

## Exploring the Link between Facebook Intensity and Online Political Participation: A Study on Malaysian Youth

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### Abstract

With these technological advancements, our lifestyles are significantly affected by the advent of the Internet. The emergence of social media makes our life easier by saving time and cost. Besides that, social media enables a new form of political participation. Although the level of political involvement among the youth is relatively low in Malaysia due to several factors, social media provides a unique platform for the youth to express their views and participate in politics. Thus, this study has been conducted to examine the relationship between Facebook Intensity and online political participation. The factors that contribute to the level of online political participation will also be studied. This study has been conducted using a quantitative research method by designing a questionnaire. The target population of this study is the local undergraduate students from the Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia. A simple random sampling technique was used, and 150 respondents were involved in this study. The collected data were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS). Based on the results, there is a significant positive relationship between Facebook Intensity and online political participation. At the same time, there are no relationships between interactivity with political figures, political interest and online political participation among the youth. Facebook Intensity is the main contributor to encouraging the youth to participate in politics online in this study.

**Keywords:** Facebook, Intensity, Political Participation, Malaysia, Youth

### Introduction

With these technological advancements, our lifestyles are significantly affected by the advent of the Internet (Riaz, 2010). The emergence of social media makes our life easier by saving time and cost. For example, instead of sending letters which requires a longer waiting time, we can now keep connecting with our friends and family instead, try, regardless of the distance between us, through social media such as Facebook, WeChat, WhatsApp and others. By using social media, we cannot only deliver text messages and make ordinary phone calls,

but we can also make video calls, allowing us to see each other. People can also shop online using social media (Crang et al., 2007).

Besides that, social media provide an alternative method for people to obtain information. People no longer get information through traditional media such as newspapers, radio and television, as well as social media such as blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are the online digital media that people can obtain the latest information from thSocialcial media users can use social media to comment on others' posts, share the latest news and discuss politics among themselves since social media is an interactive media (Qualman, 2010; Willnat et al., 2013).

Furthermore, the emergence of social media enables a different form of political participation. Compared to the traditional form of political participation, such as casting a vote, participating in campaign activities, and contacting government officials and organisational, social media encourages the youth to participate politically online. Social media is a significant factor that significantly affects the 2008 Malaysia General election result (Sani & Zengeni, 2010).

### **Social Media and Elections in Malaysia**

It is undeniable that social media plays an increasing role in our daily life. The emergence of social media also influences politics in Malaysia significantly. Several studies showed that social media usage influences political participation (Vitak et al., 2011; Willnat et al., 2013). Since the government (the previous government, Barisan National Coalition, known as BN) controlled and regulated the mainstream media in Malaysia, the opposition was denied access to the mainstream media. The Ministry of Information controlled not only the public-owned channels but also the private channels operated by the companies with solid bonds to the government. Even the newspapers, mainly Malay and English presses, were also under the control of the government (George, 2006).

Thus, the opposition turned their battlefield into the Internet, a new platform for political activists and the opposition used to deliver their message. In 2007, the Democratic Action Party (DAP) used the Internet and social media to publicise the party's views and criticise government policies. The Internet and social media have been used by Democratic Action Party (DAP) to publicise their party's views and criticise the government policies. For example, Lim Kit Siang, the Chairman of DAP, operates three popular blogs in three different languages: English, Malay and Chinese, and a Facebook account. DAP use social media to reveal corruption and other political misbehaviour (Wok & Mohamed, 2017; Willnat et al., 2013; Lee, 2008).

### **Problem Statement**

Conventionally, political participation refers to the activity carried out by the citizens to influence the political outcomes, such as policies and government action or the decision makers of the policy (Kim & Chen, 2016; Vitak et al., 2011). There are numerous ways for citizens to engage in the politics, such as voting in elections, participating in campaigns, and contacting government officials (Verba et al., 1995).

However, due to the emergence of technology and social media, a new platform of political participation has appeared in digital media. According to a recent study by Obar et al (2015), online political participation is a different type of participation compared to traditional forms of political participation. The Internet allows various types of online political participation, such as writing emails to politicians, visiting campaign websites and donating funds online

(Gibson et al., 2005). In Malaysian politics, youth are more likely to participate in political events via the Internet (Zainon et al., 2017).

