Exploring The Pragmatism of Malaysian Youth Towards Politics

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Abstract

This article delves into the factors shaping the political inclinations of Malaysian youth, a demographic crucial for the nation's future. With youth groups representing nearly half of registered voters, their sway in elections is undeniable. They keenly observe their environment, scrutinizing policies that impact them negatively. Today's youth exhibit heightened political awareness, vital for nation-building. Political education, extending beyond elections, fosters civic engagement and societal progress. This study examines the political literacy of Malaysian youth and their pragmatic approach to politics. Through qualitative methods, including library research and interviews with 200 participants of the Sekolah Rukun Negara Program organized by the Institute of Leadership, Excellence and Development (i-LEAD), Ministry of Youth and Sports Malaysia, it explores the erosion of partisan ideologies among youth. Findings highlighted youth valuing politics for national stability and rejecting divisive racial politics. The study underscores the importance of political education in fostering unity and realizing Malaysia's national ideals.

Keywords: Youth, pragmatism, ideology, politics, nation-building

Abstrak

Artikel ini membahas faktor-faktor yang membentuk kecenderungan politik kaum muda Malaysia, sebuah demografi yang sangat penting bagi masa depan bangsa. Dengan kelompok pemuda yang mewakili hampir setengah dari jumlah pemilih terdaftar, pengaruh mereka dalam pemilihan umum tidak dapat dipungkiri. Mereka mengamati lingkungan mereka dengan tajam, meneliti kebijakan yang berdampak negatif terhadap mereka. Kaum muda saat ini menunjukkan kesadaran politik yang tinggi, yang sangat penting bagi pembangunan bangsa. Pendidikan politik, yang tidak hanya mencakup pemilihan umum, mendorong keterlibatan warga negara dan kemajuan masyarakat. Penelitian ini mengkaji literasi politik kaum muda Malaysia dan pendekatan pragmatis mereka terhadap politik. Melalui metode kualitatif, termasuk penelitian kepustakaan dan wawancara dengan 200 peserta Program Sekolah Rukun Negara yang diselenggarakan oleh Institute of Leadership, Excellence and Development (i-LEAD), Kementerian Pemuda dan Olahraga Malaysia, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi erosi ideologi partisan di kalangan pemuda. Temuan penelitian ini menyoroti pemuda yang menghargai politik untuk stabilitas nasional dan menolak politik rasial yang memecah belah. Studi ini menggarisbawahi pentingnya pendidikan politik dalam memupuk persatuan dan mewujudkan cita-cita nasional Malaysia.

Kata Kunci: Pemuda, pragmatisme, ideologi, politik, pembangunan bangsa

Introduction

Democracy and democratization are prevalent systems embraced by the majority of countries in the international arena. When the Cold War lasted from 1947 after the Truman Doctrine was launched until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1991, the international system was generally divided into two different ideologies, namely the democratic ideology led by the United States of America and the communist ideology championed by the Soviet Union. These two ideologies compete with each other to spread their influence throughout the world through their respective proxy countries. As one

of the countries in the international system, Malaysia chose the ideology of democracy as the system of national administration because it is suitable to be combined with the monarchy system, which is a traditional foundation and anchor for Malaysia. The defense of the "Malaysian way" of democracy and democratization necessitates a robust nationalistic narrative. However, its sustainability relies on the continued commitment of the youth generation as successors to the legacy of the "Malaysian way." Failure to uphold this unique approach to democracy and democratization could prove counterproductive (Krauss, 2008).

Youth is the most important group for the survival of a country. The sovereignty, ups and downs, and progress of a country depend greatly on the quality of the youth. So, it is not an exaggeration if the youths need to be given much attention, not to mention that this group by nature has quite a high level of idealism, a burning spirit, a spirit of curiosity that bursts forth. However, its nature is solid in terms of experience, patience, and resilience. As a country that upholds Parliamentary Democracy and Constitutional Monarchy, Malaysia needs to maintain its traditions based on these principles, with the Federal Constitution as the pillar of national governance. The country's political and governance system is highly dependent on the effectiveness of the Federal Constitution. It is implemented with high political determination by the government and the entire Malaysian community (Neo, 2020).

