# UiTM Cawangan Kedah-INSPIN

## Social Media, Political News Exposure And Political **Participation Among Malay Young People**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The power of a democracy relies on the percentage to which its young people are aware of the political processes and involve in political participation. Young people as part of large society sholud not be avoided as they are huge group, young, energetic, proactive and many new ideas that can bring changes to the development of Malaysia towards year 2020. Since young people is valuable in practicing democracy, this study is to examine news media exposure among young people and to search how social media news exposure can influence political participation among young people. Respondents were asked to complete a survey during final year project exhibition with the theme Jati Diri Melayu (Variasi Komunikasi Melayu; VOKAL 2015). The instrument elements is adapted from European Social Survey (ESS) and instruments structured by Merdeka Center who the bodies conducted National Youth Survey in Malaysia on political issues. Findings from a survey (n=128, age 21 to 24) found that there is a greater news media media exposure gain from social media use that may leads to greater political knowledge but not externely participate in political activities. Contradictory from past research who believe that having greater news media exposure can influence political participation from development of political knowledge. This research suggest that students are not extremely participate in political activities due to the factors of early age in political activities, low political interest and not more negative political attitude.

**Keywords:** Political participation, news media exposure, social media use

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#### INTRODUCTION

The power of a democracy relies on the percentage to which its young people are aware of the political processes and involve in political participation. Young people as part of large society sholud not be avoided as they are huge group, young, energetic, proactive, many ideas and new that can bring changes to develop Malaysia in future (Visser, 2008). Since young people is valuable in practicing democracy, this study is to examine news media exposure among young people and to search how news media exposure can influence political participation among young people. The role of social media and political participation among young people has been subject of research recently (Molly W. Metzger, 2015; Kristoffer Holt, 2013; Hao Xiaoming, 2014). New forms of communication were used to plan offline political participation such as confrontation, demonstration, sign petition and protest (Molly W. Metzger, 2015; Guvenc, 2015, (Valenzuela, 2013) which now uprising in Malaysia despite in Middle East country (Guvenc, 2015; Bas, 2015) and around the world. This is how to provide evidence of disagreement toward Federal Government and to express collective consciousness on political or national issues and solidarity among protestant. The Malaysian political change, for example was called, 'Political Tsunami' since General Election 12<sup>th</sup> (Salleh, 2008) and many social science scholars believe that it caused from the crucial role of young people turnout.

The scenario continue and reported that General Election 13<sup>th</sup> as 'Urban Political Tsunami' (Junaidi Awang Besar, 2014; Sani, 2014) where voters turnout was highest in Malaysian electoral history from 76 per cent (GE 12) to 84.8 per cent of eligible voters who cast their ballots (Gomez, 2014). It is not only that, greater efficacy on political participation in Malaysia struggle Malay young people to involve demonstration and protest that called 'Bersih.' The protest carried out to express the dissatisfaction over the authorities' alleged lack of commitment towards electoral reforms with the theme 'Duduk Bantah' or sit-in-protest (The Star, 2012). Basically, young people participation in demonstration and protest brings dramatic changes in Malaysian political sphere and it raise from the crucial role of social media (Sani, 2014).

Undeniable, social media exposure caused dissemination of information, gathering protestant in mobilising events (Muniandy, 2013) and influencing voter choice, particularly in urban areas in the flourishing of anti-government material spread by young urbanites (Tapsell, 2013). Supported by Hasnen (2012) who study on how social media engage protestant in Kuwait and Egypt and found that social media plays a vital role to ensure protestant strategy success. As the events progressed, Internet users employed Facebook, Twitter and other applications to disseminate information about the meeting places and the way the protestors were to reach the location. Status updates and tweets played a very important role in providing information to the protestors about the police formations and plans.

Study on social media use among young people has positive correlation to political participation. National survey in the Netherlands on young people (16 to 24) to explore the relationship between media use and political participation reported positive relations (Vreese, 2011; Lee, 2014; Golan, 2013). The vital part of discussion on media use and political participation among young people is greater media exposure, especially social media, leads to greater political knowledge and drives to political participation among young people (Hao Xiaoming, 2014; Barnidge, 2015; Sheppard, 2015).

