Political Communication: Uncovering Knowledge, Attitudes and Young Voters' Readiness for PRU-15 in Batang Padang District, Perak

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ABSTRACT

Malaysia made history when the Dewan Rakyat approved an amendment to the Federal Constitution that lowered the voting age from 21 to 18 years old. The country's democratic system was colored by the automatic registration of those who turned 18 as voters for the 15th Malaysian General Election (GE-15). This amendment aims to democratize the political process in this nation and promote mature, fair, and equitable elections. This ongoing study aims to discover young voters' knowledge, attitudes, and readiness toward the 15th general election (PRU-15) in Batang Padang, Perak district. Methodologically, a quantitative approach was used where 462 youth participants completed questionnaires. The findings discovered that although attitudes and readiness among young voters in the research population are at a moderate level, they have a high level of knowledge. The result also uncovered five key factors that influence young voters' readiness towards making their decisions for PRU-15 namely voting is my responsibility, the good reputation of elected representatives, peer influence, the implementation of the Undi-18 policy by the government and family support. The study thus contributed to a new landscape of political communication through young voters' contribution not only to casting the ballot during the election but also to participating in the country's leadership as members of parliament.

Keywords: *Political communication, Undi-18, PRU-15, knowledge, young voters.*

INTRODUCTION

The media serves as the main vehicle by which citizens are informed about and involved in the political process, making it a crucial institution of democracy (Chinnasamy & Mohamed Azmi, 2018; Corrigall-Brown & Wilkes, 2014; Datts et al., 2021; Goncalves, 2018; Robinson, 2019; Strömbäck, 2022). The term 'democracy' originated from the Greeks, which has two aspects: "*demos*" (meaning "people") and "*kratos*" (meaning "power") (Leong, 2019). Thus, democracy is about the power of the people, who have a right to be involved in and have a say in how their government runs their nation (Leong, 2019). Following the popular quote of Abraham Lincoln, the government which runs the country is a "government of the people, by the people and for the people." Theoretical interpretations of this relationship emphasize both the media's direct roles in informing the public about the political process as well as the indirect role of promoting attitudes and resources that support engagement, like trust, efficacy and political literacy.

The argument that young people or adolescents lack the political awareness or information necessary to vote is frequently used as a justification against raising the voting age (Oosterhoff et al., 2022). However, there is conflicting empirical data comparing the political awareness of young adults. Moreover, young people's perceived lack of cognitive capacity to vote is another widespread argument for raising the voting age. These beliefs may take the form of generalizations such as the idea that children and young people lack adult-

level cognitive development or that they are too impulsive, emotional, or irrational to participate in democratic processes (Oosterhoff et al., 2022). Perceptions that young people lack the independence to vote are another frequent issue concerning the voting age. It is likely that celebrities, peers, parents, or teachers will have an improper influence on young people's voting decisions (Oosterhoff et al., 2022).

While many people initially saw digital and social media as enhancing democracy by facilitating and promoting political participation, deliberation, and the free flow of information, the debate has since turned more critical, as evidenced by theory and research on selective exposure to attitude-consistent information as well as the rising prevalence of fake news, disinformation, and misinformation (Strömbäck, 2022).

a. Malaysian Political Administration

In 1957, Malaysia, a former British colony, gained independence. It is a federation of states where various authorities are supervised by both the federal and state governments. State governments keep an eye on lands and mining, Muslim affairs and customs, agriculture, forestry, as well as local government and services, while the federal government is in charge of foreign affairs, defense, internal security, education, health, and law and order (Leong, 2019). Up until the most recent 14th General election in May 2018, Malaysia's ruling Barisan National, formerly the Alliance, a coalition of ethnically based local parties, had been in power since the country's independence.

Malaysia experienced a period of political unrest following the first regime shift of 2018, which was highlighted by the PH administration's overthrow in 2020 and the subsequent installation of a *Perikatan Nasional* (PN) government (Chin & Chin, 2023). The PN administration, which Muhyiddin Yassin presided over from March 2020 until August 2021, similarly came to an end and was replaced by an UMNO-led administration with Ismail Sabri as prime minister (Chin & Chin, 2023; Rajandran & Lee, 2023). As a result, three distinct prime ministers served for a total of four years. Compare this to the first 60 years following independence, when the Malayan Alliance, subsequently known as the *Barisan Nasional*, continuously dominated the nation (BN). UMNO dominated the ruling BN coalition at the time, to the point where Malaysians now use the terms UMNO and BN interchangeably.

