



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**CIVIC PARTICIPATION AS MEDIATING VARIABLE BETWEEN
RELATIONSHIP OF LIFESTYLES, DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT AND
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AMONG YOUTHS IN MALAYSIA**

LAI CHE CHING @ ABD LATIF

FBMK 2020 28



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By

LAI CHE CHING @ ABD LATIF

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

December 2019

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia
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December 2019

Chairman : Associate Professor Hamisah Binti Hasan, PhD
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The youth political participation has been on the declining trend in most democratic countries. However, studies have shown that youth political participation has strong link with their media usage. In addition, youth were known as being the heavy users of the digital media. Studies have also shown that civic participation among the youth was positively linked to political participation. The theoretical underpinning of the study was the Uses and Gratification theory (U&G) which suggested that gratification obtained, and media usage were two variables that were related. Thus, this study was conducted with the aims to examine the lifestyles, digital engagement, civic participation and political participation of youth in Malaysia. The study was also conducted to identify if civic participation mediates these relationships between lifestyles and political participation and digital engagement and civic participation. A quantitative survey method was conducted on 5237 respondents that were chosen through a stratified random sampling technique. These were youth aged between 15 to 25 years old. A set of questionnaires were used as the instrument for data collection. The lifestyles variable was measured through four domains namely; the media usage, religious and community services, recreation and vocational activities, and high-brow culture. The digital engagement measured the level of digital engagement. While the civic participation and political participation measured the activities that they were involved related to the variables. The data obtained for the study was analysed using descriptive analysis of frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. Linear regression analysis was used for the hypotheses testing while PROCESS mediation analysis was used to

explain the mediation. The finding shows that the respondents were spending their leisure activities digitally engaged. Thus, suggesting a media-oriented lifestyle yet, they were only engaged at the basic level of the Internet usage, similarly with the digital engagement which was more on basic digital engagement as oppose to the advance digital engagement. The political participation of youth was low while the civic participation was slightly better. The relationships between the independent and dependent variables were positive, significant but at the moderate level. The civic participation of youth was found to mediate the relationships between the lifestyles of youth and digital engagement. Similarly, the civic participation also mediates the relationships between digital engagement and political participation. In terms of contribution to the body of knowledge, new approach for the U&G theory need to be considered in light with the interactivity feature offered by the media technology. The called for the theory to expand and include a broader outcome variable was supported. Newer measurement needs to be developed to capture the essence of youth consumption of the newer media in relations to their lifestyles as well as their civic and political participations. There were four major philosophical issues that warrant further investigation from the findings namely; the issues of preparedness of youth in embracing the advance level of digital engagement that will assist them for better political participation, the role of civic participation should be enhanced to induce better political participation; the lifestyles of youth is proven to be a predictor for youth political participation and finally, the implication of a serious generational gap between the youth and the older generation in the community.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PENYERTAAN SIVIK SEBAGAI ANGKUBAH MEDIASI ANTARA
HUBUNGAN GAYA HIDUP, KETERANGKUMAN DIGITAL DAN
PENYERTAAN POLITIK DALAM KALANGAN BELIA DI MALAYSIA**

Oleh

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Penyertaan politik dalam kalangan belia di kebanyakan negara demokrasi menunjukkan kecenderungan menurun. Walau bagaimanapun, kajian menunjukkan penyertaan politik belia mempunyai hubungan kuat dengan penggunaan media. Tambahan pula, belia dilihat sebagai pengguna tegar media digital. Kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa penyertaan sivik dalam kalangan belia mempunyai hubungan yang positif dengan penyertaan politik. Kajian ini didasari oleh teori kepenggunaan dan kepuasan (U&G) yang mencadangkan kepuasan yang diperolehi dan penggunaan media adalah dua pembolehubah yang berkaitan. Justeru, kajian ini dijalankan dengan tujuan untuk mengenalpasti gaya hidup, keterangkuman digital, penyertaan sivik dan penyertaan politik dalam kalangan belia. Kajian ini juga dijalankan untuk mengenalpasti sama ada penyertaan sivik adalah pengantara diantara hubungan gaya hidup dengan penyertaan politik serta pengantara diantara keterangkuman digital dengan penyertaan politik dalam kalangan belia. Satu tinjauan kuantitatif yang melibatkan 5237 orang responden yang dipilih secara persampelan rawak berlapis telah dijalankan. Responden adalah dalam kalangan belia yang berusia 15 – 25 tahun. Borang soal-selidik telah digunakan sebagai instrument untuk mengutip data. Pembolehubah gaya hidup diukur melalui empat domain; penggunaan media, aktiviti agama dan khidmat komuniti, aktiviti rekreasi dan vokasional; dan, budaya kelas tinggi. Keterangkuman digital diukur melalui tahap keterangkuman. Manakala penyertaan sivik dan penyertaan politik diukur melalui aktiviti yang berkaitan dengan pembolehubah tersebut. Data telah dianalisis menggunakan pengukuran deskriptif seperti

