

New Young Voters' Decision to Vote: Impact of Access, Analysis and Evaluate, Create and Act

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Abstract

The development of technology in media provides advanced communication processes and sources of information conventionally provided by news agencies but today, media users are capable to create information. The ability to create media content is a benefit of the exposure to social media use and affects the Government's decision to lower the voting age in Malaysia (Undi18). The implementation of Undi18 is based on the judgment that new young voters have high political interests and greater political knowledge that led to the decision to vote. The purpose of this study is to measure the impact of media literacy competency on the decision to vote among new young voters and to develop the decision to vote model from a media literacy perspective. By using simple random sampling for a quantitative survey among 323 respondents among higher education institutions in Malaysia. This study deploys Structural Equation Modelling for descriptive and inferential analysis apart from model development evaluation. This study found that media literacy competency has significantly influenced the decision to vote among new young voters. The decision to vote model from media literacy theory developed in this study found that analysis and evaluation are strong predictors of the decision to vote among new young voters followed by access and act dimensions. Surprisingly, create dimension reported a negative influence on the decision to vote among new young voters. Young people did not create political updates through their social media accounts due to socioeconomic, psychological, and social factors that have been discussed in this article.

Keyword: Access, Analysis and Evaluate, Create, Act, Decision To Vote, New Young Voters

Introduction

The development of technology in media provides advance communication process and source of information conventionally provided by news agency but today, media users are capable to create information (Scott, 2019). Prior study gives a complete understanding on how media technology that affected young people interest to become media content creator due to more access to media platform, possess ability to analyse and evaluate media information that prone to create media content and lead them to act with high morality in political activity (Allam et al., 2021). Greater exposure to media technology highly affected political sphere in Malaysia and dramatically influence voting decision among new young voters (Nizah & Sharif, 2020).

When the Pakatan Harapan (PH) government ruled and passes Undi 18 Bill which provided for a lowering voting age from 21 years to 18 years. The PH government beliefs that Undi18 is expected to strengthen the role of young people in determining the direction of the country and the drafting of this bill is driven by the judgement that Malaysian young people (age 18) have greater political interests and political knowledge as an outcome of media technology exposure, especially social media. Exposure to media technology not only shapes greater informed young people with political knowledge, but it is significant to the decision to vote.

However, the influx of political information, especially in social media was significantly expose to various false information and inaccurate news, eventually triggering the phenomenon of information disorder. Even though, the growing trend in online political activities significantly influenced the voting decision and there is a significance importance of connection between social media as the primary political information source to develop political knowledge among new young voters (Intyaswati et al., 2021) but greater exposure to provocative political information brings about contradictory impact (Sufiean et al., 2016). Sufiean (2016) reported that young people have greater access to media and source of political information gain from new media. Greater exposure to social media as source of information leads to greater exposure toward provocative news and it is really affecting their decision to vote. Therefore, media literacy experts believe that young people, especially new young voter must have media literacy competency, especially in a political context (Kahne, 2019). This is to ensure that our young people have the skills to access reliable sources of information, be able to analyse and evaluate information critically. Media literacy competency also guide young people motivation to create high morality media content and leads to decision to vote action.

The impact of media literacy competency towards decision to vote has been discussed by past scholars (Ojebuyi & Salawu, 2015; Powers et al., 2016; McDougall, 2017; Ptaszek, 2018; Hodgins, 2019; Allam et al., 2020). The findings reported that our young people have accessibility to the Internet and others electronic media such as television and radio to gain political information that develop their political knowledge. Political knowledge expanded from news media is significantly associated with political participation (Ojebuyi & Salawu, 2015). Searching political information in social media also predicted influence by academic level and they only consume information that has direct relevance with their political ideology. Young people reported as highly social media consumers such as Twitter and Facebook but they did not post to social media about political information even they have

greater media literacy competency. Conversely, Powers et al (2016) reported that young people did not post political updates through their social media account because they felt abundant information that they have concluded, many political opinions have already been expressed and nothing new to be shared, leading them to spend more time gathering political information than create media content, creating media content demand technical skills that complicated to them and producing viral political information content leads them being ignore in social media (Edgerly et al., 2016).

However, Allam et al (2020) presents the importance of media literacy from dimensions of access, analysis, and evaluate, create and act promotes political participation integrity among young people that contradict to Powers et al (2016). Surprisingly, higher education institution students are claimed by prior study have little interest in politically engaging in social media. , Allam et al. (2020) found that young people primarily participating in political activities such as neutralising negative comments in social media posted by the online community, reporting misconduct in social media to the authorised body, and updating political information on certain issues using personal social media. Therefore, the impact of media literacy competency significantly influence decision to vote among young people and this study realise the important of decision to vote model that contribute empirical guideline to the policy makers, politicians, and media practitioners.

