



**Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities**

**THE PERCEPTION OF STUDENTS ON THE POLITICAL RIGHTS OF  
MALAYSIAN YOUTH TO PARTICIPATE IN POLITICS**

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**70581**

**Bachelor of Social Sciences and Humanities with Honours**

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**THE PERCEPTION OF STUDENTS ON THE POLITICAL RIGHTS OF  
MALAYSIAN YOUTH TO PARTICIPATE IN POLITICS**

**This graduation exercise is submitted in partial fulfilment of requirement for the  
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**International Studies WA15**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The issue of political right is a major concern for every country in the world, particularly for young people who are interested in politics. The participation of young people in politics in Malaysia is increasing and changing and this is a positive development. They have the ability and the right to join political parties and to contribute to the national political strength of the country. This is a result of the implementation of "VOTE 18," which encourages young people to participate in politics. This is a catalyst for the rise of young people in politics, and it is important that young people themselves understand their role in this situation. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the perceptions of students on the political rights of Malaysian youth to participate in political life. The purpose of this study is to determine the best way to focus on the involvement of young people in Malaysian politics as well as student perceptions of the current political situation.

**Keywords:** Political Right, Youth, Youth Political Participation, Undi 18

## **ABSTRAK**

*Isu hak berpolitik menjadi kebimbangan utama setiap negara di dunia, khususnya golongan muda yang meminati politik. Penyertaan anak muda dalam politik di Malaysia semakin meningkat dan berubah dan ini merupakan satu perkembangan yang positif. Mereka mempunyai keupayaan dan hak untuk menyertai parti politik dan menyumbang kepada kekuatan politik nasional negara. Ini adalah hasil daripada pelaksanaan "UNDI 18," yang menggalakkan golongan muda menyertai politik. Ini adalah pemangkin kepada kebangkitan golongan muda dalam politik, dan adalah penting bahawa golongan muda sendiri memahami peranan mereka dalam situasi ini. Tujuan kertas kerja ini adalah untuk membincangkan persepsi pelajar terhadap hak politik belia Malaysia untuk menyertai kehidupan politik. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk menentukan cara terbaik untuk memfokuskan kepada penglibatan golongan muda dalam politik Malaysia serta persepsi mahasiswa terhadap situasi politik semasa.*

*Kata kunci: Hak Politik, Belia, Penyertaan Politik Belia, Undi 18*

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **The Perception Of Students On The Political Rights Of Malaysian Youth To Participate In Politics**

#### **1.1 Background Of Study**

Political issues are currently a hot topic of discussion, particularly among young people. This topic has sparked debate not only in the community, but also on social media, where young people can voice their political opinions. There is no denying that politics has piqued the interest of young people because it will determine the country's future and they will be the next leaders. As a result, many young people have begun to participate in politics because they want to help shape a better political future.

Youth political participation continues to be a major concern around the world (Kitanova, 2019). This may be due to changes made by the government that caused the youth to become interested in politics. Throughout the many periods of crisis, as well as in between, young people have been actively organising for change. According to Fominaya (n.d), state that European youths are extremely interested in political participation and are willing to form an active movement in order for this movement to be able to provide certain political parties with the resources they need to effect change. For example, The global justice movement was founded on the demand for genuine democracy and democratic oversight and control of corporate and economic elites as a means of redressing the global capitalist system's injustices. Apart from that, the political strike carried out by the student political unions in Nepal was due to opposing the appointment of representatives from political parties that oppose the political movement in Nepal (O'Neill, Poudel and Maharjan, 2020). When a crisis like this

occurs, it encourages young people to get involved in politics and to change the movement as soon as the political system changes.

Outside influences are also one of the reasons why these young people are starting to speak out because they see things that other politician should not be doing. However, the voices and opinions of these young people are underestimated due to the possibility that they are too young to be politicians, immature in decision making and so on. This gives a negative view among young people who are smart because their opinions are not taken seriously. Due to this, the importance of political rights is given to the youth. Youth participation in politics may be a creative force and a dynamic source of innovation, helping to spark significant changes in political institutions (Tamanna, 2018). Most of these young people have a more thoughtful mind and are able to shoulder responsibilities if given the opportunity. But when their voices are not taken into account, they will begin to ignore the politics of the country. This is a very dangerous matter when in the future because these groups begin to pay no attention to politics in the country. According to Tamanna, in comparison to older citizens, younger generations are showing a decline in political involvement and participation. This decline in youth political participation jeopardizes not only today's democratic representativeness (leadership quality), but also tomorrow's democracy

