Vote 18 Perception Among Tertiary Education Students in Malaysia

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Abstract
The introduction of Vote 18 in Malaysia, which allows youths beginning at the age of 18 to be eligible to vote, has altered the course of elections in this nation. As a result, some insights may be valuable in anticipating how this group of individuals will perceive things given that they may differ from earlier generations, particularly among students in tertiary education. Therefore, this study aims to identify the factors that influence tertiary education students in the selection political parties, identify the students' latest views on political parties and identify aspects of student aspirations from political parties. On students enrolled in tertiary education in the Klang Valley, a pilot survey was carried out utilizing an online survey platform. In this pilot study, 252 participants from various backgrounds participated voluntarily. The findings indicate that 61.1% of students stated that suggestions from family members impact their decision to vote for a particular political party when asked about the factor that influences their choice of political parties. When asked about their opinions of political parties, students unanimously agreed that they wanted a party that would look out for their interests, be free of corruption, transparent, and able to carry out their manifestos, with close to 100% agreement across the board. The students also unanimously agreed that they wanted a political party that would benefit them in terms of career opportunities, educational opportunities, and accessibility. The results of this pilot study are crucial in giving a preliminary picture of the current perceptions of young in Malaysian elections, particularly among

tertiary students. It is advised that this study be expanded into a larger study so that the conclusions can serve as the main source of reference when discussing the needs and viewpoints of students when voting.
Keywords: Youth, Vote 18, Election, Pilot Study, Malaysia

Introduction

A general election in Malaysia is a nationwide election that happens at the federal level. It's also known as a parliamentary election. During a general election, Malaysians across the entire country vote to choose members of the federal parliament. The federal parliament is the main decision-making body that handles national-level laws, policies, and issues. The most important positions decided during a general election are the Members of Parliament (MPs) who represent different constituencies. In a general election, each constituency elects one federal MP. Federal governments are normally formed by the party or coalition with the most seats in parliament. The winning party or coalition leader becomes Malaysia's PM. General elections are held every five years, but the Prime Minister can call one earlier (Wong et al., 2010).

At the state level, there is an election. Every state has a separate legislative body and municipal government that oversees local development, health care, and education. Representatives to the state legislative assembly are chosen in state elections. The party or coalition with the most seats in the legislative assembly is the state government. The leader of the victorious party or coalition becomes the state's chief minister. The timing of state elections varies since they are not connected to federal general elections. Because state elections are not held every five years like general elections, they happen more frequently (Hutchinson, 2014). It is clear from the results of the most recent general election, which was the fifteenth, that the incumbent governance was defeated by the opposition for the second time ever. If you look back at the numerous variables, either from the perspective of the political party or the citizens of the nation, these are what caused the change in the voting pattern in the election. Because of this, political scientists have conducted a wide range of studies to comprehend the political trends in Malaysia.

This could apply to the Vote18 reform, which were put out in the Malaysian Parliament in July 2019. By lowering the voting age from 21 to 18, it also hoped to automatically register all Malaysians who turn 18 to vote. Mixed reactions were given to these changes. However, youth (those between the ages of 18 and 30) are seen as having a very high spirit and optimism in supporting ideas for improvements in a nation while this might be one of those aspects that affect most of the public (Bukhari et al., 2020).

Although this group is seen as having strong moral character in the political sphere, they are easily swayed by their circumstances or surroundings, including their family, peers, and the local community (Ansell,2016). Not only that, but modern technology developments also make it possible for different news or information to circulate quickly, and if this subject is not filtered and thoroughly explored, it will impact young people's perceptions of things.

As a result, multiple studies have been carried out by political academics in our nation to comprehend the political trends in Malaysia. There are three ideas, according to Campbell et al., (1966) and Mayudin (2006), the theory of party identification, sociological choice, and rational choice is the main one that is frequently discussed by political researchers.

The first theory is the sociological theory, introduced by Columbia University in the late 1940s. Socioeconomic factors, education, class, religion, ethnicity, and geography are all directly tied to this hypothesis. In terms of class, the middle and lower classes, for instance, tend to support political parties that are perceived as having the power to improve their lot in life as opposed to the upper class or the elite, who support political parties that prioritize economic advancement. A sociological approach can also classify social groups and social classes. According to the categories of lower, middle, and higher or elite, society is said to have social classes. According to ethnic characteristics like Malay, Chinese, and Indian, religious characteristics like Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism, as well as geographical characteristics like urban, rural, and suburban, social groups are understood as members of society. Bottomore (1979) clarifies this issue by connecting social factors to elections.