The youth are the future leaders and contributors to developing and maintaining the country's political stability. However, the youth, especially university students, receive numberless criticism when participating in politics (Zainon et al., 2017). The level of political participation among the youth is relatively low. There is a decline in traditional forms of political participation, among them voting and enrolling as partisan members. In Malaysia, there are nearly 4 million eligible voters, 67% aged from 21 to 30 (Leong et al., 2012). Of those registered to vote, only 55% voted in the 2008 General Election. The youth of the year 2000 was less interested in participating in politics than those from previous eras. Their voting turnout is generally lower in democratic countries (Delli, 2000; Henn & Foard, 2012; Kimberlee, 2002; Mesch & Coleman, 2007).

Several factors led to this phenomenon happening in Malaysia. One of the significant factors is the enactment of the Universities and University Colleges Act (1971) (UUCA), also known as AUKU, that limits students' rights. The students are limited to assembly and associate with political groups and student gatherings due to AUKU 1971. Besides that, university authorities monitored and controlled public speeches. As a result, the students were forced to obey the instruction. Disciplinary actions such as expulsion will be taken once the students disobey the law (Weiss, 2012; Gooch, 2012; Chan et al., 2014). Therefore, the youth, especially undergraduates, are likely to refrain from involving in political activities or to express their political opinion due to the existing law (Keeter et al., 2002).

Besides that, according to research conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2012), youth does not have full citizenship rights. They demand exercising their full rights to participate and express opinions in nation-building. Before the emergence of social media, the youth could not deliver their opinion through traditional media such as newspapers and radio. The space in the traditional media could have been more extensive and affordable (Abdu et al., 2017). However, due to the emergence of social media, the youth can express their opinions and be involved in politics through social media. According to Van Wyngarden (2012), a new development of political interest and participation was induced by the growth of social media. Social media such as Facebook have become trendy, cheap and accessible for the youth. The youth have used Facebook to participate in social and politic (Chan et al., 2014). The Internet has become the most potent channel for them to post links about political articles, comment and give their opinion about politics, look for political information and issues, and listen to other views online. The Internet can facilitate higher involvement in civil issues. Former Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak said the 13th General Election is Malaysia's first social media election.

There are numerous studies about how social media usage will affect political participation. The results are different when compared to each other. For example, research conducted by Holt et al (2013) concluded that social media positively affects political interest and offline political participation. Research conducted in the United States showed that higher Facebook Intensity would increase political activity on Facebook (Vitak et al., 2011). Despite the studies that indicated that social media usage would affect political participation, some researchers found no significant relationship between social media use and various forms of political participation (Bimber, 2003; Nisbet & Scheufele, 2004).

In Malaysia, there needs to be more research conducted to study the effect of social media on political participation. How frequently does the youth use Facebook? Will Facebook Intensity affect online political participation? What is the level of online political participation

among the youth? What are the other factors that will determine the level of online political participation? Thus, conducting a study about Facebook Intensity and other factors that will affect the level of political participation, especially online political participation among undergraduate students is essential.

### **Research Objectives**

The main objective of this study is to analyse Facebook usage and its relation to online political participation among undergraduate students at Universiti Putra Malaysia. Specifically, the objectives of this study include:

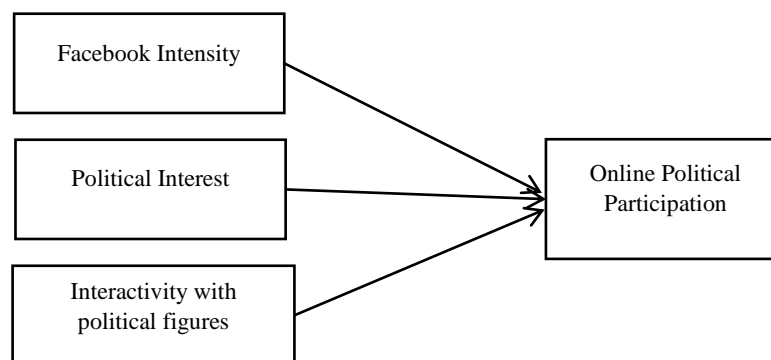
- To study the Facebook Intensity among undergraduate students in Universiti Putra Malaysia during the 14th Malaysia General Election.
- To study the factors determining online political participation among undergraduate students in Universiti Putra Malaysia during the 14th Malaysia General Election.
- To study the level of online political participation among undergraduate students in Universiti Putra Malaysia during the 14th Malaysia General Election.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Uses and Gratification Theory (U&G) was founded by Katz in 1974 to study the people's motives that encourage them to use the media (Katz et al., 1974). According to U&G, Katz assumed that the audience is characterised as active and motivated in their media use (Quan-Haase & Yong, 2010). Using certain kinds of media can satisfy the audience's needs with unique motivations (Katz et al., 1974).