kekerapan, peratusan, purata dan sisihan piawai. Analisis regresi linear digunakan untuk menguji hipotesis manakala PROCESS pengantara digunakan untuk menerangkan model mediasi. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan responden lebih gemar menggunakan media digital dalam waktu senggang mereka. Justeru, menunjukkan gaya hidup belia adalah berorientasikan penggunaan media. Walau bagaimanapun, penggunaan media tersebut hanya terhad kepada penggunaan asas sahaja. Keterangkuman digital belia juga lebih tertumpu kepada tahap asas sahaja. Penyertaan politik dalam kalangan belia adalah rendah, tetapi penyertaan sivik adalah lebih baik berbanding penyertaan politik. Hubungan antara pembolehubah bebas dan bersandar adalah signifikan, positif tetapi pada tahap sederhana. Penyertaan sivik dalam kalangan belia didapati menjadi pengantara dalam hubungan antara gaya hidup dan keterangkuman digital serta penyertaan sivik juga adalah pengantara antara hubungan keterangkuman digital dengan penyertaan politik. Dari aspek sumbangan terhadap ilmu, kajian ini menyumbangkan pendekatan baharu kepada Teori U&G dengan mengambil kira sifat interaktif dalam media digital. Teori ini juga perlu diperluaskan dengan mempertimbangkan penglibatan pembolehubah baharu. Alat pengukuran baharu perlu dibangunkan bagi menilai penggunaan media baharu dalam kalangan belia berdasarkan kepada gaya hidup serta penyertaan sivik dan politik mereka. Terdapat empat isu falsafah yang diketengahkan kajian ini; pertama, isu ketersediaan belia dalam keterangkuman digital tahap tinggi yang akhirnya boleh membantu dalam peningkatan penyertaan politik; kedua, peranan penyertaan sivik perlu dipertingkatkan untuk meningkatkan juga penyertaan politik; ketiga, gaya hidup belia dapat dibuktikan sebagai pembolehubah bebas dalam penyertaan politik belia; dan yang terakhir ialah implikasi jurang generasi yang wujud dalam komuniti terhadap penyertaan politik belia.

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To my wife – Lyn Hasan, daughters – Awatif and Athirah, and son- Aryan, Thanks for understanding.

The thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows;

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The main focus of the thesis was to examine the relationships between the lifestyles, digital engagement, civic participation and political participation among the youth in Malaysia. The study was also conducted to identify if the variable civic participation mediates the relationships between lifestyles and political participation. While there were researches conducted on digital engagements, civic and political participation among youth such as that by Valenzuela, Park & Kee, (2009), Zhang, Seltz & Richard 2013) and Xenos, Vronen & Loader (2014) yet, the studies have not included the lifestyles of youth as one of the variables to be investigated particularly in the realm of digital engagement and political participation. Thus, showing an obvious gap in studies related to the youth because this younger generation who were termed as the digital natives by Prensky (2001, 2008) have their own set of lifestyles. In addition, m of the previous research on the subject of digital engagement and political participation showed a mixed result which can be pointed to some methodological problem (Collin, 2008 & Leyva, 2016).

This chapter provides the contextual information of the study on the lifestyles, digital engagement, civic and political participation among the youth in Malaysia. As an introductory chapter it will begin with the overview of the basic premise of youth who are generally accepted as those who were born and grew up with the digital and information technology. Being associated with the technology not only limit the researchers that discussed the usage of technology but also the use of technology in shaping the lifestyles of youth. This chapter will also discuss the statement of the research problem that leads to the general and specific research objectives of the study. This will then continue with the discussion of the significance of the study that were related to both the theoretical and practical implication. The chapter will end with the explanation on the scope of the study as well as brief explanation on the keywords used in this research.