Because it will affect each other's voting behavior, he believes that struggle or activity done through organizations or groups is more effective than doing it alone. Given that Malaysians are a diverse group in terms of racial and ethnic origins, religious convictions, and standard of life, this idea has enormous relevance for the nation. The ruling party predominates in metropolitan areas populated by the middle and upper social classes, whilst support for the opposition is more concentrated in rural and interior areas, where the lower class resides, as can be observed from the first General Election up to the tenth General Election.

Another theory linked to this study is Party identification Theory. Campbell and other social psychologists at the University of Michigan proposed this hypothesis in the 1950s. According to Campbell et al. (1960), voters' allegiance to a party influences their political behavior and sentiments beyond voting for the same party in every election. In other words, voter identification impacts their views and conduct. During elections, candidates and issues may influence voters, but this is ephemeral and does not affect party loyalty or affiliation (Dalager, 1996). Family and community context also impact the creation of identity in individuals. For instance, if parents are staunch party supporters, their children may inherit the action. Parents, friends, and society are agents of socialization (Campbell et al. 1960). In Malaysia, it is common for an area to be loyal to a single party, known as a traditional party, when they have won practically every election. For instance, most State Assembly and Parliament seats in Kelantan have shifted to PAS since the first general election. Most voters from the first election have passed away, although his family still supported PAS till the 14th General Election.

Third, this study considers the Theory of Rationality. According to this argument, people will choose a party depending on their expected returns. Voters evaluate candidates, causes, and manifestos, and will not vote if the reward is not worth the expense (Matthieß, 2020). Voters logically compare rival parties and their ability to win. If a party offers a more attractive deal and is regarded as winning, people may vote for the opposite party.

Hence, in this study, we aim to identify the factors that influence tertiary education students in the selection political parties, identify the students' latest views on political parties and identify aspects of student aspirations from political parties.

Methodology

This section discusses study design, study sample, instruments research, data collection methods and data analysis. Cross-sectional designs are employed for population-based surveys in this descriptive study. The Klang Valley area's tertiary education students over the age of 18 comprised the study's population, with an estimated 252 respondents.

This study tries to pinpoint the factors that influence university students' choice of political parties, as well as their most recent opinions and party preferences. It had been measured how much knowledge the tertiary education students had acquired about the contributing reasons, contemporary viewpoints, and goals toward political parties. However, because the study sample mainly consists of tertiary education level students in the Klang Valley, the results of this study cannot be generalized to other populations. Due to the difficulty in recruiting participants for this survey, the results of this study are thus solely restricted to the relevant sample size.

A quantitative research methodology is used in this study. Students in the Klang Valley who are enrolled in tertiary institutions were chosen at random to get the questionnaire via Google Forms on social media. To avoid sampling bias, the sample selection procedure used simple random sampling. To get more accurate results, respondents were given a month to complete the questionnaire attentively. The respondents' consent and free will were also obtained for the study, and we are not disclosing who they are. The gathered information was loaded into the SPSS program for descriptive and inferential analysis.

Four categories make up a survey given to tertiary students in Malaysia's Klang Valley. They are as follows: Section A: Respondents' Personal Information Part B: Factors influencing political party selection, Part D: Aspects of students' political aspirations and Part C: Current student attitudes toward political parties. Section A comprises the respondent's personal details, encompassing gender, age, and year of study. On the other hand,

Sections B, C, and D encompass statements that are essential for achieving the study's objectives, including statements that employ a Likert scale of 5.

Table 1: Likert Scale of 5 being employed in Sections B, C and D.

Scale	Indicator
1	Strongly disagree
2	Agree
3	Not sure
4	Agree
5	Strongly agree

Results and Discussion
Respondents' demographics

Table 2: Demographic frequency of 252 respondents.