The present decision to vote model is regularly measured on Baby Boomer, Generation X and Y. This generation group is experienced voters, possess high political interests, extensive political knowledge, and less resistance in participating in political activities than Generation Z. While, Generation Z increasingly gaining the attention of researchers, especially in the field of education, psychological and social, but less attention is given to the involvement of Generation Z in the political context. Although there are studies of Generation Z involvement in political activity (Ohme et al., 2018; Stolwijk & Schuck, 2019) however, researchers tend to discuss decision to vote from the perspective of political literacy as compared to media literacy. The influence of media literacy competency towards political participation has been proven, but the development of a decision to vote model from a media literacy perspective has received less attention from researchers.

Therefore, this study was conducted to measure the impact of media literacy competency from access, analysis and evaluate, create, and act towards decision to vote among new young voters. Apart from that this study keen to develop decision to vote model from media literacy perspective that highly contributes to the policy makers, politicians, and media practitioner apart from academic scholars.

Background of Study

As we discussed earlier, the innovation of media technology provides advance communication process and source of information previously provided by news agency but today, media users are capable to create media content. Too many content producers cause we are flooded with messages and media users are extremely exposed with infinity information within second (Potter, 2004). While we are in this state, we demand our media users, especially young people possess media literacy competency in a way to equip them in information processing and ethically producing media messages, especially political content. By having high level of media literacy competency, we expected that our young people be

able to access reliable political sources and valid political information, analyse and evaluate political content before use it for political content creation. This competency leads to high integrity action while using social media (Allam et al., 2020).

A vital aspect of measurement of media literacy discussed in various fields such as education (Heller, 2021), psychology (Diergarten et al., 2017) and social (Xie et al., 2019) but little mention in politic. The power of media literacy competency in a political context is reported can empower political engagement. Outcomes from a high level of media literacy skills encourage young people to participate in political activities through online. The ability to access various media offers opportunities for young people to be actively involved in political activities (Hodgin, 2019). Compared to conventional media, social media offers more interactive communication platform, multimedia -featured communication (video, audio, animation) and political ideology effectively disseminated to target groups and discussion about current issues can more easily joined by young people. This scenario also provide opportunities for young people to participate in civic activities such as participating in fundraising programs to serve the community and society, participating in NGOs through online forum activities and volunteer activities that also involve by political bodies (Brady et al., 2020).

However, the study of media literacy towards decision to vote has received less attention from political communication scholars although the strength of media literacy skills is able to mould a generation with high morality and integrity while using media. Frequently measured media literacy competency such as access, analysis and evaluation, create and act are the popular ones adapted from Mustafa Koc & Barut (2016); Eristi (2017) who specifically tested media literacy in social media platform among young people. Apart from that current study decided to develop decision to vote model from media literacy perspective and supported by as access, analysis and evaluation, create and act dimensions. The research framework that measures media literacy competency from access, analysis and evaluate, create and act dimension towards decision to vote among new young voters as stated in Figure 1.