b. Undi-18 for Malaysian Young Voters

The beginning of Undi-18 started when a constitutional amendment to lower the voting age from 21 to 18 years old was accepted during the presentation of the Dewan Rakyat session on July 16, 2019. It was also accepted in the Dewan Negara with the support of more than two-thirds of the senators (Berita Harian, 2019). The bill that has been passed by parliament and introduced therein has the following 3 provisions:

1) Proposal to amend paragraph (a) Clause 1 of Article 119 of the Federal Constitution to lower the age of a citizen eligible to vote from 21 to 18 years.
2) Proposal to amend paragraph (b) of Article 47 of the Federal Constitution to lower the age of citizens who are eligible to become members of the Dewan Rakyat from 21 to 18 years.
3) Proposal to implement automatic registration for voters and eligibility to vote as soon as they reach the age of 18.

The Constitution (Amendment) Act 2019, which decreased the voting age to 18 and mandated that everyone who is eligible to vote to be automatically registered, went into effect with the PRU-15, which was the first election after that time. In the PRU-15, there were about 7 million more voters than in the PRU-14, when there were 14.9 million voters, bringing the total number of voters to over 21 million. The definition of youth age was redefined to the age category between 15 to 30 years old which came into force on 31 December 2021. The new definition was approved by Dewan Rakyat through the Youth Organization and Youth Development (Amendment) Bill 2019 (Act 668) (Ismail et al., 2020). However, this paper only covered young voters aged 18 to 20 years old as the Undi-18 aims to engage with that age category for PRU-15.

c.   The 15th Malaysian General Election (PRU-15)
On November 19, 2022, the 15th Malaysian General Elections (GE15) were held as the globe was still recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic and was working to restore the economic damage induced by the many lockdowns that followed. The results show that the electorate was divided because no political party or combination was able to secure even a slim majority to form a government (Chin & Chin, 2023). It was the first time in the history of the country when a federal election produced a hung parliament. Despite having a smaller share and suffering its biggest losses in Kedah, *Pakatan Harapan* continued to hold the majority of seats in the *Dewan Rakyat* (76 seats). However, *Perikatan Nasional* won every seat in the states of Perlis, Kelantan, and Terengganu, and all but one in Kedah. As a result, it swept Peninsular Malaysia's northwestern and east coastal states with 51 seats. After losing the majority of its seats to *Perikatan Nasional*, the formerly dominating *Barisan Nasional* dropped to third place with 30 seat (Suruhanjaya Pilihan Raya Malaysia, 2022).

Anwar Ibrahim, the leader of Pakatan Harapan, was chosen by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong to serve as prime minister on November 24, 2022, and was sworn in after receiving support from *Barisan Nasional, Gabungan Parti Sarawak*, the Heritage Party, the Malaysian United Democratic Alliance, *Parti Bangsa Malaysia*, and independent members of Parliaments (Bernama, 2022) following five days and intervention from the Malaysian monarchy (Chin & Chin, 2023). Additionally, endorsing Anwar Ibrahim was *Gabungan Rakyat Sabah*, whereas *Perikatan Nasional* chose to take the role of the official opposition. Anwar lost his position as Malaysia's deputy prime minister on September 2, 1998 (Rajandran & Lee, 2023), and it took him 24 years to return to the country's top political position. Specifically, the purpose of this study is to achieve the following objectives:
1)   Identify the level of knowledge, attitude and readiness of young voters towards PRU-15 in Batang Padang district, Perak.
2)   Discover the factors that influence young votes' readiness towards PRU-15 in Batang Padang district, Perak.

LITERATURE REVIEW
i.   Political Communication
Theoretically, political communication focuses on interactions between political players, the media, and citizens, and is distinguished by its persuasive and strategic nature. The transmission of information between the government and the community, as well as the other way around, is one important core of political communication. The primary objectives are to disseminate political information, create a favorable impression of candidates'

positions, sway public opinion, and defend the message against criticism and charges leveled at it by the opposition (Hung, 2022). Effective political communication will help a dominant candidate win the next voter's support and take the election. Communication errors in politics will harm a candidate's reputation and endanger his political career. As for professional practice, it denotes a range of communication techniques that have been dubbed propaganda, electoral marketing, political marketing, political campaigning, and political public relations (Goncalves, 2018). Other scholars believed that the following activities and events could be employed to understand political communication: 1) the reception of political content, 2) the interpersonal discussion of political topics, and 3) the overt political participation (Datts et al., 2021). Therefore, political communication is the study and practice of creating and disseminating messages that can influence politics either directly or indirectly (Goncalves, 2018).

