Relative Deprivation, Efficacy
SRC	Student Representative Council
SSR	Sekretariat Solidariti Rakyat
UMANY	University Malaya Association of New Youth
UMNO	United Malays National Organization
UMS	Universiti Malaysia Sabah
UN	United Nations
UPM	Universiti Putri Malaysia
UUM	University Utara Malaysia

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

According to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, youth is defined as individuals between the ages of 15 and 24 (United Nations, n.d.). In Malaysia, in July 2019, the Youth Societies and Youth Development Act (Amendment) 2019 (Act 668) bill was passed by the Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives). This bill defined "youth" as individuals between the ages of 15 and 30 (Arshad et al., 2019). Although the bill primarily pertains to the age of youth society office bearers, it can also be considered the official government definition of "youth" in Malaysia, as stated by the Minister of Youth and Sports at the time, Syed Saddiq himself (Yunus & Landau, 2019). The disparity between the UN's definition of youth and Malaysia's definition may appear minimal; however, prior to this change, the definition of youth according to the Youth Societies and Youth Development Act ranged from 15 to 40. This modification demonstrates a growing shift in the youth dynamic in Malaysia, as the bill ensures that the representatives of youth are closer in age to the actual youth, facilitating greater commonality between them. Act 668 was just one of several indications of changes in Malaysian youth political participation. Another change includes the reduction of the voting age in national and state elections from 21 to 18, approved by the Lower House of Parliament on July 16, 2019 (Suhaimi & Ping, 2021). However, an even more significant indicator of the youth's role change in Malaysia is the politician supporting this bill, Syed Saddiq. In 2018, at the age of 25, Syed Saddiq became the youngest cabinet minister ever appointed by the government. His appointment reflects a progressive change in Malaysian politics, signaling a departure from the traditional norms. This perspective is further reinforced by Syed Saddiq's directive for all his staff to declare their assets when he assumed the role of sports minister (Ramli, 2018). This

progressive appointment is noteworthy because Malaysian politics has long been characterized by stagnation and corruption due to institutional rigidity that has persisted for 60 years (Noh, 2016).

Retrospectively, the Malaysian youth has long been perceived as unusually apathetic and submissive to governmental threats, despite student activism already being present before the rise of the "Reformasi" movement (Weiss, 2005). Nevertheless, one could argue that the youth's interest in politics changed in the late 90s with the rise of the Reformasi movement. Frustrated with the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis and angered over the inhumane treatment of political prisoners, such as Anwar, the youth protested in large numbers (Hed, 2018). This demonstrated that the discontent and resentment the youth already felt towards the government could quickly turn into political engagement. The events of Malaysia's 14th General Election in 2018 also reflect this trend. Notably, the election saw the rise of Syed Saddiq and witnessed significant participation from young voters, who made up 41% of the total voters (Chinnasamy & Azmi, 2018). Therefore, the victory of the PH relied heavily on young voters. The two monumental events of 2020, namely the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the collapse of the Pakatan Harapan (PH) government, only further increased youth involvement in politics due to the foundation laid by the 2018 elections.

The first event is the COVID-19 pandemic, a global pandemic first identified in Wuhan in December 2019. The first case in Malaysia was reported on January 25, 2020 (Sipalan & Holmes, 2020). Malaysia was one of the earliest countries to be affected by the pandemic. Despite this, the Malaysian government's response to the pandemic was commendable and widely praised by its citizens. After a surge of cases in March 2020, the Malaysian government implemented a national lockdown called the Movement Control Order (MCO) (Sukumaran, 2020). The MCO proved highly successful due to the government's strict adherence, which included arresting those who violated the order, initiating home-based learning programs for educational institutions, monitoring the food supply to ensure there was no shortage, and banning public gatherings. Unfortunately, the Sabah State Election in September 2020 squandered all the goodwill the government had garnered through their earlier actions. Despite warnings from the public about the risk of infection, the government went ahead with the election, resulting

in a resurgence of cases not only in Borneo but also on the peninsula. This was because the delegates who went to Sabah were infected and did not comply with standard MCO procedures when they returned (Sukumaran, 2020). This action elicited resentment and condemnation from Malaysian citizens, as it marked a regression in Malaysia's progress in combating the pandemic. One section of society that was particularly disappointed in the government was the youth, who are highly connected through social media. The MCO further emphasized this connectivity, as the youth had fewer opportunities for outdoor physical interaction. As a result, they became heavily invested in the events happening within their country through the news.

The second event that occurred was the collapse of the PH government coalition on February 21, 2020 (Ahmad, 2020). This collapse is considered one of the most shocking political events in modern Malaysian history. The clash between personalities within the PH coalition, which won the GE14 election, led to its downfall. The PH coalition is comprised of three main political parties: Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR), Democratic Action Party (DAP), and Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (BERSATU). Although PKR and DAP won the majority of seats in parliament during GE14, the leader of BERSATU assumed leadership of the coalition. This same leader, Dr. Mahathir, also became the new Prime Minister of Malaysia after winning the election. When the PH coalition formed a new government in 2018, the members agreed that Anwar Ibrahim, the leader of PKR, would become the next Prime Minister after two years, with Dr. Mahathir handing over leadership. However, the situation changed in February 2020. Dr. Mahathir went back on the agreement to pass the power to Anwar Ibrahim, which set off a chain of events known as the Sheraton Move and ultimately led to the collapse of the PH coalition. Dr. Mahathir claimed that the transition of power was merely a verbal agreement and would only happen after he believed that corruption had been eliminated from the government (MalaysiaNow, 2021). This hesitation from Dr. Mahathir to pass the power to Anwar incensed his supporters, as it seemed he was reluctant to give up his position. The tensions between Anwar's supporters in PKR and Dr. Mahathir's supporters in BERSATU came to a head during the Pakatan Harapan presidential council on February 23, 2020 (Yunus, 2020). The main point of contention was Dr. Mahathir's refusal to adhere to the agreed-upon power transition timeline. Verbal threats of pulling out of the coalition were made, not only between BERSATU

and PKR members but also within PKR itself. Anwar and his deputy president, Azmin Ali, once close allies, had a serious falling out, and Anwar even accused Azmin of blocking his path to becoming Prime Minister (Sukumaran, 2020). As tensions escalated between Anwar's and Dr. Mahathir's supporters, Azmin gathered his supporters within PKR at the Sheraton Hotel to explore the possibility of forming a new government without Anwar (Chew, 2020). This gathering, referred to as the Sheraton Move (Jeevendran, 2020), was followed by a meeting at Istana Negara with the Yang-di-Pertuan Agong, where leaders from political parties like Muhyiddin Yassin from BERSATU, Ahmad Zahid Hamidi from UMNO, Hadi Awang from Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS), Abang Johari Openg from Gabungan Parti Sarawak (GPS), and Shafie Apdal from Parti Warisan Sabah were present. They informed the Agong about recent political developments, outlined plans to form a new coalition government, and declared their support for a new Prime Minister (Ram, 2020). Following the meeting at Istana Negara, Dr. Mahathir submitted his resignation letter as Prime Minister to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, indicating his agreement with the outcome of the political leaders' meeting (Ratcliffe, 2020). Consequently, Dr. Mahathir's resignation and the political maneuvering known as the Sheraton Move led to the collapse of the Pakatan Harapan coalition government.

The collapse of the coalition government served as a wake-up call to the citizens. It showed that despite the veneer of progressiveness of the PH government, the alliance itself was structurally weak. One result of the collapse is the termination of Syed Saddiq as a member of the BERSATU party. He is an accomplished orator and a principal member of the PH government. Previously, he served as the Minister of Sports and Youth in Malaysia, and he is considered the face of youth in Malaysian politics. His termination led to the formation of a new political party called the Malaysian United Democratic Alliance (MUDA), which aims to represent the youth of Malaysia (Buqhairah, 2020). The significance of Syed Saddiq's termination from BERSATU lies in the fact that the formation of MUDA on September 17, 2020, signals the presence of a political party that explicitly aims to represent and comprises members who are part of the youth.

Yet, before continuing further, it is highly important to first clarify the exact meaning of the term "political activism". Political activism can be described as actions that are intended to advance political goals. These actions may include contacting public officials and urging them to support a policy, mobilizing others to contact public officials, running for public office, advocating for policies, candidates, and political parties in the public sphere, as well as volunteering for and donating to political campaigns and organizations (Jones, 2020, p. 2).

Henceforth, following the monumental events of the collapse of the PH government and the poor handling of the pandemic in 2020 by the government that replaced it, there has been a surge in enthusiasm for political activism among Malaysian youth. This activism takes various forms, including protests, social media campaigns, newsletters, NGO participation, voting, and even running for public office. As a result, both citizens and the government need to be aware of this rising social trend among the youth. By paying closer attention to the political initiatives of young people, the government can gain a fresh perspective on social issues affecting the citizenry and foster better rapport with Malaysian youth. This research title was chosen specifically to provide relevant authorities with a better understanding of the role that young people play in domestic politics and to ensure that they do not harbor any harmful misconceptions about this role.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This paper explores the relationship between the political and administrative performance of Malaysia's government and the political activism of its youth, focusing on the topic of increasing youth involvement in politics starting in 2020. The initial inspiration for this research proposal came from the headlines in 2020 and 2021, which showcased a growing number of protests led by young Malaysians calling for the resignation of Former PM Muhyiddin Yassin (Zainuddin, 2021). While these events suggest an uptick in political participation among Malaysian youth since 2020, there is currently no definitive study on this matter. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the impact of the Malaysian government's administration and its stability between

February 21, 2020, and December 1, 2022, on the youth's role in politics through their political activism. This period was chosen because it allows for a focused examination of the research question and because the collapse of the PH government and the effects of the pandemic on government administration are most pronounced during this time, particularly in relation to the results of the 15th General Election (GE15) taking place in November 2022. The qualitative method will be employed in this study to comprehend the role of youth in Malaysian politics. This will involve examining how pandemic governance influences youth political engagement, exploring their perspectives on their own political involvement, and considering their ideas about the necessary changes in the political landscape. Investigating all three aspects is crucial for understanding the youth's role in Malaysian politics. Examining the influence of pandemic governance on youth political engagement will shed light on their relationship with Malaysia's political framework. Exploring their views on their own political involvement will provide insights into their perception of their political efficacy. Lastly, studying their ideas on the desired changes in the political landscape will offer understanding of how Malaysian youth may influence the nature of politics in the country in the future.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Ever since the Muhyiddin government decided to hold the Sabah state election in September 2020, despite the risk of a COVID infection rate rebound, Malaysian youth have become more active in voicing their opinions about the government and resisting it. One example of this activism is the #lawan protest organized by Sekretariat Solidariti Rakyat (SSR) on the streets of Kuala Lumpur (Amnesty International, 2021). The youth driving this political activism in Malaysia come from diverse backgrounds, including various creeds and races. However, the majority are Malaysians under 30 years old, with many originating from urban areas. So far, most of the research on the rising political activism of Malaysian youth has focused on the role of social media in promoting youth activism (Abdullah et al., 2021) or analyzing youth political participation before and during the 14th General Election (Ting & Wan Ahmad, 2021). However, there is limited academic literature exploring the relationship between youth

political activism and the government's handling of the pandemic. Additionally, prior research fails to address how Malaysian youth themselves believe they can change the political landscape. This lack of academic material on these two subjects is notable because both topics are crucial in understanding the youth's role in Malaysian politics. Another issue arises regarding the validity of the perception that Malaysian youth's participation in politics has increased since 2020, which is the motivation behind this study. In a recent phone interview survey conducted in 2019 by the Merdeka Center for Opinion Research, which included 2,520 Malaysian youth aged 18-30, it was discovered that more than two-thirds of the participants had no interest in participating in politics. Contrary to this, the remaining participants interested in politics were predominantly male, Malay, and from higher-income backgrounds (MalaysiaNow, 2019). This result suggests that despite the multitude of protests, demonstrations, boycotts, and political information sharing, it is not a given fact that most Malaysian youth are increasingly engaged in political matters. While the headlines about protests and demonstration campaigns by Malaysian youth may give this impression, the reality may not be so clear-cut. Fortunately, other studies have shown that Malaysian youth are willing to involve themselves in the country's political affairs. A survey conducted among 160 students from University Utara Malaysia (UUM) revealed that although 78% of students admitted they would not attend political gatherings and 66% admitted they would not participate in political forums, 75% of the same students expressed their intention to vote in the next general election, and 60% said they would encourage others to vote as well (Ahmad & Zain, 2021). This survey indicates that the willingness of Malaysian youth to participate in politics is still significantly high. Regarding the large number of students unwilling to attend political gatherings and forums in the UUM study, it can be explained as a remnant effect of the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 or Akta Universiti dan Kolej Universiti (AUKU) on the attitudes of Malaysian students toward political activism. A study conducted by researchers at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) found that the students in the study attribute their passiveness in political activities to the enforcement of AUKU in their respective universities (Ismail et al., 2023). In the future, this uncertainty about attending political gatherings and forums is likely to decline.

Thus, the previous research on youth political activism and its connection to their role in politics lacks insight into the mindset of these youths during the pandemic until the year 2022. It fails to address important questions such as their personal views on the Muhyiddin government, the Sheraton Move, and the pandemic. Furthermore, it does not explore whether Malaysian youth have become more politically active since 2020 or identify the problems they see in how politics is conducted in Malaysia. It also neglects to inquire about their aspirations for changing the political landscape. To gain a better understanding of the role of pandemic governance in increasing youth political engagement, their views on their own political activity, and their ideas for political change, researchers need to conduct in-depth qualitative research. By delving into these deeper questions about their activism and how a global crisis triggers it, the government can develop more effective policies for the future. Consequently, this research aims to understand the role of youth in politics from their perspective on Malaysian politics and their view of their own role in Malaysian politics.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

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

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

For this research paper, the significance lies in addressing a gap in knowledge concerning the perspectives of politically active youths. Firstly, previous research has primarily focused on social media as a factor influencing youth political engagement, overlooking the relationship between youth political involvement and the Malaysian government's handling of the pandemic crisis (Ahmad & Zain, 2021). Secondly,

preliminary research has not delved into the youths' own perceptions of their political activism, nor have previous studies explored their opinions on how to reform Malaysia's political system. Existing research on youth political activities has been too fixated on external factors, such as Ting and Wan Ahmad (2021) who primarily examined the circumstances that prompt youth to engage in political activism, rather than their actual political views. It is important to differentiate between the factors driving their political activism and their broader political views. The former refers to the specific issues that incite youth to take action, while the latter relates to their overarching ideas for improving the current political process. Hence, their political views encompass a more comprehensive perspective on politics, while the factors of their political activism pertain to specific grievances they have.

1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

This research examines numerous articles and journals that focus on the involvement of Malaysian youth in politics and the role they play. Based on these sources, the study identifies five themes that provide an overview of the current understanding of the role of Malaysian youth in politics. These themes include youth political activism, factors contributing to youth political activism, the extent of youth political activism, youth opinions on politics in general, and the impact of the pandemic on political and social activism. Before delving into the literature review, it is important to clarify the meaning of conventional and unconventional political participation. These terms will be used throughout the literature review to describe the nature of youth political participation. Conventional political participation refers to legal, institutional, collective activities driven by the conflict between government and opposition parties, which occur in the public sphere. On the other hand, unconventional political participation refers to sometimes illegal, noninstitutional activities driven by the conflict between the people in government and the governed individuals, typically occurring in the private sphere (Kaim, 2021). To facilitate the transmission of ideas and themes within the context of this research, terms such as political activism, political participation, and political engagement will be used interchangeably.

1.6.1 Activities of Youth Political Engagement

There is not much variation among the different research articles on youth political engagement. Most of them focus on unconventional political participation. One study found that youth involvement in politics typically involves assisting their preferred political parties in campaigns, attending rallies, or expressing their opinions on social media. Only a small number of these young people actually join a political party (Ahmad & Zain, 2021). In a review essay by Philippa Collin based on the book "Teenage Citizens" by Constance Flanagan, Collin describes the political engagement activities of young people as including discussions about politics with peers and family members, as well as participating in online organizations with a political focus (Collin, 2015). However, similar to the analysis by Ahmad & Zain, Philippa also finds that youth are less likely to join political parties. Instead, according to Philippa, young people are more inclined to join non-traditional organizations such as online or local community groups.

As for Su Hie Ting & Sharifah Sophia Wan Ahmad, their article reveals that young people tend to participate in unconventional political engagement activities rather than conventional ones (Ting & Wan Ahmad, 2021). However, their level of political engagement is generally low. Even among those who are involved in political activities, such as writing letters to authorities, only 6 out of the 28 participants did so. Overall, the youth in Su and Sharifah's study demonstrated a general apathy towards politics.

Despite the fact that both studies were conducted in Malaysia, there is a notable difference in the attitude of the youth participants. Unlike the participants in Ahmad & Zain's study, who display enthusiasm for engaging in unconventional/informal political activities (Ahmad & Zain, 2021), the participants in Su and Sharifah's study seem to have a more apathetic attitude. This discrepancy can be attributed to the different locations where the studies took place. Ahmad & Zain recruited their participants from university students in Changlun, Kedah, while Su and Sharifah gathered their participants from Kuching, Sarawak. Therefore, it is likely that the participants' social

environment has influenced their level of engagement in unconventional/informal political activities.

On the other hand, a research conducted in Australia yielded contrasting findings. It revealed that young people tend to prefer engaging in conventional political participation rather than unconventional political activities. This Australian study demonstrates an enthusiasm for political involvement that stands in stark contrast to the political apathy observed among youth in Su and Sharifah's study. According to the research, young individuals in Australia commonly join youth advisory groups that offer a youth-centered perspective on administrative affairs in city councils (Bell et al., 2008). Examples of such advisory groups include the Paramatta Youth Advisory Committee and the Townsville Youth Council. However, it is important to note that the government's provision of opportunities for close political participation among young people is a crucial factor contributing to their level of political engagement.

In a 2016 article by Sloam, it was found that young people are more likely to engage in unconventional forms of political participation, focusing on specific issues. These activities include signing petitions, participating in e-petitions, boycotting or buycotting (the opposite of boycotting), participating in flash mobs, and joining demonstrations. Furthermore, these activities are often accompanied by the use of new communication technologies (Sloam, 2016). Sloam's research also revealed that most young people who participate in these activities are recent graduates, which may explain their reliance on communication technologies. In a study conducted by Peter Dahlgren, it was determined that the types of political engagement undertaken by the youth in his study often involve heavy use of digital media (Dahlgren, 2011). However, the young people in Dahlgren's study primarily use digital media to consume political information and engage in social activities related to politics. As a result, their political engagement is generally more passive compared to the participants in Sloam's study. In Sloam's study, the young people transmit information through e-petitions, flash mobs, and demonstrations, thereby making their political engagement more active.

Youth political activism, which initially started as passive information sharing on social media, often translated into real-world political activism. In 2020 and 2021,

Malaysian netizens launched various Twitter campaigns to express their frustrations with the government on specific issues. Examples of these hashtag campaigns include #AntaraDuaDarjat (#BetweenTwoStatus), which highlighted reports of Malaysian elites disregarding SOP measures, and #DengkiKe (#AreYouJealous), which criticized members of the Royal Family for flaunting their privileged access to vaccinations (Leong & Rosli, 2021). The virality of these campaigns led to the emergence of other hashtag campaigns such as #KerajaanGagal, #KerajaanZalim, and #KerajaanPembunuh. While the exact percentage of Malaysian youth using these hashtags is unknown, studies have shown that a significant number of young people engage with social media (Howe, 2023). Therefore, it is likely that most Twitter users utilizing these hashtags are indeed Malaysian youth. Consequently, these hashtag campaigns paved the way for other campaigns that directly impacted the real world. Examples include #BenderaHitam (#BlackFlag) and #Lawan (#Protest). The #BenderaHitam campaign originally involved citizens posting pictures of black flags in real life on their social media platforms to express dissatisfaction with the government's handling of the pandemic. It gained immense popularity, with 35,900 Twitter users mentioning #BenderaHitam 85,300 times in their feeds. This online momentum eventually led to the #Lawan movement (Leong & Rosli, 2021). The #Lawan campaign was primarily initiated by the SSR, mentioned earlier in the Problem Statement. SSR used the hashtag #Lawan to encourage the public to wave black flags on 3 July as a protest against the government's mishandling of the pandemic. In addition to the Twitter campaign, SSR demanded Muhyiddin's resignation, the reconvening of parliament, and the lifting of the state of emergency (Leong & Rosli, 2021). This suggests that Twitter users who posted pictures of themselves with black flags shared the same demands as SSR. Consequently, SSR utilized the popularity of the #Lawan hashtag to generate support and publicity for a real-life street protest planned for 31 July 2021. On that day, hundreds of masked protestors dressed in black, carrying placards, posters, and black flags, marched in Kuala Lumpur to voice their anger against the government (Leong & Rosli, 2021). Thus, the #BenderaHitam campaign led to Twitter users displaying black flags in public spaces as a form of passive protest, while the #Lawan campaign mobilized support for an actual physical rally in Dataran Merdeka. In both campaigns, the role of youth political activists was significant, highlighting how even passive political activism by Malaysian youth could transform into active political engagement

with enough traction and organized support. The validity of this activism was further confirmed by the subsequent resignation of PM Muhyiddin Yassin from the government, though the government spokesperson claims it was not directly related to the protests (Lee, 2021). Nevertheless, the perception of the protests' influence has become solidified. These scholarly papers indicate a consistent trend, with findings suggesting that young people are more likely to engage in informal political activities such as social media posts, rallies, forums, and political promotions. Many young people demonstrated a reluctance to participate in formal political activities, most likely because they realized that even informal actions, like sharing information on social media, could have real-life political consequences. Hence, there is a reduced sense of urgency for formal engagement. This reluctance to engage in formal political activities demonstrates that although youth express eagerness for political activism, it does not necessarily translate into a willingness to join political parties or actively participate in elections.

1.6.2 Factors that Lead to Youth Political Activism

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

A study by Matt Henn and Nick Foard found that, similar to Levy and Akiva's findings, political efficacy is also essential in driving youth towards political activism. Similarly, Henn and Foard's study also revealed that the educational background of youth plays a role in their political engagement. In addition to educational background, Henn and Foard found that ethnic and economic backgrounds also contribute to youth involvement in political activities such as elections (Henn & Foard, 2014). Despite the similarities in the findings of these two research studies, Levy and Akiva's study focuses

on the psychological aspect of the youth participants, while Henn and Foard's study focuses on the socioeconomic aspect influencing their political engagement.

Another article that explains the factors is written by Ismi Arif Ismail. In his article, one section details the factors that contribute to the political socialization of youth, which also lead to youth political activism. The first factor is political literacy, which refers to a person's level of knowledge regarding political matters. The second factor is political maturity, which measures a person's ability to exercise sound judgment when making political decisions. The third factor is the political landscape, which refers to the prevailing behaviors exhibited by politicians and the government (Ismail et al., 2015). Interestingly, all three factors are closely linked to the concept of political efficacy discussed by Levy & Akiva and Henn & Foard. By increasing political literacy, fostering political maturity, and creating a conducive political landscape, individuals can enhance their political efficacy. Returning to the topic of political literacy, an article by Abdullah et al. also highlights the role of political literacy in promoting political activism among youth. However, in Abdullah et al.'s article, political literacy specifically refers to the consumption of political information from social media platforms by young individuals. The article points out that social media platforms are effective in promoting youth political activism due to their informative nature (Abdullah et al., 2021). Unfortunately, Ismail et al.'s study does not clarify the specific form of media that affects political literacy.