Background of the Study

Most studies about youth and digital media had focused on digital media empowerment by youth, particularly in the context of civic and political participation (Kirby et al., 2003, Reimer, 2003; Valenzuela, Park & Kee, 2009; Zhang, Seltz & Richard, 2013; Xenos, Vronen & Loader, 2014).

These studies have also ignore to examine the lifestyles of youth as one of the variables that were investigated, although of youth were indeed worthy of investigation. In relation to this, Prensky (2001, 2008) argued that today's youth are considered as digital natives and as digital natives, they offer promises that were different from the generation before them. This generation were also seen as disinterested and were living in their own world. Hence it was then logical to include lifestyles as one of the variables to be explored assuming that the lifestyles of youth might be different from the generation before them.

Therefore, the study aims to examine the lifestyles of youth albeit the fact that lifestyles and media usage were not entirely a new phenomenon yet, the study aims to examine from the context of Malaysia with the guided of the Uses and Gratification theory. Eastman (1979) was one of the earliest scholars who ventures into studying lifestyles. However, studies that were conducted to identify the relationships between lifestyles and media usage have been developing ever since. In fact, Fariza Md Sham et al., (2015), conducted a study examining lifestyles and individual behaviour and explained that lifestyles were related to social interaction, consumption and entertainment. Elizabeth Wong et al., (2018) has also conducted a study on lifestyles of youth in Malaysia. Even though, her focused was on lifestyles and job preferences among youth in Malaysia, her study found that the youth, in terms of their lifestyles were digitally engaged.

Thus, it is therefore, worth noting that there was a merit on the need to include youth lifestyles in the equation of the relationships of the variable in the study particularly due to the fact that youth today are the heavy users of the digital technology.

Lifestyles as argued by Baker (1999), Miles (2000) and Smith (2011) have fluid relationships with individual consumption practices. It was defined as the outward expression of individuals' cultural identities (Miles, 2000). Thus, it was another logical reason to investigate youth lifestyles particularly with regards to the general perception that youth today were 'consuming' information technology differently from the older generation.

Steele and Browne (1995) argued that youths' sense of self shapes their interaction with the media, and those encounters in turn shape their sense of themselves in the on-going process of cultural production and reproduction. While Smith (2011) cited Bourdieu's concept of "cultural capital" and "taste" to establish the link that reflected the role of culture in maintaining distinctions of class, where class, in turn is understood

to be “defined by consumption”. Thus, Smith (2011) in her study operationalised cultural capital of respondents as an assessment of their living conditions, access to media and ICTs and their preferences or value judgement. This implies that lifestyles are indeed an essential variable in measuring youth usage of the internet.

While the existing literature were overwhelming in support of the importance of lifestyles as the variables in segmenting people’s media behaviour yet, there is still some issues that are worth noting regarding lifestyles as variables. The first issue is regarding the conceptualizing and operationalizing of lifestyles. Consumer behaviour scholars often interchange the definition of attitude and behaviour in operationalizing lifestyles. Therefore, studying lifestyles must involve attitude and behaviour (Hartmann, 1999). Veal (1993) combined activities, behaviours, values and attitudes in his construct of lifestyles. Salama (2007) operationalized lifestyles as work based, attitude based, and status based. However, Bourdieu (1984) argued that lifestyles is a system of classifies and classifying practices as the expression of identity and values.

A closer look would, however, shows the difference between behaviour and attitude. While attitude represented cognitive (psychographics) and reflected on mental state instead of behaviour, youth lifestyles reflected behavioural. However, the simplicity in bridging between mental state and expression of behaviour is rather dull, as there were moderating factors between mental state and behaviour, and this can be seen from the way other disciplines were conceptualizing and operationalising lifestyles in more straightforward affairs. The discipline of health, for instance, defined lifestyles as a reflection of behaviour. Laska et al., (2009) in studying lifestyles and health risks measured the lifestyles based on behavioural pattern of the respondents such as physical activities, dietary intake, stress management as well as alcohol and tobacco consumptions. The straightforward nature in measuring lifestyles based on behaviour was more acceptable than to include attitudes.

