The Dynamics of Youth Political Participation in Southeast Asia: The Case of Malaysia

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABIM	Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement
BERSIH	The Coalition for Free and Fair Elections
BN	National Front
DAP	Democratic Action Party
Hindraf	Hindu Rights Action Force
ISA	Internal Security Act
IYRES	Institute for Youth Research Malaysia
MBM	Malaysian Youth Council
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MIC	Malaysian India Congress
NEP	New Economic Policy
OSA	Official Secrets Act
PAA	The Peaceful Assembly Act
PAS	Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party
PKR	People's Justice Party
PR	People's Alliance
SOSMA	The Security Offences (Special Measures) Act
SPR	Election Commission of Malaysia
SUARAM	Voice of the Malaysian People
UMNO	United Malay National Organization
UUCA/AUKU	Universities and University Colleges Act
WVS	World Values Survey

ABSTRACT

The decline of youth political participation in established democracies has long been researched by scholars and it is often viewed as signalling a crisis of democracy. However, research from the UK and other democracies suggests young people still engage in other non-mainstream political activities closer to their everyday lives. While scholarship from semi-democratic regions has traditionally neglected this line of enquiry, limiting itself to electoral participation, by applying these theoretical insights this thesis explores the diverging patterns of youth political participation in Malaysia and argues that young people are not apathetic towards politics but rather that they tend to practice low-risk, more diffused forms of everyday engagement like online activism, political discussion, etc. The research thus also sheds light on whether patterns of youth political participation in Malaysia are linked to the type of political system and semi-democratic setting or whether they are similar to those for political participation in established democracies. To carry out this investigation, the thesis applies a mixed-methods approach encompassing the quantitative analysis of existing survey data from the World Values Surveys (WVS) and Asian Barometer as well as the qualitative analysis of interviews with academics, political leaders, youth activists and youth non-participants. Evidence from the survey data analysis shows that young Malaysians participate in both conventional and unconventional forms of participation less than their older counterparts. The findings from the qualitative interviews complement these insights by indicating how young people in Malaysia explain and make sense of their own participation in politics, mainly in the form of low-risk channels such as online activism, popular cultural representations, and political discussion more generally. The study thus concludes that while the engagement of young people in politics could contribute to reinforcing the process of democratisation in Malaysia, draconian laws currently in place limit their wider political activism.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   The puzzle of youth political participation

Active citizen participation in decision-making is vital for a strong and vibrant democracy. The primary mechanism that facilitates the effective functioning of democracy is electoral participation. However, there is great concern among scholars in established democracies that young people are turning away from participating in the political process, particularly 'conventional' political participation such as voting and party membership (Putnam, 2000; Dalton, 2007; Norris, 2002; Sloam, 2007; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2005). We have witnessed the breakdown of the democratic representative mechanism since increasing numbers of citizens, particularly the younger generation, reject mainstream politics for example, by not voting or by disengaging from political and civic activities. This tends to be seen as signalling a democratic malaise. And it is particularly concerning as a worldwide trend, since the younger generation constitutes one of the world's largest population groups.[1]

The apparent disconnect between young people and the institutional process, particularly elections, has led observers to argue that Western democracy is undergoing a 'crisis of legitimacy' (Habermas, 1973), a 'crisis of liberal democracy' (Dalton, 2008) or experiencing a dramatic 'democratic deficit' (Norris, 2001). Some scholars are particularly concerned about what will happen in the future when the current group of young people grows up and replaces the more active older generations in the population (Franklin, 2004; Grasso, 2016). Fears of youth disengagement are clearly linked to the theory of generation effect—that the political attitudes or habits of a generation are formed as a result of the shared social and historical experiences at the time of their coming of age. In this respect,

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[1]Statistically, the total number of youngsters (under the age of 24) is estimated around 1.8 billion (25 per cent) out of the 7 billion world's total population in the year 2013. Many of them are concentrated in the less developed countries, those in Asia, Middle East and Africa, where they make up a majority of the population (UNFPA, The State of World Population, 2014).

if today's younger generations or cohorts have been socialised in a depoliticised period (Hay 2007), they will exhibit lower levels of political participation throughout their lives, bringing down aggregate participation levels in the population as they come of age and replace older, more participatory generations as they die out. However, others argue that the low level of youth engagement in politics, mainly in the form of lower voter turnout, does not mean that this cohort is dissatisfied with democracy and the political system, but rather shows that young people feel complacent about the existing *status quo* (Miroff *et al.,* 2009). Young people only participate in politics if they want to change the government, especially when they feel unhappy about economic inequality and political instability—but, their absence of participation in fact implies consent for the current system. However, other scholars have countered that either way, low or very low levels of political participation in fact undermine the government's claim to legitimacy since a democratic mandate rests on popular support from elections.

Moreover, another argument that has emerged in response to growing fears of youth disengagement turns on the contention that this group's lower levels of institutional engagement has been overblown, since young people are simply participating in different forms of political activity compared to the past (Zukin *et al.,* 2006). The advancement of technology, for example, has dramatically changed how young people engage in politics, leading many scholars to believe that the waning of conventional forms of political participation is complemented by an expansion of political repertoires—the rise of protest activism, social movement, and single-issue pressure groups (Norris, 2007; Putnam, 2000; Zukin *et al.,* 2006; Dalton, 2007; Henn *et al.,* 2002; Sloam, 2007). Recent political phenomena such as the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street movements have demonstrated the power of young people in bringing about democratisation and social change. The revolutionary uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya have been depicted as a tremendous victory for young people in overthrowing autocratic regimes and bringing a new wave of democratisation to the Arab world.[2] Inspired by the Arab Spring, Occupy

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[2]The political crisis in Tunisia or so called 'Jasmine Revolution' occured on 17 December 2010, when a young unemployed man, name Bouazizi, immolated himself as a sign of protest for the government's failure to provide jobs, eradicate poverty and improve living standards. This incident angered Tunisians as they also suffered from economic recession, rampant corruption, and nepotism under Ben Ali's regime. As a result, a series of massive protests took place around Tunisia. In response to this, the Tunisian government closed all educational institutions and schools to restrict young people from joining the street protests. Although the government promised to increase employment and allow the freedom of press and media, Tunisians refused to disperse and the popular rally continued, forcing the government to declare a state of emergency in Tunisia. Finally, on 14 January 2011, President Ben Ali resigned and fled to Saudi Arabia. The success of the

Wall Street was a manifestation of collective awakening, largely amongst youth, and marked a major protest event in U.S history that deserved worldwide attention. Many scholars have noted how young people today are more attracted to these kinds of social movements because they focus on specific issues which they find relevant. However, Grasso (2016:1) argues that a rise in unconventional engagement such as protests and new social movements does not in and of itself solve the problem of a 'hollowed out democracy' (Mair, 2006) and cannot replace a functioning representative democratic system. Moreover, Grasso's analysis shows that unconventional participation in Western European democracies will also begin to decline in the future as more politically passive generations coming of age in the 1980s and 1990s will come to increasingly replace the politically active 1960s-1970s baby-boomers in the population as they age and die out (Grasso, 2011, 2014).

The preceding paragraphs have briefly summarised the key themes of research on youth political participation and disengagement in Western democracies. However, how does youth participation in semi-democratic states in the Southeast Asian region compare to the discussion above? What are the key findings on current patterns of youth political participation in the Southeast Asia region? Are young people there also disengaged from politics or have they simply moved to different forms of political participation? Falling political participation is not just a Western phenomenon. Some argue that young people in the Southeast Asian region also appear to be apathetic towards politics, less likely to vote and to join a political party (Chang, 2012). This could also be evidenced when comparing voting levels between young and older voters at the national level in the four main countries in Southeast Asia, namely Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines, based on Wave 6 (2010-2013) of the World Values Survey (See Figure 1.1).

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people's revolution in Tunisia inspired Egyptians to organise anti-government protests which resulted in the end of 30 years' dictatorship of Hosni Mubarak. Egyptians protests began peacefully on January 25, 2011 in Tahrir Square, Cairo, and were also attended by the opposition parties, civil society and anti-Mubarak groups. However, they were blocked from entering the city by the police, causing large-scale battles which then spread to several other cities. Among the factors that contributed to the uprising are political issues (such as limited freedom of speech and corruption) and economic-driven factors (increased unemployment rate, inflation, and low minimum wages). The regime also cut-off the networks and telecommunication systems in Egypt so the people could no longer communicate and disseminate protest ideas to one another. Mubarak also refused to step down even when the popular upsrising had mounted in Egypt. Due to the international pressure, Hosni Mubarak finally resigned on February 11, 2011, after 18 days of battle between the people and his regime, causing a total of 365 deaths and thousands of injuries. See the articles by Elfatih (2015) and Salih (2013) for more details.
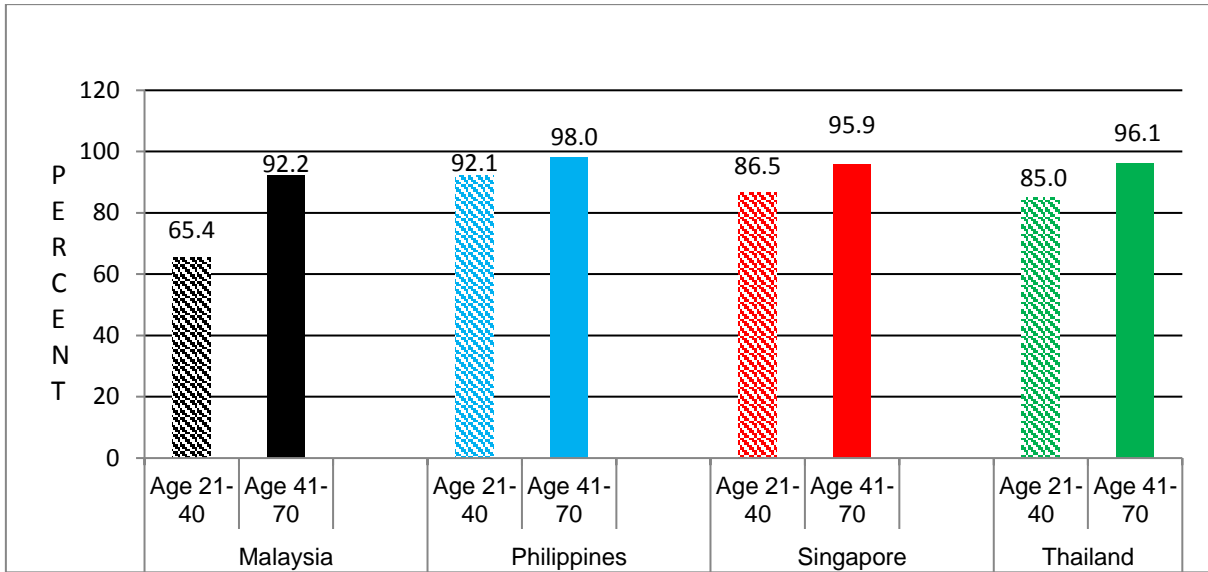
Source: World Values Survey Wave 6 (2010-2014)
Figure 1.1 Percentage of voting in the national election: comparison of age groups in four countries in Southeast Asia[3]
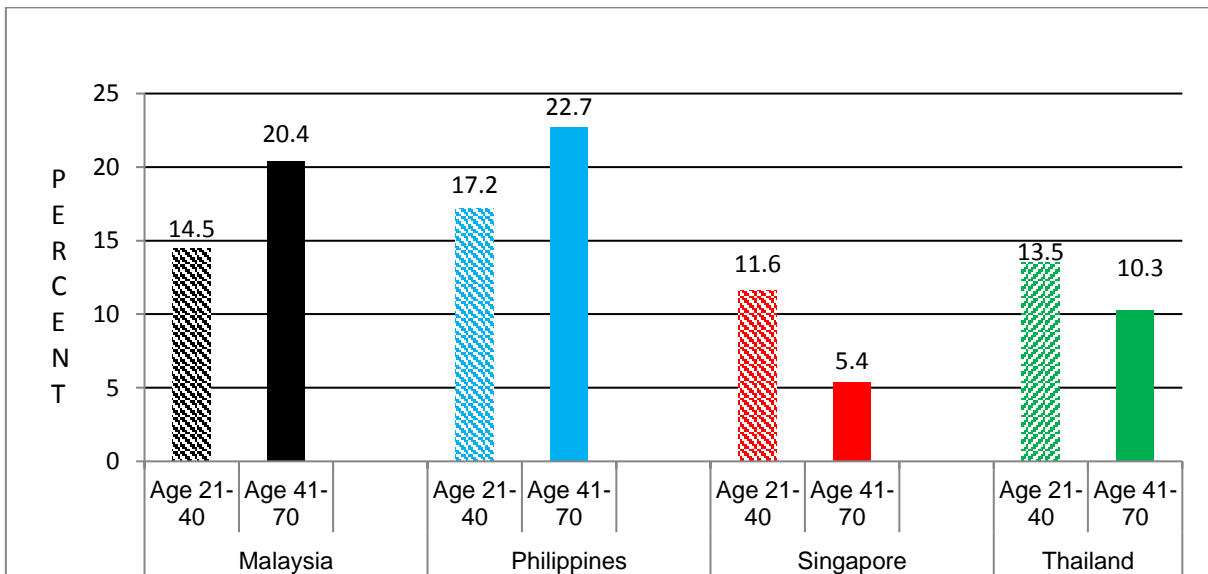
Source: World Values Survey Wave 6 (2010-2014)
Figure 1.2 Percentage of active membership in political parties: comparison of age groups in four countries in Southeast Asia[4]

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[3]The total sample size for this graph is N=5,024. To be specific, the sample for Malaysia is N=1170 (Age 21-40=523/Age 41-70=647), the Philippines N=1075 (Age 21-40=521/Age 41-70=554), Singapore N=1653 (Age 21-40=806/Age 41-70=847), and Thailand N=1126 (Age 21-40=379/Age 41-70=747).

[4]The total sample size for this graph is N=5,058. To be specific, the sample for Malaysia is N=1170 (Age 21-40 N=523/Age 41-70 N=647), the Philippines N=1080 (Age 21-40 N=522/Age 41-70 N=558), Singapore N=1659 (Age 21-40 N=810/Age 41-70 N=849), and Thailand N=1149 (Age 21-40 N=393/Age 41-70 N=756).

The findings reflect claims in the literature that young people in these Southeast Asia countries are less likely to vote and generally also less likely than their respective elders to be members of a political party (though here proportions are smaller so sometimes the differences are negligible).[5] As we can see from Figure 1.1, Malaysia has the lowest absolute levels of participation in the region, with the differences between youth and older people's participation even more marked than Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines. Similarly, the membership of political parties amongst young Malaysians is at the lowest level compared to the older counterparts and other youth in ASEAN countries, with exception of Singapore and Thailand (see Figure 1.2). Why is youth participation so low in Malaysia? What makes many young Malaysians disengaged from formal politics?

1.2   Youth political participation in Malaysia

In Malaysia, as defined by the National Youth Policy 1997, 'youth' refers to those aged between 15 and 40 years old, constituting approximately 43 percent of the 28.3 million total of Malaysia's population (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2010). Ethnicity is very important for Malaysian politics—many political parties are ethnically-based and turnout results sharply delineate Malaysian politics along racial lines. This is because the country's population consists of three different main ethnic groups, namely the Malays, Chinese and Indians. However, the 1969 ethnic riot marked a turning point that changed the political landscape of Malaysia from democratic to 'semi democratic' (Crouch, 1996), 'authoritarian democracy' (Case, 2002), 'soft authoritarianism' (Means, 1996) and 'quasi-democracy' (Zakaria Ahmad, 1989). Although elections are held regularly every five years with highly competitive political parties, but citizens have very limited political rights and freedoms, particularly after the ethnic riots of 1969. The government has used draconian laws such as the Sedition Act 1948, the Internal Security Act 1960 (replaced by Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012) and the Universities Colleges Act 1971 to stifle free speech and dissents. Through these laws, students are no longer allowed to be members of, or show a support for, any political party or become involved in many off-campus activities. It is not a surprise, then, that Malaysian youth are apathetic with respect to mainstream politics.

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[5]The definition of 'youth' is varied across countries and is treated differently by political scientists. Although youth in Malaysia is defined as those between 15 to 40 years old based on the definition stated in the 1997 National Youth Policy in Malaysia, for the purpose of this thesis, I tend to focus on the age group between 21 to 40 years old (See Methodology Chapter for details).

The nature of youth political engagement in Malaysia has changed dramatically over the last decade. This change was apparent during the 'reformation' era, starting in 1999, that witnessed the remarkable emergence of young people in Malaysian politics. The participation of young voters exploded in this period and began with the dismissal of a former Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim from the government in 1998. He organized the *Reformasi* movement which was strongly supported by young people and particularly university students.[6] Although some argue that the *Reformasi* movement failed to create structural changes in politics (Nair, 2007), the emergence of this movement developed support for democracy among large numbers of young people in Malaysia. Young Malaysians' political awareness increased as well as their calls for political change, particularly with regards to respecting the civil rights of citizens and the eradication of money politics and corruption among politicians. In support for political reform and disappointment over the country's financial crisis, many young people went to the polls in the 1999 General Election as the percentage of registered young voters increased from 80.9 percent in 1980, to 89.4 percent in 1998 (Election Commission Malaysia, 2002). In addition, with the help of technological advancement such as social media and mobile phones, the youth now has another channel to access political news and express their concerns on public issues faster and more conveniently than before (De Vreese, 2007). Significantly, 60 percent (15 million) out of 28 million of the total population in Malaysia accessed the internet to read political information in 2008 (Ramanathan, 2008), and there are over 500,000 active bloggers with 10,000 websites making Malaysia one of the largest online communities in the world after Indonesia and the European Union (Kaufman, 2008).

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[6]The wide-ranging support that Anwar received from the ordinary masses led him to launch a *Reformasi* agenda in the *Permatang Pauh* declaration on 12 September 1998 to surge anti-Mahathir sentiments. This movement echoed Indonesia's anti-Suharto movement and called for the elimination of the practice of "kolusi, korupsi and nepotisme" (collusion, corruption, and nepotism). The *Reformasi* movement was staged in two different phases: The *Reformasi* through random street demonstrations; and the *Reformasi* through social media. This made it easier for Anwar to mobilise support and formulate an effective strategy against the government. During the first phase, Anwar began to garner mass supports for the *Reformasi* movement from the opposition parties, NGOs, and the public, including young people and university students. Those who were sympathetic with Anwar held a series of mass rally protests over his dismissal and called for the prime minister's resignation. Secondly, pro-Anwar and *Reformasi* websites such as *Anwar Online, Reformasi Diary* and *FreeMalaysia* grew tremendously. These websites depicted the savage cruelty of the government, updated news on *Reformasi* events and Anwar, political commentaries, satires, and even made-up rumours. These websites gained popularity among the public who lost trust in the government media. Whilst this movement failed to remove Mahathir from power, the *Reformasi* seriously tarnished Mahathir's image and reputation, locally and abroad. See Weiss (2006) and Khoo Boo Teik (2003) for details.

This new political landscape also gave rise to protest activism and social movements when a series of large-scale protests were launched, known as BERSIH or the 'Yellow' movement, successfully mobilizing young people to play a role as a catalyst for the democratisation of Malaysia. The idea of organising the BERSIH movement was developed by the opposition parties after they were defeated in the 2004 General Election, and was supported by a coalition of civil society groups. They formed a committee called the Joint Action Committee for Electoral Reform (JACER), with the objective to reform the electoral system to ensure clean, free, and fair elections. At the early stage of BERSIH's formation, it was affiliated with political parties. Later there was an initiative to re-launch BERSIH as a non-partisan social movement (Khoo, 2014). BERSIH held its first rally in 2007, and this was followed by another four street protests on 2011 (BERSIH 2.0), 2012 (BERSIH 3.0), 2015 (BERSIH 4.0), and 2016 (BERSIH 5.0). Support for the BERSIH movement grew rapidly with thousands of young people from different ethnic groups joining the demonstrations. Furthermore, the BERSIH movement is often credited with the political changes made during the 2008 and 2013 general elections which resulted in the ruling coalition, the National Front (BN), losing its two-thirds majority in Parliament.

As voter turnout rate rose remarkably, from 76 percent to 85 percent in the 2013 general election to be the highest ever recorded in the general elections, many scholars in Malaysia agreed that at least some young Malaysians were now becoming actively engaged in the political arena, including in voting, and in fact some of them were elected as political representatives (Noorsulastryyurni, 2014; Norshuhada *et al.,* 2016; Samsudin *et al.,* 2012). However, the real issue is the alarming proportion of unregistered voters. According to the statistics of the Election Commission, approximately 70 percent of 4.2 million unregistered voters are between the ages of 21 to 40, and of that number, three million are Malay youth who were eligible to vote in the next election but were not interested in voting (Pandian, 2014b). Another issue is the shrinking membership of political parties and other major political organisations among Malaysian youngsters. The rigid structures and culture of established political parties in Malaysia discourage younger people from participating since it typically takes a long time for aspiring younger people to become politicians and often the leadership positions are given to older members (Zhen Yi, 2015). Indeed, out of 13.8 million youth in Malaysia, only eight percent or 984,850 of them are registered members of youth associations (Institute for Youth Research, 2014).

Therefore, this thesis argues that the decline of youth political engagement in Malaysia, however, gets less attention from scholars since they focus more on the shift of youth votes from the ruling party to the opposition.

A large body of research testifies that individual resources such as age, education, and income affect political participation (Verba *et al.,* 1995; Norris, 2002; Quintelier, 2007). Scholars generally agree that educated citizens are more likely to vote in elections and participate in political parties because they have time, money, knowledge and ability to access political information (Schlozman, 2002; Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980; Blais *et al.,* 2004). Looking at Malaysia's demographic profile, we can see that the literacy rate in Malaysia has increased from 92 percent in 2004 to nearly 95 percent in 2013 (ASEAN Statistical Yearbook, 2015), with 48 percent enrolment in higher education (1.2 million students) in 2012 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). In terms of economic growth, Malaysia is the ASEAN's third largest economy with monthly household income steadily increasing, largely in urban areas, to RM 4,585 from RM 3,626 in 2012 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2015). As Malaysia has achieved greater economic prosperity and education has been an increasingly higher priority, therefore we expect more young people to have higher levels of education and household incomes which should in turn enable them to participate in politics. However, many choose not to vote and in fact there are about 4.2 million young Malaysians not registering as voters. Moreover, some claim that political participation depends on opportunity structures within a given political setting (Kriesi, 2007; McAdam, 1999; Tarrow, 1998). Since Malaysia is regarded as a country with a hybrid political setting, a system that combines both inherent traits of democracy and authoritarianism (Razali 2017; Levitsky and Way, 2010), we can expect that there are wide restrictions on political freedom, including freedom of speech and assembly, which may inhibit young people from participating politically. However, not all hybrid countries have very low levels of youth political engagement. Singapore, for example, has a relatively high rate of party membership and voter turnout amongst young people compared to Malaysia whilst civil liberties there are also curtailed.

Over the last few decades, a series of controversial events has occurred in Malaysia when compared to the other Southeast Asian countries. These controversial events, including a wave of mass protests organised by Bersih (Since 2007), the imprisonment of the *de facto* leader of the opposition party, Anwar Ibrahim (2015), the corruption scandal

involving a government-run fund, 1MDB (2015) and government economic policies such as the enforcement of Goods and Services Tax (GST) (2015) may have negatively affected young people's impression of politics and politicians. The literature has shown how specific national contexts can impact the socialisation experiences of young generations (Tilley, 2002; Grasso, 2011, 2014). As such, there is a good argument to be made that the Malaysian national context may have played a role in exerting a negative influence on perceptions of politics and political engagement, leading young people to become disengaged from politics. These are the guiding hypotheses underpinning this investigation and in the remainder of this thesis we will discuss the relative literature as well as evidence to analyse them. This diverse array of evidence on youth political disengagement in Malaysia has produced a puzzle which necessitates a clear empirical investigation.

To summarise, the main aim of this study is to contribute to an evidence-based analysis to the current debate on young people's political participation in the Southeast Asian context, and more specifically to analyse whether the patterns of youth political participation in Malaysia exhibit distinctive patterns relative to established democracies and what explains these divergences. To gain deeper insight on this issue and to be able to provide a thorough analysis, including the background and history of one specific case, we choose to focus on Malaysia as exhibiting ideal-type Southeast Asian political characteristics such as a semi-democratic regime, a divided society, and a powerful ruling elite. We will examine how Malaysian youngsters (dis)engage politically and present some explanations for these trends. In turn, this will contribute to the emerging literature on youth political participation and non-participation in non-Western contexts and speak to the future of political engagement worldwide as young cohorts age and replace older generations. Therefore, one of the more significant contributions of this thesis to the political participation literature is to provide a well-rounded picture of the changing pattern of youth political participation in Southeast Asia, particularly Malaysia, by developing a value-added explanatory model specifically for youth engagement in the region.

1.3   The thesis and the wider literature

As hinted at above, the motivations for this research are grounded in the analytical problems caused by several important limitations in previous work. By overcoming these limitations, the current study moves beyond the current state of the art in a number of

ways, and thus advances scholarship. First, it is undeniable that an enormous literature has been developed by prominent scholars on youth political participation. However, most literature is Western-oriented, so it is focused more specifically on the Western socio-political context. Second, studies of youth political participation in Southeast Asia (Chang, 2012; Rashila, 2012; Zhang and Lallana, 2013; Yun Han Chu, Welsh and Weatherall, 2012), and particularly Malaysia (Weiss, 2006; Mohd Azizuddin, 2009; Francis Loh and Saravanamuttu, 2003; Muhammad Febriansyah and Muhammad Takiyuddin, 2013) have begun to develop but there is limited to research on the engagement or disengagement of the youth from electoral activities, without comprehensively analysing whether young people opt to engage outside of mainstream politics. It is worth noting that there are two contrasting narratives in the literature on youth political participation. The first camp, the so-called 'youth disengaged paradigm' (Bennett, 2008) depicts young people as apolitical, indifferent, and politically apathetic pointing to evidence for a decline of conventional forms of political participation, such as voting (Dalton, 2002), partisanship (Kimberlee, 2002), and civic life (Putnam, 2000). On the other hand, the second camp, the so-called 'youth engaged paradigm' sees this decline as a transformation—a steady shift from traditional forms of politics in favour of new and unconventional forms of political participation like protest, political consumerism, and social movement engagement (Putnam, 2000; Henn *et al.,* 2002; Dalton, 2007). The emergence of these new repertoires of participation has cut across the traditional left-right spectrum and weakened the older styles of politics.

In this study, we find evidence to support the 'youth engaged paradigm' for Malaysia (Norris, 2002; Henn *et al.,* 2002; Sloam, 2007; Dalton, 2007) and challenge the conventional wisdom that young people in Malaysia are politically apathetic citizens. It is misleading to claim that young Malaysians in general are apolitical or apathetic without analysing a broad conception of politics, which includes both conventional and unconventional political participation, and their explanatory factors. Following such a methodology allows us to see clearly the relationship between the new types of participation that young people are involved in and how these may be replacing traditional forms of participation. We find that young Malaysians are less likely to engage in conventional forms of participation, but that they replace this to some extent with participation in alternative forms such as protests, social movement activism and other forms of 'everyday politics'. Political participation encompasses a broad range of political

actions, rather than simply being confined to voting and elections. Focusing on electoral and conventional political activity as the only forms of meaningful political participation undermines the importance of other forms of political participation, and leads to the view that young people in general are politically apathetic citizens (Phelps, 2005, Marsh *et al.,* 2007; Henn *et al.,* 2002).

Moreover, explanations of youth disengagement and the shift to a new politics in Western democracies link to a number of recognisable themes (Quintelier, 2007) such as life-cycle theories (e.g., Verba and Nie, 1972; Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980), mobilising agencies (e.g., Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Norris, 2002), and generational effects (e.g., Giugni, 2007; Grasso, 2011, 2014; Jennings, 1987). However, most literature in Southeast Asia generally, and Malaysia specifically, provides vague and limited explanations of youth political participation because it commonly relies on classical approaches limited to socioeconomic status as indicators of participation (Pandian, 2014a; Marshelayanti *et al.,* 2016), with some studies also looking at political values (Mohd Azizuddin, 2009; Francis Loh and Saravanamuttu, 2003) and life-cycle effects (Muhammad Febriansyah and Muhammad Takiyuddin, 2013). Undeniably, different socioeconomic indicators such as educational status, income and so forth, have large impacts on political participation. However, the failure to go beyond classical explanations and neglect of alternative models of participation in the conceptual framework means that certain important variables and concepts such as institutional context, mobilising agents and the cost-benefit analysis underpinning political engagement are under-emphasised by these scholars. Although this thesis acknowledges the complex interaction of individual factors in explaining political participation, we argue that relying on these factors alone is not enough to account for the puzzle of youth political participation in Malaysia. As this thesis sets out to examine the diverging patterns of youth political participation in Malaysia and to investigate the characteristics and motivations of those who choose to actively participate in politics and those who decide to disengage from politics, we argue that it is essential to also consider alternative models of political participation. Most specifically, this thesis combines different approaches including the civic voluntarism model, the social psychological model, the rational choice model, the insights of approaches emphasising the importance of mobilising agencies and political opportunity structures as factors allowing us to make sense of both participation and non-participation and their underlying

motivations.[7] By combining these models, this thesis expands and develops on Hirschman's 'Exit, Voice and Loyalty' (EVL) framework (see Chapter 2).

The current Malaysian political context means that young generations coming of age today have very different social and political experiences from those that older generations have experienced, especially those who grew up after the political and economic reforms of the 1970s. We know from previous work that the current political participation habits of generations can influence future trends (Plutzer, 2002, Franklin, 2004), and this is why this thesis compares the differences in political activism between Malaysian younger and older people respectively. This investigation fills a very important gap in the literature on Malaysian youth political participation and allows us to generate valuable insights on the future patterns of youth political participation, given socialisation and population replacement (Park, 2000; Grasso, 2011, 2014; Norris, 2002). In addition, much literature in this field from Southeast Asia has rarely employed a qualitative or mixed-methods approach. Heavy reliance on a single method may only provide a partial impression of the youth as an apathetic generation. A combined mixed-methods (quantitative and qualitative) approach is needed to provide more in-depth and richer contextual explanations of how young people conceptualise politics and perceive their engagement with politics (Marsh *et al.,* 2007; Henn *et al.,* 2002). As such, by applying a mixed-methods approach to the study of youth participation in Malaysia, this research further provides novel insights into the issue.

Even though this thesis focuses only on one country, it makes an important contribution to the literature as it examines the patterns of youth political participation in a semi-democratic and divided society where ethnicity has long coloured its politics, and where the rural-urban divide has impacted on how young Malaysians engage with and view politics. This thesis thus seeks to provide cross-sectional comparative evidence which takes into account the different socio-cultural settings in Malaysia based on social

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[7]To be specific, this study combines theories from politics, economics and social movement studies such as the socioeconomic status (SES) (Verba and Nie, 1972), the civic volunterism (Verba *et al.,* 1995), the social psychological model (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996) including the relative deprivation theory (Gurr, 1970; Klandermans, 2007; Dalton, 1988; Farah *et al.*, 1979), the rational choice theory, the general incentives model (Seyd and Whiteley, 1992), mobilising agencies (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Stolle, 2007) and institutional context (Tarrow, 1998; Kriesi, 2007; Klandermans, 2007) to explain why young people participate or fail to do so, and examine whether they exhibit distinctive patterns of activism relative to young people in Western democracies given the semi-democratic context of Malaysia.

differences in age, education, gender, ethnicity, as well as the semi-democratic setting and the rural-urban dichotomy, synthesizing qualitative and quantitative evidence. Moreover, the research draws comparisons with youth political participation in established democracies highlighting differential features and theoretical gaps.

1.4   Aims and research questions

As mentioned above, most literature in the field of political science in Malaysia has largely ignored the dynamic patterns of youth political participation when aiming to understand youth participation and non-participation. Recently, there has been growing interest in electoral participation and conventional forms of participation rather than an exploration of why young Malaysians have a very low level of participation in political activities. The absence of meaningful research on youth political engagement in Malaysia has led young people to be labelled as an 'apathetic' generation. Therefore, the aims of this thesis are:

1.   To analyse the changing patterns of youth political participation in Malaysia

This aim relates to the governing assumptions of both elitist and popular conceptions of democracy when understanding the role of political participation. For popular theorists of democracy, the participation of citizens is vital for democracy since decisions made through deliberation strengthen the relationship between state and citizens, thus enhancing civic consciousness (Barber, 1984). On the other hand, elite competition theorists believe that only electoral participation is necessary for legitimising decision-making made by the elites (Schumpeter, 1952; Almond and Verba, 1963). Therefore, to avoid confusion with the concept of 'civic participation', we use the term 'elite-directed' and 'elite-challenging' forms of political participation introduced by Inglehart (1977; 1997). Accordingly, Inglehart (1997) clearly distinguishes between elite-directed activities—relating to traditional politics, mainly elections and participation through established organisations such as political parties and labour unions—and elite-challenging repertoires, synonymous with new politics, that "take place when one knows how to cope with elites and want something contrary from what elites want" (Inglehart and Klingemann, 1979:209). 'Elite' here refers to people in the leadership position who are directly involved in decision-making (Hoffmann-Lange, 2007:910). Therefore, to study the diverging patterns of youth political participation, we cannot limit the analysis to either just conventional politics, or

unconventional politics. Rather, it is important to look at the different forms of political activism side by side (Grasso, 2013). We must study both elite-directed and elite-challenging activities to examine more thoroughly whether young people's disengagement is found across political activities, and whether they are becoming less involved in conventional politics and more likely to participate in elite-challenging repertoires. To meet this aim, we compare political activism between young and older people in Malaysia by using existing survey data from Wave 6 (2010-2014) of the World Values Surveys (WVS) and the Asian Barometer Wave 2 (2005-2008) and Wave 3 (2010-2012). These quantitative analyses are presented in Chapters 4 and 5 of the thesis. To contextualise the survey data, we also investigated specific questions concerning current patterns of youth engagement with different groups in Malaysian society, namely academics, political elites, youth activists and youth non-participants via semi-structured interviews. In relation to the first aim, the empirical research sets out to answer the following questions:

- Are young Malaysians politically apathetic or have they shifted from 'elite-directed' politics to 'elite-challenging' forms of political participation?
- Are the patterns of youth political engagement in this country influenced by the characteristics of the authoritarian regime or are they instead similar to those present amongst young people in Western democracies?

2. To investigate the conception of politics amongst young people

To meet this aim, we have adopted semi-structured interviews as an approach that enables me to understand how young people conceptualise 'politics' on their own terms from a 'bottom-up' approach (O'Toole, 2003). According to Bessant (2016), the overly restrictive way people are encouraged to think about politics often discounts young people's political activity and may indicate reasons for young people's disinterest from conventional politics. In this thesis, we argue that when young people have very limited conceptions of politics it shows that they have a poor understanding of politics and perceive politics as a complex and 'boring' subject, which in turn is linked to their disenchantment with the political process. The questions in line with this aim are:

- How do young Malaysians conceptualise 'politics'?
- Do young activists and young non-participants differ in their interpretations of politics and why?

3. **To examine the attitudes of young Malaysians towards 'elite-directed' and 'elite-challenging' forms of participation**

This thesis sets out to investigate why young people participate or do not participate in politics, and in particular the characteristics and motivations of those who choose to participate in the different kinds of repertoires. To achieve this aim, the study applies a threefold strategy. First, we test different variables which may play a role in explaining participation such as socioeconomic factors (age, education, income, etc.), attitudinal determinants (interest to politics, political efficacy, etc.), and mobilising networks (group membership). Second, we select samples of youth activists and youth non-participants in qualitative interviews to identify the subjectively explained reasons behind participation and non-participation. Importantly, analysing the factors that motivate young people to engage or disengage in different forms of political activities allow us to clearly understand the underlying political attitudes of young people. Third, we examine the youth wings of political parties in Malaysia by interviewing prominent members to investigate to what extent they make efforts to recruit young members, as well as understanding their own motivations for becoming party members, the different party structures and how this impacts on the previous questions, and finally the development of strategies to attract more young members in the future. To achieve this aim, the following empirical research questions guided the analysis:

- Why are some young people politically active whereas others are largely politically inactive?
- What drives different types of young people to embrace such divergent attitudes?

1.5 The structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into ten chapters. In Chapter 1, we offer a critical analysis of the various understandings of youth political participation in the context of Southeast Asia as well as a detailed picture of youth engagement in Malaysian politics. The chapter also provides a discussion of the general background for the thesis investigation, including an explanation of the research problem and key questions. Chapter 2 reviews the theoretical and empirical literature on youth political participation in established democracies and in developing nations, particularly in Southeast Asia. Additionally, this chapter identifies a number of gaps in the existing literature and isolates specific explanatory factors which

will be employed in the analytical framework of this dissertation in order to develop an explanation of youth political (dis-) engagement in Malaysia. Chapter 3 presents the methodological approach applied in the thesis, in particular the rationale for using a case study and a mixed methods approach in the investigation.

The subsequent six chapters illustrate the empirical analysis of the thesis. Chapters 4 and 5 are the quantitative chapters. They provide the statistical analyses of age group differences, particularly between the younger and older cohorts, in both conventional and unconventional political activism. This chapter examines analytically whether young Malaysians are less likely to be politically engaged than their older counterparts by analysing their political activism through survey data from Wave 6 (2010-2014) of the World Values Surveys (WVS), and testing whether explanatory variables such as education, gender and ethnic composition play a role in explaining these differences. Chapter 5 expands the analysis of political activism repertoires to scrutinize whether young people are really disengaged from the political process relative to their elders by using another well-known survey data source, the Asian Barometer Wave 2 (2005-2008) and Wave 3 (2010-2012). Chapter 5 focuses on analysing the relative impact of important intervening variables, including education levels and the rural-urban divide and tests their differential effects for youth political activism in Malaysia.

On the other hand, Chapters 6 to 9 present the results from the qualitative analyses of the semi-structured interviews with academics, political leaders, youth activists and youth non-participants. Chapter 6 reports the results of interview with expert academics on the current patterns of youth participation in Malaysia and youth attitudes towards elite-directed and elite-challenging forms of political participation. More specifically, we focus on whether young Malaysians are politically apathetic or if instead they have simply shifted their participation to other informal modes of engagement. The analysis then moves on to Chapter 7, which comprises an analysis of political elites' views on youth political participation, the structure of the major political parties in Malaysia, the motivations of their members and what role parties play in fostering the political engagement of young people. The analyses reported in Chapter 8 and 9 allow us to compare the political participation patterns of youth activists with those of youth non-participants by considering 'the cost-benefit' analysis underpinning rational choice approaches for understanding why some young people choose to be politically active citizens whereas others do not. In

particular, these chapters analyse young people's interpretation of politics, including their motivations and what drives them to embrace politically favourable or apathetic attitudes. In the final chapter, we conclude the thesis by returning to the research questions and the key debate between elitist and popular conceptions of democracy, highlighting the contributions of this mixed-methods study and addressing future research for this area.

<center>**CHAPTER 2**</center>

<center>**UNDERSTANDING AND EXPLAINING YOUTH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION
AND NON-PARTICIPATION**</center>

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews relevant empirical evidence on young people's political engagement to gauge the extent to which existing studies explain youth participation and non-participation in general. The sources included in this literature are selected to give a picture of the gaps in previous studies, to provide analytical criticism and a well-rounded picture of academic discourse on youth political participation in established democracies and developing nations. This literature review is structured into three parts. First, we motivate this research by explaining in detail the relationship between political participation and democracy in some of the normative literature on participation to consider why political participation can be seen as something good for democracy. This part also examines the concept of political participation by highlighting changes in the conceptualisation of political participation and a broader repertoire of political actions. The second part of this chapter discusses the empirical literature on youth political participation in established democracies, Southeast Asia, and Malaysia more specifically, the focus of the present study, to identify the gaps in scholarly understanding of patterns of youth political participation. Having reviewed the empirical evidence that already exists in relation to young people's political (dis) engagement, this chapter then moves on to analyse the main theoretical explanations for participation in the literature thus allowing for the construction of a more comprehensive model of participation devised specifically to explain why young Malaysians choose to participate or not in the political process.

2.2   The concept of political participation and democracy

Citizen participation is the heart of democracy (Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995). It is necessary to participate in the political system since it determines the way democracy works, and acts as an indicator to measure the democratic quality (Russell *et al.,* 2002). By participating in democracy, citizens' preferences are transmitted to political decision makers (Parry, Moyser and Day, 1992; Lipset, 1963). Thus, the democratic values of society can be strengthened when many people influence political decision-making, or at least influence those who make the decisions (Hague and Harrop, 2001). From Ancient Greece up to the present day, the role and power of citizen participation in political decision-making have long been subject to critical debate (Held, 2006). Disagreements are particularly focused on the question of who is best suited to make political decisions, the elites or the masses? And to what extent is participation by the people desirable? Given that the central premise of this thesis lies in a belief that more active engagement in politics is generally desirable, we first start by looking at the normative literature on political participation, particularly the debate between two conceptions of democracy: elitist democracy versus popular conceptions of democracy.

2.2.1   The elitist conception of democracy

The main claim of the elitist theory of democracy is that citizens alone are ineffective in decision-making and thus should only play a limited role and rely on representatives. Democracy, according to the minimalist or realist conception, is "an institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote" (Schumpeter, 1943:24). By this definition, Schumpeter argues that citizens are 'incapable of action other than stampede' (Schumpeter, 1943:283); thus, their participation will be limited to voting, not the day-to-day affairs of governing.

Popper (1962:124) notes how democracy is "the only system in which citizens can get rid of the government without bloodshed". In a democracy, leaders compete for mass support in periodic elections. This means citizens act as 'controllers' rather than 'participants' (Parry and Moyser, 1984). Elitist theorists see citizen participation in democracy, mainly through the voting mechanism, as the way to legitimise elite decision-

making (Berelson *et al.,* 1954; Schumpeter, 1952). However, for them, the key concern is that the government gain legitimacy through popular democratic validation (Schumpeter, 1952).

Most advocates of elite democracy emphasise the dangers of mass political participation and claim that power must be handed to experts, since they alone have the requisite knowledge, skills, and experience to deal with it. The emergence of representative democracy due to the growth of industrialised mass society changed the responsibility of decision-making from the hands of the citizens to the representatives who are elected in periodic elections. For Schumpeter (1943), ordinary people are incapable of making rational judgements in the law-making process because the relevant political issues are too distant from their daily lives. It is thus better to limit the impact of citizen participation on the political system to reduce any discrepancies and facilitate adjustments (Berelson *et al.,* 1954). On this conception, the political system will be overloaded by too much input. In the words of Pateman (1970:14), "The level of participation by the majority should not rise much above the minimum necessary to keep the democratic method (electoral machinery) working."

Elitist conceptions hold that democracy is better if fewer people participate, which assumes that many people not participating is a sign of satisfaction (Miroff *et al.,* 2009). The 'problem' of low participation only occurs from this perspective insofar as it makes the system look illegitimate when too few people participate in elections. For Beetham (1993, 2002), political participation may not lead towards democracy and in fact, will damage democracy, especially in the authoritarian and communist nations because there is a high level of participation, but could not provide meaningful participation because citizens have less control over political decisions. However, some argue that elite democracy has normative shortcomings in its pessimistic outlook about citizens and sole focus on the stability and effectiveness of the system, rather than trying to stimulate greater individual participation and the moral development of citizens (Schafer, 1974; Walker, 1966). Thus, the elitist discussion on democracy is important in uncovering to what extent political elites in Malaysia encourage or discourage young people from becoming politically engaged citizens.

2.2.2   The popular conception of democracy

The central thrust of the theory of popular democracy is that the political system should encourage as many citizens as possible to participate in the decision-making process (Miroff *et al.*, 2009). On this conception, it is important to give democratic control to the people as a means of holding the government to account and to reinforce a stronger democracy (Barber, 1984).[8] For popular democratic thinking, the fact that many people disengage from politics is a problem, and the blame for people's disengagement should be laid on the system and its actors, rather than people themselves (Bale *et al.*, 2006). However, other scholars like Hibbings and Theiss-Morse (2002) take a more sceptical view by arguing that not all citizens desire to participate actively in politics, but instead opt to leave political decisions in the hands of representatives or have a 'stealth' democracy.

Popular democracy emerges as a means to improve the flaws and broken promises of the representative system (Hayward, 1996; Taggart, 2002), and to include new social groups within the democratic process (Laclau, 2005).[9] Popular democracy involves more than free elections—it means citizens are capable of managing and governing themselves effectively. They must be allowed to involve themselves in political affairs and the institutions of civic society as stakeholders, and ensure that representatives are accountable to preserve individual rights and equality, as opposed to the interests of the elites. Thus, the proponents of popular democracy such as Blinder (1997) and Majone (1996) suggest that the power of decision-making should not be handed to non-partisan experts or non-majoritarian institutions (NMIs). These institutions, according to Majone (1996), are not directly accountable to the people or the elites. Delegating power to experts – such as self-regulatory bodies, national regulatory agencies or supranational organisations – in order to promote 'policy credibility' (Gilardi, 2002) and 'procedural legitimacy' (Thatcher and Stone Sweet, 2002) degrades the government, devalues politics, and at the same time, alienates citizens from politics.

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[8]It is important to note that popular democracy is distinct conceptually from notions of direct democracy or simply majority rule since it is still consistent with representative systems (see Mair 2006 for example), but it is rooted in the ideas of direct democracy practiced in Ancient Greek city-states.

[9]Citizens' participation in democracy, for Parry (1972), can be understood through two broad theories: the instrumental and developmental. The instrumental theories see participation as an effective way to safeguard the citizens' interests from the growth of government tyranny. On the other hand, the developmental theories believe that participation has an educative function that will educate individuals to manage their own affairs.

Yet, institutional reform has been advocated by advocates of participatory democracy as a reaction to the imperfections of modern liberal democracy (Held, 2006; Behrouzi, 2006). This approach emphasizes the importance of citizens participating in political discussions, which simultaneously 'increase[s] the quality of democratic judgements' (Warren, 1996:4), and leads to maximizing the creation of more informed and critical citizens (Fishkin, 1991). Deliberative democracy also promotes the ideal of mutual respect, where each citizen justifies public policy by giving realistic reasons that can be mutually accepted by others (Gutmann and Thompson, 2004). The acceptance of collective decisions helps to limit the danger of conflicts and polarization among citizens. However, some argue that the modes of communication used in deliberation can exclude many potential participants, since they have different socioeconomic backgrounds, social privileges, and political knowledge (Young, 2000; Stoker, 2006).

Mair (2013) claims that many institutional reforms, particularly those trying to make democracy more meaningful for ordinary citizens, actually discourage mass engagement. For Mair (2013), scholars who attempt to redefine democracy (such as Zakaria, 1997; Everson, 2000) tend to emphasise the constitutional element, rather than bringing back popular sovereignty. The downgrading of popular democracy, according to Mair (2013), is due to the failure of political parties. Parties fail in two ways: they fail to mobilize the masses to participate in the political process (Watternberg, 2000); and they are seen as a way for political leaders to pursue self-interest by holding office, rather than serving the public (Mair, 2013). Without political parties, there will be a breakdown of democracy (Schattschneider, 1942; Mair, 2013; Dalton and Watternberg, 2000). In contrast, Norris (2002) argues that many traditional agencies, including mass political parties no longer hold the monopoly on democratic engagement since many new contemporary channels of participation have emerged such as social movements and single-issue campaigns which allow greater participatory choice. Rather than declining, participation has thus merely shifted from the politics of loyalties towards the politics of choice. Whilst there is an expansion in participatory repertoires, Mair (2006), however, stresses that these forms of participation cannot replace the important role of political parties in representative democracy. Therefore, the popular conception of democracy is particularly useful to contextualise the analyses in this study because it provides a compelling argument for why participation is desirable for all citizens – and particularly, for new generations of young people.

2.3 Political participation: towards a definition

Most literature on political participation derives from an assessment of the practice of democracy (Van Deth, 2014). Although the term *political participation* has been defined by many scholars in various ways, differing remarkably in its interpretations and the potential activities of citizens, the main ideas behind each definition are similar (Brady, 1999). To understand political participation, we identify the conceptualizations of some prominent scholars into different categories such as definition, typology, and actions (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1   A conceptual map of political participation

Scholar(s)	Definition	Typology	Typical Actions
Verba and Nie (1972:2):	"...those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take".	Conventional	-Voting -Campaign activity -Particularised contacting -Cooperative activities
Milbrath and Goel, (1977:2):	"...those actions of private citizens by which they seek to influence or to support government and politics".	Conventional-	**Gladiatorial activities–** -Holding public and party office -Becoming candidate for office -Active party membership -Contributing time in a campaign **Transitional activities–** -Attending a political rally -Donating money to a party -Contacting an official **Spectator activities–** -Wearing a button -Trying to talk to someone into voting a certain way -Political discussions -Voting

Barnes and Kaase (1979:42):	"all voluntary activities intended to influence either directly or indirectly political choices at various levels of the political system"	Conventional	-Electoral process activities
		Unconventional	-Demonstrations -Boycotts -Illegal strikes -Personal violence
Parry, Moyser and Day (1992:16)	".. actions by citizens which is aimed at influencing decision which are in most cases ultimately taken by public representatives and officials. This may be an action which seeks to shape the attitudes of decision-makers in matters yet to be decided, or it may be actionable in protest at the outcome of some decision.	Conventional	-Community activists (local issues) -Party and campaign workers -Communicators -Contactors of politicians or officials on specific matters -Voters -Inactive
		Unconventional	-Protestors
Norris (2002:193)	Political participation can not only be aimed at governments, but also at markets, NGOs, the media or even individuals.	Citizen-oriented Actions (Conventional)	-Voting -Party work -Contact activity
		Cause-oriented Actions (Unconventional)	-Consumer politics -Demonstrations -Petitions
Teorell *et al.* (2007:336)	"...any decision over the authoritative allocation of values for society"	Conventional	-Electoral participation -Party activity -Contact activity
		Unconventional	-Consumer participation -Protest activity

Ekman and Amna (2012:289)	"...all actions directed towards influencing governmental decisions and political outcomes"	Formal political participation	-Voting in elections and referenda -Deliberate acts of non-voting or blank voting -Contacting political representatives or civil servants -Holding public office -Donating money to political organizations -Being a member a political party, organization or trade union. -Voluntarily work or attending meetings
		Extra-parliamentary participation	-Boycotting and political consumption -Signing petition -Handing out political leaflets -Joining new social movements -Demonstrating and participating in strikes -Civil disobedience -Politically motivated attacks on property. -Sabotaging -Squatting buildings -Violence confrontations with political opponents or police.

Based on the table above, several important points can illuminate the concept of political participation. First, four main elements occur in most definitions of political participation as proposed by Brady (1999): activity, citizens, influence, and political decisions. The *activity* here refers to how citizens participate in politics, for example by voting, demonstrating, or attending meetings (Quintelier, 2007). As this thesis aims to examine the patterns and attitudes of young Malaysians toward politics, it follows Almond and Verba (1963), Barnes and Kaase (1979) and Milbrath and Goel (1977), to include 'everyday' informal engagement such as political discussion, and reading or watching political news as indicators to measure their political activism. Though these activities may be considered

as exemplifying relatively low levels of participation, they can elucidate the extent to which young people in Malaysia are engaged or disengaged from politics.

In addition, political participation needs to be engaged in by *citizens* or the mass public, rather than politicians or professional lobbyists (Burns, Scholzman and Verba, 2001). The third component is *influence*, which means citizens voluntarily attempt to influence the government's decisions, without any threats or law enforcement (Brady, 1999). The fourth common aspect in political participation is *political decisions*. In particular, citizens participate to influence the authoritative allocation of values, and public goods by the government. Thus, the participant aims to target the political system as a whole, rather than being restricted to public policy makers.

Historically, there has been a development in the typologies of political participation studied in the literature from one-dimensional phenomena to two dimensional and then multidimensional phenomena. One-dimensional understandings of participation consist primarily of electoral activities and non-violent participation, such as voting and party membership. For example, McClosky (1968), and Milbrath and Goel (1977) view political participation as a one-dimensional political activity. Notably, citizens are distinguished based on their 'activeness' in politics, ranging from political activists who play a full role in politics, through citizens who observe, but refuse to take part in politics, to apathetic citizens who neither participate nor concern themselves with political matters (Verba, Nie and Kim, 1978). However, a general increase in the level of education of citizens has augmented their tendency to participate more directly in methods, such as protest-oriented activities, to influence political decision makers (Inglehart, 1990). Thus, it is helpful to broaden the conception of political participation to include non-conventional methods. This is called a two-dimensional concept of political participation. Barnes and Kaase (1979) show that unconventional participation, such as protesting, does not fit in the one-dimensional mode of participation, since people who participate in one form of participation do not necessarily participate in other forms. So, the authors provide a distinction in the form of political involvement into conventional and unconventional forms. Most of the recent literature, however, argues that political participation is a multidimensional phenomenon, where citizens tend to engage in a combination of different forms of political participation with different potential targets and spread over more diverse mobilising agencies (Norris, 2002; Marsh *et al.,* 2007; Dalton, 2013). This

multidimensional understanding of political participation is more likely to reflect the patterns of engagement embraced by young people, since it is more meaningful and practical to them (Vinken, 2005).

In this regard, political action is not only targeted at the government but can also be directed towards other agencies, such as private organisations and NGOs, in an attempt to influence political outcomes (Teorell *et al.,* 2007). For example, political consumerism—boycotting, consumption or purchasing products for political or ethical motives—aims to influence international or supranational actors more than national government (Stolle, Hooghe and Micheletti, 2005; Ward and De Vreese, 2011). Stuart (2015) identifies three factors that are responsible for broadening the repertoire of political participation in Western democracies. First, the rise of new media makes citizens become more politically informed since they can easily access political information via online platforms (Norris, 2001). These developments enable citizens to engage in new ways in political activities such as online participation, consumer boycotts and signing petitions, while at the same time depending on traditional agencies like political parties (Theocharis, 2012). In addition, the expansion of education has created more politically sophisticated citizens who are more capable of gathering and interpreting information, and who use this information to achieve their political goals (Watternberg, 2012; Dalton, 2013). Education, as argued by Watternberg (2012) and Dalton (2013), is closely linked to political sophistication, where the more educated an individual, the more politically sophisticated they will likely be. As politically sophisticated citizens possess greater political knowledge and skills, they are less attached to political agents for guidance and resources (Norris, 2001). Even without mobilisation from political parties, they still can be politically active citizens, particularly in political activities outside the formal arena (Dalton, 2013). Finally, the evolution of political participation is also related to the decline of deeply-rooted political cleavages such as class and ethnicity, and alongside this decline we have seen rising levels of individual autonomy and self-expression—with individuals being understood to have a greater capacity to express attitudes without constraints from external factors such as economic concerns, gender and so forth (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). In this regard, changes in society and in the economy, including rising living standards and the expansion of education, have reduced individuals' concerns for materialist issues (economic prosperity and physical security) making them instead more concerned about 'postmaterialist' values (belonging, self-expression and quality of life) (Inglehart, 1990). A shift in political values

is in turn understood to have brought new political issues such as environmentalism to the fore and provided a new impetus for social movements.

Since the repertoire of political engagement is broad and sometimes overlapping, we focus on the distinction between conventional and unconventional forms of political participation, or *elite-directed* and *elite-challenging* repertoires (Inglehart, 1990). This classification is relevant for this research since it provides a clear differentiation between the two repertoires and allows for an investigation into different modes of political action to assess whether young people in Malaysia are apathetic or whether they simply prefer to participate through non-conventional means.

2.3.1 Conventional political participation: elite-directed forms of political participation

Conventional political participation, also known as 'formal politics', 'traditional politics', and 'elite-directed participation', can be defined as all means recognised by the prevailing political culture as acceptable and that are related to institutionalized actions (Conway, 1991) or sanctioned and inspired by political elites (Marsh, 1990). According to Inglehart (1997:3), "Elite-directed political participation is largely the matter of elites mobilising mass support through established organizations such as political parties, labour unions, religious institutions and so on". It is often associated with moderate actions or activities that are embedded in the legal institutionalized framework such as voting and electoral politics, including 'everyday engagement' like political discussion, work for a party and contacting officials. Thus, we will use these types of political activity as parameters to examine the current patterns of youth political participation in Malaysia. However, many scholars show how, during the 1970s, there was a waning of civic and political activism, mainly voting and party membership, in post-industrial societies (Habermas, 1973; Crozier *et al.,* 1975), and that activities that challenge elite decisions have become increasingly widespread (Inglehart, 1990), thus in turn developing another strand of forms of political participation known as 'unconventional political participation'.

2.3.2 Unconventional political participation: elite-challenging forms of political participation

Since the 1960-70s, a 'protest wave' (Barker, 2008) or 'cycle of protest' (Tarrow, 1983) was on the rise, including phenomena such as demonstrations, strikes, riots and student movements in Western democracies. The rise of the civil rights movement in America and the May Revolts in France were some examples of the vigorous protests that occurred in the 1960s. Many scholars believe that voting and institutionalized activities are not the only way to identify citizen engagement in politics. For example, Barnes and Kaase (1979) emphasise that engagement in politics should include other modes of participation or so-called 'unconventional' participation, like protests, riots, and civil disobedience, to influence political decisions.[10] Unconventional political participation refers to those modes related to non-institutionalized actions (Marsh and Kaase, 1979). This type of participation is also referred to as 'new', non-institutionalized (Marien, Hooghe and Quintelier, 2010), alternative (Della Porta, 2005), elite-challenging (Inglehart, 1990), and extra-parliamentary (Ekman and Amna, 2012). Amongst its characteristics are that it is not structurally embedded in the political system, frequently directed against the system; and at least aimed at changing the *status quo*. Therefore, activities like boycotting, signing petitions, joining demonstrations, and new social movement engagement will be examined to measure Malaysian youth's participation in unconventional politics.

These activities are pervasive and popular, mostly attracting young people in recent decades. They are attracted to these forms of participation because of their characteristics: they are loosely structured (Wuthnow, 1998); community-based initiatives (Fahmy, 2006); *ad hoc* and focused on a clear issue (Inglehart, 1990). According to Norris (2003:17), young people in post-industrialized societies are more likely to involve themselves in cause-oriented political action or unconventional forms of participation, so there is a broader cultural shift amongst young people "from the politics of loyalties towards the politics of choice". Unconventional participation differs from traditional modes in several ways. First, it is targeted at powerful state actors, and to some extent other country's governments and international organizations. Second, unconventional acts happen

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[10]Barnes and Kaase (1979) were the first to identify a typology of political participation based on conventional; and unconventional politics. This typology is widely accepted and has been developed upon by many scholars (Dalton, 1988; Parry, Moyser and Day, 1992; Norris, 2002; Teorell *et al.*, 2007; Inglehart, 1990).

sporadically, for a specific reason, rather than following a fixed schedule (Quaranta, 2012). Finally, though sometimes they fail to achieve their objectives, these acts tend to create pressure on the actors being challenged.

2.4 The changing patterns of youth political participation in established democracies

Young people's political engagement has been the subject of academic debates in established democracies over past decades. There is a vast literature on youth political participation in Western democracies, which largely takes a quantitative-based approach. Much of this literature confirms that young people or the 'millennial generation' are less likely than their older counterparts to vote in elections (Henn *et al.,* 2005; Henn and Foard, 2012; Furlong and Cartmel, 2012, Marsh *et al,* 2007). The reluctance of young people to vote is also reflected in other formal political activities. Young people are shown to have a weaker party identification (Norris, 2002; Russell *et al.,* 2002; Mycock and Tonge, 2012) and to be less likely to join political parties than older people. They were also less likely to engage in traditional institutions, such as labour unions and churches (Putnam, 2000; Skocpol, 2003; Phelps, 2010) and apparently are shown to have less interaction with politicians (Pattie*,* Seyd and Whiteley*,* 2004; Henn and Foard, 2012). Some studies also argue that young people have a very low level of political knowledge relative to older people (Park, 2000; Watternberg, 2012). The decline of youth engagement in conventional politics for some (Pirie and Worcester, 1998; Kimberlee, 2002) is related to the hypothesis of youth apathy—young people are apathetic with regards to politics.[11]

2.4.1 Young people and political apathy

The youth are perceived as politically apathetic when many of them are disengaged from political activities, show low levels of political interest and literacy, and are seriously under-represented at all levels of government. Why do young people appear to be politically inactive? The basis for an explanation of youth disengagement could lie in the theory of life-cycle effects: the changes in maturity, physical and social experiences that

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[11]According to Rosenberg (1955), political apathy refers to an individual's lack of motivation for personal involvement with politics. This could mean that an apathetic youth sees political activities as undesirable and not something they are motivated to engage with.

take place as individuals age influence their political attitude (Verba and Nie, 1972; Norris, 2003; Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980; Van Deth, 1990; Dalton 1988). Research has shown that young people tend to be uninterested in politics since they are facing more important life tasks, such as starting a career and a family (Converse and Niemi, 1971), but when these issues resolve themselves, they will participate in politics. Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980) support the idea that the interest to participate in politics may arise when young people begin to take on the role of adults in society and settle down. For example, when young people get married and start a family, they may start thinking about their responsibility to provide a brighter future for their children, and therefore they will vote in order to influence government policies. Additionally, family is an important agent of socialization that tends to develop the political interest of children to become politically engaged adults. However, Dinas (2014) finds out that young adults from highly politicised families are more likely to diverge from their parents' partisan preferences due to the new social context and political issues. Therefore, young people tend to be marginalised as they have more idealistic views about the world than older generations. Although this approach has been widely accepted, theories of the life-cycle alone do not provide sufficient explanations of the universal decline in formal politics in established democracies (Franklin, 2004; Hooghe *et al.*, 2004).