Interestingly, a doctoral thesis by Norhafiza Mohd Hed presents conflicting findings on the role of political literacy in political socialization. According to her research, higher education or political literacy did not influence the decision of young people to participate in political activities (Mohd Hed, 2017). Surprisingly, it was found that young individuals with lower levels of education were more likely to engage in such activities. However, socioeconomic status did have an impact on youth political participation, specifically in relation to labor union membership. The study revealed that middle-class youth were more inclined to join labor unions compared to those from lower-income households. This socioeconomic influence can be attributed to the higher participation rate of middle-class youth in the country's labor force, which exposes them to opportunities within labor union activities. It is important to note that these activities

primarily focus on industrialized manufacturing, and are predominantly populated by middle-class households rather than low-income ones. Another interesting finding from Norhafiza's study is the urban-rural divide. While it is commonly believed that urban youths are more politically active, the research actually demonstrated that rural youths were more likely to engage in political activities. This can be attributed to the political upheaval experienced during the 2008 General Election, which led to the ruling BN government losing its two-thirds majority in parliament and four state governments. In response, the government implemented initiatives aimed at providing financial support to individuals with low incomes in rural areas and assisting them in rebuilding their homes.

Based on these articles, it is not necessarily true that higher education or social media platforms have a direct influence on the likelihood of youth being more engaged in political activities. There are other factors at play that determine the probability of Malaysian youth being politically active. One important factor is their exposure to political knowledge through social media platforms, which can help increase their political literacy and activism. However, Norhafizah's study shows that increasing political literacy does not necessarily lead to an increase in political activism. Interestingly, the research also reveals that more youths from rural areas participate in political activities than those from urban areas, suggesting that political literacy alone is not the sole determinant of youth political activism. Socioeconomic factors also play a significant role in promoting political activism among the youth. Moreover, it is important to note that political knowledge, social media platforms, and socioeconomic background are not the only factors influencing youth political activism. The study conducted by Henn and Foard highlights the role of ethnic background, indicating that youths belonging to black and minority ethnic groups (BME) are generally more apathetic about politics compared to their white Caucasian counterparts. However, it is worth considering that this correlation between ethnicity and political apathy may be spurious, as most of the ethnic minorities in the study came from low-income households. Thus, their economic background may have influenced their decision rather than their ethnicity.

1.6.3 Rate of Youth Political Engagement

Other than the types of activities and the factors that lead to youth political engagement, it is important to understand the state of youth political engagement by examining their level of participation in political issues. In a 2012 study conducted in Britain, France, and Germany, researchers found a high rate of youth participation in political activities. The study included 7,176 participants from various age groups, and it revealed that 67.1% of young adults between the ages of 15 and 33 are likely to participate in voting. On the other hand, only 20.1% of young adults are likely to participate in protests (Melo & Stockemer, 2014). At first glance, this suggests that the rate of political participation among young people in these three countries is significantly lower when it comes to protests compared to conventional political participation, such as voting. However, when comparing the protest rate among young adults to other age groups, a different picture emerges. While 20.1% of young adults are likely to participate in protests, this is actually higher than the percentage of adults between the ages of 34 and 49 (13.7%) and adults between the ages of 50 and 65 (13.8%). These percentages indicate that youth have a high rate of participation in both conventional and unconventional political activities, and they are more likely to engage in unconventional political participation compared to older age groups.

Similarly, to the previous study, a study conducted in Sweden by Emma A. Renström, Julia Aspernäs & Hanna Bäck reveals that the rate of youth participation in political activities can be determined by comparing it with the political participation of older age groups. The study shows that younger participants tend to have a higher inclination to engage in activities such as protests. A simple slope analysis indicated that the slope was significant when one standard deviation below the mean age was considered, with the low-age group showing a positive slope (Renström et al., 2021). Despite the fact that these studies were conducted in different years and countries, they demonstrate a similar trend of youth displaying a higher participation rate in non-traditional political activities. However, it is important to consider that these engagement patterns may be influenced by cultural similarities, given that both studies were conducted in European countries. This raises the question of what the rate of youth participation in East Asia, specifically Asia, is like.

A study conducted by Alex Chuan-Hsien Chang examined youth participation in elections in East Asia, using data from Wave III of the Asian Barometer Survey. The study found that youth participation in voting and campaign rallies was lower than that of adults in all East Asian countries. Specifically, only 65.2% of youth participated in voting, and just 25.6% attended campaign rallies, compared to 87% of adults who voted and 34.6% who attended campaign rallies (Chang, 2012). This indicates a noticeable disparity in conventional political participation between young people and adults. However, the study also explored the rate of informal participation among youth and adults, such as engaging in petitions and demonstrations. Surprisingly, the results showed that the difference in informal participation rates between young people and adults was not significantly different from the gap observed in voting and campaign rallies. The study revealed a 56% rate of informal participation among adults, compared to a 54% rate among youth. These findings are interestingly consistent with previous research on youth political participation in Western European countries. While Chang's study demonstrates that youth's informal political participation is lower than that of adults, the margin between the two is only 2%. This minimal difference suggests that East Asian youths still engage in informal political participation to a considerable extent. These results imply that the high rate of informal political engagement among youth is not exclusive to Western Europe but is a pattern observed in various cultures. It is worth noting that Chang's study encompassed 13 different East Asian countries, thus providing a comprehensive representation of youth political participation in the region. However, it is important to acknowledge that the study did not specify the number of participants interviewed or surveyed, despite its large-scale nature. The lack of this information slightly diminishes the study's validity compared to the previous two studies.

Another study that examines the youth participation rate in politics is conducted by Moeketsi Kali. This study focuses on 15 respondents aged 18-30 in Lesotho. The findings reveal that 20% of those aged 18-24 expressed their willingness to join political parties, whereas only 7% of those aged 25-30 actually joined political parties. Interestingly, respondents aged 18-24 also demonstrate higher levels of voter participation compared to those aged between 25-30, although the difference in voter participation rates between the two age groups is not significantly large (Kali, 2014).

Another study aims to investigate the level of youth engagement in political activism by examining their use of social media.

That study refers to Antonio Cortés-Ramos' study, which included a sample of 58 students from Spain, with an average age of 13. According to the study, 45% of the participants engage in political activism through social media. Out of the respondents, 37% are actively involved in political activism, while 17% engage passively (Cortés-Ramos et al., 2021). However, an even more comprehensive study on youth participation in politics was conducted by Richard Wike and Alexandra Castillo. This study analyzed 14,875 people from 14 different countries. According to their findings, individuals aged 50 or older are more likely to vote compared to those aged 18-29. However, the study also revealed that young respondents tend to avoid traditional political participation but are more inclined to engage in online political activities, such as posting comments on political issues. For instance, in Poland, 36% of those aged 18-29 posted their views online, whereas only 4% of those aged 50 or older did the same (Wike & Castillo, 2018).

This collection of studies demonstrates that the rate of youth participation in politics is influenced by their political activities. When examining traditional forms of political participation, researchers consistently find that youth engagement is lower compared to older adults. However, when studying unconventional forms of political participation, researchers discover that youth participation rates are much higher, approaching or even matching those of older adults. It is important to note that these studies span different times and locations, making their similar findings regarding youth political participation even more significant. The countries in which these studies were conducted, such as Spain, Sweden, Lesotho, and East Asia, have diverse cultural backgrounds, including variations between Sweden and Spain. Therefore, the findings of Wike, R., & Castillo, A. are particularly noteworthy, as they demonstrate that youth participation in politics is higher when they are engaged in political activities on the Internet.

1.6.4 Opinions of Youth Regarding Politics in General

Now, let's consider the youth's general views on politics, specifically their opinions and attitudes. A study conducted by Carla Malafaia, Tiago Neves, and Isabel Menezes examined 40 young individuals aged 15-23 in Portugal, with a focus on Porto. The researchers discovered that the youth in the study have an interest in politics. However, this interest only emerges when it relates to a specific issue that is rational and topical. If they seem uninterested in politics, it is because of the lack of transparency in the political process. Their engagement is primarily directed towards local and relevant matters, while also challenging the idea that political participation should be centered around adults (Malafaia et al., 2021). This research demonstrates that the youth are indeed interested in political matters. Unfortunately, their dissatisfaction with Portugal's current political system, which exhibits signs of corruption, often creates the false impression that young people are disinterested in politics.

This pattern of dissatisfaction among young people towards politics is a common theme in many studies on the topic, including the research conducted by Gerry Stoker, Mark Evans, and Max Halupka. In their study, the researchers discovered that a significant number of the 1021 participants under the age of 30 were either neutral or dissatisfied with Australia's political system. Among those born after 1995, 26% expressed dissatisfaction with democracy, while 34% remained neutral. Additionally, 50% of respondents born after 1995 felt ambivalent about their country's politics. For participants born between 1980 and 1994, 30% were dissatisfied with the Australian political system, and 32% were neutral. Meanwhile, 52% of those born between 1980 and 1994 harbored ambivalent feelings toward their country's political system (Stoker et al., 2018). These statistics reveal the significant degree of disappointment among young people in this study regarding politics in Australia. This dissatisfaction stems from a perception of decreasing government transparency in the inner workings of the Australian government, a concern that many Australian academics have recently highlighted (dela Rama et al., 2022). Although the study by Stoker et al. primarily focuses on youth dissatisfaction with politics rather than their level of interest, it is still possible to infer from their findings the extent to which young people are interested in politics. One can interpret the dissatisfaction expressed in Stoker et al.'s study as a

reflection of interest, as only individuals genuinely interested in politics would care enough to be dissatisfied. Therefore, Stoker's study demonstrates that the level of interest in politics among Australian youth is significantly lower than their sense of ambivalence. It is worth noting that the studies by Stoker et al. and Malafaia et al. were conducted in different countries. Despite this difference in context, the participants in both studies share similar sentiments of dissatisfaction with domestic politics.

Yet, do the political opinions of youths in the 21st century align with those of the late 20th century? Let us examine a case study on the views of youth regarding politics in the 1990s. Through this, we can observe how the political opinions of young people can change depending on the circumstances. In an article for the Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Studies, Norhafiza used the 1998 Reformasi Era as a case study to illustrate how the views of youth regarding politics can shift from indifference to intense engagement when significant catalysts prompt changes in youth behavior. These catalysts include the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997, the perceived unlawful imprisonment of Anwar Ibrahim, and the growing trend of similar protests in neighboring countries (Hed, 2018). These powerful catalysts led to protest movements that called for accountability, transparency, and political reform in Malaysia. These protests eventually evolved into the reform movement known as "Reformasi," which continues to influence Malaysian politics today. This analysis is intriguing because the case study of the 1998 Reformasi Era bears notable similarities to the rising political activism of youth during the pandemic era. The 1997 Asian Financial Crisis mirrors the pandemic as a global problem of broader significance. The dismissal of Anwar Ibrahim from his post as Deputy PM mirrors the collapse of the PH coalition government as a domestic political crisis. Furthermore, the increasing trend of similar protests in neighboring countries during the 1990s parallels the rise of political activism during the pandemic era.

Therefore, Norhafiza's study demonstrates that the youth's opinion on politics undergoes a shift from indifference to strong interest and dissatisfaction when a significant political event occurs. Comparing the youth's opinion in Norhafiza's study to that of participants in the studies by Malafaia et al. and Stoker et al. is challenging due to differences in time, location, and culture. However, the youth in Norhafiza's

study still express a similar sentiment of political dissatisfaction with their government, as seen in the studies by Malafaia et al. and Stoker et al. Melike Tekindal's study also reveals a similar pattern of external influences shaping the political opinions of the youth. According to Tekindal, the youth's attitude towards politics is not fixed but contingent. If the government formulates policies concerning the youth without their input, their interest in and awareness of politics diminish. Turkish youth lack confidence in conventional political institutions like political parties, believing that these parties are incapable of resolving political and social issues. Despite their perceived political apathy, the youth's voter turnout reached 60% during the 2007 Turkish General Election, indicating that they are not entirely indifferent to domestic politics (Tekindal, 2016). Consequently, the prevailing perception or opinion of the youth regarding politics is one of disillusionment or disinterest. They perceive their respective governments as either excessively opaque in their political dealings, making politics difficult to comprehend, or deeply entrenched in political traditions that hinder political change. Moreover, they may feel disappointed by the flaws in the governmental process. However, the most crucial factor shaping the youth's opinion on politics is their level of political knowledge. The lack of political knowledge consistently leads to disinterest in politics among the youth, aligning with previous literature that examines factors contributing to youth political activism.

1.6.5 Effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Activism

Nonetheless, the most relevant question regarding the increasing involvement of Malaysian youth in politics since 2020 is the impact of the pandemic on youth activism, or activism in general. According to a study conducted by Geoffrey Pleyers, traditional forms of activism, such as physical protests and demonstrations, experienced only a temporary decrease due to the pandemic. Pleyers' study indicates that the pandemic actually intensified social movements worldwide. Protests, strikes, volunteer programs, critical reports from intellectuals, and the dissemination of information all saw an increase during the pandemic. This intensification can be attributed to the fact that the pandemic exacerbated issues such as economic inequality, government inefficiency, authoritarian measures, unsafe work environments, and low wages for demanding jobs

(Pleyers, 2020). Contrary to initial expectations, the study reveals that the dangers of the pandemic and government restrictions did not lead activists to limit their activities solely to the virtual space. Rather, it is more accurate to say that the pandemic heightened the intensity of citizen activism in democratic countries.

Similarly, to the findings of Geoffrey Pleyers, a short study by Jeff Corpuz also supports Pleyers' conclusions. These findings suggest a direct correlation between the rise of political activism and the pandemic, particularly in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. In these countries, authoritarian leaders have utilized the pandemic as an opportunity to consolidate their power (Corpuz, 2021). Consequently, this increase in authoritarian control has fueled the mobilization of political activists, particularly evident in youth-led protests in countries like Thailand and the Philippines, where leaders such as Prayut Chan-o-cha and Rodrigo Duterte are internationally recognized for their authoritarian tendencies. The Social, Identity, Relative Deprivation, Efficacy (SIRDE) model provides a social theory that explains the relationship between the rise of activism and the pandemic. According to this model, collective perceptions of injustice within specific groups trigger anger, which then motivates actions aimed at advocating for social change, such as protests and demonstrations. Peter R. Grant conducted a study in 2021, examining how the pandemic affected Americans' reactions to social injustice. Grant supports the SIRDE model by highlighting the contagious nature of emotions, particularly in the age of internet connectivity. Grant's study confirms the hypothesis presented in this section, suggesting that non-conventional forms of political participation, like social media, have become significant avenues for youth to express their political engagement (Grant, 2021). This phenomenon is amplified by people's increased susceptibility to negative emotions during lockdowns, creating a fertile environment for the manifestation of the SIRDE model in countries where authoritarian regimes compromise freedom. Previous studies have demonstrated that negative emotions, such as anger, fear, and anxiety, are more likely to spread contagiously than positive emotions (Fan et al., 2018).

Other than utilizing the SIRDE model to explain the intensifying effects of the pandemic on activism movements, this can also be explained by examining how the pandemic became intertwined with complex political issues. A study conducted by the

Carnegie Civic Research Network found that the pandemic escalated democratic protests in Hong Kong against China, which had already started in 2019. However, the pandemic also played a role in triggering a coup in Myanmar and increased repression in Thailand by the military junta, both countries with a history of repression under jingoistic rulers. Despite this escalating repression, the pandemic led political activists to take bolder actions, such as supporting candidates that promised local democracy or promoting alternative forms of democracy (Youngs et al., 2021), rather than simply protesting against unsatisfactory politicians. This push for alternative democracy involves a more progressive and transparent form of political governance, as people's frustrations over failed governance were heightened by the pandemic, which meant the difference between life and death. Thus, the association of the pandemic with more significant political issues fueled the zeal of activists. However, the impact of the pandemic on social and political activism goes beyond intensification. The pandemic also influenced the practice of activism.

As mentioned earlier, it is expected that young people would express their political views through social media due to the pandemic, and indeed, a subsequent study shows that the pandemic forced activists to adapt their tactics by utilizing available social media platforms and transforming their public events into online events. For example, the Extinction Rebellion Denmark hung a banner from their members' windows and posted pictures online, or shared links to webinars or relevant websites (Uldam & Askenius, 2020). The pandemic allowed activist movements to effectively spread their messages, as the government's mishandling of the crisis drove people to seek better alternatives online. Furthermore, the study also revealed that the pandemic encouraged citizens to join activist causes as a means of alleviating the lethargy brought on by lockdown measures, as demonstrated by the Danish people in Uldam & Askenius's study. Although the example in Uldam & Askenius's study focuses on climate activism, the same approach could easily be applied to political activism. Similarly, a survey study by Jonathan Pinckney and Miranda Rivers, which involved 550 activists with a median age of 23, found that the pandemic prompted activist movements to rely more on digital media. Two-thirds of the respondents admitted to the challenges of adapting their tactics to the realities of the pandemic. However, 31% of the respondents stated that their movements were able to continue despite the

pandemic, and 81% reported adopting new tactics for their activism. The study also recorded an increase in public support for anti-racism causes, most likely influenced by the death of George Floyd. Nearly all respondents (97%) mentioned that certain activities had shifted from in-person to online since the pandemic, and 72% expressed optimism that their movement could advance their long-term goals after the pandemic (Pinckney & Rivers, 2020). Pinckney & Rivers's study demonstrates that the most significant effect of the pandemic on activist movements is the need to adapt strategies and leverage social media platforms to sustain their efforts. This finding aligns closely with the example presented in Uldam & Askenius's study, although the former focuses on political activism while the latter examines climate activism.

Nonetheless, both studies reflect the similar mechanisms employed by these different forms of activism, which involve utilizing social media platforms to cope with the challenges brought by the pandemic. The presence of common themes across these studies sheds light on the overall impact of the pandemic on activist movements. The first theme is the intensification of political and social activism as the pandemic exacerbates existing social and political issues within a country. The second theme is the pandemic's influence in changing activist tactics to reach a wider audience or engage with relevant authorities. The pandemic has presented an opportunity for activists to explore the full potential of digital media in disseminating their social or political messages. Furthermore, the disruptive effects of the pandemic on political and economic systems in various countries have created openings for new methods of social and political expression to be considered or practiced, such as alter-globalization, a movement that advocates for global cooperation while opposing economic globalization, or the promotion of decentralized governmental authority and local forms of democracy (Youngs et al., 2021).

These diverse options for political expression have emerged due to the increasing connectivity of people worldwide through social media platforms. The reason why this study on the political involvement of Malaysian youth in 2020 draws upon literature discussing the effects of the pandemic on activism is that activities typically associated with activists, such as protests, demonstrations, strikes, digital media mobilization, and political lobbying, are predominantly carried out by young

individuals (Renström et al., 2021). This is evident in the sections Rate of Youth Political Engagement and Activities of Youth Political Engagement within the Literature Review, which highlight the tendency of youth to engage in informal political activities, such as protests and demonstrations, rather than formal ones. Therefore, examining relevant literature on the impact of the pandemic on political and social activism is crucial for gaining a comprehensive understanding of how the political involvement of youth could be influenced by the events that unfolded in 2020.

The knowledge gap addressed in this paper revolves around the relationship between political activism among Malaysian youth and the government's handling of the pandemic, as well as the youth's perception of their own political engagement and their desired changes to the Malaysian political landscape. Understanding these factors is crucial for comprehending the role of youth in Malaysian politics. Previous studies have primarily focused on social media as a determinant of youth political activism (Ahmad & Zain, 2021), overlooking the youth's perception of their own political engagement and their ideas for transforming Malaysia's political system. These studies have been too fixated on external factors influencing political activism (Ting & Wan Ahmad, 2021), neglecting the examination of the youth's actual political views. This research aims to bridge this knowledge gap, thereby promoting greater awareness of pertinent issues like the youth's social experiences, political inequalities, and the significance of robust governmental institutions. By doing so, readers will gain a better understanding of the role played by youth in Malaysian politics. While this research primarily focuses on the circumstances faced by Malaysian youth, its findings can also be applicable to other disenchanted social groups in Malaysia, including senior citizens, children, and foreign migrants, and their involvement in politics. However, the most significant consequence of this research lies in its potential impact on the functioning and conduct of politics in the future. As these politically interested Malaysian youth mature into adults, their perspectives on politics will become more mainstream and influential. Therefore, if the relevant political actors take the findings of this study seriously, they can better anticipate the political climate of the future and develop more suitable policies in the present.

1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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

in Malaysia, and Malaysian youth are known for their active social media usage. This study expects that youth will continue to play a significant role in Malaysian politics, following the pattern described by the SIRDE theory.

As for political socialization, it refers to the process through which individuals unconsciously acquire a political perspective. This perspective shapes their opinions on how the power structure works and how their world is organized (Glasberg & Shannon, 2010). These opinions then determine how they should behave in their respective political institutions. Various factors, including family, schools, media, religion, and the state/government, can influence political socialization. In the context of youth political socialization, notable scholars have proposed specific theories. One prominent scholar is Constance Flanagan, a professor of Women, Family, and Community at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In her seminal work "Teenage Citizens: The Political Theories of the Young," Flanagan explains that political socialization occurs among the youth due to their experience with the social contract that binds them to their community (Flanagan, 2013). Here, the term social contract does not refer to a legal contract but rather to the innate acceptance of the government's authority by individuals. Flanagan argues that the relationship between the youth's daily interactions and the dominant political environment determines the pattern of political socialization among them. While Flanagan's findings are based on studies conducted in America, they can easily be applied to the case of Malaysia.

As mentioned earlier, one of the factors contributing to the current political activism among Malaysian youth is their dissatisfaction with the government's handling of the pandemic. This dissatisfaction has led to movements calling for the resignation of former Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin. This aligns with Flanagan's theory that the youth's political activism (political socialization) is influenced by the relationship between their daily interactions (#lawan) and the dominant political environment (Muhyiddin government). Another finding by Flanagan that is relevant to the case of Malaysia is that young people are more politically engaged when they have a say in the government's decisions. It is not unreasonable to suggest that the impact of the youth vote during the 14th General Election (GE14) has contributed to the recent increase in youth political participation in Malaysia. This election witnessed some of the highest

voter turnouts among Malaysian youth in history, with youth voters constituting 41% of the total voters in the 14th General Election (Chinnasamy & Azmi, 2018). The outcome of this election, which saw the previous ruling political coalition, BN, lose power to the previously opposition coalition, Pakatan Harapan, can be seen as a catalyst for increased political socialization among Malaysian youth. Now, Malaysian youth can empirically perceive how their political decisions shape the actions of the government by replacing a conservative government with a more liberal one. However, Constance Flanagan is not the only scholar who has provided insights into political socialization among youth.

Another source of literature that can be referenced for the political socialization of youth, particularly in Malaysia, is a report titled "Political Socialization of Malaysian Youth: The Present State and the Way Forward," authored by Ismi Arif Ismail et al. from the Institute for Social Science Studies at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). Published in 2015, the report discusses the factors contributing to the political socialization of Malaysian youths, namely political literacy, political maturity, and the political landscape. All three factors are relevant for understanding the rise of youth political socialization since 2020. Political literacy is significant because the collapse of the PH government triggered widespread political analysis among Malaysians from all walks of life who struggled to understand how a government could fail from within. This collapse led to a proliferation of materials on Malaysian politics being shared online, thereby increasing the political literacy of Malaysians, especially the youth. This increase is supported by the fact that Malaysia has a 67 percent Internet penetration rate, with the majority of active Internet users falling within the 20-24 age group (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2016). Political maturity is another factor influenced by the rise in political literacy among Malaysians. The collapse of the government, the mishandling of the pandemic by the Muhyiddin government, and the infighting within the parties that make up the PH coalition have all contributed to the increase in youth political socialization. Notably, the political infighting between Anwar, the leader of PKR, and Dr. Mahathir, the former leader of BERSATU, has left citizens disillusioned with their former political icons, particularly Anwar and Dr. Mahathir, who have been the most prominent figures in Malaysian politics (Malaysiakini, 2020). This disillusionment has further fueled the youth's desire to

engage in political socialization and increased political activism. In Malaysia, these three triggers for political socialization, such as political literacy, political maturity, and the political landscape, which often occur as a result of significant events that shake the fabric of Malaysian society. For example, the Reformasi protest movement in 1998, which caused a surge in political socialization, stemmed from events such as the Asian Financial Crisis, the shocking imprisonment of Anwar Ibrahim, and the increase in government protests in neighboring countries (Hed, 2018). Similarly, the historic defeat of the BN coalition in the 2018 Malaysian General Election, which led to a spike in political socialization, was primarily driven by the severity of the damage caused by the 1MDB scandal (Maksum, 2020).