ii.   *Knowledge, Attitudes and Readiness Toward Voting*

With the implementation of Undi-18, young voters must participate in voting and campaigning in order to comply with Undi-18, but these activities must also teach youth the value of the voting and why it is important, rather than just using it as a means for a party to win elections by a disproportionate margin (Mohd Azmir Mohd Nizah & Sabri Mohamad Sharif, 2020). As such, knowledge is utilised to indicate how well a subject is understood, particularly the capability to analyse politicians' activities and decisions critically and analytically (Mohamad et al., 2018). To be able to perform voter's responsibility, political knowledge is used to refer to a person's heightened knowledge of any information pertaining to political concerns. This is an important process as previous studies highlighted that knowledge and trust are two crucial elements of political communication that influence voters' decisions (Chinnasamy & Mohamed Azmi, 2018; Corrigall-Brown & Wilkes, 2014; Susila et al., 2020).

In accordance with Agus et al. (2020), political knowledge can be imparted to a person or a community through political socialization by political practitioners, political parties, or community leaders. Political parties and governments, for instance, use a number of persuasion techniques to reach their goals of enticing and motivating voters to cast their ballots using social media platforms, electronic media like TV and radio, as well as roadshow campaigns (Chinnasamy & Mohamed Azmi, 2018). Political parties and governments recognize the importance of political information in enabling people to participate in the electoral decision-making process within a democracy (Susila et al., 2020). In Indonesia, people frequently communicate using symbols, and during election campaigns, tales, cultural myths, and rituals are incorporated into political messages and political symbols to inform and entertain voters (Susila et al., 2020). In an earlier study, regular exposure to political information fosters a sense of efficacy among young voters who believe they possess the knowledge and skills necessary to comprehend the political issue (Tariq et al., 2022). They engaged in political activity on social media platforms or other similar actions offline as a result of their skill.

In addition to knowledge, several studies have already looked at attitude as an indicator of a desire to make the right choice (Goncalves, 2018; Jerit & Zhao, 2020; Lee, 2020), particularly when it comes to voting decisions. An individual's attitude can be described as his/her perspective and evaluation of something or someone, as well as his/her propensity to react favorably or unfavorably to specific concepts, things, people, or circumstances (Vargas-

Sánchez et al., 2016). It is typically organized along three dimensions: behavioral (actions or expressed intents toward the object based on the 'cognitive' and 'affective' reactions), affective (likes and dislikes, feelings, or elicited emotions), and cognitive (perceptions and beliefs) (Vargas-Sánchez et al., 2016). For example, people routinely use their 'affective intelligence' the term coined by Marcus et al. (2000) to make sense of the world and make judgments. A study by Lee (2020) discovered that voters' attitudes toward voting may improve turnout or increase their confidence in their decision to support a particular candidate or party. Other researchers also found that there are other elements influencing individual political communication of young adults in Germany that is regarding resources, motives, and networks (Datts et al., 2021).

Readiness is a call to action for people to carry out their civic responsibilities rather than expressing a desire for political enthusiasm (Collins & Block Jr., 2020). Within democratic political systems, voting is both a responsibility and a right. Voting, at its most basic level, is a preference that is intended to improve one's own or other people's interests (Oosterhoff et al., 2022). Participation in a society's decision-making processes is another fundamental aspect of citizenship that can be performed through voting. Every person in a country must exercise their right to vote in order to preserve democracy in that country. Voting is a widespread and successful democratic method that represents the public's acceptance or rejection of a political agenda, candidate, or political party (Chinnasamy & Mohamed Azmi, 2018). An earlier study discovered a significant negative correlation between respondents' attitudes towards the readiness of Generation Z to vote at the age of 18 and their family circumstances (Mior et al., 2020). Moreover, social media, information, and peer pressure cannot be the factors that persuade Gen Z to vote, as they only led to 10.9% of respondents being prepared to cast a ballot in the upcoming election (Mior et al., 2020). The next section discusses the model that guides this ongoing study.