This belief supported by Wilkes (2014) who study on media exposure and political participation and use to choose voting and protesting as engagement type. Result shows that social media exposure highly affecting voting behaviour than protesting because media coverage on voting tend to be more positive and educate than protesting report. The findings of this study provide two (2) central idea; 1) greater UiTM Cawangan Kedah-INSPIN

media exposure, develop political knowledge and 2) greater positive media exposure leads to political participation.

However, study on social media and political participation among young people employ numbers of control variable, especially level of education. Higher education levels among young people play significant functions on the impact of social media and political participation (Galston, 2001) because most of media scholars who study political participation among young people believed that education level is a silent factor of political inclination and voter maturity (Hasnen, 2012; (Sears, 2006; Galston, 2005;). Besides that, courses taken especially, social sciences have greater influence on political participation where verbal skills have a significant influence on future political engagement (Hillygus, 2005), cognitive skills may lead individuals to participate in politics (Lenz, 2010) by sharing political information (Dana Rosengard, 2014) gained from political news consume (Gerald Jordan, 2015) and it can increase political knowledge and finally involve political participation (Lee G. T., 2013). Political news update gained through different media will have different impact of political participation among young people. Even though, they are reported as technology savvy on news searching, researcher should not undervalue traditional media influence. In the absence of news media exposure and political participation among young people, the following is the key research question for this study: 1) how level of media exposure can influence political participation among young people and 2) what types of political participation involve most among young people who have high education level.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Taking into account some basic principles on social media and political participation among young people, this study is to examine news media exposure among young people and to search how news media exposure can influence externe political participation among young people. Study on social media and political participation among young people use to employ Political Information Efficacy Theory that highlighted on social media exposure can develop political knowledge and resort to political participation among young people.

## **Political Information Efficacy Theory**

In a short view, political participation highly affected by media exposure, political knowledge and political interest. These variables highly associated to Political Information Efficacy Theory. The origin point of political information efficacy theory is political efficacy where the concept of political efficacy where the feeling that individuals political action does have an impact on the political process (Hayes, 2009). The political information efficacy theory was developed with a goal to study voter's confidence in his or her own political knowledge (gain from social media news) and its sufficiency to engage in the political process such as being register voters or turn-out during election (Pollock, 1983).

The salient idea of political information efficacy theory is lack of political knowledge about the candidates and political issues which is one of the factors young adults reason for turning off in political activities especially during election (C.Tedessco, 2007). Findings Lynda et al (2007) offer some support for this study on political information efficacy theory by showing that different sources (media) of political information result in significant differences in knowledge acquisition about the political issues that can affect political participation among young people. The impact of news media exposure has been tested to show similar positive relationships. According to Hao Xiaoming (2014), using greater political news media can increase political participation probability and supported by Vreese (2011) found that greater

news media exposure can increase political knowledge that leads to political participation.

## Differences in the Use of Traditional and Online Media among Young People

It is reported by many scholars that daily newspapers have greater impact and positive relationship with political participation among young people. According to Gerber (2007) who conducted cross-sectional survey on 15 countries to examine expressive engagement, political knowledge and young voter turnout reported newspaper readership found positive relationship between political knowledge and political participation. Supported by Wei (2008) newspaper use is generally connected to greater political trust and political knowledge where features of newspaper to inform and educate citizens because it provide more thematic and historical context, emphasizes more complex issues and policies than simplistic strategic is undeniable. Reinforced by Judith Moeller (2014) who conducted survey in Netherlands found that for young citizens, acquiring confidence in their competence to participate in the political system by using political information is not a simple, straightforward process. From the data, newspaper reading is still the most effective information source with regard to the development of internal political efficacy.