Carla Seddon (2011) offers similar definition of lifestyles, whereby she defined lifestyles as a way of living, of the things that a particular person or group of people usually do. Lifestyles were based on individual choices, characteristics, personal preferences and circumstances and this was indeed a clear reflection of behaviour. In their free leisure time, many choose to engage in the arts and culture, read a book, visit the cinema, go on holiday and participate in sporting activities. Social participation includes looking after the family or home and care giving; interpersonal roles of friend and family member; life roles such as

student, worker and volunteer; and community roles such as participant in religious, activity based, or voluntary help organisations. Thus, for this study lifestyles of youth were measured based on their behaviour which was divided into four domains such as media consumption domain, community involvement domain, vocational domain and highbrow culture domain.

The digital native reliance on technology was proven in the finding of the National Youth Survey 2008 conducted by Merdeka centre that shows, 96% of the youth interviewed owned a mobile phone, an indicator of the youth reliance on the communication technology. However, the finding from the same survey vindicated the general assumptions about youth today that are disintegrated with the mainstream society. The study also shows that 80% of the youth did not join any form of organization (volunteering organization). The remaining 20% joined non-political organizations such as sports, recreational, religious or cultural group. On the other hand, the advancement of information and communication technology especially the Internet has managed to attract the attention of scholars who believes that the Internet was a powerful tool to engage the youth to participate in political as well as civic movement. Ward (2011) argued that online interest among youth will increased rates of traditional participation and website hold the potential for spaces of interactivity and discussion. Local scholars also share the same believes that the internet is a powerful platform to engage the youth. (Joorabchi, Hassan & Osman, 2013; Faradillah & Rahim, 2015).

Long before the above national survey, a study by Abdul Mua'ti & Muhammad Fauzi (2008) conducted in 2004 has already argued that SMS/MMS and Internet were used by almost all the political parties in Malaysia to attract the younger generation. They cited the argument put forward by Dato' Azalina Othman Said "that SMS, MMS and Internet were used by her wing mainly to target the young voters, especially the same age group with the Putri's members" (p.61).

While digital media offer promises to empower youth participation, research shows mixed results on this. Xenos, Vronen & Loarder (2014) in their studies on social media use and political participation suggested a strong and positive relationship between the two across all three most advance democratic countries and suggested that social media may be helping to soften traditional patterns of political inequality (p.152). Bode (2012), Valenzuela, Park & Kee (2009), Zhang, Seltzer & Bichard (2013) also suggested that there were positive relationships between social media use and youth political participation. Other studies reported positive relationships between social media use and political engagement but limiting those relationships to specific kinds of social media use or

a circumscribed set of engagement outcomes (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012; Vitak et al., 2011). These studies suggested that the spread of social media among young people and the broader public has had salutary effects on political engagement, but at the same time suggested that the relationship between social media use and engagement may be limited to individuals who would likely be relatively engaged without social media.

However, there were other studies suggesting that there was a very weak relationship between social media use and political engagement, or none at all (Baumgartner & Morris, 2009; Dimitrova & Bystrom, 2013). Baumgartner and Morris (2009), for instance, found small and inconsistent effects of social networking site use on a range of engagement outcomes in their study of social networking site use during the 2008 Iowa caucuses, ultimately concluding that 'the hyperbole surrounding new Web development as they relate to citizenship may be just that – hype' (p. 38). In another survey namely, "the Flash Euro barometer 375" that was conducted to determine the European youth intention to vote in the EU Election 2014. The findings was compared to the a similar survey conducted in 2011 and it showed a decrease in participation such as voting in an election. Altogether, 62% of youth surveyed in 2011 indicated that they have voted, but in 2014 only 56% indicated that they have participated in the election. Most of the respondents (79%) aged between 15 – 30 years old indicated that they will not consider standing as an election candidate.

Among the reason given for this limited and weak relationship between internet usage to that of the civic as well as political participation were the fact that the social network site (SNS) or the new media were still at the infancy level. However, with reference to the methodology used, it does not measure the variable that the study aimed to measure. Apart from methodological problem, Leyva (2016) also argued that investigating internet usage and political participation among the youth was indeed a very complex situation and involved intertwined factors to determine the direct relationship.