Compared to other theories, such as Hypodermic Needle Theory (1920) and Cultivation Theory (1976), U&G focuses more on what people do with the media rather than the effect of the media on audiences. The U&G aims to explore the audience's motivation to use media, to explain how the audience gratifies their needs through the use of media, and to visualise the relationships between the audience's motivation, cognitive needs and behaviours (Katz et al., 1974). Different types of media and content can satisfy different audiences' needs. There are five different categories of needs, including cognitive needs, affective needs, personal integrative needs, social integrative needs and tension release needs (West et al., 2010).

There are three assumptions have been made in this theory by Katz. Firstly, the media users are goal-directed in their behaviour. Secondly, the media users are active. Thirdly, they are aware of their needs and can choose the media that gratifies them (Ko et al., 2005). The U&G model provides a framework to understand the needs that motivate the users to use the media to gratify their needs. Many past research related to media employ U&G Theory. Chang et al. (2006) stated that perceived needs such as companionship, passing time, action and substitution for friends are significant factors in online games adoption. Quan-Haase and Young (2010) found that passing time, sociability and social information are the main factors in the usage of Facebook. In contrast, Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008) proved that keeping in touch with friends is one of the needs that satisfy by exploring social media websites.



### *Facebook Intensity*

Nowadays, Facebook is the most popular social media website in the world. Facebook was founded by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004 to serve as a platform for college students in America. The service was opened to the public in 2006. Facebook Intensity refers to the frequency of youth using Facebook, including the time they spend and their number of friends on Facebook. Many researches study the relationship between the usage of Facebook and its effect on political participation (Tang & Lee, 2013; Vitak et al., 2011; Abdu et al., 2016; Zainon et al., 2017).

Most studies have shown that Facebook Intensity correlated positively with political participation. This showed that Facebook is a more powerful tool compared to traditional media. Facebook is not only a platform that provides political information but also an interactive medium with the advantages of global reach, better quality and higher speed (Abdu et al., 2016). Nowadays, the youth prefers to access political information from Facebook than traditional media such as newspapers, radio and television. Thus, Facebook is migrating the youth to involve in political affairs (Waller, 2013). Hence, the researcher made the first hypothesis on Facebook Intensity and the youth's online political participation level.

H1: The higher the Facebook Intensity, the higher the level of online political participation among the youth.

### *Political Interest*

Political interest is a significant indicator of political participation (Yang & Dehart, 2016; Yamamoto & Kushin, 2014). According to Abdu et al (2016), political interest is an attitude that produces a stable and sustainable outcome in politics since it can determine whether an individual is politically active or conversely. When an individual is willing to participate in politics, political interest is a motivator that encourages the individual to look for political information, skill or related knowledge (Abdu et al., 2016). The youth can be stimulated by political interest to actively participate in online political activities such as sharing political posts on Facebook, interacting with political figures, and discussing politics with their friends. Thus, this leads to the second hypothesis is related to political interest and online political participation.

H2: Political interest correlated positively with online political participation among the youth.

### *Interactivity with Political Figures*

Social media is an interactive media. Compared social media to traditional media, such as newspapers and radio, which only allow one-directional communication, social media enables

media users to interact with other users (Mayfield, 2008). Facebook is an interactive platform for politicians to reach out to their constituents and voters (Abdu et al., 2016). The interaction between politicians and the community has been facilitated through the media by providing a public online "Wall" space. The comments can be easily given to their political leaders through the "Wall" space provided (Lahabou & Wok, 2011).