In Malaysia, the government has made amendments to the voting system, and it is a step for the youth to participate in politics. The Malaysian parliament has passed legislation lowering the voting age for general elections from 21 to 18 years old. The amendments to Malaysia's federal constitution, which allow the changes to be implemented, were supported by 211 out of 222 lawmakers (Tirtayana, 2021). This change is a big change where the youth are now able to voice their political rights to the community. This movement took place in Malaysia starting with the movement of

students who wanted to change the political system in Malaysia and raise the youth to participate in politics. Syed Saddiq has been a vocal supporter of Undi 18, but the movement's founders are Qyira Yusri and Tharma Pillai, who began the movement in 2016 under the umbrella of the Malaysian Students' Global Alliance (Lee, 2021). Through this movement it has made the youth have power in this political arena. Although some groups were dissatisfied with this action, it did not stop the movement from continuing to oppose and fight for the right of the youth to participate in politics. In this research, researchers will discuss the perceptions of students on youth rights in politics and youth participation in politics.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

The participation of youths in politics is a question mark for the whole world community. These youths are a very important national asset for the country because they are the leaders of the future. Most of these young people can be a source of strength to change the political system and make a country have a strong political system in terms of administration. However, even with the wisdom of these young people they face challenges in terms of their involvement in the political world even though they can help form a strong politics. As a result of their age, young people endure discrimination and barriers to exercising their rights, restricting their potential (OHCHR | About the human rights of youth, 2021). Discrimination against these young people is due to their age being too young to govern the country even though some of them have a broad mindset.

Discrimination against the youth makes an issue that can raise the right of youth to be political. When people of the younger generation try to express themselves, they are frequently met with harsh criticism from society (Choo,2019). Through this matter,

it raises the question of why these youths need to be oppressed when at the age of 18, the youths have started working and have their own responsibility to manage themselves. This matter has become more serious because the voices of these young people are underestimated by some other politicians because they think that these young people are not yet experienced to give their opinions. As a result, despite their sensitivity to demands for social equality and justice, environmental conservation, and cultural variety, young people are increasingly excluded from decision-making and debates concerning major socio-economic and political issues (The importance of youth participation in formal political processes, 2021).

Apart from that, the issue raised by the youths in Malaysia is related to VOTE 18 which is one of the ways for the youths to participate in politics. It is often disputed by those who consider these youths to be a burden in politics. But it did not dampen the spirit of the youth to fight for their right to politics and their right to vote for their future. Although this matter has been approved by the government, various inquiries that need to be considered by the community about these youths. This is because the legitimacy of this decline can affect Malaysian politics whether good or bad and it is certainly a hot topic among the people whether these youths are ready to take on the responsibility. Because of this, the youths, especially students, need to be asked to give their opinion on the new system whether it is effective in helping politics as well as giving space to youths to lead politics in the country starting with the voting rights of youth. For this research, the researcher will analyse about the politics of youth political rights and study the student acceptance of this UNDI 18 for youths to participate in politics.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

1. What extent is it important for youths to participate in politics and the students perceive of voting right in Malaysia?

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

1. To explore the importance of the participation of youths in politics in Malaysia
2. To discover the acceptance of students on the voting rights that has been exercised in Malaysia

#### **1.5 Scope Of Study**

With the reduction of the voting age limit from 21 to 18, 18-year-olds now can participate in politics, and it can change the political pattern of this country in the future. Given this situation, the purpose of this study was to understand about the perception and acceptance of these young people towards “UNDI 18” which has been implemented by Malaysia to provide an opportunity for young people to vote during the election. The scope of the study is limited to recruiting 30 volunteers aged between 15 and 30 years according to the Malaysian Youth Council which determines the age of a youth and this study used university students from Malaysia. The reason for using students is that they have been exposed to a wide range of political information, particularly in the international politics course, and among them are also students from the youth population. For this purpose, this study will cover the entire period from the beginning of the amendment to UNDI 18 until the amendment is approved, from 2019 to 2021. The content of this study is more focused on three things, that is political rights, youth, and youth participation in political life. The reason why this concept is used in this study is because the topic of this study focuses on youth and why the importance of political rights and participating in politics. Due to this study uses University students so the location chosen is at the University in Malaysia.



## **1.6 Significance Of Study**

The findings of this study provide many benefits to individuals, societies, and nations. As these youths are the ones who lead the future, they play an important role in the progress of the country. This has caused the views of these youths towards politics to be taken by the leaders to ensure the legitimacy of these youths to govern the country. Therefore, the opinion of the youths on politics should be considered by the leaders so that it can help the country to find new paths for national progress. This study spreads awareness in the community about the importance of voting rights for the youth to determine the pattern of government in the future. This research can also help to be another field resource and help other research that outsource resources for their studies. This study will also provide information to other youths who want to know whether it is appropriate for youths to participate in politics in the future. For the researcher, this investigation will reveal the thoughts of the youth, especially the students about this "UNDI 18" towards the youth and its impact on politics in Malaysia where perhaps some researchers have not yet explored it.