Democracy is a system that gives the people the right and power to choose the national administration every 5 years. Every individual in the community who passes the age of 18 in this country plays an important role in charting the country's direction for the next 5 years, where every vote is so meaningful not only to the election candidates who are contesting but also has a significant impact on Malaysia. In the competitive international system, each primary actor must possess the capacity to compete effectively and implement a robust foreign policy stemming from a stable and efficient government. Therefore, it is highly dependent on the level of literacy and political socialization

among the people. Any political sentiments must not influence a society that is mature and understands the meaning of democracy but rather look at the performance, record, and quality of the candidates competing in the elections (Ling & Puyok, 2024).

Comprehensive initiatives aimed at promoting literacy and political maturity, particularly among the youth, should be undertaken on a broad scale with unwavering dedication. Through this mission, the Malaysian government, through the government agencies involved, has implemented programs to develop the quality of youth through advocacy and training by bringing the narrative of democratic education based on the Federal Constitution and Rukun Negara. These programs aimed at democratic education started in 2020 when a government agency under the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Institute of Leadership, Excellence and Development (i-LEAD), implemented a national program called the Malaysia Future Leader School (MFLS) by focusing on elements of leadership and statehood. A truly effective leader must embody a strong sense of national spirit, thereby contributing to the realization of the collective aspiration for a dream country (Jaes et al., 2023).

Subsequent years saw the continuation of these endeavors through a variety of quality programs conducted both in face-to-face settings and online platforms. Even though the country is under a movement control order (MCO), government agencies and public universities in Malaysia continue to consistently run the Vote 18 program through online methods to ensure that the youth have literacy and democratic awareness and subsequently participate in the 15th of General Election (GE-15) in 2022. As a result, GE-15 has seen a wave of young electors come down to participate in the country's democracy celebration in 2022 to choose the country's new administrator for the next 5 years. Who, which party, or which political tendency does not need to be debated because of the choice of each individual (Wenxuan & Osman, 2023).

Democratic education is not only the scope of politics and elections, but more than that, democratic education will also focus on the

sovereignty of the Malay Ruler, ethnic relations, gender equality, the country's administrative system, identity, and character development that is independent and not easily influenced by globalization boom. Therefore, the significance of a comprehensive democratic education is emphasized for the youth, as the future of the country hinges on the quality of individuals who have been nurtured through democratic education grounded in unwavering patriotism.

Indeed, in contemporary Malaysian politics, the significance of youth cannot be overstated. With increasing numbers and growing political awareness, Malaysian youth are becoming pivotal actors in shaping the country's political landscape. Their collective voice holds substantial sway in determining electoral outcomes. Furthermore, their sensitivity to societal changes and critical evaluation of government policies reflects a generation deeply engaged in the political process. As Malaysia navigates through complex socio-political challenges, the active involvement of youth brings fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and a fervent commitment to driving positive change.

Moreover, their rejection of divisive influences, such as racial politics, underscores their potential to foster a more inclusive and progressive society. Thus, the empowerment and inclusion of Malaysian youth in political discourse and decision-making processes are essential not only for the nation's present but also for its future trajectory towards prosperity and harmony. Thus, in the sections, the paper discusses some concepts of youth and politics.

Literature Review

Political Education Among The Youth

Democracy and democratization are distinct concepts despite stemming from a common foundation. Democracy is a system that gives rights to the people in determining the governance and government of a country. At the same time, democratization is a process towards achieving the true meaning of democracy. However, no country in the international system can be called a true democracy. It can be said that pure democracy is only a utopia that any country cannot achieve because of the constraints of primordial sentiments that bind society in one country to another country (Tan, 2023).