Some suggest another possible explanation of youth political apathy, that of 'generational' or cohort effects (Kimberlee, 2002; Park, 2000; Grasso, 2014, 2016). The concept of generation was first discussed by Mannheim, who acknowledged a strong connection between generations and social change. For Mannheim ([1928] 1952), members of the same generations who face similar experiences and encounter similarly impressionable events developed a shared set of attitudes, which differ from their older counterparts. Therefore, it could be expected that the apathetic young people of today will be the apathetic older generations of tomorrow (Park, 1995). Grasso (2014), for example, shows how across Western Europe, the 1960s-70s generations who came of age in a more radical political context are more likely than both the younger generation coming of age in the 1980s and also those generations coming of age in the 1990s to demonstrate and petition and more likely than the 1990s generation to participate in social movement organizations (SMOs). In her recent study, Grasso (2016) shows how extra-institutionalised participation like protest activism cannot be the solution for raising participation levels or stemming the weakening of democracy, since both conventional and

unconventional participation will continue to decline in future, based on the evidence that the politically active 1960s-1970s generation of baby-boomers will be replaced by politically passive 1980s-1990s generation in the population.

Although young people may be seen as less active than some older generations in political activities such as voting or protest, this should not be taken as a sign of apathy towards politics *per se* (Wilkinson and Mulgan, 1995). Instead, scholars such as O'Toole *et al.,* (2003), Marsh *et al.* (2007), Phelps (2005) and Henn *et al.,* (2002) underline a number of problems with 'conventional political science' (Henn *et al*., 2002:170) or 'mainstream survey-based' research (O'Toole *et al*., 2003:46). Firstly, they criticised the methodological grounds of the mainstream literature for over-reliance on close-ended questions in measuring youth political participation and assuming that older people shared similar view about politics with young people (Henn *et al*., 2002; O'Toole *et al*., 2003). They also argue that heavy reliance on quantitative approaches in studying participation caused 'mainstream' research to embrace a very narrow concept of political participation. They argue that the failure of most 'mainstream' research to go beyond conventional politics to consider other forms of political activity has led young people to be counted as apathetic and to undermine the importance of other 'alternative' forms of political action. For example, O'Toole *et al*., (2003:46) criticised the use of 'top-down' approaches in the mainstream literature by arguing that it is difficult to determine youth disengagement without exploring how young people themselves define politics. This is because young people conceptualise 'politics' in a different way from older generations (White *et al.,* 2000). Only when a qualitative approach is applied by researchers on youth participation would they be capable of identifying the youth's conception of political participation and find evidence for higher levels of youth political activism (Henn *et al.* 2002; Marsh *et al.,* 2007). In this thesis, we thus follow the advice of O'Toole *et al.* (2003) and Henn *et al.* (2002) that it is necessary to employ qualitative methods alongside quantitative techniques and to employ a broad concept of political participation and explore youth-based definition of politics, to include new political repertoires that lie outside mainstream politics if we are to better understand why young people are not interested in politics.

Many qualitative-based studies (Henn *et al.,* 2005; Norris 2007; Sloam, 2014), particularly those who oppose the youth apathy thesis, make contrasting findings: young people are indeed interested in political matters, they support the democratic process and

are politically engaged. However, they are 'doing politics' differently to older people by participating in informal forms of participation such as online actions, political consumerism, and single-issue groups that are not counted as 'politics' in some conceptions. Sloam (2013), for example, finds evidence that young Britons are more actively engaged in protest activism than their elders by pointing to their participation in protests against the Iraq war and in the Occupy movement. These new forms of political participation may be considered as "less political" (Quintelier 2007:167) but more attractive to young people.

2.4.2   Young people and political alienation

Far from being apathetic some scholars have pointed out how young people are distinctly alienated from the political process, including its actors and institutions (Henn *et al.,* 2005, Fahmy, 2006; Marsh *et al.,* 2007). Consequently, they are typically characterised as 'engaged sceptics' (Henn *et al*., 2002; O'Toole *et al*., 2003). According to the perspective of youth alienation, there are several reasons why young people are alienated from politics. First, young people's alienation is related to lack of trust in political actors due to their unresponsiveness in fulfilling promises and prioritising the interests of young people (Henn *et al*. 2002; Fahmy, 2006; Wilkinson and Mulgan, 1995). For example, research by Henn and Foard (2012) reveals that only half of young people felt that politicians cared enough about what they thought and less than half of the youth claimed that they were treated fairly by the government. Young people tend to view politicians in a very cynical light as unresponsive, remote, and only pursuing their own self-interest. Second, some point to young people's lack of political knowledge and understanding as one of the reasons underpinning youth political alienation (Henn and Foard, 2012; White *et al.,* 2000; Delli Carpini, 2000). In this regard, young people are understood to be largely ignorant about how the system and government function. According to White *et al.,* (2000), a lack of knowledge about politics makes young people perceive politics as a 'dull', 'irrelevant' and a 'complex' subject, which leaves them uninterested in participating. To some extent, the use of political jargon and 'vague' language by politicians promotes a deficit in the understanding of politics amongst young people. In particular, young people could not develop an interest and knowledge to facilitate political participation because of their lack of engagement with the sources of information such as the media (Bennett, 1997) and political parties (Campbell *et al.,* 1960; Butler and Stokes, 1969).

In addition, the nature of the political system and parties, which are seen as too complicated, has undermined young people's ability to influence political decisions (Sloam, 2014; Watternberg, 2002). For example, studies show that members of political parties, including young members, feel increasingly marginalised by highly centralised policymaking in both the Conservative and Labour Party (Seyd and Whiteley, 2002). Similarly, Marsh (1975) finds that young people are blaming the system, i.e democracy, for their dissatisfaction over living conditions in developed countries like Britain. When the system does not grant young people the opportunity to speak about their views, it discourages young people from participating because they feel that their demands are not represented by their country's institutions. Sometimes, policies regulated by the government are problematised, do not reflect young people's interests, and there are times when the youth are increasingly criminalised by the state due to their participation in politics, particularly those actions that aim to challenge the *status quo* (Bessant, 2016). In 2010, for example, the demonstration 'Fund Our Future' (FoF) in the UK saw the use of riot police, kettling and mass arrests against students protesting for austerity measures by the government. Furthermore, growing individualisation has undermined the role of traditional parties and organisations in society (Giddens, 2000; Piven and Cloward, 2000). In other words, political parties, which are supposed to serve as an important recruitment channel for party members to mobilize citizens' supports and facilitate governance, have weakened as the candidate-centred or issues-centred approaches have become more priorities to citizens, particularly young people. Nowadays campaigns are channelled through the media, rather than candidates directly greeting, and speaking to the voters. Political parties are understood to be withering and politicians are seen as detached from the people and particularly young people.

2.4.3   Young people and political exclusion

The impact of rapid industrialisation, modernisation and globalisation have transformed society from being hierarchically-structured to being network-based (Castells and Cardoso, 2006). In a network-based society, the citizen's orientation is no longer attached to constructed interests such as class, ethnicity, and party affiliation (Akram *et al.*, 2014). Also, most of the functions of the state are delegated from political elites to non-partisan experts or a network state and governance (Bang, 2005). These changes thus have created a

new form of political participation known as 'expert citizens' and the 'everyday makers'.[12] Bang (2005) argues that these types of participation further alienate citizens from the political process, meaning citizens' trust of political representatives wanes, thus creating the crucial problem of political exclusion. Political exclusion is when groups of people are excluded from governance networks and the decision-making process (Bang, 2005). The exclusion of substantial parts of the population from political decision-making is bad for a democracy as their 'interests will not be given the same attention as the interests of those who do have a voice' (Dahl, 1989:76). In this respect, participation in democracy aims at the distribution of collective goods, in which the benefits have to be shared across the whole society, including those who do not contribute to the production. As a consequence, 'free-rider' citizens may emerge, those who do not engage in any political activities, but enjoy the benefits of citizenship and collective actions (Marsh, O'Toole and Jones, 2007; Pattie, Seyd and Whiteley, 2004).

Returning to the major concern of this section, several factors contribute to political exclusion. One of the potential factors to measure exclusion is inequality in political participation. Inequality occurs when political power or influence is biased in favour of some groups in society against others. In particular, the practices of participation tend to privilege those with better structural advantages like higher levels of education and socioeconomic status (Kirby and Bryson, 2002). Those with better economic and social resources generally have greater influence in political decision-making. For instance, Dahl (2006: 85) argues that economic inequality should be expected to reduce political participation, particularly among the poorer citizens. Brady (2004), however, believes that greater inequality should increase political engagement, generally of the affluent. There is also a group of people who possess better structural positions but exit from politics because they feel that political activity is futile (Rosenberg, 1955; O'Toole *et al.* 2003). In addition, political inequality can be expressed in several forms such as socioeconomic status, education, gender gap, age, disabilities, minority status and so on. There are gender gaps in voting and other conventional activities, including affiliation with political organisations,

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[12]'The expert citizens' concept refers to strategic individuals or new professionals who are involved in voluntary organizations, use their expert knowledge and skills to influence elites in political outcomes. On the other hand, 'the everyday maker' is defined as those individuals who shun state-based participation, but get involved in local issues or cause-driven projects. Among the characteristics of everyday makers are: lower interest in political parties or organizations; they participate in politics just for fun, part time, ad hoc and for non-ideological reasons; they are seen to have emerged as a response to the expert citizens. See Bang (2005) and Li and Marsh (2008) for more details.

campaign contributions, contacting officials and working informally to manage community problems (Verba *et al.,* 1995). Women are more likely to participate less in politics than men and are under-represented in parliaments as they have traditionally fewer resources and are constrained by family commitments (Burns, Schlozman and Verba, 2001; Karp and Banducci, 2008). However, Stolle and Hooghe (2009) show how women are being more active in non-institutionalised activities like signing petitions and boycotts, since there are now more women who have entered the labour force, permitting them to gain resources and learning skills through activities carried out on the job.

2.4.4   Young people and changing values

One idea that is fundamental to understand the disengagement of young people from conventional politics is the decline of the structure of political cleavages (such as class and ethnic cleavages), that traditionally framed party competition and tied voters to parties (Dalton, 1999). The thawing of political cleavages is due to the emergence of new 'value cleavages' or post-materialist values which make young people more fragmented and individualised, excluded socially and politically. As Inglehart (1990) argues, people's values can no longer be understood with reference to the traditional left-right cleavage, but depend increasingly on a single-issue politics. This has occurred due to a modernization process, where material well-being and physical security have been achieved so that there is a move to post-material concerns such as self-expression and emancipative values, as well as priorities like quality of life and individual freedom. Inglehart (1990) for example, argues that the cohort which experienced two World Wars and the Great Depression is less postmaterialist than the youngest cohort (post-war cohort) who lived under more secure formative conditions. He claims that developments in education, an expanded youth cohort and an era of prosperity have led to the rise of new social movements and 'elite-challenging' activities. These activities, such as online petitions, online protest, and mobilising users to boycott certain products, are seen as more congruent with the characteristics and values of post-materialism (Loader, 2007; Wring and Ward, 2010). Moreover, Giugni (2007) and McAdam (1999) conclude that activism in turn impacts on the social and cultural patterns of contemporary Western society, particularly on the population at large and the aggregate patterns of life-course events such as non-traditional lifestyle choices.

These new values motivate people to have a free choice, which later encourages them to become involved in collective actions (McAdam, 1999), which in turn lead to the formation of a 'participatory culture' and a greater push towards democratisation (Inglehart, 1997; Dalton, 2002; Norris, 2002) as well as deviations from the normal life-course sequence (Rindfuss *et al.*, 1987). Thus, to move from authoritarian rule to democracy, people must possess these values and put pressure on regimes for democratisation. According to Almond and Verba (1963), the stability of political regimes depends on the people's beliefs about its legitimacy and authority and therefore political regimes must supply democracy in accordance to the demand of the people in order to self-sustain.

The review of the existing literatures above has drawn from evidence on the decline of young people's engagement in formal politics in established democracies and summarised the key findings. Most of this research provides comprehensive analyses using a combination of variables and models in examining the patterns of young people's political (dis) engagement. In the next sections, we develop a theoretical framework which is underpinned by previous studies to examine the dynamic patterns of youth political participation in Malaysia more specifically.

2.5   The patterns of youth political participation in developing nations: the case of Southeast Asian countries

The dramatic fall of young people's political engagement in established democracies has long been debated by scholars. Although this issue has traditionally been neglected in Southeast Asian countries, recently the academic literature on the subject has begun to grow due to the dramatic change in youth turnout in national elections (See Figure 2.1). Asian Barometer Survey (Wave II and III) has shown a decline of youth turnout in Southeast Asia countries except for Vietnam (in Yun Han Chu, Welsh and Weatherall 2012). Vietnam has a higher turnout because of its newly revised electoral system (Chang, 2012). What explains this change? What are the most important and common factors influencing youth participation and non-participation in Southeast Asia countries?
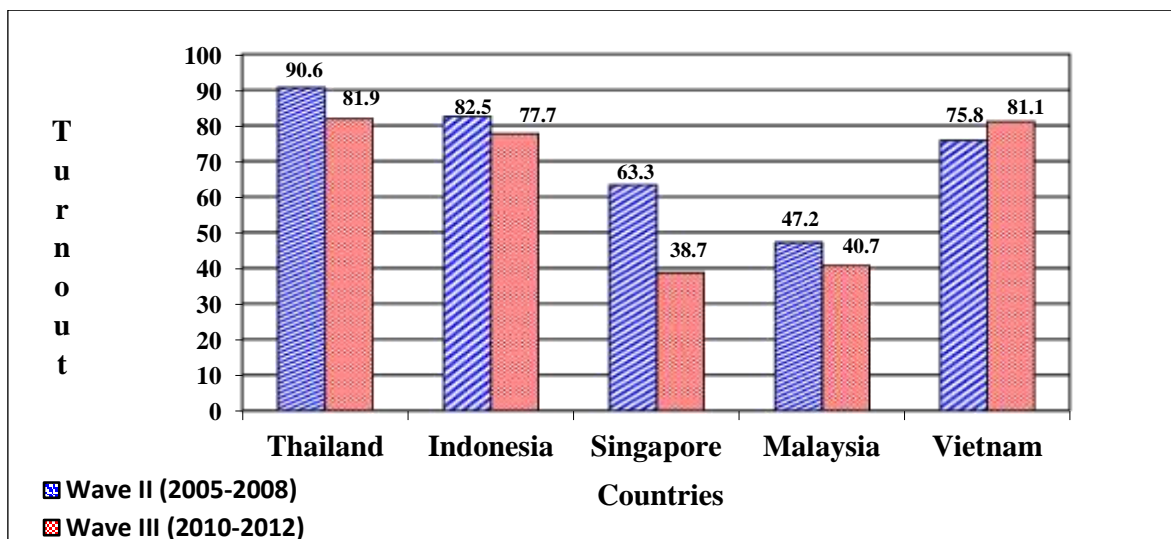
Figure 2.1 Change in youth turnout in Southeast Asia countries

(Source: Asian Barometer Survey, in Chang, 2012)

2.5.1 Key studies on participation in Southeast Asia

Although socioeconomic factors such as age, gender and income have been widely used as the most prominent type of explanation for youth political engagement in established democracies, Chang (2012) argues that the variation in socioeconomic background is not a strong predictor for the decline of youth voter turnout in Southeast Asia. However, some argue that socioeconomic indicators are important to measure political participation in this region. For example, Yun Han Chu, Welsh and Weatherall (2012:210) show how less developed economies have entered a period of rapid growth and industrialization, which should lead young people to engage in politics as they have greater access to education and the new media or 'post-industrial knowledge'. However, not every East Asian country has undergone rapid industrialization and economic development. Some of the young people in Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos are unemployed, have been forced to drop out of school and find jobs to support their families. Thus, poor living conditions remain the obstacle for young people from participating in politics in developing counties (Mansfield, 2008). This argument is endorsed by the findings of Welsh and Chang (2012) on a comparative study of youth and democratic citizenship comparing Malaysia with Cambodia. They find that low income youth in both countries tend to have less interest in politics and those with low education strongly support political traditionalism—government as a powerful entity which needs to be obeyed.

As scholars in established democracies and particularly the United States have traditionally argued that religiosity plays an important role in explaining citizens' engagement in politics (Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995), those studying Southeast Asia perceive religion as an explanatory driver that shapes young people's attitude towards democracy (Welsh and Chang, 2012; Rashila, 2012). Welsh and Chang (2012) find that religion places a greater emphasis on issues of corruption and moral governance, which attracts religious youngsters in Malaysia and Cambodia to agitate for political change. However, the hierarchical structure (with regards to an age hierarchy) that has long been embedded in Asian societies makes political change less salient, since young people play a marginal role in making political decisions (Chandler, 2000). Based on the Muslim Youth Survey 2011, Rashila (2012), for instance, finds that Malaysian and Indonesian young Muslims not only believe in a strong democratic system, but also accept the implementation of Shariah law as the basic standard of human conduct. Thus, based on the literature discussed in this section, there is strong evidence that the variation in demographic factors such as age, education and urban-rural factors can be used in this thesis as predictors to explain youth political (dis)engagement since they have significant impacts on political activism in the population, including amongst youth.

Other scholars, such as Zhang and Lallana (2013), Yun Han Chu, Welsh and Weatherall (2012) and Henke (2011) point out that disappointment with the practice of democracy and an oppressive regime is another determining factor in the decline of youth political engagement in Southeast Asia. The restrictions of the political system, particularly to freedom of assembly, expression, media, and open public discourse, increase non-participation amongst the youth. In addition, young people also lose their trust in the political representatives as they are associated with corruption, cronyism, and money politics (Zhang and Lallana 2013). They feel their vote would not change anything and that they are powerless to influence political decisions made by the government. Political parties also fail to encourage young people to participate in politics. Thus, they are marginalized, albeit they are concerned for the political development of the respective countries (Rashila, 2012). This argument is in line with the theorising of studies in the UK (Henn *et al,* 2005; Sloam, 2007) on the weakening of links between political agents and citizens, which will be further analysed in this thesis.

Some argue that there is a positive correlation between social capital and youth political participation in Southeast Asia (Chang, 2012). In this sense, young people who actively participate in political activities, both in electoral or informal approaches, are influenced by their strong reciprocal networks, membership of associations and community members who are concerned with local affairs (Chang, 2012:14). Many argue that a strong agent in mobilising youth for political action is the new media (Zhang and Lallana, 2013; Vadrevu and Sun Lim, 2012; Xiaoming Hao *et al.,* 2014). For example, based on a limited sample of 397 students from Singaporean universities, Xiaoming Hao *et al.* (2014), argue that online news consumption either through the Internet or social network sites is significantly correlated with both online and offline political and civic participation amongst Singaporean youth, compared to the consumption of news through the traditional media. However, the findings could not be generalised to the whole youth population in Singapore due to the limitation in the sample. Zhang and Lallana (2013), in contrast, claim that new media function as alternative sources of information and platforms to address community issues. However, in heavily censored regimes like Malaysia and Singapore, young activists do not have the opportunity to use new media as useful tools to reach the public and the government. Thus, such barriers create dissatisfaction among youngsters, which later lead them to avoid participating in politics.

As mentioned above, young people in Southeast Asia seem to be disengaged from formal politics, mainly voting and party membership. Amongst the key factors widely used for explaining youth participation in this region are socioeconomic status such as religion and income, dissatisfaction with political actors and systems and social capital. However, there is a relative dearth of research in Southeast Asia investigating the shift of young people's political participation from mainstream politics to new forms of political activity. We cannot simply characterise young people as apathetic if they are involved in unconventional politics. Instead, they are only apathetic about conventional politics. Thus, we argue that many studies on youth political participation in Southeast Asia provide only a vague analysis in examining the involvement of young people in institutionalized modes but not extra-institutionalized activities like protest, strikes, and petitions. In addition, some researchers do not operationalize their studies within the multilevel and multi-disciplinary framework of political participation, which make them overlook certain factors like institutional context, rational choice (cost-benefit analysis) and relative deprivation theory.

2.6 The patterns of youth political participation in Malaysia

The academic literature on Malaysian youth political engagement has started to grow. However, most existing literature is concerned with either conventional political participation and online activism, including youth voting patterns and behaviours, the issue of unregistered voters in several recent elections,[13] or the influence of new media on youth political engagement. Neither literature provides detailed explanations of youth party activism, nor empirical research comprehensively examining youth engagement in elite-challenging activities. Thus, by using the existing typology of political participation in established democracies, we will examine the patterns and when appropriate the provided explanations for youth political (dis) engagement in Malaysia.

Explanations for pervasive engagement of young people in elections often relate to the advent of digital technology (Norshuhada *et al.,* 2016; Teng and Joo, 2016; Salman and Saad, 2015; Samsudin, 2008; Rashila, 2012; Mohd Fuad and Junaidi, 2012a, 2012b; Tan Lee Ooi, 2010). For instance, Samsudin (2008) studies how social media and issues raised in the electoral campaigns affect the result of the 2008 general election by surveying 8,823 Malaysian young people aged between 21 to 40 years old. The study finds that social media is the main source of information relied on by young people to make an electoral decision, particularly among those who are not satisfied with their socioeconomic conditions. The methodology used in this study was robust because it had a large and representative sample of youth. However, this study did not look at the context of urban and rural characteristics, potentially leading to bias in the analysis. Similarly, research by Norshuhada *et al.,* (2016) which interviewed a group of 1029 member of Generation Y[14] aged between 15 to 25 years old illustrates findings common to many studies of youth online participation. The findings show that social media is the significant tool used by Generation Y to voice their views and as a platform to engage in the decision-making

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[13]The numbers of unregistered voters who are eligible to vote in the 2013 General Election were 4.3 million, and 70 percent of them were young people. Although there is an increase of 20 percent first time voters in the 2013 General Election, the numbers of unregistered voters among youth remain high. This shows that many Malaysian young people do not exercise their rights as citizens, to determine the future leadership of the country. See Mohamed Nawab (2013) for further elaboration.

[14] Generation Y or the 'Millennials' are those who were born in 1980s and early 1990s. This generation is perceived as the most tech savvy group and familiar with communications media and digital technology. See 'Millennials, A Portrait of Generation Next', Pew Research Centre Report (2010), www.pewresearch.org/millennials.

process. By referring to the 2013 general election, they argued that social media has played a significant role in facilitating young people's engagement in the election since it was extensively utilised by this generation to gather information, debate, and communicate with political leaders. However, another recent study by Teng and Joo (2016) challenges the conventional wisdom that social media was a major trigger for youth political activism in the 2013 election. Through a limited and unrepresentative online survey of 250 young people, the findings revealed that social media, mainly *Facebook*, has remarkably increased political awareness amongst youth, but it does not encourage young people to vote since they would still vote even without the media. They also found that young people in general use social media for gathering information, rather than participating in online political debates or political groups. In this regard, most of the empirical literature on youth online participation, irrespective of their optimistic or sceptical stance, based their central argumentation of the findings from surveys, except for a few studies that using a qualitative approach. However, most of these surveys are not actually representative which means we cannot be sure of their findings. As such, this study employs data from representative established surveys such as the Asian Barometer and World Values Study.

Other studies have also shown that the role of political leadership is one of the most important factors for explaining Malaysian young people's voting patterns and behaviours (Mohd Fuad and Junaidi Awang Besar, 2012a, 2012b; Pandian, 2014a, 2014b). Mohd Fuad and Junaidi Awang Besar (2012a), for example, discuss the opinions and needs of the young generation in the Muar Parliamentary constituency, by using the questionnaires distributed to 1,500 youths. They conclude that youth in Muar want the government to satisfy their needs, particularly their economic needs and give them more political freedom, as well as freedom of speech. Although this study provides statistical evidence, it cannot be generalized across wider young people as it is limited to a specific constituency only. Junaidi Awang Besar *et al.* (2012), however, analyse youth perceptions and criteria for the selection of candidates and political parties by looking at the youth population at large. Based on the large and representative sample of 13,078 young people, aged between 21 to 40 years old in different regions in Malaysia, they conclude that young people prefer honest and trustworthy candidates in the elections and support a political party who will fight for human rights. Similarly, Nazni Noordin *et al.* (2010) argue that young people vote for candidates based on their track records. Those who are 'clean' from any scandals, cronyism and corruption will be more likely to be chosen as a leader. This leads most

young voters to be 'fence-sitters', rather than giving loyalty to a particular candidate or political party. This argument is supported by the findings of Pandian (2014a) who surveyed a limited and unrepresentative sample of 615 students from various universities in Malaysia. He concludes that students have indecisive vote proclivities and easily change their preferences. To win more votes from them, political leaders need to possess an ideal leader's characteristics such as honesty, ethical principles, knowledge, and authority. This raises important questions in this study: do the failures of politicians and parties in appreciating young people's views make them move away from formal politics?

The most influential explanations for the changing pattern in youth voting behaviour is the emergence of civil society movements in Malaysia (Weiss, 2006; Mohd Azizuddin, 2009; Francis Loh and Saravanamuttu, 2003; Muhammad Febriansyah and Muhammad Takiyuddin, 2013). Particularly, these scholars emphasise the importance of civil society as a platform for developing and encouraging youth activism in Malaysia. Civil society is increasingly active and powerful since the reformation era in 1998, due to the support of youth. According to Francis Loh (in Pandian, 2008), "We have a new set of voters—middle class, educated, and those who are exposed to global developments, and the use of new technology". This new set of voters refers to the younger generation who are concerned more with democratic ideals, good governance, and human rights. These young people are more likely to participate in the civil rights movement due to its loose-structured, voluntary, *ad hoc,* and non-ideological organization, which give them more freedom to articulate ideas and political issues (Muhammad Febiansyah and Muhammad Takiyuddin, 2013). This argument confirms the findings of Samsudin *et al.* (2012) that Malaysian youngsters have shifted from political-oriented participation to civic-oriented participation—they are more inclined to become involved and to work with voluntary and non-governmental organizations, rather than political parties. This reveals a weakening role of political parties in Malaysia and their linkage with society, mainly as seen in young people. Yet, there are few empirical works on why young people are disillusioned with the political parties, an issue which will be covered in this study.

Instead of focusing on youth voting behaviour, some studies go beyond electoral participation by expanding the repertoires analysed to include various conventional political activities, including party membership, attending a campaign meeting, and contacting politicians. For example, a more recent study by Marshelayanti *et al.,* (2016)

showed that young people in Malaysia have a moderate level of political participation by examining youth engagement in conventional politics. This study corresponds to the argument by Abdul Hadi *et al.,* (2013) that young people's political engagement in this country is at the moderate level as many of them exhibit nonpartisan attitudes. According to the findings, based on a limited and representative sample of 417 young people aged 18 to 40 years old which were randomly selected in three different states in Malaysia (Johor, Selangor, and Perak), 65 percent of those young people who were surveyed voted in elections, and less than 50 percent of the sample were engaged in a political party, attended political meetings and activities. They pointed out that interest in politics is the most important cause for youth engagement in politics. At the same time, two agents of political socialisation, mainly family and educational institutions, also play significant roles in encouraging young people to participate in politics. Since many previous studies in the literature are focused only on youth engagement in conventional politics, they cannot adequately capture the nuance of the patterns of youth political participation in Malaysia. Another recent study by Muhammad Febiansyah and Muhammad Takiyuddin (2016) focuses on informal participation of young people in politics prior to the 2013 Malaysian general election. Generally, this study has suggested that the repertoires of political action for young people broadened during the 2013 general election by highlighting the emergence of new social movements and loose-structured youth groups such as Universiti Bangsar Utama (UBU) and Occupy Dataran. Whilst this has helped to contribute towards our understanding on the activist community, it has done little to account for the lack of empirical evidence with respect to the motivations of youth activists and the study of young people's non-participation in general. In fact, their arguments are essentially descriptive, based on content analysis, rather than providing statistical evidence. Therefore, this thesis provides a detailed analysis of youth political participation in formal and informal forms of participation and intentionally focuses on both participation and non-participation.

Based on the discussion above, young people in Malaysia are shown to be politically inactive in conventional forms of participation, including voting and party activism, and to some extent refuse to register as voters. Although the issue of the abstention of young people in politics deserves serious attention from researchers, they focus mainly on the swing of the Malaysian youth's votes from the ruling coalition to the opposition. Also, such studies do not provide a robust understanding on how young

Malaysians conceptualise 'politics' and political participation. There is a relative dearth of good empirical data and specific youth-oriented studies to pinpoint the participation of young Malaysians in both elite-directed and elite-challenging forms of participation. In terms of the methodological approach, most existing literature used either qualitative or quantitative data, rather than employing a mixed-methods approach in understanding young people's politics. Thus, this study aims to fill these gaps and weaknesses of earlier studies by providing a systematic analysis of the patterns of youth political participation in Malaysia and construct a more comprehensive model of participation and non-participation.

2.7   A theoretical framework in explaining youth participation and non-participation in Malaysia

Having reviewed empirical evidence on youth political (dis) engagement in different contexts such as established democracies, Southeast Asia, and Malaysia specifically, it is now possible to assess different models of participation by offering some initial comments on their strengths and weaknesses so that we can develop an alternative theoretical framework which would help to explain and understand youth (dis) engagement in Malaysia. In examining several models, this study goes back to Hirschman's framework of *Exit, Voice,* and *Loyalty* (EVL) which mapped out the ways that people respond to organisational change.

Albert Hirschman in his seminal work, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*: *Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* (1970), came out with a useful interpretative framework for understanding different individual behaviour in response to a decline in the quality of an organisation or a product. Although this model originally was proposed for market-based solutions, it has been applied in a wide range of subject areas, including comparative politics (Dowding *et al.,* 2000), the collapse of East Germany (Gehlbach, 2006), local governments (Lyons, Lowery and DeHoog, 1992), as well as protest and revolutions (Pfaff, 2006; Hirschman, 1993).

To be specific, this theoretical framework is constituted by three elements: *Exit, Voice* and *Loyalty. Exit* is defined as a decision to leave the organisation or not to buy a product, and *Voice* as a decision to complain or raise concern about the quality of a product

or organisational strategy (Hirschman, 1970). When facing a decline in a quality of a product or an organisation, individuals have three options: they can either 'exit' the organisation and not buy the product, use 'voice' to express their discontentment and express 'loyalty' by staying silent instead of complaining. The individual decision to exit or to use voice is closely related to the cost-benefit calculation (benefits outweigh the costs) of the rational choice approach. In addition, Hirschman (1970:77) defines the *Loyalty* as 'a special attachment to an organisation' which denotes the willingness to trade-off between the certainties of exit against the uncertainty that their voice might lead to improvements (Dowding and John, 2012:13). According to Pfaff (2006), Hirschman's framework of *Exit, Voice* and *Loyalty* is a combination of economic action (exit), political action (voice) and a sociological factor (loyalty) in understanding how individuals respond to the decline of quality in an organisation. In this respect, Gehlbach (2006) has extended the element of Loyalty by linking it with the concept of Silence, which can be manifested in two ways—*apathy* and *enforced silence*. Apathy occurs when apathetic individuals see no reasons to exit or to voice their concerns as they are satisfied and accepts the *status quo*. On the other hand, enforced silence comes about when the organisation suppresses the voice of its members, which leaves no option for them but to accept the *status quo* (Gehlbach, 2006). In other words, individuals are forced into silence and to accept the *status quo* because they have been denied the rights to exit or voice.

In addition, Hirschman (1993) himself applied this framework in the case of East Germany (GDR) by showing that the emigration of people and the rise of democratisation protests were present at the same time, and this led to the collapse of communism in the GDR. This finding challenged his original thesis that the relationship between exit and voice are mutually exclusive and work against each other. Therefore, he reiterated the relationship between exit and voice by arguing that exit and voice can work in 'hand in hand', and reinforce one another (Hirschman, 1993). Similarly, Pfaff (2006) explores further this framework by combining it with collective action literature. He argues that 'exit' often is the more attractive option than 'voice', since the use of voice involves such a high cost compared to exit. However, protests in East Germany were initiated and sustained due to the role played by resilient social movements in mobilising the people. In this regard, these strong social movements managed to survive whilst many people who could have been influential in using voice emigrated from the countries.

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Hirschman's framework is particularly useful in this study because of its capability to combine different subject areas, including economic, political, and sociological approaches for understanding individual behaviour. Many subsequent works that applied this framework tended to focus mainly on political participation in the context of emigration and non-emigration. However, this study employs the same logic in the different setting by linking the framework of *Exit, Voice,* and *Loyalty* in the case of youth political participation in an authoritarian regime, particularly Malaysia. More precisely, this study uses this framework to reach a greater understanding of young Malaysians' decisions to engage or disengage from politics, mainly whether they are disengaged from 'elite-directed' politics and shifting to 'elite-challenging' forms of participation, or if they are politically apathetic citizens. Drawing on this framework, therefore, we build on our own interpretation of *Exit, Voice,* and *Loyalty,* as follows: *Exit* refers to the decision made by young people to disengage from both elite-directed (voting and party membership) and elite-challenging forms of political activism (contentious politics) in response to their dissatisfaction with the regime. Young people use *Voice* to express their dissatisfaction about the existing *status quo* through their involvement in high-cost political activities, such as protests, party membership, NGOs and perhaps, electoral participation. In terms of *Loyalty*, we employ Gehlbach's concept of Silence (2006) by relating *apathetic silence* with those young people who are not complaining but rather support the *status quo*, abides the rule by participating in elite-directed activity and they see no reasons to engage in *voice* or *exit*. This can also be understood from the perspective of the general incentives model. On the other hand, *enforced silence* refers to those young people who are discontented with the regime, but have no choice but to accept the *status quo* because their opportunity to exit or voice have been 'blocked' by the regime. This suggests that political disengagement (exit) rather than voice, becomes a more attractive option for many young people in semi-democratic regime like Malaysia because they perceive the costs or the risks of participation as very high and outweighing the benefits. However, these unsatisfied young people may simultaneously be in a group of enforced silence, since their rights to exit or to use voice are denied by the regime. It also suggested that exit and voice can work in tandem or reinforce one another, as argued by Hirschman (1993) and Pfaff (2006). Therefore, this thesis used these models (see Table 2.2) below as expected factors to explain why young Malaysians choose to participate and not to participate in politics:

Table 2.2   Models to explain youth political participation in Malaysia

Model	Key Studies	Variables
Civic Voluntarism	Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995)	Resources Engagement Recruitment Political socialisation
Rational Choice	Downs (1957), Riker and Ordeshook (1968), Whiteley and Seyd (2002)	Cost and benefits Selective incentives
The Social Psychological Model	Niemi, Craig and Mattei (1991), Klandermans (2007), Gurr (1970)	Political Attitudes Relative Deprivation
The Mobilization Agencies	Rosenstone and Hansen (1993), Diani (2007), Putnam (2000)	Social Networks-social interactions
Institutional Context	Kriesi *et al.* (1995), Giugni (2007), Hibbs (1973), Klandermans *et al.* (2014), Van Aelst and Walgrave (2001)	Political Opportunity Structure (POS) Normalisation of protest State Repression

2.7.1   The civic voluntarism model

The most widespread model for an explanation of political participation is the civic voluntarism model. The civic voluntarism model proposed by Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) was developed by moving beyond the standard socioeconomic model (SES) to explain political participation. The scholars establish the later version of the model by combining resources, engagement, and recruitment to provide more answers for non-participation (Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995). Resources refer to the time, cost, and civic skills of individuals to participate. Engagement, on the other hand, is an individual's sense of political efficacy, political information, political interest, and partisanship that facilitate them to participate. Recruitment is considered in terms of social networks in mobilizing citizen's participation. Thus, having the necessary resources, motivation to participate, and being approached by individuals who are actively connected with political process tend to have a higher level of political participation. Many researchers have suggested that well-educated young people are more likely to engage in politics than their less educated counterparts because they have ample time, money, and access to political information (Verba and Nie, 1972; Verba, Nie and Kim, 1978; Dalton, 1988). Individuals'

civic orientations are also one of the factors motivating participation. Individuals' civic orientations can be developed through political socialization—the process by which individuals acquire political attitude, values, and ideas through transmission from agencies such as family, peer groups, educational system and political institutions in a given society (Almond and Verba, 1963). Therefore, political socialisation involves such a life-long process through interactions in family, workplace, and broader social environments etc. Abrams and Little (1965), for example, find that family socialization is clearly apparent among young party members where many came from highly politicized families.

2.7.2   Rational choice theory

Rational choice, which is derived from the work of economists, is another important theory in explaining political behaviour, mainly in the field of voting (Riker and Ordeshook, 1968; Uhlaner, 1989; Whiteley, 1995). Based on the seminal work of Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957)[15], the central premise of this theory is that individuals are rational decision-makers as they are able to make political decisions based on their own judgments by weighing up the alternatives available to them, with the aim of increasing either pleasure or profit. In other words, individuals will only vote in elections if the perceived benefits of voting outweigh the costs associated with voting or the so-called 'calculus of voting'. For example, individuals will vote for a political party which in their opinion will deliver policies that bring most benefit to them. Therefore, actors in politics, either parties or voters, will try to maximise their advantage in any situation at the minimum cost. According to Clarke *et al.,* (2004), there are three main elements in the calculus of voting. First, *pivotality* is the calculated probability of casting a deciding vote that allows a most preferred (utility providing) party to win and prevents a less preferred party (less-utility providing) from doing so. This simply refers to the calculation of whether casting an individual vote will make a difference. Thus, voters must be informed about the background of the elections, including the electoral system, the size of the electorate and the degree of party competition (Blais, 2000). Second, the ultimate aim of voters is to gain as much *benefits* or 'utility income' by seeking to determine which of the

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[15]According to Downs (1957:6), a rational individual is one who follows such behaviours: (1) s/he can always make a decision when confronted with a range of alternatives. (2) s/he ranks all the alternatives facing her/him in order of her/his preferences in such a way that each is either preferred to, or indifferent to, or inferior to each other. (3) her/his preference ranking is transitive (4) s/he always chooses from among the possible alternatives that which ranks highest in his preference ordering. (5) s/he always makes the same decision each time s/he is confronted with the same alternatives.

competing party has implemented or proposed policies that will be of most benefit to them. To determine this, the voters may look at parties' past records as a guide to what the future might bring if that party holds the power. Third, voters need to assess the costs of voting, mainly the time to gather such information to make an informed choice and the time needed to cast the ballots.

However, this theory faces a problem, called 'the paradox of participation' (Olson, 1965). This lies in the fact that rational actors will not participate in collective actions in order to achieve common goods (Whiteley, 1995). Amongst the criticisms are: first, the benefits that might be received by individuals from the electoral outcome (policies) would be enjoyed whether the individual participate or not since all public goods are accessible to everyone, even to those who are not participating in politics, or the 'free-rider' problem. Thus, as argued by Franklin (2004), the only rational reason for an individual to participate is to gain the non-material benefits, or civic virtues. Second, individuals prefer to abstain from participation when they think that the probability of making a difference is small, even if the benefits are large. Political activities, such as protest and party activism entail such high costs, but the rewards of participation are less than the costs associated with these acts. Therefore, many people choose not to participate in collective actions. Finally, it is difficult to argue that individuals act rationally in all circumstances since they may have limited intellectual capacity to process large amounts of information and less interest in politics. To be specific, an individual may choose to participate in a political action, not because of the benefits, but because they are reluctant to wait for a better opportunity which may or may not come. These criticisms do not mean that this theory cannot be used as a tool to explain political participation. Instead, this theory has been developed by Seyd and Whiteley (1992) in the general incentives model to include individual, groups and social norms benefits that people obtain when they participate. The key argument of this theory is that individuals are motivated to participate in politics because of incentives. This theory goes beyond Olson's model of rational choice by focusing on a wide range of incentives, rather than confined to individual incentives as proposed in rational choice theory. Although Olson's model is criticised for being inadequate to provide a comprehensive explanation of why people join a political party, the central premise of Olson's argument that individuals need incentives to engage in political activities is accepted. In this regard, the general incentives model places greater emphasis on perceived costs and benefits in understanding political participation (Seyd and Whiteley, 1992).

There are several categorizations of incentives that might stimulate individual's interest to join a political party, as divided by Seyd and Whiteley (1992). The first category of incentives is known as 'selective incentives'—benefits that individuals would get from participating. Selective incentives can be divided into two types: *outcome,* and *process*. *Outcome incentives* refer to an individual's desire to participate in achieving certain individual goals, such as developing a political career or to achieve political office. *Process incentives* describe the motives for political engagement coming from the process of participation itself. For example, the opportunity to meet like-minded people and be involved in group activities can be considered as a benefit gained from activism. As selective incentives put greater emphasis on material rewards, such incentives are more applicable to party activists who have private interest such as to get well-paid jobs and political office (Whiteley, 1995) compared to social movement activists who are less likely to have interest in personal rewards (Melucci, 1995). Another incentive also included in process incentives is ideological incentives (intangible rewards) where individuals are drawn to political activism because they are driven by ideological reasons. All these incentives lie outside of Olson's theory of rational choice that individuals will weigh out the costs and benefits before participating. However, Seyd and Whiteley (1992) believe that individuals might be politically active citizens, not necessarily because of individual benefits, but of *collective incentives*—referring to the collective or policy goals of a party. To be specific, a political party is seen as a means to implement the policies they favour or to oppose the policy goals of other parties. In addition, Seyd and Whiteley (1992) also put forward the idea of altruism—referring to emotional attachment such as a sense of loyalty for a party as another inducement for individuals to engage in political actions. Finally, this model also fills the vacuum of rational choice theory by adding another set of factors that explain political participation, which are the social norms motives relating to an individual's desire to conform to certain norms in society, such as family pressure and peer approval. The incentives model postulates all-encompassing factors in predicting high-cost types of political activism, including social movements. However, this model has been criticised for its methodology, particularly the heavy reliance on survey data in explaining why people become politically active.

2.7.3   The social psychological model

This theoretical approach is pertinent not only for explaining individual political behaviour, but also plays a crucial role in influencing collective action such as protest activism and social movement participation (Klandermans, 2007; Schussman and Soule, 2005). The underlying theory focuses on the relationship between attitudes and behaviours. Behaviour, as argued by Fishbein (1967), can be determined by two broad classes of factors: expected benefits and social norms. In particular, individuals take into consideration the benefits of different actions, while society provides a set of standards and expectations which motivates individuals to behave in certain ways (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1969). Individuals will participate if they believe their participation will bring them benefits. However, without some degree of perceived efficacy: individuals' beliefs about their competence to make a difference (Niemi, Craig and Mattei, 1991), individuals will not participate. Social norms, on the other hand, could be divided into private norms and public norms. Private norms refer to the values that individuals bring to their actions (eg. individuals participate in protest when they feel that the system is unjust), while public norms are related to the attitudes of other people whose views are important for their participation (eg. approval and disapproval of other people towards certain actions or behaviour).

The core ideas of this theory have been widely applied by scholars of social movements. For instance, Gurr (1970) emphasises that the socio-psychological grievances of individuals, particularly the relative deprivation—feelings of frustration relative to their expectations of what they should have are important to make sense of why individuals participate in a protest. When people cannot bear the burden of intensifying deprivation and higher grievances, they will engage in collective behaviour (Buechler, 2007), and become active participants in protest to fight the political regime (Farah *et al.*, 1979; Dalton, 1988). As emotions are particularly important in motivating protest, Klandermans *et al.* (2008) classified emotions into 'approach' (anger and frustration) and 'avoidance' (worry and fear). In this regard, those who feel that their group is weak are more likely to experience 'avoidance' emotions which in turn demotivate them from protest and vice versa. The socio-psychological approach also takes into account motivations of participation so called as 'motivational dynamics' (Klandermans, 2004:361). By developing the social-psychological dimension of movement participation, Klandermans

(2007), emphasises three fundamental motives for why people participate in a movement: Instrumental, identity and ideology. *Instrumental* motives are based on rational choice approaches of selective and collective incentives, denoting an effort to influence the political decision-making or social environment. In contrast, *identity* refers to sense of belonging or identification to a valued group, and *ideology* simply means an expression of one's views or in the pursuit for meaning (Klandermans, 2007:361).

2.7.4 The importance of mobilizing agencies

Many studies emphasise the importance of mobilizing agencies (social networks and organizations) for political participation (Putnam, 2000; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Stolle, 2007). For example, Rosenstone and Hansen (1993), Russell (2005), and Norris (2002) highlight the role of mobilizing agents, such as political parties, interest groups, civic groups, media, and churches in inducing people to participate. Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) differentiate political mobilization between direct and indirect mobilization. The former involves interaction between political elites and citizens via TV campaigning, direct mails, and street canvassing; the latter is mobilization through social networks. Putnam (2000), on the other hand, believes that greater interactions may help to create civic networks, building social trust, and reinforcing collective relationships—social capital. So, the weakening of social networks within society and linkage between the state and individual, are understood to lead to the decreasing of political participation levels.

Instead of looking at political mobilization as a source of social capital, social movement scholars view social networks as strong predictors of participation both at the individual and the collective levels (Diani, 2007; Kriesi, 1993; Snow *et al.*, 1980). For instance, based on the comparative study of the *Hare Krishna* and *Nichiren Shoshu* organizations, Snow *et al.* (1980) conclude that the success of movement recruitment depends on the structure of that movement (public or closed), links to other groups and social ties (family and kin). Diani (2007), in contrast, provides a much broader discussion of social networks, by analysing the overall level of collective action in a whole population. He argues that an individual who has strong personal networks and participates in multiple organizations is more likely to be involved in collective actions, political protest, and counter cultural activities. This model clearly connects agencies or outside stimulus such as political party, civil society, and social networks with political activism.

However, as argued by Klandermans (1984), it gives little credence to the role of emotions such as the feelings of grievances and consciousness in the mobilization process.

2.7.5   The institutional context

This perspective has been widely applied not only to the case of voting (Powell, 1982; Lijphart, 1999; Karp and Banducci, 2008) and political organisations (Morales, 2009), but also to the role of institutional frameworks on non-institutionalised political activities like demonstrating, boycotting, and signing a petition. For instance, some studies find out that a higher level of democratic development contributes to the increase in non-electoral participation (Marien, Hooghe and Quintelier, 2010). Other studies that have developed Lijphart's model of consociationalism have discovered that the constitutional system (the culture of inclusion, consensus, and efficacy) has attenuated non-electoral activities (Weldon and Dalton, 2010). In contrast, Grasso and Giugni (2016), combining grievance theories alongside political opportunity approaches to explain differential protest, find that individuals who feel more deprived due to the economic crisis in more generous welfare states have a greater tendency to protest than those who feel less deprived. Thus, it is worthwhile to conduct further research into the contextual or macro-level explanation of political participation, mainly the theory of political opportunity structure (POS) from the social movement literature (McAdam, 1999; Tilly, 1995; Tarrow, 1998).

The POS, according to Tarrow (1998:76), is the formal and informal characteristics of the state and politics that provide incentives for citizens to undertake non-electoral activism. The more the government provides opportunities for people to participate in public affairs, the more there will be greater citizen activism. For Koopmans (2004:65), opportunities are "options for collective action, with chances and risks attached to them, which depend on factors outside the mobilizing group". McAdam (1996) has emphasized four dimensions of POS, as follows: (1) the relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system; (2) the stability or instability of the elite; (3) the presence or absence of elite allies; (4) the state's capacity and propensity for repression. However, this thesis only focuses on two dimensions of POS, the openness and closure of institutional structure and state repression. Building on Tarrow's 'state-centred perspective', Kriesi *et al.* (1995) propose two conceptual sets of institutional structures: the political system and the cultural model, the prevailing strategies, and the discursive

opportunity structure. One of the remedies offered to encourage citizens to participate is institutional engineering or changing the degree of institutional accessibility of the political system. According to Kriesi *et al.* (1995:28), the openness of the political system "implies a multiplication of state actors and, therefore, of points of access and decision making". Thus, scholars make a distinction between *strong* and *weak* states.[16] Strong states refer to the powerful central authority that has a limited degree of access, but a high capacity to act. Thus, it will limit the opportunity for individuals to participate in all non-electoral politics. Weak states, on the other hand, have a decentralised institutional design that has a greater degree of access, but has a limited capacity to act (Kriesi, 2007). As a result, individuals are prone to participate more in extra-institutional activities when states open greater opportunities for them.

Kriesi *et al.* (1995) introduce the cultural models of POS under a notion of prevailing strategies and discursive opportunity structures (DOS). Prevailing strategies refer to the approaches use by political actors to deal with the challenges or political dissents (Koopmans and Kriesi, 1995). The two prevailing strategies are exclusive (repressive, confrontational, and polarizing) and integrative (facilitative, cooperative, and assimilative). In this regard, as Malaysia is considered as a semi-democratic country, thus we can expect that the regime in Malaysia often uses 'exclusive' prevailing strategies to deal with dissent. The use of 'exclusive' prevailing strategies by the Malaysian regime on dissenters may indirectly affect youth political participation. Some studies show that state repression has cumulative effects on political participation (e.g. Hibbs, 1973; Khawaja, 1993; Gurr, 1970). For example, Hibbs (1973) finds that state repression has a negative effect on dissent because individuals are expected to participate in politics when the benefits are greater than the costs (Riker and Ordeshook, 1968; Clarke *et al.*, 2004). Therefore, any increase in costs may lead to dissent disintegration and constrain citizens from participating in collective actions. Deprivation theory, however, makes the opposite claim by mentioning that state repression could generate 'collective frustration', which in turn escalates dissidents' interest in putting more pressure on the regime so dissenters can survive (Gurr, 1970). From this perspective, repression can be seen to encourage dissent.

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[16]These categorizations are in line with Lijphart's (1999) distinction between majoritarian and consensus democracies. Majoritarian democracies mean political powers are concentrated within and between institutions, have a greater capacity to act even with limited institutional accessibility. Consensus democracies, on the other hand, refers to the democratic systems which divide political power between institutions, with very limited capacity to act and s greater institutional accessibility.

In this thesis, however, our own argument aligns with Hibbs's view that state repression discourages citizens' participation. We argued that state repression through implementation of existing criminal laws and violent repression inhibit young people in Malaysia from actively engaging in politics.

On the other hand, DOS is the combination of POS and social movement framing (Snow, 2007), specifically to understand which collective action frames are more likely to mobilize citizens' involvement in collective actions (McCammon, 2013). According to Benford and Snow (2000:614), collective action frames are action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization. These frames may function as comprehensive structures, determining the orientations and activities of different movements (Vicari, 2010). These are known as "master frames". Framing is also an ongoing process which concerns itself with the construction of meanings and interpretations.

One of the intrinsic features of the framing process is the construction of collective identity. Taylor and Whittier (1992:105) define collective identity as "the shared definition of a group that derives from members' common interests, experiences and solidarity", or a shared sense of 'we-ness' (Snow, 2001). Based on these definitions, it can be argued that collective identity is located within the aggregate level, rather than in individuals *per se*. According to Melucci (1995:44-45), collective identity is an interactive and shared definition produce by several individuals through shared repeated interactions. To simplify, he claims that collective identity is a process that involves: cognitive definitions regarding the objectives, ideology, means, and field of actions; network of active relationships among actors: and a certain degree of emotions. Collective identity is constructed by boundaries, negotiation, and consciousness (Taylor and Whittier, 1992; Hunt and Benford, 2007). By providing an analytical argument of collective identity in the context of micromobilization of participation, Hunt and Benford (2007) show how collective identities resulted in commitment and solidarity building, biographical transformation, and the creation of a counterattack as well as social control.

Additionally, the openness and opportunities provided by the political system also give rise to normalisation and non-normalisation of collective actions. For instance, due to the increasing number of street protests since the 1960s, Dalton (1996) argues that many

Western democracies have progressively accepted and normalised street protest as a basic democratic right of the people. Rather than using repressive actions against the demonstrators, political elites prefer to negotiate and cooperate with them. The growth of action groups and the legitimacy of street protests have lead many citizens from all sections of the society to become mobilised (Barnes and Kaase, 1979). Van Aelst and Walgrave (2001), however, find that the group underrepresented in protest is those who have low levels of education. This finding supports the argument that less educated people tend to have fewer resources for mobilisation (Verba *et al.*, 1995). Klandermans *et al.* (2014) in their study of affiliated and unaffiliated participants in street demonstrations in seven European countries, point out that most of the demonstrators are not affiliated with any organizations, but they are primarily mobilised via an open channel (mass media and personal network) and motivated to participate because of anger.

Having discussed these competitive models of political participation allows us to have preliminary arguments on which of these models appear to be empirically most useful for explaining youth (dis) engagement in Malaysia. It is clear that these models do add value to explaining political participation. However, relying on a single model would only allow a limited outlook. Since there is a notable lack of empirical evidence that supports the relevance of these models for the case of youth political participation in Malaysia, the investigation in this thesis assumes that a combination of these models will constitute the most promising framework for developing explanations of youth participation and non-participation in this country. In Chapters 4 to 9, we will discuss the empirical results of the analyses in relation to the theoretical insights from these theories and discuss which approaches appear most promising for making sense of youth (dis) engagement in Malaysia.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter sought to critically review the key literature on youth political participation in established democracies, Southeast Asia, and Malaysia. There are two important conclusions that can be drawn from the review. Firstly, the subject of youth political participation has been broadly researched in established democracies. Second, scholarship on this subject has recently also grown in Southeast Asia, particularly Malaysia. However, there remains a relative dearth of well documented analysis using a mixed-methods

approach in addressing the patterns of young Malaysians' political participation in both elite-directed and elite-challenging forms of political activism. Moreover, given the lack of research on youth participation and non-participation in Malaysia, therefore this thesis sets out to fill these important gaps in the literature by using a mixed-methods approach to answer research questions. In addition, this chapter also discusses theoretical arguments building on the critical analyses of theoretical approaches to the explanation of participation: the civic voluntarism, the social psychological, rational choice approaches, mobilising agencies, and the institutional context. In this way, we can build a comprehensive model that allows us to investigate why young Malaysians (dis) engage from politics, and to examine whether they exhibit distinctive factors relative to young people in Western democracies or specific to a semi-democratic setting.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1   Introduction

This chapter provides an explicit overview of the research methodology and design adopted in this thesis. The first section discusses the research design used in this research, including the case study approach and its rationale. The chapter then explains the 'mixed-methods' strategy—the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches—by focusing on the rationale for using this approach, including ethical and practical issues. To be specific, this chapter also elucidates in detail the quantitative and qualitative techniques used in the research. Finally, the chapter concludes by discussing the limitations of the research design, including the issues of reliability and validity of this study.

3.2   Research paradigm

We should first mention the philosophical assumptions including the epistemology and ontological positions that underpin this research as they will later determine the research strategy employed. The basis of the research paradigm of this study emerged from the pragmatic approach (Peirce, 1878 [1997]; James, 1981 [1907]; Dewey, 1948 [1920]), which is oriented towards solving practical problems in the real world (Feilzer, 2010:8). This implies both objective and subjective points of view as the epistemology, and the ontological belief that external reality can be accepted (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). The pragmatist approach is more concerned with research questions rather than the worldview or the method that is supposed to underlie research. As the purpose of research is to find the solutions to real-world problem, it is important to choose 'what works' (Howe, 1988) to address research questions, so that it may produce desired outcomes. This research adopted pragmatism as its research paradigm because it required an in depth and implicit understanding of youths' attitudes towards politics. However, this research embraced a strong belief that the patterns of youth political participation could be studied scientifically,

because they are subjected to statistical assumptions and analyses of the relationships between variables. This led to the implementation of a mixed-methods approach integrating qualitative and quantitative analyses.

3.3   Research strategy: a mixed-methods approach

The research strategy is a strategy of inquiry (Creswell, 2003) which translates ontological and epistemological assumptions into research procedures and designs (Sarantakos, 2005). It seeks to answer the question of how to investigate the research questions or how knowledge may be gained. There are two distinctive and common research strategies: qualitative and quantitative.

Quantitative research methodology is strongly associated with the positivist research paradigm, and principally uses the scientific approach to study social phenomena. This type of research emphasises numerical data gathering and analysing this data using statistical methods; it has an objectivist view on social reality and it measures the variables and tests hypotheses or theories that are linked to general causal explanations (Bryman, 2012; Sarantakos, 2005; and Creswell, 2003). Additionally, quantitative methods are synonymous with deductive, confirmatory or 'top-down' approaches where the researcher moves from a theory to hypotheses to data to support or contradict the theory (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). The data collection techniques employed are primarily surveys, experimental studies, and quasi-experimental research.

Qualitative methods, on the other hand, are naturalistic. They attempt to interpret phenomena based on the meanings people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Similarly, Merriam (2009:13) defines qualitative research as uncovering "how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world". Thus, qualitative researchers have engaged themselves directly in society to observe people and their social interactions. There are several features of qualitative research: it belongs to the interpretive school of thought, it has a subjective view of social reality, is flexible and uses an inductive approach.

Over the last few decades, another alternative mode of inquiry known as the mixed-method approach has emerged: this resulted from the paradigm wars between quantitative

and qualitative approaches. A mixed-methods approach has been recognised as a 'third paradigm' (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Denscombe, 2008; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998) since it has evolved into an increasingly accepted approach that is widely used by researchers, particularly those who believe that quantitative and qualitative standpoints are both relevant to analyse their research questions

Mixed-methods (Cresswell, 2003) has also been referred to as a multi-strategy (Bryman, 2012), mixed methodology (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998), qualitative and quantitative methods (Fielding and Fielding, 1986), integrative research (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004), and a third major research paradigm (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner, 2007) in political research. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:5) define mixed-methods as, "... the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination, provide a better understanding of research problems that either approach alone". Teddlie and Tashakkori (2010:5), on the other hand, indicate mixed-methods as "The broad inquiry logic that guides the selection of specific methods and that is informed by conceptual positions common to mixed-methods practitioners". Based on these definitions, mixed method is an integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches in collecting and analysing data. There are several characteristics of a mixed-methods approach, as highlighted by its advocates (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). First, it uses both quantitative and qualitative within the same research project. Second, mixed-method is a research method that clearly stipulates the sequencing and greater emphasis is given to the qualitative and quantitative elements of the data collection. Finally, this method adopts pragmatism as a research philosophical stance.

3.3.1 The rationale for applying mixed-methods

The combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches in the thesis is based on several reasons. Firstly, mixed-methods research was adopted in data collection and analysis as a tool for triangulation. Triangulation entails the study of one phenomenon using the integration of different methodologies (Denzin, 1989). In particular, triangulation is used to verify and corroborate the findings of qualitative (semi-structured interviews) with quantitative data (existing survey data). Triangulating improves "the validity and reliability of research or evaluation of findings (Golafshani, 2003:603). Jick (1979) identifies some advantages of triangulation: it helps researchers to be more confident in their findings; it

overcomes the flaws in one single approach by counterbalancing with the strength of another; it enriches data and helps to expose contradictions. Secondly, a mixed-methods approach in this thesis was used to gain in breadth, depth and enrich understanding of youth political participation in Malaysia. According to Bryman (2007), a reason for combining quantitative and qualitative approaches is to obtain a holistic interpretation that integrates the findings of different methods. For example, in this thesis, the quantitative data provide statistical analyses on the patterns of youth political participation in Malaysia. On the other hand, qualitative data provide more refined explanations in respondents' own words, including in their subjective conceptualisations, of why young people tend to engage and disengage from politics. Finally, using mixed-methods in this study helped to offset the weakness of using each approach on its own in order to minimise bias. For instance, quantitative methods have the ability to generalise the result to many cases, but are weaker for making sense of the understandings of an individual. Thus, using mixed-methods is another way to compensate for the relative strengths and weakness associated with particular qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

Applying a mixed-methods approach in youth political participation research is not wholly new. Many researchers in established democracies have adopted this form of methodology to avoid discrepancies between how researchers and young people perceive politics (Henn *et al.,* 2005; Sloam, 2007). For example, Sloam (2007) and Henn *et al.* (2002) use mixed-methods, specifically focus groups and surveys, to understand young people's political participation in Britain. However, none of the researchers implement a mixed-methods approach in their studies of youth political engagement in Malaysia. They choose to use one method, either qualitative or quantitative, mainly because the mixed-methods design can be complex, taking up time and resources.