Other issues found in the discourse of information technology and youth participation was the importance of youth participation. While some might question as to the reason most government were focusing on their efforts and energy as well as allocating huge sums of money in the name of increasing youth participation, Farthing (2012) however, argued that there is a typology of four ideal-type of justification being developed. First, it suggests that participation could be desirable for its rights fulfilling capacities. Second its ability to empower young people, third to achieve efficiency in services and finally to support youth development.

On the contrary, there is also a need to acknowledge the fact that there was always critique about youth participation. In relation to that, it is interesting to draw on Farthing's (2012) argument that there were three types of critique on youth participation. "A radical critique suggests participation is an undesirable form of social control; a conservative critique suggests it is ill-advised, and; a secular critique that suggests that participation is an unwarranted, obfuscated missionary tendency" (p.72).

However, the study was not conducted about the youth participation per se but it was the surrounding context that shaped youth participation, particularly, the advancement of information and communication technology or simply the Internet. As argued by Bennett, Freelon and Weels (2010) that there was evidence that sweeping social changes in the experiences of youth that have the combination of the new information and communication technologies to change the ways in which young citizens tune in, engage, organize, and act (p.396).

Statement of the problem

The main problem of this thesis is the worrying trend of declining and disinterested political participation among youth around countries that practiced democracy in the world. This is a global phenomenon and older studies such as by Blais & Dobrzynska (1998), Franklin (2002), Putnam (2000) have documented this trend. Ingelhart & Welzel (2005) have also found that the level of youth political participation in activities such as petitions, boycotts and demonstration have been on the declining trend in the UK and the Germany.

In another survey (Flash Euro barometer 375) to determine the European youth intention to vote in the EU Election 2014 that was compared to the same survey conducted in 2011, showed a decrease in participation (voting in an election). 62% of youth surveyed in 2011 indicated that they have voted, but in 2014 only 56% indicated that they have participated in the election. Majority of the respondent (79%) will not consider standing as an election candidate.

Evidence of youth disengagement – often measured in terms of registration, voter turnout and party membership have been well documented in many parts of the world including the South East Asia region. In Malaysia for example, youth's political participation was ranked in the bottom five among the 51 Commonwealth countries (*Commonwealth Youth Programme Report, 2013*). According to the

Statistical Department of Malaysia, out of the 13.4 million youths in the country, 3.9 million (2007) and 2.9 million (2009) did not register as voters at the eligibility age of 21 years old. Study conducted by the Institute of Youth Research (IYRES) in developing the Malaysian youth index in 2015 has also found that political socialization or political participation among youth in Malaysia was very low or at the unsatisfactory level of 45.82% based on the definition given by IYRES. Thus, implying the need for constructive effort to increase the interest of youth to be more active in political participation.

In an earlier study conducted by Montgomery, Robbles & Larson (2004), it was reported that youth aged between 15 to 25 years old normally formed one of the largest groups in any society and were the heavy users of internet. This fit the bill of the digital natives, a term coined by Marc Prensky (2001) indicating a generation who were born during the digital technology era and relied heavily on technology in their daily activities. Prensky described the generation of young people born since 1980 as “digital natives” because he perceived it as an innate confidence in using new technologies such as the Internet, videogames, mobile telephone and “all the other toys and tools of the digital age” (Prensky, 2001, p. 1). Appropriately as the uses and gratification theory suggested the higher the uses of the media, the more gratified one would feel. Similarly, as stated by Stacks and Salwen (2009) that people use the media in seeking for gratification.

Digital technology was not merely part of their everyday lives yet, as Prensky argued technology was essential to these young people's existence. It was as though they were now being constantly “surrounded” and “immersed” by these new technologies in ways that older generations were not. Prensky also argued that this permanent state of technological immersion and dependence was encapsulated in the lifestyles of upcoming generations of “i-kids” (Prensky, 2008), who remain “plugged into” portable, personalised devices such as mobile telephones, mp3 players and handheld games consoles. Prensky's writing typifies a burgeoning body of recent commentary that has sought to document the distinct technological cultures and lifestyles of emerging generations of young people. Youth are more than just consumers of digital content however, they are also active participants and creators of this new media culture, developing content themselves, designing personal websites, and launching their own online enterprises. The proliferation of youth-created Web pages and message-board postings, and the popularity of instant messaging among young people all contribute to the booming use of the digital media for communication among youth (Montgomery, Robbles & Larson, 2004).