Demographic factors	Attributes	Quantity (%)
Age	18-20	69 (27.4)
	21-23	137 (54.4)
	24-26	26 (10.3)
	27 and above	20 (7.9)
Gender	Male	141 (56.0)
	Female	111 (44.0)
Years of study	First year	73 (29.0)
	Second year	66 (26.2)
	Third year	75 (29.8)
	Fourth year	38 (15.1)

The table above shows the age of the respondents where the number of respondents aged 21 - 23 years is the majority with a total of 137 people with 54.4%. Followed by respondents aged 18 - 20 years with a total of 69 people with a percentage of 27.4%. Next are respondents aged 24 - 26 years with a total of 26 people comprising 10.3% and lastly there are 20 respondents aged 26 and over with a percentage of 7.9%.

The table above also shows the gender of the respondents, where the number of female respondents is more than the male respondents. The number of male respondents is 111 which is 44% while the number of female respondents is 141 equals to 56%.

Table 2 shows the respondent's year of study where no significant difference can be seen. Respondents from year 3 were the most respondents with a total of 75 people comprising a percentage of 29.8%. Next are 1st year student respondents with a total number of 73 with a percentage of 29% followed by 2nd year student respondents of 66 people with a percentage of 26.2%. Lastly, there are 38 4th year student respondents with a percentage of 15.1%.

Factors that influence the choice of political party

Table 3: Factors that influence the selection of political parties based on percentage.

Item	Percentage of agreement
Social media influence	46.2
Suggestion from family member	61.1
Campaigning method	38.1
Student's educational background	43.7
Friend's recommendation	33.3
Strong area of political parties	41.3

Based on the factors that influence the selection of political parties, suggestions from family members in determining the vote of students shows the highest contribution with the highest percentage of 61.1%. The aforementioned assertion is substantiated by the research conducted by Cross and Young (2008), wherein it was found that a significant proportion of young voters tend to align themselves with a particular political party as a result of familial influence. This influence may stem from either their family members' affiliation with the same political party or their exposure to the core values and principles of the party during their formative years, which subsequently fosters a sense of loyalty towards both their family members and the political party, albeit indirectly. This assertion aligns with the findings of a study conducted by Pandian (2014), which posits that institutionalization and social environments significantly impact the perceptions and voting behaviors of university students. The study highlights the influential role of factors such as family background, hometown, and social class in shaping the perspectives of the selected cohort. Conversely, the influence of recommendations from friends on the political party preferences of students is observed to be the least significant, with a proportion of 33.3%. The impact of social media influence, campaigning methods, students' educational background, friend's recommendations, and strong affiliation with political parties on the selection of political parties is not statistically significant, as indicated by the percentage values falling below 50%. Based on these findings, it is evident that external variables do not exert a significant influence on students' decision-making processes when it comes to selecting political parties to vote for. Conversely, internal factors, including family influence, play a pivotal role in shaping students' perspectives and ultimately guiding their decision-making. The influence of family members can significantly impact a child's aspirations and goals. Children may engage in decision-making processes with the intention of imitating or satisfying the aspirations of their parents or other influential figures within their family unit (Winchester et al., 2014).

The latest views of students on political parties.
Table 4: Latest views of students on political parties

Item	Percentage of agreement
Promoting the welfare of individuals	90.5
Concern on people's issues	89.6
Avoid bribery	91.2
Accurate religious convictions	92.1
Transparency and integrity of duty	92.5
Unite without division	92.4
Execute the aforementioned manifesto.	90.5

According to the data shown in Table 4, the students' perspectives on political parties exhibit a high level of agreement, with values approaching 100% for all items examined. The choices made by individuals are motivated by a desire to promote the welfare of individuals, concern on people's issues, avoid bribery, accurate religious convictions, transparency, and integrity of duty, unite without division and execute the aforementioned manifesto. The aspect that garnered the highest level of consensus among students on their perspectives on political parties is the transparency and integrity of the political party's candidate in fulfilling their responsibilities, with a percentage agreement of 92.5%. This value is important in selecting a candidate from a pool of political parties because transparent and fair candidate selection ensures that the most qualified and capable individuals are chosen to represent the people. This helps in achieving balanced and effective representation of various groups within society (Breitenstein, 2019). Transparency and integrity in candidate selection build public trust in the electoral process and political parties. People are more likely to have confidence in a system where decisions are made openly, honestly, and with the best interests of the community in mind (Kodiyat el al., 2020). Based on the findings presented in Table 4, it is evident that students express a strong desire for political party candidates to possess a significant degree of integrity and adhere to ethical standards. The people seek individuals who

possess qualities such as honesty, transparency, and a commitment to prioritizing the welfare of the public over personal interests, as corroborated by Gebel's (2012) research findings.