Besides that, the youth can generate friendships and initiate other linkages with politicians through Facebook (Tang & Lee, 2013). Thus, friendship and interaction with political figures become essential sources of political information (Abdu et al., 2016). The interaction with political figures may lead to a higher level of political participation since the interest to involve in political activities can be stimulated by political interactivity and discussions (Feezell et al., 2009).

Therefore, the youth can be mobilised and stimulated by these interactions to participate in online political activities. Thus, the third hypothesis on interactivity with political figures and online political participation among the youth has been proposed below.

H3: Interactivity with political figures correlated positively with the level of online political participation.

### **Research Methods**

It is impossible to detail and accurately study the entire population. Thus, a sample of the data from the population has to be extracted and analysed to generate the results for the entire population. A perfect sample is one that exactly represents the population from which it is taken (Saunders et al., 2009).

### **Target Population**

In survey research, the term "population" refers to the category of people (or subjects) about whom the researchers intend to write the report and from which researchers draw the sample (Davies & Hughes, 2014). This study's target population is undergraduate students from the Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication (FBMK), Universiti Putra Malaysia, who have Facebook accounts. Thus, the students who meet the criteria will only be chosen to participate in this study.

### **Sampling Techniques**

There are many types of sampling techniques. Every sampling technique has its advantages and disadvantages. Besides that, the types of sampling techniques used depend on the type of the study. In this study, simple random sampling is applied. Simple random sampling is fairly representative since they do not favour certain members.

### **Sampling Size**

According to the statistic provided by the Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication (2018), there are 887 undergraduate students from various courses in that faculty. Yamane (1973) provides a simplified formula to obtain the sample sizes. By using Yamane's Simplified Formula with a 5% error and 95% of confidence coefficient, the sample size calculation is 276 with a total population of 887. However, 276 is the lowest acceptable number in the study. The study was conducted with a sample size of 300. The distributed sample size is larger than the calculated sample size for this study because it is to anticipate the non-response or



missing data. If there is any discrepancy in the study, the findings in this study will be affected and not reliable (Naing et al., 2006).

Theoretically, 300 respondents were needed for the study. However, due to time limitations, this research will be conducted by collecting 150 respondents' questionnaires, which is half of the calculated sample size.

### ***Research Instruments***

Research instruments are the measurement and data collection tools created to collect data. There are two different categories of instruments, which are researcher-completed and subject-completed. Some researcher-completed instruments examples are rating scales, tally sheets, flowcharts and observation logs, while examples of subject-completed instruments are questionnaires, self-checklist, attitude scales and personality inventories. The types of instruments used depend on the types of research conducted.

In this study, questionnaires will be employed to obtain the data. The questionnaires consist of five sections: Section A, Section B, Section C (a), Section C (b), and Section D. Section A is about the respondents' demographic. The questions are focused on the demographic profile of respondents, such as gender, age, race, year of study and department. Section B is purposely to measure the Facebook Intensity of the respondents. The Facebook Intensity scale was adapted from LaRose et al (2005) to measure the extent to which the respondents were emotionally connected to Facebook and the extent to which they used it in their daily activities. At the same time, Section C purposely studies the factors that determine the level of online political participation. There are two factors in this section: interactivity with political figures and political interest. The interactivity with political figures was measured with the scale adapted from the work of (Lee and Cho, 2011). The political interest was adapted from the work of Whiteley (2005) to measure the level of interest of youth in politics. Section D purposely measures the level of online political participation among the youth. The questions mainly designed depend on the work of (Willnat et al., 2013). Each item was measured using a 5-point Likert Scale.

### ***Pilot Test***

A pilot test, a feasibility study, refers to a mini version of a full-scale study. According to Zikmund (2003), the pilot test is used to evaluate the reliability and validity of the research instrument so that the design of the instrument can be improved. Thus, it plays a crucial role in a research design. The Pilot Test conducted increases the success rate of a study (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001).

