

The Awareness of Anti-Party Hopping Law among Youths in Sarawak

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ABSTRACT

Malaysian youth are more politically aware nowadays compared to the previous years. However, since the 14th general election in 2018, the national political landscape has been continually shifting, and the party-hopping issues have left many young people in Malaysia unsure over the coalition line-ups and the grand directions of the various political parties. Thus, this paper aims to discover awareness of Anti-Party Hopping Law among youths in Sarawak. The emphasis of the literature focuses on the dominant factor that contributes to the lack of awareness and awareness of Anti-Party Hopping law among young people in Sarawak. This study used a quantitative research methodology for collecting and analyzing the numerical data. The results of the study indicate that social media turns out to be the most dominant factor that leads to lack of awareness on Anti-Party Hopping Law among youths in Sarawak when there is rarely news on Anti-Party Hopping Law in Sarawak has been published on any platform of social media such as Facebook, Instagram and others, which eventually give negative impacts towards youths' awareness. Youth utilize social media sites virtually daily and share their opinions on various social, political, and economic issues, which suggest that they may become more involved in politics in the future. As a result, the more awareness spread through social media on Anti-Party Hopping Law is linked to the higher level of youth's awareness in Sarawak.

Keywords: Youth awareness, Party-Hopping, Anti-Party Hopping Law, Elections, Social media

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations considers individuals seen between ages of 15 and 24 to be "youth" (United Nations, 2013). In the context of Malaysia, the Dewan Rakyat passed an amendment to the Youth Societies and Youth Development Act (Amendment) 2019 (Act 668) that lowered the age from 40 to 30 and altered the definition of "youth" as an individual between the ages of 15 and 40 (Yunus & Landau, 2019). Youth in Malaysia today are more politically conscious than they were in years past when it comes to the political climate in the country. Youth now have a greater interest in current events and how they can become involved. This suggests that a new group of innovative ideas and dynamism would surely benefit Malaysia's entire democratic process to have a good government in future (Zaidi, 2021).

Awareness in politics is important to the citizens or public of a democratic country. This is because they need to know and understand how to react to any political matters happening in their nation. An individual is thought to have political awareness if they are able to analyze current events through a knowledgeable perspective, as well as have a fundamental understanding of politics and the ability to study the significant issues that have occurred throughout history. Their involvement in politics can make a better quality of democratic government (Rohoman, 2023). Youth participation in politics is important because this group constitutes nearly half of Malaysia's total voters. Furthermore, in July 2019, the Malaysian Parliament passed the Constitutional (Amendment) Bill 2019 to reduce the voting age from 21 to 18 years old. The amendment demonstrates the importance of youth participation in Malaysian politics. For example, the youth contributed to the opposition's success in Malaysia's general election in 2018 (Ahmad & Mohd Zain, 2021).

However, since the 14th general election in 2018, the national political landscape has been continually shifting, and the party-hopping issues have left many young people in Malaysia unsure over the coalition line-ups and the grand directions of the various political parties (Tan & Vethasalam, 2022). 'Parti Katak' or party-hopping is known as the practice of elected officials switching their allegiance to a new political party roughly halfway through the term of office to which they were elected (Wong and Wo, 2022). The frog analogy is used to refer to politicians who tend to hop among political parties. The continuing support of the majority in the relevant legislature is the essential requirement for a government to be created and to keep its power. Hence, party-hopping might be the main factor that leads to the downfall of an existing government.

Malaysia's political arena also has undergone profound and continuous transformation after 14th General Election (GE14) in 2018. The emergence of political instability, coalition realignments, and the controversial practice of party-hopping have redefined the dynamics of governance and representation. Following the "Sheraton Move" in 2020, which led to the collapse of the Pakatan Harapan government, the issue of party-hopping became a focal point of public and scholarly debate (Ufen, 2022). This event revealed deep vulnerabilities within Malaysia's parliamentary democracy, especially regarding political accountability and the sanctity of voters' mandates. The frequent switching of allegiances among elected representatives created a perception of opportunism and eroded public trust in democratic institutions (Muhamad et al., 2021; Rajah, 2022).