3.3.2   Types of mixed-method

In mixed-methods research, there are three ways for how qualitative and quantitative elements should be used in a single study, particularly on whether they can be integrated, combined, or used in parallel. Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner, (2007) develop three broad classifications of mixed-methods research, also known as 'three research paradigms' (see Figure 3.1), which is useful to understand the relationship between qualitative and quantitative components. First, a typology of mixed-methods research is where both

qualitative and quantitative approaches have an equal *status*, which means the researchers use the philosophical logic of mixed-methods and equally emphasise the qualitative and quantitative data, methodologies, or research questions. Secondly, the *qualitative dominant* approach is a type of mixed-methods research which relies heavily on a qualitative study, but concurrently acknowledges the addition of quantitative data or approaches which complement and improve the research project. Another typology of mixed-methods research is *quantitative dominant*, where research relies heavily on a quantitative study, but concurrently acknowledges the addition of qualitative data or approaches which complement and improve the research project. Based on this classification, this study can be considered as 'quantitative dominant', where the quantitative approach is the core of this thesis, but qualitative data is added to check for consistent findings and to provide deeper contextual meanings in the quantitative data.
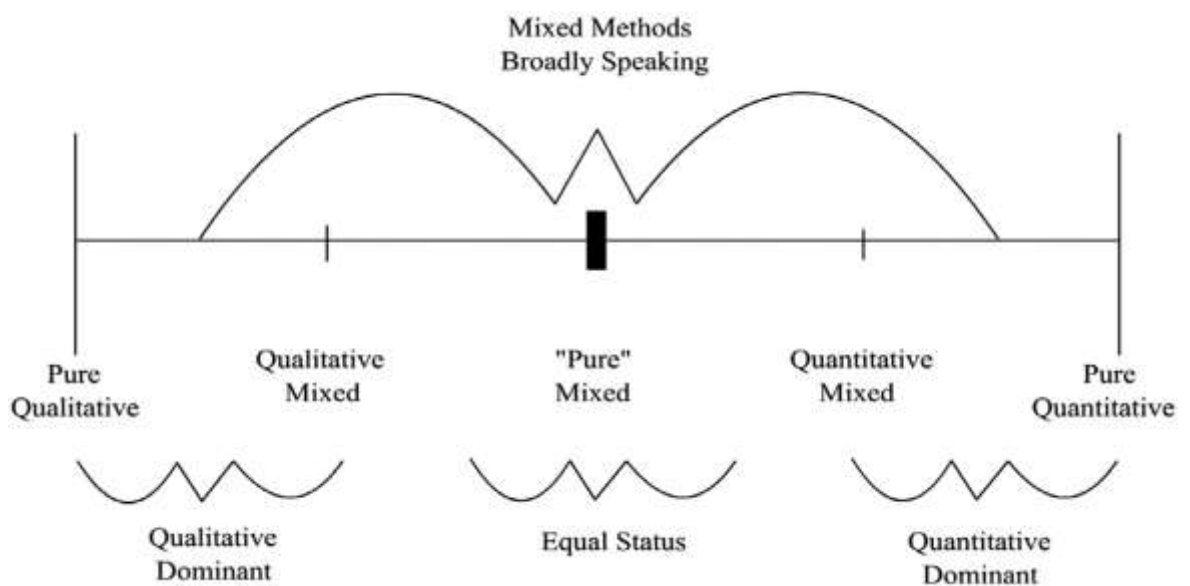
Figure 3.1 Three major research paradigms of mixed-methods research
(Source: Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner, 2007:124)

3.4 Research design: country selection

Research design is essential and helps to achieve the objectives of the work. It is a systematic plan or structure for the entire research process, from conceptualizing a problem to writing research questions, to data collection, analysis, interpretation, and report writing

(Creswell, 2007). Purposely, research design ensures that the evidence acquired enables us to answer the primary question as explicitly as possible (De Vaus, 2001). As Yin (1989:26) argues,

> Research design is a logical plan for getting from here to there, where here may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and there are some set of conclusions (answers) about these questions. Between "here" and "there" may be found a number of major steps, including the collection and analysis of relevant data.

In other words, research design provides a logical framework for choosing suitable research methods, and for deciding how data will be gathered and analysed to answer the initial questions. Thus, the first step in designing research is to understand the fundamental purpose of this research, whether it is exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory research (Burns and Bush, 2002; McNabb, 2004; Yin, 2003).[17] The main aim of this research is to examine the patterns of participation and attitudes of young Malaysians towards politics. Thus, an explanatory research approach is implemented in this research because we want to identify the characteristics and factors spurring youth engagement or disengagement with politics. An explanatory research sets out to account for descriptive information by emphasising 'why' questions, and trying to understand the reasons for attitudes, motives, values, or causal relationships in particular social phenomena (De Vaus, 2001). In other words, it attempts to provide a comprehensive account of why and how a certain event happens. To provide logical explanations of this research, a case study approach is employed as a research design.

Yin (2003:13) defines a case study as, "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life-context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident". This definition can be challenged in that a case study not only deals with the contemporary phenomenon, but past phenomena are also taken into consideration. Robson (2002:178) claims that the case study "... involves empirical investigations of a particular phenomenon within a real-life context using multiple source of evidence." On the other hand, some argue that a case study is a

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[17]*Descriptive research* helps to describe a phenomenon by providing answers to the questions of who, what, when, where and how. On the other hand, *Exploratory research* is well-suited for a researcher who has little understanding of why the instance happened as as it did or has less information on how research issues have been solved in the past.

holistic approach, the idea that social phenomenon should be studied as a whole instead of a sum of their parts (Stoecker, 1991). A case study approach is preferred in this research based on several justifications. First, this approach enables us to focus on explaining phenomena within one country (Denscombe, 1998). In this context, it is important to examine why young people in Malaysia engage in or disengage from political activities. Thus, the case study approach allows us to provide a detailed understanding of the complex relationships within the unit of analysis. In addition, a case study is an intensive approach, which produces systematic detail on a certain phenomenon. By using a case study method, this study explores the real-life phenomenon through detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events and relationships (Yin, 1984) and uses the researcher's ability to 'verstehen' (Gummesson, 1988). However, the case study approach can be criticized as it provides less scientific generalisation since it deals with a single country primarily (Yin, 1984). However, in this case we felt that the choice to focus on Malaysia and analyse it in detail provided greater benefits to the research given constraints of time and resources for this project. These are detailed below.

3.4.1 The selection of Malaysia

As stated above, the aim of this research was to provide an empirical analysis of the diverging patterns of youth political participation in Malaysia. In particular, we aim to understand whether patterns of engagement parallel those in established democracies or rather exhibit unique characteristics that need to be explained with reference to the more specific features of a semi-democratic political system. This study investigates those factors influencing the attitudes of Malaysian youth's political participation toward 'elite-directed' and 'elite-challenging' forms of political participation and the impacts of their political (dis) engagement about Malaysia's democracy. Thus, the study of youth political participation in Malaysia represents a unique case where young Malaysians were the focus of this case study.

Why Malaysia? There are four major reasons for concentrating on Malaysia: first, Malaysia has a unique feature where ethnicity is the basis of Malaysian politics: many political parties are ethnically-based, and the vote sharply delineates Malaysian politics along racial lines as the country's population consists of three different main ethnic groups, namely Malays, Chinese and Indians. These differences have great influence on the

attitudes and political participation trends of youth. For example, the Bersih 4.0 rally was dominated by ethnic-Chinese who protested against Najib's administration. Secondly, Malaysia is considered as 'semi democratic' (Crouch, 1996), an 'authoritarian democracy' (Case, 2002) and a 'quasi-democracy' (Zakaria Ahmad, 1989) with limited political freedoms. Young people who are socialized in an authoritarian regime tend to have different political values and attitudes than their counterparts in established democracies (Neundorf, 2010). Third, despite many excellent studies on youth electoral participation in Malaysia, there remains a dearth of empirical and systematic analysis of Malaysian youth engagement (dis) in 'elite-directed' and 'elite-challenging' forms of participation, which is pivotal in this study. Fourth, youth in Malaysia can be considered as a 'most-different' case as the term 'youth' itself is associated with those aged 15-40 years old, and constitutes approximately 43% of the 28.3 million total Malaysia's population and one of the largest population groups (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2010).[18]

Though some argue that a single case study has pitfalls, specifically in terms of generalization and selection bias, it nonetheless allows an intensive in-depth analysis and generates new insight into the research topic. This is particularly important in under-researched areas such as this one. Landman (2008) claims that single-country studies provide a relative description, develop new categorizations, create hypotheses, confirm, and inform theories, and explain the existence of deviant countries identified through cross-national comparison. By using the case study, this thesis provided a detailed analysis of the participation patterns and related attitudes and demographic characteristics of young Malaysians and as such allows us to bring together different sources of evidence and historical knowledge to form a holistic and detailed picture of patterns and trends.

3.5   Operationalising key concepts

The operationalisation of key concepts of this study is discussed as follows:

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[18]It is worth mentioning that the Malaysian government will redefine the age of Malaysian youth from 15 to 40 years old, to 15 to 30 years old in 2018 under the new Malaysian Youth Policy. This to ensure that the definition of Malaysian youth is in accordance with international standards. As this new age limit will only be implemented in 2018, this study used the extant definition of youth as the range between the ages of 15 to 40 years old.

3.5.1 Youth

The concept of the youth, used interchangeably with young people, relates to a biological state, a certain age span, mainly the growth from childhood to adulthood, and is also associated with social construction: youth grow within particular social contexts (Spence, 2005). Indeed, there is a contemporary debate among sociologists on whether to focus on changes in young people's transition to adult positions, mainly the transition from education to employment (Woodman, 2015) or young people's self-understanding and cultural practices (Furlong, Woodman and Wyn, 2011). This debate clearly shows that the conception of youth is complex as there is no agreement of what constitutes young people. Youth, based on the universal definition of the United Nations, are those between 15 to 24 years old. However, in the context of Malaysia, the National Youth Policy 1997 indicates 'youth' as a person between the ages of 15 to 40. Some prominent studies on youth politics in Malaysia such as a survey of Malaysian youth opinion by the Asia Foundation (2012) defined youth as those from 17 to 35 years old, and recently Marshelayanti *et al.* (2016) studied a 18 to 40 years cohort, Norshuhada *et al.* (2016) researched youth from age 15 till 25 years old. Although youth programmes and activities in this country are aimed at youth aged 18 and above, but given that the voting age in Malaysia is 21 years old, thus this study employed the definition of youth as those between 21 to 40 years old in both survey and semi-structured interviews. The purpose behind using such a broad youth category is to include a large segment of the population with different political interests, attitudes, knowledges, and experiences. Although a variety of youth groups who may have quite different political values and political experiences is included in this research, this aligns with the national and local realities by considering socio-cultural and contextual issues in Malaysia. To be specific, this age group is regarded as the 'Mahathir' and 'post-Mahathir' generations who were born between the 1970s to the 1990s and came of age in the Mahathir era. Thus, we can expect that this age group shares similar social and historical experiences at the time of their coming of age as this cohort has been socialised in a 'depoliticised period' where the country experienced autocratic and dictatorial rule. In addition, it has been argued that is possible to compare this broad youth category with youth groups in advanced liberal democracies (e.g, UK, US, and European countries etc.) since the emerging adulthood experiences of young people in western and non-western societies are different, depending on its culture (Nelson, Badger, and Wu, 2004). This suggests that young people in non-western societies like Malaysia, reach complete maturity

and come to be seen to deserve the full respect as adults later than young people in western culture. Moreover, studies that do use a more limited youth category such as 18 to 24 years old, still find evidence (e.g., Marshelayanti, 2016; Chang 2012) of a decline in political engagement amongst Malaysian youth under the age of 21 years old, similar to the patterns of youth political participation in established democracies.

Moreover, in this study, we have decided to exclude respondents aged over 70 due to mobility issues which affect the opportunities for political participation. Political activism such as protesting and attending campaign meetings require much personal and physical effort, and this older population has difficulties in physical mobility. Moreover, the percentage of older persons aged above 70 in Malaysia is relatively small, representing only seven percent of the total population (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2012).

3.5.2   Activism

The term *activism* is widely used today and treated differently by diverse researchers. There is no universal definition of activism but generally most researchers describe activism as a manifold dimension including the participants; the agents or organisations through which the participants commonly mobilise; and actions that they use. Martin (2007) defines activism as actions in support of a cause. Actions can take many forms including rallies, protests, marches, etc., whereas causes might be human rights, world peace, the environment movement and so on. To simplify, activism refers to personal efforts to affect social or political change. What is an activist? How can we consider an individual had reached 'activist' status? As activism depends on conventional and beyond conventional politics, thus the term 'activist' has been defined based on political parties and social movements. Many scholars measure the degree of 'activeness' of a party member by considering the time and effort invested in party activities. For example, Seyd and Whiteley (2002:120) define activist as "a party member who works more than five hours for the party in the average month." On the other hand, Mitchell, Bennie, and Johns (2012:86) found that the members of the Scottish National Party (SNP) perceive an active member as someone who often attended local party meeting along with spending hours devoted to the party's activities each month.

A great deal of research in the social movements literature explores what constitutes activism (Klandermans, 2004; Bobel, 2007; Martin, 2007). Bobel (2007:147) argues that "an activist must live the issue, demonstrate relentless dedication, and contribute a sustained effort to duly merit the label of activist". In this regard, the more involved an individual is in a movement, the more likely that individual would see him- or herself as an activist (Cortese, 2015) and perhaps become a regular participant or even live as a full-time political activist (Martin, 2007). Instead of considering 'activists' based on how much effort and how many hours individuals devote to activism, we sought to recruit young people who considered themselves as activists, and saw political activism as an important part of their lives or someone who felt very strongly about an issue and then acted upon it. Our interpretation of 'activists' aligns with Weinstein (2005), where we were interested to interview young people who actively participated in any political activities on a regular basis either in a political party, social movement, or through protest activism, etc.

3.6   Data collection

As the research design of this study is based on an explanatory research model, therefore, it involves two distinct interactive phases or a sequential mixed-method design. In an effort to shed light on youth political participation in Malaysia, an explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach, proposed by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), is implemented as a means to collect the data. An explanatory sequential design starts with collecting and analysing the quantitative data, and is followed by the subsequent analysis of qualitative data (Creswell and Clark, 2011:71). The purpose of building up the qualitative follow-up phase is to provide a better understanding and help to clarify the mechanisms underlying the findings from the quantitative phase (Cresswell, 2009:122). In particular, the quantitative data provide a more general picture of the research problem and the qualitative data are needed to refine, expand and explain the particular context. It is also particularly useful when unexpected results arise from the quantitative findings (Morse, 1991). Thus, there are two significant phases of the data collection process in this research: the analysis of existing survey data in a first phase; and the conducting, transcribing and analysis of materials from semi-structured in-depth interviews in the second phase. As for this study, the initial quantitative phase is used to provide statistical evidence on the political activism amongst young people. In the second phase, the qualitative interviews are conducted to help explain why many young people are disengaging from political activities, but some

tend to be politically active citizens. Although these two forms of data are separated, their analyses are interrelated and integrated to complement each other to provide a detailed understanding of youth political participation in Malaysia.

3.6.1   Phase 1: Re-analysis of existing survey data

For the purpose of triangulation and enrichment of the findings from the qualitative method, the quantitative data is central. One of the methods used for quantitative analysis in this research is the re-analysis of existing survey data from Wave 6 (2010-2014) of the World Values Survey (WVS), to show the diverging patterns of how young Malaysians engage in politics relative to their older counterparts and what the key variables for explaining these divergences might be. In particular, the survey data also allows for statistical analyses, such as to test for correlations between young people's political participation in elite-directed and elite-challenging activities, as the main dependent variables, and various attitudinal and demographic characteristics. These in turn are our independent variables. There are several advantages of using existing survey data. Firstly, continuous and regular surveys like the WVS and Asian Barometer provide the opportunity for the researcher to do both longitudinal and comparative studies. Secondly, these survey data are user-friendly and are easily accessed and downloaded from the Internet. As these data sets are highly accessible, therefore the process is less time-consuming and less expensive than primary data (data collected by oneself). Moreover, they are representative. However, the existing survey data have their downsides because the researcher has less control over the questions asked and sometimes, they may unable to answer specific research questions. To overcome these weak points, this study used semi-structured interviews as an alternative tool of data collection.

The WVS is the largest cross-national time series data set and is a well-known data survey in regards of quantitative based behavioral studies. Specifically, the WVS is a study of "changing values and their impact on social and political life".[19] Thus, the WVS is particularly relevant to this study as it provides interpretable results for analysing young people's attitudes toward politics and democratic institutions, not only in Malaysia, but also in the Southeast Asia region. Whilst many studies on youth participation in Southeast

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[19]http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp, retrieved on May 13, 2016.

Asia and Malaysia used the Asian Barometer, instead this research relies on both data sets because they are worldwide surveys which enables for a cross-national and cross-sectional comparative study on a wide-variety of topics. Although the topics in the WVS are broad and various, covering questions on attitudes and values, the survey lacks some indicators such as rural-urban and authoritarian values, which are important for this research. To further extend the analyses from the WVS survey data, this thesis used another well-respected survey data source which was the Asian Barometer Wave 2 (2005-2008) and Wave 3 (2010-2012). The rationale for choosing the Asian Barometer survey for the analyses is that it provides a broad spectrum of political actions and covers a wide range of variables and political topics that fit specifically with the features of this region, compared to the WVS. Moreover, it allows us to cross-check the WVS results. It is worth noting that the fieldwork period for the WVS was from March to June 2012, and the Asian Barometer wave 2 was on July 2007 and wave 3 was from October to November 2011. Therefore, it could be expected that there would be variations in key statistics for voter turnout reported between these surveys and the official statistics on the actual turnout. Additionally, due to social desirability bias individuals may over-report voting in surveys.

3.6.1.1 Sampling of survey data

Sampling is the process of selecting a subset within a target population so that we can save costs and time, as well as providing sufficiently precise estimation (Kumar, 1999). The most significant aspect in the sampling is the selection of sampling method, as it provides greater accuracy, makes sampling more efficient (Cochran, 1953) and avoid sampling error (Burns, 2000). As this quantitative study compares political activism between younger and older people, the sample is divided into two age groups: the young age group (21 to 40 years old) and the older age group (41 to 70 years old). The sample is drawn as follows (See Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Sample size

	The WVS Survey	The Asian Barometer Survey	
	Wave 6 (2010-2014)	Wave 2 (2005-2008)	Wave 3 (2010-2012)
Total Sample	1170	1072	1074
Sample for Young People (21 to 40 years old)	523	570	493
Sample for Older People (41 to 70 years old)	647	502	581

3.6.1.2 Data analysis

The survey data are analysed using STATA 14 and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. The detailed method for the quantitative analyses and the findings are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. This study uses cross-tabulations, comparison of proportion tests and regression methods as the statistical analyses. The T-test enabled this study to compare the means of a normally distributed dependent variable for two independent groups, the young people and the older people. The cross-tabulations and T-test were used to see clearly the overall percentage and patterns of political activism and test for significant differences between young and older groups. On the other hand, regression analyses allowed us to test how changes in the predictor variables such as demographic variables, political identification and political interest, predicted the level of changes in the outcome variables as well as testing for interaction effects of different factors on these outcomes. Subsequently, the findings from this first phase (the quantitative analyses) are further explored in the second phase and research questions and more deeply probed through the analysis of the material from the qualitative interviews to which we now turn.

3.6.2   Phase 2: Semi-structured interviews

Qualitative interviewing, according to Mason (2002), refers to in-depth, semi-structured or loosely-formed interviews. It seeks "to understand the world from the subjects' point of views, to unfold the meanings of people's experiences, to uncover their living world" (Kvale, 1996:1). This technique of data gathering is an effective tool used by researchers,

particularly in analysing people's perceptions and values (Keats, 2000).[20] Qualitative interviewing is used as a technique of data gathering in this research based on the logic that it would provide a deeper and more holistic picture of youth political participation in Malaysia, specifically on the reasons why young people engage and disengage from politics. Furthermore, it also acted as a means of triangulating with the findings from the quantitative analyses. Through this cross verification, the consistency of findings attained from different methods was verified in order to minimise bias. In addition, the nature of research questions requires depth and complexity of explanations, rather than broad understanding of surface patterns (Mason 2002). Thus, it needs the researcher to interact directly and closely with the subjects.

One of the challenges of employing a qualitative approach is to convince others to accept the value and trustworthiness of qualitative data compared to quantitative approaches which tend to appear as more objective and accurate since in practice anyone can have access to the data sets to reanalyse them and subjective interpretation of the researchers is not as central as in qualitative analysis. Since qualitative interviews are based on the subjective views of quite distinct informants who have different levels of knowledge and experience on the issues at hand, we can therefore expect that their opinions will be very different in some instances and that there could be contradictions between the qualitative individual responses and some of the results from the quantitative analysis and interview data. For example, government and opposition elites offered very different perspectives for explaining youth political interest and engagement (see Chapter 7). Similarly, academics also claimed that there is an upward trend in youth political engagement in Malaysia (see Chapter 6), which is in fact contradicted by the quantitative findings. However, this is not a problem for the study given that the role and scope of the different types of data is diverse. More specifically, this study is designed based on the implementation of the 'sequential mixed-methods' approach where the quantitative analyses provide statistical evidence on the patterns of youth political participation in Malaysia, while the qualitative data helps to enrich the interpretation of these quantitative

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[20]Among the main features of interviews outlined by Mason (2002:62) are: the interactional exchange of dialogue (it may involve one-to-one interaction, larger group interviews or focus group); a relatively informal format (it is more like a conversation, rather than a question and answer format); a thematic, topic-centred, biographical or narrative approach (the researcher has a number of topics, themes or issues which she wishes to cover); and contextual knowledge (meanings and understandings are created in an interaction).

results in the words of the informants, specifically on how individuals makes sense of different experience and why youth (dis)engage in politics.

Semi-structured interviews are adopted in this research since they allow for the formulation of a set of questions before the interview, with the opportunity to explore more details and probe responses on particular issues further. The significant characteristics of semi-structured interviews, according to Mason (2004:1020), are that they have a flexible and fluid structure. In this sense, the researcher is not forced to follow sequence of questions but can vary the order depending on the flow of conversation (Saunders *et al.,* 2003). Thus, it gives freedom to the interviewee to express their views in their own meaning. However, this kind of interview has a tendency to be biased and misinterpret the data as it will be influenced by the respondent's emotions and perceptions (Mason, 2002). To avoid this, the researcher needs to let the interviewee 'flow' (May, 1997) and to record as clearly and fully as possible (Mason, 2002).

The qualitative interviews in this study were conducted face-to-face by using semi-structured interviews. Utilising face-to face interviews as the method of data gathering is based on the following rationale. First, it allows us to probe young people's attitudes towards disengaging from elite-directed politics and become involved in elite-challenging activities. Second, it studies closely the reality of young people's experiences and diversity in views on politics because it requires the researcher to interact closely with the subjects. The combination of these elements allows for more detailed explanations of the motivations and characteristics of young people in engaging with the political process. For reliability purposes, an interview topic guide which contained a list of questions in a particular order was used to structure the interview. An interview guide was important for the researcher as it served to guide conversation and reduced the chance of main topics being neglected. Therefore, as argued by Babbie (2005:314), the researcher must be "fully familiar with the questions to be asked." Although this type of interview was guided with a standard set of questions, the interviewees were allowed to talk and express themselves freely in their thoughts and ideas about the topics that interested or that seemed important to them.

3.6.2.1 Sampling and representativeness

As qualitative research commonly relies on small and non-probabilistic samples, it is impossible for the researcher to claim representativeness and generalisation (Silverman, 2005). Typically, the qualitative researchers make a sampling choice from the population which enable them to deepen their understanding of a particular phenomenon. Since one of the aims of this thesis is to understand why youth participate or do not participate in politics, I sought to use purposeful sampling whereby the samples are chosen selectively and authoritatively according to the aims of the research (Schatzman and Strauss (1973), in terms of who is particularly knowledgeable about or experienced the phenomenon of interest (Cresswell and Plano Clark, 2011; Lewis and Sheppard, 2006) to produce cases that are 'information rich' (Patton, 1990:169). Given that this is the case, we do not intend to make statistically representative generationalisations to a larger population as in the quantitative research, but instead describe in detail some conditions under which a certain phenomenon exists and the ways in which individuals make sense of a certain phenomenon based on their subjective knowledge or explain why they choose to engage or not.

There are different strategies for selecting the sample as argued by Patton (1990), such as intensity sampling, deviant cases etc., but this thesis only applies maximum variation sampling and snowball or chain sampling.[21] At the first stage, we used the maximum variation sampling by selecting a sample across different groups in the society, covered political leaders, academics, youth activists and youth non-participants. The main purpose of gathering data from across four groups allows me to see if there is any consistency in patterns and central themes outlined across groups, and examine whether there are any outliers or themes exclusive to one group. Therefore, the total sample used in these interviews is forty respondents, where a total of 10 respondents were purposively selected from each group. The sample was appropriate as this study investigated a narrow but deep subject and it built up detail, strong and convincing analytical explanations of

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[21]*Maximum Variation Sampling* aims at capturing and describing the central themes or outcomes across different participants. Although a small sample with a great deal of heterogeneity can be a problem, but this thesis is more interested in finding any common patterns or shared aspects within that variations. By using this sampling, therefore, the data collection and analysis will yield two kinds of findings: (1) very detailed descriptions of each case which are useful to find uniqueness, (2) important shared patterns that cut across participants.

Snowball or Chain Sampling is an approach to locate key informants by asking a number of people who else to talk with or to identify different informants. See Patton (1990) for further details on purposeful sampling.

particular contexts. For this type of research, 25 to 30 interviews should suffice (Creswell, 2007). Mason (in Baker and Edwards, 2012) also claims that, "it is better to have a smaller number of interviews that are creatively and interpretively analysed, than a larger number where the researcher runs out of time to do them justice analytically". Moreover, given the limitations of time and resources in the course of this study, it was impracticable to practice a greater number of interviews. The scientifically robust criteria for selecting each group can be detailed, as follow:

i. **Political elites/leaders**

The selection of the political elites or leaders was based on their position in the government, political parties, and political organisations. Most of them are the chief leaders of the youth wings of political parties from both government (UMNO and MCA) and oppositions (PKR, PAS, and DAP). Some of these informants are key actors in public policy (for example, the Malaysian Youth Parliament and Institute for Youth Research Malaysia) and directly involved in mobilising Malaysian youth in the political arena. Some of these informants were selected based on their popularity among young people and are well-known political actors who have contributed a lot to nation-building and political developments of this country.

ii. **Academics**

The academics were selected from various public universities in Malaysia and they are well-known scholars of Malaysian politics who have intensive knowledge and have written many journal articles on political participation. The selection of academics as informants was based on the reason that their opinion can provide a more overarching and balanced perspective compared to the views of political elites and young Malaysians.

iii. **Youth activists**

The so called 'young activists' were those aged 21 to 40 years old who were actively participating in political parties, social movements, non-governmental bodies or were members of loosely structured organisations. Most use different platforms in advocating social changes, human rights, and political justice to society, as well as in challenging the existing regulatory regime.

iv. Youth non-participants

These are young people aged 21 to 40 years old, who had not participated actively in politics e.g. those not registered as voters and not affiliated with any political parties or organisations.

In seeking access to a sample of political elites and academics, their names and contact details were retrieved from official websites and social networking sites, they were contacted via email and through phone calls explaining the purpose of the interviews and why they had been selected. The consent form and participant sheet were attached together. Once they agreed to be interviewed, appointments were scheduled accordingly at dates, times and locations preferred by the respondents. Prior to the interviews, the respondents were contacted again to reconfirm the dates and locations of the interviews. On the other hand, for accessing a sample of youth activists and youth non-participants, we used snowball or chain sampling, which is a valuable tool to access an isolated or hard-to-reach group (Faugier and Sargeant, 1997) and provided the researcher with a set of potential contacts through social networks of identified respondents and a 'link' that exists between such target groups (Atkinson and Flint, 2001). The most important aspect in dealing with human participants in this snowball technique is trust. To ensure the participants agreed to identify other members of their group, we tried to develop a good rapport with them and managed to meet several participants who were willing to 'link' us to other activists and non-participants, who were then subsequently interviewed in this research. In this regard, the interviewing process continued for a period of six months (from November 2015 to April 2016) in Malaysia until we totalled an equal number of participants in each group. Within a period of six months, we visited three cities across the country and made contact by email or telephone with 55 individuals, which resulted in 40 successful interviews (15 females/25 males). Therefore, this research achieved a relatively high response rate.

3.6.2.2 Access issues within interviews

Whilst using face-to-face interviews provided a holistic picture of the phenomenon under investigation, there were some issues raised in accessing, acquiring trust, and establishing rapport with the target group, especially political elites. One of the main problems in this research was gaining access to political elites. As argued by Hunter (1995), elites are

relatively unstudied because they have power and the ability to protect against intrusion. They were undeniably hard to reach whilst they have been highly visible because they have very rigorous schedules and they were surrounded by gatekeepers who control access to them. Prior to commencing the fieldwork and after the project passed the University of Sheffield ethical review, we had identified the elites and established contact through emails, but only half of them responded to interview invitations regardless of the number of times that we emailed them. Therefore, we used different ways to reach the remainder including private messaging through *Facebook* and telephoning their offices. We had to come up with a backup plan by rearranging the list of respondents which in turn took me a very long time and higher cost compared to the other participant groups.

Apart from the difficulties in seeking access to political elites, it was also quite challenging to interview political elites due to their powerful and influential positions. As argued by Mikecz (2012:484), elites have the ability and power to protect themselves from being exposed to criticism. There was a time when elites attempted to dominate the situation, gave strong views and offensive comments regarding certain issues that had been raised during the interview and they even challenged the views of the researcher. In order to get honest views from the elites, we had to be non-judgmental by giving them the space to express in detail their concerns about the issues and summarising what has been discussed to avoid misunderstanding their opinions.

We also encountered the issue of possible bias, particularly the problem of interviewing people from different ethnic, cultural, and educational backgrounds. For instance, some Chinese and Indians respondents were reluctant to participate in this study as they felt suspicious about sharing their political views with an outsider, especially one not from their ethnic group. In dealing with this issue, we asked another respondent (from the same ethnic group) to convince them and re-clarified the main purpose of this research. In fact, the literature (Alderfer and Tucker, 1996; Davis, 1997) emphasises that the race of interviewers affects participants' responses—participants may manoeuvre their answers to satisfy the perceived expectations of the interviewer. Thus, we made it clear to them that the researcher was an independent researcher that is not affiliated with any group of society, and their opinions in general are expected to reflect their personal view rather than certain ethnic groups. This reduced concerns about information that could be regarded as sensitive by the respondent.

In addition, the issues of suspicion and potential risks also came up during interviews with young non-participants. This happened because young Malaysians are regularly subject to surveillance and criminalization by the government. In this case, several respondents from the non-participant group were very circumspect in making their statements with regard to issues associated with the government and political freedom. For example, one young non-participant that we interviewed told us that 'It is better to remain in silence in commenting about the government, otherwise we might get penalised under the Sedition Act.' These sorts of sentiments were addressed through establishing clear procedures to reduce risks and minimise bias. For example, we would ensure that they understood the risks they may face as a participant beforehand and kept reminding them about the importance of confidentiality by giving them options whether to be identified or not. Similarly, Weinstein (2005) encountered the issue of suspicion caused by state surveillance when accessing a sample of social movement activists.

Despite these challenges, it worth underlining some of the positive outcomes. We personally felt privileged to interview some well-known people, and to gain valuable insights from them. Some of them were very passionate to share their story. Some were very generous to provide us with reading materials that were useful for this study. In this sense, we believed that semi-structured interview was a vital instrument for this study, to get access to a broad range of people and outlooks on youth political participation in Malaysia.

3.6.2.3 The interviewing process

Qualitative interviews are commonly viewed as 'the interactional exchange of dialogue' (Mason, 2002:62) or 'conversation with a purpose' (Berg, 2001:77). It is the responsibility of the interviewer to create non-threatening environments and a welcoming atmosphere for the participants. Therefore, we allowed the respondents to choose the venues of the interview, which usually took place in public places such as cafés or in participant's office to ensure the participants would feel at ease. Although a café or restaurant offers a relaxed and informal space, we had to cope with the problem of background noise. The participants were given an option whether to speak in English or the Malay language, but generally most interviews were conducted in the Malay language. In line with ethical procedures, the participants had been provided with the consent form, which stated the purpose of this

research including issues of confidentiality and protection; participant's consent and right to withdraw; and the rights of the researcher to interpret, analyse as well as publish the data. Field notes and digital audio-recorders were used to record the conversation with the permission of each participant, and subsequently transcribe to ensure that there was no manipulation or distortion of the text.

Each group of participants was allocated different sets of questions based on their position and experiences (see Appendix A for detailed questionnaires) to analyse explanations on youth political participation in Malaysia. However, some important research questions were intentionally posed to all interviewees to generate deeper insights on certain issues and to provide a comparison between answers. The questions were carefully drafted by grouping them in themes that followed a logical sequence and they were asked the exact questions in the interview plan. Normally, the interviews lasted for about 30 to 60 minutes, but interviews with youth activists tended to be longer than other groups because they had much more to say about their activism, motivation, and overall picture of youth political participation in Malaysia. To preserve the authenticity of the text, the interviews were translated from Malay to English language by the researcher herself. The interviews were thus important to obtaining information on the respondents' demographic profile, their general opinions on politics and motivations to participate and not to participate in politics in order to achieve the aims of the research for this thesis.

3.6.2.4 Analysing and presenting qualitative data

Analysing interview data is quite challenging as it involves a continuous process in which different contents and structures from each interview must be integrated together and the whole process of collection, transcribing and analysing are inseparable. Although there are different approaches for analysing qualitative data and they are debatable among social scientists (Bryman and Burgess, 1994; Mason, 1996; Silverman, 2005), there is unanimous agreement on the organisation of data through the 'coding' process or breakdown the data into more handy chunks (Welsh, 2002). Therefore, a thematic analysis was implemented in this study. The thematic analysis is a term associated with the analysis of qualitative data to refer to the extraction of key themes in one's data (Bryman, 2012). Braun and Clarke (2006), on the other hand, define thematic analysis as "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within the data". In other words, thematic analysis refers to

the process of extracting themes from the verbatim qualitative data (Attride-Stirling, 2001). The thematic analysis of this study was done by using a qualitative data analysis program: NVivo 10.

In the first phase, the researcher became acquainted with the data obtained from the interviews. After the data had been transcribed, the interview transcripts were read carefully, and we generated initial careful notes from them. Although computer software NVivo 10 was used as the analytical tool, the printed copies of the transcripts were useful for quoting the interviewees. This process is known as 'utterances', brief notations (Mc Craken, 1988). The process also helped to reduce the data from the raw data. Once utterances and coding had been identified, the transcripts then transferred to the system.

The process of coding was done with the assistance of the qualitative data analysis software package NVivo 10. NVivo was chosen as it helped the researcher to code as many potential themes as possible and organized these themes into a systematic structure. In addition, NVivo is simple to use because it allows the data to be imported directly from a word processing application (Welsh, 2002). Thus, it reduced a number of manual jobs. Bazeley (2007) highlights five main tasks in which NVivo eases the analysis of qualitative data: First, NVivo helps to manage and organise data. Second, it also manages the ideas in order to understand the theoretical and conceptual issues. Third, it allows for querying data by questioning the data and utilizing this software to answer these enquiries. Finally, NVivo allows for a reporting task by utilising the data to formulate the findings. After all transcripts were transferred into NVivo, they were coded once again to discover the emergence of important themes and underlying patterns relating to this study. In this regard, the researcher selected some key phrases from the transcripts and gave coding to the phrases that were relevant to the research questions and issues which related to the interest of the researcher. According to Corbin and Strauss (2008:160), "...coding requires searching for the right word or two that best describe conceptually what the researcher believes is indicated by the data."

The third phase of the qualitative analysis was to thoroughly examine different codes and potential themes in order to find the relationship and developed patterns. To do this, a tree Node was developed. This contains information about particular concepts or category that are stored in NVivo for references to code the text (Bazeley, 2007). This

included the coding for 'memos' or extended notations about the data. After finishing the coding process, this was the time for reviewing and refining the nodes and codes. This allowed the researcher to code additional data that were missing out and generate a 'thematic map' of the analysis, so that it could build up a coherent and logical explanatory story (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). All main codes were grouped to ease the writing process by separating them into main themes and sub-themes.

The final phase was to produce the report by writing up narrative analyses and numerical data, and linking back the analyses with the conceptual framework, research questions and literature. Since the interviewees were divided across four different groups—politicians, academics, youth activists and youth non-participants—the data for each group were analysed independently and separately to gain deeper insights and views from particular groups. However, the final analysis of this study used a comparison of data between all groups to find the common and different features, as well as constructing relationship. Although NVivo was used as a tool, this research relied heavily on the actual analysis and interpretation from the researcher.

3.7   Validity and reliability

Validity is the truthfulness of the findings (Altheide and Johnson, 1994; Stiles, 1993), which is concerned with the ability of a research tool or method to describe and measure what it is supposed to measure or describe (Bell, 1999). In contrast, reliability refers to the constancy in measurement (Altheide and Johnson, 1994; Anderson and Arsenault, 1998), or how the findings can be replicated (Stiles, 1993). This means that similar results will be found if it is to be carried out in a similar context (Cohen *et al.,* 2000). From a positivist point of view, the indicator of validity is reliability (Altheide and Johnson, 1994). These terms are clearly defined in quantitative explanation and commonly accepted by positivists rather than interpretivists. Thus, there is an ongoing debate among researchers about the appropriateness of the use of validity and reliability in the qualitative findings.

One way of ensuring the validity of this research was through triangulation by combining quantitative and qualitative data. The purpose of triangulation was to neutralize or to eliminate biases of another method (Creswell, 2003). In this research, internal validity was achieved by using appropriate samples, theoretical framework, and instruments in data

collection. For example, the researcher used the qualitative data from semi-structured interviews to triangulate and cross-check the analysis of data survey, to ensure that the data were precise and the arguments coherent. Additionally, to obtain more validation in the research, the interviews were conducted in the Malay language and were later translated back to English. This helped to minimize bias and falsification of the data. In terms of external validity, the researcher used different target populations and took into consideration several characteristics such as ethnicity, area, and gender in selecting the sample for semi-structured interviews and analysing existing data survey. As suggested by Ridenour and Newman (2008), one should sample respondents across several strata such as age, socioeconomic status, and occupation which reflect the world. For reliability, the semi-structured interviews were conducted in a similar setting, using similar questions and similar circumstances. Silverman (2005) argues that to ensure the reliability of the data, they need to be consistent such that cases are assigned to the same category which can be applied in different occasions. In addition, using software in data analysis, particularly NVivo also provided accuracy in research as it can yield more reliable result through interrogation of the data (Welsh, 2002). Although NVivo provides rigorous data analysis, the manual technique could be added to ensure the validity, so the data were systematically interrogated.

3.8   Conclusion

This chapter has provided a detailed account of the research methodology used in this thesis, including a brief discussion on the research paradigm, research design and data collection methods. As the study's philosophical stance followed pragmatism, a mixed-methods approach—a combination of existing survey data and semi-structured interviews—has been used to achieve the overall objectives of this study and to provide a deeper understanding of youth political participation in Malaysia. Although the study relies on quantitative methods qualitative analyses were also needed to deepen and triangulate the quantitative findings, particularly to achieve high levels of validity and reliability. The next chapter will discuss and present the first set of quantitative findings obtained from the analysis of the WVS survey data before turning to the analysis of the Asian barometer data in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

AGE GROUP DIFFERENCES IN POLITICAL ACTIVISM IN MALAYSIA

4.1   Introduction

Research on political participation in established democracies has aimed to develop and test theories pertaining to who participates in politics, how, and what motivates them. Most of these works tend to associate political participation with a functioning democratic system. However, for semi-democratic countries in Southeast Asia like Malaysia, there is a shortage of thorough research in this area as citizens' participation has not always been accompanied by democratisation. Influenced by studies of Western democracies, political participation researchers in Malaysia are also now studying questions of participation. The common view claims that Malaysian youth are less likely to participate in politics than their elders (Samsudin, 2007; Abdul Hadi *et al.,* 2013). However, this account in the literature is not very well developed in explaining why young people in Malaysia are disenchanted with politics, since they sometimes overlook the influences of certain demographic backgrounds and the life circumstances of young people on political engagement. Therefore, with the help from the data surveys from Wave 6 (2010-2014) of the World Values Surveys (WVS), this study aims to investigate the differences in political engagement between younger and older people in Malaysia: following the definition of 'youth' in Malaysia as ending at 40, this study operationalises the youth as those aged between 21-40 and older people as those aged 41-70 (older respondents are dropped from the sample since issues of mobility may hinder their opportunities to participate). In particular, this chapter provides descriptive results on the levels of political activism between young and older people in Malaysia, and examines analytically which variables may play roles in explaining the differences.

4.2   Who participates and why?

Age has been a key indicator in the analyses of political participation. Much of the empirical literature finds that age and voting are correlated and tends to assert that the young cohort is significantly less likely to vote than their elders (Franklin, 2004; Pattie, Seyd and Whiteley, 2004). Some believe that voting, on its own, is a partial measure of political engagement as the younger generation are more predisposed to participate in 'unconventional' or 'elite-challenging politics' like protests, signing petitions and strikes (Marsh *et al.,* 2007). Therefore, scholars have recently been paying more attention to examining the age group differences in political activities beyond voting (Norris, 2003; Grasso, 2013, 2017; Melo and Stockemer, 2014). In relation to age, we expect that the young cohort in Malaysia will be less likely to participate in elite-directed politics than their older counterparts.

Apart from age, this study looks at the factors explaining political participation as developed in the model of socioeconomic status (SES) (Rosenstone and Hanson, 1993; Verba *et al.*, 1995), whereby differences in political resources, such as educational level, income and social class are seen as the key for explaining why people participate. Numerous studies have long held that more educated citizens are more likely to vote in elections and participate in electoral campaigns because they have time, money, knowledge, and ability to access political information (Schlozman, 2002; Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980; Blais *et al.* 2004). In particular, the impact of education on political participation not only stimulates and increases participation *per se*, but also allows citizens to acquire a strong sense of civic skills and political interest (Verba *et al.,* 1995). Goerres (2009:59) finds that education has a greater effect on European young citizens' likelihood of voting than it does for older people. This means that there is a huge gap between educated and uneducated young people in term of turnout. In addition, some believe that political participation is also affected by gender roles (Verba *et al.*, 1997; Karp and Banducci, 2008; Almond and Verba, 1963, Norris, 2002; Campbell *et al.*, 1960). Burns, Scholzman and Verba (2001:1) showed that women were still lagging behind men with respect to other forms of political activity, even though they were more likely to go to the polls. This shows that the growing liberalisation of gender roles does not reduce the activism gap between men and women. Financial resources, including income and employment status are presumed to have a positive relationship on voting (Verba *et al.*,

1995; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993). In particular, those with higher income are more likely to become politically engaged as they have more energy, time and money (Lipset, 1981; Rubenson *et al.,* 2004). Moreover, ethnic differences in political participation, particularly voting have been widely researched (Verba, Nie and Kim, 1978; Campbell *et al.* 1964). This research reveals that African Americans participate at relatively lower levels in voting and affiliations with political organisations than White Americans, but they are more likely than to take part in protests as they have been isolated from civic affairs and lack political resources such as income, education, and employment status (Schlozman, Verba and Brady, 1999). Given that participation in politics requires greater individual resources, we expect that young Malaysians with higher levels of education to participate in elite-challenging political activism at higher levels than their older counterparts.

However, the variables in the socioeconomic model including age, gender and income should be examined alongside other factors, since socioeconomic status strongly relates to skills and civic orientations that can directly influence participation (Dalton, 2006:50). The common explanation of participation identifies other determinant factors: group effects and people's psychological orientation or political attitudes (Dalton, 1996; Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995). First, party attachment and group membership relate positively to political participation. Specifically, the studies on the impact of party attachment show that citizens who have strong ties with a political party are more likely to turn out to vote (Dalton, 2008; Campbell *et al.,* 1960). Likewise, membership of organisations also helps to provide individuals with skills, training, values and attitudes and strong political efficacy to participate actively in political activities (Putnam, 2000; Verba and Nie, 1972; Stolle and Hooghe, 2004). In many Western democracies, the declining of turnout in elections is paralleled with a weakening of partisan ties, and this confirms that the strength of party affiliation encourages individuals to further participate. As we expect young Malaysians to be less active in elite-directed politics than their older counterparts, therefore we can predict that the weakening of partisan attachment and membership of organisations amongst young people contributes to explaining these patterns.

Second, political attitudes—political interest, knowledge, efficacy, values and positive orientation towards the government and the practice of democracy in one's

country are multiple factors that help to explain different facets of participation (Norris, 2002; Dalton, 2006; Putnam, 2000). Political interest, "the degree to which politics arouses a citizen's curiosity" (Van Deth, 1990:278) or "attentiveness to politics" (Zaller, 1992:18) has been said to have a positive effect on political participation. Those who are interested in politics are more likely to engage in political activities (Verba, Nie and Kim, 1978; Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995; Milbrath and Goel, 1977). However, for Van Deth (2000:116), citizens may be interested in politics, but this does not essentially mean that they consider politics as important or relevant in their lives. Moreover, Verba, Nie and Kim (1978:46) postulate that political interest should be an independent variable as it is an attitude that drives citizen to participate. In relation to political interest, many studies suggest an effect of political knowledge on participation: citizens who are politically informed and know more about politics should also tend to be more actively engaged in it (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Neuman, 1986; Milner, 2002). For instance, Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) find that in America there is a very unequal knowledge distribution when many African Americans, young people and financially less well-off citizens have substantially less knowledge about national politics.

Political efficacy also has been said to affect political participation (Van Deth, 1997; Campbell *et al*., 1960). In particular, one's own ability to understand and participate effectively in politics (internal efficacy) (Niemi, Craig and Mattei, 1991:407), or the responsiveness of the political system (external efficacy) (Craig *et al*., 1990:289) may increase the level of political efficacy, which then leads people to be more politically engaged. Ideological orientation on a left-wing political spectrum is an important matter too in political participation (Dalton, 2006:51). Left-wing identifiers are expected to be more active in politics, and more prone to participate in demonstration and petition than right-wing citizens, since they are anti-establishment and frequently challenge the status-quo (Melo and Stockemer, 2014; Bauknecht, 2012). Whilst citizen satisfaction with democracy has long been tied to political actions, mainly voter turnout (Norris, 2002; Karp and Banducci, 2008; Franklin, 2004), the relationship between dissatisfaction with the way democracy works and political participation is still debatable. Some argue that citizens with low levels of political trust in the political institutions may not participate in politics as they exhibit low levels of support for the system and of democratic values (Almond and Verba, 1963; Putnam, 2000). Meanwhile, others believe that dissatisfaction leads individuals to participate more in political activities, mainly through political protest (Gurr,

1970; Farah *et al.*, 1979). Accordingly, there is a blurry line between conventional and unconventional forms of participation because dissatisfied citizens may seek demands for change or express discontent using multiple channels, from protest to voting (Norris, 2002; Farah *et al*., 1979). With respect to political attitudes, we expect that young Malaysians relative to older people would be less likely to engage in elite-directed political activities because they have very low levels of political interest, efficacy and they are dissatisfied with the regime and how democracy works in this country. Thus, we combine socio-demographic factors (e.g. education, income, and gender), group effects (party attachment) and political attitudes (e.g. political interest and efficacy) as predictor variables that may explain youth (dis)engagement in Malaysia generally, and the differences of political activism between young and older people specifically.

This chapter aims to develop on the study conducted by Grasso (2013) on 'The Differential Impact of Education on Young People's Political Activism: Comparing Italy and the United Kingdom', and apply it to the Malaysian case. Accordingly, this chapter hypothesizes:

H1: Young people in Malaysia are less likely to participate in elite-directed activism than their older counterparts.

H2: Young Malaysians who have higher levels of education will be more engaged than their older counterparts with elite-challenging political activism.

H3: Young males are more likely to be engaged in elite-directed activism than young females.

H4: Young Malaysians who have high levels of dissatisfaction with how democracy works in Malaysia are more likely to be engaged in elite-challenging politics.

4.3   Data and methods

This chapter draws upon Wave 6 (2010-2014) data from the World Values Survey (WVS) to analyse how young Malaysians engage in politics as compared to older people in Malaysia. Survey data with the large samples (N: 1170) allows for statistical analyses and significant testing (to show whether differences between young and old are larger than would be expected by chance), such as to test for correlations between young people's political participation in elite-directed and elite-challenging political activities, as the main

dependent variables, and various attitudinal and demographic characteristics as the independent variables. Thus, the data set of the WVS is an ideal source of data for this study as it provides interpretable results for analysing young people political engagement (dis) in Malaysia.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, this research relies on the WVS for several specific reasons. First, the WVS provides detailed and comprehensive questionnaires which consisted of more than 250 questions, covering a wide-range of topics such as organisational membership, democracy, politics and society, socio-demographic, national identity and so on. Second, it uses large representative national samples, with an average of 1330 respondent per country (Dima and Dima, 2009). In addition, the WVS encompasses useful measures to analyse whether there are differences in political activism between young people and older generation in the previous and recent years of the surveyed interviews by using important intervening variables such as education, ethnicity, and gender. The survey topics in the WVS are significantly comprehensive and well-constructed, but in relation to this study, some aspects have not been covered in the WVS such as the questions on political mobilisation, authoritarian values and system responsiveness. These neglected aspects will be fully analysed in the next quantitative chapter using the Asian Barometer survey. It is useful to triangulate the findings between different sets of survey data, with different set of questions as it provides greater consistency of the findings on youth political participation in Malaysia, including the changing pattern of participation, diversity of political activism and their attitudinal correlates.

There is a dearth of studies on age-related patterns of political activism in Malaysia, specifically on young people's patterns of political participation relative to their elders, and in relation to the rich literature that has developed for Western democracies. This study investigates whether the disengagement of young people in established democracies is replicated for Malaysia, and it examines whether intervening variables like education have important explanatory effects. As this is a quantitative study which compares political involvement of young and older people, the sample of 1170 respondents is divided into two age groups: young people (21 to 40 years old/ N=523) and older people (41 to 70 years

old/ N=647).[22] This will allow us to analyse the differences in participation between young people and their older counterparts in Malaysia in terms of political engagement. The measure of political engagement rely on respondents' engagement in six political activities available in the WVS: voted, party membership, labour union membership, signed a petition, demonstrated and boycotted products for political reason.

Descriptive analyses are applied to provide the percentage-point gap in each political activity between younger and older people. Additionally, t-test and ANOVA analyses are developed to determine whether mean differences between two groups (age groups, levels of education and gender) and three groups (ethnic groups and social classes) are significantly different in these political activities. For the regression analyses, we create two scales as dependent variables: 'elite-directed' is measured on a scale from 0 to 1, where zero indicates that the respondent has participated in none of the activities and one indicates that the respondent has participated in all the following activities: voting, being a party member and being a labour union member. Similarly, for the 'elite-challenging', scale from 0 to 1, zero also here indicates that the respondents has participated in none of the activities and one indicates that the respondent has participated in all following activities: signing a petition, demonstrating, and boycotting a product for political reasons.

Both elite-directed and elite-challenging scales tested positively to principal component analysis (PCA). Before performing PCA, the suitability of data for factor analysis was assesed. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) reached statistical significance (0.000) for all items in both scales and The Kaiser-Meyer-Oklin values was .70, exceeding the recommended value of .6 (Kaiser, 1974), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. The elite-directed items loaded on a single component with an eigenvalue greater than one (e=1.50; 50.03% variance explained). Similarly, the elite-challenging items loaded on a single component with an eigenvalue greater than one (1.57; 52.53% variance explained). As for the independent variables, the socio-demographic and attitudinal variables are included in the regression models. These variables are: Young (coded 1 for 21-40 years, 0 for 41-70 years), Male (a dummy, where 1 male, 0 female),

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[22]Although the age of Malaysian youth is defined as those between 15 to 40, I have to exclude young people under 21 years as voting and other political activities are specifically focused on youth aged above 21 years, and also for ensuring the comparability of the subjects across different forms of participation. Similarly, older respondents who are above 71 years old are dropped from the sample since issues of mobility may hinder their opportunities to participate.

University (1 for University Degree and 0 for other), Employed (1 employed and 0 for other), Married (1 married and 0 for other), Party identification (1 for yes and 0 no), left-right values a (10-items scale), Satisfaction with democracy (10-items scale), Confidence in government (1 yes, 0 no), Confidence in political parties (1 yes, 0 no), Assessment of degree of fair voting system in Malaysia (1 yes, 0 no), Assessment of degree of Respect for human rights in Malaysia (1 yes, 0 no). The coding of all these variables and the full wording of the original survey items are detailed in Appendix B.

4.4   Analysis

4.4.1   Age group differences in political activism

Table 4.1

Comparison of proportions: political activism by age group in Malaysia

| | All (N=1170) | | | |
	21-40 yrs (N:523)	41-70 yrs (N:647)	p-value	N
Vote in elections (national)	65.4%	**92.2%**	**0.000**	1170
Party membership	14.5%	**20.4%**	**0.014**	1170
Membership of labour union	16.1%	14.4%	0.455	1170
Signing a petition	2.3%	2.0%	0.656	1170
Joining in boycotts	1.1%	1.1%	0.853	1170
Attending peaceful demonstrations	2.9%	2.2%	0.373	1170

Note: Figures in bold are statistically significant (p < 0.05)

Table 4.1 compares the proportions of individuals in each of the two age groups for six political activities in Malaysia. As expected, results confirms findings in the literature that young people (21-40 years old) are less politically active than older people (41-70 years old). Older people are significantly more likely than younger people to vote and to be a member of political parties. In fact, the first line of the table shows there is a 26 percentage-point gap in voting between young and older people. Although the percentage of young people who are members of labour union, sign petitions, boycott products and demonstrate is slightly higher than for older people, there are no significant differences between these two groups in those activities. Therefore, overall, young people in Malaysia are less likely to participate in conventional political activities than older people, but there are no significant differences for unconventional participation. This follows the argument that 'uncoventional', 'cause-oriented' or alternative forms of participation, such as

demonstrating, petition and boycotting are more popular among the young people (Dalton, 2007; Norris , 2002; Quintelier, 2007), but these differences are not so large in Malaysia.

Table 4.2

Comparison of proportions: political activism by ethnic groups in Malaysia

	Age group differences, by ethnic (N=1170)								
	Malay (N:795)			Chinese (N:288)			Indian (N:87)		
	21-40 yrs (N:347)	41-70 yrs (N:448)	p-value	21-40 yrs (N:132)	41-70 yrs (N:156)	p-value	21-40 yrs (N:44)	41-70 yrs (N:43)	p-value
Vote in elections (national)	68.0%	**93.1%**	**0.000**	59.1%	**89.1%**	**0.000**	63.6%	**95.4%**	**0.000**
Party membership	15.9%	**26.8%**	**0.000**	10.6%	6.4%	0.164	15.9%	4.7%	0.150
Membership of labour union	16.7%	17.0%	0.865	12.1%	7.7%	0.167	22.7%	11.7%	0.217
Signing a petition	2.3%	2.0%	0.713	1.5%	1.9%	0.830	4.5%	2.3%	0.524
Joining in boycotts	1.2%	1.1%	0.914	0.8%	1.3%	0.691	2.3%	0.0%	0.304
Attending peaceful demonstrations	3.2%	2.9%	0.752	0.8%	0.6%	0.881	6.8%	0.0%	0.070

Note: Figures in bold are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$)

When we compare for the respective age differences within ethnic groups (Table 4.2), we find out in the first line of the table that the younger generation whether Malays, Chinese and Indians are significantly less likely to vote in elections than their older counterparts. In addition, the second line of the table shows that the old Malays are significantly more likely to be a member of political party compared to the young Malays. Although the proportions of young Chinese in several political activities (party membership and membership of labour union) are higher than their respective elders, but there are no significance difference between these two groups in that activities (see column two). Similarly, column three shows that the young Indians are more active than the old Indians when it comes to participating in almost all political activities, except for voting, but there are no significance differences between these groups, though at p 0.070 the difference in attending a demonstration is significant at the 90% confidence interval. Therefore, overall, young people regardless of different ethnic groups are less politically active relative to their older counterparts.

Table 4.3

Comparison of proportions: political activism by social class in Malaysia

	Age group differences, by social classes (N=1169)								
	Upper Class (N:15)			Middle Class (N:458)			Lower Class (N:696)		
	21-40 yrs (N:4)	41-70 yrs (N:11)	p-value	21-40 yrs (N:187)	41-70 yrs (N:271)	p-value	21-40 yrs (N:332)	41-70 yrs (N:364)	p-value
Vote in elections (national)	75.0%	90.9%	0.459	67.4%	**94.5%**	**0.000**	64.2%	**90.6%**	**0.000**
Party membership	25.0%	18.2%	0.789	23.5%	20.6%	0.351	9.3%	**20.4%**	**0.000**
Membership of labour union	25.0%	18.2%	0.789	**24.6%**	14.8%	**0.009**	11.1%	14.0%	0.251
Signing a petition	0.0%	0.0%	-	3.7%	2.6%	0.417	1.5%	1.6%	0.930
Joining in boycotts	0.0%	9.1%	0.566	2.7%	1.1%	0.181	0.3%	0.8%	0.382
Attending peaceful demonstrations	0.0%	9.1%	0.566	4.3%	2.6%	0.268	2.1%	1.6%	0.606

Note: Figures in bold are statistically significant (p < 0.05)

Table 4.3 reports the comparison of proportions between age groups in respective social classes. Column two and three demonstrate that the older generation from both middle and lower social classes are significantly more likely to be engaged in voting compared to the younger generation. Furthermore, the old lower class have a greater intensity to be a member of a political party than their younger counterparts (see the second row of the column three). However, the third row of column two shows that members of the young middle class are significantly more likely to be a member of a labour union relative to their respective elders. For the upper class group, there are no significant differences in all political activities as the sample sizes are too small between each group. Therefore, overall, the young middle-classes appear to have a stronger preference for labour unions relatively to their respective elders. The high level of unions membership amongst young middle-class is in line with the increase of the labour force participant rate (LFPR) in this country. For example, in 2014, the LFPR for young people increased to 71.3 percent from 69.3 percent in the previous year (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2014). This means that young people, especially from the middle-class group, are amongst the working-age population that actively engaged in the labour force in Malaysia. This is contrary to the declining patterns of young workers' union membership in established democracies such as Britain (Bryson and Gomez, 2005), and New Zealand (Haynes *et al*., 2005).

Table 4.4

Comparison of proportions: political activism by gender in Malaysia

	All (N=1170)			Age group differences, by gender (N=1170)					
				Male (N:601)			Female (N:569)		
	Male (N:601)	Female (N:569)	p-value	21-40 yrs (N:271)	41-70 yrs (N:330)	p-value	21-40 yrs (N:252)	41-70 yrs (N:317)	p-value
Vote in elections (national)	81.3%	79.8%	0.513	67.2%	**92.5%**	**0.000**	63.5%	**92.1%**	**0.000**
Party membership	**20.3%**	14.7%	**0.010**	17.0%	23.3%	0.068	11.9%	17.3%	0.098
Membership of labour union	**17.4%**	12.8%	**0.025**	18.8%	16.1%	0.419	13.1%	12.7%	0.843
Signing a petition	1.9%	2.2%	0.708	3.0%	1.2%	0.106	1.6%	2.8%	0.349
Joining in boycotts	1.6%	0.5%	0.067	1.5%	1.8%	0.812	0.8%	0.3%	0.418
Attending peaceful demonstrations	**3.4%**	1.4%	**0.024**	3.7%	3.3%	0.714	2.0%	0.9%	0.276

Note: Figures in bold are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$)

The *All* column in Table 4.4 compares the proportions of political activism of Malaysian males and females. Overall, the result in the first column indicates that males, either young or old, are more politically active than female with regard to party membership, labour union and attending demonstrations, which replicates the patterns that we have seen in many studies by Verba *et al.,* (1997), Karp and Banducci (2008), Dalton (1996), Almond and Verba (1963), Norris (2002), Campbell *et al.,* (1960) that females still lag behind males with respect to political participation. Even though we have seen an increase from 5 percent in 1999 to 10 percent in 2012 of women representatives in both parliament and state assemblies, the participation of women in Malaysian politics has remained at a low level (Abdul Hadi *et al.,* 2013:17784). Some obstacles faced by Malaysian women that deter them from political engagement are: the dual burden—juggling domestic responsibilities and career concerns; political parties which are inclined to conservative attitudes and fail to adapt to women's leadership; a deterring environment for women such as belittling remarks; offensive jokes and the hypocrisy and dirty game of politics (Wan Azizah, 2002:193-194). Interestingly, when we tested the age group differences in political activism between males and females, it is worth noting that young males and young females are significantly less likely to participate in voting relative to their male and female elders (see the first row of the column two). In fact, there are greater percentage-point gaps in voting between younger and older groups, with young males (25%) and young females (28%). Therefore, we can sum up that young people, either males and females are generally less likely to be engaged in political activities than their respective elders, but the difference is only significant with regards to the voting activity.

4.4.2 Age group differences in political activism: the impact of university education

Previous research points to the level of education has a strong influence determining citizens' level of political engagement, where more educated citizens are more likely to participate in political activities as they have time, money, knowledge, and ability to access political information (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980; Dalton, 2006; Blais *et al.* 2004). Additionally, some research finds that there is a differential impact of education on turnout between age groups. Goerres (2009), Martin (2012) and Rubenson *et al.* (2004) argue that education has a greater effect on young citizens' likelihood of voting than it does for older people. However, Blais *et al.* (2004) discover that the newer cohorts of educated young people in Canada vote less than older age groups which have the same education level. Furthermore, Inglehart and Welzel (2005:43) argue that due to increases in education, young people are more inclined to participate in elite-challenging politics as they are less likely to be trusting of elites and institutions. This does not mean that their support for democracy has eroded, but young people are changing the way they participate in politics.

Table 4.5

Comparison of proportions: political activism by education in Malaysia

	Less than university education (N=883)				University education or higher (N=287)			
	21-40 yrs (N:342)	41-70 yrs (N:541)	p-value	N	21-40 yrs (N:181)	41-70 yrs (N:106)	p-value	N
Vote in elections (national)	69.9%	**91.8%**	**0.000**	883	56.9%	**94.4%**	**0.000**	287
Party membership	12.8%	**19.6%**	**0.004**	883	17.7%	24.5%	0.164	287
Membership of labour union	14.3%	13.9%	0.578	883	19.3%	16.9%	0.621	287
Signing a petition	1.2%	2.0%	0.737	883	4.4%	1.9%	0.260	287
Joining in boycotts	0.6%	1.1%	0.404	883	2.2%	0.9%	0.430	287
Attending peaceful demonstrations	2.0%	2.0%	0.231	883	4.4%	2.8%	0.500	287

Note: Figures in bold are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$)

The two columns in Table 4.5 presents information about the differences between younger and older people amongst those with non-university education and those who have a university degree or higher educational levels (Masters, PhD), and their level of political activism in Malaysia. When we compare the level of political activism between the non-university educated and the university educated, only voting activity remains significant in political activism amongst those with a university education (see the first row of both columns). Compared to the non-university educated sample, the percentage-point gap in voting for educated young people is somewhat higher (37 percent) than the educated older

people. Amongst those with a university degree, there is no longer significant difference in party membership between younger and older people (see the second row of both columns). As expected, young people with a university education or higher are less likely to vote than their respective elders who have same educational level. Therefore, overall, educated young people are less likely to vote in elections than the educated older people, but there are no significant differences for unconventional participation even the percentage of educated young people participating in unconventional politics is fairly higher than the educated older people. The result is contrary to the findings of the previous literature (Goerres, 2009; Martin, 2012; and Rubenson *et al.,* 2004) that education increases young citizens' likelihood of voting than their respective elders. This finding, however, confirms the previous study in Malaysia (Muhammed Fauzi *et al.,* 2003) that those with secondary school education and below are the ones that actively engaged in political activities compared to those who have university education.