A pilot test was conducted at Universiti Putra Malaysia with 30 respondents from various faculties on the campus except for the Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication (FBMK). The research excluded FBMK because the full-scale study will be conducted in FBMK. Thus, the pilot test should be conducted at other faculties to show that the questionnaire is valid and reliable and can be employed at different places. The collected data was analysed using computer software, SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). SPSS is a software package designed for interactive or batched statistical analysis. In SPSS, Cronbach's Alpha has been used to test the reliability of the questionnaire. Cronbach's Alpha is expressed as a number between 0 to 1. The acceptable alpha value is 0.70 and above. After analysing the reliability of the questionnaire using SPSS, the values of Cronbach's Alpha for Section B, C (a), C (b), and D are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1  
*Pilot Testing Result*

Variable	Item	Cronbach's Value
Facebook intensity	6	0.92
Interactivity with political figures	10	0.80
Political interest	8	0.55
Online political participation	10	0.84

The values of Cronbach's Alpha for Sections B, C (a), and D are more than 0.7. Thus the questions in these sections are reliable and valid. However, the value of Cronbach's Alpha for Section C (b) is 0.550, less than 0.70. Thus, the researcher refers to Cronbach's Alpha if the item is deleted for Section C (b). According to Cronbach's Alpha, if an item is deleted, the value of Cronbach's Alpha will increase to 0.682, which is the nearest value to 0.7 when the fourth question, "Politics makes no difference to people my age," is deleted. Thus, the researcher decided to remove this question from Section C (b) to increase the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. Segalowitz et al (2010) state that values exceeding 0.5 are still acceptable.

### **Data Analysis**

Two methods will be used to analyse the data collected: multiple regression and Pearson Correlation. Multiple regression is used to examine the relationship between Facebook Intensity, interactivity with political figures, political interest and the level of inline political participation among the undergraduate students in FBMK. The multiple regression method examines the relationship between a dependent variable and two or above independent variables (Abdu et al., 2017). The independent variables that significantly influence the dependent variable will be identified. Besides that, Pearson Correlation is used to study the correlation between the independent and dependent variables. By determining the correlation between each other, the relationship between the variables can be identified whether there is any correlation between each other.

### **Results**

#### *Demographic Profile*

In this study, 18% of the respondents are male, while 82% are female. Female undergraduate students are significantly higher than males since more female students are willing to stay in the faculty after the class ends for revision and discussion for their assignment. Thus, the probability of getting female students to participate in this study is higher. According to Table 4, most respondents are from the age group 20-24 years, with 143 respondents (95.3%). Most underwent STPM, matriculation courses and foundation study before entering university. Only seven respondents (4.6%) entered university even though they graduated from secondary school more than five years ago. The mean age is 22.83 (SD = 1.66). There are four ethnic groups in this study, which are Malay, Chinese, Indian and others. Malay respondents comprise the majority of respondents, contributing about 82.7%, followed by Chinese respondents (8.7%), Indian respondents (5.3%) and others (3.3%). Other races included other minor ethics such as Bumiputera, Iban and Kadazan. In this study, the majority of the



respondents are third-year students, with 80 respondents (53.4%), followed by second-year students, with 58 respondents (38.7%) and first-year students, with eight respondents (5.3%). Only four respondents (2.7%) are fourth-year or above students since most of the fourth-year students are having industrial training at their workplaces. According to Table 3, most respondents are from the Department of Communication, with 104 respondents (69.3%), followed by the Department of Malay Language, with 41 respondents (27.3%). Only five respondents (3.3%) from the Department of English exist.

Table 3

*Demographic Profile of the Respondents*

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	27	18
	Female	123	82
Age	20-24	143	95.3
	25-29	5	3.3
	30 and above	2	1.3
Race	Malay	123	82.7
	Chinese	13	8.7
	Indian	8	5.3
	Others	5	3.3
Year of Study	First-year	8	5.3
	Second year	58	38.7
	Third year	80	53.3
	Fourth-year and above	4	2.7
Department	Communication	104	69.3
	English	5	3.3
	Malay Language	41	27.3

**Research Objective 1: To study the Facebook Intensity among undergraduate students in Universiti Putra Malaysia during the 14th Malaysia General Election.**

The values of Facebook Intensity are shown in Table 4 below. Since the overall mean of Facebook Intensity is 2.89 (SD = 1.05), it can be concluded that the respondents partially disagree with the statements, which means the Facebook Intensity is lower than average among the respondents.