Democratization in many countries is often initiated by civil society movements or so-called civil society that want political change. Consequently, civil society's struggle often leads to protests, advocating for an expanded democratic space. The independence of Malaysia also began with the struggle of civil society, which wanted a government and administration that was free from the influence of foreign powers, according to Salleh Md, Said, Agus Yusoff, Jayum Jawan, and Leo Agustino in their paper, "Civil Society and Democratization" in 2012, civil society and democratization is an interesting phenomenon. After all, it is interconnected because it can produce a democratic regime and can also produce a more autocratic regime. History has proven that several civil society movements have succeeded in overthrowing autocratic regimes and implementing a democratic transition; this can be seen in the case of the Philippines in 1986, Poland in 1989, Indonesia in 1998, and others. Meanwhile, some civil society protests that resulted in a more autocratic regime happened in Nigeria in 1983, Peru in 1992, and Sierra Leone in 1997 (Said et al., 2011).

Basically, a country to be called a democratic country should highlight seven main characteristics: first, the existence of freedom of speech, free and neutral mass media, elections held consistently, free and fair, freedom of organization and association, government based on the majority, the rights of minorities respected and finally the existence of a judicial body that is always free and neutral (Othman, 2006). So, an elite is not formed or born by socialism or capitalism, a repressive or democratic system, agriculture or industry, but all societies need an elite. As a consequence, within a democratic system, the influence of a dominant party that shapes the political elite often leads to an oligarchy. Lasswell & Lerner (1952) stated that "Government is always government by the few, whether in the name of the few, the one or the many." Therefore, this

matter is not liked by the youth because it will only result in their voice and role being marginalized and will also affect their interests (Wood, 2023).

One of the methods to educate the youth to become accustomed to the democratic system in Malaysia is through campus elections. The campus election in Malaysia is very important for political analysts because it is an indication of the country's future political situation. The political situation on the campus, especially in the run-up to the by-election, is highly observed by the Malaysian community, especially at the University of Malaya (UM), to the extent that the Institution of Higher Education in question is nicknamed Little Malaysia (Zulkafli, 2012). The situation that occurred during this by-election was an effort by the Institute of Higher Learning Administration to educate students about the importance of elections on the stability of the country. However, the efforts made by the establishment from the 1970s until now did not show encouraging results when the Chairman of the Election Commission (SPR), Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Mohd. Yusof revealed that most Malaysians do not register as electors, and this group also consists of students (Muhammad, 2010). This kind of challenge is the main thing that needs to be taken into account by institutes of higher learning and government bodies because the high political participation among the youth reflects a bright future for Malaysian politics and democracy.

According to Prof. Dr. Zaid Ahmad from the Faculty of Human Ecology, University Putra Malaysia, the electoral system in Malaysia has an impact on democratization. Democracy is not only focused on elections because every political party is very hostile and has various ideologies and approaches. However, the election actually had a big impact on democratization in Malaysia. However, the electoral system practiced in Malaysia mainly allows each individual to vote, and the value of each individual's vote is the same. Malik Bennabi mentions politics as a value system- the need for an individual to know and understand the political system. The electorate is not a passive entity; elected leaders cannot act with impunity after winning an election. The passage of the Anti-Party Hopping Act is a testament to the people's will, responding to instances of fraud perpetrated by elected leaders who undermine the democratic process (Osman, 2022).

Possessing knowledge and a deep understanding of democracy is crucial for every eligible voter. Democracy, while a collective right of the people, cannot be fully realized if an individual citizen remains oblivious to the intricacies of politics and the democratic process. In such cases, the potential harm caused by the political ignorance of a single citizen may outweigh the misconduct of a corrupt leader. Therefore, political literacy needs to be improved among the youth so that they are able to choose and participate more wisely in politics. Today's partisan ideology is no longer the mainstay and main consideration of a large number of the youth in choosing candidates in elections. However, they choose based on criteria determined by civil society.