In addition, the result in Table 4.5 conflics with the argument of Inglehart and Welzel (2005:43) that educated young people are more prone to participate in elite-challenging politics as they are driven by a motivation to make a difference so that they could have a better quality of life. As we can see, the educated young people in Malaysia are less likely to be engaged in voting relatively to educated older people, but there are no significant differences for unconventional participation even though some argue that educated young people see unconventional participation, particularly street demonstration, as a rational response after voting is seen to have no influence on the election outcome (Weiss, 2006; Welsh, 2012). Overall, for young people, having a university education or being educated is not an important determinant factor and has no effect on their political activism.

Table 4.6

Ranking of political activities amongst youth (21-40 years old) and older citizens (41-70 years old) in Malaysia

	All (N=1170)				
Ranking	21-40 yrs (N: 523)		41-70 yrs (N: 647)		
1	Vote in elections (national)	65.4%	Vote in elections (national)	92.2%	
2	Membership of labour union	16.1%	Party membership	20.4%	
3	Party membership	14.6%	Membership of labour union	14.4%	
4	Attending peaceful demonstrations	2.9%	Attending peaceful demonstrations	2.2%	
5	Signing a petition	2.3%	Signing a petition	2.0%	
6	Joining in boycotts	1.1%	Joining in boycotts	1.1%	
	University education or higher (N=287)				
Ranking	21-40 yrs (N: 181)		41-70 yrs (N: 106)		
1	Vote in elections (national)	56.9%	Vote in elections (National)	94.4%	
2	Membership of labour union	19.3%	Party membership	24.5%	
3	Party membership	17.7%	Membership of labour union	16.9%	
4	=Attending peaceful demonstrations	4.4%	Attending peaceful demonstrations	2.8%	
5	=Signing a petition		Signing a petition	1.9%	
6	Joining in boycotts	2.2%	Joining in boycotts	0.9%	

The upper portion of Table 4.6 (all) shows that the ranking of political activities amongst young and older people for the whole sample is virtually different. For young people in the general sample, voting and membership of a labour union are on the top two of the list and boycotting a product is on the bottom of the list. In contrast, the top two of the list for the older people are voting and party membership and boycotting a product is on the bottom of the list. However, when we look at the ranking of political activities amongst educated young people and educated old people (the lower portion of Table 4.6), the pattern is slightly different, with demonstrating and signing a petition (4.4%) share the same rank and percentage on the list. The ranking of political activities amongst older people and old university-educated old people is almost the same. This shows that whether the older respondents have university degrees or not, there is no change in their political activities. Overall, the top three most popular political activities amongst young and older people, whether they have university education or not, are voting and being a member of political parties and labour union. Meanwhile, contentious participation such as signing a petition,

boycotting and demonstrating are the least popular activities amongst both young and older people in Malaysia.

To sum up the findings of this section, being more educated does not mediate the differences in political activism between younger and older people in Malaysia, as educated young people are significantly less politically active in voting than their respective highly educated older people. In addition, education also does not mediate the differences in political activism between older people and older university-educated people, as the older university-educated people show less intensity to be a member of political party compared to older people in general. This shows that being older has a positive effect on older citizens' political activism as does being more educated. Overall, these findings indicate that having a university education actually does not reduce the participatory gap and differences of political activism between young and older people in Malaysia. Therefore, being more educated has no effect for political activism amongst young people, whereas the reverse is true for older people.

4.5   Elite-directed and elite-challenging repertoires

In the previous section, we discussed the importance of other modes of participation, such as protests, riots, and civil disobedience as ways of publicly making people's voices heard in an attempt to influence political decisions. Since the unconventional forms of participation have become more popular amongst young people, largely in Western democracies, various forms of political activities which used to be regarded as 'elite-challenging'—usually outside the established order or "...gives the public an increasingly important role in making specific decisions" (Inglehart, 1997:3) such as political protests—must be clearly distinguished from 'elite-directed' modes, where elites mobilise mass support through voting and established organisations such as political parties and the labour unions. Following the classification of 'elite-directed' and 'elite-challenging' by Inglehart (1997), we have recoded the political activities engaged by young people (either in their lifetimes or within the past 12 months) in this analysis into a mean scale from 0 to 1 where zero indicates that the respondents have participated in none of the activities and one indicates that the respondent have participated in all of them.

(1) Elite-directed activism: voting, party membership and being a member of labour union.

(2) Elite-challenging activism: signing a petition, boycotting products and attending
   demonstrations.

Table 4.7

Elite-directed and elite-challenging activism

		21-40 yrs	41-70 yrs	p-value	N
All					
Elite-Directed		.32	**.42**	**0.000**	1170
Elite-Challenging		.02	.01	0.450	1170
University education or higher					
Elite-Directed		.31	**.45**	**0.000**	287
Elite-Challenging		.04	.02	0.249	287
Gender					
Elite-Directed	Male	.34	**.44**	**0.000**	620
	Female	.29	**.41**	**0.000**	579
Elite-Challenging	Male	.03	.02	0.447	620
	Female	.01	.01	0.836	579
Ethnic					
Elite-Directed	Malay	.34	**.45**	**0.000**	813
	Chinese	.27	**.34**	**0.010**	295
	Indian	.34	.38	0.395	91
Elite-Challenging	Malay	.02	.02	0.699	813
	Chinese	.01	.01	0.797	295
	Indian	.04	.00	0.141	91

Note: Figures in bold are statistically significant (p < 0.05)

Table 4.7 compares the means between young people and the elders in elite-directed and
elite-challenging activism. An independent sample t-test is conducted to test the age
differences in activism by looking at education levels, gender and ethnic groups. The result
shows that older people are significantly more actively engaged in elite-directed activism
than younger people and these differences also persist amongst those educated older
people. In addition, there are no significance differences in elite-challenging activism
between young and older people, even when we focus only on university-educated
respondents. When we test the age differences by gender in both activisms, we find out
that older males and females are significantly more likely than younger males and females
to engage in elite-directed activism. As expected, there are no significance differences in
elite-challenging activism between these two groups, even though young males have a

99

greater intensity to engage in this activism compared to their respective male elders. The last column in Table 4.7 shows that amongst the ethnic Malay and Chinese, young people are significantly less likely to be involved in elite-directed activism than their respective elders. Overall then, these findings correspond to the literature that there are differences in political activism between young and old with the young generally being more disengaged from politics (O'Toole *et al*., 2003; Kimberlee, 2002), since a significant age gap is apparent in elite-directed activism, and absent for elite-challenging activism.

4.5.1   The effects of age, education and their interaction

Table 4.8

The effects of age, education and their interaction

	Elite-Directed		Elite-Challenging	
	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 1*	*Model 2*
N	1170	1170	1170	1170
R²	4.10%	4.23%	0.45%	0.67%
Young	**-.104***	**-.093***	.001	-.003
	(0.014)	(0.016)	(0.005)	(0.006)
University	.009	.035	**.014***	.002
	(0.017)	(0.026)	(0.006)	(0.010)
University*young		-.046		.021
		(0.034)		(0.013)

Key: ***p≤ 0.001 **p< 0.01 *p≤ 0.05
   Items in () refer to standard errors

Table 4.8 presents the effects of age, education and their interaction on elite-directed and elite-challenging activism. In particular, it models the effects of being young, being educated and their interaction on both types of political activism. Adding the interactive effects to the regression model is useful in understanding whether the effect of one independent variable on the dependent variable is dependent on the effect of another independent variable. When the interaction effect is included in a model we check if it is significant. If it is, it means that the effect is indeed dependent on the other variables. In this thesis we test both for two-way and three-way interactions. Model 2 for elite-directed activism shows that there is no significant interaction effect between age and education as we had hypothesised, for elite-directed activism. As such, for elite-directed activism, university education does not account for the differences between young and older people.

Morevoer, when we look at elite-challenging activism, we can see in Model 1 that there are no age effects but having a university degree or higher has a positive effect on

elite-challenging activism. However, in Model 2, there is no significant interaction effect between being young and having a university degree on elite-challenging activism. Therefore, the findings contradict our initial hypothesis that young people who have higher levels of education will be even more highly engaged in elite-challenging activism. Rather, education spurs elite-challenging or protest action but older age spurs elite-directed or conventional politics.

4.5.2 Party identification effects and socio-economic determinants of political activism

Alongside age and education, many empirical studies suggest other socioeconomic status predictors such as gender, marital and employment status as potential variables to explain participation. Therefore, we include these indicators in further analyses (Table 4.9, Model 1) together with party identification (Table 4.9, Model 2) in order to see their impacts on elite-directed and elite-challenging activism. It is worth noting that the literature shows how party identification plays an important role in encouraging people to engage with politics and to become a member of a political party (Miller, 1976). In particular, citizens who have strong ties with a political party exhibit more participatory activism than people who do not feel close to any political parties (Clarke and Stewart, 1984).

Table 4.9

Socio-economic determinants of political activism

	Elite-Directed		Elite-Challenging	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
N	1170	1170	1170	1170
R^2	6.70%	7.70%	1.06%	1.22%
Young	**-.074*****	**-.070*****	-.001	-.000
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.006)	(0.006)
University	.031	.032	.001	.001
	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.010)	(0.010)
University*Young	-.029	-.030	.024	.023
	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Male	**.038****	**.040****	.009	.010
	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Employed	.022	.021	.000	.000
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Married	**.082*****	**.080*****	.008	.008
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Party Identification		**.075*****		.012
		(0.021)		(0.008)

Key: ***p≤ 0.001 **p< 0.01 *p≤ 0.05

Items in () refer to standard errors

The findings (Table 4.9) show that when controlling for both socioeconomic indicators and party identification, the effect of being young is negative for elite-directed activism and significant as in Table 4.8, and controlling for the socio-demographic factors and party identification has a positive effect, doubling the model fit for elite-directed activism relative to the model from Table 4.8 with just age and education. In addition, being male has a positive effect on elite-directed activism. This confirms the earlier findings (Table 4.7) that males are significantly more likely to be involved in the political arena, mainly conventional politics, than females. Additionally, being married appears to have a positive impact on elite-directed activism potentially since married people have more stable networks. As for elite–challenging activism, socioeconomic status and party attachment have no significant effects. It appears that socioeconomic factors such as employment and marital status, as well as political party, plays no role in motivating young people (or old people, for that matter) to participate in elite-challenging activism. Model fit does not improve much either. Additionally, the education effect disappears given that the variables included probably each have some correlation with it. As such, on balance education is the only variable found to have an influence on elite-challenging participation whereas older age, male gender and married marital status all have positive influences on elite-directed action net of the other effects.

4.5.3   Attitudinal determinants of political activism

Previous research has emphasised the importance of political attitudes such as political interest, knowledge, efficacy, values and orientation towards the government and democracy as determining factors in political participation (Norris, 2002; Dalton, 2006; Van Deth, 1997; Putnam, 2000). Therefore, five major attitudinal factors (political interest, ideology, political efficacy, satisfaction with democracy and experiences with the regime) are included along with their interaction effects between age and higher educational level in political activism in the following analyses. *Political interest* measures whether the respondents are interested in politics or not, *ideology* is measured by using the left-right scale and the measure of *democracy* relies on questions asking respondents whether they were satisfied or not with the way democracy works in Malaysia. Two other attitudinal factors, *political efficacy* and *experiences with the government* are also taken into consideration as they typically facilitate greater political participation. For, *political efficacy*, two variables: confidence in government and political parties are measured, and

three other factors: satisfaction with democracy, assessment of fair voting system and assessment of respect for human rights are considered as reflecting citizens' experience with the regime which might hinder or support political action.

Overall, Model 1 in Table 4.10 and Table 4.11 show that only some attitudinal variables have significant effects on political activism. Some like political interest support both elite-directed and elite-challenging activism whereas others like belief that the voting system is fair or having more leftist values and dissatisfaction with government support only one or the other type (the first elite-directed and the latter two elite-challenging activism). The fact that being interested in politics takes a positive effect on both repertoires of activism confirms findings in the literature that being very interested in politics increase citizens' likelihood to engage in political activities whether in the forms of formal or informal political participation (Verba, Nie and Kim, 1978; Milbrath and Goel, 1977). However, as argued by Van Deth (2000:116), a subjective expression of political interest does not necessarily mean that a person considers politics important in their lives. When controlling for attitudinal variables in elite-directed activism, the negative effect of being young has been strengthened. As predicted, feeling that Malaysia has a fair voting system has an effect on elite-directed activism. Moreover, being female and not married have significant negative effects on elite-directed activism.

Model 1 in Table 4.11 for elite-challenging activism shows that being more left-wing has a positive effect on activism. Apart from left-wing ideology, dissatisfaction with democracy also has an effect on elite-challenging participation. Given that demonstrating and signing petitions are the most prevalent elite-challenging activities, therefore, it could be expected that young university graduates are more likely to be engaged in elite-challenging activism because they are interested in politics, hold a more left-wing political ideology and they are dissatisfied with the way democracy functions in Malaysia.

Table 4.10

Attitudinal determinants of political activism and further interaction effects: elite-directed activism

	Elite-Directed Activism				
	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*	*Model 4*	*Model 5*
N	1170	1170	1170	1170	1170
R^2	10.89%	11.06%	11.24%	11.07%	11.15%
Young	**-.065***	**-.116**	**-.055***	**-.044***	**-.070***
	(0.017)	(0.045)	(0.024)	(0.022)	(0.019)
University	.022	.040	.029	.039	.019
	(0.025)	(0.079)	(0.038)	(0.037)	(0.027)
University*Young	-.027	.014	-.079	-.061	-.034
	(0.033)	(0.097)	(0.049)	(0.047)	(0.036)
Male	**.031***	**.031***	.026	**.033***	**.032***
	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.020)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Employed	.019	.019	.021	.019	.018
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)
Married	**.075***	**.076***	**.076***	**.074***	**.074***
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)
Party Identification	.041	.022	.041	.042	.040
	(0.022)	(0.034)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)
Political Interest	**.076***	**.075***	**.075***	**.093***	**.076***
	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.020)	(0.014)
Ideology: Left-Right	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Satisfaction with democracy	-.007	-.007	-.006	-.007	**-.010***
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Efficacy: Confidence in Government	.008	.008	.007	.009	.010
	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.019)
Efficacy: Confidence in political party	-.007	-.007	-.007	-.008	-.009
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)
Experiences with regime: Fair Voting system	**.049**	**.051**	**.050**	**.050**	**.050**
	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)
Experiences with regime: Respect for Human Rights	-.007	-.008	-.007	-.006	-.007
	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.014)
Party identification*University		-.020			
		(0.083)			
Party identification*young		.059			
		(0.048)			
Party identification*University*young		-.051			
		(0.103)			
Male*University			-.011		
			(0.051)		
Male*young			-.018		
			(0.033)		
Male*University*young			.103		
			(0.067)		
Political interest*University				-.032	
				(0.051)	
Political interest*young				-.049	
				(0.033)	
Political interest*University*Young				.076	
				(0.068)	
Satisfaction with Democracy*University					.011
					(0.070)
Satisfaction with Democracy*young					.018
					(0.033)
Satisfaction with Democracy*University*young					.065
					(0.091)

Key: ***p≤ 0.001 **p< 0.01 *p≤ 0.05
Items in () refer to standard errors

Table 4.11

Attitudinal determinants of political activism and further interaction effects: elite-challenging activism

	Elite-Challenging Activism				
	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*	*Model 4*	*Model 5*
N	1170	1170	1170	1170	1170
R²	6.32%	6.64%	6.50%	6.55%	6.65%
Young	-.002	.026	-.003	-.009	-.008
	(0.006)	(0.017)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.007)
University	-.004	.003	-.010	-.005	-.005
	(0.010)	(0.031)	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.010)
University*Young	**.026***	-.014	.023	**.038***	**.029***
	(0.013)	(0.038)	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.014)
Male	.006	.006	.000	.006	.005
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.008)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Employed	-.001	-.001	-.001	-.001	-.002
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Married	.008	.009	.009	.009	.008
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Party Identification	.014	**.026***	.015	.014	.014
	(0.008)	(0.013)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Political Interest	**.013***	**.013***	**.013***	.009	**.013***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.008)	(0.005)
Ideology: Left-Right	**-.005****	**-.005****	**-.005****	**-.005****	**-.005****
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Satisfaction with democracy	**-.007*****	**-.007*****	**-.007*****	**-.007*****	**-.009*****
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Efficacy: Confidence in Government	-.010	-.011	-.011	-.011	-.010
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Efficacy: Confidence in political party	.011	.011	.011	.011	.009
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Experiences with regime: Fair Voting system	-.000	-.001	-.000	-.000	.000
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Experiences with regime: Respect for Human Rights	-.006	-.006	-.006	-.007	-.006
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Party identification*University		-.008			
		(0.032)			
Party identification*young		-.033			
		(0.019)			
Party identification*University*young		.048			
		(0.040)			
Male*University			.012		
			(0.020)		
Male*young			.003		
			(0.013)		
Male*University*young			.008		
			(0.026)		
Political interest*University				.002	
				(0.020)	
Political interest*young				.017	
				(0.013)	
Political interest*University*Young				-.030	
				(0.026)	
Satisfaction with Democracy *University					.005
					(0.027)
Satisfaction with Democracy*young					.024
					(0.013)
Satisfaction with Democracy *University*young					-.008
					(0.036)

Key: ***p≤ 0.001 **p< 0.01 *p≤ 0.05
Items in () refer to standard errors

4.5.4 Further interaction effects

Models 2 to 5 in Table 4.10 and Table 4.11 represent further interaction effects based on the analyses from previous sections. For elite-directed activism (see Table 4.10), there are several hypotheses derived: (1) being male has a strong positive effect for elite-directed activism. However, there is no significant interaction effect (male*young) as shown in Model 3. This contradicts our initial hypothesis that young males are more likely than young females to be more engaged in elite-directed activism. (2) Model 2 for elite-directed activism shows that the interaction party identification*young is not significant. (3) Model 4 for elite-directed activism shows that the interaction political interest*young is also not significant.

There are two further hypotheses derived for elite-challenging activism (see Table 4.11). (1) Controlling for attitudinal variables should strengthen the positive effects of being young university graduates on elite-challenging activism, perhaps the reason is that being very interested in politics has a positive effect on young university graduates. However, there is no significant interaction effect (political interest*university education *young) as shown in Model 4. (2) Model 5 shows that the interaction term satisfaction with democracy*university education*young is also not significant. This opposes the initial hypothesis that young university graduates who have high levels of dissatisfaction with how democracy works in Malaysia are more likely to be engaged in elite-challenging politics. Therefore, overall, there is no positive impact of being a young university graduate on elite-challenging activism.

4.6   Conclusion

Based on the analyses from the WVS Waves 6 (2010-2014) survey, we confirm findings in the literature, and hypothesis (H1) that young people are less likely than their respective elders to be politically involved in elite-directed activism. However, the findings from the investigation do not substantiate the other hypotheses (H2, H3 and H4) since the relevant interaction effects and main effects of university*young, as well as male*young for elite-directed activism and the effects of satisfaction with democracy*university*young in elite-challenging activism are not significant. Therefore, we can conclude that education does not appear to mediate or have an influence on attenuating the gaps between young people

and their elders in political activism. Our empirical study in this chapter has scrutinised the diverging patterns of participation between two age groups in Malaysia employing individual-level data for different types of political activities. There are some other significant key findings that can be highlighted from this chapter: first, young people irrespective of being male or female are less likely to be engaged in elite-directed in particular, and mainly voting, compared to their respective elders. However, there are no age effects or age differences in elite-challenging activism. Similarly, young people regardless of ethnic group are less politically active relative than their older counterparts. Third, when we compare directly with older people, young middle-class people are more likely to be members of a labour union relative to their respective elders. Overall, young people's political disengagement in Malaysia clearly is an empirical fact since our data analysis has shown that they are in general less likely to be politically active than their elders. The next chapter will re-analyse whether and to what extent young people in Malaysia are disengaged from politics and what are the determinant factors by analysing another well-known survey with some additional variables not present in the WVS, namely, the Asian Barometer. This will allow us to shed further light on key questions.

CHAPTER 5

FURTHER ANALYSES OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S POLITICAL ACTIVISM IN MALAYSIA: THE DIFFERENTIAL IMPACT OF EDUCATION AND THE ROLE OF THE RURAL-URBAN DIVIDE

5.1   Introduction

The previous chapter has shown that Malaysian young people in general are less likely than their elders to be politically interested and involved in politics, either through conventional or unconventional political participation. Whilst we test whether education levels have a differential effect on young people's political activism as is found for some European countries—thus suggesting that higher education levels might close the gap between young and old (Grasso, 2013)—in the case of Malaysia, our results remain the same. Young people irrespective of education levels are less likely to be politically active than their elders in elite-directed action in particular. Given this finding, this chapter aims to extend the analyses further on whether young people are truly disengaged from the political process relative to their respective elders by using another well-known survey data source, the Asian Barometer Wave 2 (2005-2008) and Wave 3 (2010-2012). This new and additional source of representative data allows us to investigate further research questions that we could not shed light on with the previous data sources.

       As such, this chapter is arranged slightly differently from the earlier chapter, and this structure is detailed as follows: (1) in the aforementioned chapter, we mainly focused on the micro-level theories such as socio-demographic and attitudinal determinants of political actions. On the other hand, this chapter aims at integrating micro-level approaches with mobilisation factors on youth political activism. (2) Additionally, this chapter will also seek to examine the age group differences in political activism from two Waves (2005-2010) to analyse the underlying and time-varying dynamics of youth political activism in Malaysia. (3) Moreover, this data source also allows us to include another important intervening variable which pertains to the rural-urban divide. As such in this

chapter, we include this variable in the models together with educational levels in order to test whether they have a differential effect on youth political activism in Malaysia. We added the element of rural-urban difference in the analyses because the split between urban and rural inhabitants is very clear particularly after the General Election of 2013. Social commentators argue that the urban city dwellers are better educated and well-informed citizens that are more likely to support progressive changes, while rural inhabitants are less educated and less-informed and more likely to continue to adhere to the old style of patronage politics (Thompson, 2013). In this respect, Malaysian young people who are educated and urban dwelling are seen to be more likely than their rural counterparts to be involved in political activities (Rajasakran and Sinnapan, 2013). Therefore, it can be expected that those young people living in urban settings are more likely to be engaged in unconventional political participation since they are amongst the more well-educated and better informed citizens. This echoes the results for Italy found in Grasso (2013) and shows, that in Malaysia, the urban dimension is also important in conjunction with the effect of higher educational qualifications for identifying those particularly active young people that go against the grain of theories of youth apathy. (4) The repertoires of political action in this chapter have been broadened to include contacting politicians and attending a campaign meeting, both forms of conventional political action that are available in the Asia Barometer but were unfortunately not available in the WVS. As such, this is a further advance introduced in this chapter's investigation relative to the previous one which we hope will further shed light on the patterns of youth political activism in Malaysia. In the remainder of the chapter we cover the key elements from the literature, move on to data and methods before introducing our analyses and results. We conclude with a discussion of the wider implications of our findings for the literature and for scholarship on youth political participation worldwide and more specifically in Malaysia.

5.2   Further explanations for political participation

We have highlighted several key themes from previous studies focusing on the importance of socioeconomic resources and social psychological elements as determinant factors of political participation. In this chapter, given the data source, we include a further important factor that may influence the propensity to be active, which is the rural-urban distinction. Numerous studies have long predicted (although the effect found has sometimes been ambiguous) that rural-urban residence affects participation (Verba and Nie, 1972;

Richardson, 1973). Some argue that people living in urban areas have higher levels of participation than those who live in less populated areas as they have more social interaction with other people and therefore, are more likely to develop skills that enable them to participate (Milbrath, 1965). In particular, those who are "exposed to the stimulation of the urban environment" (Verba and Nie, 1972:233) have a greater tendency to be campaigners or complete activists or participate in activities which require greater effort compared to those who live in the rural areas. However, the community in rural areas tends to have direct engagement with politicians because they know better the context of local politics. Richardson (1973), for example, finds out that rural people in Japan are more likely than their urban counterparts to be strongly engaged in local politics, have a greater feeling that voting is a duty and are more concerned about having their political needs represented. However, the 'Decline-of-Community' model (Verba and Nie, 1972) stipulates that participation may be waning since increasingly more people are becoming urban dwellers and move to a more urbanised setting since they no longer feel that they belong to a particular community due to the impacts of modernisation.

For the attitudinal determinants, another important factor that has been taken into consideration in this chapter is political knowledge. Political knowledge or to be more specific, "the range of factual information about politics that is stored in long term memory" (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996:10), is beneficial for democracy since an informed citizen is needed for democratic systems to function as intended (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Neuman, 1986:1). Most studies find that there is a positive link between political knowledge and participation, particularly in the act of voting. It is generally considered that high levels of political knowledge are associated with high levels of political participation (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Neuman, 1986; Verba *et al*., 1997; Milner, 2002). In the case of voting, political knowledge enhances the ability of individuals to make voting decisions based on specific criteria such as a candidate's positions on certain issues (Bartels, 1996; Barber, 1972). To some extent, political knowledge also increases citizens' likelihood to participate in non-electoral participation due to the fact that politically informed citizens have greater information about more complex modes of political participation (Milner, 2002; Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995). How should political knowledge be measured? Generally, many scholars agree that the informative and mobilising roles of the media helps citizens gather information about society and it is a prerequisite for political engagement (Norris, 2000, Dalton, 2002;

Putnam, 2000). Therefore, exposure to the political news gathered from various media outlets can be seen as an important indicator for measuring the level of political knowledge and participation. At the societal-level, many scholars of political participation emphasise the importance of mobilising agencies as one of the explanatory factors for political participation (Putnam, 2000; Stolle, 2007; Norris, 2004). However, operationalisations vary widely (see Chapter 2 for details). In this chapter, given indicator availability in the survey, we use group membership and political discussion indexes as predictors of mobilisation, particularly to explore their effects on youth political activism. These two variables capture important aspects of the mobilisation model in terms of organisational embeddedness, potential network, and information effects leading to heightened activism.

5.3   Data and methods

The analysis in this chapter uses cross-sectional survey data from the second and third Waves of the Asian Barometer Survey in the period of 2005 to 2012. The time frame between 2005 to 2012 is critical for this exploration as there were some major political events that significantly affected the likelihood of participation in Malaysia. First, there was a 'political tsunami' resulting from the outcome of the 2008 general election, when the ruling government (the BN) lost its stronghold of two-thirds majority in the parliament for the first time since 1969 (though it held on to power nationally) and four state governments in Selangor, Penang, Perak, and Kedah were handed over to the opposition. Another significant political event during this time was the rise of popular protests by the Bersih Movement and Hindraf which conveyed major popular grievances over social inequality and electoral manipulations. Finally, Malaysia also experienced the rapid growth of the Internet, mainly social media platforms and independent websites which allowed for the unbiased flow of information, enabled public discussion, and provided an unregulated medium for free expression compared to the mainstream media. However, since 2007, the government have gradually tightened control over Internet users or politically sensitive contents which could threaten national security. For example, a prominent Malaysian blogger, Raja Petra was arrested and detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA) and Sedition Act for allegedly insulting the Malays and Islam (Mohd Azizuddin, 2009). Therefore, the Asian Barometer (ABS) is another important source of empirical data for analysing whether young Malaysians are truly disengaged from politics or not. In particular, the survey data allows us to test the effect of different types of determinants

such as socio-demographic, attitudinal elements, mobilising networks as well as some aspects that could be seen to be linked to the specific intitutional context on youth political activism. The Asian Barometer survey is a large-scale regional survey that encompasses comparable data on public opinion on political values, democracy and governance in some parts of East Asia and Southeast Asia regions. Although it is a relatively new project and has been conducted only three times so far, it has been used extensively by Asian researchers, specifically to study citizens' attitudes about democracy and politics. It is also useful for providing a temporal dimension to the analyses by examining two successive Waves side by side.

This chapter analyses the ABS data sets based on the following reasons. First, the ABS data is comprehensive enough as it uses more than 120 standardised questions and covers a broad range of topics on political participation, electoral mobilisation, psychological involvement and additional questions reflective of the Malaysian context. Some questions are retained as regular indicators which are monitored over time, while others are added to depict the current concerns at that time. Second, the sample size used in the Malaysia survey is large and covers the entire country including the Peninsular and East Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak). Generally, the average number of respondents for each Wave is nearly 1,200 repondents, who are selected randomly amongst voting-age adult Malaysians (18 and above) gives a maximum error margin 2.83% at the 95% confidence level (Malaysia Survey Technical Report, 2007, 2011). In addition, most of the questions passed the reliability test with all items showing positive correlations. Thus, we can use the whole set of questions since the consistency of each item is acceptable. The ABS survey also provides useful measures covering aspects neglected in the WVS to test whether young people are disengaged from the political process relative to their respective elders and also analysing the factors that may play a role in explaining these. For example, the ABS data gives us a chance to study a broad spectrum of political action (voting, party membership, contacting politicians, attending a campaign meeting, boycotting, signing a petition, demonstrating and using violence for a political cause) compared to the WVS, which provided a more limited set of items of political action (voting, party membership, labour union membership, signed a petition, demonstrated and boycotted products for political reason). The breadth of activity allows us to clearly understand the variations and diverging patterns of political activism amongst young people. Although the ABS data are reliable and significantly comprehensive, there is a major drawback, especially when we

try to compare between the two Waves. In this regard, some important questions that appeared in Wave 2 are no longer being asked in the more recent questionnaire. The absence of repeated measures for these indicators limits the over-time analyses. For example, the question on *conflict among political groups* is no longer repeated in Wave 3. However, with the ABS this study is still advantaged in being able to account for rural-urban differences and includes this variable in the analyses together with the other variables. All details of coding and questionnaire items are provided in Appendix C.

In order to conduct in-depth analyses on the entire repertoire of political participation, we compare the ABS data from Wave 2 and Wave 3. Specifically, this chapter aims to examine whether young people are truly disengaged from the political process relative to their elders in two different Waves and thus across time, also testing whether the rural-urban dichotomy is reflected in the findings from the data and whether educational levels are still shown to have a differential effect on political activism amongst young people. As this chapter compares the political involvement between young and older people in two different Waves, so the sample in these Waves is divided into two age groups:[23]

  i. The total sample for Wave 2 is 1072 respondents: young people (21 to 40 years old/ N=570) and older people (41 to 70 years old/ N=502).
 ii. The total sample for Wave 3 is 1074 respondents: young people (21 to 40 years old/N=493) and older people (41 to 70 years old/ N=581).

These Waves are deliberately separated to more clearly see differences in the patterns and proportions between young people and their elders, but also between young people in two different Waves. To measure their level of political engagement, we use the same procedures as previously, in which we select eight indicators of political participation available in the ABS.[24] The percentage-point gap in political activitism between young

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[23]Although the age of Malaysian youth is defined as those between 15 to 40, I have to exclude young people under 21 years as voting and other political activities are specifically focused on youth aged above 21 years, and also for ensuring the comparability of the subjects across different forms of participation.

[24]*Voting* is the most ubiquitous political activity in which an eligible electorate appoints their representatives through a regular election.
Party membership can be understood as partisan affiliation or individual's organisational affiliation to a political party, conveying obligations and privileges to that individual.

people and the elderly is analysed by using cross-tabulations and t-test analyses and these are applied to determine whether the mean differences between the two groups (age groups, rural-urban difference, gender and education levels) are significant i.e. greater than would be expected simply by chance. We generated a mean scale to use a as a dependent variable for the regression on citizen-oriented activism, from 0 for participation in no political activity to 1 for participation in all four activities, where zero indicates that the respondent has participated in none of the activities and one indicates that the respondent has participated in all the following activities—voted, being a party member, attended a campaign meeting, contacted politicians (either in their lifetimes or within the past 12 months). Likewise, for cause-oriented activism, we created a mean scale from 0 to 1, where zero indicates that the respondents has participated in none of the activities and one indicates that the respondent has participated all of the following four activities— boycotted, signed a petition, demonstrated, and used force or violence for a political cause.

These scales were tested through principal component analysis (PCA). Before performing PCA, the suitability of data for factor analysis was assesed. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) for Wave 2 reached statistical significance (0.000) for all items in both scales and the Kaiser-Meyer-Oklin value was .674, exceeding the recommended value of .6 (Kaiser, 1974), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. The citizen-oriented items loaded on a single component with an eigenvalue greater than one (e=1.64; 41.19% variance explained). Similarly, the cause-oriented items loaded on a single component with an eigenvalue greater than one (1.82; 45.58% variance explained).

Attended a campaign meeting is the part of the party work which requires more effort, time and commitment from an individual.

Contacted politicians is part of the political expressive mechanisms where citizens communicate or get in touch with the elected representatives or officials regarding political and local issues.

Boycotted is when consumers voluntarily refrain from buying, using, participating in or dealing with a person in order to put pressure for change of the policies pursued by government or private organisations.

Signed a petition is when there is a collective effort to demand some form of actions from the government or other major agency e.g. a company.

Demonstration is an act of a mass of individuals group expressing their public sentiments (positive or negative) for political or other cause. It generally consists of and includes public gatherings, marches, sit-ins, and rallies.

Using force or violence for a political cause is a type of 'high cost' illegal activism is practiced by very few people. It can involve the unlawful use of great physical force or violence such as guerilla warfare, insurgency, rebellion, revolution, and rioting against adversaries to achieve political ends. According to Della Porta and Tarrow (1986:614), political violence, for example, the Red Brigdes in Italy in the late 1960s-70s or the Baaden-Meinhoff Group in Germany in the same period, tends to consist of repertoires of collective action that include great physical force and cause damage to an opponent in order to impose political motives.

For Wave 3, the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) reached statistical significance (0.000) for all items in both scales and the Kaiser-Meyer-Oklin values was .705. The citizen-oriented items loaded on a single component with an eigenvalue greater than one (e=1.86; 37.34% variance explained). Similarly, the cause-oriented items loaded on a single component with an eigenvalue greater than one (2.13; 53.28% variance explained).

5.4 Analysis

5.4.1 Age group differences in political activism

The proportions for each of the two age groups (young and older people) engaging in eight political activities as shown in Table 5.1 below confirms the findings of the previous chapter that Malaysian young people aged 21 to 40 years old are less likely to be engaged in politics than their respective elders aged from 41 to 70 years. Overall, a significant age gap is apparent in voting, party membership and attending a campaign meeting for both Waves, and signing a petition in Wave 2. All these political activities are more likely to attract older people, with the exception of signing a petition. Compared to older people, young people in Wave 2 (13%) are more likely to have signed a petition than their respective elders (9%). However, Wave 3 shows that the age difference is no longer significant for signing a petition activity.

Table 5.1

Comparison of proportions: political activism by age group in Malaysia

	Wave 2 (2005-2008) (N=1072)				Wave 3 (2010-2012) (N=1074)			
	21-40 yrs (N: 570)	41-70 yrs (N: 502)	p-value	N	21-40 yrs (N: 493)	41-70 yrs (N: 581)	p-value	N
Voted	45%	**88%**	**0.000**	1072	48 %	**90%**	**0.000**	1074
Party Membership	12%	**17%**	**0.012**	1072	5%	**12%**	**0.000**	1074
Attend a campaign meeting	24%	**33%**	**0.002**	1072	24%	**41%**	**0.000**	1074
Contacted Politician	30%	34%	0.155	1072	37%	40%	0.251	1074
Boycotted	12%	11%	0.671	1072	41%	47%	0.062	1074
Signing a petition	**13%**	**9%**	**0.018**	1072	21%	20%	0.591	1074
Attended a demonstration	5%	3%	0.085	1072	5%	7%	0.308	1074
Used force or violence for a political cause	2%	1%	0.402	1072	3%	5%	0.096	1074

Note: Figures in bold are statistically significant (p < 0.05)

Additionally, the age difference is largest in voting: less than half or 50 percent of younger people voted in the last election, in sharp contrast to over three-quarters who voted in the last election amongst older people. When we examine the two Waves (see Figure 5.1), the pattern displays that the percentage of young people involved in all political activism have increased in Wave 3, with the exception of party membership. Party membership amongst young people has dramatically decreased from 12 percent in Wave 2 to only 5 percent in Wave 3 (see the second row of Table 5.1). The findings confirm the previous study by Pandian (2012) that young voters are more likely to be the 'fence-sitters' who seemed dubious of party affiliation, but voted based on issues, prioritising the national issues such as unemployment, security and corruption as their central preferences.

Figure 5.1

Political activism of young people in Wave 2 (2005-2008) and Wave 3 (2010-2012)[25]
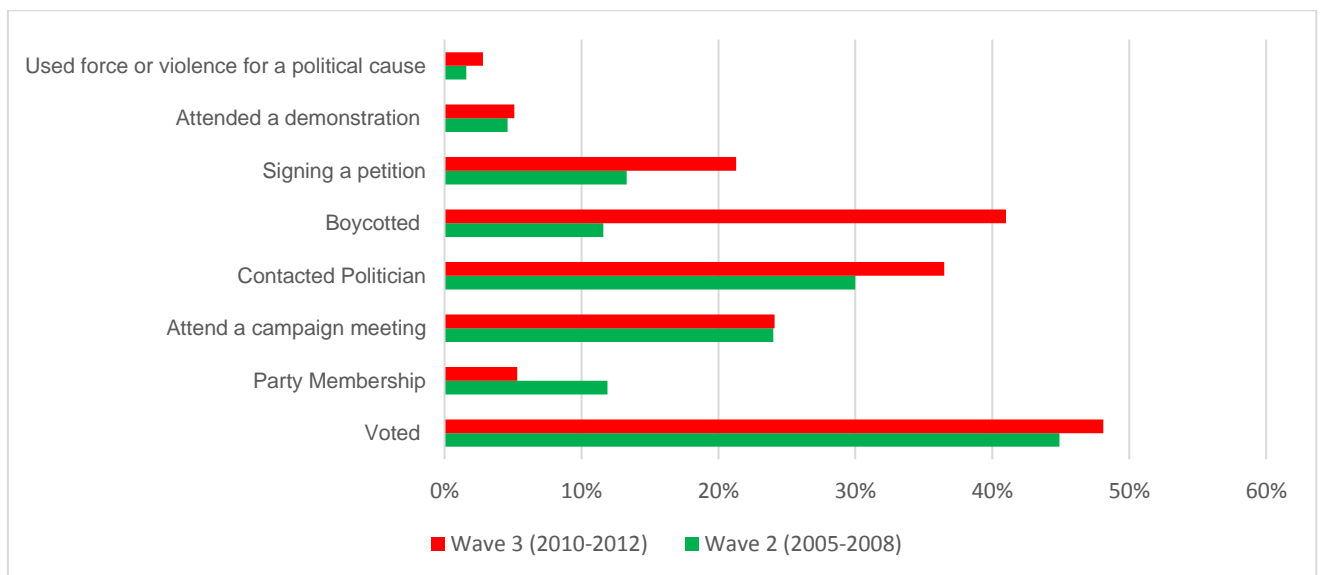
It is worth noting that signing a petition and boycotting went up, but party membership declined in Wave 3 and this could be due to several factors. First, there were legislative reforms which were meant to open greater democratic spaces for people by the government. For example, the amendment of AUKU (Section 15)[26] allows students to join political organisations outside the campus, and the enactment of the Peaceful Assembly

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[25]The total sample for this graph is N=1063, which is based on the total sample of young people in Wave 2 N=570 and young people in Wave 3 N=493).

[26] Since 2012, the government has amended the Section 15 of AUKU by allowing varsity students to take part in politics as long as they do not violate the laws or regulations of their respective universities. Before the amendment, students were not allowed to join political parties or express support for them.

Act 2012 (PAA) which allows public assemblies without any permit from the police. Instead, the organiser of an assembly must give notification to the police at least 10 days before the assembly. Second, the rise of a social movement called 'Bersih' raised public attention and consciousness for democratic values through their common campaigns such as lobbying, signing a petition, or protesting. Third, social media like Facebook and Twitter has becomes a democratic instrument that enables people to have greater access to political information and help social movements to mobilise people to sign a petition. Moreover, the results confirm previous findings that young people in Malaysia do not prefer to be engaged in 'protest politics' or other forms of participation that differ from traditional political activities, as there are no significant differences between young and older people in unconventional political activities, with the exception of signing a petition in Wave 2. This finding however, contrary with arguments by Norris (2003), Van Aelst and Walgrave (2001) and Dalton (1996) that young people are usually engaged in unconventional forms of participation. Therefore, overall, Malaysian young people are less likely to be politically active relative to their respective elders, even when we directly compare between different Waves, in accordance with the thesis of youth apathy.

5.4.2   Age group differences in political activism: the impact of urban-rural living

Table 5.2 compares the proportions of political activism between rural and urban Malaysians, using existing codes in the ABS data. In Wave 2 (see the first column), it is clear that there are no significant differences in political activities between the urban and rural young. (However here we should also consider that this could be likely due to the sample size being very small for the young rural group). Nevertheless, there is a rural-urban gap amongst the older group in three political actions, namely party membership, demonstrating and using force or violence for a political cause. In particular, these activities are more likely to be practiced by older people in rural areas than their urban counterparts. Wave 3, however, indicates different findings in rural-urban differences amongst younger people (see the second column of Table 5.2). During this time, Malaysia entered a phase of leadership transition—Abdullah Badawi handed over power to his deputy, Najib Tun Razak. Upon taking up office, Najib embarked on several radical reforms of the government policy by focusing on economic development, especially in rural areas. For example, the government continuously started providing direct cash support or the 1Malaysia People's Aid (BR1M) for the poor and rebuilt the houses of rural

residents under the hardcore poor housing programme in order to ease their burden. There is a strong patron-client relationship between the ruling government and the rural populace (Zhang, 2003). This could moreover be a reason why young people in rural areas are more politically engaged than their urban counterparts in party membership, attending campaign meetings and signing petition. Similarly, older rural people also are significantly more likely than older people in urban areas to vote, attend a campaign meeting and boycott. Khoo (in Liu Yangyue, 2014) argues that sometimes, young people who are working periodically in the urban area serve as the conveyors of information about democratic and liberal ideas when they return home. Young people may indeed be capable of influencing those in rural areas to be more politically active and aware about political issues. On the other hand, the older urban participants are more likely to contact officials than the older rural residents. Overall, rural residents whether they are young or old are more likely to be politically active in political activism than their respective urban residents.

Table 5.2

Comparison of proportions: urban-rural difference

	Urban-rural difference											
	Wave 2 (N=1072)						Wave 3 (N=1074)					
	21-40 yrs (N:570)			41-70 yrs (N:502)			21-40 yrs (N:493)			41-70 yrs (N:581)		
	Urban (N:472)	Rural (N:98)	p-value	Urban (N:417)	Rural (N:85)	p-value	Urban (N:205)	Rural (N:288)	p-value	Urban (N:260)	Rural (N:321)	p-value
Voted	46%	40%	0.264	87%	92%	0.188	46%	49%	0.517	85%	**93%**	**0.001**
Party Membership	12%	13%	0.655	15**%**	**26%**	**0.022**	2%	**8%**	**0.005**	10%	13%	0.374
Attend a campaign meeting	24%	24%	0.908	31**%**	38%	0.264	19%	**28%**	**0.025**	31%	**49%**	**0.000**
Contacted Politician	29%	34%	0.384	32%	42%	0.077	37%	36%	0.827	**45%**	36%	**0.038**
Boycotted	11%	13%	0.567	9%	16%	0.062	36%	44%	0.063	36%	**55%**	**0.000**
Signing a petition	14%	10%	0.317	8%	10%	0.515	16%	**25%**	**0.017**	20%	20%	0.820
Attended a demonstration	4%	7%	0.179	2%	**6%**	**0.036**	6%	4%	0.505	6%	6%	0.999
Used force or violence for a political cause	2%	1%	0.627	0%	**3%**	**0.009**	4%	2%	0.232	5%	4%	0.568

Note: Figures in bold are statistically significant (p < 0.05)

When we test for respective age differences within the rural-urban dichotomy (see Table 5.3), we find that young urban dwellers in Wave 2 are significantly less likely than

older urban citizens to vote and attend a campaign meeting, but they are significantly more likely than their respective urban elders to sign a petition. Perhaps, one of the factors that helps to explain why young urban citizens are more likely to sign a petition is the use of social media. Since social media has been used as the main tool to mobilise people to sign an online petition, and the young urban middle class is the largest group who have actively used the social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and blogs as a main workable source of political information (Mohd Adnan *et al.,* 2012:1249), we can assume that social media plays a role in explaining this.

Table 5.3

Comparison of proportions: age group difference, by urban-rural

	Age group difference, by urban-rural											
	Wave 2 (N=1072)						Wave 3 (N=1074)					
	Urban (N:889)			Rural (N:183)			Urban (N:465)			Rural (N:609)		
	21-40 yrs (N:472)	41-70 yrs (N:417)	p-value	21-40 yrs (N:98)	41-70 yrs (N:85)	p-value	21-40 yrs (N:205)	41-70 yrs (N:260)	p-value	21-40 yrs (N:288)	41-70 yrs (N:321)	p-value
Voted	46%	87%	**0.000**	40%	92%	**0.000**	46%	**85%**	**0.000**	49%	**93%**	**0.000**
Party Membership	12%	15**%**	0.087	13%	**26%**	**0.030**	2%	**10%**	**0.000**	8%	**13%**	**0.038**
Attend a campaign meeting	24%	**31%**	**0.013**	24%	38%	0.054	19%	**31%**	**0.003**	28%	**49%**	**0.000**
Contacted Politician	29%	32%	0.312	34%	42%	0.229	37%	45%	0.101	36%	36%	0.995
Boycotted	11%	9%	0.427	13%	16%	0.545	36%	36%	0.990	44%	**55%**	**0.008**
Signing a petition	14%	8%	**0.009**	10%	10%	0.933	16%	20%	0.238	25%	20%	0.111
Attended a demonstration	4%	2%	0.068	7%	**6%**	0.733	6%	6%	0.762	4%	6%	0.277
Used force or violence for a political cause	2%	0%	0.087	1%	**3%**	0.249	4%	5%	0.456	2%	4%	0.116

Note: Figures in bold are statistically significant (p < 0.05)

Correspondingly, young rural citizens are significantly less likely than their rural elders to vote and be a member of a political party. In Wave 3, we can see a similar trend as in Wave 2 where young people, whether they reside in rural or urban areas, are significantly less likely than their respective elders to participate in conventional politics including voting, party membership and attending a campaign meeting. In terms of unconventional political activism, there are no significant difference between these two groups, except for the rural areas where older people more actively participate in boycotts than younger people. Therefore, overall, young people—regardless of whether they live in

rural or urban areas—are less likely to be politically active in conventional political activism than their respective elders, except for signing a petition activity amongst young urban in Wave 2. These findings clearly contradict the conventional wisdom that Malaysian young urbans are more likely than their rural counterparts to be politically active citizens (Rajasakran and Sinnapan, 2013; Thompson, 2013).

5.4.3 Age group differences in political activism: the impact of gender

Table 5.4 reports the proportions of political activism of Malaysian males and females. Overall, the results from both Waves 2 and 3 confirm findings in the previous chapter that males, irrespective of age group, are more politically active than females in regard to attending a campaign meeting, contacting officials, boycotting and signing a petition. Additionally, as shown in Wave 3 (see column 4), these gender gaps are apparent in almost all political activities, with the exception of voting and party membership amongst older males and females.

Table 5.4

Comparison of proportions: gender difference

	Gender difference											
	Wave 2 (N=1072)						Wave 3 (N=1074)					
	21-40 yrs (N:570)			41-70 yrs (N:502)			21-40 yrs (N:493)			41-70 yrs (N:581)		
	Male (N:288)	Female (N:282)	p-value	Male (N:254)	Female (N:248)	p-value	Male (N:230)	Female (N:263)	p-value	Male (N:286)	Female (N:295)	p-value
Voted	46%	44%	0.539	86%	88%	0.568	50%	46%	0.327	90%	89%	0.584
Party Membership	12%	12%	0.868	19%	15%	0.241	6%	4%	0.451	10%	13%	0.158
Attend a campaign meeting	**29%**	18%	**0.002**	**44%**	20%	**0.000**	**33%**	16%	**0.000**	**49%**	32%	**0.000**
Contacted Politician	**36%**	24%	**0.002**	**43%**	25%	**0.000**	**41%**	32%	**0.039**	**49%**	31%	**0.000**
Boycotted	**16%**	7%	**0.000**	**15%**	6%	**0.001**	**52%**	31%	**0.000**	**56%**	37%	**0.000**
Signing a petition	**17%**	10%	**0.018**	**12%**	5%	**0.006**	**27%**	16%	**0.002**	**24%**	16%	**0.013**
Attended a demonstration	5%	4%	0.455	3%	2%	0.813	6%	4%	0.337	**9%**	4%	**0.035**
Used force or violence for a political cause	2%	1%	0.761	1%	1%	0.673	3%	3%	0.773	**7%**	3%	**0.043**

Note: Figures in bold are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$)

When we compare the age group differences in political activism between males and females in Table 5.5, young males in wave 2 (see the first column) are less likely than

their respective male elders to vote in elections, to be a member of a political party or attend a campaign meeting. Whilst the percentage of young people in unconventional politics such as boycotting, signing a petition, demonstrating and using political violence is slightly higher than that of older people, there are no significant difference between these two groups in these activities. Compared with the older female group (see the second column), young females are five percent more likely to have signed a petition. However, there is a significant age gap between these two groups in terms of voting, where only 44 percent of young females voted in the last election compared with 88 percent of older females.

Table 5.5

Comparison of proportions: age group difference, by gender

Age group difference, by gender											
	Wave 2 (N=1072)						Wave 3 (N=1074)				
	Male (N:542)			Female (N:530)			Male (N:516)			Female (N:558)	
	21-40 yrs (N:288)	41-70 yrs (N:254)	p-value	21-40 yrs (N:282)	41-70 yrs (N:248)	p-value	21-40 yrs (N:230)	41-70 yrs (N:286)	p-value	21-40 yrs (N:263)	41-70 yrs (N:295)	p-value
Voted	46%	**86%**	**0.000**	44%	**88%**	**0.000**	50%	**90%**	**0.000**	46%	**89%**	**0.000**
Party Membership	12%	**19%**	**0.022**	12%	15%	0.223	6%	10%	0.127	4%	**13%**	**0.000**
Attend a campaign meeting	29%	**44%**	**0.000**	18%	20%	0.538	33%	**49%**	**0.000**	16%	**32%**	**0.000**
Contacted Politician	36%	43%	0.073	24%	25%	0.897	41%	49%	0.070	32%	31%	0.709
Boycotted	16%	15%	0.759	7%	6%	0.747	52%	56%	0.303	31%	37%	0.156
Signing a petition	17%	12%	0.142	**10%**	5%	**0.044**	27%	24%	0.399	16%	16%	0.990
Attended a demonstration	5%	3%	0.149	4%	2%	0.335	6%	9%	0.258	4%	4%	0.896
Used force or violence for a political cause	2%	1%	0.594	1%	1%	0.507	3%	**7%**	**0.034**	3%	3%	0.995

Note: Figures in bold are statistically significant (p < 0.05)

The findings in Wave 3 (columns 3 and 4) show that both young males and females are significantly more inactive than their respective elders in voting and attending a campaign meeting. In addition, young males are less likely than their older counterparts to use force or violence for a political cause, while young females are significantly less active than older females in being a member in a political party. Therefore, overall, we can sum up

that young people, both males and females are generally less likely to be engaged in conventional political activities than their respective elders, particularly in terms of voting, party membership and attending a campaign meeting. There is a significant difference in unconventional political activity, mainly in signing a petition, but this is only apparent amongst young females in Wave 2.

5.4.4 Age group differences in political activism: the impact of university education

Table 5.6 shows the proportions involved in political activism amongst younger and older people for the non-university education sample or solely amongst those that university degree or higher (Masters, PhD) in Wave 2. When we compare the level of political activism between these two samples, only voting activity remains significant amongst those with a university education (See the first row of both columns). The percentage-point age gap in voting is somewhat larger (47 percent)—less than half of educated young people having voted in the last election—in sharp contrast to over three-quarters of educated older people. In addition, there is a significant age gap between educated young and old people in contacting politicians, in which this activity is more likely to be practiced by older people with university education or higher than their respective younger group.

Table 5.6

Comparison of proportions: political activism by university education or higher in Wave 2

	Less than university education				University education or higher			
	Wave 2 (2005-2008) (N=879)				Wave 2 (2005-2008) (N=193)			
	21-40 yrs (N: 413)	41-70 yrs (N: 466)	p-value	N	21-40 yrs (N: 157)	41-70 yrs (N: 36)	p-value	N
Voted	48%	**88%**	**0.000**	879	36%	**83%**	**0.000**	193
Party Membership	14%	18%	0.119	879	8%	17%	0.094	193
Attend a campaign meeting	25%	**33%**	**0.012**	879	22%	30%	0.257	193
Contacted Politician	30%	33%	0.294	879	31%	**50%**	**0.033**	193
Boycotted	12%	11%	0.596	879	11%	11%	0.961	193
Signing a petition	10%	8%	0.426	879	23%	17%	0.414	193
Attended a demonstration	4%	3%	0.280	879	6%	0%	0.143	193
Used force or violence for a political cause	1%	1%	0.878	879	3%	0%	0.280	193

Note: Figures in bold are statistically significant (p < 0.05)

On the other hand, the findings of Wave 3 in Table 5.7 reveal that five political activities (voting, attending a campaign meeting, contacting officials, and boycotting) show significant age differences between young and old in the university-educated sample, as compared to only three activities (voting, party membership, and attending a campaign meeting) in the non-university education sample. Like in Wave 2, all these activities are more actively practiced by educated older people relative to their younger educated counterparts. Therefore, overall, the results of Waves 2 and 3 confirm findings from the previous chapter that young people, whether with or without university education or higher are less likely to participate in almost all political activities than older people. The patterns also confirm, as many researchers have found, that conventional politics tend to attract the older sections of the populations, including amongst those older people with a university education or higher.

Table 5.7

Comparison of proportions: political activism by university education or higher in Wave 3

	Less than university education				University education or higher			
	Wave 3 (2010-2012) (N=900)				Wave 3 (2010-2012) (N=174)			
	21-40 yrs (N: 371)	41-70 yrs (N: 529)	p-value	N	21-40 yrs (N: 122)	41-70 yrs (N: 52)	p-value	N
Voted	47%	**90%**	**0.000**	900	50%	**83%**	**0.000**	174
Party Membership	6%	**12%**	**0.001**	900	4%	6%	0.632	174
Attend a campaign meeting	25%	**40%**	**0.000**	900	23%	**52%**	**0.000**	174
Contacted Politician	31%	37%	0.088	900	53%	**75%**	**0.007**	174
Boycotted	43%	45%	0.456	900	35%	**60%**	**0.003**	174
Signing a petition	21%	19%	0.586	900	23%	27%	0.578	174
Attended a demonstration	6%	7%	0.678	900	3%	6%	0.276	174
Used force or violence for a political cause	4%	5%	0.307	900	1%	4%	0.162	174

Note: Figures in bold are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$)

5.4.5   Ranking of political activities

Table 5.8 displays the ranking of political activities amongst young and older people from the general, urban-dwelling and university educated samples in Wave 2. The upper portion of Table 5.5 (all) shows that the ranking of political activities amongst younger and older people for the whole sample are slightly different. For young people in the general sample, signing a petition is on the top four items of the list, with party membership and boycotting (12%) sharing the same rank and percentage on the list. On the other hand, party

membership, boycotts and signing a petition are ranked on the fourth, fifth and sixth of the list for older people across the whole sample.

Table 5.8

Ranking of political activities amongst young (21-40 years old) and old (41-70 years old) in Wave 2

Wave 2 (2005-2008)				
All (N=1072)				
Ranking	21-40 yrs (N: 570)		41-70 yrs (N: 502)	
1	Voted	45%	Voted	88%
2	Contacted Politician	30%	Contacted Politician	34%
3	Attend a campaign meeting	24%	Attend a campaign meeting	33%
4	Signing a petition	13%	Party Membership	17%
5	Party Membership	12%	Boycotted	11%
6	= Boycotted		Signing a petition	9%
7	Attended a demonstration	5%	Attended a demonstration	3%
8	Used force or violence for a political cause	2%	Used force or violence for a political cause	1.0%
Urban (N=889)				
Ranking	21-40 yrs (N: 472)		41-70 yrs (N: 417)	
1	Voted	46%	Voted	87%
2	Contacted Politician	29%	Contacted Politician	32%
3	Attend a campaign meeting	24%	Attend a campaign meeting	31%
4	Signing a petition	14%	Party Membership	15%
5	Party Membership	12%	Boycotted	9%
6	Boycotted	11%	Signing a petition	8%
7	Attended a demonstration	4%	Attended a demonstration	2%
8	Used force or violence for a political cause	2%	Used force or violence for a political cause	0%
University education or higher (N=193)				
Ranking	21-40 yrs (N: 157)		41-70 yrs (N: 36)	
1	Voted	36%	Voted	83%
2	Contacted Politician	31%	Contacted Politician	50%
3	Signing a petition	23%	Attend a campaign meeting	30%
4	Attend a campaign meeting	22%	Party Membership	17%
5	Boycotted	11%	=Signing a petition	
6	Party Membership	8%	Boycotted	11%
7	Attended a demonstration	6%	Attended a demonstration	0%
8	Used force or violence for a political cause	3%	=Used force or violence for a political cause	

When we look at the ranking of political activities amongst younger and older people in urban areas (the middle portion of Table 5.8), the pattern is slightly different, with the top four to six political activities on the list for young urban people being signing a petition, party membership and boycotts. Whereas, the top four to six political activities

on the list for older urban residents are party membership, boycotts and signing a petition. Compared to the general sample, the proportions of young urban residents in boycotting (11%) is slightly lower than young people in the general sample (12%). Thus, boycotting drops to sixth place in the political ranking list for young urbans. Furthermore, the ranking of political activities amongst older people and older urban people is almost the same. This shows that there are no large differences between older respondents living in urban and non-urban areas.

The lower portion of Table 5.8 displays that the ranking of political activities amongst educated younger and older people is also slightly different. In particular, signing a petition, attending a campaign meeting and boycotting are ranked within the top five of the list, while party membership comes in the bottom three of the list for the young educated sample. In contrast, for educated older people, attending a campaign meeting is one of the top three most popular activities, signing a petition and boycotting (11%) share the same rank and percentage, and boycotts are listed in the bottom three of the list. Overall, when we compare the ranking of political activities between young people in the general, urban and university-educated samples, we can see that amongst educated young, the top three most popular political activities are voting, contacting officials and signing a petition, while party membership, demonstrating and using political violence are the least popular activities. For young people in the general and urban samples, voting, contacting officials and attending a campaign meeting have been placed on the top three most popular activities, while boycotting, demonstrating and using political violence are on the bottom three of the least popular activities. However, the ranking of political activities amongst older people in the general, urban and university-educated samples is virtually the same. This shows that whether older respondents live in urban areas or have a university degree makes no change to their political activities.

Table 5.9 compares the ranking of political activities between young and older people from the general, urban and university-educated samples in Wave 3. The upper portion of Table 5.9 (all) shows that the ranking of political activities amongst young and older people for the general sample is slightly different. For young people in the general sample, contacting politicians and attending a campaign meeting are ranked in third and fourth places on the list, while party membership and demonstrating share the same rank and percentage (5%). This is reversed for older people across the whole sample, where

attending a campaign is ranked in third place, and contacting officials is on the top four of the list.

Table 5.9

Ranking of political activities amongst young (21-40 years old) and old (41-70 years old) in Wave 3

Wave 3 (2010-2011)				
All (N=1074)				
Ranking	21-40 yrs (N: 493)		41-70 yrs (N: 581)	
1	Voted	48%	Voted	90%
2	Boycotted	41%	Boycotted	47%
3	Contacted Politician	37%	Attend a campaign meeting	41%
4	Attend a campaign meeting	24%	Contacted Politician	40%
5	Signing a petition	21%	Signing a petition	20%
6	Party Membership	5%	Party Membership	12%
7	=Attended a demonstration		Attended a demonstration	7%
8	Used force or violence for a political cause	3%	Used force or violence for a political cause	5%
Urban (N:465)				
Ranking	21-40 yrs (N: 205)		41-70 yrs (N: 260)	
1	Voted	46%	Voted	85%
2	Contacted Politician	37%	Contacted Politician	45%
3	Boycotted	36%	Boycotted	36%
4	Attend a campaign meeting	19%	Attend a campaign meeting	31%
5	Signing a petition	16%	Signing a petition	20%
6	Attended a demonstration	6%	Party Membership	10%
7	Used force or violence for a political cause	4%	Attended a demonstration	6%
8	Party Membership	2%	Used force or violence for a political cause	5%
University education or higher (N=174)				
Ranking	21-40 yrs (N: 122)		41-70 yrs (N: 52)	
1	Contacted Politician	53%	Voted	83%
2	Voted	50%	Contacted Politician	75%
3	Boycotted	35%	Boycotted	60%
4	Attend a campaign meeting	23%	Attend a campaign meeting	52%
5	=Signing a petition		Signing a petition	27%
6	Party Membership	4%	Party Membership	6%
7	Attended a demonstration	2%	=Attended a demonstration	
8	Used force or violence for a political cause	1%	Used force or violence for a political cause	4%

When we examine the ranking of political activities amongst younger and older people in the urban areas (the middle portion of Table 5.9), we can see that the bottom three of these lists are different. The bottom three of the list for young urban participants are demonstrating, using political violence and party membership. However, for older

urban residents, amongst three of the least popular activities are being a political party member, demonstrating and using force or violence for a political cause. As we compare the ranking of political activities between young people in the general sample and young urban people, there is a far lower proportion of young urban redisdents in all political activities, except contacting officials, demonstrating and using political violence.