However, impact on newspaper and political participation among young people have different point of view where young people are not really interested in reading newspaper and searching political news from the conventional media (Rebecca, 2009). In addition, Internet is the best medium to examine young people trends on searching political information because they are identified as technology savvy way before the old citizens. Besides that, in terms of accessibility, Internet provides convenience condition during the searching process (Lee G. T., 2013). Correlate to Kristoffer Holt A. S. (2013) who study on Swedish National Election Campaign reported that frequent social media exposure among young people can function as a leveller in terms of motivating political participation. Early literature on effect televison exposure can influence political participation dramatically change after invention of Internet. According to Hooghe (2011) who study on masscommunication and society observe a significant negative relation between television viewing duration and political participation. One explanation might be that, for young people, the average weekday is highly standardized. Because compulsory schooling or attending lecture is universal in Belgium, typically at school from 8 a.m. to about 4 p.m.

In Malaysia, Internet through social media promote drastic changes in political sphere. During GE12, The social media has been credited with playing a crucial role in supporting the current reform movement. People dare to speak, discuss and comment about government with central idea of changing the government (Rajaratnam, 2009). The scenario continue and reported that General Election 13<sup>th</sup> as 'Urban Political Tsunami' (Junaidi Awang Besar, 2014; Sani, 2014) where voters turnout was highest in Malaysian electoral history from 76 per cent (GE 12) to 84.8 per cent of eligible voters who cast their ballots (Gomez, 2014).

It is not only that, greater efficacy on political participation in Malaysia struggle Malay young people to involve demonstration and protest that called 'Bersih.' The protest carried out to express the dissatisfaction over the authorities' alleged lack of commitment towards electoral reforms with the theme 'Duduk Bantah' or sit-in-protest (The Star, 2012). Basically, young people participation in demonstration and protest brings dramatic changes in Malaysian political sphere and it raise from the crucial role of social media since the medium provide more interactive, more democratically, sharing political information within seconds, inexpensive and ease of use (Sani, 2014).

Social Media Exposure and Political Participation among Young People

Study on social media use among young people has positive correlation to political participation. National survey in the Netherlands on young people (16 to 24) to explore the relationship between media use and political participation reported positive relations (Vreese, 2011; Lee, 2014; Golan, 2013). The vital part of discussion on media use and political participation among young people is greater media exposure, especially social media, leads to greater political knowledge and drives to political participation among young people (Hao Xiaoming, 2014; Barnidge, 2015; Sheppard, 2015). This belief supported by Wilkes (2014) who study on media exposure and political participation and use to choose voting and protesting as engagement type. Result shows that social media exposure highly affecting voting behaviour than protesting because media coverage on voting tend to be more positive and educate than protesting report. The findings of this study provide two (2) central idea; 1) greater media exposure; develop political knowledge and 2) greater positive media exposure leads to political participation.

How social media exposure lead to political participation? According to Lee G. T., (2013), analysis of a survey of 774 university students shows that participation is explained most prominently by direct connection with public political actors and followed by exposure to shared political information. These two variables also mediate the impact of other dimensions of FB use on political participation. Sharing political information and link with user-generated content (UGC) involvement was a strong predictor of political participation among the young people. Important idea is a greater frequent engagement with UGC users' link is higher levels of participation to offline participation among young people, even though involvement is negatively related to political knowledge (Östman, 2012).

Undeniable, social media exposure caused dissemination of information, gathering protestant in mobilising events (Muniandy, 2013) and influencing voter choice, particularly in urban areas in the flourishing of anti-government material spread by young urbanites (Tapsell, 2013). Supported by Hasnen (2012) who study on how social media engage protestant in Kuwait and Egypt and found that social media plays a vital role to ensure protestant strategy success. As the events progressed, Internet users employed Facebook, Twitter and other applications to disseminate information about the meeting places and the way the protestors were to reach the location. Status updates and tweets played a very important role in providing information to the protestors about the police formations and plans.