Pragmatism as a New Ideology of Youth in Malaysia

Pragmatism is a way of dealing with problems or situations that focuses on practical approaches and solutions, ones that will work in practice, as opposed to being ideal in theory. The word pragmatism is often contrasted with the word idealism, which means based on or having high principles or ideals. Pragmatism, on the other hand, is based on real-world conditions or circumstances, considering what can realistically be done as opposed to the best theoretical course of action. More specifically, pragmatism can refer to the philosophical movement or approach that emphasizes practical consequences in meaning, truth, or value. The adjective form pragmatic means practical, especially when making decisions. The word pragmatist can refer to a person who prefers to act pragmatically or to a philosopher who adheres to the movement of pragmatism (Lefkowitz, 2022).

Pragmatism is very close to Realism, which is one of the main theories in the field of International Relations. However, as the main theory in International Relations, Realism has been developed with various approaches that

support the theory's position as a method of analyzing issues or parameters in understanding a situation that occurs. Through the study of politics, pragmatism became the hold of the youth in Malaysia because they no longer see the idealism of partisan politics as being capable of protecting their interests now or in the future due to the unstable political situation. Politics constitutes the foundational pillar for the stability of economic, social, and national security dimensions, as these aspects hinge on governmental policy-making. The government, entrusted with political authority, plays a central role in shaping and implementing policies that underpin these critical facets of societal well-being (Silva, 2023).

The ideology of pragmatism appeared more widely in Malaysia since GE-14, which was a reaction from the youth to the political scenario at that time. The youth perceive that no political party in Malaysia can unequivocally assure their future, as they believe each party is driven by motives beyond merely obtaining power to govern the nation. The results of a study by the Center for the Future of Democracy at the University of Cambridge found that the interest and trust of the millennial generation aged 18 to 24 in the democratic system is decreasing. A social media survey indicates that the youth don't inherently oppose the democratic system; however, it's the influence of political factors that erodes their faith in the system. A total of 62 percent of Twitter users admitted to being disappointed with democracy, and some even admitted that they no longer wanted to be involved in the upcoming election because they thought it would not affect the actions and decisions made in Parliament. The high debt burden, the ability to own a house, as well as the challenge of starting a household while depending on the property left by the family, compared to working hard and hoping for talent, are also factors in today's youth generation being less happy (Abdullah, 2020).

In interviews conducted with participants (70% of respondents) from the School of Rukun Negara Program organized by the Institute of Leadership, Excellence, and Development (i-LEAD), elections emerged as the prevailing perspective. Participants expressed the view that elections stand as the most potent means to reshape the political landscape of the country. According to them, their choice hinges on the belief that anyone or any political party capable of effectively governing the country will garner their support. Pakatan Harapan, Barisan Nasional, and Perikatan Nasional no longer have permanent supporters among the youth because this group can at any time express support for other parties if their level of confidence in the party they support decreases due to the behavior of the party's politicians. Thus, through this finding, it is believed that pragmatism has started to become the main ideology of the youth in Malaysia because they think realistic survival is more important than the idealism and nostalgia of partisanship that is held by previous generations.

Politics as a Method of Nation-Building

Nation-building is a process of constructing a strong sense of national identity. This approach taken by the government is considered an attempt to achieve social unity and racial integration, secure a sovereign independent state, and improve loyalty (Penrose, 2020), economic prosperity, and political stability inclusively and democratically of life. The nation-building process not only takes a long time but is very complicated to accomplish. The nation-building process incorporates political organizations and political ideals (Heywood, 2000) and encourages uniformity in society, as well as distinguishes national identity and improves loyalty (Penrose, 2020). In order to achieve independence for Malaya, there was strong cooperation and consensus among the different ethnic groups through the Community Liaison Committee (CLC) (Cheah, 2002), which indicates the importance of the formation of a united nation.