1.8 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

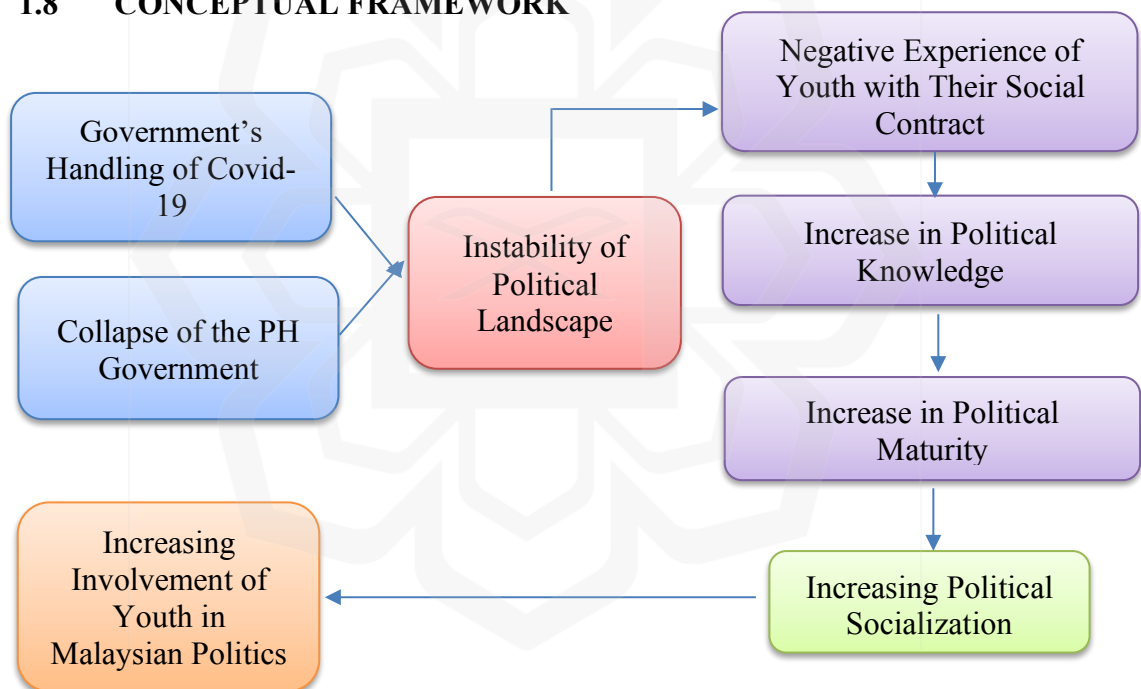


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework

Based on the previously discussed theoretical framework, a conceptual framework is developed to explain why the collapse of the PH government and its handling of the pandemic in 2020 resulted in increased political engagement among Malaysian youth. Firstly, the collapse of the PH government and the new government's response to the pandemic led to political instability in the country. This instability serves as a catalyst

for greater political socialization. According to Constance Flanagan's theories on political socialization, the youth develop a more negative perception of their social contract with the authorities in times of political instability. In addition to Flanagan's theories, the SIRDE model also applies when the youth have negative experiences in their social contract, which can be interpreted as frustration with the government. According to the SIRDE model, this growing frustration with the government leads to a heightened desire among the youth to address the negative experiences with authority. To manage their frustrations, they engage more with social media and other online platforms to gain a better understanding of the political problems facing their country and seek potential solutions. Consequently, social media becomes the primary channel for the political socialization of the youth. This increased engagement leads to a greater political knowledge among the youth, as they become more informed about the political issues through their social media activities. Political knowledge refers to having accurate information about politics. This improved political knowledge then contributes to the political maturity of the youth. As discussed in the Literature Review, political maturity refers to the ability to exercise sound judgment when making political decisions. The combination of increased political knowledge and political maturity further intensifies the political socialization of the youth. Consequently, the politically socialized youth are more inclined to participate in the political process, whether through conventional means like voting or unconventional means such as protests and demonstrations. This explains the greater political involvement of the youth.

1.9 METHODOLOGY

1.9.1 Research Design

For this research, the qualitative method will be used. Qualitative research is a highly suitable approach for gathering information. It helps the researcher gain a better understanding of the experiences of young individuals who take political matters seriously, particularly in the aftermath of the collapse of the PH government and its poor handling of the pandemic (Sutton & Austin, 2015). By employing a qualitative

method, this research aims to validate the proposed theories that explain why young people behave and think as they do regarding domestic politics. These theories include political socialization theories by Constance Flanagan and Ismi Arif Ismail et al., as well as the SIRDE model theory proposed by Peter Grant. The qualitative methods employed in this study involve conducting semi-structured interviews.

1.9.2 Sample Population

The samples for this study will be recruited using a purposive sampling technique. The focus of this research is specifically on Malaysian youths who are representatives of politically active youth organizations. These individuals may hold positions such as leaders, deputies, or chosen representatives within their respective organizations. The study will take place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The participants in this study will be youths between the ages of 15 and 30. This age range was selected based on the Youth Societies and Youth Development Act (Amendment) 2019 (Act 668) bill, which defines youth as individuals between the ages of 15 to 30 (Arshad et al., 2019). For the qualitative method, the sample size will consist of 18 participants who will be interviewed using a semi-structured format. The recruitment for this qualitative research will involve representatives from various youth-based social and political movements such as Angkatan UM, Demokrat UniSza (Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin), Suara Mahasiswa UMS (Universiti Malaysia Sabah), Idealis Mahasiswa, UMANA (University Malaya Association of New Youth), Persatuan Belia Harmoni, PEMBINA (Persatuan Belia Islam Nasional), PKPIM (Persatuan Kebangsaan Pelajar Islam Malaysia), GAMIS (Gabungan Mahasiswa Islam Se-Malaysia), Arus Anak Muda, GPMS (Gabungan Pelajar Melayu Semenanjung), and members of the IIUM student union. However, it is important to note that the study will not solely focus on youth from NGO organizations. The participants will also include members from the student wings of established political parties such as Mahasiswa Amanah, Mahasiswa Keadilan, Mahasiswa Roket, Malaysian United Democratic Alliance, Mahasiswa United, and Kelab Mahasiswa Penyokong PAS. The selection of participants will not be based on their ethnicity, religion, or gender. Instead, the focus will be on choosing leading representatives from various political youth wing organizations, university student

unions, and NGO youth organizations. Therefore, the ethnicity, religion, or gender of the participants will be coincidental and not a manipulated variable.

Nonetheless, when the participants were finally selected, the majority were Malay youths. Out of the 18 participants in the study, 16 were Malays, while the remaining two were Chinese and Indian. The gender distribution among the participants was similarly imbalanced, with 16 Malay participants being male, and the other two non-Malay participants being female. It is important to note that this overrepresentation of Malays and males in the study was not intentional, but rather a result of circumstances. Therefore, it is speculative to assume that the ethnicity or gender of the participants influences their political viewpoints. Given this potential concern, readers may understandably assume that the analysis of this research could be biased towards the views of Malay and male Malaysians. To address this, the research aimed to include participants from a wide range of political inclinations. This included individuals affiliated with conservative-leaning organizations like Mahasiswa United, Kelab Mahasiswa Penyokong PAS, GPMS, and GAMIS. In addition, participants from liberal-leaning organizations such as Mahasiswa Keadilan, Mahasiswa Raket, UMANY, and IIUM Student Union were also included. Furthermore, participants from politically neutral organizations like Suara Mahasiswa UMS, Arus Anak Mudam, PKPIM, and MUDA were involved. By including participants from a diverse political spectrum, the potential biases resulting from the gender and ethnicity composition of the majority of participants can be mitigated.

1.9.3 Research Procedure

For the qualitative method, semi-structured interviews will be used as the research method. These interviews allow researchers to ask open-ended questions and gain a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives. It is important to keep the interviews relatively informal, as most participants are not professionals. Each interview is expected to last approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes. The interview will begin with the interviewer explaining the interview process to the participant, which will take about 5 minutes. During this time, the interviewer will outline the number of

questions to be asked, reassure the participant that they are not obligated to answer any questions they are uncomfortable with, and emphasize that their identity will remain anonymous if desired. Most importantly, the interviewer will seek the participant's consent to either record or transcribe the conversation. Following this, the interviewer will ask a total of 22 interview questions based on the proposed research questions, which should take approximately 60 minutes. Once the participant has answered these questions, the interview will be concluded by allowing the participant to share any final thoughts on the research topic.

1.9.4 Research Instrumentation

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

1.9.5 Data Analysis

The data collected from the semi-structured interviews will be analyzed and interpreted to derive research findings. The collected data will be qualitative in nature, as it will come from the results of the interviews. Therefore, narrative analysis will be employed as the appropriate analysis method. Narrative analysis is utilized because the research aims to understand the perspectives and opinions of the participants, which involves documenting their stories and experiences. To analyze the details of the responses, thematic content analysis will be used. However, the qualitative analysis codes will be determined prior to recording the participants' responses. To determine the data to be categorized as codes, one should refer to the elements of the research title. Once the responses from the semi-structured interviews are recorded, common themes will be identified by identifying frequently repeated words and phrases. These themes will then be analyzed in relation to the predetermined codes. The analysis findings can then be

compared to the research objectives (Dudovskiy, 2022). The detailed analysis process is as follows: first, all the interviews are transcribed verbatim. Then, an inductive approach called thematic content analysis is employed to analyze each transcription. In this approach, researchers examine the data to identify recurring themes, which can be topics, ideas, or patterns that appear repeatedly. The main points of the interviewees' responses are coded by highlighting them. These points are then categorized as codes.

memang tengah cari second grad, so then I work dengan diaorang lah, work dengan diaorang online. Memang duduk kat rumah jer, work from home. Tak pergi office atas sebab waktu tu kes Covid-19 tengah menaik, so semua program-program pun buat online jer. So itu part time lah actually, that's a part time job. Untuk impak yang besar for me, I memang tak dapat nak keluar rumah, bagi I itu adalah something yang bad for me. Sebab I jenis extrovert, I suka jumpa orang I suka keluar dan I suka lepak. So bila dia close everything, I cannot go around untuk jumpa parents apa semua. So financially tak impak sangat, bila I dapat part time job tu I rasa lega sikit. Sebab I ada kerja kat rumah, so I takdelah rasa bosan. Kalau impak yang lain-lain tu, untuk medical for me medical tu memang benda yang I concerned about. So medical pun actually I postponed banyak appointment dan I pun tak boleh nak regularly pergi hospital. So benda tu orang kata, sedikit sebanyak memberi kesan kepada I jugak. Banyak benda yang postpone-postpone, this year bila dah sampai tengah tahun baru kitab oleh buat appointment.

Figure 1.2 Highlighting the Main Points of the Interview Transcript

For example, if an interviewee is asked about the type of discrimination they face in the workplace, and they respond with "being passed over for promotion," this specific statement will be assigned a singular code. This coding process will then be applied to all the main points of the interviewee's responses. Once the coding is complete, the codes for each response will be collected and organized according to their corresponding themes. Taking the previous response as an example, the interviewee's statement of "being passed over for promotion" will be coded as "under-promoted." This code, along with other similar codes that follow the same pattern, such as an

interviewee's response about being underpaid compared to non-PwDs workers (coded as "underpaid"), will be placed in the same table. These codes, namely "under-promoted" and "underpaid," will then be classified under one common grouping referred to as a "Theme."

CODES	THEMES
RQ1.1 -Permulaan Covid-19 tu memang I tak kerja (No Employment) -Memang takde any income, dalam beberapa bulan jugak (No Income)	-Unemployed
-So itu part time lah actually, that's a part time job (Employed Part-Time) -So financially tak impak sangat, bila I dapat part time job tu I rasa lega sikit (Not Distressed)	-Not too financially impacted
-I memang tak dapat nak keluar rumah, bagi I itu adalah something yang bad for me. Sebab I jenis extrovert, I suka jumpa orang I suka keluar dan I suka lepak.	-Discomfort from being stuck at home
-Untuk medical for me medical tu memang benda yang I concerned about. So medical pun actually I postponed banyak	Impaired Medical Treatment

Figure 1.3 Process of Matching Codes with their Respective Themes

Thus, the singular theme comprising these two codes will be labeled as 'Underappreciated at Work.' Grouping codes with similar characteristics into their respective themes will be done for all interviewee responses. After collecting all the themes from the interviewees' responses in their respective interviews, these themes will be compared to those found in all the other interviews conducted in this study. This comparison aims to identify any frequent patterns among the collected themes, ascertain which themes are commonly shared among the interviewees, and provide an explanation for the recurring pattern.

CHAPTER TWO

THE OPINIONS OF MALAYSIAN YOUTH POLITICAL ACTIVISTS REGARDING THE COMPETENCY OF THE GOVERNMENT IN HANDLING THE COVID-19 CRISIS IN MALAYSIA SINCE 2020

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In 2020, amidst the ongoing pandemic, the Malaysian government experienced a shocking political crisis. This crisis resulted in the lawfully elected government (PH) losing its right to rule. Muhyiddin Yassin, leader of the BERSATU Party and a former member of the previous government, assumed power, leading a new coalition in Malaysia in February 2020 (Ahmad, 2020). By March, there was considerable uncertainty about the ability of the Muhyiddin-led government to effectively address the unprecedented challenges posed by the pandemic, especially considering the recent political upheaval (Yaakop et al., 2020). The collapse of the PH government in February 2020 has been viewed unfavorably by many Malaysian youths. The participants in this study, who represent various youth-based political organizations, share this negative perspective. Their dissatisfaction with the collapse of the PH government can be attributed to three main themes related to the event. The first theme centers around the undemocratic nature of the Muhyiddin government's rise to power. Participants strongly condemn this aspect, as it undermines the entire political process in Malaysia. If such circumstances were to occur again, it would significantly undermine the legitimacy of future Malaysian governments. Wafiq, the President of PEMBINA, explains the importance of ensuring that a democratically elected government in Malaysia remains immune from a collapse similar to what transpired with the PH government :

We are of the opinion that the ruling government must be a government that has the characteristics of stability, justice, and strength. Any government that is formed that can meet these characteristics in our view needs to be given the opportunity and space for that government to run the country's governance well.

The second theme explores the significant impact of the collapse of the PH government on Malaysian politics. Unfortunately, this event has set a precedent for successive governments, as they now struggle to form a majority. The collapse of the PH government highlights how vulnerable a government can be if MPs from the ruling party decide to switch parties. Izzudin Aziz, the President of GAMIS, eloquently captures the negative consequences of this collapse in the following statement:

If we can see until GE15 that day, it is the downfall of PH which became the starting point for political instability in our country. Even in GE15 we can see division after division, power struggle and so on happen.

The third theme examines how the collapse of the PH government has affected political initiatives that the youth believe could enhance the quality of youth political activism. Participants frequently mention how the collapse of the PH government impedes the efforts of youth-based political parties to amend or abolish AUKU (Akta Universiti dan Kolej Universiti) - the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971. Dharshinee, the Deputy of Mahasiswa Keadilan, provides a compelling anecdote on how the collapse of the PH government has shattered the prospects of youth political freedom.

Definitely it was unfair and sad because at that time the Students of Justice Together with other student organizations, we worked hard to ensure that AUKU would be eradicated and replaced with a new Act in the PH. However, what happened, before we finished the Blueprint, only two more weeks before completion of the new AUKU blueprint, suddenly the Sheraton Move happened. And just like that we lost everything, basically whatever we drafted cannot be delivered.

In dealing with the pandemic, the government took a targeted testing approach instead of a mass testing approach to increase efficiency. They also enforced four types of lockdowns as a thorough measure to control the spread of the virus (Idris et al., 2021). The government made efforts to strengthen its medical facilities by upgrading 50 hospitals to better treat pandemic patients. Additionally, Malaysia opened more Quarantine and Low-Risk Treatment Centres (PKRC) and increased the number of beds and ventilators for Intensive Care Units (Idris et al., 2021). To ease the burden on citizens and business owners, the Muhyiddin-led government allocated economic

stimulus, with the most well-known package being the Prihatin Rakyat Economic Stimulus Package (PRIHATIN), for which RM250 billion was allocated (Lim et al., 2021). These measures proved to be highly successful in the government's efforts to combat the pandemic (Idris et al., 2021). Concurrently, the popularity of the Muhyiddin-led government began to rise due to its effective decision-making, despite its controversial origin in February 2020. Citizens even gave Muhyiddin Yassin the paternalistic nickname "Tok Abah," which means "grandpa" in Malay (Goh, 2020). However, all of this goodwill soon evaporated following the launch of the Sabah State Election in September 2020. The state election occurred because the Chief Minister of Sabah at the time, Shafie Apdal, dissolved the State Assembly to prevent the former Chief Minister of Sabah from replacing the state government with a political coup (Govindasamy, 2020). Many believed that this state election would lead to a resurgence of pandemic cases in Malaysia, undermining all the progress made by the government in the previous months (Sukumaran, 2020).

Following the Sabah State Election, there was a surge in negative publicity regarding the Muhyiddin government's handling of the pandemic. As a result, dissatisfaction with the government started to become more evident (Leong & Rosli, 2021).

2.2 PERFORMANCE OF MUHYIDDIN GOVERNMENT AGAINST COVID-19

This section will discuss the issues concerning the Muhyiddin government and their handling of the pandemic. However, it will also incorporate the perspectives of youth leaders who have acknowledged the commendable aspects of the government's efforts to contain the pandemic. This approach will provide a balanced assessment of the performance of the Muhyiddin government in combating the pandemic, while still offering a critical perspective on their efforts.

This discussion will analyze five significant problems and two significant positives in the performance of the Muhyiddin-led government against COVID-19. The determination of these problems and positives is based on data collected from

interviews with participants in this study. The problems identified include: 1) the unconstitutional nature of his administration and specific actions that did not follow proper constitutional protocol, 2) the insensitive attitude displayed towards citizens, 3) the weak decision-making process conducted by the government, and 4) mismanagement of resources. On the positive side, the Muhyiddin government has introduced economic measures and demonstrated a willingness to heed expert advice.

2.2.1 Problems in the Performance of the Muhyiddin Government

2.2.1.1 The Lack of Constitutional Conformity of the Muhyiddin-Led Government

The nature of his administration is deemed unconstitutional as he was not elected by the people, and his government's actions also disregarded proper constitutional protocol (Saleem, 2020). This relates to the Sheraton Move, where Muhyiddin Yassin formed a backdoor government to replace the PH government. It is worth noting that Dharshinee, the Deputy of Mahasiswa Keadilan mentioned earlier, strongly believes that Muhyiddin's government is unconstitutional. This viewpoint is not surprising considering she represents the student wing of the PKR party, which previously held power in Malaysia before being unlawfully removed from office. Dharshinee expresses her opinion as follows:

During the administration of Muhyiddin Yassin's government. Firstly, it was a government administration formed from a non-democratic system. Because of that, everything done by Muhyiddin Yassin's government at that time did not follow the people's rights.

Dharshinee argued that the Muhyiddin government, formed without the consent of the citizens, prioritized the benefit of Muhyiddin himself rather than the citizens. Therefore, their handling of the pandemic was poor due to political considerations. However, this argument is primarily based on speculation and further weakened by Dharshinee's affiliation with the PKR party. A stronger argument for the government's mishandling of the pandemic is the specific actions that did not adhere to constitutional protocols, rather than solely focusing on the unconstitutional nature of the government

itself, as argued by Dharshinee. This viewpoint is also shared by youth leaders such as Ashraff Fahmy, the Acting Head of the Central Level MUDA Student Bureau. Ashraff cited the suspension of Parliament by Muhyiddin Yassin on July 31, 2021 as evidence. He revealed that:

Muhyiddin's administration during his two-year tenure from 2020 until 2021 is problematic. And, of course, how he restricted democracy from happening, he closed the Parliament, and he made proclamations so that we cannot sit down and discuss policies.

Muhyiddin's administration wanted to avoid discussing the significant amount of expenditure used during the pandemic from 2020 to 2021 in Parliament. Muhyiddin suspended Parliament on July 31, following advice from health ministry officials after eleven COVID-19 infections were detected in Parliament on July 29 (Ananthalakshmi, 2021). However, the issue is that Parliament had already been closed since January 2021. It reopened on July 26, but Muhyiddin suddenly wanted to suspend it after just a five-day session. Many Members of Parliament (MPs) suspected foul play, as the parliamentary session was their only opportunity to question or criticize Muhyiddin's actions during the pandemic. The sudden suspension seemed like an attempt to unfairly silence opposition. In a normal situation, where a state of emergency was declared, Muhyiddin would have been within his rights to suspend Parliament. However, the truth is that a state of emergency can only be declared with the consent of the Yang-Di-Pertuan Agong, as stated in the constitution. The Agong has explicitly stated that he did not give his consent for Muhyiddin to declare a state of emergency since January (Ananthalakshmi, 2021). Huzayl, the President of Persatuan Belia Harmoni (Association of Harmonious Youth), also supported this point about the unconstitutional actions of the Muhyiddin government. Huzayl communicated that:

If you remember, bro, the Minister of Law, Takiyuddin, had a statement in the constitution that said the state of emergency had ended. But constitutionally, this emergency can only be terminated by the Agung. Agung hasn't announced yet, so we urge the government at the time to take responsibility for the constitutional crisis.

Therefore, all of this indicates how poorly the Muhyiddin government handled the pandemic by disregarding the appropriate constitutional protocols. These protocols are

in place to ensure political stability in Malaysia. However, this stability has been disrupted due to the undemocratic manner in which the government was formed following the Sheraton Move (Jeevendran, 2020), as well as the unconstitutional actions taken in response to the pandemic. These actions have created discord with the opposition parties, which is detrimental to the government's efforts in tackling the pandemic. The discord may cause opposition MPs to withhold support for the government's policies, as they are skeptical of the government's motives. This skepticism is a result of the government's failure to adhere to constitutional protocol. However, it is important to note that the source of this argument, Ashraff Fahmy, is a member of MUDA, a party that opposes Muhyiddin Yassin. Ashraff may be distorting the narrative to portray Muhyiddin's actions in the worst possible light, even if the government's intention was genuinely to combat the pandemic within the Parliament. Regardless of the truth, the perception that the government is attempting to suppress criticism has already taken root among the opposition, leading to a lack of political unity at a time when the country desperately needs it.

2.2.1.2 The Insensitive Attitude that His Administration Displayed toward Citizens

The insensitive attitude of Muhyiddin's government in handling the pandemic is evident in their actions, particularly in the unequal treatment of citizens and the perception of citizens as mere statistics. One example of this unequal treatment is the disparity in the legal consequences of the Movement Control Order (MCO). It is more likely to impact ordinary citizens than it is to affect politicians (Jaipragas, 2020). Birr Zamier, the leader of Demokrat UnisZa, a youth-based political organization from the University of Sultan Zainal Abidin, succinctly expressed this sentiment as follows:

After PRN Sabah, there are many flip-flop policies and unfair treatment between the ordinary people (marhain) and the elites or between the marhain and the ministers. There is a lot of unfair treatment in terms of law toward the people and also for the Minister.

Birr Zamier uses the term "marhain" to refer to citizens who are treated unfairly on a daily basis, deriving from the Arabic word "commoners". He also employs the term "orang kayangan", meaning "heavenly people" in Malay, to describe those who are not

penalized for violating the MCO. The occurrence of politicians breaking the MCO without facing consequences became a highly debated topic during the peak of the pandemic in Malaysia. This was sometimes juxtaposed with news stories of citizens receiving harsh punishments for even minor violations of the MCO (Bedi, 2021).