## **1.7 Summary**

In conclusion, the publicity of youth in this political gives an insight into the future of the country. This is because once the youth understand the proper political way it will help these youths to remain viable during the day and increase the quality of their leadership. Although the community is still concerned about the leadership patterns that the youth will do, if these youths are not given the space to demonstrate their capabilities it may have adverse implications in the future in the absence of youths who are able to rule the country. Implications may occur at first such as lack of

experience, far-sighted thinking, and a wide range of them but to some extent it helps to the country's leadership if the idea can be used.

The implementation of VOTE 18 is also shown that the government is trying to give the youths a chance to see how the youths think about the future of the country. This implementation has given the youths the impression to vote and to think about who is eligible to be their pinner. Even if these 18 votes will affect politics, their elections will affect the marginal votes of the youth, they can still think better. UND18 is a plight of youths to shine in politics and serve as a way for active youths in the field. It is hoped that the youth will continue to have the highest power to pursue the modernization of the country so that the country can achieve progress on par with other countries.

## CHAPTER 2

### Literature Review

#### 2.1 Political Right

A country's politics are one of its most critical components. Because of the existence of politics, society can choose whatever they want in terms of the country's government. As a result, the importance of political rights in society has increased. Political rights refer to an individual's ability to participate in the civil and political life of the society and state without fear of discrimination or repression, according to the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (2016). These rights include the right to join a political party, run for office, and freely participate in political rallies, events, or protests. These rights provide society with the ability to choose what they want while also providing them with encouragement to participate in political activities. The right to vote is an important right for society. The right to vote is an essential component of any country's democracy, and the proportion of adult citizens who exercise that right in free, fair, and frequent elections is one indicator of a country's democratic health, according to Duignan (2021). The involvement of youths in politics affects the political rights where they have the power to vote. As Anton (1997) points out, young people's involvement in politics, like that of any other age group, can take a variety of shapes and forms. Voting is only one component of a much larger repertoire of political participation opportunities, but it is the most fundamental democratic act that all citizens should engage in on a regular basis. Young people may have different political interests than older voters, and these should be represented, says Anton (1997). Voting is assumed to influence representation and, ultimately, policy. Young people who do not vote are more likely to be ignored by policymakers. The importance of

giving the right to vote to the younger generation can be seen in this example. According to Lee (2020), the study stated that if these youths are given the right to vote, a party will easily win the seats available, and it has been proven that the increase in voting causes a party to win seats in the contest even if there are some youths who did not vote. It has made the voting process more effective among the public to some degree.

## **2.2 Youth**

Youth is a critically important group in the world because they are the inheritors of the next generation, and they are the future of the world. The best way to think about youth is as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to the independence of adulthood. 'Youth' is defined by the United Nations (2013) as those between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without regard to other definitions used by Member States. According to the UN's understanding, the age of a youth is not subject to the dictates of the UN alone but is determined by the country in question and the age range it desires for its citizens. It is common in many studies on youth culture and identity, according to Bucholtz and Mary (2002), who published a paper titled Youth and Cultural Practice, that the category of youth does not have a clear definition, and that in some situations, one's social circumstances may be taken into consideration rather than one's chronological age or cultural position. Also mentioned was the fact that these youths' mental and physical outlook on life needed to be taken into consideration when assessing them. According to Musgrove (1964), The current status of the young is shaped by changes in economic, demographic, and educational trends, as well as new philosophies and psychologies. The study also states that status of the young has profound implications for the quality of intergenerational relationships, the level of

national enterprise and innovation, and the pace of social change. When these youths interact with one another, they can gain a better understanding of what their age expectations are based on how life around them and their social situation is.

In Malaysia, the definition of youth is defined as being between the ages of 15 and 30 (KBS, n,d). According to the 1997 agreement of the Malaysian Youth Policy, which sets the age of youths between 18 and 40, the age setting of these youths has been changed as a result of the changes to Act 668 that took effect in 2019 (Fauzi, 2020). According to Fauzi (2020), this shift is since Malaysia's youth-setting age is higher than that of other countries, which only set the age range between 15 and 24 years in other countries. According to the Ministry of Youth and Sports (n.d.), this youth is the cornerstone of a country in which the government has established a policy to soften the human capital potential as a driver of the country's future strategic development as a driver of the country's future strategic development As a result, youth is an important aspect for the country in terms of increasing productivity for the country's future.

