



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF ETHNIC MINORITY GROUPS  
IN MALAYSIA***

**FANG YI XUE**

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**POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF ETHNIC MINORITY GROUPS  
IN MALAYSIA**

By

**FANG YI XUE**

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in  
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science**

**December 2016**

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of in Master of Science

## **POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF ETHNIC MINORITY GROUPS IN MALAYSIA**

By

**FANG YI XUE**

**December 2016**

**Chair: Ahmad Tarmizi Talib, PhD**  
**Faculty: Human Ecology**

The marginalization of ethnic minorities in socio-economic and political developments has raised concern in Malaysia. The current government mobilizes attention to them especially during the election period due to their significant contribution in securing a number of parliamentary seats. Nevertheless, the participation of the Orang Asli group in the street demonstration recently for example, had sent a message of discontentment on the policies implemented. The questions raised were to what extent of the political participation of the minorities in order for them to sustain their needs. Hence, this study aims to (1) determine the level of political participation of the ethnic minorities (2) anticipate support of the minorities in the GE-14 and (3) determine the relationship between respondents' backgrounds (income and education) and the level of political participation. The level of political participation was measured using voting status in GE-13, involvement in political party and political activities while their support was evaluated from their voting intention in GE-14. A quantitative approach was employed using survey. There were 610 respondents involved from six ethnic minority groups namely Baba Nyonya, Portuguese, Chitty, Siamese, Sikh and Orang Asli in Peninsular Malaysia. The survey data was analyzed using descriptive analysis and Pearson correlation. The level of political participation was determined by measuring total score of participation in political activities. The support of the ethnic minority groups was cross-tabulated using descriptive analysis. Furthermore, the relationship between the level of political participation and the income and education background were examined using the Pearson correlation test. The results showed that all ethnic minority groups participated moderately in politics. The Orang Asli, Siamese and Chitty intend to support the BN government in the next GE-14 while the Baba Nyonya, Portuguese and Sikh community were less supportive. Therefore, the support of the ethnic minority groups towards the current ruling government is not convincing despite of the government claimed of giving supports to them. The result showed that there is no significant relationship between both variables of income and education with the level of political participation. The moderate participation of these ethnic minority groups in politics could possibly answer the problems of them being disadvantaged in many areas.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia, sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

## **PENGLIBATAN POLITIK KUMPULAN ETNIK MINORITI DI MALAYSIA**

Oleh

**FANG YI XUE**

**Disember 2016**

**Pengerusi: Ahmad Tarmizi Talib, PhD**

**Fakulti: Ekologi Manusia**

Peminggiran etnik minoriti dalam pembangunan sosio-ekonomi dan politik telah menimbulkan perhatian di Malaysia. Kerajaan pemerintah hanya menumpukan perhatian kepada mereka terutamanya dalam tempoh pilihan raya yang menjadi penentu undi di beberapa kawasan kerusi Parlimen. Walau bagaimanapun, penglibatan kumpulan pribumi (Orang Asli) dalam demonstrasi jalanan baru-baru ini telah menghantar mesej rasa tidak puas hati mengenai dasar yang dilaksanakan di mana kerajaan perlu mengambil perhatian. Persoalannya ialah sejauh manakah penglibatan golongan etnik minoriti dalam politik agar kebajikan mereka terjamin. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk (1) menentukan tahap penglibatan politik golongan minoriti (2) menjangka sokongan golongan minoriti dalam PRU-14 dan (3) menentukan hubungan antara latar belakang responden (pendapatan dan pendidikan) dan tahap penglibatan politik. Tahap penglibatan politik diukur menggunakan status pengundian semasa PRU-13, penglibatan dalam parti politik dan aktiviti politik manakala sokongan mereka dinilai melalui jangkauan undi mereka dalam PRU-14. Pendekatan kuantitatif telah diaplikasikan menggunakan kaji selidik dalam kajian ini. Terdapat 610 responden yang terdiri daripada enam kumpulan etnik minoriti iaitu Baba Nyonya, Portugis, Chitty, Siam, Sikh dan Orang Asli di Semenanjung Malaysia telah terlibat dalam kajian ini. Data kajian dianalisis menggunakan ujian statistik deskriptif dan korelasi *Pearson*. Tahap penglibatan politik ditentukan menggunakan jumlah skor dalam penglibatan politik. Sokongan daripada kumpulan etnik minoriti dijadualkan secara *cross-tabulate* menggunakan analisis deskriptif. Tambahan pula, hubungan antara tahap penglibatan politik dengan latar belakang pendapatan dan pendidikan responden telah diuji menggunakan ujian korelasi *Pearson*. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa semua kumpulan etnik minoriti mempunyai tahap penglibatan politik yang sederhana. Orang Asli, Siam dan Chitty berhasrat untuk menyokong kerajaan BN dalam PRU-14 yang akan datang manakala majoriti Baba Nyonya, Portugis dan masyarakat Sikh tidak akan menyokong kerajaan BN. Oleh itu, sokongan kumpulan minoriti terhadap kerajaan BN tidak begitu meyakinkan dalam PRU-14 yang akan datang walaupun kerajaan mendakwa memberi sokongan kepada kumpulan minoriti ini. Hasil ujian korelasi menunjukkan bahawa hubungan yang signifikan antara kedua-dua pemboleh ubah pendapatan dan pendidikan dengan tahap penglibatan politik. Penglibatan kumpulan etnik minoriti dalam politik yang berada di tahap sederhana ini kemungkinan menjawab persoalan di mana mereka dipinggirkan dalam kebanyakan pembangunan.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 9 December 2016 to conduct the final examination of Fang Yi Xue on her thesis entitled "Political Participation of Ethnic Minority Groups in Malaysia" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Master of Science.