Table 4  
Facebook Intensity

		SD (1)	D (2)	Percentage (%)		SA (5)
				PA (3)	A (4)	
1	Facebook is part of my everyday activity.	10.0	19.3	20.0	28.0	22.7
2	I am proud to tell people I am on Facebook.	18.8	25.5	28.2	18.1	9.4
3	Facebook has become part of my daily routine.	14.1	20.8	24.8	28.2	12.1
4	I feel out of touch if I do not log into Facebook for a while.	24.7	24.7	22.7	20.7	7.3
5	I feel that I am part of the Facebook community.	14.8	22.1	30.2	23.5	9.4
6	I would be sorry if Facebook shutdown.	16.1	27.5	28.2	21.5	6.7
<b><i>M = 2.89, SD = 1.05</i></b>						

Note : SD - Strongly Disagree, D - Disagree, PA - Partially Agree, A - Agree, SA - Strongly Agree.

**Research Objective 3: To study the level of online political participation among undergraduate students in Universiti Putra Malaysia during the 14th Malaysia General Election.**

The third objective of the study is to determine the level of online political participation among undergraduate students at UPM. The results were calculated and tabulated in Table 5. Based on the results, the overall mean for online political participation is 2.32 ( $SD = 1.07$ ). Thus, most respondents did not participate in politics online during the 14<sup>th</sup> General Election.

Table 5

*Political Participation*

		Percentage (%)				
		N(1)	R(2)	S(3)	VO(4)	A(5)
1	I visited the website of a party or political organisation during the 14 <sup>th</sup> General Election.	14.7	25.3	30.0	21.3	8.7
2	I sent a political newspaper article to a friend or colleague online during the 14 <sup>th</sup> General Election.	28.9	23.5	21.5	19.5	6.7
3	I signed an online petition during the 14 <sup>th</sup> General Election.	29.9	24.5	22.4	17.0	6.1
4	I participated in an online question-and-answer section with a politician during the 14 <sup>th</sup> General Election.	29.3	26.0	20.0	16.7	8.0
5	I emailed a politician or government official during the 14 <sup>th</sup> General Election.	45.9	24.3	16.9	8.8	4.1
6	I donated funds online to a political cause during the 14 <sup>th</sup> General Election.	43.3	22.7	20.0	8.7	5.3
7	I signed up online as a volunteer to help with a political cause during the 14 <sup>th</sup> General Election.	39.3	23.3	19.3	12.0	6.0
8	I joined a political organisation online as a member during the 14 <sup>th</sup> General Election.	43.6	21.5	17.4	10.1	7.4
9	I downloaded leaflets or promotional material to distribute offline during the 14 <sup>th</sup> General Election.	38.7	26.7	18.0	14.0	2.7
10	I campaigned for the candidate of my choice online during the 14 <sup>th</sup> General Election.	40.7	21.3	21.3	10.7	6.0

***M = 2.32, SD = 1.07***

**Research Objective 2: To study the factors determining online political participation among undergraduate students in Universiti Putra Malaysia during the 14th Malaysia General Election.**

*Correlation Analysis*

Pearson's Correlation Coefficient method was employed to study the correlation between the variables. The relationship between the variables can be determined via Pearson Correlation (*r*). Pearson Coefficient's value is between -1 to +1. Two variables can be interpreted as a perfect positive correlation if the *r* value is +1, while their relationship with each other is a negative correlation when the *r* value is -1. There is no relationship between the variables

when the  $r$  value is 0. The strength of the correlation depends on the distance from either -1 or +1. The closer the value to -1 or +1, the stronger the correlation (Weir, 2016). Evans (1996) proposed a guideline to describe the strength of the correlation.