Secondly, there is the issue of perceiving citizens as mere statistics. Loo Qie Ying, a youth leader and the President of UMANY (University Malaya Association of New Youth), emphasizes how the government led by Muhyiddin perceives the situation of its citizens in this way. In her own words, Qie Ying stated:

The government didn't personally understand what the people are going through and only saw them in terms of numbers.

Though Qie Ying did not provide further details, it can be inferred that she is highlighting how Muhyiddin and his political partners use statistical figures to underscore that their administration had resulted in fewer deaths compared to other countries' administrations (Jamaludin, 2022). Nur Rahim Nasir, the leader of Mahasiswa Raket, the student wing of the DAP political party, discussed the most notable example of how the Muhyiddin government perceives its citizens as mere statistics. This example occurred when Muhyiddin stated during his GE15 campaign in November 2022 that under his administration, "Hanya sebilangan kecil yang mati" (only a few citizens died). The most egregious statement was when he said, "Hanya 36,000 nyawa yang meninggal dunia" (only 36,000 lives were lost) (Jamaludin, 2022). These statements are highly insensitive, especially to citizens who have lost their loved ones, as they indicate that he and his government viewed the citizens solely in terms of numbers and disregarded their suffering. What exacerbates this insensitivity is that Malaysia had the highest death toll from the pandemic among ASEAN countries (Mathieu et al., 2020). However, it is not entirely justifiable to claim that Muhyiddin's statement that 'only 36,000 lives were lost' is evidence that his government sees civilians as mere statistics. This statement was made during his election campaign in late 2022 and was not an official statement made by a government representative while Muhyiddin was still in power. Instead, the argument about the double standard in the enforcement of Movement Control Order (MCO) based on the social status of civilians

serves as more compelling evidence of the insensitive attitude displayed by the Muhyiddin government towards its citizens (Bedi, 2021).

2.2.1.3 The Weak Decision-Making Process Conducted by the Government

This issue is the most apparent and important contributing factor to why most participants in this study believe that the Muhyiddin government did not handle COVID-19 well. It directly involves the actual management of the pandemic itself. The points about the government's weak decision-making are related to the State Selection in Sabah in 2020, the appointment of incompetent individuals to important positions, and the failure to resolve domestic political issues. The decision made by the Muhyiddin government to initiate the PRN in Sabah in 2020 was a significant mistake that clearly demonstrated their mishandling of the pandemic (Lim et al., 2021). Aidi Zuhaili pointed this out and emphasized the ineffectiveness of some of the government's political actions. For instance, there were cases of politicians traveling to Sabah from Peninsular Malaysia during the PRN Sabah. Aidi revealed that:

Maybe the problem is how ineffective some of the political will was made by the Muhyiddin government when trying to curb the spread of COVID-19. For example, when pilihan raya negeri Sabah was being made, one of the factors was politicians coming and going from Sabah to peninsular Malaysia. The politicians coming and going between Sabah and the peninsula were not dictated proper quarantine measures by the government because the government did not want to try and curb their freedom even though the COVID-19 pandemic was still a threat at the time.

The government should have enforced clear quarantine protocols for politicians traveling between Sabah and the Malaysian peninsula. Aliff Naif, the President of IIUM Student Union, cites a statement made by Ismail Sabri, the Senior Minister of Malaysia at that time, during the Sabah State Election in 2020. In Aliff's own words:

Lack of leadership by the Muhyiddin government also led to Ismail Sabri making a statement during the Sabah State Election, saying that people who came back from the election in Sabah do not need to quarantine themselves.

During the Sabah State Election, Ismail Sabri stated that individuals returning from Sabah after the State Election ended do not need to quarantine themselves (Bunyan, 2020). Various members of the public and democracy observers urged the Muhyiddin government not to proceed with the election (Sukumaran, 2020). They were concerned about the risk of virus transmission during the election due to the presence of politicians from the peninsula visiting Sabah. However, the government disregarded these protests. As expected, once the State Election concluded, there was a surge in COVID-19 cases in the peninsula, transmitted by the returning politicians from Sabah. Muhyiddin's double standard in enforcing the Movement Control Order (MCO) worsened the situation, as many of these politicians needed to follow proper quarantine measures upon returning to the peninsula (Walden, 2021).

The next issue pertains to the placement of incompetent individuals in the administration. This point is reinforced by Huzayl, the youth leader who previously addressed the government's unconstitutional actions. To further illustrate this point, Huzayl mentioned the appointment of Dr. Adham Baba as the Minister of Health. Initially, Malaysian citizens were highly impressed and content with the government's response, which many attributed to the efforts of Noor Hisham Abdullah, the Director General of Health, in implementing effective health measures against the pandemic (Chain & Ismail, 2021). However, citizens were considerably less satisfied with Adham Baba's performance in his role as the Minister of Health. As the supposed leading authority on the pandemic, he made perplexing and ill-informed statements during his early tenure. Huzayl provided an example to support this claim:

So, it's easy to see that Muhyiddin Yassin's government at that time handled COVID-19 by putting incompetent people to lead. For example, the Minister who led health was Adham Baba, who made a hilarious statement about warm water. And he's not taking people's lives seriously while the numbers keep increasing.

The most egregious example is his statement that "drinking warm water would prevent COVID-19 infection" (Augustin, 2020). This remark, which was both untrue and unfounded, significantly eroded the public's confidence in the Ministry's ability to handle the crisis. Additionally, Adham's other statements have further distorted the public's perception and fueled negativity towards the government. These remarks may have contributed to the confusion and disarray in managing the pandemic, as

highlighted by Farhan Rosli of PKPIM, who noted the difficulties in determining travel protocols between different regions. His Ministry MITI failed to give a proper SOP for the workers to work. This is something I think needs to be seen.

Some may argue that Adham was not directly responsible for the government's blunders in handling the pandemic, such as their decision to continue with the Sabah State Election. However, it does not mean that Adham's action of making outrageous statements about the pandemic was not harmful. His ridiculous statements could have led Malaysian citizens to underestimate the dangers of the COVID-19 virus, potentially resulting in the loss of thousands of lives. Therefore, his tendency to make absurd statements highlights the government's practice of appointing incompetent individuals.

The next pressing issue is the government's unresolved domestic political issues. These unresolved problems also hinder the government's decision-making process (Noor, 2022). Naiem Zikri, the President of Suara Mahasiswa, supports this view. Naiem stated that if the Muhyiddin government had solely focused on handling the pandemic instead of getting involved in politics, it could have performed to the best of its ability. In particular, Naiem said:

His government could do better because if the government only focused on handling COVID-19, I think the outcome would be better. But Muhyiddin has something else to settle down (handle), the political issue that heats him.

Nevertheless, Naiem acknowledges that the leadership of the Muhyiddin government is weakened by inherent political issues, such as the events of the Sheraton Move, which cannot be ignored. While it allowed the Muhyiddin government to come into power, it also created irreconcilable tension with the opposition parties, particularly the PH coalition. The coalition discredits Muhyiddin's government by accusing him of illegally seizing control of the government through backdoor political maneuvers (Zainuddin, 2021). As a result, bipartisan cooperation with the opposition parties becomes challenging at a time when it is desperately needed. Unfortunately, this situation worsened when the government suspended parliamentary sessions on July 31, 2021 (Ananthalakshmi, 2021). This suspension meant that the government's measures

would not undergo critical analysis by all members of Parliament, thereby depriving it of valuable feedback and majority support in the Parliament.

2.2.1.4 Mismanagement of Resources

Mismanagement refers to the way in which the government potentially wastes its resources and how it uses its funds. Ashraff Fahmy from MUDA provides an example of the government's mismanagement of resources in his statement:

I think you look at the numbers. If you look at the numbers, they have spent a massive budget, RM 500 to 600 billion, during his tenure as PM. But what I can say is, of course, we can't say that they didn't do anything at all. They did financial aid and so on. But there are a lot of loopholes. First is how they requested that the people withdraw their pension funds. That's a really bad move, especially for the economy, at the point where our people have minimal savings. We can see that almost 70-80% of Malaysians have less than RM10,000 in their EPF.

According to him, the Muhyiddin government spent RM500 to RM600 billion during their tenure. However, the way the funds were collected was less than ideal and had significant loopholes, such as requesting people to withdraw their pension funds (Shah et al., 2020). Ashraff believed that this was a wrong move, especially for the economy, as people had minimal savings at that point. In fact, 51.5% of Malaysians with the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) have less than RM10,000 in savings (Kamis & Abdul Aziz, 2023). It seems that the government was taking more money than necessary. This is the point that Nabil Halimi, the President of Arus Anak Muda, a youth-based NGO, further explains. Nabil believed that the vast amount of expenditure allocated for COVID-19 needed to be utilized correctly. Nabil's statement regarding the poor utilization is as follows:

The government allocated a huge sum of money to combat COVID-19. A lot can be done with that money, but it doesn't show in the public. The public couldn't see where the money went.

The measures taken against COVID-19 needed to be revised in light of the government's potential expenditure, according to Nabil. Arus Anak Muda couldn't see

where the money went. This concern about improper use of funds may initially be a perception shared by Nabil and his organization, as no evidence or description was provided to support the claim that the government misused resources. However, on March 9, 2023, Muhyiddin Yassin was detained by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission for charges of accepting bribes from companies in exchange for benefiting from a large amount of government expenditure through an economic recovery package meant to assist citizens (Ananthalakshmi & Latiff, 2023). This lends credibility to Nabil and other youth leaders' criticism of the government's spending. It also suggests that the Muhyiddin government may have mishandled their resources. Although Muhyiddin was acquitted of the corruption charges in August 2023, the Attorney General's Chambers is still trying to reinstate the charges, and the Court of Appeals is set to hear submissions from both sides in February 2024 (Khairulrijal, 2023). Therefore, there is still a possibility that Muhyiddin Yassin could be found responsible for the misallocation of public resources during his time in government.

2.2.2 Significant Positives in the Performance of the Muhyiddin Government

2.2.2.1 Economic Measures Introduced by the Muhyiddin Government

Some of the measures discussed in the Introduction section, such as PRIHATIN, have already been mentioned. The government injected RM250 million into this initiative (Lim et al., 2021), demonstrating the commitment of the Muhyiddin government to addressing the pandemic. Wafiq Bin Azman, the youth leader of PEMBINA (Persatuan Belia Islam Nasional), provided additional examples of economic aid packages prepared by the government to support citizens during the 2020 and 2021 pandemic. His examples are as follows:

Among the initial efforts that can be commended, apart from the establishment and appointment of economists to lead the National Economic Action Council (MTEN), is the launch of the National Economic Regeneration Plan (PENJANA) and the establishment of 20 initiatives of the Strategic Program for Empowering the People and the Economy (PEMERKASA).

Majlis Tindakan Ekonomi Negara (MTEN) is a council of economic experts whose job is to advise the Prime Minister on the financial measures needed to handle the pandemic. Pelan Jana Semula Ekonomi Negara (PENJANA) is a series of programs aimed at strengthening the economy by providing cash injections to business owners and organizations responsible for assisting unemployed individuals (BERNAMA, 2020). Additionally, the establishment of 20 strategic initiatives for the Program Strategik Memperkasa Rakyat Dan Ekonomi (PEMERKASA) focuses on curbing the pandemic, driving economic recovery, strengthening the country's competitiveness, ensuring regional and community inclusion, and transforming the economy (Idris et al., 2021). These are not the only financial packages provided by the Muhyiddin government. The Minister of Health has also been allocated RM600 million. The monthly allowance for healthcare employees has increased from RM400 to RM600 per month starting from April 1, 2020, until the end of the pandemic (Idris et al., 2021). A study conducted by Universiti Sains Malaysia on a group of 25 young Malaysian entrepreneurs regarding the effect of the economic stimulus package mentioned above (Lim et al., 2021) concluded that the economic stimulus packages are effective as a short-term strategy. Specifically, the study found that young entrepreneurs highly value wage subsidy programs, deferment of monthly tax payments, and bank moratoriums for their livelihood (Lim et al., 2021). Therefore, the notion that the economic measures undertaken by the Muhyiddin government demonstrated its positive performance is not without merit. However, the other side of this argument about the effectiveness of the Muhyiddin government's measures can also be seen from the previous discussion about why the government did not perform well against the pandemic, particularly in the last discussion by Nabil Halimi on the mismanagement of resources in subtopic 2.2.1.5: Mismanagement of Resources. Despite a significant amount of expenditure allocated, some of the funds were not accounted for, indicating that the provided funds were not fully utilized. These suspicions were further supported when Muhyiddin Yassin, the Prime Minister, was detained by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission on charges related to receiving bribes linked to his government's economic packages (Ananthalakshmi & Latiff, 2023).

2.2.2.2 The Willingness of Government to Heed the Advice of the Experts

Typically, when discussing the competent appointment of officials in public health in the Muhyiddin government, the name Dr. Noor Hisham Abdullah is commonly mentioned. He has been the Director General of Health of Malaysia since 2013, subordinate to the Minister of Health. In this role, he is responsible for overseeing the individual Health Departments of the different states. Dr. Noor Hisham is known for suggesting a mass testing approach for efficiency and the implementation of four types of lockdowns for a thorough lockdown measure (Idris et al., 2021). Therefore, he has proven himself to be a competent public health administrator, and Muhyiddin's government has demonstrated competency in handling the pandemic by following Dr. Noor's directives. Farhan Rosli, the President of Persatuan Kebangsaan Pelajar Islam Malaysia (PKPIM), explained that Dr. Noor Hisham's appointment as Director-General is a testament to the Muhyiddin government's efforts in managing the pandemic. Specifically, Farhan said:

Muhyiddin tried his best by appointing some good people to advise him on public health. We cannot say the Muhyiddin government failed. He has been supported by sound public servants such as DG Noor Hisham. I think the DG has played an important role in reducing the criticism from the public to the government.

Farhan acknowledged that Dr. Noor Hisham's role in advising and organizing public health matters for Malaysian citizens was widely praised. Dr. Noor Hisham's increased involvement in handling public health affairs was particularly noteworthy when he took over the responsibility of making public announcements about public health after the actual Minister of Health, Adham Baba, made false statements that we have previously discussed (Tong, 2021). His name is frequently mentioned in discussions about the government's effective health measures because of his ideas on maintaining public health in Malaysia and because he became the public face of the health ministry (Rahman, 2022). However, it should be noted that Farhan's statement that "the appointment of Dr. Noor Hisham as Director-General" is not entirely accurate because Dr. Noor Hisham was appointed in 2013, long before Muhyiddin Yassin became the Prime Minister. Nevertheless, the key point to consider from Farhan's statement is that the government is willing to listen to the advice of experts on how to

handle the pandemic. Despite the competence Dr. Noor Hisham demonstrated in handling the pandemic response during its early stages, it must be acknowledged that he made some mistakes in his response. Firstly, he allowed the Sabah State Election in 2020 to proceed despite protests and advice against holding the election. Although he initially stated that he would not encourage the state election to take place, he ultimately allowed it with certain guidelines (Loheswar, 2020). This decision led to accusations from the former Director-General, Dr. Mohamed Ismail Merican, who referred to Dr. Noor Hisham as a "paper tiger" and believed that he should not have let himself be pressured by the government to approve the state election (Supramaniam, 2021).

2.3 EFFECTS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF THE PANDEMIC ON THE POLITICAL ACTIVISM OF YOUTH

Unsurprisingly, the way in which the Muhyiddin government addresses the pandemic, which is an event of great magnitude and urgency, will undoubtedly have a profound impact on all levels of the Malaysian population, including the political engagement of young people. The government's efforts to minimize physical contact among citizens will naturally affect the dynamics of social interaction among Malaysians. As a result, the measures taken by the Muhyiddin government to combat the pandemic will have a significant influence on the political activism of Malaysian youth. In general, political activism typically involves activities such as public assemblies, and the government's Movement Control Order (MCO) will inevitably disrupt this. This is particularly true for young people who are more inclined to participate in public demonstrations due to their greater need for social connection compared to older individuals (Renström et al., 2021).

2.3.1 Stagnation of Political Activism

This discussion will focus on the impact of the measures implemented by the Muhyiddin-led government on youth political activism. The most noticeable effect on youth political activism is stagnation. During the pandemic, various activities that are typically used for activism have become unfeasible. These activities include social

gatherings, protests, engaging with the public, and holding meetings for discussions. The Movement Control Order (MCO) restricts these activities due to the social distancing guidelines, lockdowns, and isolation measures imposed on citizens (Singh & Singh, 2020). Malaysia, too, has implemented multiple phases of the MCO. As a result, many youth-based organizations in Malaysia have experienced a stagnation of their political activism during the pandemic and the MCO measures (Wilf et al., 2023). Airil Fitri, the leader of the Mahasiswa United organization, recounts what has transpired:

We can't do any activities because of restrictions," and "So to me, Muhyiddin's policy at that time caused us to be a little slow to move, a little slow to get to know each other, in fact to this day we still have people saying there is room for us to add more members.

What is noteworthy is that the Mahasiswa United organization ardently supports the Muhyiddin government. However, they also acknowledge that the MCO policies of Muhyiddin hinder their activism. While it is well-known and understood that political activism has stagnated during the pandemic, it is important to note that this stagnation is not permanent. Although there was initially a decline in political activism among Malaysian youths at the beginning of the pandemic, it eventually led to an increase in political activism among youths during this time.

2.3.2 Intensification of Political Activism

It comes as no surprise that the intensification occurred as a result of the government's mishandling of the pandemic. This viewpoint is expressed by Ashraff Helmy from MUDA, who describes his thoughts as follows:

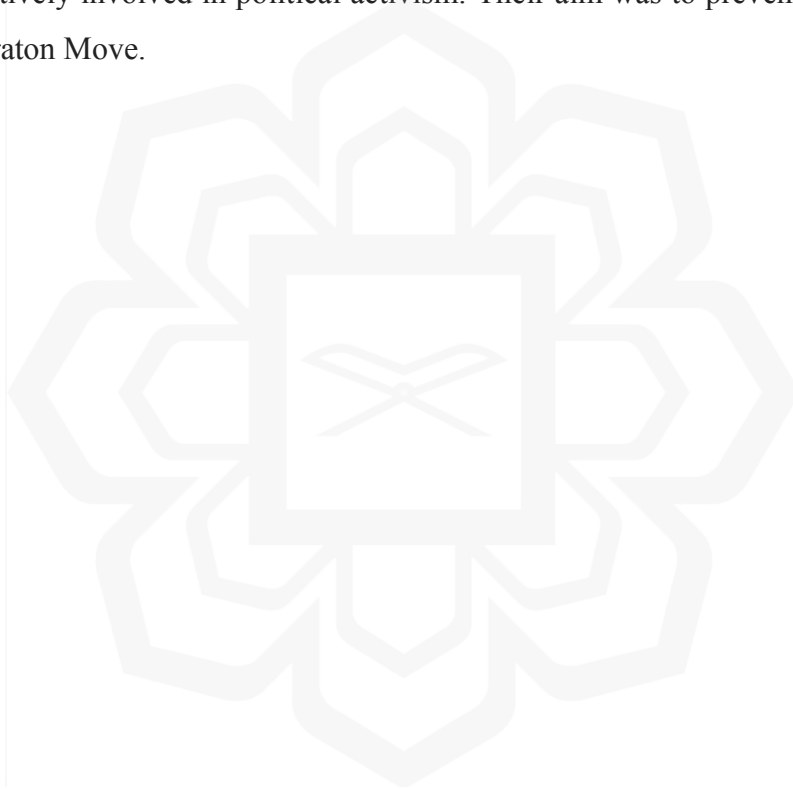
So, I think it's pretty clear how the government could have done better to handle the COVID-19 crisis. Of course, MUDA has been consistently voicing our stance that there are a lot more things that the government could have done and, of course, that out of all the scandals that came out post-Covid and so on. So those are the kinds of things that we are firmly against. Our activism is indeed related to how the government handled the COVID-19 crisis.

An excellent example of the intensification of political activism among Malaysian youth is the impact of the Sabah State Election (Johan, 2021). This intensification can be explained by Peter Grant's study on the SIRDE model of social theory (Grant, 2021). According to the SIRDE model, initiatives for social change are triggered by a collective perception of injustice within the group, which leads to feelings of anger among the group members. These feelings of anger then translate into actions advocating for social change, such as protests and demonstrations. Grant's study explains how the SIRDE model works by stating that emotions can be contagious, and this contagion is amplified by citizens' connectivity through the Internet (Grant, 2021). In the case of Malaysia, the perception of injustice within the group is the unfair treatment of citizens compared to the "Orang Kayangan," meaning "people of heaven" in Malay, who are usually celebrities and politicians. These "people of heaven" often receive less severe punishment for breaking Movement Control Order (MCO) protocols, with prominent examples being celebrities like Neelofa and Instagram influencer Iram Naz Hafiz (Free Malaysia Today, 2021). The issue is not that they are not punished at all, but rather that they are fined at the same rate as ordinary citizens. This is problematic because these celebrities and politicians are less burdened by the financial consequences of the fines. For instance, Iram Naz Hafiz was fined RM 2,500 for breaking the MCO. For someone as financially well-off as Iram, this fine is not a significant issue. However, for a fresh graduate earning approximately RM 2,400 per month, a fine of RM 2,500 is much more punitive. Grant's statement that "these emotions only become more contagious due to the connectivity of citizens through the Internet" applies to Malaysia as well, particularly to the youth who are active users of social media (Ahmad et al., 2015). This unfair treatment also exemplifies the concept of relative deprivation experienced by the youth according to the SIRDE model (Abrams et al., 2020). The stark contrast between the heavy punishment faced by ordinary citizens in Malaysia and the lenient punishment given to wealthy and connected individuals for the same offense highlights the sense of deprivation experienced by the youth. While this deprivation is not exclusive to the youth, considering that most of them belong to lower income brackets compared to affluent Malaysians, the youth naturally feel the effects of this deprivation more strongly. However, it can be argued that the intensification or continuation of the youth's political activism is not solely due to the government's handling of the pandemic but also because

the citizens are still upset about the events of the Sheraton Move. This is evident from Ahsraff's own statement later on:

But after the Sheraton Move, they feel like politics is not just for politicians. Politics is not just for elites. Rather, politics is supposed to be for everyone. That is why most of the people who were before this have not been involved in political movements. The post-Sheraton move sparks a need for them to become a political party.

Hence, the disillusionment of the youths with the political elites and their self-serving nature, which led to the events of the Sheraton Move, prompted them to become more actively involved in political activism. Their aim was to prevent a recurrence of the Sheraton Move.



CHAPTER THREE

VIEWS OF MALAYSIAN YOUTH LEADERS REGARDING THEIR POLITICAL TENDENCY BEGINNING FROM 2020 TILL 2022

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The series of headlines in 2020 and 2021 showing the increasing number of protests led by young Malaysians calling for the resignation of PM Muhyiddin Yassin gives ordinary citizens in Malaysia the perception that political activism among Malaysian youth has been on the rise since 2020 (Zainuddin, 2021). Additionally, Malaysia has recently ratified a new law allowing citizens as young as 18 to vote (Lee, 2020). These events contribute to the perception of increased political participation among Malaysian youth. However, it is crucial for this study to understand this growing political activism among Malaysian youth from the perspective of the youth themselves, specifically those actively involved in Malaysian politics. This study aims to collect the views of leaders from politically active youth organizations, recognizing that these leaders represent the political views of their respective organizations' members. By gathering information from these youth leaders, this study will gain insight into the factors driving their political activism, the types of activism they engage in, and the perspectives of politically active youth on the overall political activism of Malaysian youth.