Members of the Thesis Examination Committee were as follows:

**Zainal bin Madon, PhD**

Senior Lecturer  
Faculty of Human Ecology  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Chairman)

**Mohd Daud bin Awang, PhD**

Senior Lecturer  
Faculty of Human Ecology  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Internal Examiner)

**Sivamurugan Pandian, PhD**

Professor  
Universiti Sains Malaysia  
Malaysia  
(External Examiner)



---

**NOR AINI AB. SHUKOR, PhD**  
Professor and Deputy Dean  
School of Graduate Studies  
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date: 28 February 2017

This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

**Ahmad Tarmizi Talib, PhD**

Associate Professor  
Faculty of Human Ecology  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Chairman)

**Sarjit Singh Darshan Singh, PhD**

Associate Professor  
Faculty of Human Ecology  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Member)

---

**ROBIAH BINTI YUNUS, PhD**

Professor and Dean  
School of Graduate Studies  
Universiti Putra Malaysia

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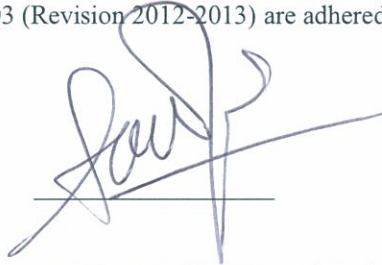
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Signature:

Name of  
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Supervisory Committee: Associate Professor Dr. Ahmad Tarmizi Talib



Signature:

Name of  
Member of Supervisory  
Committee:

Associate Professor Dr. Sarjit Singh Darshan Singh



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BERSIH	<i>Gabungan Pilihanraya Bersih dan Adil</i> (The Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections)
PR	<i>Pakatan Rakyat</i> (People Alliance)
PRU-12	<i>Pilihan Raya Umum-12</i> (General Election-12)
GE-11	General Election-11
GE-12	General Election-12
DUN	<i>Dewan Undangan Negeri</i> (State Assembly)
BN	<i>Barisan Nasional</i> (National Front)
GE-13	General Election-13
GE-14	General Election-14
UPSR	<i>Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah</i> (Primary School Achievement Test)
PMR	<i>Penilaian Menengah Rendah</i> (Lower Secondary Assessment)
SPM	<i>Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia</i> (Malaysian Certificate of Education)
STPM	<i>Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia</i> (Higher School Certificate)
MCE	Malaysian Certificate of Education
SC	School Certificate
SMA	<i>Sekolah Menengah Agama</i> (Religious Secondary School)
SPVM	<i>Sijil Pelajaran Vokasional Malaysia</i> (Vocational Certificate of Education Examination)
STP	<i>Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan</i> (Malaysian Higher School Certificate)
HSC	Higher School Certificate
I.B.	International Baccalaureate
STAM	<i>Sijil Tinggi Agama Malaysia</i> (Malaysian Higher Religious School Certificate)
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy

CNN	Cable News Network
YDPA	<i>Yang di-Pertuan Agong</i> (His Majesty)
PAS	<i>Parti Islam Se-Malaysia</i> (Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party)
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association (Malaysian People's Movement Party)
MIC	Malaysian Indian Congress
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
EC	Election Commission
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GMC	Gurdwaras Management Committee
UMNO	United Malays National Organization
ASN	<i>Amanah Saham Nasional</i> (The National Share Scheme)
ASB	<i>Amanah Saham Bumiputera</i> (The Bumiputera Share Scheme)
POASM	Peninsular Malaysia Orang Asli Association
JAKOA	<i>Jabatan Kemajuan Orang Asli</i> (Department of Orang Asli Development)
JHEOA	<i>Jabatan Hal Ehwal Orang Asli</i> (Department of Orang Asli Affairs)
Gerakan	<i>Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia</i>
PPP	People's Progressive Party
DAP	Democratic Action Party
HINDRAF	Human Rights Action Force
PAN	<i>Parti Amanah Negara</i> (National Trust Party)
UPKO	United Pasokmomogun Kadazandusun Murut Organisatio



# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

In Malaysian field of social studies, the political science field of interest has been the limelight among the local and foreign scholars. However, most of the political studies has merely revolved in the ambits of majority ethnic groups.

In this chapter, the researcher will discuss on the rational of this study focusing on the minorities' political participation. This chapter then provides an overview of the thesis structure and illustrates the way in which this research aims to shed light on less focused marginal politics in Malaysia.

### 1.2 Background of the Study

The main theme of the study is to examine the political participation of the ethnic minority groups in Peninsular Malaysia. The researcher will focus on the ethnic minority groups in the Peninsular Malaysia covering the Baba Nyonya, Portuguese, Chitty, indigenous groups (Orang Asli), Sikh and the Siamese. The subject matters focused on the ethnic minority groups in Peninsular Malaysia which doesn't mean to exclude the minority groups in the East Malaysia with regards to the research limitation provided in the later part of the subchapters.

Geographically, Malaysia which is strategically situated on a peninsula which engulfed between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea was historically a fundamental choice of entrepot that drew in traders and travellers from China and India especially during the 'golden age' of the Malacca Sultanate (Abraham, 1997). The trades and traders from China and India had established a significant relationship with the indigenous Malay in Malacca that evolved the existence of both Baba Nyonya and Chitties community in Malacca. During the Dutch's colony in 1511, the settlement of the Portuguese with the local women had innate the Portuguese community in Malacca.

On the other hand, the establishment of the Siamese settlement was during the invasion of Kedah by a military operation mounted by the Kingdom of Siam against the Sultanate of Kedah in 1821. The arrival of Sikhs was brought in by the British during the 19<sup>th</sup> century as political prisoners and then served as policemen for British Straits Settlement. The Orang Asli is the aborigines in the Malay land that has been socially categorized by the British to differentiate them from the majority Malays in the 1960s. The 'divide and rule' implication from the colonialism of the foreign powers had imported a number of labours force especially from China and India for the economic

interest in mining, trading and peasant that succeeded over a multi-ethnic nation in Malaysia.

The tolerance and mutual respect of the majority and minority groups within the society in Malaysia are the key factors towards political stability. The political tolerance of this diversified community has brought about several challenges towards the minorities in Malaysia's democracy. This is evident as the government have been planning and organizing various programs, motto, and slogan by means of various policies in fostering the unity and relationship among races (Gill, Talib & Jawan, 2012). For example, 1Malaysia concept with the slogan of "People First, Performance Now" was introduced by YAB Dato' Sri Mohd. Najib Tun Abdul Razak, Prime Minister with three main principles<sup>1</sup> in enhancing national unity (Department of Information Malaysia, 2016).

However, the current government only mobilizes attention to the minority groups especially during the election period due to their significant contribution in securing a number of parliamentary seats. Over the recent years, the minority groups can be observed to be actively involved in politics not only during voting but also street demonstration. For example, the participation of the indigenous (Orang Asli) group in the recent street demonstration. Furthermore, the denial of the Indian minority groups towards Abdullah Badawi's governance during the GE-12 in 2008 had gave a message of discontentment on the policies implemented which the government should look into. Besides, from the perspective of the minority groups, it is obvious that they lack of opportunity to participate in politics. One of the main reasons for this is that there is usually no political party representing these communities and taking care of their welfare. These ethnic minority groups play important political roles as they are also voters that ultimately determine the triumph of the candidates in certain Parliamentary areas. For example in the last general election, Datuk Dr Mah Hang Soon from MCA won against an Orang Asli's representative, Tony Bah contesting under the PKR ticket in the state seat, Chenderiang (N46) where there is a substantial number of the Orang Asli population.