In addition, the ranking of political activities amongst older people and old urban people is nearly the same, except for contacting politicians and boycotting, which have been ranked in second and third places of the list for old urban residents, and this is reversed for older people in the general sample. The lower portion of Table 5.9 shows that the ranking of political activities amongst educated younger and older people is different. For educated younger people the topmost popular activity on the list is contacting officials – and signing a petition and party membership share the same rank and percentage (4%). At the same time, voting is the most common activity of the list for educated older people, and party membership and demonstrating share the same rank and percentage (4%).

Therefore, overall, the top three most popular political activities amongst younger and older people, whether from the general, urban or university-educated samples, are voting, contacting politicians and boycotting, except for older people in the general sample—attending a campaign meeting is on the top three of the list. On the other hand, contentious participation such as demonstrating and using force or violence for a political cause are the least popular activities amongst younger and older people, regardless of their education levels and living areas. Remarkably, party membership is also one of the least popular activities amongst both young and older people in Wave 3.

5.5   Citizen-oriented and cause-oriented repertoires

Many scholars argue that it is necessary to distinguish between two repertoires that broadly map on to the distinction between elite-directed and elite-challenging activities employed in the previous chapter, namely, that between citizen-oriented—relating primarily to elections and parties, and cause-oriented activism—focusing mainly on specific issues and policy, since unconventional politics such as demonstrations, strikes, and consumer politics have become 'mainstream' and more widespread (Norris, 2007; Van Aelst and Walgrave, 2001). In this regard, we use different definitions of political activism proposed

by Norris (2003), citizen-oriented and cause-oriented, in order to differentiate this chapter with the previous one. This terminology also draws a clear distinction between conventional and unconventional politics by relating citizen-oriented actions with elections and parties, that are widely recognized as essential to democracy, and cause-oriented actions are commonly used to pursue specific issues and policy concerns amongst various targets through different forms such as protests, consumer politics, and petitioning. Following Norris's classification of 'citizen-oriented' and cause-oriented activism, we have recoded political activities in this analysis into a mean scale from 0 to 1.[27] (0 = indicates that the respondents have participated in none of the activities and 1 = indicates that the respondents have participated in all activities).

(1) Citizen-oriented activism: voting, party membership, contacting politicians and attending a campaign meeting.

(2) Cause-oriented activism: signing a petition, boycotting for a political reason, demonstrating, and using force or violence for a political cause.

By using an independent sample t-test, Table 5.10 compares the means of two age groups (between young and older people) in citizen and cause-oriented in Wave 2 and 3. In Wave 2, older people are significantly more likely than younger people to participate in citizen-oriented activism. These differences are also significant amongst university-educated respondents, older males and females, and older people who reside in urban and rural areas. In contrast, young people are significantly more likely than older people to be engaged in cause-oriented activism; these differences also persist amongst young people in urban areas. The higher engagement of young people, particularly amongst the young urban residents in cause-oriented activism in Wave 2 (2005-2008) could be related to the political situation at that time. Looking back at the political scenarios during the period from 2005 to 2008, there was a strong feeling of disillusion about the ruling government over several issues, such as the economic recession and the spiralling rate of inflation, political corruption, and the worsening of inter-ethnic relations (Brown, 2008; Ooi Kee

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[27]Since demonstrations and 'unconventional' forms of participation have become widespread and mainstream, Norris (2003:4) suggests that it is better to distinguish between citizen-oriented actions, relating to the traditional agencies such as elections and parties, and cause-oriented actions which more concern on single-issue or policy, typified by new social movement or consumer politics. Norris (2003:17) also finds out that, young people in post-industrialized society are more likely to get involved in cause-oriented political action, so there is a broader cultural shift in young people's political participation "from the politics of loyalties towards the politics of choice". By analysing different forms of political activism separately, we can examine whether the disengagement of young people is reflected across different social contexts and across other forms of participation.

Beng, 2008; Saravanamuttu, 2008). Such issues eventually culminated in popular uprisings, namely the Bersih 1.0 and Hindraf protests, noted as major historical events in Malaysia.[28] These massive rallies galvanised largely young people, who were strongly linked to numerous student associations and political NGOs.

Table 5.10
Citizen-oriented and cause-oriented activism

		Wave 2 (N=1072)				Wave 3 (N=1074)			
		All							
		21-40 yrs	41-70 yrs	p-value	N	21-40 yrs	41-70 yrs	p-value	N
Citizen-oriented		.33	**.50**	**0.000**	1072	.28	**.45**	**0.000**	1074
Cause-oriented		**.31**	.23	**0.038**	1072	.17	.19	0.190	1074
		University Education or Higher							
		21-40 yrs	41-70 yrs	p-value	N	21-40 yrs	41-70 yrs	p-value	N
Citizen-oriented		.33	**.45**	**0.000**	193	.32	**.53**	**0.000**	174
Cause-oriented		.42	.27	0.284	193	.15	**.24**	**0.018**	174
		Gender							
		21-40 yrs	41-70 yrs	p-value	N	21-40 yrs	41-70 yrs	p-value	N
Citizen-oriented	Male	.36	**.50**	**0.000**	542	.32	**.49**	**0.000**	516
	Female	.31	**.48**	**0.000**	530	.24	**.41**	**0.000**	558
Cause-oriented	Male	.39	.31	0.147	542	.21	.23	0.377	516
	Female	.21	.14	0.126	530	.13	.15	0.435	558
		Urban							
		21-40 yrs	41-70 yrs	p-value	N	21-40 yrs	41-70 yrs	p-value	N
Citizen-oriented	Urban	.33	**.49**	**0.000**	889	.26	**.42**	**0.000**	465
	Rural	.32	**.53**	**0.000**	183	.30	**.47**	**0.000**	609
Cause-oriented	Urban	**.30**	.20	**0.009**	889	.15	.17	0.482	465
	Rural	.31	.36	0.659	183	.19	.21	0.213	609

Note: Figures in bold are statistically significant (p < 0.05)

When we examine Wave 3, we can see that older people remain significantly more active in citizen-oriented activism; these differences also appear significant amongst university-educated respondents, older males and females, and older people who reside in

[28]The first incarnation of the Bersih 1.0 rally, also known as 'yellow wave rally' was held on November 10, 2007 in preparation for the 2008 general election. The name Bersih was derived from the name of its organiser, BERSIH (Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections), a coalition of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the opposition parties, with an objective to reform what they saw as the flawed electoral process in Malaysia.

The Hindu Rights Action Front (Hindraf) is a coalition of Indian non-governmental organisations to preserve the Hindu community rights. The ostensible purpose of the Hindraf rally was to protest the poor social conditions and the violation of the rights of minority Indians in Malaysia.

urban and rural areas. In addition, older people are significantly more likely than their respective younger counterparts to be involved in cause-oriented activism; however, these differences only persist when focusing only on university-educated respondents. In Wave 3, young people—whether amongst all respondents, the university-educated, male or female, living in urban or rural areas—are less likely than their elder counterparts to be engaged in citizen and cause-oriented activism.

5.5.1   Age effects on citizen-oriented and cause-oriented activism

By using regression analysis, Table 5.11 reports the age effects, specifically the effect of being young on citizen-oriented and cause-oriented activism amongst all respondents, those who have a university education or higher and those who reside in the urban areas. These results reflect the findings in Table 5.7, in which being young has a significantly negative effect on citizen-oriented activism in both Waves 2 and 3. There is also such a negative age effect amongst the university-educated and urban respondents. When we look at Wave 2, being young has a significantly positive effect on cause-oriented activism; the effect is also positive and of a similar magnitude amongst just the urban citizens. Therefore, being young a has a greater effects on cause-oriented activism in Wave 2. In Wave 3, however, being young has no effect on cause-oriented activism, whether amongst all the sample, among university graduates or urban respondents. Therefore, overall, the findings show that there are significant differences between younger and older people in citizen-oriented activism in both Waves and in cause-oriented activism only in the earlier Wave.

Table 5.11

Age effects on citizen-oriented and cause-oriented activism

	Wave 2 (N=1072)						Wave 3 (N=1074)					
	Citizen Activism			Cause Activism			Citizen Activism			Cause Activism		
	All	University or Higher	Urban	All	University or Higher	Urban	All	University or Higher	Urban	All	University or Higher	Urban
N	1072	193	889	1072	193	889	1074	174	465	1074	174	465
R²	7.31%	10.11%	6.22%	0.40%	0.60%	0.77%	10.72%	11.62%	10.42%	0.20%	0.20%	0.80%
Young	**-.604**	**-.843**	**-.551**	**.079**	.148	**.105**	**-.679**	**-.722**	**-.685**	-.078	-.077	-.083
p-value	**0.000**	**0.000**	**0.000**	**0.038**	0.284	**0.009**	**0.000**	**0.000**	**0.000**	0.191	0.209	0.163

Key: ***p≤ 0.001 **p< 0.01 *p≤ 0.05
Items in () refer to standard errors

In particular, the patterns show that young people whether in Wave 2 or 3 remain significantly less likely than older people to engage in citizen-oriented activism. For cause-oriented activism, there are differences between younger and older people in Wave 2. Moreover, there are no significant differences between younger and older people in cause-oriented activism in Wave 3.

5.5.2 The effects of age, education, and their interaction

Table 5.12 presents the effects of age, education and their interaction on citizen and cause-oriented activism. In other words, it models the effects of being young and being educated and their interactions on both types of political activism. As stated in Table 5.11, being young has a significantly negative effect on citizen-oriented activism whether amongst the general sample or just the university-educated for both Waves. Judging from the magnitude of the coefficients, being young has a greater negative effect on citizen-oriented activism in Wave 3 than Wave 2. In Wave 2, having a university degree or higher education has no significant effect on citizen-oriented activism. Similarly, model 2 for citizen-oriented activism shows that being young and having a higher education level has no interaction with this repertoire.

Table 5.12

Age, education and interaction effects

	Wave 2				Wave 3			
	Citizen Activism		Cause Activism		Citizen Activism		Cause Activism	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
N	1072	1072	1072	1072	1074	1074	1074	1074
R²	7.51%	7.69%	1.04%	1.12%	11.59%	11.65%	0.20%	0.50%
Young	**-.577*****	**-.541*****	.051	.038	**-.722*****	**-.700*****	-.077	-.031
	(0.068)	(0.072)	(0.039)	(0.042)	(0.061)	(0.066)	(0.061)	(0.016)
University	-.134	.099	**.135****	.050	**.268*****	**.367****	-.008	.200
	(0.088)	(0.185)	(0.051)	(0.107)	(0.083)	(0.142)	(0.082)	(0.141)
University*young		-.302		.110		-.150		-.315
		(0.211)		(0.122)		(0.174)		(0.174)

Key: ***p≤ 0.001 **p< 0.01 *p≤ 0.05
Items in () refer to standard errors

In Wave 3, however, having a university degree has a positive effect on citizen-oriented activism, but there are no interaction effects between being young and having a university degree in this repertoire. So, for citizen-oriented activism, there are greater differences

between younger and older people, but even having a university degree does not attenuate these differences. When we look at the cause-oriented activism in Wave 2, we can see in Model 1 that having a university degree or higher has a positive effect, but there are no significant interaction effects between being young and having a university degree in this repertoire. No such interaction effects are observed in Wave 3. This confirms the findings in Table 5.11 that when controlling for a university degree, younger people are less likely than their respective elders to be engaged citizen-oriented activism, but no significant differences between younger and older people for cause-oriented activism are observed.

5.5.3 The effects of age, urban and their interaction

Table 5.13 illustrates the effects of age, urban and their interaction on citizen and cause-oriented activism. It models the effects of being young, being urban and their interactions on both repertoires. As reported in Table 5.11, being young has a significantly negative effect on citizen-oriented activism whether amongst the general sample or the urban sample for both Waves. Model 2 for citizen-oriented activism in both Waves show that being urban has a negative effect, but there are no significant interaction effects between being young and being urban in this repertoire.

Table 5.13

Age, urban and interaction effects

	Wave 2				Wave 3			
	Citizen Activism		Cause Activism		Citizen Activism		Cause Activism	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
N	1072	1072	1072	1072	1074	1074	1074	1074
R²	7.57%	7.84%	0.62%	0.84%	11.50%	11.51%	0.81%	0.81%
Young	**-.604*****	**-.864*****	**.079***	-.048	**-.685*****	**-.701*****	-.083	-.096
	(0.065)	(0.158)	(0.038)	(0.092)	(0.060)	(0.079)	(0.059)	(0.079)
Urban	-.149	**-.316***	-.078	**-.160***	**-.185****	**-.202***	**-.158****	**-.172***
	(0.087)	(0.127)	(0.050)	(0.074)	(0.060)	(0.081)	(0.060)	(0.081)
Urban*young		.312		.153		.038		.031
		(0.174)		(0.101)		(0.121)		(0.120)

Key: ***p≤ 0.001 **p< 0.01 *p≤ 0.05
Items in () refer to standard errors

Therefore, for citizen-oriented activism, there are greater differences between young and older people but even being urban does not attenuate these differences. Model 2 for cause-oriented activism in Wave 2 reports that being young is no longer significant, and being

urban has a negative effect on this repertoire. However, no such interaction effects (urban*young) are observed in this repertoire. Similarly, Model 2 for cause-oriented activism in Wave 3 shows that being urban has a negative effect, but no such interaction effects (urban*young) are observed in this repertoire. Whilst the effects of being young and urban are positive in both repertoires, there are no significant effects for these interactions.

5.5.4 Party identification effects and socio-economic determinants of political activism

Following the previous chapter, we include the classic socioeconomic indicators also in these analyses such as gender, marital and occupational status (Table 5.14, Model 1) together with party identification (Table 5.14, Model 2) in order to see their effects on citizen and cause-oriented activism. The findings in Table 5.14 show that controlling for both socioeconomic indicators and party identification leaves the effect of being young negative for citizen-oriented activism for both Waves.

Table 5.14

Socio-economic determinants of political activism

	Wave 2				Wave 3			
	Citizen Activism		Cause Activism		Citizen Activism		Cause Activism	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
N	1072	1072	1072	1072	1074	1074	1074	1074
R²	13.86%	20.60%	3.53%	3.69%	15.57%	17.33%	4.22%	6.52%
Young	**-.753***	**-.740***	-.072	-.071	**-.705***	**-.685***	-.056	-.034
	(0.155)	(0.151)	(0.092)	(0.092)	(0.082)	(0.081)	(0.082)	(0.081)
University	.009	.094	.022	.031	**.325***	**.353***	.187	.218
	(0.182)	(0.178)	(0.108)	(0.108)	(0.142)	(0.141)	(0.142)	(0.141)
University*young	-.112	-.174	.138	.132	-.113	-.103	-.310	-.300
	(0.208)	(0.203)	(0.124)	(0.124)	(0.174)	(0.172)	(0.174)	(0.172)
Urban	**-.281***	-.182	**-.167***	**-.156***	**-.231***	**-.184***	**-.195***	-.145
	(0.124)	(0.122)	(0.074)	(0.074)	(0.081)	(0.081)	(0.081)	(0.081)
Urban*young	.312	.271	.126	.122	.050	.061	.072	.083
	(0.171)	(0.167)	(0.102)	(0.102)	(0.119)	(0.118)	(0.119)	(0.118)
Male	**.286***	**.268***	**.164***	**.162***	**.259***	**.260***	**.348***	**.350***
	(0.070)	(0.068)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.065)	(0.064)	(0.065)	(0.064)
Married	**.416***	**.405***	-.004	-.005	**.154***	**.158***	-.007	-.003
	(0.075)	(0.073)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.071)	(0.070)	(0.071)	(0.070)
Employed	**.234***	**.236***	.022	.022	**.139***	**.143***	-.024	-.020
	(0.073)	(0.071)	(0.043)	(0.043)	(0.067)	(0.066)	(0.067)	(0.066)
Party Identification		**.523***		.057		**.328***		**.352***
		(0.069)		(0.042)		(0.069)		(0.069)

Key: ***p≤ 0.001 **p< 0.01 *p≤ 0.05
Items in () refer to standard errors

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In addition, Model 2 for citizen-oriented activism shows that being a male has a positive effect on both repertoires, in both Waves. This confirms the findings in Table 5.4 that males are significantly more likely to be involved in the political arena than females. Whereas, being married and employed only appear to have positive effects on citizen-oriented activism. As for cause-oriented activism, Model 2 in Wave 2 shows that controlling for socioeconomic factors and party attachment still accounts for the negative significant effect of being urban. However, political party attachment plays no role in mobilising urban residents to participate in cause-oriented activism.

5.5.5 Attitudinal and mobilising network determinants of political activism

Apart from attitudinal factors, another important determinant for political participation are mobilising networks (Putnam, 2000; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Stolle, 2007). Mobilisation as defined by Rosenstone and Hansen (1993:25) is "the process by which candidates, parties, activists and groups induce other people to participate." The Asian Barometer also contains two indicators to measure mobilising networks, which are: political discussion, and membership of organisations. Table 5.15 shows that controlling for attitudinal and mobilising network determinants improves model fit particularly for citizen-oriented activism. Controlling for attitudinal and mobilising determinants leaves the effect of being young negative and significant for citizen-oriented activism in both Waves. In addition, the result also confirms previous chapter findings that being interested in politics accounts for a positive effect on both repertoires in Wave 2, and on citizen-oriented activism in Wave 3. Similarly, internal efficacy or citizens' ability to understand and participate in politics has a positive effect on both activisms in these Waves even when we control for attitudinal and mobilising determinants. As expected, exposure to political news accounts for a positive effect on citizen-oriented activism in both Waves. Exposure to political news can increase citizens' likelihood to participate in political activities. Furthermore, trust in parliament has a greater effect on citizen-oriented activism in Wave 2. In particular, group membership and political discussion have greater effects on citizen-oriented activism in Waves 2 and 3. Party identification also has a positive significant effect on citizen-oriented activism in Wave 2 when controlling for attitudinal and mobilising factors. Being female, not married and not employed have negative effects on citizen activism in Wave 2.

Table 5.15

Attitudinal and mobilising networks determinants of political activism

	Wave 2				Wave 3			
	Citizen Activism		Cause Activism		Citizen Activism		Cause Activism	
	Model 3	Model 4	Model 3	Model 4	Model 3	Model 4	Model 3	Model 4
N	1072	1072	1072	1072	1074	1074	1074	1074
R²	27.33%	**41.95%**	6.52%	6.72%	25.42%	**34.98%**	11.03%	14.28%
Young	**-.753***	**-.643***	-.070	-.062	**-.576***	**-.507***	-.013	.016
	(0.143)	(0.128)	(0.091)	(0.091)	(0.079)	(0.074)	(0.081)	(0.080)
University	-.067	-.094	-.036	-.027	.212	.122	.139	.086
	(0.170)	(0.153)	(0.108)	(0.109)	(0.135)	(0.127)	(0.139)	(0.137)
University*young	-.070	-.073	.165	.157	-.062	-.046	-.242	-.240
	(0.193)	(0.173)	(0.123)	(0.123)	(0.165)	(0.154)	(0.169)	(0.166)
Urban	-.184	-.136	-.144	-.138	-.095	-.056	-.112	-.093
	(0.117)	(0.104)	(0.074)	(0.074)	(0.078)	(0.073)	(0.080)	(0.079)
Urban*young	.285	.271	.113	.111	.028	.034	.092	.096
	(0.159)	(0.142)	(0.101)	(0.101)	(0.113)	(0.106)	(0.116)	(0.114)
Male	**.187**	**.137*	**.132**	**.129**	**.142*	.111	**.289***	**.270***
	(0.065)	(0.058)	(0.041)	(0.042)	(0.062)	(0.058)	(0.064)	(0.063)
Married	**.338***	**.318***	-.017	-.017	.111	.083	.006	-.016
	(0.070)	(0.062)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.068)	(0.063)	(0.069)	(0.068)
Employed	**.238***	**.147*	.013	.014	**.159*	.096	-.025	-.056
	(0.067)	(0.061)	(0.043)	(0.043)	(0.063)	(0.060)	(0.065)	(0.064)
Party Identification	**.324***	**.226***	.063	.063	**.170*	.096	**.269***	**.223***
	(0.069)	(0.062)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.068)	(0.064)	(0.070)	(0.069)
Attitudinal Determinants								
Political Interest	**.385***	**.264***	**.133**	**.138***	**.385***	**.262***	.074	-.013
	(0.066)	(0.060)	(0.042)	(0.043)	(0.062)	(0.060)	(0.064)	(0.065)
Internal Efficacy	**.257***	**.117*	**.105**	**.107*	**.231***	**.172**	**.353***	**.321***
	(0.064)	(0.059)	(0.041)	(0.042)	(0.060)	(0.056)	(0.061)	(0.061)
External Efficacy	.102	.014	.030	.030	-.037	-.078	-.015	-.041
	(0.065)	(0.058)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.065)	(0.061)	(0.067)	(0.066)
Dissatisfaction with democracy	.026	-.031	.050	.050	.024	.013	.110	.097
	(0.069)	(0.062)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.072)	(0.067)	(0.074)	(0.073)
Trust in Political Parties	.083	.082	**-.093*	**-.095*	.039	.033	.084	.080
	(0.069)	(0.061)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.064)	(0.060)	(0.066)	(0.065)
Trust in Parliament	**.189*	**.130*	-.060	-.060	-.041	-.048	-.077	-.077
	(0.074)	(0.066)	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.072)	(0.067)	(0.073)	(0.072)
Left-wing	.074	.012	-.040	-.038	-.094	-.075	-.100	-.088
	(0.096)	(0.086)	(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.060)	(0.056)	(0.062)	(0.060)
Exposure to political news	**.211***	**.162**	-.035	-.033	**.282***	**.166**	.076	.007
	(0.065)	(0.058)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.61)	(0.058)	(0.062)	(0.062)
Mobilising Networks								
Group Membership		**.926***		.047		**.717***		**.347***
		(0.059)		(0.042)		(0.061)		(0.066)
Political Discussion		**.208***		-.044		**.210***		**.208**
		(0.035)		(0.042)		(0.062)		(0.067)

Key: ***p≤ 0.001 **p< 0.01 *p≤ 0.05
Items in () refer to standard errors

For cause-oriented activism, the effect of being young is not significant in both Waves even when we are controlling for attitudinal and mobilising network determinants. Findings in Wave 2 show that trust in political parties has a negative effect, but party identification accounts for no significant effect on this repertoire. However, these are reversed in Wave 3 where cause-oriented activities are still in some way related to parties

as party attachment has a positive effect. In addition, group membership, and political discussion account for positive effects only amongst respondents in Wave 3, but being interested to politics has no significant effect on this Wave.

5.5.6 Further interaction effects

Overall, we found no relevant further interaction effects for our investigation. See tables in Appendix D including further interaction effects.

5.6 Conclusion

Based on the analyses from the Asian Barometer Waves 2 (2005-2008) and Wave 3 (2010-2012) survey, we reconfirm findings from the previous chapter that young people are less likely than their elders to be politically involved in 'elite-directed' or 'citizen-oriented' activism. Whilst there are some small signs that young people might be significantly more likely than older people to be engaged in at least some forms of 'cause-oriented' or 'elite-challenging' activism, these significant differences only appear in Wave 2 and are no longer significant when controlling for socioeconomic, attitudinal, mobilisation and institutional determinants. The results also reconfirm findings from the preceding chapter that education does not appear to mediate or have any influence on attenuating the age gaps between young people and their elders in political activism. Similarly, when we use urban-rural as an intervening variable, the effects of being urban and young are not significant on both citizen and cause-oriented activities. Overall, these findings indicate that being more urban actually does not narrow down the participatory gap and differences in political activism between younger and older people in Malaysia. This empirical chapter's analysis has scrutinised the diverging patterns of participation between two age groups in two different time frames, by employing variables capturing socio-demographic, attitudinal, and mobilising networks to explain why young people are engaged or disengaged in citizen-oriented and cause-oriented activism.

This chapter also provided some evidence of an upward trend in young people's political activisms from Wave 2 to Wave 3, even though the overall levels were still lower than those of their elders. Overall, based on the analyses from two well-known surveys (the WVS and the Asian Barometer), young people's political disengagement in Malaysia

has been clearly shown to be an empirical fact since our data analysis has shown that they are disengaged from both conventional and unconventional politics, compared to their older counterparts. For the purpose of triangulation and the enrichment of the findings from the quantitative analyses, the next few chapters will analyse the interview materials to develop a more complete understanding and detailed description of whether young people in Malaysia are really disengaged from politics.

CHAPTER 6

YOUTH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN MALAYSIA: INTERVIEWS WITH ACADEMICS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the views of academics from qualitative interviews on whether conventional or 'elite-directed' participation has been waning in Malaysia, while unconventional or 'elite-challenging' participation has been on the rise. Based on analysis from the two quantitative chapters, statistical evidence has shown that young people in Malaysia are disengaged from both conventional or 'elite-directed' and unconventional or 'elite-challenging' political participation. However, qualitative analyses also allow us to contextualise and enrich our understanding of the roots and causes of political disengagement with a specific focus on mechanisms. As mentioned, the qualitative analyses are presented based on interviews with different groups in society. This allows us to observe any consistency in patterns and commonalities and differences across groups, which allows us to answer the overarching research questions.

6.2 Views on youth political participation

The first theme covered in the interviews with academics is their subjective views on youth politics in Malaysia. The opinions expressed may vary depending on participants' observations of the current political situation. Interestingly, most academics agreed that young people in Malaysia have played a remarkable role from the beginning of the independence period. Young people fought for the political rights of society, as mentioned by Academic (10), *"So far as I can remember, the earliest moment in history was a conflict between the 'Kaum Muda'* [Young Group, the progressives] *and the 'Kaum Tua'* [Old Group, the conservatives]. *The younger generation brought new ideas to roll back the role of Islam that were totally opposite to the older people, who practised those traditional ways. After the country obtained independence during the 1960s, particularly after the*

University of Malaya opened in Kuala Lumpur, the youth has driven the agenda to fight for several local issues, such as the issue in Tasik Utara in Johor[29] and Baling, Kedah.[30] But when their actions became radicalised, the government decided to take action, such as making arrests. During the 1970s era, their struggles were mostly silenced due to the amendments of the University and University Colleges Act (UUCA) 1971.[31]" This marked the end of the student movement as a powerful political force in Malaysia and the 'depoliticisation' of the youth.

However, more than half (6 out of 10) of the academics interviewed believed that the 2008 Malaysian general election marked a turning point for young people's participation in politics. It witnessed outstanding numbers of young people engaging in politics, whether in online or offline activism. The uprising of young voters in the last two elections was seen by some as a reason for the ruling party's (BN) lost the popular vote

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[29]The Tasik Utara demonstration in September 1974, is a significant example of the student-led protests aiming to tackle society's problems. They begun when the Malay squatters, mainly the poor who could not afford to buy houses, set up squatter houses in the Tasik Utara, on land owned by the government. Prior to the General election of 1974, the government assured the squatters that their homes would be secured and promised to give their rights to stay on the land if the BN-led government won the election. However, after the 1974 election, the squatters were shocked when they received eviction notices warning them to evacuate and their homes were demolished without providing any compensation. A group of students led by Hishamuddin Rais, gathered at Tasik Utara and pleaded the authority to stop the demolition. Their plea was unsuccessful, and the students were arrested. The detention of several student leaders led to a massive student demonstration in Kuala Lumpur, pressing the government to release all the detained students. Students from the University Malaya Students' Union (UMSU) seized and took over the administration of University Malaya in sign of protest towards the brutality of the police and specifically the government. This coup only lasted for 12 hours, and the UMSU was suspended. See Karim and Hamid (1984) and Abdul Rahman Abdullah (1997) for further details.

[30] A few months after the Tasik Utara incident, there was another significant demonstration in Baling, Kedah on 19 November 1974, related not only to the student's struggle but also involving the participation of the masses. More than 1,000 peasants, mostly the rubber smallholders who were affected by the falling prices of rubber, demonstrated in Baling. They demanded that the government to increase the price of rubber and reduce the price of foods and necessities. However, their protests were in vain as the government did not take any actions towards their demands. Therefore, the angered peasants staged another mass protest on 1 December 1974 in Baling, attended by 30,000 people to show their growing frustration. In support of the peasants' struggle, more than 8,000 students held a huge demonstration on 3 December 1974 in Kuala Lumpur, demanding that the government solve the inflation problem, increase the price of rubber, and punish all corrupt ministers. Altogether, more than 1,200 students were arrested by the police in this demonstration. Meanwhile, the students' leaders who stirred up the demonstration such as Anwar Ibrahim, Ibrahim Ali and Kamarulzaman Yacob were detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA). For further details, see Abdul Rahman (1997) and Hussain Mohamed (1986).

[31]The University and University Colleges Act (UUCA) was first enacted in 1971 aiming to provide guidelines for the establishment, regulations, the administration of colleges and public universities. Following the student-led demonstrations on 1974, the government amended Section 15 of the UUCA in 1975, which prohibited any student or faculty members from expressing support for any political party, organisation, or trade union. However, it was revised in 2012 to give greater flexibility to the students by allowing them to take part in political activities off-campus, including the right to be a member of any political party.

and led to a more competitive balance between the government and the opposition, as noted by Academic (6), *"The BN has lost its two-third majority vote in the parliaments because of the votes of the youth. It was estimated around two million of first-time voters, who are mostly amongst young people, voted in the 2013 election. There has been a huge increase of voters compared to five years ago, and young voters have been targeted by the competing parties to get their votes."* This comment confirms findings by Pandian (2015), Welsh (2014), and Mohamed Nawab (2013) that the 'youth factor' played a decisive role in determining the outcome of the 2008 and 2013 elections, since first time voters, mostly young people, increased from 637,548 in the 2008 election to 2.6 million in 2013. The young voters are 21 to 39 years old, making up to 5.6 million or 40 percent of 13.3 million eligible voters (Election Commission, 2013). An influx of young voters in the elections was probably due to the increased political interest amongst the young middle classes, who were educated and felt marginalised by government's race-based affirmative action (Norshuhada *et al.,* 2016:129). The outcome of the 2008 general election came as a major shock to BN, since this was its worst performance in history, comparable with that of the 1969 election. The result showed a "tectonic shift to the Malaysian political landscape" (Saravanamuttu, 2008:35) had taken place, since Malaysians wanted drastic political change.[32]

In addition, many observed that since the 2008 general election political awareness among young people was evident, as stated by Academic (1), *"They have very great political sensitivity and excitement whenever they talk about politics."* This argument is supported by Academic (3), who commented that, *"I think now we can see that politics is something that everybody, mainly young people, talk about."* Academic (8) also added that *"One of the reasons that makes young people become more concerned about political issues is due to the internet."* New media has expanded the discursive terrain by providing a vital avenue for political debate, thereby enhancing greater awareness among young electorates since the number of internet users in Malaysia, most of whom were young people, increased dramatically from 2.7 million in 2000 to 14 million in 2008. This means

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[32] The ruling coalition (BN), for the first time, suffered a major setback when it failed to maintain two-thirds of the parliamentary majority, and secured only 140 out of 222 seats in the parliament, with the popular vote falling from 64 percent to just 51 percent (Case, 2010; Weiss, 2008). On the other hand, the main opposition parties represented primarily by DAP, PAS, and People's Justice Party (PKR, previously KeADILan) formed an informal electoral pact prior for the election. The opposition coalition achieved unprecedented triumph when they garnered 82 parliamentary seats from a total of 222, thereby denying the BN a two-thirds majority in parliament, making this the greatest opposition performance in history (Ho Khai Leong, 2012:72).

that, within eight years, the growth rate of internet users rose sharply by 302.8 percent (Koh, 2008:25). Moreover, a majority (7 out of 10 academics) gave positive responses that young Malaysians in general are interested in politics, as stated by Academic (9), *"Young people are interested, that is why they are participating"*. Although agreeing with this sentiment, Academic (10) emphasised that political interest is somewhat greater amongst the young middle-class group as *"...the middle-class consists of young people who have professions such as lawyer, doctor, educators etc. They have already attained economic stability and live comfortably."* This idea supports the theory of civic voluntarism of Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) that having necessary resources (income and education) may increase the interest and motivation to participate in politics. The remaining interviewees believe there is some sense of indifference or *"...the syndrome of 'I don't care'"* (Academic 6) amongst the younger generation, which makes them less concerned about political matters.

Whilst a majority argue that the 2008 Malaysian general election showed significant changes in the patterns of youth political participation in Malaysia, two out of ten academics claim that the 'Reformasi' era in 1998 should be set as a benchmark for the integration of youth into political life, as commented by Academic (5), *"...there are a lot of changes that have happened since 1998. During the 1999 election, we noticed that young people's participation was obviously clear. At that time, many issues were raised by young people and the government was asked to solve them."* The *Reformasi* era is depicted as the rise of young Malaysians in politics, immediately after the dismissal of the Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim, from the government and UMNO. Anwar, who lost his political power, launched the so-called *Reformasi* movement (Reform movement) which was supported by the public and mainly young people and called on Mahathir to step down. The political unrest caused by Anwar's dismissal and the *Reformasi* movement resulted in the worst electoral setback for the BN up until that point, particularly UMNO, in the 1999 general election.[33] Many Malays, mostly young and educated professionals, switched their support to PAS to show their discontent with the political and economic developments which had rocked the country (Hiebert, 1998). Overall, most academics were optimistic about young Malaysians' political engagement where they believe that the

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[33] The result of the 1999 general election showed that BN retained its two-thirds majority in Parliament with 148 of the 193 seats (a drop of 10% popular votes), but UMNO, the kingpin in the BN, lost more than half of the Malay votes and failed to secure half of the total number of seats won by BN. UMNO won only 72 out of the 148 seats, compared with 89 seats in the 1995 general election (Weiss, 2000:414).

period since the 2008 general election signifies a palpable change in the patterns of youth political participation from being passive to actively engaging in politics. However, such arguments are based solely on the increment of young voter turnout rate in current elections. They fail to compare the age gap between young and old people in voting and other forms of participation – or to take into account the large number of unregistered eligible young voters. This failure creates a spurious bias by positively stereotyping young Malaysians as a politically engaged and active generation; instead, they are a distinct generation with negligence when it comes to participating in conventional politics.

6.3   Declining conventional or 'elite-directed' political participation?

Current discourse on declining political engagement tends to look at the literature on conventional politics. Conventional participation or so called 'formal politics', 'traditional politics', and 'elite-directed participation' can be understood as those means that a prevailing political culture recognizes as acceptable and that are related to institutionalized actions (Conway, 1991), sanctioned and inspired by political elites (Marsh, 1990), or political activities that are facilitated by traditional bodies such as political parties and trade unions (Morales, 2009; Mair, 2006). In advanced democracies like Britain and the US, some believe that these countries are facing a crisis of democracy because there is a serious decline in two conventional indicators: voters' lower turnout in national elections (Dalton, 2000; Franklin, 2004; Blais *et al.,* 2004) and falling party membership (Clarke *et al.,* 2004; Whiteley and Seyd, 2002).

When observing the case of Malaysia, 6 out of 10 academic respondents stated that the current pattern of youth political engagement in Malaysia is different from that in western democracies. The pattern of political participation in established democracies shows a decrease, while in Malaysia it shows an increase. This is reflected in the comments of Academic (6), *"I do not have the exact statistics as proof, but we can see an increment in political engagement amongst young people."* Academic (9) also added, *"They are actively involved in politics and have become registered voters."* Academic (1) also responded positively to this issue by saying, *"Based the observation of the general elections, the total number of young voter turnout are increasing. We can see the channels for youth (channels 3 and 4) are always full."* Although agreeing with the statement that youth political participation in this country is on the rise, two respondents pointed out that

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the increase is only apparent in voting, but not party membership. Membership of political parties continues to shrink amongst young people, as commented by Academic (8), *"There is a decrease in party membership. We can see the younger generation prefer to be non-partisan and refuse to attach themselves to any political parties."* This is in line with the arguments of Pandian (2014a) and Welsh (2012) that this age group no longer identifies themselves with any political parties, claiming that the political party is 'over' in Malaysia. In this case, Malaysia is also experiencing a downward trend in partisanship parallel with many advanced democracies, although Britain has recently been experienced a sharp rise in Labour Party membership following Corbyn's leadership victory. These responses correspond with findings from the previous chapter that there is an increase in political activism amongst young Malaysians from Wave 2 to Wave 3, except for party membership. Yet, young people still have low levels of political participation when compared to their older counterparts, and young people in other Southeast Asian countries.

In addition, several academics argue that the increment in participation can be seen clearly in terms of young people's engagement in social activism, such as new social movements and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). This can be seen in the response of Academic (3), *"They participated in various forms of so-called social activism. They formed their own NGOs, and networks."* Academic (2) also takes a similar view, saying, *"There are many activities outside parties. Activities that are related to culture, literature and arts, but are instilled with political elements and have been engaged in by young people".* In contrast, one respondent argues that turnout has declined in Malaysia and so has party membership, especially amongst young people. Academic (5) stated that: *"When we look at the rate of political party membership, it is quite low. The decline in the level of turnout is also true because one of my students did a study on youth voter turnout. The findings are disappointing. They did not cast their votes, but they also did not register as voters."* For the remaining participants (2 out of 10), they believe that the engagement of young people in politics can be predicted based on the current political situation and the issues that interest them. According to Academic (10), *"Young people either in established democracies or semi-democratic nations are mostly passive. They will be active only when important issues relevant to them arise."* In particular, young people tend to be 'issue-based' rather than 'organizationally-centred', where they are far more likely to be motivated by particular issues, choose the issues that matter the most and cast their votes accordingly.

When we asked further in interviews about the major issues concerning young people now, a majority (8 out of 10) of the academics claimed that the biggest issue facing the Malaysian youth today is the economy, particularly the increase of the cost of living, unemployment, and student-loan debt. This can be reflected in the comment of Academic (9), *"They have no chance to get better employment and they have a heavy education debt with the PTPTN. These are the issues brought up by the youth."* However, Academic (10) argues that economic issues tend to affect most urban young people, while another issue faced by young people in rural areas is religious and racism issues, as he stated that, *"Religion and racism are two strong issues in rural areas. However, the most worrying issue amongst Malaysians is racism. If the situation cannot be controlled, there is a possibility of riots between races, but not widely spread around the country."* Malaysian politics has always been determined and mobilised along the communal framework, as apparent during the election. In this case, 6 out of 10 academics agreed that communal or ethnic politics remain a forceful factor in Malaysian politics as most of the political parties are ethnic-based parties. Therefore, ethnic sentiment is relevant to mobilise popular support.

Based on these responses, it can be pointed out that many of the academics agreed that the downward trend of conventional politics or elite-directed activism is clearly visible in party membership. When we asked whether political parties engaged and communicated effectively with young people, although a majority of academics (8 out of 10) reacted positively by mentioning that political parties are now competing to get the youth votes by organising many 'youth-friendly' policies and programs, as commented by Academic (2), *"... many changes have been made by the government and they put effort into more deliberately responding to young people's needs,"* the mechanisms used by political parties to approach young people are not suitable and failed to empower young people to have a full and active participation in politics. In retrospect, Academic (4) said, *"When they approach young people, they initiate 'festival-like' programs without aiming to educate them. This is not meaningful engagement."* Academic (10) is also pessimistic, arguing that most youth policies are not formulated by young people, thus they do not reflect the youth's interests. Academic (9) in similar vein also claims, *"They only listen, but no actions are taken"*.

If political parties are actively engaging, why do young Malaysians not want to join them? Most academics (7 out of 10) related this development to young people's disillusionment with traditional political parties as a major reason for the decline of party membership. To be specific, young people have lost hope, trust, and confidence in the parties, be it the government or the opposition, as reflected by Academic (4)'s comment, *"We have this one side that is very hopeless yet not credible politically, which is the government, while the other side is not organised, not credible and has no leadership, which is the opposition. So, where to now for the youth?",* and the comment of Academic (5), *"One party, which is the ruling party, has their own problem. Whereas, the opposition has started to look unstable after PAS left the coalition and yet...the newly established party...we do not know their ability and credibility."* Therefore, the internal rifts and lack of credibility of these two power blocs (the ruling BN and the opposition pact) which want to govern Malaysia leave young people with no alternatives but be a 'fence sitter' or choose to remain outside the parties.

Some emphasize that political parties' structure is a main barrier preventing young people from actively participating (2 out of 10). It is worth noting that the ruling party, mainly the UMNO, is a hierarchically-structured party which has different grassroots levels such as central, state, division, and branch. Therefore, people have to go through a complicated procedure to become members of this party, as stated by Academic (4), *"There is no direct registration. Only those who really want to be politicians are willing to go through all these complex member's registration process."* In other words, young people join the parties to become a leader or worse, they become a party member simply to fulfil their material needs, as commented by Academic (4), *"There is no motivation to be an active member of UMNO, unless I want a position, project or power because the patronage system is deeply rooted in this party"*. Moreover, UMNO has always been a feudal nationalist party in which most of its upper leaders are often from aristocratic family backgrounds. Therefore, it is not easy for young people to join the upper level leadership, even though there is a youth wing, because the conflict between young and old in UMNO has long been institutionalised. This is reflected in the remark of Academic (10), *"Khairy Jamaluddin is the only youth leader in UMNO that stands out. Other youth leaders are trying to stand out, but they sometimes have not been given the opportunities to do so."*

Unlike UMNO, the opposition parties such as DAP and PKR are cadre parties that depend on mass support. These parties are more appealing to young people since they are much easier for young people to join, they don't necessarily need to register as a party member but can participate in party activities as political volunteers. According to Academic (4), *"So what they are doing is basically to find platforms where they can approach young people through sport activities, entrepreneurship programs, and many other events that suit the interest of young people"*. The opposition has proven far more effective in allowing younger leaders to emerge and shine in national politics, as noted by Academic (6), *"As younger ones join the opposition party, they can be easily placed as leaders within the party."* Academic (2) also added, *"There are many young leaders such as Rafizi, Nurul Izzah and so on who are very active and energetic in the opposition party"*. However, the internal crisis faced by the opposition, particularly disunity amongst the component parties, makes young people much less interested in joining this party.

Furthermore, some highlight the waning attachment to political parties due to lack of resources (such as income, time, and education), and attitudinal factors (such as political efficacy and skills). The response of Academic (10) reflects that resources adversely affect participation: *"Career and living factors, such as time constraints, are the reasons for* [young people] *having no interest in participating or maybe sometimes young people already feel comfortable with their lifestyles."* Academic (6) also argues that *"...certain political skills are required to participate in political activities. Maybe young people's political skills and organisation are still low"*. In this respect, political skills could be enhanced through partisanship which helps to create a more responsive system by reinforcing citizens' ability and awareness to respond to the political system and articulate societal needs (White and Ypi, 2011). Therefore, the disenchantment of young people with politics and the low levels of political skills amongst young people in Malaysia could be related to the decline of partisan politics. Dalton (2000:29) argues that citizens have become less dependent on political parties to cultivate their political skills and information due to increase in levels of education and the expansion of the media. This means that they are no longer mobilized by hierarchical organisations, instead relying heavily on their cognitive capacities (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). Therefore, we can see that loyalties to long-established traditional political parties are weakening, but loosely-structured movements are becoming more popular in Malaysia.

6.4 What drives conventional or 'elite-directed' political participation?

As mentioned above, we can see that most academics are reasonably positive that elite-directed participation is rising, mainly in terms of voting based on the marginal increase in voter turnout in the recent election, while at the same time, party membership is shrinking amongst young people in Malaysia. These views area consistent with the findings in Chapter Five.[34] What drives young people in Malaysia to participate in politics in general? Some (4 out of 10 academics) argue that socioeconomic factors such as educational background and living areas affect young people's engagement in elections. In particular, Academic (5) argues that uneducated rural young people are less politically informed citizens, so they are less likely to be engaged in voting than their counterparts. This can be reflected in her comments that *"Uneducated citizens in the rural areas are less politically informed because they are still struggling for basic necessities like food, money and live in poor conditions."* Therefore, education or political knowledge may reliably increase the likelihood of young people to vote. This confirms findings from the literature that educated citizens are more likely to vote in the election because education gives them necessary civic skills to be more concerned about politics (Campbell *et al.,* 1960; Verba *et al.,* 1995; Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980).

On the other hand, 3 out of 10 academics are in agreement about the role played by socialisation agents, such as family and friends, who can motivate young people to be active in politics, as mentioned by Academic (10), *"If family has been involved in politics, the probability for the children to get involved is high. There is also an influence from peers. When friends discussed politics, they will join them and then later, have an interest in it."* It appears that the influence of family is the strongest determinant of socialisation which deeply influences young people's attitudes towards politics. However, most academics (6 out of 10) claim that the rapid growth of the internet, mainly social media in recent years, has to some extent replaced the traditional agents in transmitting political knowledge to young people. As pointed out by Academic (8), *"Before, we usually relate* [the transmission of political knowledge] *with family, peers, etc., but now, I can say that it is because of the media, particularly, the internet that has a big influence on young*

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[34]The percentage of young people voted in the election has increased slightly from 45 percent in Wave 2 to 48 percent in Wave 3, but party membership amongst young people dramatically decreased from 12 percent in Wave 2 to only 5 percent in Wave 3.

people.'' This is in line with the argument by Mohd Azizuddin (2014) that social media, whilst not the determinant factor for political change in Malaysia, is obviously significant in providing avenues for electorates to debate and communicate with political leaders. For instance, in 2012, there were over 13 million users of Facebook, nine million of whom were young people in urban areas over 21-years-old (Asohan, 2013). As this media is the most popular channel and commonly used by young people, therefore it was used extensively during the campaigning period by both the ruling party and the opposition to communicate with and attract the voters during the 2013 general election. Therefore, the 2013 general election has been regarded as the first 'social media' election (Lim, 2013) that witnessed the BN government still losing its two-third majority in the parliament.

6.5   Rising unconventional or 'elite-challenging' political participation?

Some studies show that the rise of new social movements coincided with the increase of protest activism, which has become mainstream in western democracies (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005; Norris, 2003; Van Aelst and Walgrave, 2001). In this sense, political participation has evolved, and these kinds of repertoires, new social movements (human rights, environment, development, etc.) and unconventional political participation (protest, boycotting, signing petitions, etc.) are typical of younger cohorts (Grasso and Giugni, 2016, Norris, 2003). As in Malaysia, 8 out of 10 academics agreed that there is a rise in unconventional political participation as new mediums for young people to voice their opinions and to influence political decisions. One other academic (1 out of 10) believes that there is no shift from the conventional to unconventional, but young Malaysians use all forms of political participation. While one academic has given a mixed response by saying, *"There are two camps of youth. First, a very brave group who is more extreme, and like to use protest as the way to convey messages to the government. The second group is more fearful, and they are only engaged in conventional political participation like voting and party membership.''* To be specific, unconventional political participation is pre-eminent amongst those brave youngsters. In addition, the respondents have listed the three most popular forms of elite-challenging participation in Malaysia, as follows:

1) Demonstrations or street protests

Street protests or political rallies were long practised in Malaysia from before World War II, and normally were supported by the lower classes in society who aimed to bring gradual social change in this country. In fact, Academic (10) argues that *"Even the main political parties such as UMNO and PKR were established on the basis of protests"*. For example, UMNO was transformed into Malaya's largest nationalist party on May 11, 1946 due to an anti-Malayan union protest. However, since the reformation 1998, and the establishment of BERSIH movement, street protests have been widespread and occurred more often than before, as commented by Academic (8), *"It had happened before, but not as much as now. It has become a normal activity amongst citizens."* Although protests are commonplace today, there are not as many as in other neighbouring countries like Indonesia and Thailand. As argued by Academic (9) *"We can see protest exists, but not many compared to other countries as there are many restrictions imposed by the government. If we are given freedom, surely there will be a massive political change."* In particular, some indicate that the government did not accept protest as part of political participation and regarded this activity as contradicting Malaysian culture, and regulated it with the Peaceful Assembly Act 2012.[35] According to Academic (3), *"I do not think they will accept street protests. What they are trying to do is to make the protesters gather in a stadium. That kind of proposal has been proposed many times. Luckily there are no groups of protesters to take that kind of offer because if we take in that kind of offer, you will set a precedent."* To some extent, the government will use brutality and excessive force against protesters, as pointed out by Academic (6), *"Sometimes when we look at the government's attitude towards protesters, it seems like the government is not mature enough."* This is in contrast with the situation in long-established democracies where the normalisation of protest activities has made protest a vital part of democracy, rather than a threat to its existence (Van Aelst and Walgrave, 2001; Della Porta and Diani, 2006). Nevertheless, some argue that the government's harsh stance has changed, and they are now generally

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[35]The Peaceful Assembly Act 2012 (Act736) was passed to facilitate a more peaceful assembly process in Malaysia. It replaced Section 27 of the Police Act 1967, which implies that the organisers of protest no longer need a permit to hold a protest or an assembly, but one is required to give a written notice to the police 10 days before the intended assembly. The police have discretion to impose restrictions and conditions, but they have no power to refuse the holding of an assembly. This Act forbids a street protest or assembly within 50 meters of a 'public place' such as places of worship, hospital, schools, etc. The police also have the power to arrest both the organiser and the participants if they fail to comply with the rules and conditions under Section 15, possess any weapons, or bring a child to an assembly.

more tolerant of protesters, as clearly put by Academic (5), *"At least now we can get the permit to do a protest in a short period, and allow gatherings in designated places permitted by the authority."*

In this regard, most believe that protest is usually used as a last resort, appropriate when negotiation and other cooperative methods of problem-solving have failed, as commented by Academic (6), *"...protest is the only way when we do not have any other options."* Several (4 out of 10 academics) claim that those young people who participated in protest are generally outside the political parties or organisations, attempting to bring about political change, or to represent the political voice of marginalized groups, as described by Academic (2), *"Normally, the protesters are amongst independent groups, such as anarchist or socialist groups. However, they have always been labelled as pro-opposition as they are anti-establishment"*. The 'Occupy Dataran' is one of the examples of a grassroots assembly of independent young people demanding more democratic spaces in Malaysia. Furthermore, some (3 out of 10 academics) find that the number of protesters is still considered low compared to other countries, but they manage to get wider coverage and attention from the media and public. To attract more young people, protest nowadays has become distinctively entertaining and satiric, more akin to a festival-like protest, as depicted by Academic (3), *"...protest is very much like a fun fair kind of festival where young protesters sing and dance, enjoying an 'open-air concert' and speech from the leaders."* As expected, alongside the increase of protest politics in this country, it often leads to the rise of social activism.

2) Social activism

Instead of being apathetic towards politics, several academics (4 out of 10) argue that young people are finding new alternatives in venting their frustrations against the system through their engagement in social activism, mainly the grassroots movements and popular culture. This is reflected in the comment by Academic (2), *"...most of the youth do not affiliate themselves with political parties. As they do not have any other alternatives, they find another activity such as the social movement like Bersih. This is a trend in Malaysia now."* Malaysia's Bersih movement is noted as linked to pivotal events in Malaysia. To some extent, Bersih is considered a proponent for Malaysian political change. In fact, Bersih was an extension of and link to the *Reformasi* movement initiated by Anwar in

1998 (Weiss, 2012). Whilst these protests have conveyed different messages and demands, they helped to ignite the crux of the democratisation processes in Malaysia. However, Academic (6) finds two new forms of NGO that stand out most amongst the youth. This can be reflected in his comment, *"Currently, it is the era of the rising of Malay's NGOs such PERKIDA and PERKASA. They had organised the 'Red Shirt' rally, most were youth. On the other hand, a new movement has emerged, which is the indie group movement, organized by young people, but more towards anti-government NGOs."* These views confirm the findings of Samsudin *et al.* (2012), that Malaysian youngsters have shifted from political-oriented participation to civic-oriented participation—they are more inclined to be involved and work with voluntary and non-governmental organizations, rather than political parties. This also supports the previous findings that party membership is one of the least popular activities amongst young Malaysians.

Over the last few decades, the younger generation has found a new and different way to be politically engaged—less attached to political organisations, but more to personal interest, social networks, and cultural activism. Some (4 out of 10 academics) perceived cultural activism or so-called 'popular culture' like music, film, arts and literature, as one of the most common forms of resistance amongst young people in Malaysia today, as commented by Academic (7), *"One of the most popular things among youth is 'popular culture'. For example, we have University Bangsar Utama (UBU), The Street Kitchen (Dapur Jalanan), The Street Books (Buku Jalanan), Komuniti Frinjans, Diskopi and so on".* This mode of activism is appropriately useful to analyse political participation (Cohen, 2010; Jenkins, 2006), even though it is often practiced through informal, non-institutionalised or loosely-structured networks. In other words, such things are political insofar as they aim to influence political decision making. This activism is closely related to young people, as stated by Academic (3) *"I think using the arts and music are very important and easy for attracting more young people."*

Why are young people more likely to be attracted to this kind of activism? First, this is one of the most effective ways in fostering critical engagement—for example, creating free spaces and facilitating public debates to flesh out political ideas against the dominant political structure, as described by Academic (2) *"We can simply criticise and encourage political awareness through art and culture because they are easy to understand."* Second, some claim (2 out of 10 academics) that pop culture displays less

radical images, which are not able to resist or change the *status quo*. Therefore, with the help of technologies such as social media, young people's political creativity, fresh and ongoing ideas could spread rapidly. However, the Malaysian government regularly uses crackdowns on free expression, mainly the Sedition Act,[36] to intimidate and harass the critical activists and this has created "a culture of fear" amongst young people. Therefore, we can observe that the circle of youth activists in this country remains small even if the numbers of social activities have increased, as described by Academic (3), *"...one person can actually wear many hats. It works similarly with NGOs, where person A also is a member of other groups."* Apart from the government's control, Academic (7) also argues that *"Malaysian youth lack the sense of empowerment in a variety of life circumstances due to long-term dependency on the government."* This happens when young people's identities are moulded in accordance with the government's desires and young people have not been given a formal space to develop their own identity and creativity.

3) Online activism

It is imperative to consider that the internet, and primarily social media avenues such as *Facebook, Twitter,* and *YouTube*, have changed the way that people, especially youth in urban areas, participate and engage with politics. Although this media does not have intrinsic power to bring about political change, at least it helps in organising and mobilising young people in politics and collective action. Unsurprisingly, a majority of academics (8 out of 10) think that online activism serves as a medium to galvanise young people for more meaningful political participation, as commented by Academic (8), *"Young people used social media for political purposes such as discussing political issues or expressing their dissatisfaction."* It is noteworthy to mention that the 1998 Reformasi movement gave birth to Malaysia's online activism (Abbot, 2004; Weiss, 2012; Khoo Boo Teik, 2003). In particular, they utilised the potential of the internet by transforming it into a new repertoire of contention as this medium is not scrutinized under the government's censorship. Since 1998, internet users in Malaysia boomed significantly from 6.7 percent

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[36]The Sedition Act was enacted in 1948 by the British colonial authority, originally aimed to fight against the local communist insurgents before Malayan independence. However, it continues to be used with full force by the Malaysian government to limit citizens' freedom of expression by prosecuting individuals including activists, journalists, and politicians for actions or discourse deemed as seditious and critical towards the government which may threaten national security. In other words, it makes it an offence to say or publish words that have a 'seditious' tendency.

to 67.5 percent in 2014, with its netizen population getting to almost 20.1 million in 2014 – and it has been estimated that more than 60 percent of these users were young people below 30-years-old.[37]

There are several factors which explain why young Malaysians are more interested in using the internet, as outlined by the academics interviewed. First, the internet offes more spaces for young people to voice their views, ideas, and criticisms about the government, as it is controlled by the people and could be a 'check and balance' for the government's mainstream media. This can be reflected in the comment of Academic (4): *"Young people, like Syed Saddiq, voice out their concerns and political comments not through political parties, but through social media."* Second, the new media was hassle-free and provided a relatively cost-effective means of communication. Third, it was due to the 'global trend'—many developed countries like the United States and Britain had been using new media for political activism. For example, Ward and Gibson (1998:22) concluded that the 1997 British general election was the 'first internet election' that 'the internet appears to be doing more to equalize exposure of parties' ideas to the electorate compared to other media'. The development of cyberculture in other countries thus influenced young Malaysians to explore this new space.

It would seem, therefore, that the academics are positive about the growth of elite-challenging political participation, which is often manifested in the forms of protest, social activism, and online participation amongst Malaysian young people. Indeed, a majority of academics (9 out of 10) emphasised that Malaysian youth have the right to participate in unconventional political participation and that it is necessary for them to be encouraged to engage in this kind of repertoire. However, there must always be a balance between both conventional and unconventional political participation, and instead, the government should pose no further restrictions on citizens' political freedom, as explained by Academic (9), *"It is indeed necessary, and all restriction should be removed by the government to allow them to voice their political views as initiatives to changing the country in a better direction."*

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[37]Please see http://www.internetlivestats.com/internet-users/malaysia/, retrieved on June 9, 2016.

6.6   What drives unconventional or 'elite-challenging' political participation?

Although the quantitative results suggest that there is no significant difference between young and older people in elite-challenging activism, it is worth highlighting several reasons why some young Malaysians tend to engage in this form of participation based on the responses of the academics. The most profound explanation is related to young people's discontent towards the system and the government. In this case, most argue (6 out of 10 academics) that unconventional political action is an alternative to express dissatisfaction with the government or to spur political change, since most of the formal channels are fully controlled by the government. The current political scenarios show that young people are hard-pressed by the economic downturn, prevailing corruptions, racial skirmishes, and a government crackdown on freedom of speech. All these problems make young people feel angry and frustrated with the government. This can be reflected in the comments of Academic (9): *"The government does not try to lessen people's burdens, instead putting them on the people's shoulders. These are the problems that make young people angry at the government."* In a similar vein, Academic (2) also commented that, *"...they only wanted some sort of channel to voice their opinions. As we all know, the strict system makes it difficult for the youth to think outside the box..."* In this context, young people in Malaysia are frustrated with the government and the system as their political rights and freedom have been denied. This supports the argument from relative deprivation theory that the socio-psychological grievances of young people are a potential cause for collective action, mainly protest and social movements (Gurr, 1968; Klandermans, 2007; Dalton, 1988; Farah *et al.,* 1979, Grasso and Giugni, 2016).

However, feelings of deprivation alone might not motivate young people to engage in elite-challenging political participation, as they could also need a mobilisation driver such as group membership. In this case, 2 out of 10 academics believe that social networks, mainly the affiliation of political organisations, could somehow increase political awareness and the interest of young people to participate in elite-challenging political participation, as mentioned by Academic (3) *"There are still many groups of young people who are very much affiliated and willing to work with political parties and organisations."* For example, the support for Bersih movement is generally based on party lines. This can be clearly seen when the Bersih 1.0 protest was first launched in 2006, it was a political party-driven movement supported largely by the opposition members and

representatives from civil society. It did not entirely enter the grassroots consciousness as only 10 percent of non-partisans participated in this rally (Radue, 2012:64). For example, since PAS enjoyed much Malays support, therefore, the absence of PAS supporters clearly affected the Malay turnout in Bersih 4.0 when the party decided not to mobilise its members to participate in this protest. The responses confirm findings from mobilisation theory that young people who are embedded in political parties and organisations are more likely to engage in political activities, including protests (Diani, 2007; Kriesi, 1993; Snow *et al.,* 1980).

Furthermore, some highlight the rise of unconventional activities due to the emergence of a 'new politics' which has replaced the 'old politics' of ethnicity that has been long dominated Malaysian politics. Recent developments, particularly those occuring since the *Reformasi* era, successfully developed the idea of a 'new politics' as the issues raised by this movement went beyond ethnic lines—civil liberties, human rights, good governance, more democratic space, and accountability indirectly encouraged young Malaysians, mainly those in urban areas, to abandon ethnic allegiance. This is reflected in the response of Academic (9): *"We cannot run from ethnic politics, but we see now the youth are more attracted to new politics like human rights, good governance and so on."* The ultimate reason behind the formation of new politics in Malaysia is related to the rise of a new middle class, as a result of rapid economic growth, which can be seen in the comment of Academic (6), *"The educational institutions and economic development later created more middle-class people, largely amongst young people who were born in the 1970s and 1980s, who have received the benefits of the NEP and feel contented about their lives."* This in line with the arguments of Yun Han Chu, Welsh and Weatherall (2012:210) that less developed economies have entered a period of rapid growth and industrialization, thus leading young people to engage in politics because they have greater access to education and new media, known as 'post-industrial knowledge'. Therefore, young people tend to be much more liberal in their views on democracy, with less preference for ethnic-based politics. These young people are the 'post-NEP' generation. The post-NEP generation are those born from the 1980s, a tech-savvy group who are not easily influenced and are more likely to make assessments of any decision or action taken by the government. As Inglehart (1990) argues, people's values could no longer be explicated simply by reference to the traditional left-right divide, but depend on single issue politics.

Other academics (2 out of 10) pointed out that the upsurge of popular protests in neighbouring countries – or a 'regional trend' factor – may also have influenced the upward trend in unconventional political participation in this country, as mentioned by Academic (2), *"If we look at the regional trend, especially in the Philippines and Indonesia, the changing of regime happened not by the means of the election system, but through the popular protests that were initiated mostly by the youth."* The regional trend can be reflected in Malaysia during the 1998 *Reformasi* movement. At that time, the financial crisis was a turning point for leadership change in Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia. In Indonesia, the downfall of the longstanding leadership of Soeharto in May 1998 through the popular uprising, and the dawn of *Reformasi,* inevitably influenced and eventually spread to Malaysia and became the rallying cry of Malaysians to call for Mahathir's resignation soon after he sacked Anwar from the Cabinet on 2nd September 1998. The wide-ranging support that Anwar received from the ordinary masses led him to be at the forefront of a *Reformasi* movement with anti-Mahathir sentiments. Whilst the *Reformasi* movement in Malaysia failed to overthrow Mahathir from his premiership, there were several long-term ramifications. First, this movement had shaped citizens' political awareness and galvanised youth participation in the whole spectrum of political activities, including institutionalised and non-institutionalised political participation, even the *Reformasi* movement no longer existed (Weiss, 2006). Second, the *Reformasi* provided a platform that bridged political parties and civil society, and joined the opposition parties against the regime. To some extent, it sowed the seeds for greater electoral challenges when the political opportunity structure was in favour of the opposition, as with the 2008 general election (Liu, 2014:44).