Aspects of student aspirations from political parties
Table 5: Aspects of student aspirations from political parties in percentage

Item	Percentage of agreement
Provision of job opportunities	97.3
Government that keeps promises	94.4
Education for youngsters improves.	93.7
Reduced educational costs burden	94.6
Education facility ease	93.7
Acceptance of young ideas and suggestions	94.6

According to the data presented in Table 5, the analysis of students' aspirations from political parties following their electoral victories reveals a substantial level of agreement across all elements, with nearly 100% agreement seen for each item. Students expect that political party would provide them with job opportunities, keep their promises while campaigning, improving education for youngsters, reduce educational costs burden, ease in education facility, and accept the youth ideas and suggestions. Most of the students agree that they would aspect high provision of job opportunities with the highest percentage of 97.3%. The provision of employment opportunities is a crucial determinant in the electoral preferences and political affiliations of young individuals. The perception of political parties and election choices among young individuals is directly influenced by the accessibility of high-quality employment possibilities (Crisp & Powell, 2017). The goals of young individuals frequently revolve around prioritizing work options and career prospects. They want political parties that possess well-defined strategies for fostering job creation and promoting economic growth. Political parties that effectively tackle the issues of unemployment and underemployment are more likely to garner the support of the younger demographic (Heller et al., 2007). Overall, students have high expectations when selecting a candidate from a political party. They anticipate that the chosen candidate will present manifestos that prioritize the well-being of students and provide them with increased opportunities in terms of employability, education, and facilities.

Conclusion

In summary, the suggestions and viewpoints of family members play a crucial role in influencing an individual's decision regarding their affiliation with a particular political party. The familial setting frequently serves as a fundamental source of initial political exposure and education, whereby conversations, values, and affiliations are commonly exchanged. The political ideas of individuals can be influenced by their family members, leading them to associate themselves with the political party that closely reflects their family's ideals. Nonetheless, although familial ideas do exert an influence, individuals also cultivate their own viewpoints through educational pursuits, personal encounters, and the application of critical analysis. Consequently, they are able to make well-informed choices that encompass a blend of familial influences and individual deliberations.

Furthermore, the perspectives of students about political parties underscore a shared desire for leadership that is characterized by ethical conduct and transparency. The significance of clean administration is underscored by the demand for candidates who possess integrity and a steadfast dedication to eliminating corruption. The prioritization of philanthropy and the fulfillment of political agendas reflects a call for responsible governance and measurable contributions to the well-being of society. The demand for candidates who espouse religious beliefs and promote togetherness underscores the necessity for leaders who possess the ability to engender a sense of cohesion while simultaneously adhering to ethical standards. In conclusion, the viewpoints of the students support political leaders who not only prioritize openness and public service, but also uphold the values that contribute to a cohesive and thriving society.

Lastly, the aspects of student aspirations from political parties emphasize a vision for a holistic and empowering future. The prioritization of work possibilities is indicative of the pragmatic necessity for economic stability and expansion, but the accentuation of educational support highlights the fundamental significance of education in individual growth and advancement. The appeal for political parties to embrace and enact youth perspectives reflects a desire for inclusiveness and acknowledgment of the influence of young individuals in defining the trajectory of the nation. Collectively, these objectives underscore the students' yearning for all-encompassing policies that not only tackle urgent issues but also equip them with the means to personally improve and actively engage in molding a forward-thinking society.

The study of the Vote 18 perception among tertiary students in Malaysia carries substantial academic significance due to its representation of a crucial shift in the democratic framework of the nation. The decision to reduce the voting age in Malaysia from 21 to 18 demonstrates the country's adherence to international democratic standards and recognition of the political participation and influence that may be wielded by its younger citizens. The mentioned policy alteration prompts significant inquiries on the ramifications of granting voting rights to younger individuals on electoral dynamics, patterns of political engagement, and policy results. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of the intricacies associated with the implementation of various aspects, such as voter registration procedures, initiatives aimed at enhancing civic education, and the level of responsiveness exhibited by political parties towards this demographic transition, can provide significant insights into the dynamic evolution of democracy in Malaysia. Furthermore, this research holds significant implications for global dialogues concerning the empowerment of young individuals in politics and the possibility for political institutions to undergo transformation through the inclusion of a more varied and younger voting population.

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