FACEBOOK AND POLITICAL CYNICISM: UNDERGRADUATES' PERCEPTION

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to examine the perception of undergraduates about political cynicism based on the information that they consumed from Facebook. It is common for people to share various types of information on Facebook, which include news, commentary, videos and photographs of politicians and political parties. Such information may form perception among undergraduates about politics and politicians as a whole. Using quantitative approach, a total of 105 questionnaires were distributed to undergraduates across different faculties in UNIMAS. Out of 12 questions about trust adapted from Elderman Trust Barometer, undergraduates had chosen to be neutral in their answers. This indicates that undergraduates are undecided when it comes to their perception about political issues and politicians in the country.

Keywords: Political Cynicism; Trust; Undergraduate; Facebook.

1. INTRODUCTION

Having trust on the ruling government is one of the prerequisites of a country's political legitimacy and stability. There are reasons why citizens do not trust their government. Capella and Jamieson (1997) stated the reason why government and political system cannot be trusted is because the misuse of power for illegitimate private gain by politicians and government officers. This in turn, could spark cynical reaction from citizen towards the government. A number of researchers suggest that negative political campaign tactics and biased media portrayals add fuel to the flame of cynicism among citizens (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Hart, 1994).

In the age of the Internet, social media provides platforms to young adults to engage in political activities. One of the political activities is where citizens interact with others or participate in online communities (Kushin, 2010). This active behaviour of political engagement via social media support the democratisation of knowledge where young adults are involved in activities such as posting and sharing political commentaries on social media. In the case of dissatisfaction or disagreement on political issues, politicians or political parties, social media users have choices either to post sensible expression or to ridicule them. The latter, which young adults are engaging

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