The youth generation in Malaysia believe this political volatility has generated confusion and disillusionment about the integrity of the political system. Young voters often perceive party-hopping as an act of betrayal to the electorate's trust, raising questions about the ethical commitment of politicians to their manifestos and party principles (Tan & Vethasalam, 2022). Recent analyses suggest that youth political engagement has shifted from partisan loyalty to issue-based activism, with young Malaysians increasingly demanding transparency and legislative safeguards against political manipulation (Ahmad & Mohd Zain, 2021; Rohoman, 2023). Nevertheless, a lack of consistent political education and limited exposure to reliable information, especially in rural and semi-urban regions such as Sarawak, have contributed to varying degrees of awareness regarding the implications of party-hopping and the introduction of the Anti-Party Hopping Law (New Sarawak Tribune, 2021).

The enactment of the Anti-Party Hopping Law in 2022 marked a significant milestone in Malaysia's democratic evolution. The constitutional amendment aimed to restore political stability and reinforce the electorate's mandate by prohibiting Members of Parliament and State Assemblymen from switching parties after being elected (Abdul Aziz, 2022; The Star, 2022). However, despite its importance, the public citizens especially young people are still struggles to understand how the law is implemented, and their level of understanding remains inconsistent. In Sarawak, for instance, the level of awareness is comparatively low due to limited media coverage and political engagement among younger citizens (Roji Kawi, 2022). This gap underscores a broader issue of civic literacy and the need for effective dissemination of political information through educational institutions, social media, and civil society initiatives.

In this context, it becomes essential to examine how Malaysian youth, particularly in Sarawak, perceive and understand the Anti-Party Hopping Law. As the country's largest voting bloc under the Undi18 reform, the youth represent a crucial determinant of Malaysia's political future (Ahmad & Mohd Zain, 2021). Their awareness, or lack thereof, about such legislative reforms will significantly influence the direction of political accountability and democratic consolidation in Malaysia. Understand the roots of this awareness gap is very important, not only for strengthening youth political participation but also for ensuring that Malaysia's democratic processes remain robust, transparent, and representative of the people's will.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Youth Awareness in Politics

Awareness is defined as an equitable and connects awareness with the capacity to make forced-choice judgments beyond a probability level of performance in recent masked-prime investigations (Merikle, 1982). At this point, an observer can confirm sensory facts at this level of awareness without necessarily assuming comprehension

(Gafoor, 2012). Malaysian youth are more politically aware nowadays compared to the previous years. They have become more interested in current affairs and how they can participate as much as possible. Therefore, political awareness among the civil society is crucial in order to ensure they become a knowledgeable voter. Political awareness, according to Zaller (1999), is the extent to which a person pays attention to politics and understands political information. This statement means that someone's level of political awareness represents their level of political knowledge. As a result, according to Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996), political awareness refers to voters' knowledge of politics. Access to political information, political participation, media exposure, interest in politics, and education are all examples of political awareness.

Before the amendment made to the Federal Constitution in 2022, there are few attempts to enact a law to restrict a change of alliance or party hopping by the elected assemblyman where if they change their alliance, they need to step down and go through a by-election. For instance, it happens after Sabah state election in 1986, where they amend Article 18 (2) (d) of Sabah State Constitution. Kelantan's State Legislative Assembly also once passed The Constitution of Kelantan (Part I) (Amendment) 1991 to prevent party hopping among members of Kelantan State Legislative Assembly. However, the amendment of both state constitution was considered void because those amendments are contrary and against Article 10 (1) (c) of the Federal Constitution, where anti-hopping seen as infringe association right. (Hershan, Ikhsan, & Ku Yusof, 2023).

Article 10 (1) (c) of the Federal Constitution guarantees every citizen the fundamental right of freedom of association, where it protects the right to form, join, not join, or resign from an association including political party. These fundamental liberties can only be restricted by Parliament, and solely on the grounds of national security, public order or morality as mentioned under Article 10 (2). This clearly excludes the State Legislative Assembly from introducing their own restriction on right of association. Consequently, the amendment State Constitution Sabah and Kelantan consider as unconstitutional. In contrast, the amendment in 2022 introduces Clause (3A) into Article 10 expressly subject the right of association under Article 10 (1) (c), in relation to members of Parliament and State Legislative Assembly, to the restriction imposed by Article 49A and Section 7A of Eight Schedule which removed the application of ordinary right of association in the case of anti-hopping provision. The introduction of Article 49A and Section 7A of the Eight Schedule establishing a uniform legal framework for anti-hopping solutions where the members will lost their sit if he resign or cease to be a member of the political party, or if the member elected as independent, when the member join a political party.