The issues and disadvantages on social development posed a concern on the government on giving much attention to these ethnic minority groups. It could possibly due to the lack of participation in politics not only in voting but also in other democratic process. Therefore, this study embarked to examine to what extent of the participation of the ethnic minority groups in politics besides than election.

### **1.3 Statement of Problem**

Political participation of the citizens should never be neglected and must be based on voluntary action of the citizens that complements a democratic society. Over the past

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<sup>1</sup> Three basic principles of 1Malaysia: (i) principle of acceptance, (ii) principle of national spirit and (iii) principle of social justice.

decades, the marginalization of the minorities caused them to stray away from the mainstream society. On top of that, as far as the researcher is concern, there is not much study that has been done on these minority groups that leads to a gap of literature in political science. Most of the political science scholars have been focusing the limelight on the majority groups. The study on these marginalized groups is necessary as the intellectuals can disseminate the message of grievances of these minorities to the government. It can be observed that in these recent years, they started to actively participating in political activity due to unresolved issues by the authority and disagreement in political policy by the government.

The issues of seven Orang Asli's children missing from school was only getting attention from the authority after 47 days later when a decomposed body of one was found near the living quarters to look into it. Besides, the issues of deforestation that hit the indigenous community have been a threat to their traditional land which is seen to be contradicting to the Aboriginal Peoples Act 1954<sup>2</sup>. With relevant to these accumulative issues of the Orang Asli over the years, their overwhelming tolerance has backfired the government through explosive medium to render and express their opinions and satisfaction. One of the blazing nation civil society reforms was the BERSIH 4, where the Orang Asli invested and gained their first experience. The Sun Daily (2015) reported that the Orang Asli gain their first 'Bersih' experience where most of them make their way to the 34 hour long rally despite of difficulties and dire circumstances to reach the heart of Kuala Lumpur. The involvement of the Orang Asli had perplexingly amused the street protesters and even the media. Among the minority ethnic communities, the Orang Asli is the majority. Ma'rof and Sarjit (2008) claimed that the Orang Asli has been left behind and not given equal opportunity as contributors especially in the political arena. Hence, the proclamation of Orang Asli has been a "fix deposit" by the BN (National Front) government will be in catechism. Is the Orang Asli's support towards the BN government still valid for the coming General Election (GE-14)?

As the marginal politics in Peninsular Malaysia is not well-established in the field of political science, hence the issues compiled through the FGD are very helpful in explaining their political participation and at the same time, aiding in constructing the questionnaire. The FGD was conducted on the ethnic minority groups in Malacca, namely Baba Nyonya, Portuguese and Chitty as there is not many political studies have been conducted on these groups

The issues that have been faced by the minority groups in Malacca had been categorized into social, economic and community issues. The three minority groups do not have access to internet in their settlement as internet is one of the important tools for the community to access information on the current national issues. They also claimed that the government have been neglecting their culture and heritage as not much fund was spend in preserving and conserving the heritage, arts, building and settlement of the community. Besides, their cultural representation and domination by

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<sup>2</sup> An act to provide for the protection, well-being and advancement of the aboriginal peoples of Peninsular Malaysia.

Briged Seni<sup>3</sup> has caused a threat towards their cultural and heritage originality. On top of that, the state government has been claimed not providing sufficient funding for the community development program.

Why do these phenomenons happen? Is it because they do not have a particular political party established by their own community itself? If so, then who should defend the rights of their community members? Hence, these groups of minorities should be given importance by the ruling government so that they do not feel isolated. It is also evidently supported by the FGD data where by the community leaders claimed to have no representatives for the community to communicate the issues and welfares of the community with the state authority. Furthermore, the current Chief Minister of Malacca has spawned dissatisfaction among the community as he has been giving silent response to the invitation community programs.

One of the challenges faced by the Sikhs was conflict between the Gurdwara and the Granthi Sahib due to committee members' influence and their abuse of power in their relations with religious specialists (Gill & Kaur, 2008). The Gurdwaras Management Committee (GMC) had turned into political platform for some Sikhs to be engaged in, associating with Malaysian political arena (Gill & Kaur, 2008). The invasion of political influence was due to involvement of GMC members in political parties, like MIC and Malaysian Punjabi Party.