Unity stands as the utmost imperative for a nation, serving as the primary pillar for its survival in the face of an anarchic international system. Each country worldwide employs distinct approaches and methods to foster a sense of belonging among its people and to establish laws that promote stability and domestic peace. Malaysia, as a sovereign nation and an active participant in the international

system, follows its procedures to achieve stability peace, and ensure its survival as a sovereign entity. Furthermore, Malaysia's status as a multi-racial and multi-religious society heightens the risk of domestic chaos if not managed with care and prudence. Since Malaysia gained its independence on 31 August 1957 and then the formation of the Federation of Malaysia on 16 September 1963, which brought together Malaya, Sabah, and Sarawak as a national entity, Malaysia has first had a written constitution as a guide in matters of national governance (Cheah, 2002).

The Federal Constitution, as the supreme law, is the source of all laws, whether existing or to be made. In his book titled "Principles of Constitution and Governance in Malaysia," Abas (2015) emphasizes that all other laws must align with the constitution, as any contradiction renders the law void. As such, the Federal Constitution and the matters enshrined in it are the highest legal canon for Malaysia, which includes various provisions such as parliament, the administrative cabinet, and the courts. It is in line with the doctrine of separation of powers, which has been Malaysia's practice since independence, with the Yang Dipertuan Agong as the head of state. At the same time, the three main pillars of the national government are divided into the executive branch, which includes the Prime Minister, ministers, and government bodies. The second peg is the legislature, which contains the parliament, which is the senate assembly, and the people's assembly. In contrast, the third peg is the judiciary, which contains the courts and anything related to the judiciary. However, the Federal Constitution is the supreme authority in Malaysia, overriding the Yang Dipertuan Agong and the three pillars of the national government (Azrae, 2020).

The Federal Constitution has a very significant function in creating unity in Malaysia's multi-racial and religious society by preserving the interests of every individual citizen. The foundation of Malaysia's nation-building is based on the accommodation model, which was agreed upon by the three largest races in Malaya at the time of independence, namely the Malays, Chinese, and Indians. This model also involves an agreement that is very important to achieve independence, which is the social contract, as proof of tolerance and acceptance of these three largest ethnicities to live in the same country. Besides, it is also proof that the Malays have accepted with an open heart to live with other races in their heritage land. Malaysia does not choose some models, such as assimilation, amalgamation, and acculturation, as a model for building and strengthening the country because they are not in line with the philosophy and ideology planned by the government. However, the accommodation model is seen as dominant and compatible with the nature of the multi-religious and multi-ethnic Malaysian society. According to Ting (1987), the accommodation model is a process that causes each ethnic group to realize and respect the norms and values of other ethnic groups while still maintaining their own culture of life. This concept is represented by the formula $A+B+C=A+B+C$, where A, B, and C refer to culture.

Therefore, the understanding of the diversity of the people who inhabit Malaysia simultaneously influences the pattern and structure of Malaysian politics, which is still racist and has a partisan ideology guided by primordial sentiments. The young generation increasingly rejects this because a large number of them think that the primordial sentiments of racism and narrow ideology can no longer influence Malaysian politics. Instead, they think that Malaysian politics needs to be more realistic and have a high political determination to develop and advance the country.

Research Method

This study utilized a qualitative approach employing interviews to gather opinions from youth groups participating in the Rukun Negara School Program (SRN). The focus was on youth in universities, skills training institutes, and schools, with an emphasis on Form Six and Form Five students. This study employed the data analysis technique based on primary and secondary source approaches to describe data related to the patterns and levels of political education among the youth in Malaysia.

Result And Discussion

Political Literacy of Youth in Politics

The study of youth political involvement is gaining more and more attention among researchers and academics. In some countries, such as Europe, youth political involvement is reported to be declining. The low percentage of voting and the lack of youth membership in political parties are among the signs of the problem of youth political involvement (Malafaia et al., 2021). Researchers and academics in Malaysia began to focus on this group since the last general election in 2008. However, three aspects need to be considered to understand youth political involvement, namely their perception of politics, the way they act in politics, and political socialization (S.-H. Ting & Wan Ahmad, 2022).