iii.   *Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)*

The foundation of the ELM is the idea that people wish to have the right attitudes and beliefs since they will typically prove to be the most beneficial in navigating life. The ELM outlines two significantly different paths a person could take in order to develop what they perceive to be a reasonable attitude (i.e., one that makes sense to them) (Petty et al., 2005). One method, known as following the 'central route to persuasion', entails carefully considering and analyzing data relevant (or central) to a topic's merits. The second strategy, known as the 'peripheral route to persuasion' requires less cognitive load and happens when someone relies on a straightforward and low-effort decision-making technique, like agreeing just because the source seems proficient (Petty et al., 2005). The amount of work required by the audience to comprehend, analyze, and recall the message and to decide whether to accept or reject it is referred to as "elaboration" (Chmielewski, 2012).

Moreover, ELM has specifically stated that when the audience gets a message, they will respond by using one of two channels (sometimes combining both channels) that reflect the level of effort necessary. They might, for instance, accept a high or low explanation and then utilize central or peripheral route processing. Another common illustration of shifting attitudes in political persuasion is the value of political messages. Receivers' shared values, shared political party identifications, and values historically linked with various political parties all affect the persuasive power of values (Çiftçi, 2018). There is no doubt that the central route of value matching encourages close attention to the political message, whereas

party mismatching is likely to enhance message rejection (Çiftçi, 2018). Through ELM, Chmielewski (2012) believes that political involvement is important in determining whether voters will make decisions based on comprehensive and methodical considerations in analyzing election-related issues or only refer to secondary cues that do not involve any information processing to those issues. As such, we also believed that young voters' decision towards voting is highly influenced by central or peripheral route processing which will be revealed in the finding section.

METHODOLOGY

a. Quantitative Research Approach

This study uses a quantitative design that applies survey methods by distributing questionnaires. The total number of respondents involved in this study was 462 youths who were obtained from four areas in the Batang Padang district, Perak. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), the quantitative research approach is associated with numerical data and analyzed using statistical tests. By examining a sample of a population, a survey design examines trends, attitudes, and views of that population quantitatively or looks for correlations between its characteristics (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researchers can respond to two different types of questions using survey designs: (a) descriptive questions and (b) questions about the relationships between variables. The information and data that have been obtained are then analyzed using SPSS Statistics.

b. Cluster Sampling

In this study, the researcher employed cluster sampling, which divides the population into groups of heterogeneous populations before taking a random sample from each group. The studied population in this study is the Batang Padang region of Perak, which includes the communities of Bidor, Tapah, Chenderiang, and Temoh. To conduct cluster sampling, the total population is divided into groups or clusters based on the geographical area (Taherdoost, 2018). The complete sample is then used after a random sample is taken from each of these clusters. Cluster sampling is advantageous for researchers whose subjects are distributed across large geographic areas since it is a time and money-efficient (Taherdoost, 2018). Following is the procedure for doing cluster sampling:

    i.   Choose a cluster grouping for the sample frame;
    ii.   Each cluster is assigned a number; and
    iii.   Choose the sample by utilizing random sampling.

c. Research Instrument

The research instrument used in this study is a questionnaire. Among the main factors of this method being chosen is that it helps in answering questions that require measuring the factors that influence the voting decision as well as the most suitable method to answer the objective of this study. In detail, this study uses a set of questionnaires that are divided into seven parts, namely Parts A, B, C, D and E, which aim to obtain data as follows:

    Part A: Demographic characteristics of the respondent
    Part B: Knowledge of voting
    Part C: Attitudes toward voting
    Part D: Readiness to vote
    Part E: Factors influencing Voting

d. Human Research Ethics

Respecting the autonomy of each individual participant is a moral obligation for researchers who are involved in data collection from participants (Msoroka & Amundsen, 2018). Confidentiality and informed consent are two key ethical considerations that were followed when conducting this study. The respondent's right to confidentiality was always upheld, and all laws governing data protection were followed. The participants in this study were fully informed of the survey's objectives, and their consent to participate in the survey was also obtained and documented. Prior to gathering the data, the researcher obtained approval from a number of organizations, including the UPSI Research Ethics Committee, the District Education Office, and the Educational Planning and Policy Research Division (EPRD).

e. Data Analysis

The researcher has utilized the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software, where the collected data were quantitatively examined using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Percentage, frequency, and mean were presented in a table that conveys the data analysis. The findings are expanded upon in the next section that follows.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a. Descriptive Analysis