The data collected was analysed by using Pearson's Correlation Coefficient. The results are shown in Table 6. Table 6 shows a positive relationship between Facebook Intensity and online political participation ( $r = 0.306$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Facebook Intensity and interactivity with political figures are moderately positively correlated with each other. Besides that, there is a weak positive relationship between political interest and online political participation ( $r = 0.151$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). However, there is no relationship between interactivity with political figures and online political participation among the youth ( $r = -0.022$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

Table 6

*Correlation Between Examined Variables Relevant to Communal and Exchange Relationships*

	1	2	3	4
1. Facebook intensity	-	.441***	-1.30	.306**
2. Interactive with political figures	-	-	-1.35	-0.22
3. Political interest	-	-	-	.151**
4. Online political participation	-	-	-	-

Note: \*\*\* $p < .000$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ .

*Multiple Regression Technique*

The relationship between the variables can be determined via Pearson's Correlation ( $r$ ). However, it is just able to show the correlation between each other. Which independent variables are the main contributor to online political participation? How much does the main contributor affect the dependent variable? To answer these questions, a multiple regression technique was employed to study the relationship between the variables. The results show a positive relationship between Facebook Intensity, political interest and online political participation ( $r = 0.131$ ,  $p < 0.005$ ). At the same time, there was no significant relationship between interactivity with political figures and online political participation.

Overall, Facebook Intensity [ $F(1,130) = 13.448$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ] contributes 9.4% variance ( $R^2 = 0.094$ ) in online political participation. It shows that Facebook Intensity ( $\beta = 0.306$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) correlates most with online political participation among the independent variables. At the same time, the combination of Facebook Intensity and political interest increased by 3.7% to the variance ( $R^2 = 0.131$ ) in online political participation. Thus, the research concludes a direct relationship between Facebook Intensity, political interest and online political participation among the youth. Figure 4 shows the regression model derived from this study. The regression model for online political participation is Online Political Participation = Constant (0.14) + Facebook Intensity (0.34) + Political Interest (0.41).

Variables	Online Political Participation	Political Interest	B	$\beta$	t	Sig
Facebook Intensity	0.31	-1.30	0.34	0.33	4.00	0.00
Political Interest	0.15		0.41	0.19	2.34	0.02
Mean	2.32	2.95	R = 0.36			
SD	1.07	0.50	R <sup>2</sup> = 0.13			
			Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> = 0.12			
			F(2, 129) = 9.70, p<.05			

### Discussion

As stated in the introduction, the main objective of this study is to study Facebook's Intensity and its relations to online political participation. Based on the findings, the Facebook Intensity is lower than the average level among the youths. It shows that the youths are no longer using Facebook nowadays. According to Sweney (2018), youths are less likely to use Facebook. In 2018, there were 700,000 fewer users under 25 in the UK compared to 2017. They started to use other social media such as Instagram, Youtube and Snapchat. One of the main reasons is that more older users are joining Facebook. Facebook's popularity among users above the age of 55 is increasing. There are 500,000 more senior users started using Facebook in 2018. Since the youths know that their parents, lecturers and their future employers are present online, they have to behave appropriately and accordingly (Binns, 2018). Therefore, the youths quit using Facebook since they cannot act or say anything they want.

Then the second specific objective of this study is to study the factors that determine the level of online political participation. According to the results, Facebook Intensity and political interest are positively correlated to online political participation. Facebook Intensity is the main factor that contributes to the level of online political participation. This result resonates with the study conducted by (Abdu et al., 2017). However, their influence towards the dependent variable is relatively tiny. Therefore, many other factors contribute to online political participation. As mentioned above, since the youth prefer other social media than Facebook, thus other social media have a more considerable influence on their behaviour than Facebook. Besides that, interactivity with political figures does not correlate with online political participation. Although the youths agreed that Facebook facilitates their interactivity with political figures, it does not stimulate their interest in online political participation. This result also resonates with the study mentioned above and indicates that interactivity with political figures does not sufficiently influence their behaviour to participate in politics online. Kruike-meier et al (2013) stated that characteristics such as political efficacy and civic skills are required to have a significant positive effect on political interest and participation. Therefore, Facebook's Intensity and political interest can motivate the youth to participate in politics online, while more than interacting with political figures is needed to influence their behaviour to participate in politics online.

The third specific objective of this study is to study the level of online political participation. The findings show that the youth's online political participation level is considered low compared to an average level. Although most of them visited party or political organisation websites during the 14th General Election, the actions that required more outstanding

commitment of resources, such as donating funds and registering as a volunteer, were less frequently taken by the youths. The same phenomenon happened in the study conducted by Vitak et al. in 2011.

