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**IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA TOWARDS FIRST-TIME VOTERS: A STUDY OF
THE 15TH MALAYSIA GENERAL ELECTION**

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the influence of social media on the voting behaviour and political engagement of first-time voters during the 15th Malaysia General Election. As the digital landscape evolves, social media platforms play an increasingly prominent role in shaping public opinion, especially among younger demographics. This research aimed to determine the impact of social media towards the first-time voters within the context of the 15th Malaysia General Election. The research employs a quantitative approach that was collected through structured questionnaires to gather insights from a sample of first-time voters, focusing on social media platforms used, the political engagement, and voting behaviour of first-time voters. The outcomes of the research contributed to a deeper understanding of the role of social media in shaping political opinions and civic engagement among the youth, providing valuable insights for policymakers, political analysts and educators.

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THE DECLARATION

ABSTRACT

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Social media have become an integral part of modern societies as their impact is felt through various aspects of life, including those of politics which have been studied extensively by scholars and academicians of the past. Understanding how social media could affect first-time voters in Malaysia has become an increasingly important topic with the widespread emergence and usage of social media within the political sphere, especially among the younger generations. Nowadays, candidates and political parties are utilising these social media platforms for their political gain, which enables them to communicate with voters in a direct way that proves to be beneficiary from a multitude of standpoints, such as lowering the overhead cost of communication in comparison to the usage of traditional media. This has given them the opportunity to mobilise their supporters in hopes of obtaining greater votes and attracting the attention of the younger generations so that their campaign message can be disseminated freely. Therefore, it is unsurprising that social media has become an integral tool in political campaigns worldwide, and Malaysia is no exception. The 15th General Election, which took place in 2022, saw significant political parties and candidates leveraging various social media platforms to reach out to their voters, especially those within the first-time voter category. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Tiktok each played their crucial roles in shaping public opinion, mobilising party support, and, most importantly, influencing election outcomes. As such, the 15th General Election became a historical event within the nation's political landscape, leading the nation to experience its first hung parliament. For that reason, this research paper aims to explore the impacts of social media on first-time voters in Malaysia and the role of social media in shaping the political landscape of the country.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW & CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the literature on the impact of social media towards first-time voters: a study of the 15th Malaysia General Election. The presentation of this chapter begins with the literature review that includes social media and the Malaysian General Elections, social media exposure and political participation among the youth, first-time voters in Malaysia and voting behaviour of the Malaysian youth. Following the review of the relevant literature, the conceptual framework is also discussed in detail in relation to the conceptual definitions. Finally, hypothesis development is proposed to support research questions and research objectives of this study.

2.2 Literature Review

Social media has become an integral part of modern society, as it has transformed the way that people communicate, share valuable information as well as engage in political discussion. With the rise of digital platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok has revolutionised the way political information is distributed to the masses. This in turn, had played a significant role in shaping political discourse and influencing electoral outcomes. This review will seek to explore the extent to which social media has influenced the political attitudes, behaviours as well as the participation of first-time voters during the critical democratic process of voting. Understanding these patterns may provide us with important insights into the implications for democratic processes and election outcomes in the digital era. Overall, this review's findings will shed light on the complex relationship between social media and first-time voters during Malaysia's 15th General Election, ultimately informing policymakers, researchers, and political stakeholders about the challenges and opportunities posed by social media in the context of democratic processes.