Since these youths are the successors of the next generation, it provides an indication of how they interact with one another. In today's world, youths have developed their own culture, which has developed over time. It is argued that "youth cultures" refers to the collective expression of young people's social experiences through the construction of differentiating lifestyles, mainly in their free time or within the interstitial spaces of institutional life (Feixa and Nofre 2012). It is used to describe the emergence of "youth micro-societies" that are largely independent of "adult institutions" and exist in their own right in their own right time and place. According to Buchmann (2001), youth culture is the way in which young people express their identities and sense of belonging. Due to structural and cultural changes in late modern

society, the extension of the life stage 'youth' and the blurring of age boundaries between youth and adulthood have raised the question of what constitutes authentic and autonomous cultural expressions of youth. Through this understanding, youths lead to a culture changing according to their needs and everything it does according to their behaviour according to the environment they are facing.

When a young person is growing up, how they act in the world is one way they can think about where they want to go in the future, good or bad. Young people are relatively unburdened by adult responsibilities at this point in their lives, allowing them to explore a wide range of potential career and life paths. However, they remained bound by the community life that surrounded them. Youth play an important and prominent role in supporting society's progress and promoting its development because they make up a large percentage of the population (Rakan and Ayman, 2020). Through this matter youths are made the main thing to protect and care for as they are the country's most asset. Young people's care is a long-term investment process, according to Rakan and Ayman, as the more they are nurtured, the more valuable their human experiences become in the modern world and the nation's most powerful weapon for dealing with both internal and external threats.

### **2.3 Youth Political Participation**

Increasing youth participation in politics is widely acknowledged to be an important social issue today. As stated in the article Young People's Political Participation (2010), youth political participation can take on many different forms, including all the ways that young people participate in civic life, practise active citizenship, or provide input into processes that determine policy and practise decisions. Participation of young people in social, economic, and political life is vital for a healthy

democracy, says the Partnership (2021). Voting, joining political parties, serving on a local youth council, engaging through a youth organisation, or participating in online political activism, boycotts, or protest movements are all examples of political participation. According to the author Ramli (2012), Youth will be the next generation of policy makers, innovators and workers. The authors say that Some of the factors to young people's participation in politics are political socialisation by family, friends and the school system, media agenda setting, and personal experiences. Youth participation in politics, on the other hand, is fraught with difficulties for a variety of reasons. Malafaia, Neves, and Menezes (2021) found that young people are interested in participating in politics, but that there is no impetus for them to do so, particularly in terms of having a space where they can discuss political issues with others. People have said that young people don't seem to be interested in politics because they don't want to be part of the political world (sida, 2010). Malafaia, Neves, and Menezes, state that these young people believe politicians do not take people, particularly young people, into account. But young people demonstrate a willingness to engage with politicians to improve their relationship with politics.

Several previous studies have found that today's youth is frequently influenced by external factors, including a variety of outside influences that cause them to be interested in participating in the political process. Because today's young people are very different from their parents' generation, new forms of political participation have begun to emerge, and it is asserted that youth are becoming more involved in politics through new types of political activities (Kitanova 2019). Youths are becoming more interested in politics, and they are being influenced by the resources that are available to them in this modern age, which includes technology such as the internet. A study by Ahmad, Batool, and Ittefaq (2019) found that the Internet is playing an important role

in informing the public about political events, engaging users, and encouraging them to participate in offline political activity. Politics-related online activities are beneficial because they encourage young people to get involved in political events and campaigns. These activities have prompted young people to attempt to enter the political arena, where they can gain an understanding of how politics works by reading news stories on the internet. According to Abdu, Mohamad, and Muda (2016), the following is true that, as a result, youth were unable to express their opinions or participate in politics through traditional media outlets prior to the advent of social media. Newspaper space, radio and television airtime were limited and expensive prior to the advent of social media. Studies by Ahmad, Batoool and Ittefaq (2019) show that political parties initially used the Internet as a one-way communication tool to inform the public via their websites. They cite these findings as evidence. For political information, the author claims that Facebook is preferred by young people over other social networks like Twitter. Nigerian youths now have access to political information and can interact directly with political candidates through social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube, according to the World Economic Forum (Abdu, Mohamad & Muda, 2016; Uzochukwu & Ekwughu, 2014).

They've become a target for politicians and political parties because of their strength, expectations, and mental proclivity to openly embrace new ideas, among other characteristics (Zaidi, 2021). These youths are also becoming more informed about politics as time goes on. According to Halim et al. (2020), young voters are motivated to participate in political activities by their political interest. As a result, young people who are interested in politics will have a higher level of knowledge about this topic. According to studies, the media plays a critical role in providing a platform for young people to gain political knowledge, which in turn leads to their participation in political