On the other hand, there are three hypotheses made in this study. The first hypothesis is that Facebook Intensity positively correlates to online political participation among the youth. This hypothesis is valid and supported by the study's findings ( $r = 0.306$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Thus, the researcher rejects the null hypothesis. The second hypothesis is that political interest correlated positively with online political participation. Thus, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis. The third hypothesis made in this study is that interactivity with political figures correlated positively with the level of online political participation. After the data analysis, the results do not support the hypothesis. Thus, the researcher failed to reject the hypothesis.

The researcher did all the preparation and planning to ensure that this study would be conducted smoothly. However, there are still some problems and limitations encountered by the researcher. Firstly, this study was limited to only undergraduate students from FBMK, UPM. Secondly, due to the limitation of time and cost, only 150 respondents were invited to participate in this study. Due to these two factors, the findings may not be generalised to other faculties and universities in Malaysia. Then, Facebook is the only social media chosen to examine in this study. Many other social media still need to be studied and discussed. Besides that, many other factors, such as political knowledge, political efficacy and financial status, have significant potential to affect online political participation. The researcher needed help to identify all the other possible factors in this study. Last but not least, only the level of online political participation has been studied; the level of traditional forms of political participation among the youth still needs to be identified.

### **Suggestions For Future Study**

Some suggestions for further research relate to factors that contribute to the level of online political participation among the youth. For future studies, a larger sample size is needed to generalise the findings across Malaysia. Besides that, since fewer youth use Facebook nowadays, the researcher suggests that other popular social media such as Instagram, Snapchat and WhatsApp should be selected to study their influences for future research. Then, other possible factors that might have significant potential effects on online political participation can be studied in future. By identifying the other possible factors, the government and other related organisations can motivate the youth to participate actively in politics. Lastly, future research shall study the level of traditional forms of political participation and their relationship with online political participation since the youth might still prefer to participate in politics in traditional forms than online participation.

### **Conclusion**

The research findings reveal valuable insights into the relationship between Facebook Intensity and online political participation among youth, providing significant theoretical and contextual contributions to the existing knowledge on social media's role in political engagement. Theoretical significance arises from identifying a significant positive relationship between Facebook Intensity and online political participation. This finding adds to the growing body of literature on the influence of social media on political behaviours. By highlighting the importance of the intensity of Facebook usage, the study contributes to a nuanced understanding of how specific aspects of social media engagement shape political



participation. This theoretical insight deepens our knowledge of how social media platforms can mobilise and engage young individuals in political discussions and activities. Contextually, the research plays a vital role in the Malaysian setting. It addresses the relatively low level of political participation among youth and explores the potential of social media platforms, particularly Facebook, in facilitating their engagement in political discourse.

The study captures the unique context of Malaysian youth by focusing on undergraduate students from the Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication at Universiti Putra Malaysia. The findings shed light on the specific dynamics and challenges of political participation in the country, providing valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and social media practitioners. Understanding the significant positive relationship between Facebook Intensity and online political participation is particularly relevant in Malaysia, where social media has become a prominent avenue for political expression. By recognising Facebook as the primary contributor to encouraging youth participation in online political activities, the research highlights the platform's potential to promote democratic values and empower young individuals to voice their opinions. Policymakers can leverage these insights to design targeted interventions and initiatives to foster informed political engagement among the youth through social media platforms.

Moreover, the study's findings have implications for enhancing civic education and digital literacy programs. By recognising the influence of Facebook Intensity, educators and policymakers can develop strategies to educate youth about responsible and effective online political participation. This includes promoting critical thinking, media literacy, and navigating political discussions on social media platforms.

In conclusion, this research significantly contributes to the existing knowledge by revealing the positive relationship between Facebook Intensity and online political participation among Malaysian youth. The study's theoretical insights deepen our understanding of social media's role in political engagement, while its contextual relevance provides valuable insights into Malaysia's political and social landscape. By recognising the significance of Facebook as a catalyst for youth participation in online politics, the research informs policymakers, educators, and social media practitioners on effective strategies to foster informed and active citizenship among Malaysian youth in the digital age.

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