An amendment of anti-party hopping law is crucial to bringing back voters' confidence to the election process plus signifying the respect of their rights and decisions (Abdul Aziz, 2022). The Minister in the Prime Minister's Department in charge of Parliament and Law, Datuk Seri Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar mentioned that the four states which are known as Sarawak, Kelantan, Penang and Sabah has their own anti- hopping laws but not able to implement the legislation as a Supreme Court decision in 1992 ruled that it was against Article 10 of the Federal Constitution on freedom of association. Sarawak is one of the four states that have anti-hopping laws in place to prevent state-elected representatives from switching parties before the 15th general election is held on 19 November 2022 (The Star, 2022).

The Sarawak State Legislative Council (DUN) has passed the Sarawak State Institutional Act (RUU) (Amendment) (No.2) 2022, which makes it illegal for elected officials to skip parties. The bill that the Chief Minister for the Position of Premier of Sarawak, Datuk Sharifah Hasidah Sayeed Aman Ghazali (Act, MA63, State-Allied Relations), put forward was supported by 77 Experts of the State Invitees Council (ADUN). Datuk Sharifah Hasidah Sayeed Aman Ghazali explained the bill by saying that it was a step forward and a proactive move by the United Party Sarawak (Gabungan Parti Sarawak- GPS) toward a stable nation for the people of this country. Aside from that, the Sarawak State Invitational Council should be able to make changes to this bill to make sure that the people's mandate is always kept, as well as their integrity as people's representatives (Roji Kawi, 2022).

Factor that Causes Lack of Awareness of Anti Party Hopping Law among Youth

Whether or not the youth is aware of particular situations, awareness precedes comprehension, and understanding precedes knowledge (Abdul et al., 2012). The sources from which they can obtain information such as from documents, persons such as parents and peers, and social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and others.

Here, the sources as well can be referred to as the factor that causes lack of awareness among youth regarding politics. Furthermore, any factor can be a prime move to spread awareness, particularly among youth; this is because it is an accessible type of approach that can be used to give awareness regarding Anti-Party Hopping Law. Other than that, any factor also can give positive or negative contributions that would affect the mindset of the youth regarding politics. Youth are a valuable asset to the country, and they can generate excellent ideas that may make a big contribution to the country's development process. Moreover, they are the driving force behind the country's growth, and their efforts in bringing new ideas are unquestionable (Zalinah and Zawiyah, 2021).

However, nowadays, there are some Sarawakian youth still not politically aware especially with Sarawak's politics. We can say that youth involvement in politics is crucial but some of the youths are not still exposing themselves to any political current issues especially regarding Anti-Party Hopping Law. According to Dr Arnold Puyok, a political analyst at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), there is less young engagement in politics since there are no concerns, implying that Sarawak youth are not actively involved in political matters (New Sarawak Tribune, 2021). It proves that there is a lack of awareness among youth in Sarawak, especially awareness of Anti Party Hopping Law. So, what we can say here is that there are a few possible factors that contribute to the lack of awareness among youth in Sarawak. Basically, the reason why there is the lack of awareness among youth is because they have poor knowledge and interest towards politics especially on Anti-Party Hopping Law. Clearly, it is not an easy task to spread awareness among youth regarding politics especially on Anti-Party Hopping Law because of their unwillingness on gaining knowledge in politics. In this research, we use three factors that lead to lack of awareness of Anti-Party Hopping Law among youth in the Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies of UiTM Cawangan Kota Samarahan 2, Sarawak.