A total of 462 questionnaires were collected from young voters from April to June 2022. This section discusses descriptive analysis and inferential analysis using parametric statistics. Specifically, it aims to answer the first research question by identifying the level of knowledge, attitude and readiness of young voters towards PRU-15 in Batang Padang district, Perak.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Demographic Characteristics	Details	Frequency	Percentages
Gender	Male	161	34.8
	Female	301	65.2
Ethnic group	Malay	249	53.9
	Chinese	73	15.8
	Indian	28	6.1
	Orang Asli (Aborigine)	93	20.1
	Others	19	4.1
Age	18 years old	49	10.6
	19 years old	208	45.0
	20 years old	205	44.4
Educational level	No Formal education	23	5.0
	PMR leavers	11	2.4
	SPM leavers	338	73.2
	STPM leavers	70	15.2
	Certificate	5	1.1
	Diploma	15	3.2
Occupational sector	Not working	52	11.3
	Student	362	78.4
	Private sector	11	2.4
	Self-employed	26	5.6
	Others	9	1.9
	Total	**462**	**100**

Table 1 represents the demographic characteristics of respondents where the gender category indicates that 65.2 percent of the respondents were young females, while only 34.8 percent were young males. From the data, more than half of the respondents (53.9%) were young Malay people. Orang Asli respondents, with the second-highest percentage, contributed to 20.1 percent, followed by 15.8 percent of Chinese respondents, and Indian respondents, who make up 6.1 percent. Additionally, the respondents who participated in this study are young voters between the ages of 18 and 20. Almost half of the respondents were at the age of 19 years old followed by 44.4 percent who were 20 years and only 10.6 percent who were 18 years old. In terms of educational background, more than two-thirds of the respondents were SPM leavers (73.2%) followed by those with STPM education at 15.2 percent. Respondents who have no formal education contributed to 5 percent and only 1.1 percent were certificate graduates. As for the occupational sector, more than three-fourths of the respondents are students (78.4%) followed by 11.3 percent of the respondents who are not working. The lowest percentage is in the other employment sector which is only 1.9 percent.

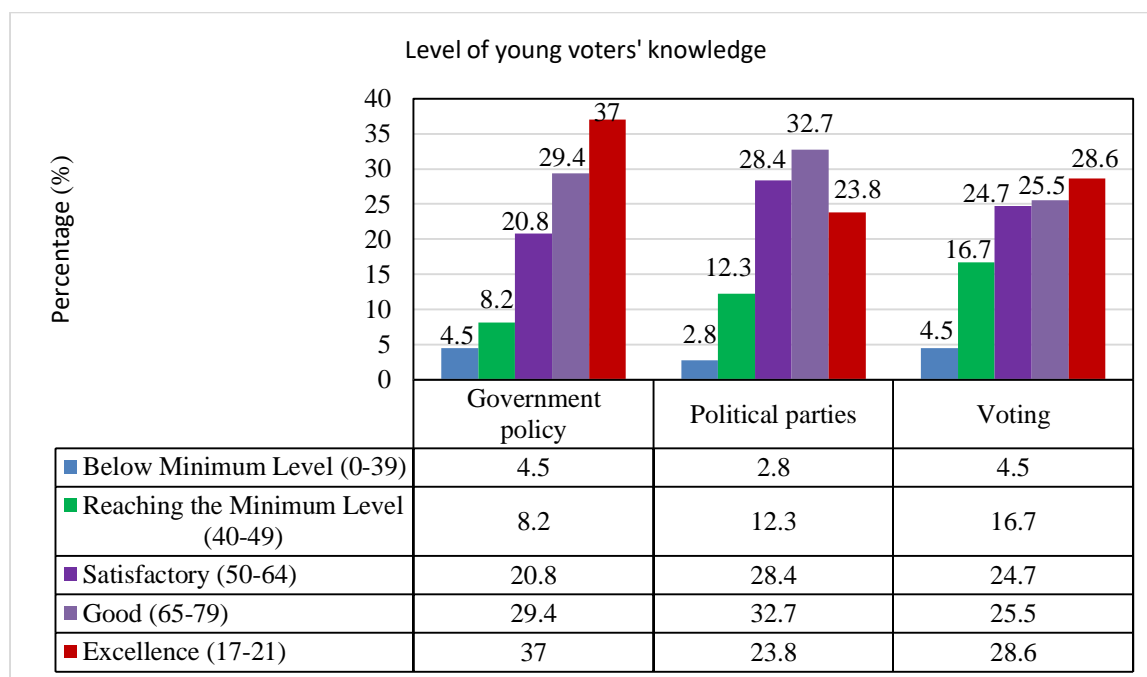|	Government policy	Political parties	Voting
■ Below Minimum Level (0-39)	4.5	2.8	4.5
■ Reaching the Minimum Level (40-49)	8.2	12.3	16.7
■ Satisfactory (50-64)	20.8	28.4	24.7
■ Good (65-79)	29.4	32.7	25.5
■ Excellence (17-21)	37	23.8	28.6