Thus, the access to the Internet have revived the interest among researchers on youth political participation in the western democratic countries (Kirby et al., 2003, Reimer, 2003). There has also been an increasing interest in using the Internet to promote youth participation in democracy (Coleman and Rowe 2005), and, in Australia, most state governments with a youth portfolio and youth-serving non-government organisations (NGOs) have integrated the Internet into their policies and strategies for youth engagement.

Even though there was always an enthusiasm among scholars to study on the potential impact of general Internet use on political and civic engagement among the youth, yet past and current research have shown an inconclusive and mix results (Xenos, Vronen & Loader, 2014). Bode (2012), Valenzuela, Park & Lee (2009) and Zhang, Seltz & Richard (2013) found that there was a positive relationship between social media and various indicators of political engagement. Gil de Zuniga et al., (2012) and Vitals et al., (2011) have found positive relationship with limitation on certain aspect of social media use. On the extreme right of the continuum Baumgartner & Morris (2009), Dimitroff & Bystrom (2013) found weak or no relationship at all.

This is indeed consistent with Xenos, Vronen & Loader, (2014) who suggested that future research should be demonstrating the importance of attending to variables particularly relevant to young people, such as political socialization and newly emerging norms of citizenship, in all areas of research on digital media and citizenship (p.164). Emerging norms of citizenship could be loosely translated in the context of this research as the youth lifestyles. Moreover, as argued by Montgomery, Robbles & Larson (2004) the growth of the new technology such as Internet has dramatically altered the ways in which individual use the media, and youth are at the forefront of these changes.

However, there were limited studies conducted on the youth lifestyles as variable even though research on lifestyles and media usage has been introduced way back in 1979 by Eastman. Focusing on youth was due to the fact that they were the heavy users and early adopters of new media (Krueger, 2002). They frequently embraced the kind of participatory culture that can be facilitated by new media and were the most likely to use the Internet for entertainment and socializing. As shown from a study by Jones & Fox (2009), 43% of those aged between 18–32 read blogs, 20% created blogs, and 67% used social networking sites. Bennett, Freelon and Weels (2010) also believed that youth heavy usage of the internet provides evidence of sweeping social changes in youth that were manifested in their lifestyles.

In the context of Malaysia, recent survey shows that 25 million of Malaysian have accessed to the Internet. Statistic has also shown that the age groups of 16 – 24 years old were the highest group who has access (73%) to the Internet. While those in the age group of 23 -34 years old, there were 63% who were using the internet (www.statista.com, Dec 8, 2018). This is consistent with the finding of the National Youth Survey in 2008 conducted by Merdeka centre whereby, 96% of the youth interviewed owned a mobile phone. Thus, can lifestyles be used as one of the predictors to youth political participation like that of the youth internet used?

From the same survey above, there is another pertinent issue that can be derived from the finding. It showed 80% of the youth did not join any form of organizations (civic, volunteering organization). While the remaining 20% joined non-political organizations such as sports, recreational, religious or cultural group. This perhaps explain the trend of declining political participation among the youth, because Putnam (1993, 2000) breakthrough findings shows that there was a direct positive association between civic participation and democracy or political participation. Studies by Pascke, Kenski, Romer and Jamieson (2006) further strengthen Putnam's findings that civic activity is positively associated with political awareness that led to political participation.

The above discussion has outlined three variables that could predict youth political participation. Previous studies have shown how civic engagements or participation among the youth could led to increase political participation. It has also shown how the use of internet among the youth has positive relationship with youth political participation, however there were other instances whereby the results are mixed, thus there are suggestion to include other variables that are close to the youth such as their lifestyle to be further investigated.