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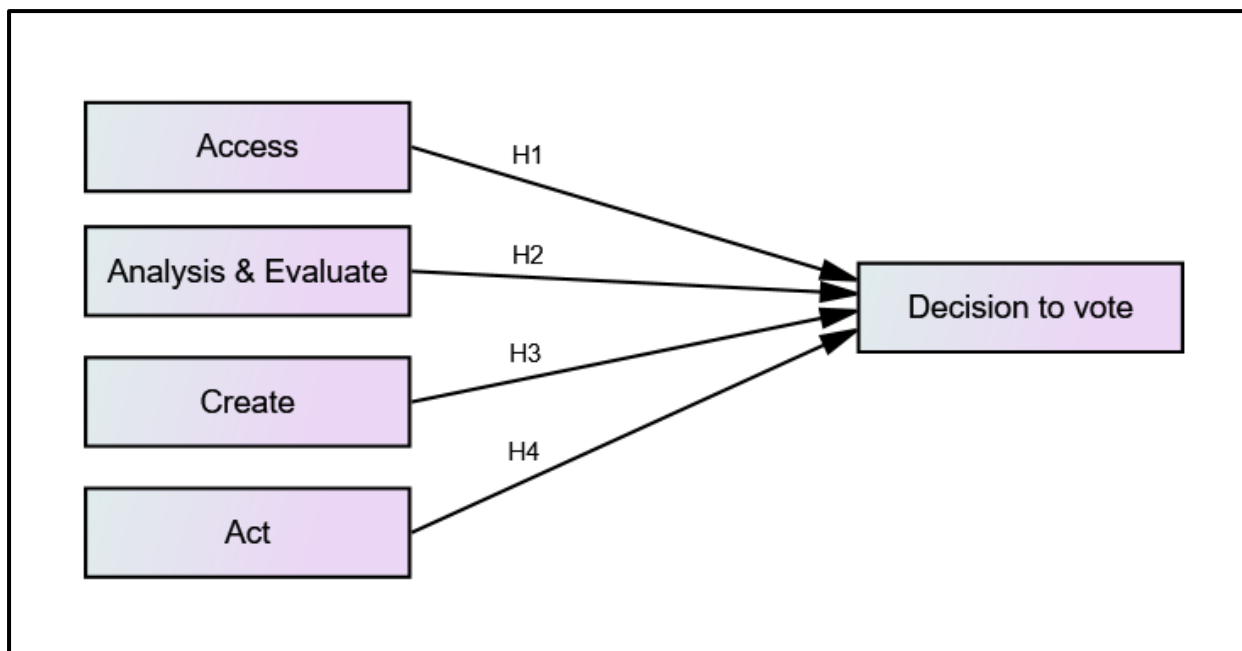


Figure 1. Research framework

Methods

Students who study in Universiti Teknologi MARA, Melaka Branch, Universiti Teknikal Malaysia, Melaka, Multimedia Universiti, Melaka Branch and Kolej Universiti Islam Melaka, all located in Melaka, Malaysia, were selected as the target sample using simple random sampling methods. 400 questionnaires were distributed, and 323 respondents replied, i.e., the response rate was 81%. More details about the instrument used are provided in Appendix A, items and using a seven-point likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) approaches were used to test the study model using AMOS 21.0 computer software. SEM is a method for evaluating hypotheses concerning the relationships between observable and latent variables in a thorough way (Hoyle, 1995). The statistical approach incorporates path analysis, factor analysis, and linear regression into a theoretical causal model for analysis of latent constructs and measurable variables, allowing simultaneous estimation of both measurement and structural sub-models (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

Demographic Profile

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of those who took part in the survey. There are 323 people who took part in the survey. There are 71.2 percent females and 28.8 percent males among those who responded to the survey. The findings also reveal that the majority of the respondents, 77.1 percent of the sample, are between the ages of 19 and 20. More than 85% of the respondents are married. Most of the respondents have been educated to college or higher education level: 17.9% are SPM, 1.2 are STPM, 0.9% are pre-Diploma and 83% diploma holders. In addition, 48.9% of the respondents from B40, 34% are M40 and 17% are from T20 family.

Table 1

Demographic profile of respondents (n=323)

Variable	Frequency (n=323)	Percentage (%)
Age		
17-18	23	7.1
19-20	249	77.1
21-22	51	15.8
Gender		
Male	93	28.8
Female	230	71.2
Level of Education		
SPM	48	14.9
STPM	4	1.2
Pra-Diploma	3	.9
Diploma	268	83.0
Race		
Bumiputera	316	97.8
Non-Bumiputera	7	2.2
Family Income		
B40 (Below RM 3,000)	158	48.9
M40 (Below RM 6,000)	110	34.1
T20 (RM 13,000 and above)	55	17.0
State		
Melaka	21	6.5
Negeri Sembilan	26	8.0
Johor	38	11.8
Pahang	12	3.7
Selangor	135	41.8
Putrajaya	1	.3
Kuala Lumpur	20	6.2
Terengganu	10	3.1
Kelantan	12	3.7
Perak	19	5.9
Kedah	11	3.4
Pulau Pinang	5	1.5
Sabah	9	2.8
Sarawak	4	1.2

Results*Reliability Analysis*

We assessed the convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability of all the multiple-item measures based on the findings of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), using criteria from the available literature. Tables 2 and 3 provide the measurements properties. To test reliability, composite reliability (CR) was employed, which evaluates the degree to which items are free of random error and provide consistent results. Composite reliabilities in the measurement model ranged from 0.834 to 0.861 (see Table 2), above the recommended cut-off of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Table 2