3.2 FACTORS OF YOUTH POLITICAL ACTIVISM

What circumstances or actions might lead to an increase in the political activism of Malaysian youth, as discussed in the introduction section? This paper argues that there are three key factors: political issues, freedom of speech, and social media.

3.2.1 Political Factors

Political factors include the current political climate and the existing political beliefs of the youth, which motivate them to engage in political activism. One of the primary reasons is the students' own political demands, as explained by Aliff Naif, the leader of the IIUM Student Union, in 2022. He stated:

The establishment of the IIUM student union itself is political. So, before this, we had SRC, and after that, we changed to a student union because of the political demands of the students of IIUM itself.

What Aliff meant by political demands here is the students' desire for a legitimate representative of IIUM students to engage with the authoritative body of IIUM. This desire for a fair voice representing the students in IIUM led the PH government and the IIUM governing body in 2019 to approve the establishment of the IIUM Student Union, making IIUM the first university in Malaysia to have its student union (Mustafa, 2019). The university laid out the framework for the IIUM Student Union and organized the Speaker Corner program, created by IIUM University in March and April 2019, as a platform for IIUM student leaders, as well as members of groups and movements in IIUM, to express themselves and voice their desires regarding representation (New Strait Times, 2021). It's important to note that in 2019, the government and the IIUM administration were willing to allow the creation of the IIUM Student Union. The PH government, at that time, was very receptive to the idea of a student union within universities, undoubtedly influenced by the fact that the Minister of Education at the time was Dr Maszlee Malik, a former lecturer at IIUM and the former President of IIUM in 2018 (Babulal & Amran, 2018). The PH's openness to a student union highlights another point made by Aliff Naif: the political efficacy of Malaysian youth.

According to Aliff, the IIUM Student Union became involved in political activism because they recognized the potential impact that students could have on the political landscape. They understood the significant role that Malaysian students could play in shaping Malaysian politics. Aliff emphasized that:

Understanding our role in political scenery, especially in social, political, or economic fields. Understanding that we can play a big part in it, we can be included in university meetings or even meetings with government officials.

It can be inferred that both the government and the University authorities had confidence in the role of the student union. This indicates that the IIUM Student Union became involved in political activism due to its belief in its ability to influence political affairs, which in turn influenced its political demands. Political efficacy refers to the trust and belief citizens have in their ability to influence political affairs. This reasoning aligns with the findings of a study by Brett Levy and Thomas Akiva in the Literature Review section of Chapter 1. In this study, Levy and Akiva discovered that increased political engagement among students is linked to their sense of political efficacy (Levy & Akiva, 2019). Conversely, if students feel powerless to bring about any political change in the country, their interest and demand for political involvement will diminish. This attitude is demonstrated in a study by Tekindal, where it is shown that if the government were to make policy changes, particularly those affecting the youth, without seeking any feedback from them, it would greatly diminish their political interest and demand (Tekindal, 2016).

The rising political activism among Malaysian youth can be attributed to another factor, namely the amendment to the minimum voting age in Malaysia. This amendment lowered the minimum voting age to 18 and received unanimous support from all members present in the Dewan Rakyat. It is important to note that this was the first bill in the country's history to secure unanimous support from both the Dewan Rakyat (Lower House) and the Dewan Negara (Upper House) of Parliament (Annuar, 2019). Dzafir Firdaus, the leader of Kelab Mahasiswa Penyokong PAS, the student wing of the PAS political party, has attributed the increase in his organization's involvement in political activism to the impact of the voting age amendment. In his explanation, he stated:

PAS students were formed after the amendment of item 119 in the Federal Constitution, which allowed for Undi18.

Even though the PH coalition is the party primarily responsible for amending the voting age, Dzafir, the political opponent of PAS, still recognizes the significance of the voting age amendment in shaping his organization. This amendment has played a role in encouraging youth organizations to become politically active by granting Malaysian youth greater political efficacy. The fact that Malaysians as young as 18 now have the power to vote means that most members of these youth political organizations have a say in electing the government. Furthermore, as of 2022, thanks to the voting age amendment, every eligible Malaysian citizen is automatically registered to vote without the need to go through the hassle of registering with the Electoral Commission office (Chan, 2022). This expanded voting base among Malaysian youth has given them the understanding that they now have a more significant role in the government's affairs, thereby increasing the likelihood of their involvement in political activism. However, despite the significant increase in youth involvement in politics due to the voting age amendment, there is unfortunately a tendency for Malaysian voting patterns to be heavily influenced by social media. A study on Malaysian Millennials regarding their voting patterns during GE15 found that many of them use TikTok as a source of political information, allowing that information to influence their political decisions (Subre et al., 2023). While the study only focuses on Millennials aged 27 to 42, it is possible that even younger Malaysians can be greatly influenced by social media. This highlights the potential political influence it can have on first-time voters during GE15. Since these young voters are even more active on social media than the Millennials, an amendment to the voting age may increase the likelihood of voting patterns being influenced by populist sentiments if these sentiments are widely shared on social media platforms. It could be concerning if youth voters base their voting decisions solely on information that is trending on social media. However, it is important to note that no research paper has conclusively demonstrated that social media is primarily responsible for the voting patterns of youth during GE15.

In continuation of this discussion on the political factors of youth political activism, it is important to address Malaysia's freedom of speech. Freedom of speech has a significant influence on the political environment of any state, and Malaysia has a complex history with regards to its practice (Hajjafari et al., 2018). While Malaysia's restrictions on freedom of speech are not as severe as in other countries, they are still

far from ideal. There are numerous examples of prominent cases where the government has violated freedom of speech rights of its citizens, such as the enactment of the Internal Security Act of 1960, the implementation of Operasi Lalang in 1987, and the infamous mistreatment, beatings, and imprisonment of the prominent future opposition figure Anwar Ibrahim in 1998 (Hajjafari et al., 2018). However, one specific aspect of the government's restriction of freedom of speech that the youth vehemently oppose is the implementation and practice of Akta Universiti dan Kolej Universiti 1971 (AUKU) within Malaysian universities. AUKU is an act of Parliament that allows the government to prevent student involvement with political parties, trade unions, and even mergers between student bodies. This effectively restricts the opportunities for political expression among Malaysian youths, all under the guise of providing a legal instrument for establishing universities in Malaysia (Wan, 2019).

For many academics and students, AUKU has become a hindrance to the progress of Malaysian universities and their autonomy. It not only restricts academic freedom but also limits freedom of speech among the majority of university students, who are young individuals (Wan, 2019). Consequently, from 2020 to 2022, the revision of AUKU emerged as a central issue, prompting youth and youth organizations to engage in political activism. Several leaders of politically active youth organizations cited the amendment of AUKU as the driving force behind their organization's involvement in political activism. Dzafir Firdaus, Chairman of Kelab Mahasiswa Penyokong PAS, explained the reasons that influenced his organization to enter the realm of political activism. He expressed:

And the second is for political education to be allowed; exposure to politics is allowed on campus because of the AUKU amendment itself. So, because of these amendments, we dare to establish an entity that we call the part student wing.

Some youth leaders have stated that their youth organizations got involved in political activism with the aim of abolishing the AUKU act, rather than just amending it. One example is Loo Qie Ying from UMANY, who explained that:

In 2001, we rebranded to UMANY. We formed UMANY because we want student autonomy campus democracy, and our ultimate goal is to

abolish the AUKU". Later, she added, "For 20 years plus we have been advocating, then we get a chance during 2018 to get to know the minister and abolish the AUKU. This is why we are involved in activism.

One youth leader, Dzafir, provided an intriguing explanation for his organization's involvement in political activism. According to him, his organization's political activism was not driven by the need of the youth to amend or abolish AUKU. Instead, it was the amendment of AUKU itself in 2018 that finally motivated the youth within his political party to establish a youth wing of their own. Dzafir is the Chairman of Kelab Mahasiswa Penyokong PAS (PAS Supporter Student Club), the student wing of the PAS party. In his account, he said:

And the second is for political education to be allowed. Exposure to politics is allowed on campus due to the AUKU amendment itself. So, as a result of these amendments, we dare to establish an entity that we call the student wing of the party.

Nonetheless, Loo Qie Ying and Dzafir explained that AUKU was a factor in their political activism. Nine other participants in this study also expressed their desire to amend AUKU if given political power. These repeated references to AUKU as the catalyst for their political activism also indicate the relative deprivation experienced by the youth, as suggested by the SIRDE model. The dissatisfaction with AUKU among the youth in this study becomes the root cause of their sense of deprivation, which in turn leads to anger and involvement in political activism when they believe that their collective efforts can bring about political change (Abrams et al., 2020). It is important to note, however, that this does not necessarily mean that the majority of Malaysian youth attribute their political activism to AUKU. As of now, no credible literature has linked the rise in youth's political activism to the implementation of AUKU. Nevertheless, it is likely that AUKU has a more significant impact on increasing political activism among youths who are already politically active, such as the participants and their respective organizations in this study.

3.2.2 Social Media Factors

There are multiple reasons why social media usage influences youth organizations to engage in political activism. One explanation is found in the algorithm function of social media, which promotes trending topics. This dissemination of trending topics within social media platforms provides users with awareness of the latest issues gaining attention among Malaysian youths, particularly if these issues are already relevant to Malaysian youths (Baatarjav & Dantu, 2011). This awareness then encourages youth organizations to participate in political activism. For example, Angkatan UM, a student organization at the University Malaya, is actively involved in such activities. Anas, the strategic director of Angkatan UM, has expressed that:

It is true that social media greatly influences us because we get a source of exposure to current issues through social media and so on.

Showing the utility of social media in sharing the latest hot-button issues in the news has greatly influenced Angkatan UM's decision to participate in activism. Birr Zamier, the Leader of Demokrat UniSZa mentioned earlier, shares this sentiment. According to him, the information gathering and sharing on social media served as the driving force behind the formation of Demokrat UniSZa and their decision to contest in the University election. In his own words:

Social media is the most significant factor that led to the establishment of Demokrat UniSZa. Social media is one of the factors that led to the organization of political activism in UNiSZa. How we started in UniSZa was also through social media.

The second explanation for how social media can influence the decision of young people and youth organizations to engage in political activism is the fact that social media is primarily used by young people (Ahmad et al., 2015). Not only are young people the main users of social media, but they also frequently use multiple platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook at the same time because they are easy to use and affordable (Sani & Azizuddin, 2014). As a result, young users quickly share any news on social media. Since young people are the main users of social media (Howe, 2023), any information that appears on social media becomes popular because

young users share it frequently. Therefore, by identifying the issues that are trending on social media, one can also understand the topics that interest young people. This is the reasoning provided by Dharshinee from Mahasiswa Keadilan, explaining what motivated her youth organization's political activism. Mahasiswa Keadilan has been involved in political activism long before social media platforms became popular. However, the trends and posts on social media still significantly influence the type of activities they choose to engage in as part of their political activism. According to Dharshinee, she stated:

I agree that it is driven by social media information because we have a target audience: young people. Young people now in this era are constantly on their social media, so whatever that is, mainly drives our activism through our social media.

The third explanation for how social media would influence the youth and youth organizations to participate in political activism is the validity of the information presented. Regular citizens are not the only social media users; news outlets and government agencies also have dedicated pages within various social media platforms where they share their information and views (Apuke, 2016). And though news outlets tend to advertise sensationalized stories at the expense of news with proper context, it is undeniable that the information shared by news outlets is typically more credible than the postings transmitted by everyday citizens unless they are verified experts in the field. Henceforth, the information presented by news outlets or government agencies within social media would also be able to trigger student organizations to action through political activism, especially if the information shared involves hot-button issues in Malaysian politics such as party hopping, updates about the AUKU amendment, the question of UEC, and uncertainties about a new government. Wafiy uses this rationale. Wafiy is a member of the Highest Council within Gabungan Pelajar Melayu Semenanjung (GPMS), a student organization that is critical of the welfare of Malay students in the Malayan peninsula. In his explanation, he highlighted that in recent times, GPMS's exposure to news about the issue of the Unified Examination Certificate (UEC) in social media prompted their political activism. In Wafiy's explanation, he quoted:

About the UEC, our first source is the news, but the issue's sentiment and virality come from social media. Because the news is only news, but the thing that sparks it is social media, and most of our members know about any issue from social media.

The GPMS organization has consistently opposed the recognition of UEC throughout its history. However, Wafiy argues that social media provides valuable insights into public opinion on UEC in current times. This information could potentially be used to strengthen their argument against UEC. However, it is important to note that information found on social media should not be blindly accepted. While it helps gauge user sentiment, a responsible political organization should verify these claims with factual evidence. This aligns with a study conducted in Malaysia, where 80% of the participants were youths, which found that 69% of them rely on social media for daily information. However, 60% of these participants still consider mainstream media (such as television and newspapers) to be more trustworthy than social media (Arandas et al., 2021). Therefore, youths do not blindly accept online information without question. Airil from Mahasiswa United (MU) supports this perspective, stating that social media is generally an unreliable source of political knowledge. Airil further explains:

But in the form of social media, for example, if we get input from 'Talk', I am less encouraged because they have no facts. We must have facts and figures to explain political issues or anything.

However, if the information presented on social media originates from a reliable news outlet, it would be considered credible and have a substantial impact on MU's decision to participate in political activism. In this regard, Airil states:

Some newspapers use this social media platform, Facebook, to convey their news. So, regarding bringing up that fact, I will use Facebook as a reference for MU. Facebook is the source of information that MU refers to the most for political activism activities.

Of course, Facebook is not the only social media platform that has official news outlet profile pages. However, in Airil's case, his organization prefers to use Facebook as their social media platform to provide them with the latest news and updates in Malaysia.

3.2.3 Sheraton Move

The Sheraton Move is the first cause for the increasing trend of political activism that will be discussed. Given its wide-ranging impact on Malaysia, it is unsurprising that the Sheraton Move has influenced the opinions of the youth regarding Malaysian politics. Aliff Naim from IIUM Student Union believes that the events of the Sheraton Move have made the youth realize the importance of being politically active, as they cannot rely solely on politicians to determine their political well-being. In his words:

Some youths have actively participated in politics since 2020 because of the Sheraton Move. Because they see a need for them to join politics, he added, “Youth who actively take part in politics because they don’t want to leave their fate just in the hands of the members of parliament.

Thus, the events of the Sheraton Move have encouraged the youth to become more politically active. This is because the event demonstrated the instability of the Malaysian government system. The youths reject the backdoor government maneuver by PN, the attempts to overthrow the lawfully elected PH government, and the internal conflicts within the PH government (Saidin, 2023). The Sheraton Move has revealed that the politicians they once trusted to prioritize the needs of the citizens and maintain political stability may instead prioritize their own interests. This disappointment with politicians serves as a motivating factor for the increased involvement of young people in political activism. Nur Rahim from Mahasiswa Raket describes this sentiment:

They saw that Sheraton’s move was happening and were disgusted. Jumping political parties, they considered it to be a bit unfair because we voted to win this party (PH). Yet, the people’s representatives then jumped and joined another party. So maybe that thing will arouse a feeling of dissatisfaction, so we can see that the trend increases with the protests that started in parliament.

Nur Rahim argues that the Sheraton Move inadvertently led to an increase in youth political activism by damaging the reputations of politicians involved. However, it is important to note that while the Sheraton Move motivated Malaysian youths to engage in political activism, it could also result in greater apathy towards electoral politics as a whole. A study conducted in Zambia revealed that one of the reasons for voter apathy is a lack of change in leadership (Mataka & Nkandu, 2020). The Sheraton

Move, viewed as a failure to bring about leadership change, resulted in the formation of a government comprised of Bersatu and UMNO members. UMNO is the same party that many Malaysian voters opposed in GE14. Consequently, this can be seen as a return to previous leadership, which has led to resentment and disappointment among Malaysians. This feeling of relative deprivation, experienced by youths, drives them to participate in political activism according to the SIRDE model (Abrams et al., 2020). The Sheraton Move illustrates how Malaysians' voting rights are undermined, as the government they elected can easily collapse and be replaced by a new cabinet with vastly different views and policies from those of the majority. While this deprivation affects all Malaysian citizens, not just the youth, it is disingenuous to argue that the youth are not affected, considering that 41% of voters in GE14 were young Malaysians (Chinnasamy & Azmi, 2018).

3.2.4 Formation of MUDA

Another reason that youth leaders attribute to the rising trend of youth political activism is the establishment of MUDA. MUDA is a newly formed youth political party founded by former Youth and Sports Minister Syed Saddiq. To summarize, MUDA is a political party created by Syed Saddiq to cater to the needs and aspirations of Malaysian youths who reject the traditional politics (Azmi, 2022). This point connects to the previous point about the Sheraton Move, as MUDA was formed as a direct response to it. The internal conflicts and party-switching within the PH coalition prompted Syed Saddiq to establish a political party that he believes is free from the old-fashioned political mentality. Because MUDA is a recently formed political party with a focus on the youth, it is expected that the MUDA organization will contribute to the increase in youth political activism. Currently, there is a lack of academic literature on the direct impact of MUDA on the growth of youth political activism. However, many youth leaders believe that the establishment of MUDA has played a role in the upward trend of youth political activism. Aidi Zuhaili from Mahasiswa Amanah supports this viewpoint. He stated:

I think one of the reasons for the establishment of MUDA is that young people believe they would rather become a MUDA member than a member of a conventional party, even within Amanah itself. The youth are likelier to become Pakatan Harapan member, MUDA member, or Keadilan member". They believe MUDA gives all the young people a platform to enter politics. MUDA is one of the reasons why we have a constant growth of youth political activism since 2020.

From this statement by Aidi, he implies that MUDA's role in the increasing trend of youth political involvement is not tied to any specific actions performed by MUDA, but rather to the perception people have of MUDA itself. Aidi repeatedly uses the word "believe" to explain how MUDA influences youth politics, suggesting that MUDA's impact on youth activism primarily stems from the youths' own beliefs about MUDA. It is possible that Aidi is suggesting that the presence of a political party mostly led by Malaysian youths energizes them to engage in politics. Interestingly, it should be noted that in this study, Ashraff Fahmy, an actual representative from MUDA, never claimed that MUDA influenced the rise of youth political activism.

Unfortunately, the potential influence of MUDA in politics may be stifled by current events in 2023. In the 2022 Johor state election, MUDA only managed to win one seat in the Johor Legislative State Assembly. In the August State Elections in 2023, MUDA lost all 19 contested seats (Sun, 2023). Adding to this series of setbacks, Syed Saddiq was recently found guilty of corruption, specifically embezzling over \$200,000 from his party's funds (Chan, 2023). He has been sentenced to 7 years in jail, two cane lashings, and fined RM 10 million. Whether his supporters argue that the embezzlement was due to ignorance rather than maliciousness is irrelevant. The stain of political corruption on a figure who has always been vocal in fighting against corruption in the political system will forever tarnish the political prospects of Syed Saddiq and MUDA. Consequently, there is a possibility that the enthusiasm of Malaysian youths to be involved in politics may dwindle over time due to the perceived corruption of Malaysia's most prominent youth politician. However, this does not change the potential impact they may have on youth participation in Malaysian politics. Even if MUDA fails to become an influential political party on par with UMNO, PKR, or PAS, its entry into Malaysia's political scene could still inspire other politically-minded youths to create parties that challenge Malaysia's status quo. While MUDA itself may not fade into

obscurity just yet, since the collapse of the coalition government in February 2020, individual political parties in Malaysia can no longer dominate the government as they did before (Wong, 2023). This means that youth-centric political organizations like MUDA still have the potential to gain significant political influence due to the importance of youth voters.

3.2.5 14th General Election

It is not surprising that youth leaders in Malaysia believe that the Sheraton Move and the formation of MUDA have played a significant role in influencing the trend of youth political activism since 2020. However, some youth leaders also attribute the increase in youth political activism to Malaysia's 14th General Election. This election marked a historic moment as it resulted in the ruling BN government's first-ever loss and the rise of the PH coalition as the government for the first time. What is equally important to note is the crucial role that youth voters played in determining the outcome of the 14thGE. Therefore, some youth leaders believe that this election laid the groundwork for greater political engagement among the youth. In fact, during this election, a significant number of young voters participated, accounting for 41% of the total voters (Chinnasamy & Azmi, 2018). This further supports the notion that youth voters were instrumental in the PH's victory. Subsequently, the presence of young voters in the election and the renewed perception of Malaysian politics as more democratic sparked the interest of Malaysian youth in politics. Dharshinee, the Deputy of Mahasiswa Keadilan, emphasized this point, stating:

However, that was the turning point when Pakatan Harapan won the election. Many opened their eyes, and many were interested. I believe that was the turning point, and people became more excited and more deeply delved into the politics of Malaysia when the Sheraton Move happened. Because that was something new to many, because they thought, 'eh, things like this can also occur in politics?'

Be that as it may, some observers may doubt this claim simply because of Dharshinee's identity. Dharshinee is the Deputy President of Mahasiswa Keadilan, the student wing of PKR, the political party that benefited the most from the results of the

14th General Election. Therefore, there may be some bias in her assessment. However, her opinion about the effect of the 14th General Election on the trend of increasing political activism is also shared by Airil, the President of Mahasiswa United, a student wing of the BERSATU party and a political opponent of PKR. In regards to this, Airil said:

Post GE14, where even young people have started to know about politics and know a little about politics. Coupled with Dato Najib Razak's case regarding 1MDB, young people are more curious about politics in Malaysia. It has translated into the enthusiasm of youth for politics in this GE15.

Thus, he emphasized that youth political interest surged after the 14th GE. He also pointed out that the 1MDB scandal, which coincided with the election, further intensified the youth's engagement in politics. However, it is worth noting that criticisms of bias could be directed towards both Dharhsinee and Airil. This is because Airil's political party, the BERSATU party, was part of the same coalition that emerged victorious in the 14th GE, alongside Dharshinee's party.

3.2.6 Undi18 Amendment

The next point raised by Malaysian youth leaders concerns the impact of the amendment to the minimum voting age of 18 on youth political activism, commonly known as Undi18 (Annuar, 2019). Undi18, in the context of Malaysian politics, has two meanings. It can refer to the revision of the minimum voting age, or it can refer to the organization that advocated for this amendment. In this study, Undi18 will primarily be used to refer to the revision of the minimum voting age. The amendment was a significant shift in Malaysian politics, expanding the voting base and giving Malaysian youth greater political efficacy in choosing their leaders and policies (Zain et al., 2023). As a result, many Malaysian youth leaders believe that the Undi18 amendment has affected the trend of youth political activism. The more youth perceive that Malaysian politics can change, the less apathetic they become towards political engagement. Naiem Zikri from Suara Mahasiswa UMS supports this view, stating:

Yes, I can see the trend is increasing because of the addition of the implementation of Undi18. So, the youth activists will be more willing to see what the political landscape is all about.

To further support this point, Ashraff Fahmy, the representative from MUDA, also believes that Undi18 plays a significant role in influencing the youth's political activism trend. Ashraff stated:

Yes, of course, it's pretty apparent, especially when Undi18 was passed, and we have many more young voters. It encouraged young people to get involved in politics. Even in my constituency in Gombak, we have secondary school students who are willing to join our activities and ready to join our initiatives in Gombak.

Huzayl, the representative from Persatuan Belia Harmoni, agrees with Ashraf and Naiem's point about the role of Undi18. However, he adds that Undi18 has had a positive impact on the youth's political activism trend by renewing their interest in politics. Huzayl stated: This growing trend existed after Undi18. Only then did you see gangs (youths) that didn't care about politics before now want to care.