6.7   Youth and democracy

There was a strong sense amongst the academics that youth engagement in politics has contributed to strengthening the democratisation process in Malaysia, as explained by Academic (9), *"...they are the 'third force'. They are the centre or the core group are fighting for social justice and real democracy."* Whilst young people's engagement has failed to change the government and only precipitated the 'Political Tsunami',[38] they have

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[38]Most scholars and political analysts used the term 'political tsunami' or 'political volcano' as metaphors to reflect a major setback of BN when it failed to maintain two-thirds of the parliamentary majority, an overwhelmingly victory of the opposition parties.

pushed the government to open more democratic spaces and restored some democratic elements in Malaysia. This is because young people have a powerful force in calling for greater democracy. For instance, under Najib's tenure, he carried out legislative reforms after being heavily pressured by young people. First, he repealed the draconian ISA and replaced it with the Security Offences (Special Measures Act).[39] Second, he amended the AUKU, mainly Section 15, to allow students to join political organisations, including political parties outside the campus. Third, he amended the Printing Presses and Publications Act—an annually renewable printing permit was abolished, a one-off licence being put in place. Finally, he enacted the Peaceful Assembly Act 2012 (PAA), which allows public assembly without a police permit (Liu, 2015:292). These indicate that the efforts of many NGOs such as SUARAM, Gerakan Mansuh ISA and Students Solidarity Malaysia to put pressure on the government had paid off.

However, some respondents argued that youth political participation has strengthened the democratisation process, while at the same time it has also strengthened the semi-democratic regime. This is reflected in the comment by Academic (7), *"I think the involvement of the youth strengthened the democratic process as well as the authoritarian regime as the government is still enforcing control on the laws and their authority on the people."* In this case, the government's initiatives to implement these political reforms meant the opening of greater democratic spaces for people, or at least tried to show responsiveness over human rights accountability that had been undermined when brutal crackdowns were employed against dissidents. It was evident during the Bersih rallies—Bersih 2.0 (in July 2011) and Bersih 3.0 (in April 2012)—and the People's Uprising Rally (Himpunan Kebangkitan Rakyat, in Malay) that the government had engaged in pre-emptive arrests under the Sedition Act[40], and used violence such as tear gas and water cannon to disperse the protesters. According to Academic (10), *"As long as we are still in the semi-democratic system, the situation will be like a pendulum that swings up*

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[39]The Security Offences (Special Measures Act) or SOSMA was enacted in 2012 to repeal and replace the controversial Internal Security Act 1960 (ISA). The Act was made under the Article 149 of Federal constitution, specifically aimed to prevent internal security issues including acts of terrorism, sabotage, public order, prejudice, and espionage. The most important provision in this Act is Section 4 that gives powers of arrest and detention to the police over person who is suspected of having committed security offences. In particular, the police also allow to detent the suspect for 28 days and place an electronic monitoring if released.

[40]Refer to previous footnote on this.

and later it comes down. Sometimes we see it towards democratic, sometimes more towards autocratic."

6.8   The future of youth political participation in Malaysia

For established democracies, a recent study by Grasso (2016) predicts that elite-challenging participation in Western Europe may decline in the future since younger generations who came of age in the 1980s and 1990s are less likely to participate in some elite-challenging activities, mainly new social movements. However, in contrast to this, a majority (8 out of 10 academics) were optimistic about the future of youth political participation in Malaysia. They argue that young Malaysians will be more politically active in the future, either in elite-directed or elite-challenging participation. An example of this point of view is given by Academic (9), *"Surely more youth will be involved. Political development in this country has become more interesting to study, especially when elections are highly competitive as the government and the opposition have an equal chance to form the government."* This view supports the findings of Norshuhada *et al.,* (2016) that Generation Y will continue to be a significant impact on elections by registering as new voters. On the other hand, 2 out of 10 academics point out that it is difficult to predict youth political participation as it depends on the current political situation of this country. This can be seen in the response of Academic (10), *"If BN is in a stable condition, people will join them. Same goes to PR. If there is no stability within these parties, people will feel unsatisfied and the turnout rate will decrease, meaning that the people are to be less interested in politics"*. The future of young people's engagement in politics relies on the stability of the two power blocs; the ruling party and the opposition. Recently, young people have had no dependable alternative political party as the BN-led government has been plagued with corruption scandals, while PR has been reborn into the new Pakatan Harapan but there remain issues over this change. If young people do not have any viable choice, they might become more politically apathetic. The academics believe that politically apathetic young people can be encouraged to participate actively in politics through the following strategies, discussed below:

1) Better systems of voting regulation

The government should provide better systems of voting regulation, particularly regarding to the voting age limitation. It is noteworthy that Malaysia is amongst 14 countries in the world which have a minimum voting age of 21-years-old.[41] In this case, 6 out of 10 academics suggest that the voting age should be lowered from 21 to 18-years-old, as argued by Academic (4) *"I think the level of maturity is there already, at the age of 18 years old."* Whilst they agree with this statement, 2 out of 10 academics also argued that young people must be exposed to politics or at least possess general knowledge about politics before lowering the voting age. This can be reflected in the comment of Academic (5), *"The youth must be exposed to political knowledge, and the importance of politics from the very beginning, before we lower the voting age to 18."* However, Academic (10) is optimistic that Malaysia could be like Singapore, where voting is made compulsory for all eligible citizens and they could be somehow penalised if they do not cast votes.

2) Academic freedom

Three out of 10 respondents suggest that universities should be given political freedom so that students and academics can have spaces to voice their thoughts and move forward creatively, as pointed out by Academic (2), *"The government should give a sense of freedom to the youth. Young people cannot do anything within the campus, there is no public speaking corner, etc."* Academic (6) also responded positively to this issue by saying, *"They are still restrained by the rules made by the university's bureaucrats. But, I am confident that the awareness is there…"* In other words, the UUCA 1971[42] has been amended several times, but remains a significant barrier curbing student from engaging in political activism.

3) Youth political leadership

In other countries such as Britain and Canada, political careers begin at the university level. However, in Malaysia, as political parties are not allowed to be set up in universities

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[41]Please see https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/guidetowfbook.html, accessed on March 29, 2017.

[42]Refer to previous footnote on this.

and students have not been allowed to actively engage in politics, we can see that the journey for aspiring young people to be politicians typically takes a long time. Generally, most political leaders enter politics through membership in the grassroots party divisions, mainly the youth wings. However, due to the rigid structure and cultural settings of established parties, leadership positions must be given to the senior members, rather than young leaders. Nepotism is practiced in the party where youth members can be advanced if their family members hold positions in higher office. Realising this, some academics (3 out of 10) suggest that political parties need to take more deliberate action by fielding more young candidates in the elections, and higher offices, as commented by Academic (1), *"This is the main challenge necessary to the political parties where they have to give full opportunity to the youth to expose themselves in political leaderships,"* and Academic (10), *"... give the youth a chance to build their good leadership skills"*. These views support the findings of Pandian (2014a) that young people prefer political leaders who possess characteristics of an ideal leader such as honesty, competence, bold views and brave ideas to remain relevant for youth.

4) More responsive government or politicians

Almost half, that is, 4 out 10 academics recommend that the government or politicians should try to be able to represent young people well and be willing to fight for their needs in order to gain young people's support. This can be seen in the response of Academic (9), *"Very simple. Leaders must change their attitudes in helping the people to settle their problems rationally, more responsive to their voices to ensure a better future."* In a similar vein, Academic (1) stated that *"The government should necessarily be sensitive to the demands and problems faced by the youth."* In other words, young Malaysians desire meaningful engagement and hope that their voice will be listened to by the government. Although the government has provided various platforms for young people like the Youth Parliament to give training for potential youth leaders, they are still not free to exercise political rights as certain issues are not generally amenable to public discussion.

6.9   Conclusion

There are conflicting narratives in the literature on political engagement in established democracies. Scholars researching conventional politics often claim that young people in

many advanced democracies are increasingly disengaged from voting and party membership. On the other hand, most studies on unconventional participation argue that a shift from 'elite-directed' engagement to 'elite-challenging' participation has taken place (Inglehart, 1990; Inglehart and Welzel, 2005) as a younger generation of 'cognitively mobilised' (Inglehart, 1990), 'critical citizens' (Norris, 2011), or 'dissatisfied democrats' (Klingemann, 1999) has emerged. Based on the opinions of the academics, they perceive that there has been an upward trend in elite-directed and elite-challenging participation in Malaysia, but there is a lack of statistical evidence to support this assumption. However, most of them agreed that young people in general are less likely to be a member of a political party. This group's interview analyses also showed that education, rural-urban differences, and socialisation agents have an important role in explaining what drives young people to participate in conventional politics. In addition, young people are seen to be engaged in elite-challenging participation, commonly in demonstrations, social activism and online-participation. The feelings of deprivation, social networks, the emergence of a 'New Politics' and regional trends are believed to be the determinant factors in explaining the rise of elite-challenging participation in this country. In the next chapter, we will scrutinise intensely the contrasting views of another elite group, namely the politicians, on the dynamics of youth political participation in Malaysia before turning to the analysis of our interview with both active and inactive young people themselves.

CHAPTER 7

THE ROLES OF POLITICAL ELITES AND THEIR VIEWS OF YOUTH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

7.1   Introduction

In the previous chapters, the analyses showed that young people in Malaysia are less likely than the older generation to be members of political parties or as closely identify with parties. Similarly, academics also believed that young people are increasingly disengaged from political parties. They argue that the shrinking membership of conventional political organisations has been equivalent with the increase of youth participation in new forms of elite-challenging participation such as social activism, protests, and online participation. A serious decline of party membership, particularly within youth wings, has not only occurred in Malaysia, but also in most established democracies over recent decades (Cross and Young, 2008; Hooghe *et al.,* 2004). For example, Mair and Biezen (2001) show that the membership of political parties in Western Europe countries such as the United Kingdom, France, and Italy dropped by more than 50 percent between 1980 and 2000. Studies have shown that the plunging of party membership in these countries is a consequence of organisational changes (Whiteley and Seyd, 2002; Mair, 2006), alongside the increasing of societal disillusion towards the parties (Sloam, 2007; Henn *et al.,* 2005). As party involvement requires a high degree of commitment, in terms of time and energy, so this activism is seen as undesirable and generally involves a small group of people (Whiteley and Seyd, 2002). Despite a decline, the study of youth party activism remains important as this is the only route for many people to become future politicians. Therefore, this chapter explicates the views of political elites on youth political participation, the structure of the major political parties in Malaysia, the motivations of their members and roles played in fostering political engagement of young people.

7.2   Making sense of current patterns of youth political participation in Malaysia

Generally, half of the members of the political elite group (5 out of 10) agreed that young people in Malaysia have an interest in politics and are concerned about political issues around them, as stated by Political Elite (5), *"Now we can see the tendency of young people to join politics is getting better day by day. For me, it is considered as a great development to develop Malaysia."* This opinion is supported by Political Elite (1), who commented that: *"The number of young people coming out to vote in the last two General Elections shows that they are interested in politics."* Political elites rely heavily on the increment in voter turnout from recent election in their understandings. Although agreeing with the sentiment, Political Elite (6) pointed out that young people today show greater interest in politics, but not to any particular political party, since *"… in terms of party involvement, many youths are not ready to engage consistently or even are being cynical about in-depth political involvement. They only vote and some of them are involved with demonstrations. But only a small group of young people are involved actively in politics."* This supports findings from the qualitative interviews with academics that young people are seen to be less likely to be a member of a political party.

There are several underlying factors, as outlined by the respondents, which influence youth interest in politics. Firstly, 3 out of 6 politicians believed that the existence of social media helps to provide a vast amount of political information and exposure to young people, as mentioned by Political Elite (9), *"Young people in Malaysia today are interested in politics, since they have been exposed to enormous information from social media."* Political Elite (2), an UMNO Youth Exco member, in a similar vein also claimed that, *"If we look closely to the AC Nelson's analysis, the statistics show that 80 percent people who surf the internet to access information and read online news are young people aged 17 to 40-years-old."* Although there is a higher proportion of internet users amongst young people, the findings of Salman and Saad (2015) show that young Malaysians do not use this media for seeking political information, communicating with politicians, or commenting on political issues. Instead, they are more likely to use this media to connect with others and look for entertainment. Despite the increasing importance of social media, Political Elite (10) also emphasised the role played by NGOs and civil society in building political understanding and awareness amongst young people, as he stated that, *"Young people today are more alert in politics because they can get access to social media, and*

they have many other platforms to gain political knowledge and voice their demands through NGOs and civil society. " This view resonates with the argument by Mohd Azizuddin (2009:108) that since the 2008 election, civil society groups have become more numerous and even stronger due to the change in attitude and mindset of young people who were increasingly aware of the importance of political freedom and rights. Thus, there emerges a reciprocal relationship between young people and civil society: civil society needed continuous support from the youth to move the country towards democracy, while young people wanted wider participation and an avenue to deliver their demands directly to the government.

Secondly, 2 out of 6 respondents argue that young people have shown to have very high levels of political interest because they are eager for political change in Malaysia. This can be seen in the response of Political Elite (1), *"...there is a general sense or feeling that something must be done to save Malaysia and build a better Malaysia for all.",* and the comment by Political Elite (5), *"When the youth care about politics, they will be the agent to change Malaysia to a much brighter future..."* The remaining participants (5 out of 10) react negatively by saying that young people in general are not interested in politics. According to Political Elite (8), *"...young Malaysians are not interested in politics, not interested to participate and to know about politics. They seem to be indifferent and apathetic about politics because when we talk about politics, it is about something 'boring' and unfair."* Political Elite (7), is also pessimistic about this issue by arguing that, *"Young people find politics to be too 'dirty', too 'technical' and too distant from their daily lives."* In this regard, it seems like young people have a negative perception of politics because they tend to associate politics with political actors or parties who are often observed to pursuit their own objectives rather than the interest of society. This reflects the findings of Henn *et al.,* (2005) and White *et al.,* (2000) in Britain.

7.3   Declining conventional or 'elite-directed' political participation?

When asked about current patterns of youth political participation in Malaysia, more than half of respondents and most from the government (6 out of 10) agreed there is a decline in conventional or 'elite-directed' political participation amongst young people in this country. This is reflected in the comments by Political Elite (8), *"I agreed that there is a decline in voting and membership of any political organisation since young people are less*

likely to be registered as voters or be members of any political organisation..." Political Elite (10) also responded positively to this issue by saying, *"Yes. I don't have the exact numbers, but I believe that there is a decline. It not only happened to the political parties, but NGOs also faced the same problem."* It appears that not only is youth turnout in elections low, but young people also display comparatively weak attachment to political parties and are less likely to be a member of formal organisations. Evidently, in Malaysia, out of 13 million youth population, only two percent are registered as members of youth organisations. In addition, the findings from the Malaysian Youth Index (2015) which was created to enable the government to understand the youth based on certain indicators that would guide them to formulate suitable youth programmes, also showed that the overall domain score for young people between the ages of 15 to 30-years-old was 'moderate' (70.22 score). The lowest score amongst the 12 domains was political socialisation at a score of 45.82, falling under the category 'not satisfied'.[43] This indicates that the political engagement of young Malaysians is at the lower levels since they are less engaged in political activities, mainly conventional politics and discuss politics less.

On the other hand, other political elites (4 out of 10), the majority from opposition parties, argued that youth political engagement in this country is showing an upward trend, particularly after the 2008 general election, as commented by Political Elite (7), *"No, I do not agree. In fact, I would argue the opposite and say that youth political participation in Malaysia has increased since 2008."* Political Elite (6) also responded positively to this issue by saying, *"I think if we compare with the previous situation, where the reformation era occurred, the current situation is much better."* In this regard, the opposition elites tend to be positive on youth political engagement because they received large votes from young people since the 2008 and 2013 general elections. For example, 58.16 percent of young voters voted for the opposition (PR), while the ruling party (BN) only managed to

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[43]This domain was measured based on three indicators: political discussion, following current issues on political developments and engagement in political activities. The score was based on the scale of 0 to 100. (0-39) refers to strongly dissatisfied, (40-49) is under the category of not satisfied, (50-59) refers to less satisfied, (60-74) refers to moderate, (75-79) refers to satisfied and (80-100) is under the category of strongly satisfied. The Malaysian Youth Index also shows that young females (44.42) have lower political socialisation levels than young males (46.81), the young urban (45.48) are slightly lower than the young rural (45.54) in term of political socialisation and the political socialisation of young Malays is lower compared to the young Chinese and Indians.

get 41.84 percent of the youth vote in the 2013 general election (IYRES, 2014).[44] Although agreeing with the statement that youth political participation in this country is on the rise, but most of the respondents (3 out of 4 opposition elites) are in agreement that political parties continue to lose membership from young people. This can be seen in the response of Political Elite (1), *"They may not be party members. But they are actively following contemporary political developments."* Young people are inclined to be non-partisan or 'fence-sitters' due to several reasons. According to Political Elite (6), *"They are maybe interested in political issues or policies, but they do not want to become members and be involved with party activities such as meetings, campaigning etc."* Similarly, Political Elite (7) also argued that *"Young people today have many channels to be active in politics as there are more efforts by the government and political parties to reach the youth via many programmes such as the Youth Parliament, internship opportunities from political parties, the Perdana Fellowship and so on."* Therefore, they can simply participate in those activities despite not being a member of any political party.

Additionally, young people no longer think that party ideology is relevant in their life as they are more interested in a single-issue politics, as reflected by Political Elite (6)'s comment, *"... we are currently living in a post-ideological world where racism, liberal democracy and leftist politics have failed to attract the youth's attention in Malaysia."* This supports findings from the previous chapters that Malaysia is experiencing a downward trend in partisanship, and parallel with the argument of Marsh, O'Toole, and Jones (2007:100) that young people's participation is greater in issue-led rather than ideological politics. Whilst the majority of political elites (8 out of 10) were concerned about the proportion of young members joining the political parties, for them, young people continuing to vote for them in elections is far more important than them being

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[44]There were varied reasons why young people vote for the opposition. First, an indignation of young people towards BN's policy outputs and institutional functioning—BN's failure in managing the economy, the anti-corruption campaign, respect for the rights and civil liberty of the people, criticisms of the former Prime Minister and ethnic-relation linked reasons. This indicated that young people had different political views and attitudea as compared to the older generation, who had strongest political loyalties and robust partisan attachments with the ruling parties. Instead, many controversies and political scandals that took place before the election such as the widespread corruption and economic downturn, did not changed the loyalty of older voters to BN. Second, young people tend to be much more liberal in their views of democracy, with less preference for ethnic-based politics. They were in favoured of multi-ethnic political parties, like the PKR, that inclusive for all populace regardless of race or religions. The Malaysian youth, especially young-urban professionals, believed many BN politicians to be blatantly corrupt and no longer capable to provide a better future for Malaysia. Another important factor contributing to the victory of the opposition was the impact of new media, primarily social media such as *Facebook, Twitter* and *Youtube*. This media was fully utilised and maximised by the opposition to influence young people to vote for them.

members of parties. This can be seen in the response of Political Elite (2), *"Personally, I think that one day political parties will no longer depend on the numbers of members, but more on how to attract youth support."* Political Elite (6), in a similar vein, commented that, *"Sometimes, we do not need to become a member, but we can become an agent for a party through handling talks and so on."* Political Elite (3) also added, *"If they do not want to be a member in any political parties, they must be a good citizen by voting in the election."* As political parties, particularly the youth wings are the only channel or the recruitment base for future politicians (Hooghe *et al.,* 2004), therefore, young members are still vital in Malaysian democracy.

7.4   Understanding youth non-participation

Based on the analyses above, we can see that most political elites claim that young people are less likely to be involved in 'elite-directed' political participation, be it in voting or party membership. These views echo the findings in the quantitative chapters that portrayed young people as more politically inactive than their older counterparts. So, why are Malaysian youth generally disengaged from traditional politics? Some political elites (3 out of 10) relate the disengagement of young people from politics with the attitudes or characteristics of young people that are distinct or different from the older generation. To be specific, young Malaysians are seen to opt to distance themselves from conventional political participation due to the changing of values and relationships between young people and the state. This is reflected in the comments by Political Elite (2), *"We live in a different era from our ancestors where there was less physical development during that time. We experienced a different set of realities when we were born. Therefore, we will feel less grateful and indebted to the government."* In a similar vein, Political Elite (10) also commented that, *"Young people tend to be individualistic and have less ties to the community..."* The impact of economic insecurity and social life has strengthened the process of individualisation amongst young people, so they are less dependent on the state and community, and feel that politics is no longer relevant to them. As young people become more individualised, they are more likely to participate in less-institutionalised or loosely-structured groups that require not as much commitment or long-term loyalty, as stated by Political Elite (8), *"Young people are less likely to be registered as a member of any organisation, but they are more likely to be involved in social clubs or unstructured organisations."* This in line with the findings of Bennett (2008) that young people can be

labelled as 'Actualising Citizen (AC)', rather than 'Dutiful Citizen' (DC) as they are more disengaged from democracy, have less need for government intervention, and are in favour of a loose-structured network of community actions.

Other political elite members (2 out of 10) pointed out young people's disillusionment with the democratic process in Malaysia as another possible barrier that made them disengaged from 'elite-directed' political participation. In particular, young people are frustrated with the political process, feel a lack of trust and faith in politicians as they seem unable to keep their promises and be accountable to society, as mentioned by Political Elite (4), *"Politicians are supposed to fight for the interests of the people, but when that did not happen, this led young people to become distrustful and disengaged with elections and any political party."* This supports findings from Sloam (2007) and Molloy *et al.* (2002) in the United Kingdom that declining trust in traditional institutions and the political process make young people turn off from politics. For Political Elite (8), *"Young people today are wise. Politicians need to rationalise an issue with factual data and logical content to attract young people."* In this sense, young people have a sceptical view of politicians and political parties as they are self-interested, and being involved in politics to benefit from the system. Furthermore, some (2 out of 6) argue that young people's lack of political efficacy could be another factor that led to the decrease of their participation in politics, as indicated by Political Elite (4), *"Young people think that voting is unimportant because they do not feel responsible to determine who will govern the country, and they do not believe that their vote will make any difference."* This opinion is also extended similarly by Political Elite (7) in his comment, *"If there is no change in the government, I am worried that these young people would start to lose hope in the political process. And because of that, it also can decrease their political participation."* This supports findings from the literature that individuals who have low levels of self-efficacy or feel that they cannot bring change to the system are more likely to be disengaged from the political process (Niemi, Craig and Mattei, 1991; Renshon, 1974).

7.5   Rising unconventional or 'elite-challenging' political participation?

Based on the responses, 7 out of 10 political elite members are in agreement that some young people in Malaysia are turning to new repertoires of political engagement, where they are in favour of 'elite-challenging' or unconventional political activities as their

constructive channels to influence political decisions. Amongst the most prevalent forms of elite-challenging political activities that have been listed by the respondents are:

1) Online activism.

Internet access in Malaysia was developed as early as the 1990s, but online activism in Malaysia started in the 1998 *Reformasi* movement as a means of communication amongst activists and an alternative source for *reformasi*-related information for many Malaysians as it was free from the government control (Abbott, 2004; Mohd Azizuddin, 2009). Therefore, it was at this time, where the internet was politicised, and perhaps gave rise to the young Malaysians 'internet generation', though youth are marginalised politically and economically, but they are technologically empowered. However, only in 2008 did the internet, particularly social media like *YouTube* and *Facebook* become the vehicle for mass political mobilisation. Indeed, Bersih 2.0, which relied heavily on social media, successfully galvanised a diverse mix of Malaysians to the streets. This could help the emergence of a society that transcended ethnicity, and enabled possibilities for 'bridging socio-political cleavages' (Weiss, 2012:26). As expected, a majority of the respondents (9 out of 10) emphasize the importance of social media as a new form of political expression in leading young people to participate politically, as mentioned by Political Elite (9), *"The new form which is very popular now among the youth is social media, which is used to get information on politics, communicate with politicians or to channel their political opinions."* This is unlike the mainstream media, where all information has been filtered, manipulated, and distorted by the regime, only depicting their positive sides. Therefore, young people turned to alternative media for a more accurate and comprehensive source of information, and politically important to express views and criticise the government (Tan Lee Ooi, 2010:158).

However, social media can have adverse effects, as commented by Political Elite (6), *"...the disadvantage of social media is that sometimes, young people simply like the page or group to show their concern, but when the party invite them to join, they will reject it because they think that it is much easier to press the 'like' button than to participate directly..."* Whilst social media potentially creates 'informed young Malaysians', it may also potentially lead to lack of meaningful participation when political debate and information gathered from the media are ambiguous, conflict-ridden, and

inaccurate, as stated by Political Elite (8), *"Young people can simply be influenced by social media if they did not investigate an issue further before making any political judgment."* This supports the findings from Ipsos MORI (2015) that almost half of young Britons feel that social media platforms like *Facebook* and *Twitter* are making political debate more divisive and superficial.[45]

2) Street protests

As protests become prevalent over recent decades, many studies (Van Aelst and Walgrave, 2001; Tarrow, 1989) find a 'normalisation' of protest in established democracies where the authorities have learned to accept protest as part of people's everyday activity. It also means that protest is more likely to be less contentious or violent in more open political environments and systems, where the costs and opportunity of participation are higher compared to the close and non-democratic regimes (Tarrow, 1998). In Malaysia, the transition to democracy has significantly opened wide channels for protest activities, but the extent to which protests have become 'normalised' in this country is somewhat unclear. Moreover, many scholars who studied on protest activism are highly concentrated on the attitudes of the masses toward protest, rather than on what political elites perceive protest as part of political participation and their attitudes toward protest (Uba, 2016). Therefore, when I asked their view about political protest in Malaysia, 4 out of 10 respondents from the incumbent party responded negatively on this issue by arguing that protest activities contradict Malaysian culture and have not been normalised in this country. This can be reflected in the comment by Political Elite (3), *"When we talk about demonstrations, I think in Malaysia, it totally contradicts with our Asian culture and norms."* Political Elite (8), also pointed out that, *"Our culture is totally different than Western culture. Western society is more transparent, and their young people carry out protests in a wise manner - unlike in Malaysia, where young people were being used by certain parties as a pressure group to achieve their own political goals."* These views depict that protests in Malaysia are not youth-led political activities, instead they are being manipulated by certain political actors. In the case of Malaysia, we can see gradual changes in protest activities. The 1998 *Reformasi* era witnessed the upsurge of young people, spontaneously gathered, and conducted the protest movement against the existing

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[45]Please see https://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/3539/A-third-of-young-people-think-social-media-will-influence-their-vote.aspx. Retrieved on December 1, 2016.

status quo. But nowadays, protest relies heavily on a formal affiliation, a leader or at least it needs social networks to attract a large crowd. The Occupy Dataran in July 2011 is an example of a grassroots movement that was meticulously organised and publicized through social media, which aimed to reclaim the right to assembly in Malaysia. It was not a continuous occupation, but more of a 'general assembly' for young people to gather, organise activities, share ideas and thoughts.

In addition, some (2 out of 10) political elites from the opposition indicate the government still did not accepted protests and was intolerant of protesters, since various laws had been regularly used to criminalise dissent. According to Political Elite (6), *"I have been accused three times for the same fault because I have held a Blackout 505 assembly."*[46] In contrast, Political Elite (7) believes that the government has accepted political protests as a reality in Malaysia which cannot be 100 percent banned or controlled. However, he argued that, *"...the government is trying its hardest to limit the influence of these protest activities."* Therefore, the government will continue to infringe people's basic human rights and freedoms.

It appears that political elites agreed there is a rise in elite-challenging political participation amongst Malaysian youth, predominantly in the forms of online activism and protest activities. In fact, a majority of political elites (8 out of 10) believed that unconventional political activities such as protests and online participation are part of political engagement and people's democratic rights. This kind of repertoire has been seen as one of the new ways used by politicians, particularly the opposition to approach and to get close to young people.

7.6   What drives unconventional or 'elite-challenging' political participation?

In the previous chapter, most of the academics saw young people's discontent about the system and the government as the main factor that drives them to participate in elite-challenging forms of political participation. Similarly, 3 out of 10 political elites also

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[46]Following the aftermath of the 2013 election, the PR coalition led a series of massive rallies throughout the country, known as 'Blackout 505'rally—with the slogan of 'Save Democracy'—the protests were against what was seen as the fraudulent victory of BN, claiming that there had been electoral malpractices undertaken by BN, and were backed by the Election Commission given issues of phantom voters, indelible ink, money politics, gerrymandering, and media bias.

believe that young people are discontented with the way democracy and the system works in Malaysia. Therefore, they use this channel as an avenue to express their dissatisfaction against the ruling party, as stated by Political Elite (9), *"There are many factors, some of which are current issues like economic instability which cause them to protest against the government. Besides that, maybe the restrictions on political freedom and fundamental basic rights is another factor that drives youth."* For instance, the year 2015 was a bad time for Malaysia, since it had been exacerbated by a protracted political crisis, starting with the arrest of a *de facto* leader, Anwar Ibrahim, to five more years in prison for sodomy charges in February. The imprisonment of Anwar gathered nearly ten thousand of his supporters who rallied in the streets of Kuala Lumpur, calling for the freeing of the opposition leader and to vent their discontent with Najib's government. These so-called unlawful 'Kita Lawan' (We Fight) rallies were held on 7th and 28th March, and ended with the mass arrests of opposition activists. In May 2015, the Kuala Lumpur streets were once again swamped with thousands of people who dressed in a 'red shirt' as a sign of protest against the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in Malaysia.[47] On August 1st, 2015, the youth activist group known as the Coalition of Youth for Malaysia (Gabungan Anak Muda Demi Malaysia) organised the 'Arrest Najib' (#TangkapNajib) rally in Kuala Lumpur, to call for the arrest of Najib Razak for alleged corruption and abuse of power. A series of street protest in Malaysia did not occur in a vacuum, but they were the culmination of widespread discontentment over current political and economic conditions.

In addition, 3 out of 10 political elites highlighted that accidental exposure to politics on social media could increase young people's likelihood of participating in elite-challenging activities, as depicted by Political Elite (5), *"This is because the exposure from social media such as blogs, Facebook etc., has created direct interactions with politicians, and increases their interest to join political activities."* In particular, social media acts as a driving force to mobilise young people into political actions, whether it is signing a petition, being invited to a rally or boycotting, since mainstream channels in Malaysia are

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[47]The anti-GST rally was organised by a coalition of NGOs such as Solidarity Anak Muda Malaysia (SAMM), 'Anything but UMNO' (ABU) movement, and the Oppressed People's Network (JERIT), supported by the opposition parties, in response to the implementation of GST by the government on 1 April 2015. They argued that the 6 percent GST tax imposed would burden the people, while widen the income inequality and disparity (Asrul Hadi, 2015). Although the GST was heavily criticised, but Najib defended this tax as it was the lowest among ASEAN countries and the GST collection had benefited the people in the form of mega project like transportation and infrastructures, thus it saved Malaysia from economic uncertainty.

tightly controlled by the government. This can be reflected in the comment by Political Elite (4), *"There are many informal mediums, mainly the social media that could be easily accessed by young people without any restrictions. Therefore, young people have been influenced by the information which in turn make them realise that they need to do something."* For instance, due to the diffusion effect of social media, mainly *Facebook, YouTube* and *Twitter*, the size of Bersih rallies (from Bersih 1.0 to 5.0) has grown from around 40,000 to 300,000 Malaysians attending this civic movement. This echoed the other media-driven social movements like Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street that advocated political reform and accumulated people's discontent on social media.

Some political elites (2 out of 10) argue that other contributing factors such as peer pressure or networking, and the image of the people who run and participate in elite-challenging activities like protest, may influence young people to engage in this kind of repertoire, as commented by one politician, *"They see these activities as a good way of networking, and sometimes young people are attracted by 'cool' politicians such as Tony Pua, Nurul Izzah and Hannah Yeoh and by 'cool' activists such as Fahmi Redza and Ambiga."* As the circle of activists who are always at the forefront of political rallies in Malaysia are "rooted from the middle-class" (Political Elite 7), and normally attended by young people, so we can expect that those who are from a very different background or social group may not be interested to participate in this kind of repertoire.

7.7   The structure of political parties and parties' strategies to attract young people

This section sheds further light on the structure and role of political parties in Malaysia. The inclusion of the discussion of political parties is important to consider the methods by which various political parties seek to engage with and mobilise young people. It is worth noting that the Malaysian political system is mobilised along a communal framework (Liow and Afif Pasuni, 2010). Due to the highly pluralistic nature of Malaysian society, most political parties and coalitions in the country are racially-based, where they ostensibly represent the interests of their own ethnic groups, rather than competing political philosophies. There are more than 30 registered political parties in the country. However, this thesis only focuses on the six main parties, UMNO, PAS, PKR, MIC, MCA, and DAP because these parties have representatives in the Parliament and the Assemblies,

and they actively contested in the general election for the past 10 years. In addition, all these major parties have youth wings and women's wings.

7.7.1 United Malays National Organisation (UMNO)

UMNO emerged in 1946 as a response to the British scheme of the Malayan Union, and is the largest political party representing the interests of the Malay-Muslims populace. Although UMNO is considered as a mass party, the membership is not universal as it is confined to Malays only. UMNO's party election has been seen as important as the country's election because its party apparatus often reflects the state apparatus (Fionna, 2008). In other words, the president of UMNO normally served as the Prime Minister. UMNO is at the helm of their key allies, mainly the MCA (Malaysian Chinese Association), MIC (Malaysian Indian Congress) and 12 other regional parties in a coalition called as the *Barisan Nasional* (National Front). Although this was not formally written, the elites understood that "UMNO and the Malays were *primus inter pares* (first among equals) in politics, while in return the business pursuit of non-Malays would remain free of hindrances or persecution" (Mauzy, 2006:53). In particular, the inter-communal coalition formula or consociational democracy, which recognised the Malay supremacy, was the very basis of constitutional polity and ethnic solidarity. UMNO has a large membership with more than three million registered members, spread around 190 divisions and more than 17,000 branches (Kaβner, 2014), and consistently able to gain support from the Malays. This is reflected in the comments by Political Elite (9), *"We keep on receiving new membership forms from every division."* Political Elite (2), an UMNO Youth Exco member also responded positively to this issue by saying, *"This number keeps increasing because we have membership bureaus at all party levels."* To keep continuing and getting more support from the youth, UMNO has separated its youth wing into male and female components (UMNO youth and Puteri UMNO). The UMNO Youth was formally formed in 1949 to deter the mounting intensity of radicalism among youth at that time and to represent the next generation of leaders. Unlike the UMNO Youth, Puteri UMNO can be considered as a newly-formed party wing which was established after UMNO's setback in election 1999, as stated by Political Elite (3), *"Puteri UMNO was launched in 2001, with the objective to attract and provide a political platform for young women between the ages of 18 to 35 years old."* Both UMNO youth wings are active in searching for and recruiting new members since those members who have reached the age limit of 35 years old for

Puteri UMNO and 40 years old for the UMNO youth will automatically relocate to the central party.

Undeniably, the two recent elections of 2008 and 2013 showed that the popular vote for UMNO has gradually declined. This party has encountered big challenges as it has been exacerbated by protracted corruption and money politics, splits in the leadership, a growing force of the opposition, and most importantly, difficulties in approaching the younger generation. This can be reflected in the comments by Political Elite (9) *"It is very hard to attract the young people as they have little trust in UMNO"*. Political Elite (3) also believed similarly by saying, *"We do not deny that attracting young people to UMNO is a big challenge to the whole UMNO leadership. Even though it is difficult, we have planned strategies to attract young people's hearts."* Therefore, UMNO has geared up its machineries to mobilise youth support by introducing more youth-friendly policies and programmes that starting from the grassroots, through the branches and up to the national level. Additionally, UMNO also interacts directly with the university students by setting up the higher education bureau, as described by Political Elite (2), *"We have direct interaction within small groups of youth. So, we hold discussions with chosen topics on the living costs, the Goods and Services Tax, employment, etc. We have established many programmes under City Hall and Q&A sessions."* In other words, to get close to young people, a party does not need large scale programs targeted to reach a large audience. Political Elite (3) also responded positively to this issue by saying, *"It is just enough to have a coffee session with young people, to share and listen to their problems. So, we can be the middleman for youth to bring forward their problems to a proper authority."* In addition, UMNO has been heavily criticised as being discriminatory towards young leaders since many senior members have been placed in the top leadership. In response to this, Political Elite (2) argued that, *"UMNO has been established for a long period, so we see an older generation in leadership. I cannot deny the fact that UMNO needs to be more open-minded and provide more spaces to young candidates."* Political Elite (3) also added that, *"That is why we always urge the UMNO's higher leadership to fill in the empty positions with more youth to make it fairer."* Recently, we can see that UMNO has opened the opportunities for young leaders to be at the forefront, and hold various portfolios in the government as part of the strategy to attract young people to join the party.

7.7.2 Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA)

The MCA, which was transformed into the formal political party of 1949, served as a guardian of the interests of the Chinese in Malaysia. Historically, the MCA has succeeded in bringing a large Chinese support to the BN. However, the support of the grassroots Chinese towards this party has gradually deteriorated as evidenced in 2008 and 2013 general elections.[48] Despite the gradual withering of Chinese support, the membership of MCA has reached more than one million, thus the MCA remains as the largest Chinese-based party in Malaysia. This can be seen in the response of Political Elite (10), *"...approximately, the number of MCA registered members are around 1.8 million members. And it is increasing from time to time."* In this regard, the MCA Youth Section always plays an active role as a vanguard for the MCA and continues to attract more young Chinese, particularly those who are between 18 to 40-years-old, to join this party. He further added that *"When we talk about support. It's not only for young Chinese, but we also try to win the support from other races. But of course, the main focus is on young Chinese."* However, MCA admits that the party is facing difficulties in getting support from young Chinese, particularly in the urban areas, as stated by Political Elite (10), *"Most of the supporters of MCA are located in the new village. So, we need to cater for them differently."* Therefore, this party has introduced well-planned strategies to attract young people by empowering young people in leadership, listening and sharing their ideas and thoughts, addressing non-race based issues to entice support from the non-Chinese, and starting to open the opportunity for young people to hold higher positions in the party. In terms of party registration, Political Elite (10) did not deny that MCA has a complicated registration system, as he stated, *"Yes, I do agree that the application to be a member is quite complicated and sometime, if the applicant is far better than the head branch, he will be simply rejected because they are afraid that they might not get the chance to reach the higher position."* Therefore, they have made a significant change by introducing an online membership system that does not need approval from the head office or division support. This is another way to woo youth support by making party registration much easier.

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[48] Kam Hing and Ker Pong (2014:29) have outlined several possible reasons why the MCA continues to lose its support from the Chinese. First, the Chinese see UMNO as the dominant party in BN because it has many seats in parliament and all-important cabinet portfolios are held by UMNO leaders. Second, MCA is seriously hampered by party factionalism and internal crisis, particularly after the resignation of MCA's president, Ong Ka Ting in 2008. Finally, many Chinese became disillusioned with MCA for failing to protect and advance Chinese interests, especially on the issues of Chinese education and language.

7.7.3 Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC)

While MCA caters to the interests of the Chinese, the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) on the other hand is one of the BN component parties representing the interests of the Indian community. The MIC was founded in 1946 and considered as the first fully-fledged Indian-based political party in Malaysia. Indians have been described as a marginalised minority and comprise only slightly over seven percent of the total population, therefore, this leaves the MIC with minimal representation in the Cabinet and securing small quotas of seats in the Federal and State Assemblies. In 2007, the MIC position as the safeguard of the Indian community was firmly undermined when Hindu Rights Action Force (HINDRAF), also known as *Hindraf Makkal Sakhti* (People Power)—a coalition of Indian non-governmental organisations to preserve the Hindu community rights, led a massive protest against the BN government, mainly the MIC for failing to address and serve the interests of Indians.[49] The Hindraf rally was clearly a new awakening of resentment of the Indians, which had never been seen before, showing their greater awareness and political consciousness to struggle for their rights. This also appeared to be a sharp decline of Indians' confidence towards the MIC and its leadership in the 2008 general election.

7.7.4 The Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)

The opposition in Malaysia received a great boost after Anwar's dismissal from the government. Although many opposition parties claim they are a multiracial party, their ethnic affinities strongly underpin these parties. The Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) is

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[49] Notably, as a small ethnic minority in a polarised society, Indians have been historically marginalised in both the socio-economic and political spheres, experiencing less economic progress to climb out from poverty, as compared to the Malays and the Chinese. Whilst they were unable to gain access to affirmative action policies that benefited the Malays, and influenced the political processes, they were largely politically compliant. However, a series of publicised incidents generated more discontentment from the Indian sectors of the population towards the government. Despite Moorthy's burial incident, which led to the formation of Hindraf, the grievances of Indians build-up upon the issue of demolition of Hindu temples. For example, several Hindu temples were demolished by the government from 2006 to 2007, including the 100 years old *Sri Maha Mariamman* temple in Selangor, as these temples were built illegally. Realising the deepening anger of the Indian community, the government made some comforting promises by allocating compensation and providing sites for reconstruction of the temples. Nonetheless, these promises were unable to placate an outraged Indians, but provoked more furious reactions. Therefore, on November 25, 2007, almost 10,000 to 30,000 Indians, largely from youth and working-class groups took to Kuala Lumpur's streets. The protesters were clad in orange shirts and carrying the portraits of Mahatma Gandhi, alongside banners with the picture of Queen Elizabeth II, symbolic of non-violent protest (Saravanamuttu 2008:46). This rally turned violent as the police used tear gas, batons, and water cannons to push back the protesters, causing several injuries and more than 190 people were arrested as well as five of Hindraf leaders detained under the ISA.

a strong UMNO competitor in pursuing the Muslim-Malay vote. PAS, which was established in 1951, reiterates that it was really an Islamic party which aimed to form an Islamic state and implement Islamic law (Funston, 1976). In term of its membership, currently there are more than one million people registered as PAS members, as stated by Political Elite (5), *"As I can remember, young people are among the highest registered members in PAS. This is because the minimum age to become a member is not 21 years old, but 15 years where they have reached the puberty."* Although PAS is exclusively for Malays, they have their own non-Muslim wing called the PAS supporters' Congress which aimed to woo the non-Malay voters, particularly after its exit from the Pakatan Alliance in 2015. PAS lost most of its non-Malay support when it left the now defunct Pakatan Rakyat coalition.[50] PAS also experienced its biggest split when the so-called 'progressive' faction left the party and formed a new political party, known as the National Trust Party (Amanah), after being overwhelmingly defeated by the 'conservatives' in the party election. Despite the disunity within PAS and the break-up with the Pakatan coalition, this party remains strong and continues its strategy to win back young people's trust by introducing dual approaches. First, PAS has setup more than 20 bureaus under its youth wing to organise various 'youth' programmes, whether in the context of politics, economy and social affairs that are largely inspired or derived from Islam, as stated by Political Elite (5), *"We have to extend the meaning of Islam. Not only focusing on mosques, or even Islamic talks. We need to establish more programs, whether sports, art and culture to attract the youths towards religion."* For example, under the PAS Youth's Bureau for Art, Culture, and Sport, they have setup a club called 'Alternative Riding Club' (ARC) for those young people who are interested in motorbiking. Through these activities, PAS can directly connect, socialise, and interact with young people. Primarily, the internet—such as social media, personal blogs, and an official homepage—is the key channel of mobilisation and mass communication for PAS. In this regard, PAS intended to bring a message that PAS Islamic style is not in contradiction of youth trends, so that moderate young people

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[50]The disarray of the opposition pact or 'the Pakatan Rakyat' (PR), which was formed after the 2008 general election was due to several factors. First, the disagreement between PAS and PKR over the appointment of a new chief minister in Selangor, after Khalid Ibrahim was sacked from the party in 2014. Second, there had long been the ideological differences between Islamist PAS and Chinese chauvinism DAP, particularly on the implementation of Islamic law in Malaysia (Mohamed Nawab *et al.*, 2015:2). Failure to resolve these internal issues, led to disunity in Pakatan Rakyat. On September 22, the new coalition 'the Alliance of Hope' (Pakatan Harapan, PH) was formed, consisting of DAP, PKR and the newly formed Amanah party. The formation of PH coalition amid the leadership crisis of Najib, leave the people, mainly the youth with no other alternative to bring Malaysia towards democracy.

could subsequently be attracted to PAS, as pointed out by Political Elite (5), *"By doing so, youth will get to know more about PAS and they can see PAS as a youth friendly party."* Whilst PAS does not have a specific quota or special position for the young leaders, they strongly encourage potential young leaders who are qualified to fill the post in the party central committee.

7.7.5   The Democratic Action Party (DAP)

The Democratic Action Party (DAP) is a socialist and multi-ethnic party, but predominantly vents Chinese grievances (Case, 2001:45). It was officially formed in 1966 when the People's Action Party (PAP) in Malaysia was deregistered after Singapore was separated from Malaysia. Therefore, they maintained the PAP's idea of *Malaysian Malaysia* to defend the interest of non-Malays, by calling for elimination of the Malays' privileges and the official national status of English, Chinese and Tamil languages. For the DAP, the entire structure of the Malay special rights did not benefit the Malay peasants or urban poor, but only created a greedy Malay capitalist class (Means, 1976:394). Although DAP is always seen as anti-Malay and racist, since 2008 the membership of DAP has increased significantly, particularly amongst Malays, as commented by Political Elite (7), *"I would say that probably after 2008, we would have seen the members who join I would guess about 40% of them are being considered as Malays under the age of 35-years-old."* Why are more young Malays attracted to DAP? There are several underlying strategies implemented by DAP to reach the young Malays, as highlighted by Political Elite (7). For many young Malays, they are attracted to the programs and agenda brought forward by DAP which are seen as more inclusive and progressive to all citizens regardless of races. To draw more Malays to DAP and overcome the anti-Malay perception, DAP has established its training camp, known as Democracy School (SekDem) that is largely for young Malays to understand and speak about democracy. This can be seen in the response of Political Elite (7), *"We are trying to expose the young people, especially Malays to what democracy is all about and we also asked the DAP leaders to talk to these young people and quite a number of them join the party as a result."* Second, DAP is a possible avenue for young people to flourish as political figures since this party brings more Malay candidates standing on DAP tickets to the election. For example, DAP has fielded a young Malay and political newbie's candidature, Dyana Sofia, to compete in the Teluk Intan by-election to woo the young Malay votes. Interestingly, DAP also uses other channels that

more practically suit the interest of young people like party internships, volunteering activities, political seminars, and utilising popular culture (music, art, and literature) as part of its strategy to reach the younger generation.

7.7.6 The People's Justice Party (PKR)

Initially, PKR was founded from the establishment of 'Movement for Social Justice' (Adil), led by Anwar Ibrahim's wife, Wan Azizah, and Chandra Muzafar in an effort to formalise the *Reformasi* into a more concrete organisational structure. However, on 4th April 1999, this movement was transformed into a strong multiracial political party known the 'National Justice Party' or (KeADILan), and on 2003, it merged with the Malaysian People's Party to form the 'People's Justice Party (PKR)'. The formation of PKR opened the possibility of building a broad opposition political alliance in Malaysia (Hilley, 2001). When it was first established, PKR attracted more than 200,000 members, mostly young people (Weiss, 2006:152). This party seemed a viable alternative for young, urban-based Malays and Chinese (Hwang, 2003:356). It was able to capture the hearts of some young people since it was born from the *Reformasi*; it is not a race-based political party and strongly addresses issues related to the interests of the youth, such as good governance, social justice, and human rights. Therefore, PKR can be considered a youth-oriented party. According to Political Elite (6), *"Currently PKR has nearly half a million members, with roughly around 30 percent of young people who are under the age of 35-years-old."* For PKR, it is relatively easy to invite young people to join the party's programs and activities as many are attracted to Anwar's personal charisma and what he and the party stands for. However, it is quite challenging to increase the number of membership amongst young people, as stated by Political Elite (1), *"Not many really want to be a card-carrying member, though many are very supportive of us."* This opinion is also extended similarly by Political Elite (6) in his comment, *"Yes, it is not easy because sometimes, they follow their own moods. At first, they are very enthusiastic about it, but later they are not interested."* To overcome this major challenge, PKR has initiated an ongoing 'youth-to-youth' strategy that uses different approaches for different target groups, as highlighted by Political Elite (6). First, PKR tries to maximise the use of online activities for the purposes of advocacy, establishing networks and supporting the youth. Second, through the establishment of its official student wing, known as 'Mahasiswa Keadilan Malaysia' (MKM), PKR can encourage students to participate actively in its party activities and

training and have face-to-face meetings with young people involving senior leaders of the party. Furthermore, PKR gives priority to the youth being at the forefront of the party by promoting young leaders as election candidates. In particular, PKR launched its 'School of Politics' in 2010, specifically to develop the leadership skills of young people. Through these training programmes, the most promising participants can be fast-tracked into the party's leadership positions.

As we can see, the main political parties in Malaysia have made efforts to develop strategic plans to attract youth support by implementing 'youth-friendly' policies and programmes. However, a majority of the political elite members (8 out of 10), whether from the ruling party or the opposition, acknowledged that while they have done a lot to reach young people, it is still not enough to engage meaningfully with young people. In other words, there is still room for improvement in the relationship between political parties and young people. The ruling party believes that social media needs to be completely utilised as a tool to communicate and get close to young people, as mentioned by Political Elite (2), *"Maybe we are still lacking and have weaknesses that need to be fixed, mainly the use of social media. However, the efforts that we have made contributed a lot so far."* On the other hand, although they believe they have reached out to many young people through social media, one of the weakest points of the opposition is they are less engaged with young people in suburban areas, largely in Sabah and Sarawak. This can be seen in the response of Political Elite (7), *"I think that one thing lacking is to reach out to young Malays in suburban areas. I think that can be improved significantly."*

Another factor that may widen the gap between political party and people is the increasing 'professionalization' of the parties, as commented by Political Elite (5), *"Meaning, we have many specialists from different types of field, and those specialists are among the youth themselves. We have Associate Professors, economic specialists, and doctors who are brave enough to take the responsibilities to lead the party."* Obviously, the party today relies on a group of professionals or members with specialised skills to support the leadership and for the party to function.[51] The rise of professionalization does not only appear amongst party members, but also can be seen in political campaigns and

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[51] 'Professionalization' as defined by Webb and Kolodny (2006:338) is, "by which professionals become more central to an organisation, in this case a party".

communication. Therefore, there is 'no room for amateurs' (Johnson, 2001) in party activities anymore.

7.8   Motivations to become a party member

In Malaysia, according to Farish (2016), political parties often work as a patronage-granting mechanism that provides not only political goals, but also social capital, prestige and means for obtaining power and resources. However, there is still a dearth of studies that explore the individual characteristics and motivations of party members. Therefore, this section aims to probe the significant motivations behind their participation in political parties by using the general incentives model. Most of these politicians are youth leaders but some are no longer characterised as 'youth'. Taking into consideration that they have been active members of the party from a young age, it is important to account for their motivations in participating in a political party. Based on the responses, 5 out of 10 political elites mostly expressed *a process-type incentive*, which means ideological incentives are their motivation for joining a political party. To be specific, some (2 out of 10) argue that a strong ideological basis, mainly religion, drove them to join a political party, as commented by Political Elite (5), *"Number one is religion, and religion has become a priority in my life. Later, the support I received from my family. I lived in an environment where they put religion and politics first."* In this regard, even the respondent has a strong family connection to party activism, but ideology turns out to be an important factor in motivating him to join the party. In addition, several politicians (2 out of 10) claim that they choose to join the party because they wanted to change or provide a better system for the country, which is strongly related to *collective incentives*. In this sense, the respondents take into consideration a calculus of costs and benefits not only at the level of the individual, but also at the party level because they have a strong believe that their party collectively can make a difference to outcomes. This can be reflected in the comment by Political Elite (10), *"I felt disappointed and I think we need to change the system to be equal for all races. That's why I choose to join the political party."* Although agreeing with the sentiment, Political Elite (1) significantly emphasised, *"I realise that in this country, if you really want to affect change, you have no choice but to join politics."* Notably, civil society in semi-democratic setting like Malaysia is weaker, less powerful and developed since it has systematically limited by the state. Therefore, to influence the decision-making process, people have no choice but to be members of political parties

instead of being activists in NGOs. Political parties, particularly the youth wings, appear to be an important platform for recruiting future politicians or to start a political career. The remaining respondent (1 out of 10) concerns 'selective outcome incentives'—joining a party in order to build up a political career acted as the strongest motivator for him. This supports findings from Recchi (1999), Hooghe *et al.,* (2004) and Young and Cross (2002) that being a young member of a political parties is a significant factor in becoming a politician.

On the other hand, some (5 out of 10) political elites stressed *social norm motives* like family tradition or influence from friends as the main reason for party membership. In particular, 2 out of 10 respondents do not deny that they are greatly influenced by their family's political background, as stated by Political Elite (6), *"My father is a government officer, but he was aware about politics. Since I was little, I did talk with him about politics and I have two uncles from my father's side who have competed for KeADILan."* The early political exposure received from the family has facilitated them to be an active member of a political party because having a family member in a party grants them access to political networks and knowledge about the party. This is reflected in the findings from Cross and Young (2008) in their study on Canadian young party members, and Recchi (1999) in Italy. Apart from the influence of family, some agreed (2 out of 10) that having friends connected to a political party to some extent inspired them to be involved in partisan politics, as mentioned by Political Elite (7), *"I was asked to help DAP through my friend, Tony Pua. I was there for two years and then I joined the party in 2012."*

7.9   Youth and democracy in Malaysia

The meaningful participation of young people in politics is a necessity to strengthen democratic processes in a country. When we asked the political elites about youth and democracy, overall 6 out of 10 of them have an optimistic view that the involvement of young people in political processes could push this country into a much more democratic system, as explained by Political Elite (10), *"The more young people participate in politics not only in political parties, but various kinds of activities, the more democratic this nation will be."* Political Elite (7) also reacted positively by commenting that, *"I think the youth is less tied down by old ideas and old concepts and more willing to vote based on the current performance of the government rather than out of appeals which are solely based*

on race or religion." It could be seen that Malaysia is now entering the 'new politics' paradigm, where young people are more likely to embrace change compared to older generations, in favour of non-communal version of politics and at the forefront of a mass politics of dissent. They are, in fact, the politically aware generation that has been shaped by social media networking. Therefore, they prioritise issues about the economy and good governance more than communal issues (Pandian, 2014b). However, when we asked them further in the interviews whether ethnicity is still an important issue amongst young people, half of the respondents (4 out of 8) believe that race-based politics is still relevant and that young Malaysians are still racially inclined. This can be reflected in the comment of Political Elite (6), *"Ethnic sentiment still exists because of propaganda and it is institutionalised in the educational system."* Since ethnicity has long been deeply embedded into the system and society, thus Political Elite (3) claimed that, *"Racism cannot be removed",* but Political Elite (2) suggested that the best way to overcome this is *"to defend their own races' rights, at the same time protect other races' rights as well."* This reflects findings from the previous chapter (See Chapter 6) that communal or ethnic politics remains a forceful factor in Malaysian politics.

In addition, 3 out of 10 political elite members pointed out that youth political engagement does not necessarily lead to greater democracy if certain conditions or 'rules of thumb' have not been fulfilled. First, young people will have an opportunity to help strengthen the democratisation process if they embrace the idea of 'new politics'. According to Political Elite (1), *"The idea of 'new politics' comprises of four major components: integrity, new governance framework, innovations in democracy and progressive political thoughts."* If the government and people could adhere to these four principles, only then would democracy be achieved. Second, democracy can be guaranteed if young people's politics are supported with the right inputs and guidance, as commented by Political Elite (8), *"For me, in today's borderless world, young people can easily access information and data. Thus, we need to guide young people so that they can think more critically and be mature."* Therefore, politicians themselves need to rationalise an issue with factual data and logical content, as well as demonstrating a good quality of leadership to gain the trust of young people. Political Elite (4) believed that Malaysian democracy depends on its leaders. So, to reinforce the democratic process in this country, the current leaders must be the 'role-models' as they shape the characters of future leaders. In addition, only one respondent disagreed that youth political participation has

strengthened the democratisation process in Malaysia because young people themselves do not understand the real meaning of democracy. This can be reflected in the comment by Political Elite (3), *"When the government limits the freedom of citizens to speak, it does not mean that we are not practicing democracy. We must know that the democratic practices in Malaysia are different from other countries."* It is worth noting that, historically, the phase of Emergency, which lasted 12 years from 1948 to 1960, had a major impact on the Malaya political structure as it created a crux of authoritarian rule in the country. The British had to introduce draconian laws such as the Emergency Regulations of 1948, the Internal Security Act of 1960, and the Sedition Act of 1948, to deal with communists and some of these laws have continued to be used in Malaysia. The amendments of these laws allow the government to cut back the fundamental rights of the people whenever there is a threat to national security (Kheng, 2009:136). This resulted in the restriction of political freedoms to safeguard the national security and political stability—freedom of speech, freedom of publications and freedom of movement in Malaysia. Therefore, the Malaysian people have never had an actual experience of democracy, instead they have had to adapt to the nature of authoritarian rule.

7.10   The future of youth political participation in Malaysia

The findings from qualitative interviews with academics show that they are optimistic about the future of youth political participation in Malaysia. Similarly, when we asked political elites about the future support of young people, they confidently believed that political parties in Malaysia remain relevant to young people and continue to receive strong support from young people. An example of this point of view is given by Political Elite (9), *"I am very optimistic. If UMNO maintains their strategy and continues existing programs with efficiency, I assure UMNO is able to gain more support from the youth."* In a similar vein, Political Elite (6) also pointed out**,** *"We can see more youths have attracted to ideologies of 'Pro Kebebasan', 'Pro Keadilan' that we have implemented, which has put aside racism. I am sure that we have a bright future ahead of us."* However, many political analysts argue that Malaysians, mainly the younger generation will be greatly affected and has no other alternative as both PR and BN suffer internal strife. BN and Najib's premiership have recently faced a leadership crisis and biggest corruption scandal. While at the same time, the demise of PR and the formation of new Pakatan 2.0, left Malaysians disappointed, particularly the middle-ground voters as they expect that this

coalition will stay united to govern Malaysia (Mustafa, 2015). In this regard, all political stakeholders must be geared up towards collaborating with young people and providing opportunities for more meaningful participation of young people in a deliberative process. Therefore, effective approaches need to be implemented to encourage more young people to be active in politics, as discussed below:

1) Engage effectively with young people

The majority of political elites (8 out of 10) suggested that elected representatives must get in closer touch with young people by giving them a more active role in the decision-making process and more youth empowerment programmes. All politicians are in agreement that young people today are wise, very open-minded and very demanding, so it is better to encourage young people to participate through the concept of 'touching young people's hearts', rather than 'touch-and-go' policies, as noted by Political Elite (4), *"Even if we do something little (not necessarily in the form of money, but sometimes in the form of 'in-kind' goods such as development, infrastructure and so on), but it must be constant and long lasting."* In particular, patronising young people or bidding for their votes during elections by giving them material incentives is not the right way to boost their engagement.

2) Youth political leadership

Even though some political elites argue that the strength of a political party does not depend on the numbers of its members, they still believe that it is important that a political party can recruit young people to be the 'future leaders'. Therefore, many political elites (6 out of 10) suggested that the existing leaders and political parties must develop a pathway for future leaders and offer more opportunities for them to stand out. This can be seen in the response from Political Elite (3), *"It is not wrong to recycle the leaders because we need the senior leadership to give advice and help us as they have a lot of experience. However, we must have the next generation of leadership by giving more opportunities to young people."* Although the government has provided 'healthy' platforms for young people to develop their leadership capabilities and skills through the establishment of a

youth parliament[52] and fellowships[53], they also continue to use harsh penalties and further restrictions on political freedom. As a result, the younger generation might become an apathetic onlooker since they are less likely to engage in elite-directed activism and no more likely to participate in elite-challenging activism than their older counterparts.

3) Improving the system

Four out of 10 politicians emphasised that the state must make constant efforts to improve the effectiveness of politics, the economy and society. Several politicians (2 out of 10) suggested that the government should lower the voting age from 21 to 18, as depicted by Political Elite (7), *"And I think at the age of 18, many people go to university or college. That is the time when they can start their maturing process which also may involve registering as voters and voting."* In other words, young people at the age of 18 are mature enough to be involved in the political system and are well-informed about the issues that affect their lives. However, some rejected this idea by saying that, *"In Malaysia, only a few young people are like that, but generally, I can say that they are not yet ready."* To counter this, Political Elite (5) suggested that, *"We have to educate the youth, so they will participate in politics maturely."* This means that young people must be exposed to political knowledge at an earlier age by providing them with both formal and informal political education.

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[52]The Malaysian youth parliament was established on 2013 with the objective to provide a proper channel for young people to voice their opinions and demands to the government. This program is open to all young people whether they are affiliated with youth organisations or non-organisations, as long as they are Malaysian citizens aged 15 to 40 years old and they can be registered as voters, while young people aged 18-30 can be nominated as the candidate for youth parliaments. The concept of this program is like the real parliament, where there is an election to elect the representatives. All the elected representatives have to undergo the orientation session and a pre-sitting session before they are divided into nine committees. Each committee will be focusing on different issues such as economy, religion, and sport. Unlike the parliament sitting, there will be no government and opposition, but the representatives will be sitting according to their respective committee. Each Member of Parliament will be serving for a term, which is two years only (Interview with Dr Zainah Sharif, Secretariat for the Youth Parliament).