Political involvement is defined as the extent to which citizens use their right to influence or involve themselves in political activities (Soler-i-Martí, 2015). It is not limited to just voting. Rather, it is an engagement in politics as a whole. Political involvement is divided into two forms, namely conventional and non-conventional. Conventional involvement in activities that are considered "normal," that is, behavior that is usually done and practiced in a society. It also refers to the behavior accepted by the society. In addition, conventional involvement is also considered a routine behavior that uses institutions established by government representatives and takes place in the norms and traditions of certain countries (Leftwich, 2005). Meanwhile, non-conventional involvement in activities is considered inappropriate or seen as not complying with the rules. It is a behavior that is not commonly practiced, challenges or opposes established institutions, tends to move outside the norm, is more aggressive, and may break the law (Hinterleitner & Sager, 2023).

There are four ways to form a democratic education system among the youth, namely through political socialization among the youth, cadre, training, and selection of leaders among the youth, integration between politics and society, and finally, the formation of an organization that can influence decisions in politics. This writing suggests that the four methods that have been mentioned earlier be implemented at the youth education institute level (either school or university) because the research done by the writing shows a high percentage of the attitude of people who receive higher education towards involvement in the democratic system. Thus, it is seen to be able to increase the level of literacy, socialization, and youth participation in Malaysian politics. Campus elections, educational programs facilitated by youth organizations, and democratic training initiatives conducted by government agencies have the potential to enhance political literacy among the youth. However, this ultimately rests on the youth themselves to decide whether they are willing to take responsibility for their political engagement (Mulder, 2023).

Youth and Elections

According to research, respondents were asked about the criteria for candidate selection, and 18.0 percent of respondents stated that the main criteria for candidate selection were based on honest and trustworthy leaders. Youth also care about candidates who are people-friendly and clean of corruption. The youth want a leader who is honest and responsible to represent the people by focusing on the needs and wishes of the people without being selfish in making a decision. These considerations are complemented by qualities of leadership and a people-friendly personality. Voters often weigh the leadership attributes and the personal traits of a candidate in their selection process, favoring leaders who are authoritative, firm, adept at advocating for people's issues and rights, skilled, highly educated, and well-versed in matters of religion. The electors see those characteristics as highlighting the leadership figure of a leader they choose, in addition to having a good personality. Let's look at the criteria for choosing a political party with reference to the geographical location of the respondents. It is found that the majority of respondents in urban areas choose political parties that fight for humanitarian issues such as transparency, justice, and human rights. This situation is different from respondents in rural

areas who are more concerned with the political party that can drive development from the aspects of infrastructure, public facilities, access, poverty, and land and urban development and can contribute material aspects to them. Urban areas already have all the necessary basic facilities, such as roads, water and electricity supply, or schools, compared to rural areas, which are somewhat behind in terms of these basic facilities. In urban areas, ideological factors, leadership, and current issues such as economic issues, corruption, prices of goods, the delivery system, and maintenance of public facilities are the main criteria for the evaluation of electors, especially the Chinese electors, in choosing candidates and political parties (Jali et al., 2012).

The 14th General Election (GE-14) marked a transformative moment as the youth wave played a pivotal role in altering the government regime that had held sway in Malaysia for 61 years. In a historic turn of events, the Barisan Nasional, which had governed since the country's inception, faced defeat in the 2018 election. The departure of youth to the voting centers was very high because, at that time, they were attracted by the election promises carried out by the opposition in their election manifesto. The dominance of the opposition party during GE-14 on social media was also massive, giving confidence to the youth to vote for Pakatan Harapan, which at that time placed the fourth former Prime Minister, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, as Prime Minister candidate of Pakatan Harapan won GE-14. Rahim (2013) also showed that most of the youth generation, who are respondents to the study, use newspapers, television, and the internet to get election information. Nur Azween Zakaria and Nidzam Sulaiman, in their work Alternative Media as an Agent for Expanding Voicespace Case Study GE12 (2008), revealed that cyberspace through the role of alternative media such as blogs, websites, emails, and Short Message Service (SMS) can expand voice space thus increasing democratic participation (Zakaria & Sulaiman, 2008). So, Barisan Nasional at that time failed to control the alternative media, which was very popular among the youth who lost in GE-14.