Since, only civic participation has been proven to have positive relationship with political participation, it would be interesting to examine on the relationship between civic participation among the youth in Malaysia and identify if the variable can mediate the relationships between youth lifestyle and Internet use with youth political participation. As argued from the perspective of uses and gratification, would the level of digital engagement contribute to the civic and political participation? Hossain (2019) reported that when respondents used the new media, they do so to seek various gratifications to fulfil their needs and wants. He has also shown that the greater the uses gratification, the greater the usage intention. Thus, suggesting that U&G theory is significant particularly in social interaction, passing time, enjoyment

and self-presentation. Therefore, this study aims to answer the following research questions; what is the relationship between lifestyles, level of digital engagement, civic participation and political participation? The study was conducted to answer the following research questions;

- 1) What are the lifestyles of youth in Malaysia?
- 2) What is the digital engagement of youth in Malaysia?
- 3) What is the civic participation among youth in Malaysia?
- 4) What is the political participation of youth in Malaysia?
- 5) What is the relationship between youth lifestyles to that of political participation of youth in Malaysia?
- 6) What is the relationship between lifestyles to that of civic participation of youth in Malaysia?
- 7) What is the relationship between the digital engagement with the political participation of youth in Malaysia?
- 8) What is the relationship between the digital engagement with civic participation of youth in Malaysia?
- 9) What is the relationship between civic participation with political participation of youth in Malaysia?
- 10) Does civic participation mediate the relationships between lifestyle and political participation?
- 11) Does civic participation mediate the relationship between digital engagement and political participation?

Objectives of Study

General objective

The general objective of the study was to examine the lifestyles, level of digital engagement, civic and political participation of youth in Malaysia. The study also examined the mediating role of civic participation between the relationship of lifestyles with political participation, and the relationship between level of digital engagement and political participation.

Specific Objectives

Specifically, the study was conducted to examine the following objectives;

1. To examine the lifestyles of youth in Malaysia.
2. To examine the digital engagement of youth in Malaysia.
3. To examine the civic participation of youth in Malaysia

4. To examine the political participation of youth in Malaysia
5. To identify the relationships between the lifestyles to that of political participation of youth in Malaysia
6. To identify the relationships between the lifestyles with the civic participation of youth in Malaysia
7. To identify the relationship between digital engagement with the political participation of youth in Malaysia.
8. To identify the relationship between digital engagement with the civic participation of youth in Malaysia
9. To identify the relationship between civic participation with the political participation of youth in Malaysia
10. To examine the mediating roles of civic participation between the relationships of lifestyles and political participation of youth in Malaysia.
11. To examine the mediating roles of civic participation between the relationships of digital engagement and political participation of youth in Malaysia.

Significance of Study

Theoretical significance

There was a general assumption that the uses and gratification theory were introduced to explain the usage of the media and its relationship to gratify the users as well as explaining the reasons for the media usage. That was the initial idea of the theory, this study will bring in fresher concept to the theory, for Shah, Kwak & Holbert (2001) have argued that there were obvious generational differences of using the media. The Generation X & Y were the Internet savvy generation however, the theory was introduced to the usage of traditional media namely television usage among Baby Boomers and the use of newspapers among members of the Civic Generation. The theory explained the direct effect of the media usage and gratification. However, since this study deals with the usage of new media therefore, the findings of the study particularly in the mediating analysis will offer a new perspective between the relationships of the media usage and digital engagement to political participation when the civic participation acts as the mediating variable. Thus, the study will strengthen the theory from the conception of information use and seeking in relation to the way the youth were using the Internet today.

Practical significance

The literature has argued that there was obvious generational divide between the youth today and the older generation, particularly in the context of civic and political participation. The older generation has been

using their own yardstick in measuring civic and political participation. On the contrary, the youth has their own perception of civic and political participation. Thus, by understanding the relationships between the lifestyles of youth, level of digital engagement, civic and political participation, it will offer an opportunity to better understand the civic and political participation of today's youth that could lead to facilitate campaign planners in planning their activities.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

To ensure that the objectives of the study were fulfilled, the study has limited the age of the youth in the range between 15-25 years old. While the construct of youth may extend from a young child to adolescent yet, the study has limited the age group by referring to the age limit that has been outlined by the United Nation which is 15-25 years old. This was due to the fact that the digital natives or also known as the millennial generation (SA Rahim & Chong, 2019) consisted of this age group (Pelan Tindakan Belia, 2016). Therefore, the data collected for the study would not suitable for the use of the whole Malaysian society who has a different demographic and lifestyle status. Besides, this study only focused on the lifestyles, digital engagement, civic participation and political participation.