Thus, the amendment to the voting age increases the trend of youth political activism by giving more Malaysian youths a stake in political matters. Simultaneously, the Undi18 amendment can also be used as an example of the collective efficacy of the youth according to the SIRDE model. This study suggests that the amendment represents the "efficacy" component of the SIRDE model. According to this model, higher collective efficacy among the youth is more likely to result in normative political actions such as protests and other forms of political advocacy (Grant et al., 2017). This is because the amendment to the voting age increases the sense of efficacy that youths feel towards Malaysian politics by significantly expanding the number of eligible young voters in GE15 (James, 2023). As noted by youth leaders in this study, such as Naiem, Ashraff, and Huzayl, the number of young people participating in various normative political actions has increased since the implementation of the Undi18 amendment. However, there is a risk associated with extending the right to vote to 18-year-olds. The risk is that populist sentiments could influence these new youthful voters due to a lack of education, particularly in politics. Some political commentators believe that the PN coalition gained many seats in Parliament after GE15, despite their use of racial or religious rhetoric, because of a lack of political education among Malaysian youth (Ong,

2022). Malaysia does not provide adequate political knowledge to its students, making them susceptible to being swayed by populist sentiments propagated through popular media, including social media. Previous studies, such as the one conducted by Subre and her colleagues, have shown that social media use can influence individuals' political views (Subre et al., 2023). Considering that social media users are predominantly young people (Ahmad et al., 2015), they are at a higher risk of being exposed to inflammatory populist sentiments without being provided with the necessary context regarding the issues that Malaysia faces.

3.2.7 Online Engagement of Youth

As previously discussed, one reason why young people are highly involved with online platforms like social media is due to the instant notification features that are available on all social media outlets. This feature makes it easier and more convenient for users to share information (Abdullah et al., 2021). Consequently, political information shared online is more easily accessible to Malaysian youth. This supports the statement made by Loo Qie Ying from UMANY. Qie Ying states:

They are also more reachable because, during the pandemic period, everything moved toward social media. Before, the youth showed support by being involved in “Turun Padang”, but now everyone is interested in political activism by supporting those activities online.

Hence, youth political activism has increased because online platforms make political information more accessible and political activism more convenient. However, it is important to note that this social and online media feature was already present before 2020. Another explanation for the increased prominence of online engagement on youth political activism is the pandemic. During the pandemic, the entire world was confined to their homes or rooms, and as a result, people could only interact with the outside world through the internet and online platforms. Consequently, users of online platforms, especially young people, have increased their consumption of political information (Karhu et al., 2021). Dzarif from Kelab Mahasiswa Penyokong PAS also supports this explanation for the upward trend in youth political activism since 2020. According to Dzarif, the youth's increased political activism can be attributed to the fact

that they have had to rely on the internet and online platforms for their communication and information needs.

If it's concerning activism where we express our ideas and so on, then during the time of MCO it increased, because during the MCO people were staring at each other's screens more and more.

Indeed, studies like the one conducted by Mari Karhu, a visual design researcher from Finland, indicate that the increased use of online media during the pandemic can be attributed to several factors. These include the greater access to the internet due to the Movement Control Order (MCO), the need to connect with people they couldn't meet in person, and the desire to stay informed about the pandemic (Karhu et al., 2021). This aligns with the perspective of Dzarif and Qie Ying, who also note the growing online engagement of young people. Qie Ying's quote suggests that the youth leaders in this study identify young people as the social group in Malaysia that utilizes social media for political participation. Thus, the study proposes that the social identity component of the SIRDE model theory, as presented by Abrams et al. (2020), can explain youth political activism. Online engagement reinforces youth social identity, as the more posts and memes they create regarding their perceived deprivation under the Muhyiddin government, the stronger their social identity becomes. The growing awareness among young people of their collective suffering further fosters feelings of solidarity, thereby reinforcing their social identity (Freelon, 2018). The increasing online engagement of Malaysian youth also encompasses another aspect of the SIRDE model, known as "collective efficacy." As discussed earlier, Malaysian youth have become highly active in social interactions on the internet since the government implemented strict MCO measures. This active online engagement among young people leads to a heightened sense of collective efficacy. The more youths engage with one another online, the more they realize that the deprivation they experience under the Muhyiddin government is shared by other Malaysian youths. This realization boosts their confidence in engaging in political activism, as they believe they are more likely to effect social change by working together as a group (Grant et al., 2015). Consequently, when young people experience increased collective efficacy through online engagement, they are emboldened to participate in activities such as protests, as

witnessed in the #Lawan protests, which initially originated from online interactions among the youth (Amnesty International, 2021).

3.3 ACTIVITIES OF YOUTH POLITICAL ACTIVISM

Another important topic of discussion regarding the political activism of youth in Malaysia is the type of political activism in which Malaysian youth engage. This discussion covers four different types of political activism: political advocacy, engagement with the government, protests, and social media engagement.

3.3.1 Political Advocacy

Political advocacy involves presenting information to influence a political decision or a political figure (Casey, 2011). This discussion on political advocacy encompasses three key components: political literacy, promotion of youth candidates, and encouragement of youth participation. Firstly, political literacy refers to the act of advocating for political causes by enhancing the political understanding of Malaysian youth. Research has demonstrated that an increase in political literacy has a direct impact on youth participation in political activism (Ismail et al., 2015; Abdullah et al., 2021). Consequently, numerous youth-based organizations engage in political advocacy by promoting political literacy among Malaysian youth. Aidi Zuhaili, the President of Mahasiswa Amanah, highlighted that his organization achieves this through the Kelas Demokrasi program. According to Aidi Zuhaili, this advocacy initiative aims to:

We have also engaged with youth organizations, organizing Kelas Demokrasi, a politics school and politics camp.

The terms "politics school" and "politics camp" refer to programs similar to Kelas Demokrasi. It is important to note that Kelas Demokrasi is not a program created by Mahasiswa Amanah. Instead, it is a seminar that was designed and conducted by Mohd Fahmi Reza, a well-known Malaysian political graphic designer and documentary filmmaker. In this particular case, Mahasiswa Amanah invited Fahmi

Reza to present his Kelas Demokrasi at an event of their choosing. During the Kelas Demokrasi seminar, Fahmi Reza utilized small whiteboards placed in front of a mini stage, as well as his own notes, to provide easily understandable explanations and information about the election system in Malaysia, the parliamentary system, the ideology of political parties, and the coalitions that compete in elections (Ramlan, 2022). It is worth mentioning that Fahmi Reza's seminar and perspectives are apolitical, as he feels equally comfortable criticizing politicians from all sides of the political spectrum. However, despite this, various public universities have frequently banned him due to concerns that he may be attempting to influence the political views of students. Nevertheless, the primary goal of Kelas Demokrasi is to equip Malaysian youth, particularly those in educational institutions, with the necessary political knowledge to prepare them for the crucial GE15. It is important to note, though, that while political literacy can be an effective means of political advocacy, it might not always result in increased political activism among young people. A study conducted by Norhafiza Mohd Hed, which was previously discussed in the Literature Review section of this study, reveals that increased education or political literacy did not influence the decision of young individuals to engage in political activities (Mohd Hed, 2017).

The second form of political advocacy is the promotion of youth candidates. The presence of youth candidates was already a very newsworthy topic during Malaysia's GE14, with the most prominent being Syed Saddiq from Pakatan Harapan and Prabakaran Parameswaran (Aziz, 2018). For GE15, the number of youth candidates has only increased, including candidates such as Peggy Chaw, Muhammad Syahmi Suhaimi, Adam Adli, and Shahril Hamdan. While it is not yet proven, the role of youth voters in the results of GE14 likely influenced the proliferation of youth candidates for GE15. According to certain post-GE14 studies, such as the one conducted by Chinnasamy and Azmi in 2018, young voters accounted for 41% of the total voters during GE14 (Chinnasamy & Azmi, 2018). Therefore, it is foreseeable that youth-based organizations would want to promote the candidacy of a young candidate in their 20s or early 30s who would be more relatable to the youth. This is exemplified by the efforts of Mahasiswa Keadilan, as described by Dharshinee, the Deputy President of Mahasiswa Keadilan:

We were campaigning for candidates with student status. For example, during the Melaka PRN, there was Farzana Hayani. She was a student at UITM, so we campaigned for her.

In hindsight, it is not surprising that Mahasiswa Keadilan, a component organization of PKR, would support Farzana Hayani, a state election candidate from PKR. However, Dharshinee later mentioned that she would not mind if youth candidates from rival parties won their candidacy to increase the number of young politicians in Parliament. Citing:

If we look at the demographics of young people allowed to be election candidates yesterday, it's good! Many young people are given opportunities. It's just that these young candidates are given tough seats to fight in the election. I am not giving an example from my party because my party can say that their distribution is good. Perhaps from Shahril Hamdan's party, he was assigned to fight with Adly Zahari, the former chief minister of Malacca. Isn't that a bit unfair? I like how Shahril Hamdan worked, and I am not from Barisan Nasional, but I would like to see him in Parliament because I feel that a young person like Shahril Hamdan should be in parliament.

It is evident that Dharshinee and her organization are committed to fostering the participation of more young candidates in the Malaysian political landscape, regardless of their party affiliation. While not explicitly stated, it is likely that her organization also actively supported youth candidates from the PH coalition party during GE15, such as Syefura Othman, Adam Adli, and Muhammad Syahmi. Regrettably, despite the significance of promoting young candidates to encourage youth political engagement, Dharshinee highlighted that the political parties that fielded young parliamentary candidates during GE15 did not fully prioritize the promotion of these candidates. Therefore, the promotion of young political candidates would be futile if those in power lack confidence in the value of youth perspectives in government.

The third type of political advocacy focuses on encouraging youth participation in politics. This type of advocacy builds on the promotion of political literacy, as increasing the political knowledge of young people makes it easier to motivate them to engage in politics (Ismail et al., 2015). The most fundamental form of participation is through voting in elections. In efforts to enhance political literacy, youth organizations

provided young people with the necessary knowledge about the Malaysian political system, giving them the context they needed. This is similar to the approach taken by Kelas Demokrasi. However, the efforts to encourage youth participation in politics go a step further by actively informing young people about the importance of voting. This includes not only national elections but also campus elections. Wafiq, the President of Persatuan Belia Islam Nasional (PEMBINA), explained that his organization launched campaigns to motivate university students to vote by raising awareness about Malaysian politics. They explained the potential dangers that certain movements could pose to Malaysia's national identity. In Wafiq's own words:

Through awareness campaigns and protests against movements that bring a political agenda that threatens national identity (such as COMANGO, ICERD & LGBT), as well as political awareness advocacy campaigns such as the campaign to Vote for Credible Muslim Candidates, Malaysia Islamic Nation.

These political awareness programs aim to educate young people about the importance of voting and the consequences of not voting. However, the type of awareness that PEMBINA spreads in their programs may be considered controversial by individuals who do not identify as Malay Muslim. This raises a concern about promoting youth participation in politics through racial sentiments. A study conducted from 2020 to 2022 on thousands of Malaysians aged 18 and above found that ethnicity plays a significant role in driving political participation, more so than economic concerns, governance issues, or political stability (Mohamad & Suffian, 2023). If more politically active youth organizations attempt to encourage youth participation in politics through racial issues, as exemplified by PEMBINA, it may only exacerbate the race-based politics that Malaysia is currently grappling with (Leong, 2023). This reality has the potential to further divide Malaysian society into irreconcilable factions.

3.3.2 Engagement with the Government

Another method of political activism that could be just as effective, if not more effective, than political advocacy is engaging with the government. It is easy to see why this is the case. Political advocacy mainly involves expressing opinions to the public or elected officials through giving speeches or writing letters. In contrast, engaging with the government allows youth organizations to have direct dialogue with those in power (Youth Engagement and Empowerment, 2018). Studies have shown the positive impact that youth and government engagement can have if there are effective communication channels between them (Ng & Thomas, 2023). This would result in increased legitimacy of the government's decisions, trust in the government, and overall development and economic growth for the country (OECD, 2017). Youth-based organizations have the ability to employ various approaches to engage with the government.

The first approach is to meet with government officials. When the government wants to ensure smooth implementation of policies concerning the rights and welfare of Malaysian youth, it engages in dialogue with members and leaders of prominent youth organizations. This allows the government to gather perspectives and suggestions on how to improve or modify its policies (Ng & Thomas, 2023). These meetings prevent any misunderstanding between the government and the youth organizations regarding their wants and needs. Ministries directly responsible for Malaysian youth, such as the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Youth and Sports, typically hold meetings and engage with these organizations. For instance, on 14 December 2021, the Ministry of Youth and Sports conducted a meeting with 41 youth organizations to discuss the implementation of the Youth Societies and Youth Development Act (Amendment) 2019 (Act 668), which lowers the age limit for youths to 30 years old (STAR, 2021). However, ministries often hold less publicized meetings to address specific issues, as was the case with the IIUM Student Union. Aliff Naif, the President of the IIUM Student Union and a member of the National Student Representative Council (SRC), described a meeting between his organization and the Ministry of Education. According to Aliff, the meeting was productive and beneficial.

As the IIUM student union president, I am part of the national SRC (Student Representative Council). The national SRC comprises every president of every SRC, student union, or whatnot.

Thus, as a member of the SRC, Aliff regularly attends meetings with the Ministry of Education to discuss student welfare. In order to illustrate this, Aliff shared an example of one of these meetings by describing:

So, we join such meetings where we convey our opinions and concerns. For example, the last session I joined before the dissolution of Parliament was regarding changing our matric card. Right now, the IIUM matric card will be connected to RHB bank, so I joined the meeting with RHB and the Minister of Education, in which we voiced our concern.

The concerns that Aliff talks about here are about:

We have to change our matric card to be connected to RHB bank, yet our campus does not possess any ATM or office from RHB bank. Which makes it difficult for our OKU friends to do their business.

Thus, in order to enhance the well-being of students on campus, youth organizations should arrange meetings with government ministries to advocate for their difficulties. This demonstrates that the element of advocacy is still a part of their engagement with the government. However, unlike the political advocacy discussed in 3.3.1, this form of advocacy is more focused on directly addressing the individuals in power. In contrast, the political advocacy discussed in 3.3.1 aims to create publicity in order to capture the attention of those in power.

The second approach to engaging with the government is through Members of Parliament (MPs). This type of engagement is more personal and personable, as it involves interacting with individuals rather than institutions. By directly engaging with politicians, politically active youth can establish a rapport with them (Mohd & Krauss, 2019). This allows politicians to develop greater empathy for the concerns of youth regarding their welfare and rights. Meetings between young people and MPs can take various forms, including routine meetings, podcasts, visits to Parliament during sessions, and inviting MPs from both sides to engage in debates. Arus Anak Muda, a youth-based political organization, works closely with MPs to foster engagement. Nabil

Halimi, President of Arus Anak Muda, described their engagement with MPs as follows:

We did engagements like podcasts with members of Parliament, we had meetings with opposition leaders, and we went to Parliament to bring youths who haven't even managed to look into how they debate. We bring in special sessions with MPs from both sides.

Hence, the activities described by Nabil are some of the ways that youth organizations engage with Members of Parliament. This engagement goes beyond simply meeting with MPs; it also includes giving youth participants the opportunity to visit the Malaysian parliamentary sessions, which have become quite famous in the country (Aslan, 2022). Nabil mentions, "We bring in special sessions with MPs from both sides." This refers to podcast sessions where Arus Anak Muda invites MPs from opposing parties to participate in the same podcast, creating an engaging conversation between politicians with differing views. These engagements help build rapport between youth organizations and the MPs. If these MPs are key members of relevant institutions, it allows Arus Anak Muda to establish rapport with those institutions. Nabil explains the rationale for their engagement with MPs as follows:

We try to bring an ecosystem where we work with MPs that we are friendly with so that we can understand how it worked for NGOs to work with respective institutions. So that is how we try to instil different approaches despite you trying to be neutral as an NGO. You still have to face the fact that the power structure lies in the Constitution. The power structure still relies on the MPs to voice your agenda. You still need to lobby MPs to get whatever you need as an NGO. Thus, that is all the initiatives that we have done.

Thus, the engagement of Arus Anak Muda with MPs provides them with a convenient platform to express their concerns and views to governmental institutions. The third approach involves the submission of memorandums. Although submitting a memorandum is considered a part of political advocacy, it is included in this section because the memorandums in this case are directly addressed to the government. As mentioned earlier, political advocacy in this discussion focuses on efforts aimed at the general public rather than specifically targeting the government. Memorandums are

written messages used for professional purposes. These memos typically convey decisions, agendas, policies, and suggestions to the recipient party in a concise manner. In Malaysia, various youth-based NGOs have utilized memorandums to draw attention to specific issues that they believe require urgent attention from the relevant authorities. One example of such utilization is the action taken by the youth wing of Parti Amanah Negara (AMANAH), who submitted a memorandum directly to the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong, the Head of State of Malaysia. This memorandum questions the moral integrity of Tan Sri Azam Baki, who is suspected of owning shares in several companies during his tenure as the MACC Director of Investigations (Rahim, 2022). Another example is the submission made by Persatuan Belia Harmoni to the Minister of Finance, containing suggestions regarding the 2022 budget. According to Huzayl, the President of Persatuan Belia Harmoni, the submission was made to convey their desired contributions.

We will also bring a policy paper to the government. We will do it in 2021 before the 2022 budget is read, together with the student movement initiated by Harmoni Malaysia. We will discuss with other organizations to ask for their views on what we want to bring to the MoF for him to include in the 2022 budget. We have a document we made together and presented at the MoF in front of the Deputy Director of the 2022 Budget.

Though he referred to the document he submitted as a "policy paper" in his account, it is essentially still a memorandum. Persatuan Belia Harmoni did not submit the memorandum individually; instead, they were joined by several other student organizations, including Harmoni Malaysia. This collective support from various student organizations for the submission of the 2022 Budget memorandum adds weight to the submission in the eyes of the media. It is not uncommon for student organizations to submit a memorandum to a government body with the support of allied student organizations. The IIUM Student Union also employs similar measures when submitting their memorandum. According to Aliff Naim, the President of the IIUM Student Union, their organization submitted their memorandum in the following manner:

We also have some memorandum, so we are working in a silo. We have a student network on a national level. IIUM student union, UM student union, and grassroots movements, for example, Congress IIUM, Demokrat UM, and Demokrat UKM. There are so many of us on a

national level. So, what we did is we shared our resources in terms of ideas, money, and manpower. So sometimes we would write a suggestion paper proposal, or sometimes we wrote a memorandum, for example, on goods prices. So, we wrote it together with every student group we could reach. If I'm not mistaken, it is 33 or 37 student groups. And we went to the Parliament and handed a memorandum to the member of Parliament, whether it was on the government or the opposition. We will inform them, and they will come to us and take our memorandum and proposal.

The account provided by Aliff highlights the extent of activism through memorandum submissions, which is dependent on the submitting organization's network of contacts. However, it remains uncertain whether the mainstream media ever reported on the specific memorandum submission mentioned by Aliff. Nevertheless, the mainstream media did publicize a threat of demonstration on 29 June 2022, organized by a coalition of 20 student groups led by Aliff Naim, addressing the issue of escalating prices of essential goods (Asyraf, 2022).

3.3.3 Protests

The next activity we will discuss is youth participation in protests. When the term "political activism" is mentioned, protests are often the first thing that comes to mind. Protests are designed to attract public attention by expressing disapproval or dissent towards a political idea or action (Chenoweth et al., 2022). Political activists frequently use protests to highlight overlooked viewpoints that only affect a small portion of society, or to express dissatisfaction with an extreme idea that does not align with the majority's views (Chenoweth et al., 2022). Therefore, it's not surprising that youth organizations in Malaysia have chosen to use demonstrations or protests as their means of political activism. In this section, we will explore three methods of protest: demonstrations, flash mobs, and vehicular convoys.

The first method we will discuss is demonstrations. Demonstrations are a type of protest that involve more than twenty people gathering in a public space and then marching from one place to another (Casquete, 2006). Demonstrations can be highly effective in gaining public attention, to the point that even the threat of a demonstration can be influential. For instance, in the previous paragraph, we mentioned a specific

demonstration that took place on June 29, 2022. This demonstration was organized by 20 student groups, led by Aliff Naim, to protest the increasing prices of goods, particularly food items (Asyraf, 2022). Anas Akmal, the Strategic Director of Angkatan UM, also provided his account of the same gathering on June 29, 2022. He stated:

The group has also united in solidarity for a demonstration to lower the price of goods in front of Sogo and front of the art market. That is one of the examples of political activities carried out by Angkatan Mahasiswa.

The protest was not just about the price of foodstuff; it encompassed various demands from the students. These demands included requesting the government to reduce the minister's salary, maintain subsidies, provide dignified aid to all levels of society, control the price of goods, and address the issue of food security (Nazaraly, 2022).

The second method of protest used by youth organizations is the use of flash mobs. Flash mobs differ from traditional protests. Protests typically involve creating a public disturbance that can last long enough to draw attention to a specific overlooked issue or grievance. However, flash mobs aim to bring attention to a particular topic through entertaining performances that are short but attention-grabbing. They do this by perplexing the audience with a series of nonsensical actions (Tan & Bakar, 2015). Like regular protests, flash mobs also draw attention to a specific topic and involve numerous participants who seek to call attention to themselves. However, flash mobs can be more tasteful because they know when to leave. They tend to disperse after their performance ends (Tan & Bakar, 2015). The organization Persatuan Belia Harmoni, which was previously mentioned for submitting a memorandum to the Minister of Finance, also used flash mobs alongside regular protests in their political activism. According to Huzayl, the President of Persatuan Belia Harmoni, their protest activities include:

Together with other movements, we come down to demonstrate or make a gimmick like a Flash mob to show that we have a disagreement or a stance.

Unfortunately, Huzayl does not provide further details about his organization's Flash mob activity. However, it can be assumed that it is similar to the Keretapi Sarong

flash mob that took place in September 2022. During this event, a large number of participants gathered at their nearest train station wearing traditional Malay clothes known as "batik" (Zikri, 2022).

The third method is vehicular convoys. Vehicular convoys as a method of political activism are not as well-known as other forms of protests because they mainly capture the attention of citizens on the roadway. These convoys only briefly appear on the periphery of citizens' attention spans. Vehicular convoys can only achieve their maximum effect if the roads are filled with vehicles. Typically, this happens during special holiday events. However, it also occurs during the election season when Malaysian citizens return to their hometowns to vote for their parliamentary candidates (Lee, 2022). During the 2022 election season, specific youth organizations use highway congestion to perform their demonstrations using vehicular convoys. Kelab Mahasiswa Penyokong PAS employs this strategy, and the scale of their convoy is quite impressive. Dzafir Firdaus, the Chairman of Kelab Mahasiswa Penyokong PAS, describes their method during the election season as follows:

We have also made for the recent GE a motor convoy of young people; we gathered 1,000 people. 1,000 of us convoyed from Sungai Besi to Putrajaya. Not all of them ride motorbikes, but most of them ride motorbikes. Alhamdulillah, we managed to do that, which is what we think is our latest activity for our activism. To collect all the riders of the convoy, we open it up to anyone who wants to register through social media.

Having 1,000 motorcyclists on the highways holding or displaying banners in support of the PAS party or any grievances or issues that the convoy planners wish to convey will quickly affect everyday road users. This is especially true for road users who are on their way to return home to vote, as the information or opinions that have the most impact on them will likely affect their voting patterns. Therefore, even if Kelab Mahasiswa Penyokong PAS did not use their vehicular convoy demonstrations in the same way as Aliff and his compatriots from Pasar Seni, the concept is still the same. A vehicular convoy can just as easily be used to voice disapprovals or grievances on a congested highway.

3.3.4 Social Media Engagement

The final activity related to the political activism of politically active Malaysian youth is social media engagement, as mentioned earlier. Social media has the potential to influence young people because it is a platform where trending information is shared in cyberspace. It simplifies and makes information sharing more convenient for youth users (Abdullah et al., 2021). A 2021 study defines social media engagement in political activism as activities such as signing online petitions, gathering information on social media, and sending messages to political candidates or government officials (Halim et al., 2021). Modern NGOs are aware of the effectiveness of social media as a method for political activism. They value the impact of social media to the extent that they are willing to seek professional advice from experts in the social media market. For example, Ashraff Helmy from MUDA stated that in their efforts to fully utilize social media, they consulted with Meta, the parent company of Facebook. Ashraff described their approach as follows:

We even have a class among MUDA members on how to use effective social media engagement. Especially we have a specific type done by our Penerangan team, which they will teach and share with members of MUDA on how to make good videos, how to edit videos on TikTok, how to make an effective posting on Facebook, how to make effective copyrighting on Instagram. And, of course, apart from our initiative among MUDA members, MUDA also engages with Meta (The parent company of Facebook), where they share with us the algorithms of Facebook, the kind of photos, and the type of values important in social media. How to make sure that your posting engages with the public.