Reliability and Factor Loadings

Construct / Measurement items	Standardized Loadings	CR	AVE
Access		0.819	0.535
AK1	0.780		
AK2	0.664		
AK3	0.768		
AK4	0.774		
AK5	0.660		
Analysis and Evaluate		0.856	0.555
AE1	0.777		
AE2	0.762		
AE3	0.680		
AE4	0.719		
AE5	0.781		
Create		0.753	0.591
CR1	0.682		
CR2	0.820		
CR3	0.783		
CR4	0.783		
CR5	0.827		
Act		0.817	0.503
AC1	0.677		
AC2	0.762		
AC3	0.771		
AC4	0.720		
AC5	0.603		

Convergent validity was assessed in terms of factor loadings and average variance extracted (AVE). According to the prior study, convergent validity requires a factor loading greater than 0.50 and an AVE no less than 0.50. As shown in Table 2, all items had significant factor loadings higher than 0.50. To evaluate discriminant validity, the AVE is used. All constructs have an AVE of at least 0.5 and all the square roots of each AVE value are higher than the off-diagonal correlation elements (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 3

Correlation matrix and roots of the AVEs (shown as diagonal elements)

	1	2	3	4	5
(1) Access	0.731				
(2) Analysis and Evaluate	0.601	0.745			
(3) Create	0.434	0.755	0.769		
(4) Act	0.256	0.563	0.830	0.709	
(5) Decision to Vote	0.467	0.600	0.472	0.447	0.758
Mean	4.907	4.663	4.253	4.089	3.962
Std. Deviation	1.165	1.261	1.397	1.452	1.477

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Analysis of Paths

The test of structural model was performed using the structural model includes: (a) estimating the path coefficients, which indicate the strengths of the relationships between the dependent variables and independent variables, and (b) the R-square value, which shows how much variance is explained by the independent variables. The path coefficients in the SEM model represent standardized regression coefficients. The structural model reflecting the assumed linear, causal relationships among the constructs was tested with the data collected from the validated measures. Figure 2 shows the results of analysis. The square multiple correlation for the structural equations index indicates that 41% of the variation in the dependent variable is explained by the variation in the independent variables. Properties of the causal paths (standardized path coefficients (β), standard error, p-value and hypotheses result) are shown in Table 4.