Figure 1: Level of young voters' knowledge towards government policy, political parties and voting

In accordance with the high school grading standard that was adjusted and used in this study, the results of the respondents' scores for knowledge were further divided into five categories. As indicated in Figure 1, the categories range from Below Minimum Level (0–39 marks), Reaching the Minimum Level (40–49 marks), Satisfactory (50–64 marks), Good (65-79 marks), and Excellent (80–100 marks). More than one-third of respondents (37%) managed to get an excellent score showing that they have good knowledge about the government policies implemented in the country followed by 29.4 percent who received a good score. Only 4.5 percent scored below the minimum level for knowledge about government policy. There is one-third of the respondents (32.7%) have good knowledge of political parties followed by 28.4 percent with a satisfactory level of knowledge. Only 2.8 percent scored below the minimum level concerning knowledge of political parties. For voting, more than

one-fourth (28.6%) scored excellence for voting while only 4.5 percent scored below the minimum level.

Table 2: Level of young voters' attitude towards voting

No.	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
1.	I tend to make additional referrals before polling day.	3.68	0.875	High
2.	I'm interested in getting involved in the political campaign before the election.	3.07	1.005	Medium
3.*	**I'm interested in finding out about the election results.**	**3.87**	**0.929**	**High**
4.	I feel that I'm old enough to participate in the polls.	3.69	0.965	High
5.	I feel it is appropriate to make it mandatory for voters who are 18 years old to vote in elections.	3.57	1.086	Medium
6.*	**I'm confident of the EC's transparency in implementing the voting process.**	**3.80**	**0.908**	**High**
7.*	**I'm confident that I will make the right decision during voting day.**	**3.94**	**0.882**	**High**
	Overall Mean	**3.660**	**0.678**	**Medium**

(*indicates the item that has a mean value of the highest three)

The descriptive statistics in Table 2 show the highest mean for the level of young voters' attitudes toward voting is "I'm confident that I will make the right decision during voting day" with a mean of 3.94 and a standard deviation of 0.678 followed by the statement of "I'm interested in finding out about the election results" with the mean of 3.87 and a standard deviation of 0.929. On the other hand, the lowest mean refers to the statement "I'm interested in getting involved in the political campaign before the election" with a mean of 3.07 and a standard deviation of 0.929. From the findings obtained, it can be concluded that the level of young voters' attitudes towards voting is at a moderate level, with a mean of 3.660 and a standard deviation of 0.678.

Table 3: Level of young voters' readiness toward voting

No.	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
1.*	**I'm ready to vote.**	**3.45**	**1.093**	**Medium**
2.	I'm ready to find information about the voting process.	2.61	0.987	Medium
3.	I'm ready to join the Election Academy by the SPR.	3.28	0.991	Medium
4.	I'm ready to help as an Election Commission (EC) official.	3.34	1.035	Medium
5.*	**I'm ready to pass on information to friends about the voting process.**	**3.45**	**0.980**	**Medium**
6.	I'm willing to participate in programs related to voting preparation.	3.30	1.010	Medium
7.*	**I'm ready to discuss the election with the family.**	**3.46**	**1.015**	**Medium**
	Overall Mean	**3.419**	**0.813**	**Medium**

(*indicates the item that has a mean value of the highest three)

Based on Table 3, the highest mean for the level of young voters' readiness toward voting is "I am ready to discuss the election with my family" with a mean of 3.46 and a standard deviation of 1.015 followed by the statement of "I'm ready to vote" with the mean of 3.45 and a standard deviation of 1.093. On the other hand, the lowest mean refers to the item "I am ready to find information about the voting process" with a mean of 2.61 and a standard deviation of 0.987. From the findings, the overall level of youth readiness for voting is at a moderate level, with a mean of 3.419 and a standard deviation of 0.813.