In the case of the Siamese community, the proclamations of land titles of the Siamese in Kelantan (Embong, 2001) are more alike to those of the indigenous group. It was administered under the Malay Land Reservation Act which prohibit the other "Malays" to own the land. Other than that, there are still a small number of illiterate communities from the elderly citizens who live in the rural area in Kelantan who do not possess a formal citizenship certificate. The existence of this illiterate minority groups can also argued that they have been marginalized from the social development in the aspect of education. On top of that, the education literacy is assumed to be important as part of the factor in contributing to the political participation.

Subsequently, these minority communities have been marginalized and the focus now is entirely on the majority communities which are Malays, Chinese and Indians. What about the ethnic minorities? What are their democracy rights as Malaysians? These ethnic minority groups also have the rights to join any political party and participate in the electoral process like the other majority ethnic groups as Malaysia practices democratic parliamentary system. Though the number of minorities are small in number which often to be ignored by the majority groups including political elites, their significance only be salient when it comes to ballot box. For instance, the BN Parliamentary seats for Cameron Highland (P078) was continuously being secured by the contribution of the Orang Asli voters in which the incumbents gained majority support of 3117 in 2008 and a close majority of 462 in 2013. Each of the minority votes,

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<sup>3</sup> Briged Seni or pronounce as Melaka Art Brigade is an official cultural dance and music performing group for the State Government of Melaka which choreograph all aspect of Malaysian multi-ethnic community dance.

even one vote is important in determining the majority winning in election. Therefore, this proves that the ethnic minority groups are also the significant contributors to the changes in the Malaysian political landscape.

All of these pertinent unresolved issues relating to the marginalization of the ethnic minority groups has led to the following research questions to be addressed in this study:

1. To what extent of the participation of the ethnic minority groups in politics?
2. Which political party would the ethnic minority groups most likely to vote for in the next GE-14?
3. Is there any relationship between the political participation and social factors (income and education background)?

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

##### **General Objective**

This study aims to determine the level of political participation and the support of the ethnic minority groups in Malaysia.

##### **Specific Objectives**

1. To determine the level of political participation of the ethnic minority groups.
2. To determine the support of the ethnic minority groups in the next election (GE14).
3. To determine the relationship between respondents' background (income and education) and the level of political participation.

#### **1.5 Significance of Study**

Research is the systematic investigation and study of materials and sources to establish facts and reach new conclusions. Through research findings, political scientists are able to explain an individual's or group's behaviours, including how people think and act in certain ways.

As the theme of this study focused on the political participation of the ethnic minority groups, it was therefore highlight the importance of their participation in politics in order to vocalised their rights as a citizens and give them the power to elect the leaders who can mobilized towards the communal interest. Within the principle of one people one vote, though this group of minority can be small, but in democratic electoral system of Malaysia, one vote is important in determining the elected representatives of the people. For example, P138 Kota Melaka seats where the Baba Nyonya, Portuguese,



and Chitty can be found populating in the constituency contributed to the triumphs of the DAP candidates since the last two term of elections, GE-12 and GE-13.

Eventually, the findings of this study will be beneficial to those political parties that are interested to capture the support and attention of the ethnic minority groups. Both the BN and Pakatan Harapan (PH) parties will certainly benefit from this study as it will show the inclination of all the ethnic minorities community voters' on their political interest especially on the issues raised in the survey instrument. Through this study, the above mentioned ethnic minorities' support towards the ruling government that can be influential for the next General Election (GE14). The findings obtained can be used as an initial indicator for the advancement of the ethnic minorities' well-being and welfare. With the issues faced by the ethnic minorities, this study can provide constructive recommendations to the government to be more inclusive on policy-making for the ethnic minority groups.

Furthermore, this study is expected to give an overview of the political participation of the ethnic minorities which has not been covered much by the political scientist in Malaysia. Besides, the uniqueness and findings of this study can contribute to the body of knowledge in the corresponding field of marginal politics and political participation. As many of the previous studies on political science merely focus on the majority groups, the researcher believes this study is significant in contributing to the literature of political science.

## **1.6 Political Participation**

The study of political participation is important for someone to make political decisions in appointing, upholding, and removing leaders in a democratic society especially in the case of Malaysia. It can be observed that in the last six decades, the rapid development of the study of political participation in the field of political science reflects imperative importance of citizens' involvement for democratic decision-making (van Deth, 2001). The term 'democracy' and 'political participation' is inseparable and closely associated. Verba and Nie (1972) claimed that when there is more participation in decisions, there will be more democracy. Hence, liberal democracy cannot be achieved without minimum level of political participation.