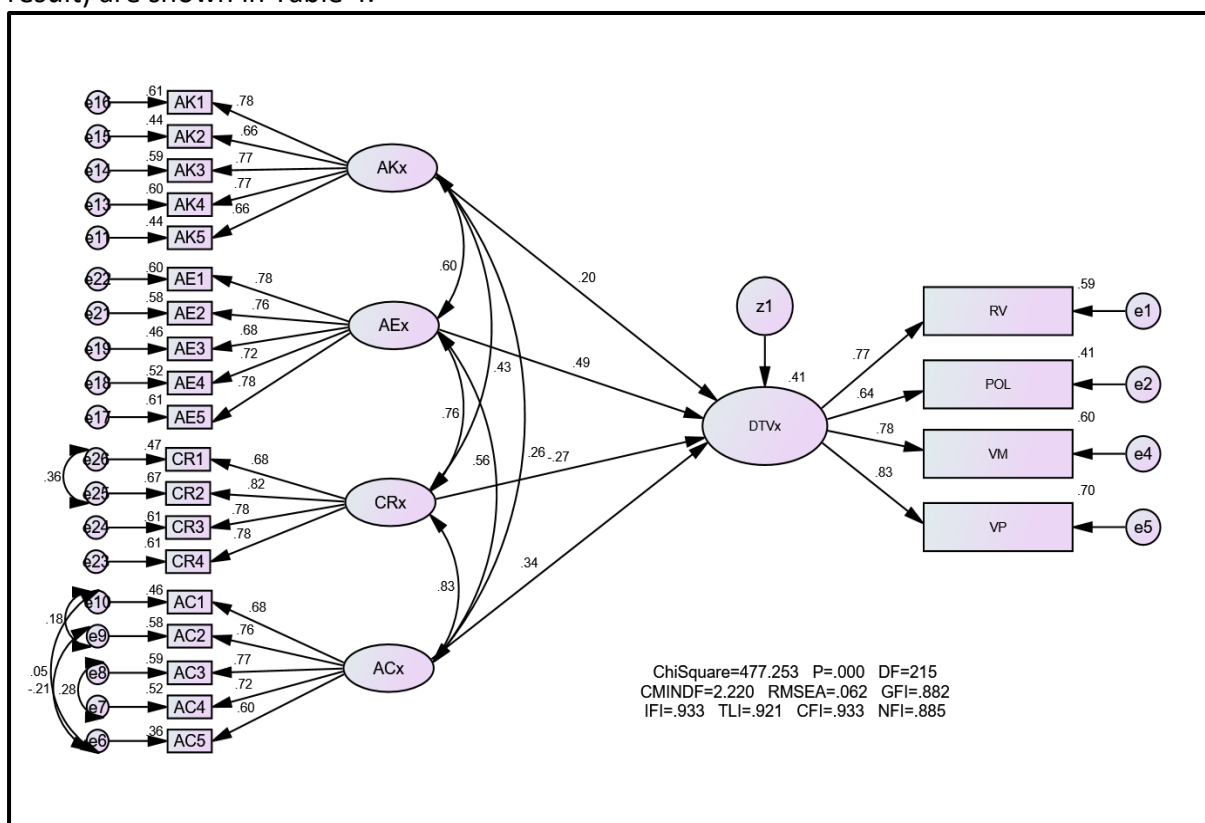


Figure 2. The result of structural model

Decision to Vote of New Young Voters

The effect of access on Integrity of political participation among young people was significant at 0.05 level ($\beta_1 = 0.203$), as presented in Table 4 and Figure 2. Thus, H1 was supported. Using access competency would improve young people integrity in political participation. With a good competency of access among young people will avoid them from deviant behaviour and is to be useful strongly influences their political integrity. As expected, Analysis and Evaluate had a significant positive influence on the integrity of political participation among young people ($\beta_2 = 0.489$). Thus, H2 was supported. Analysis and evaluate on the political information would drive young people to have positive and integrity in political participation. Moreover, it would be easy for the young people to become skilful at analysis and evaluate the information. Create had insignificant influence on integrity of political participation at 0.05 level ($\beta_3 = -0.272$), not supporting H3 (refer to Table 4 and Figure 2). It is mean that Create

variable has no significant positive effect on the integrity political participation predictors. In contrast to our expectations, young peoples that had high education were not more strongly affected by the media literacy predictors. Consistent with the theoretical expectation, Act had a significant positive influence on Integrity of Political Participation ($\beta_4 = 0.345$) at 0.05 level, suggesting support for H4. Act competency help young people to behave in good manner and integrity of political participation is Using the will fit well with the way young people participate in politics. The empowerment of the Integrity of political participation will be compatible with the way they act on political discourse.

Table 4

Result of hypotheses test

	Path			β	S.E.	P	Result
H1	DTV	<---	AKx	.203	.075	.009	Supported
H2	DTV	<---	AEx	.489	.087	***	Supported
H3	DTV	<---	CRx	-.272	.119	.163	Not Supported
H4	DTV	<---	ACx	.345	.103	.019	Supported

Notes: Path = Relationship between independent variable on dependent variable;
 β = Standardized regression coefficient; S.E. = Standard error; p = Level of significance

Discussion

We explore the contribution of media literacy towards decision to vote among new young voters and current study reported that media literacy from access, analysis and evaluate and act are significantly influence decision to vote. Surprisingly, our new young voters who reported as technology savvy group are not keen to create political content in social media. We expected that media technology can enhance access to information and delivery of media messages to mass of people. Young people need to have a variety of media literacy competency in order to access media content and sources. Such skills are required to survive in the digital era and anytime access to digital devices such as personal computer, tablets and smart phones offers young people to access greater media sources and information (Koc & Barut, 2016). Nowadays, the most dominant platform of digital media are Web 2.0 tools that refers to a new version of communication platforms that allow for user-generated content in any format (text, graphic, illustration) apart from social networking sites that popular such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Tiktok where image, audio, and video sharing to world-wide media users.

This study approved that access to various media are significantly influence decision to vote and current study was aligned with prior findings. Access to Facebook, Twitter (Yu, 2016), Instagram and Youtube (Gotlieb & Cheema, 2017) reported significantly influence decision to vote. Yu (2016) revealed that greater access to social media demonstrate greater motivation for political expression and expose political ideology that leads decision to vote among young people. Access to media leads them get involve more in task of creating and sharing original content later. However, greater access to media content also significant to have greater exposure for provocative information that influence aggressive action in joining political activities such as street demonstration and provocation (Syahputra, 2019) and turn-off during election (Mohd Sufiean et al., 2016).