Social Media

Social media is a type of internet media in which users may easily interact, share, and generate material such as banners, posters, videos, and advertisements (Tritama and Tarigan, 2016). Political knowledge is now communicated and sought not just through conventional channels such as political meetings, but also through social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter (Hassan et al., 2021) According to the statistics, in 2022, there were 30.25 million active social media users in Malaysia and majority of the users of social media are youth at the age of 13 until 34. However, mostly youth use social media only for sending messages to everyone, sharing their photos or videos and browsing through social networking applications to learn about current issues such as about local and international celebrities, global news or online shopping particularly on Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter. So, the youth are mostly unaware of the political topics that are now trending on social media. Other than that, the message delivered through social media is not just for one individual, but also for many others. Because of the contact with numerous people, the message tends to be faster than in other media (Tritama and Tarigan, 2016).

Social media that are often being used by the youth are Facebook, Telegram, Twitter, Instagram and others. With these social media platforms, it draws the attention of the youth and finally, youth will be aware of the current issue that has been spreading around. Furthermore, giving awareness through social media platforms also can influence how youth will think about current issues and how youth will react to such issues, particularly about Anti-Party Hopping Law in Sarawak. However, these trendy social media platforms have not shown enough of any political knowledge especially on Anti Party Hopping Law in Sarawak. Nowadays, youth often show their disinterest to gain political knowledge because they think that politics is not important as well as the role of social media in delivering political knowledge is also understated. It is apparent that social media may contribute to a lack of political understanding, particularly with Anti- Party Hopping Law in Sarawak.

Roles of Parents

Apart from social media, parents are also one of the factors that lead to lack of awareness of Anti-Party Hopping Law among youth. For a number of reasons, the family plays a vital role in political engagement (Memon, 2017). Parents can influence either in positive or negative ways regarding politics, especially awareness of Anti Party Hopping Law. Several studies have discovered a significant relationship between political socialization and the significant influence of family (Andolina, Jenkins, Zukin & Keeter, 2003). What we can say here is that parents are the closest individuals to the youth; they learn and witness everything about political concerns through their

family, particularly their parents. This is because parents who are knowledgeable about politics have passed on their knowledge to their children, which might impact youth's attitudes toward politics. However, some parents do not instill political knowledge in their children from an early age because they are uninterested in politics or simply do not care about political concerns. For example, if parents consistently vote for the same party, their children may eventually think that "I am a member of X party." (Michael et al., 2004) This is the reason why youth does not earn any support and knowledge regarding politics from parents. It causes the Sarawakian youth are not be aware of politics, particularly on Anti- Party Hopping Law.

Peers' Influence

A critical component is peer-led political involvement and youth engagement (Andolina et al., 2003). Peer groups, which may include friends, coworkers, partners, and other acquaintances, may become very important as a child grows older as parents lose control in the sense of influencing their children (Plutzer, 2002). As previously indicated, friendships and involvement in a peer group have a good impact on political behavior. It demonstrates that youth are typically influenced by their peers on political issues. At this point, peer's influence can be in a negative or positive way of influencing because nowadays a wrong interpretation in politics can be the main reason for the unwillingness of youth to involve themselves in politics, particularly on Anti-Party Hopping Law. We can say that the common interests, social position and age among youth can contribute to the awareness of politics yet they are still unaware because of their uninterested in such issues. Peers may also develop and propagate incorrect information about politics, which causes the person to lose interest in certain subjects of politics, particularly on Anti-Party Hopping Law. This can show that youth usually get influenced negatively or positively by their peers.

Research Methods

In this study, random sampling had been adapted to gather data. This is a sampling approach wherein each sample has an equal chance of being selected. A random sample is intended to provide an unbiased reflection of the entire population. This study uses a quantitative research methodology in the form of questionnaires. The population of the Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies at UiTM Cawangan Sarawak Kampus 2 in this study is 1413 students. The sample size must then be determined, with 302 respondents taking part in this study utilizing the method (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970). The purpose of this quantitative study is to employ hypothesis testing and statistical analysis. The method of hypothesis testing is used to ascertain the relationship between our independent factors : social media, roles of parents and peers' influence, and our dependent variables : Awareness of Anti-Party Hopping Law among Youth in Sarawak. We disseminated the cross-sectional questionnaire via Google Form.