### **1.6.1 Definition**

Political participation have endless list of definitions and had been discussed by the political scientists. Milbrath and Goel (1977), for example, defined political participations as actions of the private citizens by which they seek to influence or to support government and politics. Furthermore another scholar, Verba and Nie (1972) defined political participation as activities by private citizens that are more or less directly that intent on influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take.

Huntington and Nelson (1976:3) wrote, “participation may be individual or collective, organized or spontaneous, sustained or sporadic, peaceful or violent, legal or illegal, effective or ineffective”. In contrast and compare, political participation is not just merely on electoral processes such as voting, but also varies across a wide spectrum.

Freedman (2000) discussed in his book on four types of political behaviors namely voting, interest-group activity, community advocacy and political education, and individual networking. He mentioned that political participation is the foundation that is instilled in every collective organization or action. Participation can occur when there is a symbiotic form of activity and actions that require individuals to opt to participate which concerned with the group behavior as a whole.

Amongst of these definitions, scholars had explore on the extent of political participation, the demographic background of the political participants and the reason of people participating. Milbrath (1965) outlined a hierarchy of political involvement of the vast majority of American citizens were passive or engaged in ‘spectator activities’ including voting, engaging in political discussion, or wearing a political badge. The outcome of a small group of the citizens were involved in both low-cost and high-cost activities such as petition of party funds or run the candidacy seat in an election. Hence, Verba and Nie (1972) claimed that the interaction of the community and the political system will increase the level of participation.

It can also be argued that there is a relationship between the political participation and democracy stability. Kornhauser (1959) claimed that the lack of contacts and cohesion provided by groups for the community will leave the individual in a state of apathy and discontent. Stein (1960) debated that the erosion of face-to-face interaction between the groups of political elite and the community will be a threat for a democratic society.

One of the prominent political thought scientist, Bachrach (1967) stated: “I believe that a theory of democracy should be based upon the following assumptions and principles: the majority of individuals stand to gain in self-esteem and growth toward a fuller affirmation of their personalities by participating more actively in meaningful community decisions”. Walker (1966) also debated that a citizen who took part in the society affairs will develop a great sense of social responsibility and widens his life perspectives.

Therefore, based on my understanding, political participation associates with people who play the role of citizens that involves in a voluntary action in taking part in activities that concerns with the government and politics in a broader sense - political system. In simplest form, it is an action that can leverage the government-decision making.

The studies of political participation have evolved various theories in the field of political science. Various frameworks on the political participation had been adopted

with the reference to Milbrath (1965). Milbrath had emphasized on few important elements in exploring the political participation such as:

- a. Position hold in a party
- b. Candidacy for any position in the party
- c. Attend party's strategic planning meeting
- d. Membership in any political party
- e. Involvement in party campaign
- f. Attend meeting or gathering of a party
- g. Make donations to the political party or leader
- h. Keeping contact with political leader
- i. Wear badge or sticker or place the flag of a party on vehicle
- j. Discuss about polling
- k. Voting
- l. Discuss about political affairs

With the elements mentioned above, Milbrath argued that political participation is not just merely on voting. Therefore, the level of political participation can be measured and evaluated based on three levels which is low, medium and high level.

There are several important factors that can explain the patterns of political participation such as social factors, political institution, political socialization, acculturation, and political efficacy. However, I would limit myself in examining the social factors of the ethnic minority groups in explaining their political participation. The rest of the factors shall be included in the literature review later part.

### **1.6.2 Social Factors and Political Participation**

The elements of social factors of an individual include education, occupation, race, religion, sex, mobility and residence. There are quite of research conducted has proven that most of these social class variables correlate to some degree with participation (Encyclopedia.com, 1968). In brief, political participation tends to be higher among the well-educated, higher income groups and professional occupational members, the middle-aged, the dominant ethnic and religious groups, urban community and so on (Encyclopedia.com, 1968). However, the correlations of these variables and political participation can be unstable and low and that may vary from one cultural – political context to another. On the other hand, the most possible variables are the factor of education and employment in which it exist evidently among the groups that could possibly leads towards their particular behavior in politics.

Hence, the focus in this study will only emphasize in examining the correlations between participation with education and socioeconomic status which has been proven strongly correlated. Hence, in the context of ethnic minority in Malaysia, do these variables of education and socioeconomic status show any correlation to the political participation?