Our findings also affirmed scholars' conclusions that analysis and evaluate various political sources and information are significantly influence decision to vote. Ability to analyse and evaluate political information and sources enhance critical thinking skills that reduce negative impact while using media (Potter, 2019). The important indicator should be the audience's skill while using media is ability to analyse and evaluate political information and sources whether they are able to recognize valid, trustworthy, and reliable sources. Media literacy is basic perspective of the establishing the critical thinking of young people to enhance and develop their awareness on democratic system, current issues, and political activities. Lack of analysis and evaluate competency cause political immaturity where young people participate in political activities with lack of democratic consciousness (Murinska-Gaile & Hadžialić, 2017). Hence, this study predicted that there is a significant influence of analysis and evaluate aspect toward decision to vote among new young voters. Access to various media and ability to analyse various political information and sources reported positive relationship to create political content among new young voters (Reyna et al., 2018). Media literacy from create dimension offers the potential to maximize what we value most about the empowering media technology tools and applications (Hobbs, 2017). Apart from access, analysis and evaluation, media literacy competency from create dimension demonstrate the ability of media users to create moral political content for sharing with other media users. Social Media t allows users to generate and share content in the form of information updates, political opinion, political interest, and other form of information such as news, and references to the general public. In this situation, social media has a chain effect, meaning that the transmission of a message does not end at one person but the content sharing may reach millions of media users (Latif et al., 2020).

Surprisingly, create dimension are not significant influence decision to vote among new young voters and current findings are contradictory with prior study. Young people are often reported as technology savvy, they are able to explore media technology applications, searching new media tools and adapt this matter faster than other generations such as the Baby boomer, Generation X and Y. Therefore, young people among new young voters have high motivation to create political content from various formats such as text, graphics, illustrations, animation, audio and video (Gotlieb & Cheema, 2017). By using social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Tiktok the political content can interactively share to other media users. However, there are several factors that constrain the creation of political content among new young voters on social media. Factors of educational level, family socioeconomics (Picone et al., 2016), Internet access and HIE law (Taib & Yaakop, 2017) are often relied upon to reinforce the negative relationship between creative skills and decision to vote among new young voters.

This study found that act dimensions have positive influence towards decision to vote among new young voters and current study findings are supported by previous study. Having access to a variety of media, being able to evaluate political resources and information as well as being motivated to create media content, new young voters are expected to realize media literacy competency from act dimension into decision-to-vote (Ohme et al., 2018). Interactions with various media such as television, radio, and newspapers reported influenced voting decisions significantly. The increased popularity to access online political debates had a considerable impact on voters' decisions. The relevance of access to social media as a primary source of political information and traditional media to supplement new young

voter's decision-making is demonstrated in prior study (Intyaswati et al., 2021). However, having access to a variety of media, being able to evaluate political resources and information as well as being motivated to create media content are not promise our new young voters turn out during election. Study by Lee (2020) reported that candidate, political party and election campaign is a key determinant of new young voters coming out to vote. Conversely, Lee (2020) are contested by Lau et al. (2018) study who reported that new young voters gain the exposure of candidate information, election campaign news and political party agenda update in news reporting through the media. The media access during election is significant to the decision to vote.

Theoretical Implication

The theoretical implications of this study can be noticed based on the media literacy perspective that tested in political context that gain less attention by political communication scholars. In addition, this study provides empirical analysis on the impact of media literacy competency towards voting decision among new young voters (Generation Z) by developing new media literacy scale in measuring decision to vote. The new model of decision to vote was developed from media literacy perspective in this study and contributed to expand media literacy knowledge in political communication.

Conclusion

This study found that media literacy from the dimensions of access, analysis, and evaluation as well as action is influencing the decision to vote among new young voters. It was surprising when this study found that new young voters among Generation Z who were more prone to the use of gadgets and media technology applications were reportedly not interested in creating political content. The creation of political content often associated with new young voters such as video, audio and animation are reportedly insignificant in encouraging them to vote during elections. This coincides with demographic factors where the majority of respondents are diploma students who are still newly formed political interests. Most of the respondents were from low -income families (B40) who were more focused on graduating than engaging in online political activities. Not to mention creating political content that exposes them to misconduct that can be prosecuted under the University Colleges Act (AUKU).

Future Research

Future researchers are recommended to measure media literacy competency towards decision to vote among new young voters specifically from age 18 who are not only in higher education institution (HIE). Young people who are in HIE are strictly impose under numbers of law of the university. It may affect the dimension of create and act. Apart from that future researcher are suggested to observe media literacy competency towards voting readiness which specifically measure their awareness on election process. Since Undi18 is new policy in Malaysia and young people in the age of 18 are newcomers in political arena, voting readiness knowledge is important to give real insight about new young voter's voting behaviour.

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