In general, the findings from the descriptive and inference analysis have demonstrated that the higher the level of youth dependence on social media for political socialization, the higher the chance that their political knowledge is going to be influenced by the perceptions that dominate the medium (Barber, 1972; Eichhorn & Linhart, 2023); which in turn will lead to an increase in the rate of political-cultural change. Additionally, the political culture changes that resulted from the dependency on social media have also reinforced its position as the contemporary agent of political socialization and political culture change (Fujiwara et al., 2023; Rahim, 2013).

This research found that university students generally exhibit a broader understanding of the election process compared to their counterparts in skills institutes and schools because they have been exposed to campus elections in addition to the effectiveness of the syllabus of general subjects such as Malaysian Studies, Ethnic Relations, Islamic Civilization and Southeast Asian Civilization and Introduction to Ethics and Philosophy which play a significant role in their political literacy. In recent years, Malaysian youth have demonstrated heightened political awareness compared to previous periods.

Their increased interest in current affairs reflects a growing inclination towards active participation in political discourse and engagement. Under the Pakatan Harapan Government in 2019, the Malaysian parliament approved a bill to reduce the voting age for general elections from 21 to 18 years old. Also, it approved the Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) that was set to be implemented this year. It was an opportunity for the youth, mostly first-time electors, to vote in the 2023 15th General Election. The rise of social movements, such as Undi18, that pushed for the bill to be approved is a case that shows how eager the youth are to take part in the decision-making process. More platforms and opportunities should be given to the youth to voice out and contribute to Malaysia's democracy (Yaakub et al., 2023).

Pragmatism of The Youth in Politics

The political scene in Malaysia has become so fragmented that no one political party is dominant enough to rule. It presents an opportunity for a new and fresh youth-led political movement to start leading platforms that will attract youth and give them space to express themselves. Malaysian United Democratic Alliance, or MUDA, led by former Youth and Sports Minister and Member of Parliament (MP) for Muar, Syed Saddiq, has caught the attention of not only the public but also the seniors in the political field. The number of youths in Malaysia is growing, with at least 45% of the population, or 14.6 million people, between the ages of 15 to 39 years old. Therefore, MUDA has created a new platform option where the youth can share their vision and ideas for the future of Malaysia. The involvement of youth in the decision-making process has become more accessible, and there is a noticeable trend of the youth's voice gaining increased consideration (Yaakub et al., 2023).

Young politicians are not uncommon in many countries worldwide. Notable examples include Jacinda Ardern in New Zealand, Sanna Marin in Finland, and Oleksiy Honcharuk in Ukraine, who have assumed leadership roles in their respective nations. In Malaysia, one of the few names that immediately comes to mind is Syed Saddiq and P. Prabakaran, who are the Members of Parliament (MP) for Batu. They entered the political field in their early 20s and have made much progress along the way. A new set of fresh ideas and energy would undoubtedly give an advantage to the whole process of democracy in Malaysia. It is said that the current generation of leaders, combined with veteran politicians, lacks the will to push for government reforms and are only trying to stay in power to serve their self-interest. Young politicians such as Syed Saddiq and P. Prabakaran could step in and push politicians to face better the challenges of the 21st century, such as a fast-changing job market, technological advancements, and accelerating climate change (Zaidi, 2021).

The philosophy of pragmatism was initiated in America in the 19th century. It reflected the philosophy of the Americans, and it was widely applied in the domain of education. One of the prolific figures of pragmatism was John Dewey, who was popular with pragmatism in the version of instrumentalism. He was also popular as an educator who propagated experience as an effective basis for gaining knowledge. In general, the word pragmatism comes from the Latin "pragmaticus" and the Greek "pragmatikos," which means action (Ormerod, 2006). From a technical aspect, as explained by A Dictionary of Philosophical Terms and Names (2011), pragmatism is a theory that emphasizes the practical effects of an idea and its function on actions (Susanti, 2015). The philosophy of Pragmatism was pioneered in America at the end of the 19th century. This philosophy reflects the American people's view of life, including that of education. It is seen to unite various contradictions at that time, for example, the contradiction between science and religion and intuition versus empiricism (Scheffler, 2013).