[53]Perdana Fellows is a programme spearheaded by the Ministry of Youth and Sports to provide talented young Malaysians the once in a lifetime opportunity to work at the highest level of the federal government, assisting the Cabinet ministers in substantiating the national agenda. The concept is similar like a mentoring programme where the fellow will be exposed to policy work under the direct supervisions of the Cabinet ministers for a period of six weeks to three months (http://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2015/05/23/perdana-fellows-intern-ministers/. Retrieved on December 6, 2016).

7.11   Conclusion

In conclusion, political elite members make subjective claims that young people in general are less likely to be engaged in conventional or 'elite-directed' political participation, including voting in elections and being a member of a political party. The large-scale exit of young people from this repertoire is mainly understood as emerging from the views that the young generations possess different political attitudes from their older counterparts, and being disillusioned with the democratic process in Malaysia. In this regard, most political elites relate the decline of conventional politics with the rise of youth engagement in 'elite-challenging' or unconventional political activities, particularly in online activism and protest activities. Feelings of discontent with the system, political exposure from the social media, and other contributing factors such as political networking, and the good personality or cool image of some prominent politicians and activists who get involved in social movements may explain why some young people are seen to be more likely to participate in the 'elite-challenging' politics. In addition, these political elites who opt to be an active member of a political party are largely motivated by *selective process incentives* (ideologically motivated), *collective incentives* (to provide a better system for this country) and *social norm motives* (family and friend connections and political education). Although many political parties in Malaysia have maximised their effort and develop strategic plans to woo youth support, they are still at a distance from young people because they do not fully engage in meaningful connections with them. In the next chapters, we will scrutinise the contrasting views of both active and inactive young people in politics to further make sense of the patterns of youth participation and non-participation in Malaysia.

CHAPTER 8

BEING A YOUNG ACTIVIST IN CONTEMPORARY MALAYSIA: IN THEIR OWN WORDS

8.1   Introduction

Based on quantitative analyses from two well-known surveys (the WVS and Asian Barometer), this thesis showed that young Malaysians are disengaged from 'elite-directed' activism relative to their older counterparts, but no significant differences between young and old people were found for elite-challenging political participation. However, when we scrutinised the views of academics and political elites on how youth in Malaysia get involved in politics and the divergent patterns of youth political participation in this country, they argued that young Malaysians appear to have become less participative in conventional political participation, but have shown increasing interest in 'elite-challenging' or unconventional political activities, particularly in online activism and protest activities. In this regard, 'elite-challenging' forms of participation are seen to be potentially replacing voting and party membership as new ways for influencing political decision-making amongst young people who feel unrepresented and disenchanted with traditional agents. Yet, this is debatable, as argued by Henn et al. (2005): there is no clear-cut evidence whether a possible trade-off between young people's engagement in 'elite-directed' or 'elite-challenging' repertoires has emerged. Rather it is more likely that there is a large gap between politically active and inactive young people because only a fraction of young people is involved actively in these kinds of political action, while the rest remains disengaged and tend to be 'apathetic' (Sloam, 2007).

To make things clearer, this chapter aims to shed light on why some young people are politically active and politically inactive and what drives their behaviours by comparing the motivations for (dis-)engagement between a group of youth activists and youth non-participants. As such, this chapter analyses the political engagement of youth

activists who were actively involved in social movements, protests and civil society in Malaysia. This includes how and why they got involved in politics, their interpretation of politics, as well as their general views on youth political participation in Malaysia.

8.2   Who are they?

We started the interview by asking participants about their own background and how they first got interested and involved in politics. Generally, most of the youth activists who were interviewed were in their early twenties and thirties, with 26 or 27 being the common age. Most activists were highly educated—they have graduated from Malaysia's most respected local universities, and a few were still at the university. Most among them had read for degrees in the social sciences including politics, economics and law. Given their education background, it is perhaps not surprising that most possessed a basic knowledge of politics or at least were aware of the contemporary political landscape. As expected, the majority of youth activists described themselves as middle-class. Several respondents noted that their parents were working in the government and the private sector, where they earned just enough money to live comfortably. For example, Youth Activist (6) said *"I am from a middle-class family where you live within what you have."* This finding conforms with the social movement literature (Barnes *et al*., 1979; Offe, 1985) that many new social movements and protest activism are formed by middle-class activists.

As political activists, the participants were more drawn to politics. When asked about their own political leanings, none of them said they stood for a strong ideological position, be it left or right on the spectrum whilst most of them were actively participating in protests and social movements. Rather, they placed themselves on the moderate level or centre-left politics, promoting the ideas of social justice or equality. This is reflected in the comments of Youth Activist (2), *"No one cares about political ideology in Malaysia, but for me, I would put myself along the line of progressive ideology."* Out of the ten youths interviewed, only three actively joined political parties, mainly the opposition, as members. Since these activists were active members of the opposition parties and they were somewhat more likely to place themselves as pro-opposition and anti-government. This needs to be borne in mind when analysing the results. Although the rest of the activists remained independent or participated actively in NGOs, they mentioned they made a conscious effort to establish a good network with some of Malaysia's influential

parties. Activists in political parties agreed that the main reason why they chose this path was because they have more chance to make a change, although this is the most unpopular decision amongst the youth, as stated by Youth Activist (7), *"I think if we do not enter the political arena and don't try to make a change, who else will?"* Youth Activist (9) also responded positively by saying, *"The political party needs the 'expert' and fresh ideas from young people. So, I saw there was a space for me to help them and to make some changes."* However, those outside a party felt that changes can be achieved with or without the parties, as long as we participate in civil society. In this case, some activists (3 out of 7) argued that it is in the nature of political parties to be in a power struggle, so we need a 'third party' to monitor them, as commented by Youth Activist (4), *"I am not saying that political parties are not doing good work, but they should have a check and balance."* Indeed, in the case of Malaysia, some NGOs are quite vocal and, to some extent, influential in their advocacy of democracy and human rights, but they do not have a strong mass support base (Saliha, 2002). Therefore, civil society needs more participation from people to effectively play its role as 'watchdog' of the government. In addition, party rules and regulations, as well as the attitude of politicians who sometimes force people to do something against their will is another factor that makes some activists chose to engage with NGOs, as depicted by Youth Activist (10), *"It is really hard because there are many limitations inside the party and you have to work for the party and follow their directions."* This supports views from the academics that the way parties function might be the main barrier for young people becoming members.

The classical approaches to political socialisation often sought to find out how early childhood development shaped the political attitudes and outlooks of the individual (Flanagan and Sherrod, 1998). Influences from the most important agents of political socialisation such as family, peers, educational institutions, and the media in the earlier life of individuals are considered to have greater impact on their political activism in later years. Of the ten youths interviewed, half came from a very political family who was actively involved in political activities. In particular, the family has been the most influential agent of political socialisation and transmitter of political values amongst activists from a very early age, conforming to the argument of Jennings *et al.* (2009) and Jennings (2007). In addition, 4 out of 5 respondents also mentioned that their family support the opposition. This is reflected in the comments of Youth Activist (7), *"Since a young age, I often followed my mother who was an active member of PAS and always went*

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to PAS talks and activities. So, I knew about current issues and what was happening around me." Young people whose family frequently engaged in political actions and encouraged the expression of strong opinions, even those challenging the *status quo*, are more likely to be politically active citizens. Therefore, we can expect that most youth activists who came from a pro-opposition family, typically, have developed an anti-establishment attitude and tend to be critical of the government. In other words, young people's political beliefs are greatly affected by the values and attitudes learnt from their families. Other activists (2 out 10) argued that politics was a common topic of conversation, even if their families were not activists, as stated by Youth Activist (10), *"My family is not involved in any sort of political activities, but we always discuss current politics at home."* In this regard, being heard or valued at home contributes to a strong sense of political efficacy and the feeling that their ideas are worthy, which is really important to activism (Torres, 2006). Therefore, the findings support the arguments of Hyman (1959) and Sigel (1970) that family is always acknowledged as the primary agent of political socialisation.

In some cases, instead of family, youth activists themselves may act as socialising agents for their family, as stated by Youth Activist (8), *"At first, my family prevented me from being active in politics, but after I explained to them the reason why I did this, they can understand it. And now, they consistently follow updates on political development and give full support to me."* Those young people who partake in activist causes are more likely to be informed and thoughtful citizens as they closely follow political updates and experience issues faced by the community. Therefore, they may disseminate information not only to their family, but also to the public and encourage them to participate in politics. This clearly empowers the youth to be 'information leaders' (McDevitt and Butler, 2011).

For the remaining participants, they believed that their political attitudes and ideas were shaped by educational institutions, mainly university. Educational institutions provide training grounds to stimulate young people's political skills and learning through the formal classroom, extra-curricular activities, and student bodies. This is important for young people because the political education they received in university stimulates them to think critically about politics and social realities, as mentioned by Youth Activist (9), *"The university environment has opened our eyes to clearly see reality. That is why we feel that we need to participate to express our dissatisfaction with the university system and*

policies in this country." Therefore, the phenomenon of growing political activism amongst young people in Malaysia has been associated with student activism as they are at the forefront of movements fighting for political rights and freedom.

8.3   A brief history of student activism in Malaysia

It is worth noting that the history of the student movement in Malaysia can be traced back to the pre-independence era, mainly when there were many higher educational institutions established in Malaya like the Malay College Kuala Kangsar and the Sultan Idris Training College. In 1938, a group of teacher trainees, namely Ibrahim Yaakob, Ishak Hj, Muhammad and Mustapha Hussein, from Sultan Idris Training College, formed the first political association known as the *Kesatuan Kaum Muda* (Young Malay Movement or KMM).[54] KMM was seen as a Malay nationalist movement and having leftist politics rather than a mass political movement as it only represented the political crisis between the Malays and the British. By the time University Malaya was first established in 1949 (in Singapore), many political clubs were developed by students, which tended to be "non-communal, nonsectarian, autonomous, lawful, limited to undergraduates and essentially academic in nature" (Weiss, 2011:44-45). But their premises contained an anti-colonialist idealism and desired the attainment of self-government. Amongst the earliest club to form was the University Socialist Club (USC), created in 1952. The Socialist Club aimed to be ideologically moderate, but still there were some members who actively promoted socialism and Marxist revolutionary ideas, while others focused more on local issues and social justice through their well-known monthly journal, *Fajar.* In 1954, *Fajar* produced a provocative editorial edition entitled 'Aggression in Asia' which condemned Western imperialism and degraded Malaya as a 'police' state. All eight *Fajar* editorial board members, including James Puthucheary, Poh Soo Kai and M. K. Rajakumar, were arrested and charged under the Sedition Act (Kah Seng Loh *et al.,* 2012:61). As the members of the socialist club graduated, most of them joined the trade unions, political parties and the peasant movement. The development of political clubs and the student movement

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[54]Inspired intensely by the Indonesian nationalist movements, KMM aimed to enhance greater political awareness for Malay youth to overthrow colonial power through a political amalgamation of the Malays in Malaya and Indonesia, under the notion of 'Melayu Raya' (Greater Malay Nation-state). KMM envisaged upholding the Malay supremacy and reviving the legacy of the Malay kingdoms like Majapahit, Srivijaya and Malacca into a larger entity, known as the republic of Indonesia (Ramlah Adam, 2004:90). However, this movement was banned in 1942 by the British and many of the prominent leaders were imprisoned.

continued when the University of Malaya moved to its Kuala Lumpur campus in January 1962. However, their struggle was no longer on nationalism and anti-colonialist grounds. Instead students focused more on campus issues, especially on student welfare matters. The formation of Speaker's Corner in 1966 had boosted students' enthusiasm to raise their concerns, demonstrate and assemble on various issues which caught the university's and other students' attention.

The period from 1967 to 1974 marked the climax of student activism, the 'heydays of protest' (Weiss, 2011) or 'the golden age of the student movement' in Malaysia (Abu Bakar, 1973). Various student bodies were established, including the University of Malaya Islamic Students Society (PMIUM) and Malay Language Society (PBMUM), and the most influential of these was University of Malaya Student Union (UMSU) as all student bodies were linked to it, except for the Socialist Club. Their shared focus went beyond the issue of students, but covered issues in national politics, policy, and any problems of the community. There emerged many well-known student leaders such as Anwar Ibrahim, Syed Hamid Ali, Syed Naquib al-Attas and Hishamuddin Rais, who were at the forefront of the student demonstrations. In 1967, there was a huge protest against the Selangor government for attempting to destroy a squatter community in Teluk Gong. Since many students themselves came from poor families, they denounced the crackdown by the government on the peasants of Teluk Gong. In support of the unfortunate peasants, UMSU, PBMUM and some lecturers demonstrated at the Speaker's Corner and conducted a sit-in outside the Selangor chief minister's office (Weiss, 2011:155). In order to make sure that students' views were heard and people had more power in the decision-making process, the UMSU launched a students' manifesto in the 1969 national general election. They championed the idea of democracy—demanded greater involvement in the decision-making process and that national politics should be based on democracy which guaranteed more freedom and justice (Karim and Hamid, 1984:4). UMSU also held a series of public rallies throughout the country before the election, persuading the people to vote based on the issue and against the racial politics. In the aftermath of May 13th, 'anti-Tunku' rallies erupted at the University of Malaya and Mara Institute of Technology on July 1969. The students, led by Anwar Ibrahim and Syed Hamid Ali, denounced Tunku over the 13th May riot and demanded Tunku resign from the government. It was the first time that police had invaded the UM campus to disrupt the protest against the Prime Minister. Their efforts were not in vain since Tunku resigned as a prime minister.

After 1969, the implementation of the state-led preferential policy, the New Economic Policy (NEP) and the increased of the number of several other local universities like the National University of Malaysia (UKM), the University of Science Malaysia (USM) and the University of Technology Malaysia (UTM), increased the proportion of Malay students in the universities—most of them were from rural and less privileged backgrounds—and continued struggles for Malay rights and social justice through a series of protests in the early 1970s. Whilst these struggles were situated within a communal framework, they received wide support from the students, including non-Malays, as it gave precedence to economic concerns. Student movements acted as non-partisan pressure groups to criticise the government's policies (Karim and Hamid, 1984). To curb the growth of the student movement, the government enacted the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 (UUCA), and later was amended in 1975, prior to the mass arrest of students in the 1974 Tasik Utara and Baling incidents. The 1975 amendment of the UUCA 1971 has silenced the students from being critical and vocal to being passive in activism.

Whilst student activism was weakened, the later period of the1970s was notable for the rise of Islam among the Malay youth, which was manifested in the emergence of Muslim revivalist groups who challenged the existing political power structure.[55] The most prominent *dakwah* group in Malaysia, who was considered a political threat to the government, was Angkatan Belia Islam or ABIM (Islamic Youth Movement). ABIM, which was established by a group of young Muslim intellectuals in 1971, served as a religious pressure group and had been very critical about government policies which were deemed as unfair, inhumane, and contrary to Islamic teachings. They received support from among the highly educated, professionals and then urban-middle class Malays who were more devout in Islamic practices. Although it was a non-partisan organisation, many of its leaders crossed over to politics, particularly PAS as its ideology is similar to this party.

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[55]There were various causes that contributed to the growing of Islamisation in Malaysia. First, the rise of Islamic consciousness among Malay youth was influenced by the rise of a global Islamic resurgence, particularly in the Middle East (Ahmad F. Yousif, 2004). Second, the driving force behind the Islamic resurgence was a prevalent feeling of failure and loss of identity, political system and economies of the Muslim societies (Esposito, 2002:83). Islamic resurgence in Malaysia was also seen as a strategy of the Malays to preserve and strengthen their ethnic identity vis-à-vis the non-Malay population (Chandra Muzaffar, 1987). The Muslim revivalist groups or so-called *dakwah* groups actively developed Islamic consciousness within the Muslim community, but some groups were regarded by the government as deviant and posed potential threats to the religion. Among the visible impacts of the *dakwah* movement were the increased popularity of Islamic attire, greater piety in the perseverance of Halal foods, the practice of Hajj, Zakat and daily prayers.

However, during the 1998 Reformasi era, though students were curbed from being involved in the political arena, the dismissal of Anwar Ibrahim, who was perceived as an 'idol' for student activists, contributed to the revival of student activism. At that time, Anwar rallied a large number of the masses, particularly the students, in a Reformasi movement. This movement echoed Indonesia's anti-Suharto movement called to eliminate the practice of *kolusi, korupsi and nepotisme* (collusion, corruption, and nepotism) (Khoo Boo Teik, 2003). In fact, there were many student movements which cut across ethnic lines, such as, Students' Voice (Suara Mahasiswa), Campus-Based Free Anwar Movement (Gerakan Bebas Anwar), and Malaysia Youth and Students Democratic Movement (DEMA), which were formed to support Anwar. In spite of the waning Reformasi movement, student activism continued energetically to advocate democracy and human rights. For example, June 2001 saw a large-scale student protest—around 400 students gathered at the National Mosque—demonstrating against the ISA (Weiss, 2011). In this protest, seven students were detained and suspended from their universities. In the same year, many more students were arrested for protesting against police brutality and restrictions on student activism. Through the establishment of 'Abolish AUKU movement' (GMA), the students kept pressing the government to abolish the UUCA, and only in 2012 did the government decide to slightly amend Section 15 to allow students to join political organisations, including political parties outside campus. However, this amendment did not appease students since they still have limited autonomous power and academic freedom (Suhaimi, 2013). Meanwhile, student movements remain at the forefront or are strong supporters of massive rallies such as the Bersih movement, the People's Uprising Rally (Himpunan Kebangkitan Rakyat), the 'Arrest Najib', and the 'Dataran Occupy". As student movements have undeniably played a significant role in many major social and political changes, therefore we need to contextualise why students decided to become activists and how they started their early political activism.

8.4   Early involvement in political activism

There are a variety of ways individuals enter into political activism. Some began with small scale activities such as attending meetings, volunteering activities, and slowly become actively engaged as full-time activists (Martin, 2007). Whereas, others become involved straight away in high-scale activities like organising protests. Since a social movement seeks to create 'a world apart from the dominant culture' (Taylor and Whittier,

1992:113), the process of becoming part of an activist community is problematic and difficult if there is no connection to social movement networks, identifiable organisations, or necessary contacts (Weinstein, 2005). As expected, most (7 out of 10) of these activists, when asked about their early political involvement and how they gained access to a group, said that their political activism began at university, as student activists, and that they gained access to the activist community through their active roles in student movements such as Student Solidarity of Malaysia (Solidariti Mahasiswa Malaysia or SMM), Malaysia Youth and Students Democratic Movement (DEMA) and the Federation of Islamic Student of Malaysia (Gabungan Mahasiswa Islam Se-Malaysia or GAMIS). These student organisations were responsible for organising political campus activities and taking strong stands against the government policies by staging pro-democracy protests. This can be seen in the response by Youth Activist (2):

> *"In 2010, I joined a protest voluntarily, protested the rise of Water tariffs at the National Mosque, and over there, I knew many student activists from other universities. And then, my university acted against me, and they barred me from student bodies, student election and all sorts of things. I brought up this case at the national level student movement and from there I started to actively join student movement."*

As for Youth Activist (5), her exposure and experienced grew when she studied abroad and contributed to her political awakening, as reflected in her comments, *"When I did my masters in the UK, most of my awakening is from there, particularly when I did some work for the Socialist Worker Party…"* Being abroad has initiated the complex process of reflection between what young people perceived to be Malaysian democracy and Western democracies because they had a chance to get closer participation with globally connected social movements.

For the remaining participants (3 out of 10), their political activism began when they started working, whether being employed or self-employed. The workplace or working environment may open up the opportunity to acquire civic and political skills that are needed to become an active citizen, as pointed out by Youth Activist (3), who was an entrepreneur *"My initial involvement in politics began when I worked as a bookseller and I got mixed-up with many core student activists from the UKM."* This supports findings from Humphries (2001) that those independent business owners have a tendency to be the main actors in political affairs and more likely to be invited to participate actively in

politics since they have a central position in social networks. However, for Youth Activist (4), his decision to quit his job in corporate banking and build a career as an activist began when his friends were arrested by the government. According to Youth Activist (4), *"I was not involved in this kind of thing much, until in 2007, when two of my friends were detained under ISA. They didn't have any political associations, but they were detained for some reasons which I think ridiculous and unacceptable."* In this sense, the discriminatory experiences of someone close to us may develop our political awareness and a sense of responsibility to the community to change an unfair situation.

8.5   What motivates young people in political activism?

Youth activists were influenced by diverse motivations; the motivation to participate depends on costs and benefits gained (Klandermans, 1997; Muller and Opp, 1986). Since political participation is the "study of everything" (Van Deth, 2001:4) and takes a variety of forms, it could be distinguished by the time and risk or effort of engaging in different kinds of action (Klandermans, 2004). Some require little time, but are potentially risky, like a protest, a sit-in or joining a strike. Other forms of participation such as giving money, signing petitions, or attending peaceful demonstrations demand less time and less risk. At the same time, joining an organisation is both time consuming and takes substantial effort. Therefore, different forms of political activity require different kinds of resources (Verba et al, 1995), or what are termed 'motivational dynamics' (Klandermans, 2004:361). By developing the social-psychological dimension of movement participation, Klandermans (2007), emphasises three fundamental motives (demand-supply why people participate in the movement) which are: *Instrumentality*; *identity*; and *ideology*. *Instrumentality* denotes as an effort to influence the political decision or social environment. By contrast, *identity* refers to sense of belonging to or identification with a valued group, and *ideology* simply means an expression of one's views or in pursuit for meaning (Klandermans, 2007:361). As the circle of youth activists is small, and many of these activists are the drivers for social movement and protests in Malaysia, it is important to understand the reasons why they participate in such movements. Following this, it seems reasonable to use the framework of 'Demand and Supply of Participation', proposed by Klandermans (2007) in this chapter to examine what motivates young activists in Malaysia to actively engage in political activism.

Based on the responses, there was a strong sense amongst half of these activists that they were motivated to actively engage in politics for political and social change. This is rooted in their recognition of deprivation, injustice, and indignation about some of the government's policies, as commented by Youth Activist (4), *"What motivates me is that this country is moving in the wrong direction, and injustice is everywhere."* This opinion is also extended similarly by Youth Activist (9) in his comment, *"...we can see that our country is not moving in a better direction. We are moving towards a 'failed state' in terms of the economy, politics, and society. So, we can conclude that our country requires a total change. Not a small-scale reform."* It is clear that instrumentality is the motive to participate where the activists have a strong belief that their participation could bring about change, if not now, at least for future generations. This is reflected in the comment of Youth Activist (8), *"We are fighting to see Malaysia better than what it is now. This is not for us, but it is for the next generation."* Evidently, we can see in Malaysia, there were several cases where movements have clearly been successful in irreversibly changing policies. For example, a national campaign for the abolition of the Internal Security Act (ISA) has been spearheaded by a coalition of human rights NGOs, such as Aliran, Hakam and Suaram, under a banner called as 'Anti-ISA Movement' (Gerakan Mansuh ISA, GMI) since 2001.[56] After a decade of resisting and protesting against indefinite detention without trial, only in 2012 did the government repeal the act and replace it with the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act and release the detainees of ISA. This showed that the activists are aware that participation may not be effective straight away in bringing about changes (Klandermans, 2007), but it takes a long process or a 'cycle', as stated by Youth Activist (3), *"We do not want to do something quickly, but fail to bring about a change. If you get tired, you can take a rest, and will be replaced by others. And when you are ready, you can come back to fight for change. All this is a cycle"*.

In addition, some activists (3 out of 10) claimed the reason why they participated in political activism is because they were part of a group in society—collective identity is a factor that stimulates them to participate. In this regard, their strong attachment to specific groups like labour, women, and lower-class groups increases their likelihood to participate in political activism. For Youth Activist (2), belonging to the group of young people

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[56]Abolish ISA Movement (Gerakan Mansuh ISA, GMI) is a coalition of more than 80 NGOs opposing against Malaysia's 50 years old draconian law, the Internal Security Act (ISA). They organised a series of massive protests to put pressure on the government to abolish the ISA, and their efforts paid-off when the ISA was being scrapped on 2011.

means leaning more towards an anti-establishment view. It is the nature of young people to be passionate and energetic in challenging the *status quo* and to refuse to acquiesce to the dominant culture. This is reflected in his comments, *"As for young people, they are indeed rebellious. People don't understand them, but it is part of the culture. Every period you can see there are counterculture groups who oppose the system, everything that they see as wrong."* Apart from group identity, Youth Activist (2) also was heavily inspired by stories from many successful movements in the 1970s that he read from books, and this indirectly triggered his awareness to go against the system. In a similar vein, Youth Activist (3) also stated that, *"At the age of 11-years-old, I started to read political newspapers such as Watan, which was very critical at that time."* In contrast, Youth Activist (6), who came from a working-class family, saw that her family's condition and the surrounding environment motivated her to actively engage in the civil society. She pointed out, *"I can do something for marginalised groups because I saw them in their economic background where they live in poverty, but it is beyond having an economic reason."* This confirms findings from the literature (De Weerd and Klandermans, 1999; Reicher, 1984; Stryker *et al*, 2000) that the construction of collective identity is central to social movements—the more people identified themselves with a group, the more they inclined to engage in political movements.

Others (2 out of 10), believed the agent of mobilisation was social networking and people from successful movements who inspired them to actively engage in the movement's cause. According to Youth Activist (5), *"...I was in the UK during the rise of popular uprising such as the Arab Spring and the anti-austerity movement of Spanish students where there were calls for greater democracy. At that time, in Spain, the activists came out with a manifesto titled 'real democracy now', and I was very inspired by the people who were attached to these movements."* This is one of the impacts of successful movements on individuals where they have been a source of inspiration for people to build political awareness and to champion a cause, so they have more inclination for further activism. Furthermore, there is an activist whose participation was strongly influenced by her emotions about the government and political system. An example of this point of view is given by Youth Activist (7), *"I'm mad with the government and I think if we do not show our anger, they cannot see and understand."* The sense of anger has been considered as the ideal emotion for protest (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2007), which in turn may stir up their motivation for collective actions. Indeed, the 'feeling of anger' has been

used as a symbolic expression to attract others to participate, as mentioned by Youth Activist (7), *"We need the feelings of anger to attract other young people."* Therefore, they can create a so called 'group-based anger' and channel this feeling into a movement.

As political activists often hold different views from the government, they are the group that has always been targeted for crackdowns by the government. When being asked whether they had been caught by the authorities, the majority activists (8 out of 10) mentioned that they have been caught at least once during their participation, as reflected by Youth Activist (9), *"I was arrested seven times when I was a student activist, and two times when I worked for SUARAM."* Youth Activist (3) also pointed out that, *"I was arrested for involvement in the 'Tangkap Najib' rally."* Whilst they have been arrested many times, most of these activists said that they were not afraid, and the government's crackdown could not stop them from continuing struggling for better change. They believed the experience of previous political figures was a source of inspiration to resist the current system. For them, their punishment is minimal compared to that of previous leaders and activists, as mentioned by Youth Activist (2):

> *"All the successful leaders out there have already been arrested a lot of times in their life. So, if I was in prison for five to six years, it is nothing compared to 27 years of Nelson Mandela in prison. That is why I challenged myself."*

This opinion is also extended similarly by Youth Activist (7) in her comment, *"If we look at previous leaders, they were caught under the ISA, and even after they were released from ISA, they were still struggling. Meaning that, they have a very strong spirit."*

Despite being inspired by prominent political leaders, inner strength also came from the support and solidarity of family and friends, as depicted by Youth Activist (4), *"I was very touched, there was a time when me and Adam were in prison, and from inside the cell, we heard our friends calling our names outside the police station."* Indeed, positive social support from family and in-group members is the strongest support system for each activist to remain constant in their activism. This reaffirms the importance of identity construction (Melucci, 1995; Taylor and Whittier, 1992; Hunt and Benford, 2007) as a result of a strong sense of belonging or 'we-ness' within the activist community. Moreover, getting caught or imprisoned is the main risk undertaken by activists, so they must prepare themselves with basic information about legal and civil rights. According to

Youth Activist (9), *"When we were first arrested, we were bullied and tortured by the police. But after several times, we did research about legal rights, specifically on the Penal Code, we realised that the police were just doing their job and we were just practising our right as citizens."* Clearly, legal and political knowledge is important for activists to be better capable of judging when systems are poorly functioning and willing to act whenever necessary.

8.6   Interpretations of politics

Youth activism in the past was often interrelated with idealism, altruism, and rebellions (Luzatto, 1997). But how about youth activism today? Do young people have an idealistic or rather narrow interpretation of politics? Generally, most youth activists have a broad and clear understanding of politics. Out of ten youths interviewed, three saw politics as a process of governance and administration of a country. This can be seen in the response of Youth Activist (6), *"I think if you want to put it in a simple way, politics is something that is designed by a system, governed by a government that has been elected by people..."* In contrast, some claim (2 out of 10) that politics is a tool or mechanism to achieve something, as explained by Youth Activist (2), *"Politics is a tool that is used to gain something, your own agendas, whatever agenda that you have. For example, environmentalists use politics, student uses politics, chauvinists, fascists, racists, and all of them use politics."* Youth Activist (7) also reacted positively by commenting that, *"Politics is not just between the political representatives and the people, but we have politics in the workplace, in university, in the office and so on. Politics is everywhere."*

These suggest that the definition of politics is relatively wide, is beyond political parties or politicians, and it encompasses all aspects of human life. Therefore, as proposed by Youth Activist (5), the more you participate in politics, the more you are able to govern yourself since *"Politics is relating very much on how politically involved you are and how politically empowered you are."* However, the activists argued that many young people misunderstood the definition of politics as they frequently associate politics with politicians and political party. According to Youth Activist (3), *"Sometimes when we heard the news about a leader who was arrested because of corruption, we straight away jumped to the conclusion that it is 'politics'."* In this regard, politics is viewed as a 'dirty game' if it is only based on actors who habitually abuse power in the system. Perhaps,

having a narrow understanding of politics—politics is equivalent to political actors, could create a tendency for people to have a sceptical view about politics and the whole political system. This in turn will make them feel less in favour of engaging in the political process.

8.7   Political concern: analysing the patterns of youth political participation in Malaysia

Youth activists act as representatives or agents to bring about social changes and awareness for their fellow young people and society at large. To some extent, it is the nature of youth activists to be well-informed and concerned about whatever issues happen locally and globally. It is useful for their activism purposes and to be effective in their actions. Therefore, when we asked about current youth political engagement, they knew a lot about young people's patterns of participation and their attitudes towards politics as they themselves experienced and engaged directly in youth activities. Interestingly, most of the activists (7 out of 10) claimed there is a downward trend of youth political involvement in conventional or 'elite-directed' participation, as stated by Youth Activist (8), *"This can be seen through the data released by the Electoral Commission, where almost four million Malaysians, largely young people who are over 21-years-old are not voting, and even worse failed to register as voters."* Youth Activist (9) also responded positively to this issue by saying, *"Students also are not concerned about voting. Almost 400,000 students graduate each year, but less than two percent of these total graduated students are registered as voters."* This conforms to the consistent patterns of youth political participation in quantitative analyses (see Chapters 4 and 5). Although agreeing with the statement, Youth Activist (5) significantly emphasised that the decline appears evident amongst the generation who lived in the Mahathir era and post-Mahathir era, as she argued that, *"Many of us grew up during the Mahathir era and post-Mahathir era, and had parents who were afraid of being politically active. So, we have a social structure that discouraged us to be politically active."* During the Mahathir premiership from 1981 to 2003, Mahathir used many repressive mechanisms such as the Sedition Act, the UUCA, the amendment of the Printing Presses and Publications Act of 1984 (PPPA),[57] and mass

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[57]The amendment of the Printing Presses and Publications Act of 1984 (PPPA) requires all domestic and international publishers and printing firms to get annual permits. Under this Act, the minister had an 'absolute discretion' power in allowing or rejecting the permits for printing presses and the minister's decision to revoke or suspend the permit, could not be challenged in court (Milne and Mauzy, 1999:113). Therefore, the government had the power to prohibit any 'malicious' news, which they considered as a threat to the national interest and security.

arrest under the ISA to curtail political rights of the people. The impact of Mahathirism upon the changing political landscape from semi-democratic to autocratic, and Mahathir's centralisation of powers contributed to the creation of a 'silent generation' as there were many people at that time afraid to be involved in politics. In addition, some activists pointed out that the decline is significantly apparent in membership of political organisations, including political parties and NGOs. In other words, young people are disengaged from structural political participation, as mentioned by Youth Activist (6), *"They don't want to be put in a structure where they think every structure that exists, like political parties, political organisations, NGOs, for them those people can be hypocrites."* Not surprisingly, the decline of young people in political organisations signals that young people have little or no trust of political actors, as stated by Youth Activist (7), *"They are still not ready to join the party and do not believe in political parties."* In this sense, some young Malaysians seem to hold a deeply distrustful and sceptical view towards political players, corresponding with the findings of Henn and Foard (2012) in Britain.

Whilst a majority maintained that there is a decline in youth political participation, two out of ten activists believe that the indicators to measure political participation are too narrow, limited only to institutionalised politics, as argued by Youth Activist (3), *"We cannot make a generalisation that there is a decline in youth political participation by only measuring electoral participation and party membership."* This suggests that political participation is a very broad concept and includes a growing range of youth-relevant political activities—elite-directed and elite-challenging participation. Failure to adopt a broad conception of politics will neglect new political repertoires that lie outside mainstream politics (Bessant, 2016; O'Toole *et al*., 2003) and we would not find evidence of high levels of youth political activism (Henn *et al.*, 2002).

The repertoire of the modes of political participation has expanded; therefore, based on the responses, all activists agreed that there is a growth of elite-challenging participation because young people are more likely to have undertaken unconventional participation. According to Youth Activist (2), *"I would agree that young people have shifted to something else. People have changed and look at politics from different perspectives. It is still politics, but in different forms."* Whilst the segmentation of youth in political activities is diversified, there are several renowned modes of elite-challenging

participation that have been commonly used by not only activists, but also young Malaysians in general.

1) Online activism

Social media, if it is used effectively, may help to perform a variety of roles such as putting pressure on the government, influencing political decisions, disseminating political information and to some extent, empowering people to initiate social movement. In fact, the Arab Spring is one example of how online activism led to offline protest. Out of ten activists interviewed, three of them believed that social media is the main mobilising agent for youth activism or a vehicle to stimulate cooperative efforts to challenge 'real power', as mentioned by Youth Activist (10), *"I think social media is very convenient to share whatever they like, but to avoid them from getting into trouble since many people are arrested when they have joined the protests."* For young people, online activism seems to be a viable way to manifest their participation in politics compared to protest activism since this kind of activity is the path for high-risk activism. However, young people, mainly Generation Y, are more attracted to political humour on the web, featuring political jokes, parody, cartoons, and satirical shows, as described by Youth Activist (3), *"Many fanpages like Amran Fans and Malaysian Gags which portray Malaysian political issues in satirical and humorous ways are popular amongst young people."* In this sense, exposure to entertainment-oriented programmes or 'soft news', indirectly allows people to gain political knowledge, even without their intention, because political information is presented in a more entertaining and easily digestible way (Baum, 2003). Notably, youth activists also use online activism frequently to maintain social networking, propagating dissenting opinions and mobilising the masses. Bersih rally is one of the examples of successful people movement that strategically using social media platforms of *Facebook and Twitter* to draw the significant number of young people to the rally, as mentioned by Youth Activist (4), *"Previously, Bersih demanded for free and fair election but today, it is totally a people's movement. And you can see the Bersih 4.0, the biggest rally ever in Malaysian history."* Whilst online activism is growing rapidly amongst the youth, it is pervasively used by most young middle-class people, as argued by Youth Activist (3), *"For me, youth from the middle-class group in Malaysia are the main users of social media like Facebook and Twitter."* This group of society, as argued by Welsh (2012) is more politically aware, assertive, and critical in expressing their political views.

2) New social movements and protests

Based on the responses, 2 out of 10 activists argued that the most common mode of political participation of young Malaysian today is social movements, as said by Youth Activist (6), *"I think more young people want to be in social movements, a very loose social movement and very much unstructured, and they want a very different kind of system or modes of communication."* In particular, the salient characteristics of social movements, including voluntary membership, their non-partisan character, organised collective action, being less institutionalised and their commitment to promote social changes may be the factors that drive young people to engage in this mode of participation. It is noteworthy to mention that most of the social movements in Malaysia are closely linked with NGOs in advocacy on the issues of human rights and political freedom. These movements, as argued by Weiss and Saliha (2003), are deep-rooted in the middle class which embraces these ideas to bring about socio-political changes through large-scale protest. Today, the most outstanding Malaysian protest movement is the Bersih movement that is struggling to transform public places into spaces for people, largely young people, to engage in diverse political activities, leading to challenging the *status quo* (Smeltzer and Pare, 2015). According to Youth Activist (7), *"If we look at the past Bersih 4.0, it could not be denied that there was a wave of Chinese, but there was also a wave of young people."* However, Youth Activist (9) opposed this argument by saying that:

> *"Young people's involvement in protest is relatively low in Malaysia. Normally, of 250,000-300,000 participants of the Bersih movement, 90 percent is young people. If we compare this 90 percent with almost 16 million of youth population, there is only one to two percent of young people who participated."*

Even if protest activism is rampant in Malaysia now, most activists (6 out of 10) believed that the government still refuses to accept protest as part of political participation, as mentioned by Youth Activist (4), *"The government never recognised protests as they simply penalised people who fight for freedom of speech and assembly that had been guaranteed by the constitution."* In this regard, the government failed to understand that protest is one of the main elements in democracy since they blatantly used violence, excessive force, and randomly arrested protesters. This is reflected in the comments of Youth Activist (5), *"I think the government is very schizophrenic when it comes to street*

protest. If we look at the earlier Bersih rallies, the government has rampantly used violence such as tear gas, with many people getting beaten…."

Although the recent Bersih 4.0 and 5.0 were run smoothly with no violent crackdown, few arrests, or significant incidents, it does not mean that the government has allowed protests and tolerated protesters. In fact, according to Youth Activist (4), *"Me, Adam and several other activists were arrested two days after the Bersih 4.0, and a week later, I received a letter stating that I was to be charged in court for the old case."* This indicates that the government retains use of 'exclusive' prevailing strategies (Koopmans and Kriesi, 1995) such as repressive crackdowns on the dissenters. Perhaps it has changed its strategy by allowing people to protest before being arrested. Despite the crackdowns and detentions, the activists believe that protest needs to be continued as it will help to bring about change, although it may take a long time, as noted by Youth Activist (7), *"Protest must be continued. If we do not show protest to the government, they will keep doing whatever they like."* In a similar vein, Youth Activist (9) also commented that, *"Protest is regarded as a process to drive Malaysia towards democratic maturity and we will not give up making protest part of the culture."* Given that many of the activists are highly educated and commonly used protest and social movements as mechanisms to change the status-quo, therefore we could expect that the group underrepresented in protest activism in Malaysia is those with low levels of education, corresponding to the findings of Van Aelst and Walgrave (2001).

3) The politics of popular culture

Since young people perceive politics as something boring, irrelevant, stressful, and sometimes inexplicable (Bhavnani, 1994), 3 out of 10 activists believed that young people find different ways to make politics more meaningful, entertaining, and fun through their participation in popular culture like arts, music, and political satire. This can be seen in the response of Youth Activist (4),

> *"Popular culture is wide enough and increasing amongst the youth as people want to contribute something, but sometimes they don't have enough time or are afraid of the law of the state, being arrested, etc. So, they use their expertise in drawing posters, cartoons, jokes, and so on as a sign of protest".*

Generally, the politics of popular culture means the use of culture to express political views (Street, 2004). According to Alvarez *et al.* (1998:7), culture is political since its meanings are constitutive of processes that, implicitly and explicitly, seek to redefine social power. In other words, culture is political because it affects power relations. The politics of popular culture is vague yet a comprehensive concept, encompasses the interactions between state and people, including the actions of the state and the exercise of individual rights, as well as the use of a counter-hegemonic force or a protest of popular resistance (Hall, 1981). It is noteworthy to mention that the politics of popular culture in Malaysia has long been embedded in the society, but its rise can be seen during the Reformasi 1998. At that time, many cultural revolutionary groups emerged, created by a handful of young people such as *Komunite Seni Jalan Telawi* (KsJT) and *Universiti Bangsar Utama* (UBU), which were actively organised community-based programmes, educational street theatre and agitprop, not only to challenge the authoritarian regime, but more embedded in everyday-life politics. The Reformasi era also marked the rise of the 'Malay Cultural Revolt' (Khoo Boo Teik, 2002:33) with the significant growth of satirical novels written by Shahnon Ahmad, poems entitled 'Shit' by A. Samad Said, articles by Rustam Sani, Fathi Aris Omar and political cartoons by Zunar, that criticised and opposed the Mahathir regime.

Indeed, the use of politics of popular culture in Malaysia today has expanded in different forms of collective actions where people shared common meanings, interests, and experiences. Most of these collective actions were conducted by young people, and were generally anti-establishment and non-ideological but brought up a socio-political agenda. Amongst the most well-known youth collective groups are the Bangsar Utama Club (Kelab Bangsar Utama, KBU), the Frinjan Collective, the Street Book (Buku Jalanan), the Youth Open University (Universiti Terbuka Anak Muda, UTAM) and the Lecture Book (Kuliah Buku, KUBU).[58] Apart from collective groups, the protest movement in Malaysia,

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[58]Bangsar Utama Club (KBU), is a rejuvenation of Universiti Bangsar Utama (UBU). It was established in 2012 when a group of activists rented a space to be a centre for youth activities and a gathering place for youth reformists. KBU's activities are wide, ranging from community programmes such as the Street Kitchen (Dapur Jalanan) and free tuition for local children—to education programs like free classes on politics and philosophy, informal discussion, and forums—to arts and music such as the BangsarArt, Radio Bangsar and Bangsar Film Club. KBU is the place for young people, which open the doors to many activities, as long as their fundamental principal is pro-democracy.

The Frinjan Collective is a loose-structured group for artists and those people who love art and culture. It aims to utilise art as a medium to attract public attention on various political and social issues. It also intends

mainly Bersih, also utilised the element of agitprop by staging a live concert and designing posters and images, as mentioned by Youth Activist (2), *"Bersih 4.0 was totally different from other Bersih where there used to be political spirit, fights with police and so on, so we changed it to pop culture."*

Currently, we also can see the rise of a political graphic artist, Fahmi Reza, who uses art and graphic design as forms of civil disobedience. He is most well-known, particularly in depicting a caricature of the Prime Minister, Najib Razak, as a clown − which was widely shared across social media. Due to this image, Fahmi Reza was charged under the Communication and Multimedia Act 1998. Previously, the government has used the Sedition Act to stifle a prominent political cartoonist, Zunar, for his work (Human Rights Watch, 2015). Clearly, the use of different forms of popular culture such as political jokes, satirical literature and internet memes as weapons of resistance able to challenge the hegemony and pose a threat to national security and public order. In Malaysia, popular culture has become political when the state has imposed censorship and banning because of explicit political content. According to Youth Activist (2), *"Each successful movement, they do not leave even a single thing out of human experience. Meaning, you are not just going against the government, but you also go against the system and culture. So, you have to bring another culture to counter another culture."* Therefore, it is apparent that popular culture has been used by young people in Malaysia as a tool of resistance and to counter prevailing trends, such as inequality along ethnic lines and social class, and an oppressive state.

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to utilise art as a medium to empower young people to face any challenges and problems out there. The main programs organised by Frinjan are Frinjan City (Pekan Frinjan), Frinjan House (Rumah Frinjan), Frinjan Forum and Frinjan Black Box. Frinjan City (Pekan Frinjan) is a cultural activity for youth, combining the elements of arts, activism, and entrepreneurship. While, Frinjan House (Rumah Frinjan) is a space for arts and youth activities and Frinjan Black Box is an enclosed space, specifically emphasising collaboration projects with other art groups. (*http://frinjan.blogspot.com*, accessed on January 15, 2017).

The Street Book (Buku Jalanan) is a fortnightly reading club that organise reading sessions as an effort to create a public reading culture and space for the community based on the principle of Books, Arts, Culture and Activism (BACA). (*https://en-gb.facebook.com/bukujalanan/*, accessed on January 15, 2017).

The Youth Open University (Universiti Terbuka Anak Muda, UTAM) is an education hub to incalculate knowledge amongst Malaysians, mainly young people, strengthening the democracy and citizens' participation through cross-displinary critical discourses. They organise online weekly lectures via Ustream and weekly open discussions involving many local and foreign students, as well as academics. (*http://utam.net/*, accessed on January 15, 2017).

The Lecture Book (Kuliah Buku, KUBU) is a weekly discussion groupattended by progressive young people. (*https://id-id.facebook.com/pg/KuliahBuku/about/?ref=page_internal, accessed on* January 15, 2017).

8.8   Why don't young people participate?

It would seem, therefore, the youth activists are optimistic that young people are not politically apathetic even if there is a decline in elite-directed participation—voting and party membership. Instead, they believe that youth today are seen to be channelling their participation in different modes of elite-challenging activism, mainly online activism, social movements, protest activism and popular culture. There are several factors highlighted by the activists on why fellow young people are turning off from institutionalised politics, but the most insightful explanation is related to the 'culture of fear' amongst young people. In this regard, all youth activists argued that the government's oppressive laws which stifle political rights and freedom have cultivated the 'culture of fear' within young people, making them afraid to participate, as argued by Youth Activist (10), *"AUKU and the Sedition Act frighten a lot of students now and create a barrier for them to actively participate in politics."* This opinion is also extended similarly by Youth Activist (5) in her comments, *"So I think that AUKU is very powerful in making people censor themselves into being very careful of what they think and what they say in real life and social media."* The government's attempt to impose crackdowns and detention on youth activists is to give a warning sign to scare largely Malaysians (Human Rights Watch, 2015). This support the argument by Hibbs (1973) that state repression has a negative effect which constrains citizens from participating in collective actions. Therefore, only a small group of young people are brave and willing enough to participate in political activism, as mentioned by Youth Activist (5), *"I know that you always hear some students have been caught for something, to their credit, they are quite few, and they are very brave, and they are quite exceptional."* It seems that youth activism for a small minority is inextricably related to the political alienation of large sections of young Malaysians.

In addition, the youth's frustration with political parties, whether the ruling party or the opposition is another explicit factor which explains why youth do not participate. As expected, a majority of the youth activists (8 out of 10) agreed that young people, including the activists, feel that they do not have a better alternative since both parties are facing internal incoherence and open rivalry. This can be reflected in the comments of Youth Activist (1), *"Some youth are 'fed up'. They have an interest in choosing PR, but there are internal problems in PR, tension. They want to support BN, but BN is troubled by the issue of corruption and they are unable to accept the Muslim Malays who are very*

racist." Clearly, the attitude and internal strife of political parties make young people feel that these parties are not convincing enough to provide a better future, as argued by Youth Activist (9) *"It seems like young people have already despaired".* This echoes the findings of previous qualitative chapters. Furthermore, some (3 out of 10) claim there is a relationship between youth political disengagement and thesocioeconomic resources, as pointed out by Youth Activist (4), *"...the lower income people, I think they participate even less in politics. First, they need to work to earn for living. So, they don't have enough time. Second, educational background plays an important role."* In this sense, young people, especially the working-class, are less integrated with politics as they do not have the necessary resources such as money and time. Perhaps, economic barriers may account for low participation amongst the youth, as Youth Activist (3) argued, *"Young people are increasingly under pressure due to economic problems and the rising cost of living"*

The quantitative findings showed that at the population, education did not attenuate the participatory gap between younger and older people in Malaysia, whilst more young Malaysians are gaining higher education and joining professional careers. In the qualitative interviews however, 3 out of 10 activists pointed specifically to the poor political education or political literacy amongst young people which can largely affect their participation in politics, as mentioned by Youth Activist (8), *"Political education has not been integrated into the curriculum, whether at school or university levels. So, young people do not participate since our own education system does not prepare them for politics."* Youth Activist (9) is also in agreement with this view by responding that, *"There is a dogma that says students cannot engage in politics and politics cannot enter the campus. This makes students become politically blind."* As a civic curriculum has proven to be effective in developing youth political literacy (Niemi and Junn, 1998), the lack of such a curriculum in educational institutions in this country means failing to provide students with the skills to understand the abstract concept of politics and political issues and to play roles and exercise their rights as citizens in a democratic society.

8.9 Why have young people moved to elite-challenging political participation?

As expected, more than half (6 out of 10) youth activists pointed out that growing discontent and mistrust with the government and the political system makes young people more likely to participate in elite-challenging modes of participation, as indicated by

Youth Activist (5), *"The young people, a lot of them, and also the NGOs as well, do not believe in the system anymore because they say elections never change everything even if we made them legal."* In this regard, institutionalised political participation, such as that in elections and political parties is unappealing to many young people because they are 'powerless' to make change since their votes do not make any difference. According to Youth Activist (3), *"I think our electoral system is not transparent. If it is transparent, there will be no problem and is better to concentrate on election."* Although Malaysians are free to vote, the electoral system remains suffers from serious malpractices—the issue of phantom voters, indelible ink, money politics, gerrymandering, and media bias—skewed in favour of the incumbent government. Since the established formal system is problematic, young people tune into informal or unstructured participation. This supports the argument by Meyer (2004) that people resort to non-conventional methods when they believe that the conventional routes to influence are either unavailable or ineffective. Evidently, there was a massive rally organised by the PR Coalition and NGOs, known as 'Blackout 505' in the aftermath of the 2013 general election. At least, more than 50,000 protesters across different ethnic groups, clad in black as a sign of protest, had joined the mass rallies. They demanded the resignation of the electoral commission due to continued concerns about its impartiality, re-running elections in 30 constituencies where the margin of victory was small, and suspended the practice of gerrymandering or boundary delimitation and any form of amendment to electoral law (Zulaikha, 2013). Amid the rallies, many youth activists such as Adam, Safwan and Syukri were arrested under the Sedition Act, for organising and rioting in the illegal Blackout 505 rallies.

Some activists (4 out of 10) linked the youth motivation from formal to informal political participation with the culture of non-partisanship. It is the trend of young people today not to be identified with a political party or any organisation, as argued by Youth Activist (1), *"If we look at the trend of young people today, honestly, it is quite difficult to attract young people to join any sort of organisation. The youth are very enthusiastic about being involved in many programs, but they do not want to be attached."* Youth Activist (2) is also pessimistic about this issue, arguing that, *"For young people, being in a party or organisation is something unexciting, not 'cool', not young and unattractive…"* To be specific, young people often see political parties or organisation as an activity that is commonly practiced by older people because being attached to these organisations makes young people feel rigid, 'unfree', as they have to follow rules and order. It seems that

being partisan is relatively contrary to the nature or 'soul' of youth. To some extent, young people in fact do not understand the concept of partisanship, as commented by Youth Activist (4), *"Young people do not understand the meaning of partisan and non-partisan politics. Everything we do is partisan."* Therefore, the narrow understanding of the concept of partisanship embraced by the youth makes them prefer to be outside the organisations. Conversely, Youth Activist (2) argued that young people refuse to be attached to a political party because *"Political parties have always been associated with power struggles, such as wanting to be a member of parliament, minister and so on."* Since political parties are always competing for power, young people often consider they seek power for their own sake.

Another common explanation of why young people are more prone to engage in unconventional or elite-challenging participation is because they are heavily influenced by successful popular movements, as mentioned by Youth Activist (5), *"And I think a lot of these people found their awareness during the 2011 occupation and this is all democracy, participation outside, reimagining new spaces, and all these are sorts of movements."* In this regard, the success of popular movements which strive for political or social change, such as the Arab Spring and Occupy Movement, often inspired other groups or organisation to reproduce quite similar protests. A protest, as argued by Minkoff (1997), can be considered a successful protest when it generates demonstration effects. In Malaysia, many believe that the success of the Anti-ISA movement became the stepping stone for other movements to continue calling for improving the system, as stated by Youth Activist (8), *"The success of the anti-ISA movement that struggled for so many years has driven us to organise an 'anti-AUKU' movement."* Generally, most of the successful protest movements have been primarily animated by young people because *"Young people are radical, brave and they like to go in that direction. To make a change, we need to do something to show to the government that we are mad at them"* (Youth Activist (7)). In a similar vein, Youth Activist (1) also commented that, *"The youth is idealistic. They are educated, good thinkers and exposed to a lot of reading. So, when they are provoked, they become resistant."* Therefore, the attitude and the character of young people themselves makes them fit easily into elite-challenging participation.

8.10   Youth and democracy

It is clear that in a semi-democratic country like Malaysia, the main purpose of political struggle is to ensure more extensive practices of democracy and greater political freedom. Therefore, when we asked the activists whether youth participation strengthens the democratisation process or if it simply legitimises the semi-democratic regime, all of them agreed that the participation of young people in politics make the process of democratisation in Malaysia grow even stronger. This can be reflected in the comments of Youth Activist (6), *"Like I said, the more youth participate in politics, the more demands, they can go beyond the boundaries, they can push for democracy."* Youth Activist (5) also added, *"...from Reformasi up until now, you can actually see many students have been caught. In that sense, if you are challenging democratic spaces and challenging the structure now, I think they always benefit democracy."* Notably, the *Reformasi* of 1998 saw a remarkable increase in youth participation in Malaysian politics, particularly after the dismissal of Anwar Ibrahim from the government, and young people continued to play a crucial role in determining the electoral outcome of the 2008 and 2013 general election—significantly producing a 'political tsunami' in Malaysia—fend off a two-thirds majority of the incumbent BN in parliament. Throughout this time, from 1998 up until the present, a series of protests have been staged and largely supported by young people, even though regime change still seems far off. Realising that young people are able to challenge the *status quo*, the government attempts to 'silence' activists whenever possible, as stated by Youth Activist (3), *"The government now is being more creative especially in dealing with young dissenters. For example, the government has abolished the ISA, but they replaced it with the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act or SOSMA."* In this sense, the government has manoeuvred so that people see them as less dictatorial.

Although agreeing with the statement that youth political participation in Malaysia has strengthened the democratisation process, two respondents point out that the process is quite difficult to achieve, and it will not happen aggressively, particularly when the people still have been denied their rights, as explained by Youth Activist (2), *"In Malaysia, it is difficult when you cannot get the same information, and receive unequal treatment in the media, and propaganda is only occurring on one side."* The mainstream media in the country are clearly biased in favour of the ruling government. The government's strong hold on the media has stifled the opposition's right to publish and reach the masses.

Therefore, many Malaysians began leaning towards the alternative media, mainly the internet. However, as argued by Youth Activist (2), *"The internet does not provide much political information as we expected. Although young people in rural areas use the internet, they don't read much as they have different levels of education, etc. So, the most effective tool is still the television."* This supports findings from Nuurrianti (2016) that a large number of Malaysians, mainly those who do not have access to the internet, still rely heavily on the mainstream media channels as their main source of information.

8.11   Youth activism and hopes for the future

Whilst previous qualitative chapters indicated that young people will be more politically active in the future, based on our responses, some activists (4 out of 10) are pessimistic that young people will increasingly disengage from politics and the decline may well continue in elite-directed participation. This can be seen in the response of Youth Activist (9), *"We have to admit that youth participation is gradually declining. The downward trend is not only happening to young people, but is also taking place inside the party".* Although agreeing with the sentiment, Youth Activist (3) expressed his concern about declining student participation on campus because *"We can see that the percentage of students who participate in campus politics is far less than 10 percent. This trend happened since 1974."* It is worth nothing that the voter turnout for campus elections in every local university in Malaysia is less than 50 percent, except for some universities which enforced a merit system—deducting students' marks for not voting (Junaidi *et al.,* 2015). Campus elections seem unappealing to large members of students as there is too much politicking and electoral misconduct—they are faulty and unfair. Also, the majority of students are still afraid to actively take part in campus elections, even though the government has amended the UUCA. Therefore, some effective strategies are needed to encourage more young people to persistently participate in politics as suggested by these activists.

First, 4 out of 10 activists believed that the political system is in need of a total overhaul in order to make young people get connected to the system. According to Youth Activist (5):

> *"I think we really need legal reforms because there are far more oppressive laws like the Sedition Act, the PAA, and the UUCA etc. All these laws very clearly abuse your fundamental human rights. These things should go."*

However, legal reform alone is not sufficient to encourage young people to participate. Evidently, we can see that even the UUCA has been amended by the government to allow students to engage in political activism, but there are still fewer students participating. Therefore, it is important to reform the educational and social system, mainly the family institution, since both systems facilitate social change, as argued by Youth Activist (1), *"The disengagement of young people in politics occurred due to the weakness of the family institution. Parents pay less attention and they do not give a clear understanding of the current issues to their children."* It is normally perceived that young people's political preferences are reflective of their family. So, the role played by the family may enhance positive attitudes about politics in young people. Apart from family, political parties also need to closely engage with young people through their popular grassroots programmes, small-scales activities, and direct communication, as depicted by Youth Activist (9), *"Although face-to-face meetings with the grassroots is regarded as conservative, this conservative method is considerably effective for this time."* Indirectly, political parties can help to shed light on people's political knowledge and current issues, even though it will threaten the survival of the party. Additionally, the activists (2 out 10) also suggested that the political party must develop more potential young leaders to represent the 'voice' of young people, as mentioned by Youth Activist (8), *"We must put forward many young leaders, whether they are from the ruling party or the opposition, like Khairy Jamaluddin, Rafizi, Datuk Saifuddin and so on."*

Furthermore, some (2 out of 10) activists recommended that young people need to be encouraged to create their own collective groups that actively help society through community programmes, as stated by Youth Activist (7), *"Many young people are not interested in politics, but they like to do community work."* Whilst they agreed with this statement, the remaining activists also argued that the use of pop culture probably make political activism seem more 'cool' and attractive to young people, as reflected in the comments of Youth Activist (10), *"I can see now that young people, we cannot go straight away to them and talk to them about political things and so on. We must use another way like using arts, movies, music and relate it to the current political situation."* Although agreeing that politics must be fun Youth Activist (2) argued that *"We should make it fun,*

but not too fun so that it lost its values." This means that politics should not just be about fun and entertainment, but that there are important aspects that need to be taken seriously by the politicians, particularly in terms of listening to the voices and demands of young people.

8.12   Conclusion

All in all, the analysis of the views of youth activists in contemporary Malaysia, showed firstly that most of the youth activists who were interviewed hold key resources such as being a highly educated person, coming from a predominantly middle-class background, being politically informed, and exhibiting strong political socialisations. Many received early political exposure from their family and educational institution, mainly university where the nature of the environments in which they grew up were surrounded by political and participatory norms. Such socialisation experiences, combined with the availability of the movement networks, eased and facilitated their route to activism, conforming the previous literature (Snow *et al.*, 1980; McAdam, 1988) that these two aspects are important to ensure a smooth transition into activism. Clearly, the majority of the activists started to actively participate in political activism at university, as student activists. Even though most of them have graduated, they still carry on their activism. To some extent, their motivations to political activism in Malaysia are significantly driven by instrumentality motives where activists have a strong belief that their participation could bring about change, as well as a sense of collective identity and strong attachment to specific groups and aided by the strong influence of social networking. In terms of their views on youth political participation, the findings from this group echo the results from the qualitative chapter on political elites, where there has been an overall decline in elite-directed political participation amongst young people, either in voting or party membership. The activists mostly argued that the 'culture of fear' due to the government's oppressive laws such as the UUCA, the Sedition Act and SOSMA stifle political rights— and disengagement from political parties makes young people opt out of conventional politics. Instead of being disengaged, young people are believed to have shifted to 'elite-challenging' political participation, mainly online activism, social movements, and protest activism, as well as a new way of entertaining politics, which is the politics of popular culture like arts, music and satire. In this regard, a growing discontent and lack of trust in the system, the culture of non-partisanship and the influence of many successful

movements are factors that explain why young people tend to participate in this repertoire. In the next chapter, we aim to understand how and why some young people show indifference to politics.

CHAPTER 9

BEING A YOUTH NON-PARTICIPANT IN MALAYSIA: YOUNG PEOPLE EXPLAIN WHY THEY DO NOT ENGAGE

9.1   Introduction

We have just analysed interviews with young Malaysians who actively participate in varied forms of political activity on a regular basis. However, many other youths do not. They have always been characterised as an 'apathetic' and 'apolitical' generation since they lack interest, knowledge, and participation in politics (Wilkinson and Mulgan, 1995; Park, 2000). Some argue that politicians' failure to respond to and address young people's voices and concerns because they are too selfish in pursing their own agenda is one of the recurrent factors that turned young people off politics (Richardson, 1990; O'Toole *et al.,* 2003; Sloam, 2013). Others relate youth disengagement to the effects of life-cycle (e.g Verba and Nie, 1972; Norris, 2003; Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980) and generation (e.g Giugni, 2007; Grasso, 2014). In this context, this chapter analyses how young non-participants in Malaysia who were not registered as voters or attached to any political parties or organisations think of politics, their potential participation and what drives them to be politically disengaged.

9.2   An apathetic generation?

As mentioned in the methodology (Chapter 3), the selection of youth non-participants was based on the criteria that they should be non-registered young voters that were also not members of political parties. The sample was accessed through a snowball or chain sampling method. Although a small number of non-participants were interviewed they covered the major sociodemographic characteristics reflecting the population, including

gender, social class, and ethnic background.[59] The first theme covered in the interviews with young non-participants was their demographic profile. In terms of age, many of the young non-participants interviewed were in their late twenties and early thirties. Therefore, we can expect that many of these respondents generally had a relatively stable career and life. Their backgrounds also conformed to the expected patterns of the activists, which means some of them are being highly educated and coming from a middle-class family. Non-participant (3), for example, mentioned that her salary was just enough to meet the high cost of living, while several other respondents stated that they lived 'a comfortable lifestyle' (Non-participant 1). Once again, most of these young non-participants had graduated from well-known local universities in Malaysia, with a large number having studied social sciences, and a minority studying natural sciences. Given that the majority of this group were university graduates, it is not surprising that many of them had settled in urban areas and were working full-time either in the private or government sectors. If they possessed a number of necessary resources such as education and paid work, why were they politically disengaged?

