

Influence of Media on University Students' Efficacy in Participating in Political Conversations

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Abstract

Purpose: The key agents that influence political orientations of youths are family, peer, school and media. The study examined the influence of media on university students' efficacy in participating in political conversations. In particular, the relationships between media use, knowledge of issues, political dominance and efficacy in participating in political conversations were investigated.

Design/methodology/approach: Survey data from 305 students in a Malaysian university were analysed.

Findings: The results showed that a majority of the respondents read the online newspaper and the least popular media for getting information on community or national issues was magazines. For knowledge of issues, more respondents understood the concept of 1MDB and knew its context in politics compared to BR1M. The results also showed that the respondents were moderately dominant in political conversations. More than half of them reported presenting sensible arguments in support of their political views but did not dominate the other person. However, when taken as a whole, the group of respondents felt that they were more confident about engaging in political action than in participating effectively in group discussions about political issues. There was a significant positive correlation between political efficacy and political dominance.

Research limitations/implications: The findings suggest the prevalence of political apathy among the university students studied.

Practical implications: To set students free from the intellectual containment that constrain students' engagement with political thought and discussions, the repealing of the University and University Colleges Act 1971 is in order.

Originality/value: Studies have shown Malaysian students' disengagement with partisan politics but this study revealed that university students have disengaged from citizenship issues as well.

Keywords: Media, Efficacy, Political Conversation, Political Dominance

Introduction

The key agents that influence political orientations of youths are family, peer, school and media. "Through everyday political talk, citizens construct their identities, achieve mutual understanding, produce public reason, form considered opinions, and produce rules and resources for deliberate democracy" (Kim & Kim, 2008, p. 51). Moy and Gastil (2006) argue