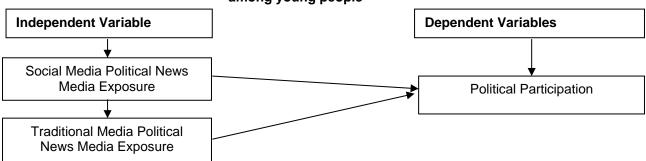
#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is conducted to examine news media exposure trend and to analyze how news media exposure can influence exteme political participation among young people. Respondents selected among final year students of Communication and Media Studies age between 20 to 25. This study aim to choose potential voters (eligible voter is 21-years-old) because young people's behavior are the most avid information and communication technologies users and the most vulnerable to the influence of various extreme political participation.

The survey is based on 128 respondents from 210 total of final year students that stratified by gender, age and qualification. Respondents were asked to complete a survey during final year project exhibition with the theme *Jati Diri Melayu* (Variasi Komunikasi Melayu; VOKAL 2015). The instrument elements is adapted from European Social Survey (ESS) and instruments structured by Merdeka Center who the bodies conducted National Youth Survey in Malaysia on political issues. This study estimate trend of news media exposure and types of political participation either extreme or non-extreme among young people.

## **RESEARCH FRAMEWORK**

Figure 1: How news media use and media exposure can influence political participation among young people



**Political Participation**; This study use to choose dependent variable is a political participation. Respondents were asked whether, and to what extent, they involve or engage in four types of extreme participation such as egage confrontation, demonstration, sign petition and engage protest. Besides that , there are six types of non-extreme participation such as reply 'comment', click 'like,' 'share,' 'retweet,' 'favourite,' and 'report option,' listed in the questionnaire (Cronbach's alpha = 0.89).

**News Media Exposure**; First independent variable of this study is news media exposure. In oder to measure, news media exposure trend, there are four elements such as duration time spent on searching and reading news, subscription trend, news readership trend on weekend and weekdays tested (Cronbach's alpha = 0.72).

**Social Media and Media Exposure**; Second independent variable is types of media use to search political updates. Media exposure is to search political news either from online of offline media. Use of online media, especially, social media was measured by using three common types of social media sign up by young people such as Facebook, twitter and instagram. While, offline media such as newspaper, television, radio and new variables tested is getting news political update from the lecturer. (Cronbach's alpha = 0.78).

**Control Variable**; Level of education (qualification) and age, highly influence percentage of political participation among young people. Education levels among young people play significant functions on the impact of social media and political participation because most of media scholars who study political participation among young people believed that greater education level is greater political awarenes and contribute to greater political knowledge that leads to greater political participation (Galston, 2009).

## **RESULTS**

To restate, the main purpose of this study is to examine news media exposure among young people and to search how news media exposure can influence political participation among young people by considering political news readership among respondents. In Malaysia, political news content varies from weekend and weekdays edition. Therefore, this study decided to split the edition circulation.

Table 1: Political New	s Readership dı	uring Weekdays
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Duration	Frequency	Percentage (%)
21-30 minutes	73	57.1
11-20 minutes	25	19.5
31-40 minutes	24	18.8
41 minutes and above	3	2.3
0-10 minutes	3	2.3

From Table 1, higher percentage of duration time spent on political news readership during weekdays is 21 to 30 minutes and followed by 11 to 20 minutes. Searching or reading political news during weekdays among respondents reported medium frequency where duration stated highest (41 minutes and above) reported low frequency. From past literature, young people consume political news greater during weekend. Therefore, this study use to seek political news readership during weekend as stated in Table 2.

Table 2: Political News Readership during Weekend

Duration	Frequency	Percentage (%)
41 minutes and above	65	44.5
31-40 minutes	29	22.7
21-30 minutes	20	15.6
11-20 minutes	12	9.4
0-10 minutes	10	7.8

From Table 2, we found that a respondent who represent Malay young people search or read political news during weekend is greater than weekdays and duration stated highest (41 minutes and above) reported high frequency than low duration (0 to 10 minutes). Comparison between weekend and weekdays readership by using descriptive analysis stated as Table 3. This study reported that respondents spent more time searching or reading political news during weekends rather than weekdays (M=3.53).