Definitions of Keywords

Political participation

Barret and Smith (2014), Bimber et al., (2015) defined 'political participation' as the activities that has the intent or effect of influencing either regional, national, or supranational governance, either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of individuals who make that policy. In brief, political participation is referring to the behavior of voting in election, demonstrating, signing of petition, writing complaint letter to the people representative,

Civic participation

Past studies have defined civic participation (or engagement) in both specific and generic terms, including social capital (Putnam, 2000), civic literacy (Milner, 2002), and club memberships. Civic participation in this study is define as the activities of volunteering, charity work, recycling as well as contacting government officers to complaint about public

services. All these are like what was defined by Lee, Shah and McLeod (2012) and Rivera and Santos (2016) who defined civic participation as the action such as doing charity volunteering, community project or fund raising

Lifestyles

Kotler (1996) and Robertson et al., (2010), defined lifestyles as the behavioural activities, the way people act, behave, perceive, and prefer to live their lives in society. An individual will act and perform things in a specified way, depending on their preferences and activities. Similarly, they will thus, think, judge, and interpret different information based on their own references, knowledge as well as values. Lifestyles is also assumed as the living picture of individuals, families, and societies where they joined together to cope with their physical, psychological, and social environments on a day-to-day basis. Therefore, lifestyles could also refer to the way an individual eat, drink, sleep, as well as their interaction with others. Fariza Md Sham et al., (2015) stressed that way an individual spent their leisure activities and the way of how they provide opinions and values on certain issues were also considered as lifestyles. While Kushner and Choi (2010), stated that lifestyles pattern of an individual were clearly shown through the daily activities that he or she practiced, such as media activities, community activities, physical activities, vocational activities and the High-Brow activities. The term High-brow activities refer to those high culture activities such as attending musical orchestra, reading literature, and visiting art gallery. Lifestyles is therefore a term to express the individual behavior patterns such as activities, attitudes, interests, motivations, culture, behaviors, opinions, and values (Fariza Md.Sham et al., 2015).

Digital engagement

SA Rahim and Hasan, H (2017), defined digital engagement as a process that involves learning the skills necessary for online interaction and fostering the motivation to use the Internet. In their study, they stressed that to guarantee digital inclusion, youth should use the Internet for purposes other than communication and entertainment.

In the context of this study, digital engagement is measuring the activities conducted by the youth online. This is different that measuring the time spent online. As argued by Quintellier & Vissers (2008) that when one wants to understand the effects of Internet use on political participation levels, it is critical to distinguish different forms of internet use. Other scholars such as De Vreese (2007); Jung, Qiu & Kim (2001) as well as Norris (1996) also echo the same sentiment. They

acknowledged that the amount of time spent online matters, but so too does the content of the activities people engage in. Therefore, online activities such as commenting on current issues in social media, conducting e-banking transaction, communicating with friends and surfing government or political parties' website are some of the online activities measured in the digital engagement process.

Youths

The Malaysian National Youth Development Policy defined youth as those who were in the range between the ages of 15 – 40 years old. However, there were various category of age group of youth. The programs and activities for youth development were only prepared for youth whose age range between 15 – 25 years old (Pelan Tindakan Belia, 2016). Therefore, the youth range in the study is from 15 – 25 years old. McRobbie (1993), explained that “Youth,” is a simple word yet it brings a complicated meaning as youth represented a major symbolic for any society that it represented, and they played an important role in the society.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the fundamental of the research project. The aim of the research has been clearly explained which was to identify the relationship between youth lifestyles, level digital engagement and civic and political participation of youth in Malaysia. The reason for this has been discussed as well as the research design to answer the propose research questions and hypothesis.

The next chapter is the review of past studies that were conducted related to the study. The chapter will discuss the elements that has formed the main block for this research. The first part in the subsequent chapter will discuss the conceptualization of ‘political participation’, ‘lifestyles’, ‘level digital engagement’ and ‘civic participation’. This will be followed by the discussion of the theory employed in this research, namely the Uses and Gratification theory. The third part in chapter two is the review on previous research related to lifestyles, level of digital engagement, civic participation and political participation. The final part of the subsequent chapter will outline the research framework as well as the hypothesis.

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