There was numerous studies by the past scholars that proven the relationship of social-class-based approaches and the immigrant political participation in evaluating the level of participation and influence in the political arena. The employment of Marxist framework had determined how capitalism's need for cheap labor, a pull factor in immigration, has resulted in the creation of an underclass made up of marginalized newcomers (Castles & Kosack, 1973; Cerny, 1982; Heisler & Heisler, 1986). Hence, in the perspective of Malaysia, the economic and political policy implemented by the British had reacted to development imbalance between the rural and the urban area that further executed economic disparity among the ethnic groups (Shamsul, 2008).

Cerny (1982) argued that the immigrant participation as part of a process whereby indigenous and foreign laborers can find common ground based on their similar class interests. Thus, the approaches of ethnicity and immigrant status had cause the state to split the working class into fragmented groups. In the context of Malaysia, the formation of working class happened among the immigrants that settled down in Malaya long time ago. For instance, the acculturated groups of Baba Nyonya, Portuguese and Chitty that formed new ethnic minority groups could have possibly influence on their participation in politics.

In the perspective of a non-Marxist, Horton (1992) and Louise Lamphere (1992) debated that economic and demographic restructuring process affected the political relationship between newcomers and established residents. Horton claimed that the political incorporation of the Chinese-American community in Monterey Park, California was influenced by the existing institutional structures that were conducive enough to encourage the participation of the Chinese. In this case, there is another angle in evaluating the political participation on the existing institutional structure which will be the research limitation as the researcher will only focus on the education and socio-economic status in this study.

Huntington (1991) in his research claimed that there was existing relationship between the economic growth and democratization. From the findings of his study, it was found that country with secondary higher income is moving towards a democratic society, while country with a high income has succeeded in exercising the democratic system. Viewing from the Malaysia perspective where by Malaysia consider themselves as a developing country with stable economic growth, thus, it is very interesting to measure the political participation among their people. On top of that, it is even more interesting to examine the minority groups in terms of their political participation so that we could evaluate the Huntington's theory for future study.

Milbrath (1965) claimed that those who are actively involved in community affairs are most likely to be politically active. Bobo & Gilliam (1990) proved that the relationship of race and sociopolitical participation through the blacks' participation was magnified via group consciousness even they are in the lower class of socioeconomic status. In this case, both the lower and upper class have potential in participating in politics. But what about the ethnic minority groups in Malaysia who has been marginalized from the socio-economic development?

Based on a study by Freedman (2000), there is a relationship between socioeconomic status and political participation whereby the well-off Chinese communities were participating actively. Like other immigrants groups, the ethnic minorities expect that participation will improve their economic opportunity and also towards the next generation. His study basically hypothesis that the Chinese minorities participate in politics through the mobilization efforts of community leaders when there are political, economic and social incentives to do so (Freedman, 2000). He briefed that there is a need of electoral incentives to support the political elites to disseminate their propaganda to the Chinese community. Furthermore, he summarizes that the participation will be at greater rates if the participants have higher levels of income and education.