This account of MUDA's consultation with corporations like Meta demonstrates the commitment of these organizations to mastering the social media algorithm. As a result, youth NGOs have discovered various ways to use social media for political activism. One method is using social media as a promotional tool for political marketing (Binshad, 2020). They achieve this by broadcasting programs such as seminars, forums, and classes on their social media platforms as part of their political activism. These programs allow users to engage more deeply with the organization's political messages and viewpoints, while also being convenient for social media users. According to Anas Akmal, the Strategic Director of Angkatan UM, this is how Angkatan utilizes social media for political activism:

At the national level, we use all our media platforms, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and so on, to give as many people as possible to see and hear what we are arguing and what we want to share.

Though online promotion can provide valid information for digital media users, it is widely recognized that mainstream media generally offers higher quality information compared to social media (Salaudeen & Onyechi, 2020). Therefore, youth organizations often utilize social media to engage with representatives from mainstream media. These organizations seek their assistance in promoting their programs through news outlets. Aliff Naif from IIUM Student Union shared that the student union employed this strategy by leveraging social media.

That is also where we call upon our media friends, meaning whatever media sites like Awani, Malaysiakini, Bernama, and everything through social media. Of course, we also use WhatsApp to contact them, but social media is the platform we use to gather media that we couldn't reach through WhatsApp.

The connection with their media friends is likely why mainstream media consistently gives considerable coverage to public political activism organized by politically active youth organizations. However, social media use can be more than just advertising political information or messaging associates from other organizations. Youth organizations can also use it to collect funds for citizens suffering from welfare issues (Ruzic, 2022). The use of social media by Malaysian citizens to assist with welfare issues, particularly environmental victims, is not new. Malaysians have been using social media to help victims of ecological disasters since 2013. During the severe flooding of Kuantan in December 2013, many concerned citizens used social media to delegate disaster relief tasks to different groups based on their preferences (Chong et al., 2014). In light of this, the youth-based organization Mahasiswa Raket, which is the student wing of the Democratic Action Party (DAP), chose to use social media as a means to collect funds to aid the victims of the severe flooding in Malaysia that began in December 2021. Regarding this, the President of Mahasiswa Raket, Nur Rahim Nasir, said:

And last year, we were successful. It was the middle of the flood season at the end of 2021, and we collected approximately RM 50,000 funds from crowdfunding. We have delivered in the form of help. We go all over Malaysia, in every state, to help clean the house. We pay volunteers, so we get from that, from virality from social media, we bring all those things. The help came non-stop for three weeks. People wanted to give support and goods. So social media is our central platform.

There is a clear parallel between the efforts made to assist flood victims in 2021 and the actions taken in 2013 to aid those affected by flooding. This parallel can be seen in the use of social media as a means to mobilize public support and provide relief to the victims. However, it is important to note that there is one disadvantage associated with this use of social media - the potential for an organization to exploit its platform by using it to solicit aid funds for purposes other than humanitarian relief. Regrettably, a recent example of such a case involves allegations against Aman Palestine, a Malaysian NGO responsible for providing humanitarian aid to Palestine. It is alleged that they misappropriated RM 70 million in funds from public donations (Camoens, 2023). Although Aman Palestine does not actively utilize social media to promote its aid collection, the underlying issue remains the same. Any organization has the potential to exploit the public's willingness to help those in need by appealing to their emotions.

3.4 VIEWS OF YOUTH POLITICAL ACTIVISM

This study aims to articulate the views of young people regarding their political activism by discussing the factors and activities associated with youth political engagement. By exploring the relationship between the factors that drive their political activism and their actual activities, this study seeks to shed light on their perspectives. Several key concepts have emerged throughout the discussion on youth political activism, including the political efficacy of young people and the increased use of social media, particularly following the pandemic.

3.4.1 Political Efficacy

As previously mentioned, political efficacy refers to the extent to which a person believes they can bring about social or political change. In the context of this study, the political efficacy of Malaysian youth refers to their belief in their ability to influence Malaysian politics. The study has already discussed the impact of political efficacy on the political activism of Malaysian youth (Levy & Akiva, 2019). Two factors have been identified as contributing to increased political efficacy among youth: the constitutional amendment to the minimum voting age in Malaysia and the events of the 14th General Election (GE14). These factors also influence the type of political activism that Malaysian youth engage in. The amendment to the minimum voting age has led the youth organizations in this study to prioritize political advocacy, specifically by encouraging Malaysian youth to participate in the electoral process. This encouragement often takes the form of programs like Kelas Demokrasi, which aim to educate young people about Malaysia's political system and the electoral process (Ramlan, 2022). In other words, the amendment to the minimum voting age, which took place in December 2021 and increased political activism among Malaysian youth, has also motivated politically active Malaysian youth to encourage their peers to vote. As for the events of the 14th General Election (GE14), they likely influenced youth political activism by promoting young political candidates. While this is not yet proven, the participation of young voters in GE14 likely led to an increase in the number of young political candidates in the subsequent GE15, such as Peggy Chaw, Muhammad Syahmi Suhaimi, Adam Adli, and Shahril Hamdan. The explanation for this increase is that political parties and youth political organizations, recognizing the significant participation of young voters in GE14 (Chinnasamy & Azmi, 2018), focused on attracting youth voters by fielding candidates who were closer to their age. Dharshinee, the representative of Mahasiswa Keadilan in this study, clearly stated that promoting young candidates is one of the activities her organization is involved in.

We were campaigning for candidates with student status. For example, during the Melaka PRN, there was Farzana Hayani. She was a student at UITM, so we campaigned for her.

Thus, GE14, which is responsible for the increase in youth political activism, also influenced the decision of the youth-based political groups in this study to promote youth political candidates in GE15 as part of their political activism activities.

3.4.2 Social Media Usage

When it comes to the opinions of Malaysian youth on the usage of social media in political activism, there is a clear link between the role of social media in increasing political activism and its role as a tool for political activism itself. The role of social media in increasing political activism among Malaysian youth has been extensively discussed. In this chapter, we have identified two characteristics of social media that contribute to its influence on youth participation in political activism: the algorithm function and the presence of mainstream media accounts. These two characteristics also make social media an ideal tool for youth to use in their political activism. Begin with the algorithm function, the algorithm function of all social media platforms allows them to instantly share any topics that are gaining mass attention from users. This means that trending topics on social media give users an understanding of the latest issues that are capturing the attention of Malaysian youths (Baatarjav & Dantu, 2011). As mentioned earlier, youth in Malaysia make up a large demographic on social media, so any trending topics are likely to be popular because youth users are sharing and liking posts related to these topics. The more youths engage with political issues by sharing and liking posts, the more their political literacy will increase. With increased political literacy, youths become more eager to participate in political activities. At the same time, youth-based political organizations or politically active youths in general can also use the algorithm function of social media to bring attention to politically literate youths regarding matters that are important to the welfare of all youths. These matters can include issues such as AUKU, constitutional amendments regarding the minimum voting age, or other youth-related issues as part of their political activism. To take advantage of this algorithm function, politically active youths can engage in political marketing on social media by broadcasting programs like seminars, forums, and classes on their social media platforms. These programs allow users to immerse themselves in issues related to the welfare of youth while still being convenient for social media users.

Therefore, youths see the algorithm system on social media as both responsible for increasing their political interest and participation and as a tool they can utilize for their own political activism. Next, the presence of mainstream media on social media. As mentioned earlier, news outlets on social media tend to prioritize sensationalized stories, but the information shared by these outlets is generally more credible than posts from everyday citizens unless those citizens are verified experts in the field. It is this credibility of mainstream media that contributes to its role in increasing youth political activism through social media. Additionally, politically active youths in this study are aware of how credible news outlets are perceived, and they use these outlets for their political activism. They recognize the usefulness of news outlets in transmitting information not only to the youth (who make up the largest demographic on social media) but also to the general audience. Therefore, politically active youths communicate with news outlets to publicize the issues that Malaysian youth face. A former leader of the IIUM Student Union, Aliff Naim, described this correspondence in detail.

That is also where we call upon our media friends, meaning whatever media sites like Awani, Malaysiakini, Bernama, and everything through social media. Of course, we also use WhatsApp to contact them, but social media is the platform we use to gather media that we couldn't reach through WhatsApp.

Showing that not only do politically active young people use social media indirectly through the influence that news outlets have, but these young people also directly use social media to communicate with these news outlets themselves. Therefore, in the perspective of young people regarding their political activism, they understand that the news outlets that represent the mainstream media are valuable allies in their political activism. This is because the news outlets can help shed light on issues related to youth welfare and also increase the political participation of young people themselves.

CHAPTER FOUR

HOW DOES THE MALAYSIAN YOUTH THINK MALAYSIAN POLITICAL LANDSCAPE SHOULD CHANGE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Regarding the political landscape, Malaysian politics also has a reputation for being corrupt due to the rigidity of its political institutions (Noh, 2016). As a result, Malaysian youth, especially those who are politically active, strongly believe that there is a need for change in the Malaysian political landscape.

4.2 FACET OF POLITICS THAT MALAYSIAN YOUTHS WANT TO CHANGE

4.2.1 Need for Coalitions between Political Parties

A coalition of political parties has historically ruled Malaysia. For the first 61 years, the BN coalition, comprised of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), was in power (Wong, 2018). Although BN consisted mainly of these three parties, UMNO controlled the alliance, with MIC and MCA maintaining subordinate relationships within BN (Wong, 2018). Due to UMNO's dominance and their control over votes, the government of Malaysia remained stable with minimal upheaval, aside from the 1987 feud between Dr Mahathir and his finance minister Razaleigh Hamzah (Tan, 1990), and the rivalry between Dr Mahathir and his former deputy Anwar Ibrahim in the early 2000s during the rise of the Reformasi Movement (Abbot, 2001). However, since 2018, when the PH coalition replaced the BN coalition, Malaysia has experienced instances of chaos and political instability, starting with the Sheraton Move affair in 2020, and

most recently, the five-day political limbo following Malaysia's GE15 in 2022 (Chin, 2023).

In most cases, political chaos and instability occur because political parties need to form large coalitions in order to secure the 112 majority seats in Dewan Rakyat required to establish a government (Chin, 2023). Unlike the BN coalition, which never faced the challenge of not having enough political seats or the risk of coalition fragmentation while in power, as experienced during the Sheraton Move in 2020, the PH alliance consisted of political parties with diverse political views (Ufen, 2021). This led to tensions and ultimately the splitting of the PH coalition during the Sheraton Move. The BN coalition never encountered such challenges because all its members shared the same underlying ideology and were more submissive to the dominant party, UMNO (Lee, 2007). On the contrary, after the GE15, although PH managed to form a government, they had to form an alliance with the UMNO party, which has historically been their primary opponent since the Reformasi period in the late 90s. This alliance exposed the PH coalition to the same risks that led to the Sheraton Move, due to the ideological differences between UMNO and PH members. Therefore, youth leaders believe that the process of forming and maintaining a government coalition party needs to change in order to improve the political landscape. Nur Rahim Nasir, the President of Mahasiswa United, the student wing of the BERSATU party, expressed this belief. Specifically, Nur Rahim stated,

In simple terms, we want a situation where if one party wins, they don't have to merge with another party to form a government. We want a government that can get a majority so they can rule cleanly, with no need to give certain positions to maintain support. We don't want it to be like that. We want a government with a clear majority, no need to spend a lot of money, and no need to appoint this person or that person to the GLC.

Even though the PH has faced challenges in forming and maintaining a coalition government since 2018, this situation has actually benefited the PN coalition. However, it is understandable that Nur Rahim does not want this situation to continue. Continued political instability would not only have a negative impact on Malaysia's political system, but it would also eventually affect PN if they were ever able to gain control of the government. Additionally, the issue raised by Nur Rahim in his statement also

applies to the difficulties faced in forming a minority government. Dr. Mahathir, a respected statesman in Malaysia, provides a reasonable explanation for the weaknesses of a minority government. In regard to minority governments, Dr. Mahathir stated:

This means you can't even enact a law. So, I cannot do that (lead a minority government) because a minority government cannot function. Every time you move something, they (opposition members) can always bring it down and oppose it (Yunus, 2021, para. 3).

Wafiq Bin Azman shares this belief as well. He serves as the President of Persatuan Belia Islam Nasional (PEMBINA), a Muslim youth activist group in Malaysia. While Nur Rahim highlighted the importance of a party's ability to form a government without being obligated to work with a party that differs fundamentally from their own, Wafiq emphasized the significance of a coalition government being stable and immune to political divisions, like the ones witnessed during the Sheraton Move incident. In his own words, Wafiq expressed:

We desire a stable, strong, and fair government to guarantee the country's continued development. If there is no change in the unstable political landscape today, it will be an endless drama and will indirectly hinder the planning and development of the country.

Concerning the prevention of fractures within a coalition government, one constitutional measure that has been implemented to prevent situations like the Sheraton Move is the introduction of anti-hopping laws. These laws aim to discourage the disreputable practice of party hopping in Malaysian politics and ensure its abandonment for good.

4.2.2 Politics Revolving around Religion and Ethnicity

As observed during GE15, race and ethnicity still play a role in determining the voting patterns of Malaysian citizens (Mohamad & Suffian, 2023). Throughout the campaigning season for GE15, politicians from all sides often used rhetoric related to race and religion to garner electoral support. For example, the leader of the PN coalition, Muhyiddin Yassin, claimed that the PH party was collaborating with Jews and

Christians to Christianize Malaysia (Povera, 2022). On the other side of the spectrum, a DAP activist named Hew Kuan Yew was caught on camera during the GE15 campaign making a racially charged speech. He allegedly urged the Malaysian Chinese community to exploit tensions within the Malay community and strike a "deathblow" (Anbalagan, 2022). As evidenced by the voting patterns during the 15th GE, the majority of Malay voters supported the PN coalition, while most non-Malay voters chose to vote for the PH coalition, specifically the Democratic Action Party (DAP) (Mohamad & Suffian, 2023). Even after the election, sentiments based on race and religion continue to prevail among the electorate. A particularly concerning example is the proliferation of TikTok accounts that shared videos warning Malaysians about the possibility of a new May 13 race riot due to the PH coalition's victory in GE15 (Easwaran, 2022). This led to the removal of over 800 videos on TikTok discussing the potential resurgence of the May 13 race riots, as they were flagged by TikTok's artificial intelligence. In response to this proliferation, the Inspector-General of Police, Acryl Sani Abdullah Sani, warned users not to "upload content that touches on racial and religious sensitivities, which could threaten public safety and order" (Easwaran, 2022, para. 7). Therefore, there is a need to change the culture of political support and intensity that is based on inflammatory sentiments of race and religion in order to improve Malaysia's political landscape, as believed by Malaysian youth leader Aidi Zuhaili, the President of Mahasiswa Amanah. Aidi expressed his view on the importance of reducing race and religion-based politics in Malaysia.

Yes, change the political landscape that is religion and culture-based, continually evaluating that party to become more Islamic or less Islamic, to become more Malay. To the party, to the politics, who fights for justice the best, who fights for the rakyat the best. We are still stuck in lame politics concerning race and religion. Such as, Amanah is with DAP. And DAP is "Anti-Islam," PAS is "more Islam," and UMNO is "more Melayu." Lame politics.

Aidi wants to eliminate the practice of politicking in Malaysia which he refers to as "Lame Politics." This term implies that this type of political campaigning is superficial and lacking substance, as it focuses on fearmongering instead of addressing important issues such as wealth inequality, government corruption, and public welfare. Malaysian politicians tend to exploit the fear of the Malaysian Malays, whether by

emphasizing the perceived threat of Christianization or by evoking the memory of the May 13 race riots. As long as politicians continue to rely on fearmongering as their campaign strategy, Malaysia's democracy will not mature, the country's economic concerns will be neglected, and the politics-business nexus will persist. Aidi's assertion that politics based on race and religion are "lame politics" is therefore accurate. Consequently, politically active Malaysian youths are eager to eliminate race and religion-based politics in order to improve the political landscape of Malaysia.

4.2.3 Abolishment of AUKU

The concept of AUKU and its relationship to the political activities of the youth has already been discussed in Chapter 3. However, as a brief recap, AUKU is an acronym for a legal act called the Akta Universiti dan Kolej Universiti 1971. The AUKU Act, which is an act of parliament, allows the government to prevent student involvement with political parties and trade unions, and even restricts mergers between student bodies. This restriction curtails the opportunities for political expression among Malaysian youths, under the guise of providing a legal framework for establishing universities in Malaysia and formalizing the relationship between the state and universities (Wan, 2019). The provisions of this Act hinder the progress of autonomy for Malaysian universities and their freedom of expression (Wan, 2019). The AUKU Act has prompted youth leaders and their organizations to take an active political stance to amend or abolish AUKU. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that many politically active Malaysian youths desire a youth-friendly government that will repeal AUKU and any other Acts similar to it. One such politically active Malaysian youth is Aliff Naif, the President of the IIUM Student Union. Aliff believes that the new government must amend the AUKU Act and other Acts that restrict freedom of speech in order to bring about change in Malaysia's political landscape. Specifically, Aliff stated:

So how are we going to do it? Of course, to amend the "Peaceful Assembly Act 2012," we also want to abolish every Act that disallows the students from voicing out. For example, AUKU, (Act) 174 and (Act) 173 for UITM, (Act) 555 for Private Higher Educational Institutions Act 1996 [PHEIA].

Despite Aliff's suggestion for amending AUKU and other similar Acts, he has not explicitly stated how he intends to make these amendments. However, Malaysian youth leaders, including Aidi Zuhaili from Mahasiswa Amanah, have put forward proposals for the nature of these amendments. Aidi pointed out that the government has already taken steps by introducing a bill proposed by the former Minister of Education, Dr Maszlee Malik, as a replacement for AUKU. Aidi stated:

We empower the Mahasiswa by changing the political regime within the Ministry of Higher Education. Maybe proceed with the bill Dr Maszlee Malik initially proposed in his high education act, protecting Mahsiswa from AUKU and restricting Mahasiswa from doing something.

It is unclear what the full extent of the amendment to AUKU was in the original bill by Dr. Maszlee Malik. However, Aidi believes that the government did not fully implement the original bill, and if it were implemented, it would empower students' freedom of expression. Some observers may interpret Aidi's support for Dr. Maszlee Malik's bill as a sign of his political bias, as he represents AMANAH, a party closely allied with Dr. Maszlee Malik's PKR party. Nevertheless, during Dr. Maszlee Malik's tenure, he did amend specific subsections of Acts related to freedom of speech in universities and colleges. These amendments included the removal of subsection (c) of Section 15 (2) of AUKU, which banned students from participating in political party activities within universities and colleges. The removal of subsection (c) of Section 47 (2) of PHEIA (Private Higher Educational Institutions Act 1996), which banned students from engaging in political activities on private higher education institution campuses. And the removal of subsection (c) of Section 10 (2) of EIDA (Educational Institutions Discipline Act 1976), which gives students the right to be involved in political activities on campus (Abdul Rashid, 2018). It is still being determined if these are the bills that Aidi refers to. However, it cannot be denied that even these amendments have the potential to change the political landscape by providing Malaysian students with greater political freedom of expression.

4.2.4 Change Education Policy

Another change that the politically active Malaysian youth wanted the government to make was to revise the country's education policy. This change would have a significant impact on the lives of Malaysian youths, as their experiences are closely intertwined with education (Mørch, 2003). While freedom of expression has proven effective in enhancing the political voice of Malaysian youth, that voice would be of limited utility if the youths themselves are poorly educated. Consequently, many youth political organizations encouraged students from their respective circles to participate in the Kelas Demokrasi programs initiated by Fahmi Reza. Therefore, the first proposed change in education policy was to incorporate political education into the Malaysian students' syllabus from an early stage. Political education is crucial in improving the political landscape of Malaysia, particularly for the youth, who are increasingly becoming a significant factor in federal and state elections. Youth political leaders even believe that the lack of political education among the youth has influenced their voting patterns during GE15. Loo Qie Ying, the President of UMANY, shares this opinion:

No one is expecting Perikatan Nasional to get so many votes. It also goes back to our educational system; our civic education is very weak, and then Undi18 is coming on. Those young voters don't know what they are voting for. The lack of civic education kind of harm our democratic system in the future. At Primary School, they should have been taught about how democracy is doing in other countries like Taiwan and other democratic countries, so I believe that only then will the Undi18 become some sort of hope for Malaysian, not become like right now where everyone just follows what is on Tiktok and what is trending.

She believes that the poor quality of education and the lack of civic education are responsible for the increased electoral support for Perikatan Nasional during GE15 from young voters. Qie Ying believes that Undi18 is not fully effective in improving the political condition of young Malaysians without being complemented by proper education. She argues that the inadequate education of Malaysian youth makes them susceptible to influence from social media platforms like TikTok, which was impressively utilized by PN during the elections. This view is supported by a doctoral dissertation study conducted at UITM. The study, which involved 196 Malay students, found that a lack of political knowledge among students increases the likelihood of

voting for PN during GE15 (Ling, 2023). Introducing political education, such as Kelas Demokrasi schools, would reduce the susceptibility of Malaysian youth to political trends on social media, enabling them to make more informed political judgments when voting. Another change in education policy that politically active youth believe could transform the political landscape is addressing unequal access to education among different ethnic groups. This inequality in access to education arose from the implementation of the New Economic Policy after the racial riots on May 13, 1969. Malay youths have had more privileged access to education at the expense of non-Malay youths, leading to a weakened sense of solidarity between Malays and non-Malays that persists into adulthood (Cheon et al., 2016). Dharshinee, the Deputy of Mahasiswa Keadilan, supports this need for change. Regarding this, she stated:

Those entitled to a placement at the University should get that placement, regardless of race or religion. We still know that the percentage of non-bumiputras entering University is still low. It can be raised again, but it's not given, which we have questioned before. We ask for the non-Bumiputera to be increased while maintaining the Bumiputera, not lowered. It's a give-and-take. This percentage can go up when we do all our research, it can go up actually.

Though Dharshinee did not specify exactly how changing access to higher education for non-Malay youths would impact the political landscape of Malaysia, it is likely that it would instill a greater sense of belonging among these youths. By fostering this sense of belonging during their formative years, it is hoped that they would avoid engaging in divisive political rhetoric, particularly related to religion and ethnicity, as they grow into adulthood. Huzayl, the President of Persatuan Belia Harmoni, also advocates for these actions.

That's why they don't feel a sense of belonging to Malaysia, and that's why they fight for UEC and so on. So, most of them want to recognize this UEC because they want to go outside Malaysia. After all, they don't have the opportunity to develop in Malaysia because of the race-based policy. We have to bring this political landscape to a non-race-based political landscape.

In his statement, Huzayl suggests that improving access to higher education for non-Malays would enhance their sense of belonging to Malaysia (Nasir et al., 2021). He argues that this would reduce their susceptibility to race-based politics, which have hindered Malaysia's economic and social development for many years. Additionally, it would prevent these youths from seeking employment opportunities abroad, thereby avoiding a significant loss of human resources for Malaysia. It is highly likely that Dharshinee aimed to achieve these outcomes by advocating for increased access to higher education for non-Bumiputera individuals. This is not only because she herself is a non-Bumiputera youth, but also because the party she represents, the PKR party, has long been committed to promoting inclusive politics that transcend ethnic boundaries (Teik, 2021).