The pragmatic connection with the youth has been very evident in Malaysian politics lately. This pragmatic thinking stems from the youth's empirical experience regarding national political issues that annoy them. When the previous generation was bound by partisan ideology and was so idealistic that it caused the political parties that were in power for so long to form the political elite of the country, when this conflict happened, the government only hovered among these political elites, which is called oligarchy politics and gerontocracy politics. Therefore, the youth are no longer able to break through the wall of power built by the political elites. As a result, the youth stay away from partisan politics because they think they have no chance and are more comfortable with pragmatic ideas that tend to be non-partisan and free to make political choices based on the current situation.

As a substantial segment of Malaysia's population, the youth wield the potential to influence a more open direction in the country's political structure. However, if the pragmatism of the youth is not guided by the right knowledge, information, and training, there is a concern that it could impede the country's stability in the future. Additionally, there is a fear that it may also lead to changes in the country's government system, which is anchored

in the Constitutional Monarchy Parliamentary Democracy framework, serving as the fundamental pillar of Malaysia's statehood.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this article summarizes that the youth have a high tendency towards politics and want to participate in Malaysian politics and democracy. Nevertheless, politicians must play a pivotal role by setting an example and providing a positive reference for the youth to follow in leading Malaysia in the future. The pragmatism of the youth in Malaysian politics stems from their dissatisfaction with some politicians and political parties who do not fulfill their promises, as well as a lack of knowledge, so they are easily influenced by negative political sentiments (Abdullah, 2020). This study also showed that the youth in Malaysia need more exposure and formal political education from school to enable them to prepare to participate in politics either as electors or election candidates since the age limit for voting and being an election candidate has been lowered from 21 years to 18 years through the amendment of Article 119 and Article 47, Federal Constitution in 2019.

The political system in Malaysia that uses the "first past to post" model is the best method for Malaysia because this country does not practice direct elections to choose the Prime Minister but chooses a political party or political alliance that will govern the country for every five years. This condition may be different from other countries in Southeast Asia, such as Indonesia, that practice a presidential system that has different methods. Perhaps the system practiced in Malaysia is not compatible with Indonesia and vice versa because the basis of the statehood of these two countries are very different and have different political characters. Certainly, the tendencies and problems afflicting the youth in both countries are likely to be similar. As developing nations, the issues surrounding the pragmatism of youth become focal points of discussion, proven during the 4th ASEAN-India Youth Summit, which took place in Hyderabad, India, on 12-16 February 2023, where the researcher was one of the Malaysian delegations to the conference. The dilemma of youth in ASEAN countries became a popular topic in several discussion sessions. The political, economic, social, security, and cultural issues that were then focused on the issue of corruption, political dominance by the political elite/gerontocracy, the slow rate of development, the low exchange rate, and the significant economic dependence on the great powers made the majority of the delegation from ASEAN member countries and India agreed to launch a sustainable resolution to be voiced through ASEAN as a regional organization.

Thus, it can be understood that the importance of youth in any country is essential to map the direction of the country in the future. Youth need to be actively involved in national decision-making, and it is high time that youth are given an important position in the administration and government of the country. Their voice and role are undeniably significant, especially considering the substantial political influence wielded by the youth in Malaysia during elections. Any leader and political party that marginalizes the youth will only invite trouble and will definitely be rejected by the youth during the elections. This article also suggests that the role of the Malaysian Youth Council (MBM) needs to be fully empowered as a youth organization that brings together all the youth organizations in Malaysia. The President of the Malaysian Youth Council needs to have a voice in the senate assembly hall as a Senator as soon as possible because that way, the voice and role of the youth will be more effective and significant in the Malaysian Parliament system, which is one of the main bodies under the national legislative pillar.

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