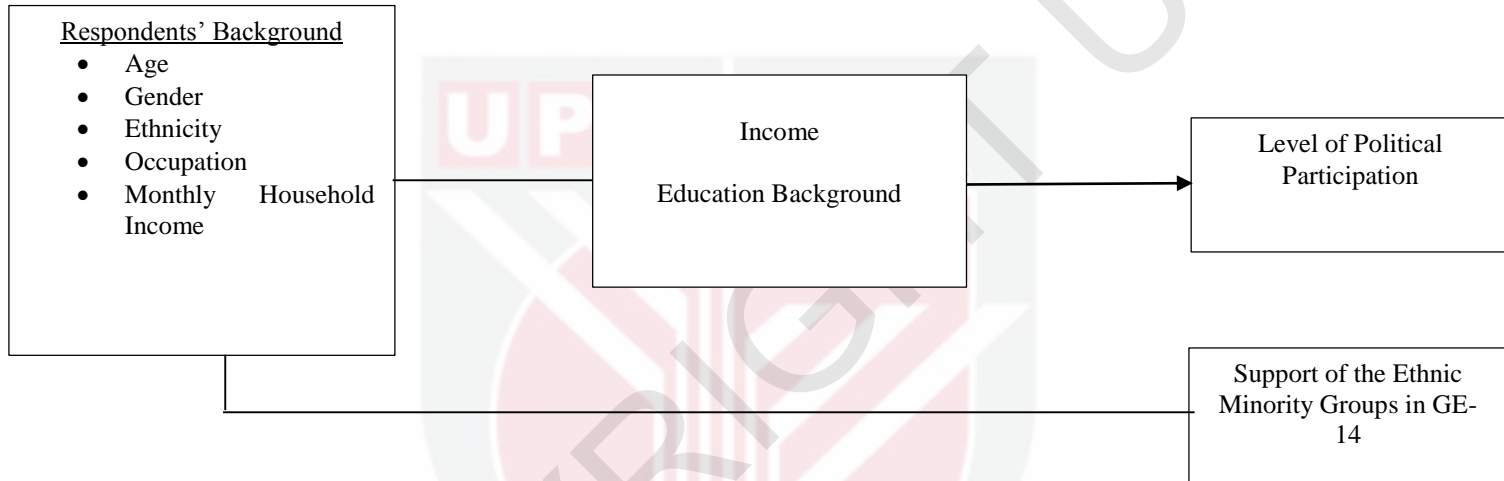
However if the dominant groups continue in viewing them as outsiders, the state institutions and policies will remain affecting this minority groups. In short, this phenomena will eventually influence on the allocation of resources and values that impact their status in relation to the dominant group. Therefore, this study will determine the social factors include the income and education background of the ethnic minorities in this study. What is the relationship of the income and education background on the level of political participation of the ethnic minority groups?

### **1.7 Research Conceptual Framework**

This study aims to determine the level of political participation. The level of political participation will be measured from the voting status in GE-13, involvement in political activities, presence in election activities and participation in political party (Milbrath, 1965). Besides, the study will determine the support of the ethnic minority groups for the upcoming GE-14 as there are many unresolved issues that has not been taken care by the current ruling party.

The demographic background of the respondents which includes the ethnicity, age, education, occupation and income are the antecedent variable. From the theoretical framework, the social factors such as income and education level will be used to examine the relationship with the political participation of the respondents.

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**



## 1.8 Terminology Definition

Terminology is included in this study which must be defined conceptually and operationally. Below are the terms to be used in this study.

### **Ethnic Minority**

Conceptual definition: A sociologist, Louis Wirth (1945) defined minority groups as a group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination.

Operational definition: The targeted respondents were from the ethnic minorities, namely Baba Nyonya, Portuguese, Chitty, Orang Asli, Sikh, and Siamese.

### **Political Participation**

Conceptual definition: Verba and Nie (1972) defined political participation as activities by private citizens that are more or less directly that intent on influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take.

Operational definition: The researcher will explore on the political participation that being considered in this study in party membership, position in political party, choice of party selection, involvement in political activities, and presence in election political activities.

## 1.9 Research Limitation

The target respondents for this research were the ethnic minority groups in Peninsular Malaysia namely the Baba Nyonya, Chitty, Portuguese, Sikh, Orang Asli and Siamese communities. Hence, the states selected for this research were Melaka, Selangor and Kedah in which the ethnic minority groups are well represented in Peninsular Malaysia. Hence, this study is limited to generalization of the findings on all the ethnic minorities groups in Malaysia.

The respondents will be selected based on purposive sampling. This type of sampling method is used because of the small number of the minorities' population scattered across Peninsular Malaysia. Therefore, the number of sampling is randomly selected from the community in the study location.

Besides, this study also faces challenges in determining the accuracy of the data collected based on the response of the respondents. Respondents may be dishonest or impatient in answering the questionnaires rationalizing that some of the data collected might not be reliable.

### **1.10 Chapter Organization**

In general, this chapter begins with the brief introduction and background of the study. The current issues faced by the ethnic minority groups were highlighted to be addressed in determining their political participation as part of the principles of democracy. The research objectives were established in answering the research questions followed by the significance of this study. Furthermore, this chapter also presented the theoretical framework that constructs the conceptual framework with a more understanding of terminology definition that will be used in this thesis.

After residing on the main themes of the study, it is appropriate that the following chapter focuses on the literature review in understanding political science, apprehension on the ethnic minority groups who are the study's subjects, ethnic factors in Malaysia politics and the minority issues. Next, the thesis will explain on the research methodology applied in Chapter 3 and discusses on the findings of the survey in Chapter 4. Lastly, the thesis will end with conclusion, implication from the research findings and constructive suggestions recommended for future study.

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