4.2.5 Improve Parliamentary Institution

There is no doubt that changing Malaysia's education policy would accelerate the process of shifting young voters and future adult voters away from being influenced by race and religion-based politics. However, changing the political landscape of Malaysia could also be achieved by reforming the government and parliamentary institutions themselves. This approach may be more effective since human behavior is subjective, and attempting to change behavior in order to achieve a specific outcome would be challenging. Additionally, changing the government and parliamentary institutions would involve modifying the laws that govern them. Laws are objective and have the ability to elicit compliance from citizens due to their sense of duty, which goes beyond the fear of punishment (Trinkner et al., 2018). Empowering the parliament further is one of the changes that could be implemented in order to enhance the political landscape within the government and parliamentary institutions. This proposal has been put forth by Birr Zamier, the Leader of Demokrat UniSZa.

We will empower the parliament itself. Because now, we see that the executives are not responsible for their ministry or their policy in parliament. They decide everything, but the parliament is not scrutinizing their decision. They come to present that they have a policy, but when they want to discuss anything, there are limitations to the discussion.

Based on Birr Zamier's suggestions, the parliament, most likely the Dewan Rakyat (Lower House), would be granted the power to further scrutinize the policies proposed by the executive branch of the government. Birr Zamier argues that the executives within the government do not feel accountable for the policies they present in parliament, and they consistently restrict discussions about the bills presented. They are able to do this because the executive branch has the authority to determine which bills can be verbally debated each day of the sitting and dictate the order in which those bills are discussed (Anwar & Jailani, 2021). When Birr Zamier refers to the executives acting irresponsibly towards their policies, he is highlighting how the executive branch avoids having their bills debated, thus leaving room for flaws and mistakes that could have been rectified through adequate discussion in the Dewan Rakyat and Dewan Negara. Therefore, Birr Zamier's proposal is to empower the parliament to discuss and evaluate the bills presented by the executives without interference from the executive branch or government cabinet. This would ultimately lead to a positive change in the political landscape, as it would enhance the level of accountability from government ministries and improve the quality of government policies put forth by these ministries. This increased government accountability would ensure that the youth's interest in Malaysian politics is maintained, as they would no longer view a government that shirks responsibility and operates at a minimal standard with apathy (Molloy et al., 2002). By maintaining their political interest, the youth can contribute to improving the political landscape by providing constructive feedback. There are multiple ways for Malaysian youths to offer constructive feedback to the government, such as submitting a memorandum that outlines the issues they have with the current management of parliament. Another approach would be for the government to establish a database of all youth online groups, which would facilitate more convenient input from Malaysian youth on how to enhance the parliamentary process (Youth, 2012).

Another proposed improvement for Malaysia's government and parliamentary institutions that could significantly change the country's political landscape is to address the culture of debate currently prevalent in the Malaysian parliament. The issue lies in the poor conduct of parliamentarians during discussions. There are numerous instances of disorderly behavior, including immature exchanges, sexist and racist remarks, and discriminatory comments against fellow parliament members (Aslan, 2022). This kind

of behavior is particularly concerning for young members of parliament, as they are often targeted and disrespected by their older counterparts. Their opinions are frequently dismissed due to their perceived youth and inexperience in expressing their political stance on certain issues (Aslan, 2022). This shameful conduct continues because there are no specific guidelines in place to regulate the behavior of parliament members during sessions. Youth leaders, like Huzayl, the President of Persatuan Belia Harmoni, strongly believe that addressing this problem is crucial for improving the overall political landscape. Huzayl asserts that the disrespectful behavior exhibited by parliament members during sessions is contributing to the polarization of politics among Malaysian citizens. Huzayl emphasizes the need for change, stating:

And in terms of the landscape of Malaysian politics, the culture of debating in the people's assembly has an impact on the people. Because of these legislative politicians, they fight, and when the people see it, they think they have to fight with each other. That's why PAS people fight badly at the people's level, but these politicians are good people outside the council. That may be another part of our change: the culture of debating in legislative bodies that ultimately affects the people below.

On that note, if the Prime Minister's office were to provide a documented code of ethics specifically tailored to address the behavior of parliament members during parliamentary sessions, it would greatly contribute to improving the professional conduct of politicians towards their younger counterparts. Additionally, it would help mitigate the negative impact that MP behavior can have on citizens. This, in turn, would foster an environment where young individuals are more inclined to engage in politics, and where citizens do not harbor ill will towards others who hold differing political views, influenced by the disrespectful behavior of MPs towards those with opposing viewpoints. Currently, the existing code of ethics released by the Prime Minister's office in 2018 solely focuses on the overall ethical and moral standards applicable to members of parliament, without specifically addressing their conduct during sessions (Jabatan Perdana Menteri, 2018). Thus, it would be beneficial for the government to introduce an additional provision that prohibits MPs from skipping parliamentary sessions, coupled with appropriate penalties. The issue of MPs absconding parliamentary sessions has often been criticized by Malaysians, as it creates the perception that these MPs do not prioritize their role in representing the interests of their constituents

(Denison, 2018). Moreover, it sets a negative example for aspiring young politicians, who may potentially be influenced by such unprofessional behavior if it becomes normalized. Therefore, Aidi Zuhaili of Mahasiswa Amanah has proposed the introduction of legislation to prevent parliamentarians from skipping their sessions. Aidi emphasized the importance of this measure, stating:

Do not skip parliament sessions. Total attendance must be adhered to. MP has to be more engaged with the citizens, not simply focused on their prestige level. When they become members of parliament, they become too comfortable mingling in their circle, and they don't want to mingle with the citizens. Instead, they only mingle with the citizens in front of the camera.

By implementing such laws, not only would it enhance the quality of performance of Malaysia's legislative body, but it would also enhance the overall image of politicians in Malaysia. This would prevent young upcoming politicians from perpetuating the same negative habits that have plagued previous generations.

4.2.6 Strengthening the Judiciary

Previously, there has been a discussion about the potential benefits of changing Malaysia's parliamentary institutions to improve the political landscape. However, another branch of the Malaysian government, the judiciary, could also play a crucial role in this regard. The judiciary is not solely responsible for rendering judgments on civil and criminal matters for the sake of public justice, but it also serves as a check and balance on the powers of the executive and legislative branches of government (Izarudin Shah, 2023). This is achieved through judicial review, which empowers the judiciary to revise and reject decisions and laws made by the executive and legislative branches if they exceed their constitutional boundaries (Aziz et al., 2023). Thus, judicial review ensures that the government does not abuse its authority. However, among the three branches, the judiciary is the weakest. In a parliamentary system, the ruling government controls the executive and legislative branches, and even more concerning is the fact that the executive government influences the judiciary through its power to appoint five

out of nine members of the Judiciary Appointments Commission (JAC) (Shuaib, 2011). This influence compromises the effectiveness of the High Court in checking the government's power through judicial review. It is precisely this reality that politically active Malaysian youth, such as Dzarif, are determined to change in order to improve the political landscape. Dzarif, the Chairman of Kelab Mahasiswa Penyokong, a student organization that firmly supports PAS's political agenda, believes that separating the judiciary from the influence of the executive branch will bring about positive change. In Dzarif's own words:

Freedom for the judiciary, where the executive does not influence it, is something we often opt for during my tenure. Another judicial proposal is an example of the separation of powers between the attorney general and the public prosecutor, which is crucial for me. Another problem is not so much in judges and lawyers, but it results from an unclear interpretation of the Constitution that requires improvement or an amendment. Our constitutional debate is too vague, and that affects our judiciary.

Other than ensuring the independence of the judiciary from the executive, Dzarif also emphasizes the need to establish a clear separation of powers between the attorney general and the public prosecutor. The Attorney General wields absolute power not only as a legal adviser to the government but also as a public prosecutor, which can easily be abused (Mallow, 2022). Furthermore, Dzarif's proposed change aims to reduce external influence on the judiciary and prevent power abuse within the judiciary itself. By minimizing the influence of external forces on the judiciary, it will guarantee that any legislation passed by parliament does not infringe on the rights of Malaysians to express themselves. If parliament were to propose another act that restricts the freedom of expression of Malaysian youth, similar to or even worse than the original AUKU act, an independent judiciary can ensure that such an act would not be approved. Likewise, if the parliament suddenly decided to revert the minimum voting age amendment back to the age of 21, in an attempt to minimize the influence of the youth, an independent judiciary can exercise its authority to prevent such an act from being passed, thus ensuring that Malaysian youth have a say in the governmental decisions.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1 REMARKS ON RESEARCH QUESTIONS

All citizens of a country who possess the necessary mental maturity and political literacy to make informed political decisions should have the right to participate in politics. It is crucial to acknowledge and not suppress the rights and aspirations of young people when it comes to political involvement. In this study, we aim to answer three research questions, and the results have provided us with the answers we sought. The first research question focuses on the opinions of young political activists in Malaysia regarding the competency of the government in handling the pandemic since 2020. The initial proposal anticipated that the research would demonstrate a correlation between the increasing engagement of young people in politics in Malaysia, starting in 2020, and the government's handling of the pandemic under the Muhyiddin administration. The study's findings confirm this relationship. Not only do the results indicate that the participants and their organizations are disappointed with how the Muhyiddin government managed the pandemic, but they also reveal that it was the government's actions that fueled a surge in youth political activism. Initially, the political activism of young Malaysians had stagnated due to the Movement Control Order (MCO) measures, which made it challenging for youth members to socialize and organize. As recounted by Airil Fitri, the leader of Mahasiswa United:

We can't do any activities because of restrictions," and "So to me, Muhyiddin's policy at that time caused us to be a little slow to move, a little slow to get to know each other, in fact to this day we still have people saying there is room for us to add more members.

The MCO restricts activities like social gatherings, protests, interactions with passers-by, and discussions due to social distancing, lockdowns, and isolation imposed on citizens (Singh & Singh, 2020). As a result, young people have increasingly turned to social media for political activism during the MCO. A study conducted by researchers at Universiti Malaysia Sabah in June 2021 found that 57.3% of the 424 Malaysian respondents spent more than 4 hours on social media platforms during the MCO. The study also revealed that 68.6% of the respondents were between 17 and 30 years old (Meri et al., 2022). Through cyberspace, youth political activism has intensified due to the convenience of connectivity and the rapid spread of information about the mistakes of the Muhyiddin government on the internet compared to traditional news media. This connection between the political intensification of Malaysian youth and the performance of the Malaysian government aligns with the theoretical framework presented in the study, known as the SIRDE model theory. According to the SIRDE model theory proposed by Peter Grant, initiatives for social change are triggered by a collective perception of injustice within the group, which leads to anger and actions advocating for social change, such as protests and demonstrations (Grant, 2021). Applying this theory to the political intensification of Malaysian youth, their dissatisfaction with the Muhyiddin government's handling of the pandemic would be the collective perception of injustice within their group (Leong & Rosli, 2021). The various #BenderaHitam demonstrations organized by Malaysian youths dissatisfied with the government's pandemic response would represent the actions advocating for social change according to the SIRDE model. Interestingly, the SIRDE model also acknowledges the role of social media in amplifying youths' reactions towards the government, as emotions related to the perception of injustice within the group are intensified through online connectivity (Grant, 2021).

The second research question focuses on the views of Malaysian youth leaders concerning their political tendencies from 2020 to 2022. Two factors stand out as the most influential in shaping the political tendencies of these youths during this time period: social media and political efficacy. Regarding social media, the initial proposal of this study, made in 2022, predicted that the participants would link their political engagement to the heavy use of social media platforms by Malaysian youths in Kuala Lumpur, especially after the onset of the Malaysian Control Order Movement in 2020.

The study confirms this prediction, showing that the increasing usage of social media and the internet, in general, resulted in a rise in political engagement among the youth starting in 2020. It is worth noting that this increased usage wasn't solely due to the participants recognizing the utility of social media for political activism. Rather, it was driven by the convenience social media offered amidst the pandemic. To further understand this behavior, we will employ the theoretical framework proposed in this study, specifically the concept of political socialization. According to Constance Flanagan's model of political socialization (2013), the relationship between the youth's daily interactions and the prevailing political environment determines their political socialization pattern. Applying this theory to the youth in this study, their political socialization is influenced by the relationship between their daily interactions (social media engagement) and the dominant political environment (Muhyiddin government). The increasingly negative perception of the Muhyiddin government on social media, in response to their policies, contributes to the political socialization of Malaysian youth. Another theory on political socialization comes from Ismi Arif Ismail, who argues that political participation among Malaysian youths increases due to heavy usage of social media platforms. This increased political participation deepens political socialization, leading to higher political literacy and political maturity. These connections between political socialization, political literacy, and political maturity have been highlighted in Ismail's previous study (Ismail et al., 2015). As political socialization increases, politically literate and mature youths become more enthusiastic about participating in politics and shaping policies. Social media usage not only boosts youth engagement in political activism but also influences the type of political activism Malaysian youth leaders engage in. The convenience of social media during the pandemic makes it an ideal alternative for political activism during and after the pandemic. Political activism among Malaysian youth notably decreased during the pandemic due to the government's Movement Control Order measures (Wilf et al., 2023). Consequently, politically active Malaysian youth, represented by the youth leaders in this study, turned to social media for their political activism, recognizing its influence on the youth and its alignment with MCO regulations. Turning to the second influential factor, political efficacy, the youth leaders believe that it not only increases political activism among Malaysian youths but also shapes their patterns of political activism. This is particularly evident in the context of the recent amendment to the minimum voting age in Malaysia, lowering it from 21

to 18 years old (Annuar, 2019). This amendment has significantly increased the number of young voters participating in elections, making the political opinions of the youth more valuable to various political actors in Malaysia. Consequently, the political efficacy of Malaysian youth has increased, leading to a greater tendency for political activism. The youth leaders recognize that their views are being taken seriously and understand that political parties that ignore the youth may suffer in elections as a result. The increased political efficacy resulting from the voting age amendment also influences the focus of Malaysian youth leaders' political activism, directing it towards political advocacy. Political advocacy refers to programs organized by youth-based political organizations aimed at encouraging Malaysian youth to participate in the electoral process. One such program is the politically neutral Kelas Demokrasi, which seeks to educate youth on Malaysia's political system and their right to vote (Ramlan, 2022).

The third research question focuses on the desired changes the youth want to see in the Malaysian political landscape. The initial proposal for this research study, made in early 2022, anticipated that the changes sought by the youth would revolve around strengthening institutions responsible for government accountability and implementing policies to prevent the rapid collapse of coalition governments. Interestingly, this prediction closely aligns with the findings of the study. Participants expressed a desire for the political landscape to evolve through the reinforcement of governmental institutions, thereby promoting greater government accountability. They also emphasized the need for a system that ensures the stability of coalition governments, rather than experiencing quick collapses like the previous PH coalition in 2020. Furthermore, the study revealed that politically active youths' ideas about the necessary changes to improve the political landscape of Malaysia were influenced by the results of the 2022 GE15 elections. In response to the question, many participants expressed a desire to reduce the reliance on fragile alliances among political parties to form a government. They also called for a decrease in political discourse centered around religion and ethnicity, while advocating for increased confidence in youth politicians within political parties. These proposed changes are closely tied to the challenges faced by Malaysian politics after the GE15 election. Following the release of the GE15 results, Malaysians grappled with uncertainty over which party would govern, as neither the PH

nor PN parties secured a majority of parliamentary seats required to form a government (Chin, 2023). This uncertainty is referenced in the youths' desire to minimize the need for parties to form fragile alliances. Additionally, the inclusion of UMNO into the new PH-led coalition government after the GE15 election was disappointing to supporters of PH, as many had voted for PH with the hope of sidelining UMNO (Ismail, 2023). The political campaign leading up to the GE15 also involved a significant amount of fearmongering related to religion and ethnicity. Politicians from both sides frequently made claims that one ethnic or religious group's rights would be undermined if the opposing side won the elections. Notably, Muhyiddin Yassin's statement alleging a collaboration between Jews and Christians to Christianize Malaysia gained considerable attention (Povera, 2022). This rhetoric influences the youth leaders' desire, highlighted in this study, to reduce political discourse based on religion and ethnicity. It is unclear why these factors influenced the participants' views, but it is possible that the interviews took place shortly after the GE15, and the emotions surrounding the elections still impacted their perspectives on the necessary changes to Malaysia's political landscape. However, it should be noted that this is purely speculative and requires further investigation.

Concerning the theoretical framework used in this study, this chapter has already discussed how political socialization and the SIRDE model theory can be used to explain the results. However, further discussion is needed on how SIRDE explains the behaviors of the youth. The previous discussion only touched on how the theory explains the actions of the youth in general. Now, let's delve into how the individual components of SIRDE are represented in the study. The SIRDE model in this study consists of three components: 'social identity' (SI), 'relative deprivation' (RD), and 'collective efficacy' (E). Regarding 'social identity', the study finds that the youth's social identity is actualized through social media or online engagement. Their social identity is affirmed when they make posts and share memes on the internet regarding the relative deprivation they are experiencing under the Muhyiddin government. The more they engage online, the stronger their social identity as Malaysian youths becomes. This awareness of collective suffering strengthens their feelings of solidarity (Freelon, 2018). In terms of 'relative deprivation', the youths highlight several issues under the Muhyiddin government that they believe contribute to their sense of deprivation. These

issues include biased treatment of citizens who violate MCO measures, invalidation of youth voters during GE14 due to the Sheraton Move, and the continued implementation of AUKU. Although AUKU was not implemented by the Muhyiddin government and there were already amendments to it prior to 2020, some youth leaders in the study mentioned that they had plans for further amendments with the help of the PH government before the Sheraton Move. Therefore, the formation of the Muhyiddin government deprived them of that opportunity. These three issues lead Malaysian youths to experience feelings of deprivation, which in turn causes anger. However, the final trigger for their desire to bring about change in the government is 'collective efficacy'. In this study, two factors contribute to the youths' feelings of collective efficacy. The first factor is the Undi18 amendment, which allows a larger number of Malaysian youths to participate in voting. Consequently, they feel that their actions have greater relevance to the political landscape, leading to a sense of increased collective efficacy. This increased collective efficacy then manifests in normative political actions such as protests and other forms of political advocacy by the youth (Grant et al., 2017). The second factor is social media engagement. The MCO measures implemented by the Muhyiddin government have resulted in increased social media usage among the youth. As they engage with one another online, they become more aware that the deprivation they experience is shared by other Malaysian youths. This realization boosts their confidence to engage in political activism, as they believe that working together as a group with other youths increases their chances of effecting social change (Grant et al., 2015).

Because of this, it is crucial for the government and relevant political actors to fully understand the role that Malaysian youths play in the political landscape through their political participation. If these political actors were to comprehend the pivotal role that youth play in domestic politics, then Malaysian youths would feel less isolated from the political process and could contribute positively to the country's political landscape. Thus, in the event of a mass political wave among Malaysian youths, the government and other political actors would be better prepared. Based on the participants' experiences in this study, it is evident that various aspects of Malaysian politics and legal bills, such as AUKU, still exist that are not conducive to youth political participation and do not reflect a mature political system. If Malaysia does not promote

youth political participation, its politics will become stagnant due to a lack of the energy and perspective that young people bring. Additionally, if Malaysia's politics does not reflect a mature system, the youth participating in politics will only repeat the same mistakes as the previous generation. However, it is not enough for the relevant political actors in Malaysia to simply be aware or knowledgeable about the importance of youth political participation.

5.2 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

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

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

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

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

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

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APPENDIX: INTERVIEW SCRIPT

<p>Welcoming Massage (5 minutes)</p>	<p>Thank you for your willingness to participate in this interview. My name is Aiman Marzuqi Bin Mohd Azzahari, a postgraduate student from the Department of Political Science of International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). As you are aware, I am currently conducting a study regarding the role of Malaysian youth in politics beginning in 2020. I hope that you will not feel uncomfortable during the duration of this interview and answer any questions freely.</p>
<p>Conduct of the Interview (5 minutes)</p>	<p>Before we begin, I would like to elaborate how this interview will be conducted.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Several questions will be asked. Approximately more than 20 questions 2) Feel free to comment on the type of questions I will be fielding, whether you think the questions are relevant or not. The purpose of this interview is to gather your opinions on the role of youth in politics. Please feel free to answer the questions in any way that you want. I hope that you will be honest and sincere in your answers. 3) If there are any questions that you do not want to respond to, then you are not obligated to do so. 4) I guarantee that I will keep your identity and responses confidential and only use your real name for the data collection and publication if you consent to it. These findings are strictly for academic purposes. 5) I would also like to ask your permission to record this Zoom meeting so that I can gather real and true findings from you. I hope you would have no problem with this. 6) Finally, this focus interview will take approximately 60 minutes. Please feel free to eat or drink during the discussion if you want to. Do you have any questions before we start?
<p>Introduction (5 minutes)</p>	<p>(Recording Starts) Before we begin could you introduce yourself and briefly recount how your participation in political activism began</p>

<p>Interview Session R.Q.1 (20 minutes)</p> <p>What are the general opinions of the Malaysian youth regarding the competency of the government in handling the Covid-19 crisis in Malaysia since 2020?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What are your government's opinions on how the government is handling the Covid-19 crisis? 2) Do you think the government did the best that it could in handling the covid-19 crisis? 3) Do you think the former Alliance of Hope coalition government is able to handle the COVID 19-crisis better than the Muhyiddin led government? 4) Is your organization's political activism affected by how the Muhyiddin government handled the covid-19 crisis? 5) What are your organization's opinions regarding the events of the collapse of the Pakatan Harapan government in 24 February 2020? 6) Was there any way to prevent the collapse of the Pakatan Harapan government? 7) Is your organization's political activism related to the events of the collapse of the Pakatan Harapan government on 24 February 2020?
<p>Interview Session R.Q.2 (20 minutes)</p> <p>What are the views of Malaysian youth regarding their political tendency beginning from 2020?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What factor led to your organisation becoming active in political activism? 2) Was your organization active in political activism prior to 2020? 3) Is your organization's political activism driven by information from social media? If not, what other media could it be driven from? 4) Does the political information you and your organization gained helped form your political perspective? 5) What type of activities does your organization engage in as part of your organization's political activism? 6) Do you utilize social media for your organization's political activism? 7) What type of political activism is most effective in bringing change in your organization's experience? 8) Could you give a rough estimate on how much mass support your political activism has generated from other Malaysian youths? 9) Does your organization find conventional forms of political participation to be effective or ineffective? 10) Would members of your organization be willing to join a political party as an extension of their political activism? 11) Does your organization think there is a growing trend of political activism among youths in Malaysia since 2020? 12) If there is a growing trend, is the current trend of youth political activism to be something

	unexpected, or was the potential always there to begin with?
<p>Interview Session R.Q.3 (20 minutes)</p> <p>How Does the Malaysian Youth Think Malaysian Political Landscape Should Change?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Does your organization think the landscape of Malaysian politics need changing? 2) Could the Malaysian youth change the landscape of Malaysian politics without taking part in conventional forms of political participation such as voting, in the opinions of your organization? 3) Could your organization change the landscape of politics in Malaysia without being part of a political party? 4) If your organization could change the political landscape without joining a political party, how would they do it? 5) If your organization were to become an executive member of the government, what would they change regarding the landscape of Malaysian politics? 6) If your organization were to become a legislative member of the government, what would it change regarding the landscape of Malaysian politics? 7) In your organization's opinion, is the rising political activism of the youth in Malaysia a symptom of a failing political system, is it a sign of democratic progress for Malaysia or is there another explanation for the rising political activism of Malaysian youth?
<p>Final Thoughts (5 minutes)</p>	<p>Finally, our interview has come to an end. Do you have any final thoughts about the role of youth in politics that you would personally like to share?</p>
<p>Wrap up (5 minutes)</p>	<p>Thank you coming today and sharing your opinions. I hope you enjoyed today's session and may Allah bless you. Assalamualaikum.</p>