Results

Multiple regression analysis has been conducted on the first research objective, by analyzing three independent variables which are social media, parents, and peers. The obtained result shows that social media turns out to be the most dominant factor that leads to lack of awareness on Anti-Party Hopping Laws among youths in Sarawak with beta standardized coefficient 0.596. We all agree that social media play an important role influenced how the people especially youth felt about significant political issues (Salman et al., 2016). The youth has used social media to voice their concerns and complaints about issues affecting their welfare. Hence, followed by peers that have lack of interest regarding this party hopping as they tend to discuss more on fashion, for instance, with beta standardized coefficient 0.123. The least contributing is parents with beta standardized coefficient 0.053. Therefore, H1 is accepted ($\beta = 0.596$) as the most dominant factor that leads to lack of awareness on Anti-Party Hopping Laws among youths in Sarawak. However, as we can see nowadays, there is rarely news on Anti-Party Hopping Law in Sarawak that has been published on any platform of social media such as Facebook, Instagram and others, which eventually give negative impacts towards youths' awareness.

For the second finding, an independent t-test was used to identify the significant difference between youths' awareness and their family involvement in politics. The obtained results show that the family involvement of either their parents or siblings in politics also contribute to the youths' awareness in Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies students at UiTM Cawangan Sarawak Kampus Samarahan 2 because the p-value,

which is 0.00, is < 0.05 . Hence, the H1 is accepted as there is enough evidence to support the significant differences between the variables. This indicate that the family involvement in politics has affected youths' awareness as they will share or give some knowledge regarding what is going on around the environment of politics in Sarawak and especially on the issue related to Anti-Party Hopping Law. Thus, when youths are aware of the existence of Anti-Party Hopping Laws in Sarawak politics from their family members, it will enhance their knowledge regarding the issues and also motivate them to be actively involved in Sarawak politics.

For this finding, we would like to see if there is any relationship between social media awareness and the factors that lead to lack of awareness on Anti-Party Hopping Law among youths in Sarawak. Thus, a Pearson Correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationship. The positive correlation was shown between social media awareness and the factors that lead to lack of awareness on Anti-Party Hopping Law among youths in Sarawak with the strong correlation ($r = 0.659$, $p < 0.01$). Nowadays, social media is a major source of political knowledge, particularly for young people, which eventually affects their interest in politics and participation (Muzaffar, 2019). Youth utilize social media sites virtually daily and share their opinions on various social, political, and economic issues, which suggest that they may become more involved in politics in the future. As a result, the more awareness spread through social media on Anti-Party Hopping Law is linked to the higher level of youth's awareness in Sarawak.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, youths nowadays play a crucial role in the sense of understanding the political awareness, especially youths in Sarawak. The involvement of youth in politics can be a creative force, a dynamic source of innovation, and it can help to spark significant changes in political structures (Tamanna, M., 2015). It shows that youths are the future generations and nation's development driving force in order to sustain a good politics in one's country. However, some of the youths in Sarawak are not interested to get to know what Anti-Party Hopping Law is all about. The Anti-Party Hopping Law in Sarawak is not actively practiced as in Sabah and Peninsular Malaysia. Hence, the focus of this study is on the Anti-Party Hopping Law in Sarawak due to its unfamiliar issue especially among youths. It is focused on the students of Faculty in Administrative Science and Policy Studies in UiTM Cawangan Sarawak Kampus Samarahan 2, which can be called as youths.

In this study, in order to identify which, the dominant factors that contribute to the lack of awareness of the Anti-Party Hopping Law among youths in Sarawak, we used Multiple Regression to generate the results. The results showed that social media is the dominant factor to the lack of awareness of the Anti-Party Hopping Law in Sarawak. Therefore, most of the youth nowadays are familiar with the use of social media but not for political matters. The youths are not using their social media such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and others to obtain the information on politics in Sarawak as if they are not having the desire to learn about Sarawak's politics. However, even if the youths used social media to learn about Anti-Party Hopping Law in Sarawak, there is quite little news on the disclosure of the issue on social media. By doing this research, we are able to know what their opinion is and how much they understand about Anti-Party Hopping Law in Sarawak. In this study also, we provide recommendations that can help in the exposure of youths on Anti-Party Hopping Law in Sarawak.

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