**Table 3: News Readership Trend** 

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
Political News Readership during weekends	3.53	1.369
Political News Readership during weekdays	3.27	1.189

Media Exposure and source of political update take into consideration online media and offline media that use frequently among young people. As for online media such as twitter, facebook and instagram, while offline media such as newspaper, radio and television. We introduce new variable of source political update which is lecturer.

**Table 4: Media Exposure and Source Political Update** 

Media Exposure	Mean	Std. Deviation

update twitter	4.14	1.128
update lecturer	4.05	1.142
update facebook	4.03	1.163
update newspaper	3.84	1.405
update radio	2.11	1.324
update television	2.10	1.266
update instagram	1.96	1.180

From Table 4 reported that respondents highly depending on twitter (M=4.14) rather than facebook (M=4.03) and instagram (M=1.96) to get political update. Surprisingly, this study discovers new findings that respondents also get political news update from lecturer (M=4.05) who teach Issues and Media, Journalism and News Writing Reporting courses. Consistent to past research findings, offline media do not grab respondents' attention to get political update among young people. This study divided political participation divided into two such as 1) extreme participation and 2) non-extreme participation.

**Table 5: Political Participation** 

		Std. Deviation
Political Participation	Mean	
click 'like'	3.44	1.344
click 'share'	3.25	1.322
click 'favourite'	3.25	1.322
click 'report option'	3.21	1.373
click retweet	3.21	1.284
reply 'comment'	3.11	1.269
engage confrontation	2.28	1.108
sign petition	2.23	.915
engage protest	2.20	.934
engage demonstration	2.10	.792

We found somewhat different that past study, even though respondents reported high exposure on political news media from online media but they are not interested on extreme participation then non-extreme. From Table 5, respondents are interested to join online participation such as click 'like,' (M=3.44), click 'share' and click 'favourite' (M=3.25). Among extreme participation, respondents interested on engagement confrontation (M=2.28) and sign petition (M=2.23) rather than engage protest and demonstration.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

In this paper we have to examine news media exposure among young people and to search how social media news exposure can influence political participation among young people. Based on view political news readership among respondents who represent Malay young people we found that they are exposed greater political news, especially weekend compared to weekdays. This is related from past literatures who study on masscommunication and society found that low frequency of reading news

during weekdays than weekend because compulsory schooling or attending lecture is universal, typically at school from 8 a.m. to about 4 p.m (Hooghe, 2011). In Malaysia, coverage news during weekend is greater than weekdays, where most news media broadcast feature writing news on national issues (Normah Mustaffa, 2010). Greater exposure on political news can result greater political knowledge that leads to political participation (Hao Xiaoming, 2014; Barnidge, 2015; Sheppard, 2015). However, greater political participation vary from types of media use such as facebook and twitter who reported greater extreme demonstration and protest (Hasnen, 2012; Sani, 2014) while, newspaper leads to voting behavior (Wei., 2008; Judith Moeller, 2014). This study reported that young people who are interested to get political update from social media such as twitter and facebook rather than newspaper or television. Consistent from past study where our young people who technology savvy (Lee G. T., 2013), belief that social media provide greater accessibility to world wide supporters, dissemination of information become more effective than conventional media (Muniandy, 2013) and this new media motivate political participation through online participation which more democracy (Kristoffer Holt A. S., 2013). New findings that can contribute to the world of knowledge in political science from this study is our young people have greater political news media exposure, greater social media use to get political update but low extreme political participation such as engaging confrontation, demonstration, protest and sign petition. They are interested to online participation such as click 'like, share, favourite and retweet' button rather than involve political activities that they notice will be arrested. We believe that our young people who in the early age (21 to 24) did not extremely involve in confrontation, demonstration and protest because low political interest (Vreese, 2011; Visser, 2008). Political participation related to age reported positive significant where young people and old people display comparable levels of trust in political institutions and political interest. They are not more negative than adults in their political attitudes, and this is true for both political trust and political interest (Quintelier, 2010). This literature is consistent with findings that young people involve in newer and positive participation rather than extreme participation.

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