Table 4: Factors influencing young voters' readiness towards voting

Predictors	Young voters' readiness		t	p	Contribution (%)
	B	B			
Constant	1.053		5.949	.000	
Voting is my responsibility	.295	.352	6.852	.000	26.2
The good reputation of the elected representatives	.145	.159	3.087	.002	4.7
Peer influence	.165	.204	3.478	.001	2.3
Implementation of Undi-18 policy	.129	.151	3.027	.003	1.1
Encouragement of family members	-.079	-.097	-1.803	.072	0.7
Electing a new government	-.004	-.004	-.077	.938	No contribution
Fighting for my religious rights	-.046	-.057	-1.206	.228	
Fighting for the interests of youth	.024	.028	.532	.595	
The influence of social media	-.007	-.009	-.165	.869	

F=27.321   R=.594
Sig F= *p<.05* R^2=.352

Table 4 clearly shows that there are five factors that significantly influence young voters towards voting, namely, voting is my responsibility, the good reputation of the elected representatives, the influence of peers, the implementation of the Undi-18 policy by the government and the encouragement of family members in the Batang Padang district. Statistically, voting is my responsibility contributed up to 26.2 percent (*B*=.352), while the good reputation of the elected representatives contributed up to 4.7 percent (*B*=.159), the influence of peers contributed up to 2.3 percent (*B*=.204), the implementation of vote policy 18 by the government contributed up to 1.1 percent (*B*=.151) and the encouragement of family members contributed up to 0.7 percent (*B*=-.097), with a value of $R2$=.352, $F(9,452)$=27.321, p<.001 which influence the young voters to vote in PRU-15. The finding concurs with the previous study from Borg and Azzopardi (2022) that participants' voting decisions call attention to the responsibility that comes with having the ability to influence the result of the vote. They appear to have been motivated by this sense of responsibility to do the right thing. While the factors of electing a new government, fighting for my religious rights, fighting for the interests of youth and the influence of social media do not influence the young voters' readiness to vote for PRU-15. Thus, these findings on discovering the factors that influence young votes' readiness towards PRU-15 in Batang Padang district, Perak were achievable.

CONCLUSION

In the past, elite institutions of power and gatekeepers dominated and controlled the centralized traditional mainstream media, and citizens served as passive consumers of information. This is how BN became the longest-serving elected government in the history of the globe that is still in power. Predictably, as stated by a previous study (Leong, 2015)

opposition parties were early adopters of social media as a way to get around strict regulations on traditional mainstream media and question the government narrative. Further investigation into other hashtags on other social media platforms would offer insights into how governance and citizenship are negotiated and contested at various societal levels, especially as the political situation in Malaysia continues to develop in unpredictable ways and citizens use social media to engage in political debate.

From a methodological angle, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) was used in this study to determine the young voters' readiness for voting. The process of stimulation is explained differently by the ELM model, and the outcome of that process could alter an individual's knowledge, attitude, and decision. ELM is a twofold process of persuasion that defines two paths to persuasion, namely the central route and the peripheral route. Each route depicts a separate cognitive process, initiated by various conditions and using different information. In each instance, a person critically evaluates the information in depth, but in other circumstances, a person will evaluate the material quickly, superficially, and without carefully evaluating the arguments presented in it. They should assess political information more critically in the context of this study to determine whether the young voters are truly prepared. When the level of knowledge is high, then the level of attitude and readiness will also be at a high level because youth are seen as more prepared and not easily influenced by third parties (peripheral cues).

The current findings, however, reveal a different understanding of the variables influencing young voters' readiness for PRU-15 in Batang Padang district in Perak. In opposed to the previous study by Mior et al. (2020), which claimed that Malaysian Gen Z was still uncertain whether they could fulfill their obligation in the upcoming election due to a low percentage of respondents who confirmed their readiness to vote, Moreover, their study shows that social media, expertise, and peer factors have little effect on the voting behavior of Generation Z. Their study additionally revealed a negative and strong association between family and attitude and readiness, which explains why Gen Z does not rely on their family or attitude while making voting decisions. Interestingly, as discussed in the previous section, our findings discovered that young voters are significantly influenced by five factors, including the belief that voting is their responsibility, the reputation of their elected officials, peer influence, the government's implementation of the Undi-18 policy, and the support of family members.

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