

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**THE EFFECTS OF POLITICAL
CHAOS ON SOCIAL MEDIA
TOWARDS YOUNG VOTERS
INTENTION ON VOTING DECISION:
A CASE STUDY OF SEMENYIH
CONSTITUENCY**

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ABSTRACT

In today's socio-political landscape, which is shaped by racial tensions, political turmoil, economic uncertainty, and negative images of leaders, understanding the complicated dynamics is crucial. This is especially important for young voters who are navigating their way through a complex web of information on social media sites. The massive amount of information that they encounter can potentially impact their voting intentions and behaviours. In this research, the focus is on how political chaos has significantly impacted voters' intentions and behaviours by examining the Malaysian political phenomenon. The chaotic situation may be helpful for politicians and policymakers to design appropriate actions and counter-measures. Political parties may gain political advantages from chaotic situations, while others may suffer from the situation. The chaotic phenomena have triggered the young voters' emotions and behaviours, making them more independent, alert, cautious, and careful when making a voting decision. This pre-election study explores and explains the effects of political chaos on young voters' intentions and behaviour in the Semenyih State Constituency of Selangor. The study used a survey to collect data from 380 respondents, and all the collected data was examined. The study developed a structural equation model to test the relationship between constructs. Using PLS-SEM 4.0, the study formed Low-Order constructs consisting of racial complexity, political disorder, economic uncertainty, and leaders' chaotic images against the High-Order construct of political chaos. The study tested a voter's intention through established Low-Order constructs of attitude, subjective norms, and behavioural control against the High-Order construct of voters' intention. Similarly, the voters' behaviour was also examined using a Low-Order construct of candidate images, current issues, situational factors, and epistemic value against the High-Order construct of voters' behaviour. The Disjoint Two-Stage Approach test was used to validate both the Low-Order and the High-Order constructs. All of the constructs have been tested against a dependent variable, a voting decision. The Structural Measurement showed that political chaos has a significant impact on voters' intentions and behaviour but has no significant effect on a direct voting decision. In addition, social media construct has been included to see the mediator effect on the structure. It was found that there is no mediating effect between political chaos and voting decisions, as well as between intention and voting decisions. However, social media does play a partial role between behaviour and voting decisions. Similarly, chaos strategy plays no moderating role between behaviour-voting decisions and intention-voting decisions.

Keywords: political chaos, voting intention, voting behaviour, social media, political strategy

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

One of the major concerns among political researchers is the state of attitude and behaviour of young voters when exposed to political chaos, and how they influence their voting decisions. Young voters living in the millennium are no longer predictable, as their attitudes and behaviours have been exposed to many new external phenomena that have not occurred previously.

Factors influencing voters differ from one country to another. It has been learned that voters in a Western country are greatly influenced by race identity, religious background, ethnicity, regional demographics, class of people, and gender. For Japanese voters, their voting behaviours were determined by other factors that differ from the Western countries. Japanese voters have been influenced by the country's leadership, which determines the country's economic and political stability (Hrebenar & Itoh, 2015). However, in Malaysia, economic inflation, unemployment issues, and financial scandals have a potential effect on voters' behaviour (Jamie Tan et al., 2019; Mohamad & Suffian, 2023).

According to Kurada (1974, as cited in Hrebenar & Itoh, 2015) "voting is not so much a political activity, but as part of general social behaviour" (p.7). The author claimed that the voter's behaviour could be understood through the active high turnout, passive individuals who refused to vote, and hostility towards politicians and political parties. Therefore, this research will examine how political chaos could have affected the intention, behaviour and voting decisions of the young voters.

1.1.1 Malaysian Influencing Factors

Ethnicity remained a relevant factor in plural society as it involved various interests of the respective races. Among ethnicities, there is always a feeling that their interest is threatened by other races (Embong, 2018). The interests of one race are different from others, depending on the society or a particular group they are inclined to (Barry, 1995). According to Mohamad and Suffian (2023), ethnicity has been the