The process by which young people take shape and develop an interest in politics depends on various life circumstances. It can happen when individuals become a member of society and take on knowledge, values, and attitudes (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) that were transmitted from one generation to another through various agents of socialisation. This is known as a broad process of political socialisation—a lifelong process where an individual obtains political attitudes and beliefs (Langton, 1969). In some cases, a politically active family may stimulate young people's interest in politics. However, out of ten youths interviewed, eight of them said that they had never discussed politics at home, with the family, as commented by Non-participant (2), *"I came from a non-political family, and we do not like to discuss about politics at home."* While the remainder (2 out of 10) claimed that their families are political and there is a member in the family who gets involved actively in political activities. This can be reflected in the comments from Non-participant (1), *"I grew up in a political family where my parents were active members of a political party. But I have no interest in politics."* Although they have grown up in a politicised family environment and were taught from a very young age to be politically informed

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[59]Amongst ten youth non-participants interviewed, half of them were males and another half were females. In term of social classes, four out of ten respondents came from the lower-class group, while the rest were from the middle-class group. There were also different ethnic groups in this sample, with the Malays as majority (8 out of 10) and another two respondents were Chinese and Indian.

through political discussions at home, this does not necessarily help in fostering their interest in politics. This is parallel with the findings by Jennings and Niemi (1968) and Dinas (2014) that there is a relatively low correlation between the political orientations of parents and children.

When we analysed the political exposure of youth activists, although a few of them came from an apolitical family background, their educational institution, particularly university, activated their interest in politics. However, for youth non-participants, none of them mentioned the role of educational institutions or a particular course in inspiring their political interest whilst majority of them have a higher educational background. According to Non-participant (7), *"I have a very little knowledge about politics because neither school nor university has stimulated my political interest or given information about politics."* The involvement of students in campus politics may provide greater exposure to political activism, which affects them becoming a politically literate citizen (Mohd Fuad *et al.,* 2009). However, it is apparently shown that young Malaysians are still quite behind in political literacy since formal political education and educational institutions failed to cultivate their general interest and understanding of politics. Unlike youth activists, most of the non-youth participants stated that they had never joined any student movements or organisations when at the university. Only a few of them (2 out of 10) said they were representatives for the student council, but they had no supportive contact or networks to help entry to the activist community. In this regard, another reason why youth non-participants were politically inactive was because they had no networks or personal contact to find a route into activism.

Therefore, overall, we could see that the absence of political socialisation experiences and mainly the influences of socialisation agents such as family and education, to stimulate political interest and civic knowledge amongst most of the youth non-participants could be one of the reasons for their disengagement. In contrast to youth activists, young non-participants had typically grown up in families and environments in which political participation is regarded as insignificant, discouraging them from developing their own interest to take part in political activities. As social movements and protest activism in Malaysia are commonly associated with student activists, the lack of involvement of youth non-participants in student movements and activities in university

results from the absence of personal contacts or social networks which can help to gain access to the activist community.

9.3   Political interest

As political socialisation is one of the driving factors of young people's political interest and attitude, and given that such socialisation experiences are absent amongst these respondents, we can assume that most of the youth non-participants have relatively low levels of political interest. Indeed, when we asked the respondents directly about their interest in politics, most of them (7 out of 10) apparently showed a very low interest in politics since they perceived politics as something boring, irrelevant, and monotonous, as mentioned by Non-participant (5), *"For me, politics is something complicated and difficult to understand."* Non-participant (1) also thought similarly, saying that, *"I have no interest in politics because politics is very complicated and there is too much manipulation from political parties. For me, politics is an arena for those who have greater power and influence."* Since politics is regarded as a complex and serious matter, only a certain group of people who possess power and influence are usually involved in politics. In addition, there was a common perception that young people's lack of political interest was due to politicians' misuse of powers, selfishness, and untrustworthiness. This can be reflected in the comments of Non-participant (2) *"I do not have any interest in politics because politics has always been in an unfair situation where those in powers remain rich, while the normal people continue to be poor."* In a similar vein, Non-participant (3) also pointed out, *"Honestly, I do not have any interest in politics because I saw that many government policies and efforts only benefited and served the interests of the government itself, rather than the people."* Therefore, we could sum up that youth non-participants display lower levels of political interest because they tend to associate politics with political players, resulting to a greater cynicism towards politicians and institutions. This supports findings from the literature (Henn *et al.,* 2005; O'Toole *et al.,* 2003; Mardle and Taylor, 1987) that young people in the UK are highly pessimistic about political leaders and parties.

Furthermore, the decline of political interest amongst young people also relates to their limited understanding and knowledge about politics, as indicated by Non-participant (8), *"The reason why I do not have any interest in politics is because I do not understand what politics is really about."* The difficulties in trying to grasp such a 'complicated'

politics makes many young people decide to be 'silent readers' or 'observers' in politics. As mentioned earlier, whilst most of these respondents were highly educated citizens, they admit that they know less about politics. Again, this resonates with the findings of Henn and Foard (2014) on young people in Britain. For the remaining respondents (3 out 10), although they displayed strong interest in politics, they were only interested in mature and intellectual politics, as commented by Non-participant (6), *"I am interested in politics because this is the best contribution that we can make to our country. But I do not like hanky-panky or dirty politics."* Additionally, the current political and economic conditions of this country also indirectly reinforced the interest in politics of young people, as argued by Non-participant (9), *"I was not interested in politics before, but now I feel that I need to be politically aware and concerned about politics because of the impacts of political and economic instability in this country."* However, even some have a high level of political interest, but this does not guarantee they will engage actively in political activities because their engagement depends largely on the country's current political and socioeconomic conditions. It would seem, therefore, youth political disengagement in Malaysia is attributed to low levels of political interest.

9.4   Understandings of politics

Based upon the responses given by the respondents on how they understood politics, four broad conceptualisations of politics can be identified. First, 4 out of 10 youth non-participants associate politics with power struggle and influence, as stated by Non-participant (9), *"For me, politics is about power and influence. When we have influence, only then we can have the power to make whatever we think necessary."* In this sense, power is important for leadership because it gives the leader an ability to influence or control the people. But sometimes, power can be misused, unjust and abused by the leader. Therefore, for Non-participant (2), she believed that, *"Politics is a great gamble for those who want power and money."* Second, 2 out of 10 respondents viewed politics as being connected to the government and administration. This can be reflected in the comment by Non-participant (6) that, *"Politics is definitely about the government who takes the lead and is in charge of the government. And of course, there is the opposition and the current governing party and administration."* In a similar vein, Non-participant (10) also pointed out that, *"Politics is about the government and it is an arena for people who want to show their leadership."* It could be seen, therefore, that these young non-participants have a

narrow conception of politics in which they framed politics as 'political players', mirroring the findings by Bhavnani (1994) that people, including the youth, relate politics with British party politics.

In addition, some respondents (2 out of 10) were incapable of expanding their views on politics due to lack of knowledge. They claimed that the word 'politics' itself is vague and complicated to understand, as stated by Non-participant (3), *"Honestly, I do not understand and know much about politics"*, and Non-participant (8), *"I know nothing about politics"*. Others (2 out of 10) viewed politics negatively, related particularly to corruption and self-interest, as significantly emphasised by Non-participant (1), *"Politics is about individuals who struggle for the community, and even for their personal interests"*. Non-participant (7) also responded negatively to this issue by saying, *"Politics is strongly related to corruption and money politics. We can never run away from this practice."* The perception that corruption and money politics are part of political practice in Malaysia appears to be widespread amongst young people in Malaysia, particularly when Najib's premiership was accused of corruption.[60] Overall, it could be seen that youth non-participants generally embraced an overly limited understanding of politics, conforming to the picture that is entirely consistent with the patterns of youth disengagement in established democracies (Henn *et al.,* 2002; Henn and Foard, 2014; Quintelier, 2007). They often relate politics with political actors who try to win power and fulfil their own self-interest, rather than concerns about societal needs. This in turn makes them feel 'politics' is far off from their daily lives. Indeed, an overly limited understanding of politics amongst young Malaysians may be one reason for their lack of interest and motivation to participate in politics.

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[60] On July 2015, *the Wall Street Journal (WSJ)* and the *Sarawak Report* alleged that almost RM 2.6 billion from the fund of 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB), a state-owned investment company, had been channelled into Najib's personal bank account. However, Najib, who was also the chairman of the 1MDB advisory board, denied the allegations by claiming that the money was given by the Saudi royal family as a donation, to help UMNO win the 2013 election (Yang Razali, 2015). In reactions to this, the former prime minister, Mahathir condemned Najib's mismanagement of 1MDB and strongly urged Najib to resign. To counter this criticism, Najib accused Mahathir of a 'continuation of political sabotage' to topple him. Meanwhile, the Deputy Prime Minister, Muhyiddin Yassin, publicly rebuked Najib for his involvement in 1MDB scandal and continued to call for transparency and accountability in managing this issue. The political rift between Najib and his most likely successor, Muhyiddin, was clearly apparent when on July 28, 2015, he sacked Muhyiddin in a cabinet reshuffle, and appointed Zahid Hamidi as his deputy to replace Muhyiddin. Indeed, this move was seen as Najib's attempt to prolong his political position by obviating 'pressures' to oust him inside the government (Saleena and Mohamed Nawab *et al.*, 2016).

9.5   Attitudes towards 'elite-directed' political participation

9.5.1   Why don't young people register as voters?

Evidently, although the number of new voters has increased by 354,141 in the second quarter of 2016, there are 4.2 million Malaysians remaining, largely young people, who are eligible voters but have yet to register (Shahanaaz Habib, 2016). Whilst voting is not the only way to influence political decisions, the ballot box remains the most common way for young people to get engaged with the political system. As a majority of youth non-participants do not cast their votes and are not registered as voters, when we asked whether voting is important in this country, most of them (8 out of 10) have an optimistic view that voting is really important to elect representatives who will lead the country, as explained by Non-participant (4), *"As a Malaysian citizen, it is important to vote in elections because indirectly we can determine who will govern our country."* Through elections, voters have the ability to decide who represents them at national and local governments and voting itself reflects *"the practice of Malaysian democracy"* (Non-participant 6).[61]

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[61]It is worth noting that the outcomes of elections in Malaysia are somewhat predictable because for the last few decades, the country's longstanding ruling coalition the BN, won every national election since the first held in 1955. However, the last two elections (the 2008 and 2013 general elections) were the hardest battled and the least predictable compared to previous polls as the BN had a very narrow victory. For example, in the 2013 general election, the BN performed badly by securing only 133 out of 222 parliamentary seats (60 percent of the total seats, a loss of 7 seats from the 2008 election), with 47 percent of popular votes (Weiss, 2013:1136). Whilst BN's vote dropped significantly for the first time, they managed to reclaim Kedah from the opposition. In terms of state elections, BN won 275 out of 505 state legislative assembly seats contested (54.5 percent), declined marginally compared to the 306 seats it had obtained in the 2008 election. Within BN, UMNO performed better by winning 88 parliamentary seats, fairly in the rural-Malay heartland constituencies—typically characterised as less educated, less informed, digitally disconnected and less acquiescent to change. BN secured a national victory only because of its strong support in Sabah and Sarawak (Gomez and Surinder Kaur, 2014:12), mostly held by local parties such as United Traditional Bumiputera Party (PBB), United Sabah Party (PBS) and Sarawak People's Party (PRS). However, all Chinese-based BN parties suffered a major setback as the Chinese swung their votes to PR. Notably, BN also lost huge swathes of support from the youth and multi-ethnic urban middle classes who dissented against corruption, weak governance, ethnic discrimination, and lack of transparency (Weiss, 2013; Khoo Boo Teik, 2013). The 13th election result was not due to the 'tsunami' of the Chinese as what Najib had claimed "a wave of Chinese support has washed away from BN" but it was truly the 'tsunami of the Urban'.

    On the other hand, the PR coalition led by Anwar Ibrahim did extremely well in this election as they once again managed to deny a two-thirds majority for BN in the parliament, increased their share by seven new parliamentary seats from 82 that it had won in 2008, and successfully bolstering majority popular votes from 46.4 percent in 2008, to 50.8 percent in this election and enlarged its state legislative assembly seats from 190 to 229. Whilst PR had a majority popular vote due to the 'first-past-the-post' system that had been adopted by Malaysia, they failed to take the federal power. However, PR retained its power in urban industrialised states like Selangor and Penang, and made significant headway into BN's stronghold of Johor, Sabah and Sarawak, while at the same time continuing its rule in Kelantan (Gomez and Surinder Kaur, 2014:12). This showed that PR's base support came from the urban settlement with large young and urban-middle class voters, pointing out the importance of cross cutting issues such as economic burden, good

Although most respondents are in agreement that voting is important, half of them (5 out of 10) believed that their vote could not make a big difference in Malaysia, as argued by Non-participant (9), *"Honestly, if I voted in the last election, it would not make any change."* Non-participant (5) also reacted negatively by commenting that, *"Vote or not, it does not bring any changes to the country because we already knew who will win the election."* In this respect, youth non-participants have a weak sense of personal efficacy where they are doubtful that their votes will have any meaningful effects on elections and political changes. This conforms to the previous literature (Almond and Verba, 1963; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Norris, 2002) that the low levels of political efficacy leads people to be politically disengaged.

Furthermore, 4 out of 10 respondents attributed this to lack of awareness about the importance of the electoral process and voting registration. This can be reflected in the comments of Non-participant (4), *"One factor that caused me not to register as voters is because I was not aware and alert about the voting system and I think that it is better to wait till the last minute to register as a voter."* Non-participant (1) in a similar vein also stated that, *"I do not have an awareness and feel no interest to register since voting is not compulsory in Malaysia."* Voting is a basic democratic right, but when it is not made compulsory, citizens have the right to choose whether to vote or not vote. This supports the argument by Wan Ahmad (2010) that Malaysian youths are not taking on the role of a registered voter because they feel that voting is unimportant, and they are not aware of the benefits of voting.

In addition, out of ten youths interviewed, three felt unmotivated to register as voters because the voting system in Malaysia is too complicated and outdated, as argued by Non-participant (5):

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governance, political empowerment, and inequality across the population—these were clearly spelled by PR in its election campaign. Meanwhile, the Chinese support for PR also flourished tremendously. It is obvious that the PR excessive controlled of social media coverage during election was one of the factors that contributed to the ability of PR to win majority popular supports (Mohd Azizuddin, 2014:136). Interestingly, the 2013 election highlighted some significant points: First, race or ethnicity remained the crucial factor in determining Malaysian voting pattern, but it seems to have been superseded by the urban-divide and class-divide. Second, the election outcome firmly showed that Malaysia was in a transition to the two-party system, making the election more competitive and tense.

> *"As I remembered, there were officers from the Election Comission of Malaysia (SPR) came and helped my brother to fill in the voter's registration form. But now, no one come to help me. For me, the whole process is complicated."*

They claimed that the counter-based registration model used by the electoral commission is outdated and everything must be done offline.[62] In this regard, those who are eligible to vote must register with the electoral commission via specific offices and post offices or they can register through the political parties. However, the electoral commission has been dogged by criticism due to persistent inaccuracies of large numbers of missing voters and phantom voters from the electoral rolls (Lim Hong Hai, 2002). Therefore, the flaws in the voter registration system are one of the major factors that makes many young people lose their confidence in the system, as mentioned by Non-participant (6), *"I think sometimes I feel doubt about the voting system as it is not clearly transparent. When the system is not transparent, there is not much change we can make through the election."* This means that voting can bring change to the system if the government ensures transparency of the voting process, as depicted by Non-participant (3), *"We can make a big change through voting. But it depends on the transparency and integrity of the electoral system and the vote itself. The more transparent the system, the more changes we can make."* In the Malaysian context, however, fraud and malpractice are pervasive in elections through the practice of gerrymandering, issues of phantom voters, the problem of indelible ink (in which it can be easily washed off), an uneven playing field in the media, and intimidation at the ballot box. The electoral commission (SPR) is also faced severe criticism for its lack of impartiality and widespread inefficiencies, which worked in favour of the incumbent government.

The rest (2 out of 10) admitted that they are still not ready to register as voters because of personal restrictions such as employment, housing, starting a family, etc. This is reflected in the comments of Non-participant (7), *"I know how to register as a voter, but I do not have enough time to do so",* and Non-participant (8), *"I think I am not ready to vote because I was too concerned about finding a job after graduating."* This supports the hypothesis of the life-cycle theory (Verba and Nie, 1972; Norris, 2003; Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980; Van Deth, 1990) that young people are focusing more on building social status and they will turn to politics when those issues are resolved.

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[62]Additionally, the constitution (Article 113) provides that the important functions of Electoral Commission as conducting the elections, delineating electoral constituencies, and preparing for electoral rolls, including the registration of newly qualified voters are the responsibility of the electoral commission.

9.5.2 Why don't young people join political parties?

Partisanship is one of the most important modes of institutionalised political participation in a modern democracy. However, based on the previous qualitative analyses from the academics, politicians, and youth activists, they agreed that young people in Malaysia are less likely to be a member of any political party and organisation. So, when we asked youth non-participants why they do not join political parties, some (4 out of 10) argued that they have no alternative because political parties are not convincing enough to bring a better political transformation to Malaysia and they are currently facing different degrees of internal conflict. An example of this point of view is given by Non-participant (5), *"For me, political parties, whether the government or the opposition, were just the same. Both are not convincing enough to provide a better future for this country. I don't think these parties are sincere in helping the people, but they are more concerned about their own interests"*. Non-participant (8) also pointed out, *"Actually, I think that I have no alternative because the ruling party and the opposition are corrupted and have their own problems"*. Young people's frustration with political parties, be it the government or the opposition, makes them have a critical attitude which in turn makes them less desire to be a member of any party. This corresponds with earlier findings (Chapters 6 and 7) that young people are more likely to be 'fence-sitters' or not affiliated with any parties because most parties in Malaysia were not seen as 'credible' and convincing enough to bring about change to the country.

Additionally, 2 out of 10 respondents attributed their non-partisan attitude to the complex structure and function of political parties, conforming earlier findings (Chapters 6 and 7) that the hierarchical structure of political parties was a main barrier that prevented young people from participating. As noted by Non-participant (1):

> *"Most political parties in this country have difficulties to accept new reforms because they are based more on seniority and experiences. So, for young people, it is difficult to engage with them as our ideas will simply be rejected. And, the process of becoming a politician also very complicated and takes a long time."*

Non-participant (7), in a similar vein also commented that**,** *"Whatever ideas or views from young people have not been heard by the parties,"* For example, UMNO is clearly seen as a bureaucratic party where succession is based on the culture of seniority rather than merit.

As a result, it is difficult for young politicians to show their talent and stand out in a party. In particular, some parties also have a complex registration system where members need to go through several grassroots levels like state, branch, and division. According to Non-participant (6), *"I tried to join this party, but unfortunately, I received no feedback from them."* Therefore, the tendency to be rejected as the prospective members is quite high compared to a party with an open registration system. Others (2 out of 10) believed that the behaviour of politicians who are unable to keep their promises makes young people less interested to join political parties, as stated by Non-participant (3), *"I think, one of the reasons is the leaders themselves. Before the election, they make vast promises, but after being elected, they break their promises."* When the leaders fail to play their roles, and bring no changes to the society, this means that citizens' participation in politics are *"less meaningful and effective"* (Non-participant 7). The remaining (2 out of 10) argued that their limited understanding of the concept of partisanship is a main factor that makes them less attracted to be a member of political parties. This is reflected in the comments by Non-participant (8), *"I don't understand anything about political parties and partisanship. So, it is hard for me to decide which party I like the most."* Non-participant (9) is also in agreement with this view by responding that, *"I do not understand, and I am, somehow less interested in partisan politics."* In this context, limited knowledge and understanding on partisanship is a result of little or no connection between political parties and young people. They are not providing young people with profound information about parties' programmes and policies.

Most political elite members (see Chapter 7) had claimed that they have adequately engaged with young people, but when we asked these youth non-participants, only 2 out of 10 were optimistic that political parties have communicated with them, as noted by Non-participant (1), *"The parties are trying to communicate with us, but only on specific times and occasions such as during the election."* Political parties often meet face-to-face with people during elections for campaigning and to woo people's vote. For the rest (4 out of 10), they believed that only some politicians are actively trying to bridge the gap with young people by engaging with them, as stated by Non-participant (10), *"I think only some of the politicians have been doing this, for example, Khairy Jamaluddin. He would be the finest example for youngsters and even now, he is doing so much engagement with the youngsters."* Whilst they agreed with this statement, the remaining youth non-participants also argued that there are some MPs who only send their officers to meet with the people

at the grassroots, as reflected in the comments of Non-participant (6), *"There are certain MPs who will visit and meet the people in their constituencies. But there are many MPs who are just sending the officers and these officers can do nothing."* It was also consistently claimed that politicians are remote and inaccessible since they sometimes do not understand the needs of young people and are aware of the real problems of society, as argued by Non-participant (5), *"We can see in the media that sometimes politicians have confused young people with their illogical issues, without facts and figures. I don't think politicians went to the ground to clearly see what happened to the people."* The failure of political leadership to have much deeper engagement with young people has resulted in increases of irrelevance and youth-unfriendly policies and programs.

Overall, apart from the complex structure of political parties, there was also a negative and critical perception amongst youth non-participants of political parties. The general consensus was that political parties were unresponsive to young people's demands, disengaged from young people and attempted to communicate only during election time for the sake to win votes from the youth. This once again reflects the findings of Henn and Foard (2014) on young people in Britain. Whilst party activism is generally low and perceived to be the less desirable mode of political participation in Malaysia, a majority (6 out of 10) believed that this channel is the most efficient way to influence political decision directly compared to voting. This can be reflected in the comments of Non-participant (4)*, "I think if I register as a voter and voted in the election, the impact is not as big as directly participate in a political party. When we join the party, it might affect the government's decisions."* Non-participant (5) also added, *"When we are inside the political party, indirectly we can contribute opinions or voices, but it depends on the top leadership to hear or not."* In the context of Malaysia, although we have many platforms that enable us to politically engage, but becoming a member of a political party is often selected by many people since the party is the primary path for future politicians.

9.5.3   What makes young people 'turn off' politics?

There are several factors underlying why they are disengaged from politics in general as emphasised by youth non-participants. First, the most significant explanation of youth political disengagement is related to the feeling of 'fear' amongst young people due to the government crackdowns on the dissents. All (10 out 10) believed that they cannot

participate freely in politics in Malaysia as they have very limited political rights and freedoms, as argued by Non-participant (5), *"I think we are not completely free to participate in politics because there are still barriers that restrict our freedom. For example, students are not free to engage in political activities since the AUKU law has restricted their political rights."* The repressive laws such as the AUKU, Sedition Act, SOSMA etc., appear to have effectively blocked the opportunity for young people to politically engage in both conventional and unconventional politics. In this regard, young people face obstacles to fully exercise their democratic rights because they are undermined by the government's draconian laws, as depicted by Non-participant (6), *"As a government servant, I cannot actively participate in politics."* Non-participant (7), in a similar vein, also commented, *"I think the violent repression used by the government on dissidents have scared not only me, but young people as whole, from getting involved in politics."* This corresponds to the views of youth activists that the 'culture of fear' amongst young people, makes them too intimidated to participate in politics. According to Non-participant (4), *"Political freedom is limited and there is a double-standard where some group is given the freedom to engage in politics, but those who are against the authority will usually encounter excessive restrictions from the government."* The respondents viewed that many laws and policies as biased and have a double-standard against groups who have strongly opposed the government. In turn, Malaysia's democracy is in a worse shape or a *"democracy on paper only"* (Non-participant 1). The increasing repressive measures taken by the regime to criminalize democratic dissent in Malaysia has clearly constrained them from actively engaging in politics more generally as the costs to participate are greater than the benefits (Hibbs, 1973; Muller, 1985; Davenport, 2007).

Second, 4 out of 10 youth non-participants admitted that politics seems so complicated that they cannot really understand what is going on, as pointed out by Non-participant (7), *"Personally, I am not interested to participate in political activities because politics and the government are too complex terms to understand."* In this regard, there is a perception that politics is a complex subject which young people find hard to grasp and understand. Clearly, young Malaysians have a very limited knowledge and understanding of politics since they are less exposed to political education. This confirms previous literature (Pattie, Seyd and Whiteley, 2004; Henn and Foard, 2014; Quintelier, 2007) that young people have lower levels of political knowledge relative to their older counterparts. To some extent, they also acknowledged that political education is important

to increase knowledge and interest in politics. An example of this point of view is given by Non-participant (1), *"Political education is essential. We do not need a subject in a curriculum, but we need political exposure in general."* Young people also shared a general perception that politics is a dirty business as the politicians keep thinking about winning and maintaining power rather than working together to provide better services to the people, as argued by Non-participant (6), *"Sometimes, people get involved in politics for the sake of money because some parties are willing to give money to get support. This is a normal practice in Malaysia now."* For example, Najib inaugurated a direct cash handout program, referred as Bantuan Rakyat 1Malaysia (BRIM, or 1Malaysia Peoples Aid) in 2012, ostensibly to help low-income households cope with the rising cost of living, while at the same time prompting to woo votes for BN.[63] The government is still giving out BR1M, despite it being greatly criticised by Mahathir as BN's political ploy or a form of vote buying.

In addition, youth disengagement stems from the perception that politics does not bring about political change. Some (3 out of 10) felt that their engagement in politics does not make any difference, as mentioned by Non-participant (4), *"I felt that we are unable to bring any change through our political participation. So, we have to accept whatever is being done by the government."* Interestingly, some youth believed that government is unresponsive to their needs and voices. Therefore, they feel marginalised and distrust the government's ability to make meaningful decisions for them, as commented by Non-participant (8), *"I think that many young Malaysians are upset that their voices and views are often ignored by the policy makers and the government. When our voices are unheard, it is better to stay away from politics."* This means that there is no point exercising democratic rights because young people are being politically neglected by the government. In this respect, young Malaysians are perceived to have a lack of political efficacy, whether internal or external as they feel unable to act effectively in politics and the decision-makers are unresponsive to their demands. This may explain their disengagement from conventional politics as political efficacy has been said to have greater effect on

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[63] The ulterior motive of BR1M is to create new patron-client relationships with the electorate, especially in rural areas, to retain BN's hegemony. Notably, the BR1M program was extremely expensive as the government had to spend almost RM14 billion that reached 7.4 million recipients every year (Haikal Jalil, November 2, 2015, The Sun Daily).

political participation (Norris, 2002; O'Toole *et al*, 2003). Apart from political exclusion, 3 out of 10 respondents attributed their disengagement mainly to life-cycle effects—young people are struggling for 'start-up' problems such as they do not have a stable job, house and family, as indicated by Non-participant (2), *"I don't have time to think about politics because I am more concerned about my career and future planning."* Non-participant (9) also pointed out that, *"I am not involved and am indifferent to politics as I am too busy building up a career and family. I was educated to build career first before politics."* This confirms findings of the literature (Barnes *et al.,* 1979; Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2009; Garcia Albacete, 2012) that the transition to adulthood or life-cycle effects may explain why young people are less likely to engage in politics than older cohorts.

9.6   Attitude towards 'elite-challenging' political participation

In the quantitative analyses, the results show that there is no significant difference between young and old people in elite-challenging activism. However, in the qualitative analyses, most viewed that 'elite-challenging' forms of participation, particularly online activism and protest activities may be replacing the conventional participation as new ways to influence political decisions for young Malaysians. When being asked about their political activities, most of them do not refrain from engaging in political activities even if they are politically uninterested. However, most of the youth non-participants stated that they commonly participated in these three forms of participation or low-risks participation:

1) Political discussion

According to Kim *et al.,* (1999:362), political discussion can be defined as, "all kinds of political talk, discussion, or argument as long as they are voluntarily carried out by free citizens without any specific purpose or predetermined agenda." In this regard, political discussion could be considered as conversation or talk about any topics relevant to 'politics'. It appears that 9 out of 10 respondents agreed that the most prevalent form of political activity that has been frequently engaged by them is political discussions with friends and family. This is reflected in the comments by Non-participant (6), *"I think political activity that I like the most and I usually do is gather together with friends to discuss political issues."* Non-participant (9), in a similar vein also pointed out that, *"I use social media less. But, political issues are extensively discussed with my friends."* Based

on the Youth Index 2015[64], discussions on political issues amongst youth was the highest indicator in the domain of political socialisation with a score of 48.29. Political discussion may likely stimulate the interest of young people to participate in political activity because it generates greater political knowledge and self-efficacy (Valentino and Sears, 1998; Hoffman *et al.,* 2007). However, in the case of Malaysia, though young Malaysians are more interested to get involve in informal political discussion, they are not really interested in politics and what more to exercise their right as citizens, including casting a ballot in elections.

2) Online activism

As expected, a majority (8 out of 10) indicated that they have engaged online and used online activism for political purposes, as mentioned by Non-participant (4), *"I used social media to explore political issues and information, and to find out what is happening in this country."* Non-participant (2) is also in agreement with this view by responding that, *"I only access the online media to be aware about what had happened and read trending political news."* In this regard, online media has become increasingly important amongst the Malaysian youth for information seeking or 'information-based' activity, including searching for political information, rather than 'participation-based' activity such as posting political contents, friending politicians, or participating in online debates (Jensen, 2013). This confirms the findings of Freeman (2013) that young Malaysians prefer online news instead of traditional news media. The primary source of political news for young people in Malaysia is online. Online activism creates more engagement opportunities and lowers participation costs since the information is updated, available at any moment and free from government censorship. Therefore, the internet has been a 'playing field' that has reduced the tendency for young people to engage in traditional forms of political involvement.[65] Notwithstanding, the former prime minister Abdullah Badawi also

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[64]The Malaysia Youth Index provides data on youth well-being in Malaysia, and is specifically used by the government to establish youth development programmes.

[65]It is worth mentioning that the internet, primarily social media such as *Facebook, Twitter* and *Youtube* were an important factor that contributed to the increase in support to the opposition in the 2008 and 2013 general elections. This media was strong enough to influence young people to vote for the opposition parties as the number of internet users, most of whom were young people, increased dramatically from 2.7 million in 2000 to 14 million in 2008. This means, within eight years, the growth rate of internet users rose sharply bhy 302.8 percent (Koh, 2008:25). Up to 2012, the total number of internet users in Malaysia was 17.7 million, representing 60.7 percent of the whole country's population (Mohd Azizuddin, 2014).

acknowledged that the failure of the ruling BN in the online war made them lose the youth vote in the 2008 election. As he argued, "*We thought that the newspapers, the print media, the television were important but young people were looking at text messages and blogs. (The influence of alternative media) was painful.*" (New Straits Times, 26 Mac 2008:2). Similarly, the 2013 general election also proved that the social media war was won by the opposition. This is perhaps due to the domination of social media by the opposition, so the failure of BN to handle negative perceptions caused them to lose the popular vote.

3) Community works or volunteerism

Volunteering activities in Malaysia, although generally low, have started to increase. Evidently, a recent study conducted by Turiman *et al.,* (2011) showed that about 74.6 percent of the sample of 5,019 youths indicated that they have been involved in volunteering activities including community services, sport, education, and culture. However, out of ten youths interviewed, only half claimed to have engaged in community works or volunteerism, as commented by Non-participant (10), "*I have volunteered myself to one political person to facilitate his program and it is like a roadshow and we have done so many things. But then, why I am engaged is because it is beneficial for the community.*" In this sense, the main factor that motivates youth to participate in volunteerism is simply because they want to help or to assist others in need. But, many Malaysian youths are more likely to join a loosely-structured organisation or move independently in volunteerism, rather than joining formal youth organisations. This can be reflected in the comments by Non-participant (8), "*I have been involved in volunteering activities to help those worst affected by the floods, but not attached to any particular organisation.*" This in line with the findings of the Ministry of Youth and Sports that out of 8,000 youth organisations registered under the registrar's office, only 30 percent are considered active with an overall membership of around 2.8 million youths (Utusan Malaysia, January 13, 2005).

When talking about political protest in Malaysia, none of the respondents have ever participated in a demonstration or protest. However, half of them (5 out of 10) believed that it is important to protest when disagreeing with something or feeling discontent with the government. According to Non-participant (4), "*For me, demonstration is a way to*

express our dissatisfaction on certain issues. We can demonstrate as long as it is organised in a proper way and not disturbing public order." Non-participant (8) is also in agreement with this view by responding that, *"Protest is important to make our voices heard and to ensure the government actually pay attention to us."* Although many young Malaysians feel grievances, anger and discontentment about the government and political system, these emotions are not strong enough to motivate them to participate in protests. Perhaps young people have a shared belief that protesting is a risky activity that makes them fearful about the personal consequences of protest. This is because the government continues to use excessive force and detention towards protesters, and protest has long been constructed by the government as something that is "…not an accepted culture in our country" (Najib, 2016). As protest is considered against the culture, therefore "*...it is not effective in bringing about changes or influencing political decisions because the veto of power lies in the hands of the government"* (Non-participant 2). In particular, protest remains governed by unclear legal norms in Malaysia and sometimes is deemed illegal by refusing organisers permission to take to the street. As argued by Tarrow (1998), contentious politics and revolutionary activities may be higher in the countries where participation channels are blocked by political restraints such as repression, but this does not apply in the case of Malaysia.

9.6.1   What drives young people to become involved in elite-challenging political participation?

There is no doubt that young Malaysians are channelling their participation in different modes of elite-challenging activism, mainly low-risk forms of participation such as political discussion, online activism, and volunteerism or civic engagement. When being asked whether these political activities are part of democracy, most of them (8 out of 10) agreed that these are other proper ways that can be used by citizens to influence political decisions and they are part of democracy, as stated by Non-participant (1), *"Informal political participation, yet still democratic actions."* This opinion is also extended similarly by Non-participant (4) in her comment, *"Indirectly, some people have their own opinion and want to express it to the higher authority through different popular and democratic means that are commonly popular today."* However, Non-participant (3) opposed this argument by saying that, *"I think it depends on the government to decide whether these political actions are democratic or not since democracy is subjective and*

the government has full autonomy in this country." It is the political elite's role to decide whether or not these modes of political participation are democratic and what they think is best for every people.

Overall, youth non-participants varied widely in term of their motivations to participate in elite-challenging activism. Most of them (6 out of 10) argued that this mode of political participation is fun and more relaxed compared to the formal ones because it allows them to share political thoughts and views without any misunderstanding and conflicts. This can be seen in the comments by Non-participant (4), *"Activities like political discussion and online activism are stress-free where we can express different political opinions respectively, without any misunderstanding."* Similarly, Non-participant (5) also commented that:

> *"I feel very comfortable to discuss political issues with my friends, especially with those who have the same point of view as I do, instead of discussing politics in a formal channel. Besides, I am afraid if we disagree with something, it may create misunderstanding since politics is a very sensitive issue."*

To be specific, young people are more contented to speak about politics with their 'intimate circle' such as friends and family instead of the public. The fear of harming or offending others, personal disapproval and punishment proved to be the reason why they are more likely to choose informal ways to participate in politics. In addition, 4 out of 10 felt that engaging in unconventional political participation is somewhat easy and free from any interference from the government, as pointed out by Non-participant (9)*, "For me, this channel is relatively 'cool' since we have been warned that we cannot freely talk about politics."* The ongoing government crackdowns on free speech by abusing legal process to harass critics have deepened the culture of fear amongst the youth. Thus, it is clear that 'the culture of fear' is not only a 'roadblock' to political participation, rather, it is perceived by young people as a convincing reason why they are moving away from traditional politics towards alternative forms of political action.

For some (4 out of 10), they believed that they were motivated primarily by specific issues that have been publicised in the social media, as mentioned by Non-participant (8), *"I was very attracted to the issues that went viral in the media, especially those issues that can badly affect society."* Non-participant (3) also responded positively

by saying that, *"Only through online media we can get the latest and updated political issues and I think this is the best and fastest way to influence political decisions."* In this regard, youth involvement in informal channels is issue-driven or centred on issues that are relevant and interest them—ranging from personal, national, and global issues, conforming to the argument of Manning (2013) that young people engaged with issues rather than a particular ideology or set of principles. Out of ten youth interviewed, 7 of them revealed that the economy and cost of living are ranked as youth's greatest concerns now, as explained by Non-participant (3), *"The most critical problem faces by youth today is the rising cost of living and people have been dragged into paying higher rate of taxes."* Young people are, in fact, aware and informed about current affairs that are occurring around them because they have used online media excessively. This parallels with the findings of Pandian (2014b) that the main factors which affect youth in Malaysia the most, particularly students, are the good price increases, unemployment, and educational prospects.

When we asked them further in the interviews, whether ethnicity is still an important issue for young people, a majority of the respondents (9 out of 10) agreed that communal politics is no longer relevant and young people are against racism in Malaysia, as indicated by Non-participant (9), *"I am not interested in ethnic-based politics. Because for me, politics must be equal for all races."* This supports the argument by Mandal (2004) that young people appeared to have embraced a new multi-racial identity and emerged as a bulwark against the practice of ethnic politics in this country. However, most of them (9 out of 10) believed that racial sentiment strongly exists, and race relations remain shaky in Malaysia. This is reflected in the comments by Non-participant (1), *"Undoubtedly, ethnic sentiment still exists in politics and most parties are fighting for the rights of their ethnic groups. We cannot run away from racism because it is part of the system and society."* In fact, there are some parties that were formed on a non-communal basis, but *"one ethnic group will always dominate and take control"* (Non-participant 6). Thus, a non-communal party still has to play the communal approach in order to maintain power.[66]

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[66] Historically, the first test for 'ethnic bargaining' was the Kuala Lumpur Municipal election in 1952. The party who won this election would lead the country for independence. The UMNO lacked campaign funds and faced a strong challenge from the non-communal party, the Independence of Malaya Party (IMP) to gain votes from the majority Malays constituencies. Therefore, the MCA made an *ad hoc* agreement with the leaders of UMNO to fund their electoral campaigns. The political pact of UMNO-MCA won nine out of twelve seats in the election. In 1953, this pact was formally established at the national level, with the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) added to it, as a coalition party known as the *Perikatan* or the Alliance. The

9.7   Democracy in Malaysia: the role of youth

The role of youth in Malaysian democracy cannot be in any way underestimated as they make up a majority of the population. Therefore, political disengagement and the lack of political interest amongst young Malaysians could threaten the future of democracy in this country. However, when being asked whether youth political participation strengthens the democratisation process, overall, 7 out of 10 argued that their engagement in politics is essential in strengthening the democracy or at least, could support the effective functioning of democracy in Malaysia. According to Non-participant (2), *"If we look at young people today, they have fresh ideas and a more aggressive spirit than the older generation. So, they are steering the country towards democracy, or at least, to adopt principles of democratic governance."* Non-participant (7) also reacted positively by commenting that, *"I think young people are always the first to speak out on democracy and they often express incredibly strong political views. Sometimes, the government considers youth's demands. Indirectly, this could help to strengthen the democratisation process in Malaysia."* Although it is generally perceived that young Malaysians are politically ignorant, they play a role as a key deciding factor in determining the outcome of elections and shaping the political landscape of Malaysia. Young people are largely unaligned but engaged, tech-savvy and a 'critical citizen' generation—those who viewed both the ruling party and the opposition with scepticism and wanted the whole system to be improved (Welsh, 2012). In particular, young Malaysians are given their highest recognition of the problems of corruption and inequality, as well as more inclined to democratic expansion

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Alliance, then contested in the first Malayan general election in 1955, where they secured majority seats 51 out of 52. This victory proved that the Alliance's viability and its elite accommodation for managing the political salience of ethnicity were supported by the Malays and convinced the British to grant independence to the country.

The elites of these three parties worked out to draft some key substances for the constitution through the negotiation and compromise or so-called 'the bargaining behind closed door'. The bargain or the *quid pro quo* arrangement, came out with specific key points in which liberal citizenship requirements, *Jus Soli* and economic rights would be granted to the non-Malays, but in return the Malays would have a constitutional protection—the special position of the Malay Rulers, Malays special rights (Article 153), Islam as the official religion (Article 3), and Malay as the sole national language (Article 152). These key principles were written down in the Malayan constitution and were viewed as the multiethnic 'social contract' or generally known as the *Merdeka* (Independence) compromise (Crouch, 1996). In other words, the constitution reflected a social contract between various ethnic groups and recognised the plurality of Malayan population. Although there was not formally written, but the elites understood that UMNO and the Malays were "primus inter pares (first among equals) in politics, while in return the business pursuit of the non-Malays would remain free of hindrances or persecution" (Mauzy, 2006:53). In particular, the inter-communal coalition formula or consociational democracy, which recognised the Malay supremacy, was the very basis of constitutional polity and ethnic solidarity, which led to the independence of the Federation of Malaya on 31 August 1957.

(Welsh and Chang, 2012). Even the economic and political conditions in Malaysia are favourable for democratic pressures, but due to the widespread corruption and repression from the government, the opportunity for young people to enhance democratic change has been 'blocked'.

As a political opportunity for youth to strengthen the democratisation process was blocked, therefore, 2 out of 10 respondents believed that youth political engagement may be leading towards greater authoritarianism, as stated by Non-participant (4), *"...even more young people are participating and strongly campaigned for democracy, the government will use its power to stifle political dissents."* In a similar vein, Non-participant (1) also commented that, *"...if any attempts to establish true democracy have been thwarted, there is nothing much we can do about it."* Although there is solidarity and commitment for democratic change among youth activists, the unwillingness of ruling elites to accommodate popular demands for change leaves this country continuing with a legacy of authoritarian rule.

It is important to get as many young people as possible engaged in the political process because shaping their habits of participation could develop more active citizens in the future (Franklin, 2004). At present, there are some youth programme and policy initiatives by elites such as the Malaysian youth policy, youth parliament, school of democracy etc., to encourage greater youth engagement in politics. However, these programs are fragmented, selective, and exclusive to a certain segment of youth population, as pointed out by Non-participant (4), *"I think many initiatives taken by the government for young people, like the youth parliament, only represent and benefited one side of youth society."* Therefore, some effective strategies are needed to boost youth political participation as suggested by these youth non-participants. First, some (3 out of 10) suggested that more youth programme and activities should be initiated by political elites in order to eliminate negative perceptions of politicians and to decrease the gap between them and young people, as mentioned by Non-participant (8), *"Political leaders must carefully plan and maximise activities which may interest young people and in accordance with their trend."* Young people have various needs, concerns and desires that differ from those of older people. Therefore, by knowing what interest young people, politicians may have a deeper understanding of how to facilitate political engagement amongst the youth. To achieve this, Non-participant (3) believed that, *"Political leaders*

should go to the grassroots and talk directly with young people to figure out their current problems."

In addition, 3 out of 10 youth interviewed proposed that young people need to be educated on politics either through formal or informal institutions, as depicted by Non-participant (9), *"We should make politics such an interesting subject by making it compulsory to attract more young people."* In Malaysia, the educational system is highly centralised where the autonomy to implement the curriculum and syllabus lies in the hand of the federal government. There are no policies or emphasis on politics as a compulsory subject in schools, but politics has only been covered on an ad-hoc basis through core subjects like Malaysian history or civic education. At the private universities, Malaysian Study or Nationhood is made as one compulsory courses for all students to instil the spirit of patriotism, loyalty, and belonging to the country (Mohd Mahzan *et al.,*2013). However, this is not enough to educate youth to have a better understanding of politics. Therefore, many independent groups and NGOs emerged, such as Kelab Bangsar Utama (KBU), Youth Open University, The Lecture Book and so on, take an initiative by providing informal political education for young people through the organisations of political talks and intellectual discourses outside the university.

Some (3 out of 10) argued that young people should be given more space and opportunity in the political arena to become change makers, as mentioned by Non-participant (2), *"Giving young people more freedom to voice out their political views and encouraging more young people to channel their leadership capabilities in political parties and electoral politics,"* and Non-participant (6), *"Civil servants should be given leeway to be active in politics, and to some extent, they must be allowed to assert political affiliation."* As the civil servants are more well-informed with the strength and shortcomings of policies. Thus, they must be given a free rein to express constructive criticism to improve government's administrative system and to serve people effectively. Furthermore, 2 out of 10 youth non-participants recommended the government to implement a fair and transparent system to restore the confidence of young people, as argued by Non-participant (5), *"I think the whole electoral system needs to be 100 percent fair because if the system is unjust, how can people be involved in making a difference."* However, for Non-participant (7), she believed that**,** *"Young people are more interested to participate in politics if the government is completely free of corruption."* This view

supports arguments of Weiss (2013) and Khoo Boo Teik (2013) that the ruling party lost huge supports in the 2013 general election amongst the youth and multi-ethnic urban middle class who dissented against corruption, weak governance, ethnic discrimination, and lack of transparency.

9.8   Conclusion

To sum up, the findings from a group of young non-participants provide some further answers to the puzzle of youth disengagement in Malaysia. Several main findings to be highlighted from this chapter. Firstly, although young non-participants have the necessary resources such as university education and paid work, the absence of political socialisation experiences, particularly influences from family and school in stimulating interest and knowledge of politics is one of factor in their disengagement. In this regard, the non-functioning roles of family and educational institutions to stimulate young people's interest and knowledge in politics could be one major factor why young people find politics as something complex to understand and have difficulties in grasping the meaning of politics. Second, young non-participants 'turn-off' from politics because they do not have any social networks or links to the activist community including any political party. Third, young non-participants appear to have an overly narrow and limited understanding of politics because they often associated politics with 'political players' and institutions who seems to be selfish and pursue their own agendas, are unable to keep their promises and fail to respond to young people's needs. Apart from the low levels of political interest, qualitative analyses also revealed that the core factor explaining the large-scale exit of young Malaysians in politics is mainly due to the 'culture of fear'—the government's draconian laws that limit people's freedom, and coupled with the lack of political efficacy, the complex structure of political parties and the voting system, feelings of alienation from political agents and life-cycle effects. Even if they are politically uninterested, they do engage in politics mainly in the form of low-risk unconventional activism, such as political discussion, online activism, and civic engagement. Young people are driven to participate in this mode of political action because it is relatively fun and more relaxed compared to formal modes, free from government interference and the issues addressed are relevant to their interests. Instead, they perceived these political activities as part of a democracy and alternative ways to influence political decisions.

When comparing these two groups, three significant points can be emphasised. First, there is a gap between politically active and inactive young people in Malaysia because the circle of young people who play an active role in politics remains small, while large segments of young Malaysians are passive and disenchanted with politics. The 'culture of fear' and high risk involved when participating in politics in the autocratic state may be cited as the most significant reason why large young people have no courage to struggle for their democratic rights. Second, it is clear that youth activists are actually more politically aware and have a better understanding of politics than non-active youth since they received greater exposure and access to political information from the agents of political socialisation, mainly the family, educational institutions and media. They are also heavily inspired by social networks and the people from successful movements to actively engage in a movement cause. In other words, youth activists have more effective functioning socialising agents. Indeed, social support from the family and in-group members is the strongest support system along with inner strength for activists to be consistently active in their political activism. Finally, although there are rumblings of mounting discontent amongst youth activists over the political system and politicians, they are channelling this feeling into active political activism. This is because youth activists are more likely to have higher levels of political self-efficacy where they believe their political participation can bring about changes compared to youth non-participants. It is widely acknowledged that politically active citizens with high political self-efficacy tend to hold high political trust (Hooghe and Marien, 2013).

In the concluding chapter, we will draw together the main findings of this thesis, more specifically, to make sense of whether the patterns of youth political participation in Malaysia exhibit distinctive patterns relative to established democracies and returning to discuss the conceptual framework that underpins this research, mainly the debate between elitist and popular conception of democracy. This thesis will end with identifying a number of issues that merit further research in this area.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

10.1   Introduction

The central aim of this thesis has been to investigate the dynamic patterns of youth political participation in Malaysia by challenging the dominant hypothesis that young people are more politically apathetic than older generations. In particular, we argued that young Malaysians in general are remarkably inactive in 'elite-directed' politics, and have been shifting towards 'elite-challenging' political participation such as protests and new social movements. This is motivated by their alienation from conventional politics, but not by apathy. This study aimed to examine some of the key theories of political participation (Putnam, 2000; Norris, 2002; Henn *et al.,* 2002; Sloam, 2007; Dalton, 2007) and apply them to an analysis of youth participation in Malaysia.

Most previous studies in Malaysia focused on youth participation in electoral activities and 'traditional' explanations of political participation, such as the resources or baseline model (Verba and Nie, 1972; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Parry, Moyser and Day*,* 1992; Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995). This study, however, moved beyond this by focusing on both conventional and unconventional types of political participation, and applying a multi-disciplinary perspective from political participation, economics, and social movement studies for a conceptual framework. To be specific, this study combined theories from politics, economy and social movement studies such as civic volunteerism (Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995), rational choice theory, mainly the general incentives model (Seyd and Whiteley, 1992) and the 'Exit, Voice and Loyality' framework (Hirschman, 1970), the social psychological model (Klandermans, 2007; Schussman and Soule, 2005), mobilising agencies (Putnam, 2000; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Norris, 2003) and the institutional context (Kriesi, 2007; Taylor and Whittier, 1992; Dalton, 1996) to analyse why young people participate or fail to do so, and whether they exhibit

distinctive factors relative to young people in Western democracies. There remains a dearth of empirical analysis on youth political participation in Malaysia within both elite-directed and elite-challenging forms of participation. This study applied a mixed-methods approach to gauge the changing patterns of participation and attitudinal characteristics of young people over time by integrating the insights from analyses of existing data survey and qualitative interviews. In particular, the survey data allows for statistical analyses of the patterns of youth political participation, while the qualitative interview material complements the findings by providing detailed explanations. In this context, the goal of this final chapter is to look more broadly at the key findings of the study to provide a clear picture of youth political participation and non-participation in Malaysia, reflecting briefly the theoretical debates, discussing how the study has contributed to the literature, and suggesting directions for future research.

10.2   Revisiting the research questions

10.2.1 Young Malaysians: trajectories of political participation

By using the existing survey data from the World Values Surveys Wave 6 (2010-2014) and building on Inglehart's classification of 'elite-directed' and 'elite-challenging' political participation, Chapter 4 looked at the relationship between youth political participation and various attitudinal and demographic characteristics. The most important conclusion to be drawn is that youth political disengagement in Malaysia is clearly an empirical fact as young people are less likely than their elders to be politically engaged in both 'elite-directed' and 'elite-challenging' activism. Indeed, the younger group, aged 21 to 40 years old, were less politically active than the older age group of 41 to 70 years old, across several political actions, and most markedly in voting and party membership. The empirical results show that there is no significant effect of being a young university graduate on both elite-directed and elite-challenging activism. Therefore, education does not play an important role to offset the gap between young cohort and older cohort in political activism. While in other contexts those who are more educated tend to be more likely to protest (Verba and Nie, 1972; Dalton, 1988), this appears to have no effect in the case of Malaysia.

Chapter 5 also found similar evidence from another source of survey data, the Asian Barometer Wave 2 (2005-2008) and Wave 3 (2010-2012), that there is a dramatic decline of youth political participation in both 'citizen-oriented' and 'cause-oriented' activism, most markedly in voting, party membership, and signing petitions. In this regard, even when we tested whether intervening variables such as education and urban-rural divide have differential effects on youth political activism as found in some European countries, the effects turned out to be insignificant for each form of political activism. As such, in Malaysia, being more educated and living in an urban context do not attenuate the participatory gap between the younger and older generation in Malaysia. The differences between the levels of political participation in the younger cohort and older cohort are most pronounced in conventional politics, mainly voting and party membership. In terms of voting, although there is an upward trend between 2008 to 2013, young people still have lower levels of participation compared to the older generation. Party membership amongst young people dramatically shrinks relative to the older generation. This study also found that young Malaysians, compared to youth in Western democracies, do not prefer to be engaged in cause-oriented activism, including protest activities, as there were no significant differences between young and older people in this mode of participation. Although many argue that a series of large-scale protests, known as BERSIH or the 'Yellow' movement have mobilised largely young Malaysians into protest activism (Welsh, 2012), this study did not find evidence for this as a general population trend. In fact, as argued in Chapter 8, protest activism is often championed by small groups of committed youth or student activists, rather than a large number of young people.

This finding is also supported in the material from the qualitative interviews with academics, politicians, youth activists and youth non-participants, where all groups claimed that young Malaysians have very low levels of political participation. Chapters 8 and 9 probe this issue in more detail and show how young people are participating in politics, but only in the form of 'everyday engagement' or through low-risk channels such as online activism, community works and political discussion more generally. This suggests that young people in Malaysia do not reject politics *per se*. They may be turning away from mainstream politics, but they are connected differently to less conventional channels. As argued by Kimberlee (2002), Henn *et al.,* (2002) and Marsh *et al.,* (2007), young people are engaged in a broad range of activities that are often not seen as political. In this regard, the thesis argued that conceptualisations of political participation must be

broad enough to include a different range of political activities, rather than be confined to formal participation as the only meaningful participation. The impact of technological advancement and social development has significantly expanded the opportunity for young people to participate in politics (Sloam, 2007; Norris, 2001; Stolle, Hooghe and Micheletti, 2005) by creating new forms of political participation, such as internet activism and social movement politics around online groups. Therefore, the results presented here support the arguments of the 'anti-apathy' school that young people can be seen as politically apathetic only when politics is narrowly defined, but that they are politically interested and engaged when more broadly conceived (O'Toole et al., 2003, Henn *et al.,* 2002; Marsh et al., 2007).

10.2.2 Findings on the attitudes of young people towards elite-directed participation

Another contribution that the thesis makes to the existing literature on youth political participation is to rigorously apply different explanatory models that are commonly found in empirical studies of youth in established democracies to develop the conceptual framework. All these models contribute something towards an understanding of youth (dis)engagement. Although all these models can be used to account for youth political participation in Malaysia, they are not sufficient to provide strong underlying explanations for why young Malaysians are politically inactive. It is emphasized by this study in the quantitative Chapters 4 and 5 that levels of youth political participation in 'elite-directed' and 'elite-challenging' political activism are lower than those for the older generation. Although young people in Malaysia have been alienated from formal politics, the findings in Chapter 9 suggest that young people do profess that voting and party membership remain important mediums to influence political decisions and elect representatives that will lead the country. In this respect, the qualitative findings based on the semi-structured interviews with academics, political elites, youth activists and youth non-participants emphasised the role of authoritarian rule, the prevailing political system and socio-historical context to make sense of present-day youth political participation in this country.

As evidenced in Chapters 6 to 9, the findings show that the large-scale exit of young people from mainstream politics, and to some extent their disengagement from informal politics, are related strongly to the 'culture of fear' emerging from the government's criminalisation of political dissent through the use of oppressive laws such as the Sedition Act 1948, the Official Secret Act 1972, and the Universities and University

Colleges Act 1971, to stifle political rights and freedom. These laws, which mostly date back to the colonial rule era, give central power to the regime to continue 'blocking' the opportunity for citizens' participation by subverting the democratic process. A deeply embedded culture of fear in Malaysian society has created a very passive youth, largely amongst the Mahathir and post-Mahathir generation. They are, in fact, disengaged from both formal and informal political participation, including protest activism. This echoes the findings of Zhang and Lallana (2013), Yun Han Chu, Welsh and Weatherall, (2012) which indicated that heavily censored regimes such as those in Malaysia and Singapore, discourage young people from engaging in politics. This study concludes that fear of repression and the negative consequences of protest result in young Malaysians perceiving protest as a high-risk or high-cost activity that is, moreover, ineffective in bringing about change. Therefore, any increase in costs may constrain citizens from participating in collective actions. Put simply, increased state repression is likely to decrease participation in any form, as emphasised by Hibbs (1973). This supports the argument by Kriesi (2007) that states that more closed political opportunities and political spaces result in lower possibilities for the development of unconventional politics. Since the barriers to this type of action are relatively high, we could therefore argue that protest activism in Malaysia might not appear as 'normalised' as in Western democracies (Dalton, 1996), and many contentious actions that aimed to challenge the regime are practiced only by a small group of young people who are brave enough.

In addition, we found in Chapters 8 and 9 that young activists have a very broad understanding of politics. For youth activists, politics is seen as a broad concept, covering all aspects of human life and behaviours, and suggests that citizens must be integrated within the system. In contrast, most young non-participants in this study define politics as an overly limited conception because they commonly relate politics with political players, such as parties and politicians who struggle for power, who are 'self-serving' in pursuing their own interests and fail to champion people's needs. In addition, young non-participants also perceive politics as something 'complex', dull and too technical to be understood because they have a little knowledge on what politics is really about. The difficulties in trying to grasp such 'complex' politics makes many young people simply 'observers', rather than 'participants'. Therefore, negative perceptions of politics and politicians, tend to depress their interest leading them to 'turn-off' from politics. This echoes the trends in established democracies that young people in Britain for example have

a hard time understanding politics and this inhibits them from participating (Henn *et al.*, 2002; Stradling, 1977; Pattie, Seyd and Whiteley, 2004) and therefore, as suggested by O'Toole *et al.* (2003), research need to use a bottom-up approach to understand fully how young people conceptualise politics. Overall, we can conclude that young people tend to have a poor understanding of politics. In this regard, even young non-participants who are largely educated remain politically illiterate.

This thesis highlights two significant factors for making sense of young Malaysians' relationship with politics. First, the agents of political socialisation, particularly the family and school, seem to be not playing their roles in developing a sense of political interest and knowledge amongst young people, a factor that contributes to the limited understanding of politics amongst youth. This study showed that unlike youth activists, most of the youth non-participants grew up in environments where politics was not the cultural norm. Therefore, they tended to regard politics as unimportant in their lives. However, based on the findings from qualitative interviews in Chapter 9, we found that even if young people frequently discussed political matters with family and friends or had a family member who was actively involved in politics, this was still not enough to motivate them to participate in politics. Sumner (1906) argued that the effectiveness of political socialisation does not lie in parental and school influences, but in the desire of people to conform to a particular behaviour. The failure of people to conform to changing patterns implies that they are not 'immunised' to them (Butler and Stokes, 1974). This suggests that young people's first experience of political activities and political activism, such as voting, could create a habitual participant (Plutzer 2002; Franklin 2004). In addition, the qualitative findings also revealed that social media platforms and online activism have become a popular new means for young Malaysians to engage in politics. Many young Malaysians switched from mainstream media to social media to access political news because of its anonymity, and since the news released in traditional media is biased towards the incumbent government given they have central power to tightly monopolise and control this media. However, they only used online media for 'information-based' activity, particularly to seek political information, rather than for 'participation-based' activity such as posting political contents, communicating with politicians, or participating in online debates. The findings are consistent with previous studies (Zhang *et al.,* 2010; Teng and Joo, 2016) that the use of social networking sites like

Twitter and *Facebook* may not necessarily lead to political activism even once relevant political information is collected.

Apart from the non-functioning agents of socialisation, the thesis also argued that young people's lack of political interest and political knowledge emerged from an absence of schooling on politics. There is no statutory subject or curriculum on politics in schools. Although Malaysia has a high percentage of youth literacy rates (98.42 percent)[67], students remain politically illiterate because politics and civic education are only sporadically touched upon in subjects like Malaysian history or civic education, which are aimed at preparing the student to be a good and loyal citizen rather than providing essential skills and experiences for students to participate in political decision-making (Mahmood, 2014: 135). Therefore, based on the evidence from interviews with young people, it could be suggested that young people have low levels of political interest also in part because of lack of formal civic or political education. As civic knowledge stimulates political participation (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995) and 'civic literacy' makes democracy work (Milner, 2002), the absence of such knowledge can act to obstruct efforts to promote democratic norms and values.

While young people have a narrow understanding of politics as evidenced in particular in the analysis of the interviews with young non-participants (Chapter 9), the reluctance of young Malaysians to engage in mainstream politics is also to be found in their low feelings of political efficacy. Feelings of political efficacy, as argued by many scholars (Almond and Verba, 1963; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Norris, 2002), are highly correlated with political activities and participation. This study (Chapter 5) showed that when controlling for attitudinal determinants, low internal efficacy—an individual's belief in their political competency to make a difference in politics—has caused lower levels of young people's engagement in citizen-oriented activism. The findings from the qualitative analyses complement this by showing how young people feel that they are powerless and have no say in politics because their engagement, and particularly voting, does not make any difference for policy change at any level. Moreover, we also found that the low levels of external efficacy amongst Malaysian youth are strongly related to low trust in political institutions due to the unresponsiveness of the government to tackle major

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[67]Please see: The World Bank, 2015,
http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.1524.LT.ZS?locations=MY, accessed on 20 March 2016.

'youth' issues, particularly the economy and the widespread practices of corruption. Given that political efficacy and political knowledge are key aspects of psychological engagement in politics (Clarke *et al.,* 2004; Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995; Marsh *et al.,* 2007), particularly low levels of efficacy within this group is one potential explanation for youth disengagement from in politics.

As discussed in the analysis of the qualitative chapters, it is clear that youth disillusionment towards the political institutions and politicians whom they feel unresponsive to their needs and self-serving also plays as a major role in explaining why young people are so inactive, both within and beyond the conventional political participation sphere. The qualitative findings (Chapters 6 to 8) suggest that young Malaysians hold sceptical views of politicians and political parties and have a lack of trust in the elites as they failed to keep their promises and be held accountable. These key findings have a lot in common with the study of Henn *et al.,* (2002) in the UK. Based on the data from survey panel and focus groups, they found that young people in the UK regarded politics as remote because they have a lack of confidence in politicians. Therefore, the inability of politicians and parties to convince young people has left them with no alternatives to choose between suitable parties, resulting in them becoming 'fence sitters' or simply avoiding elections. There are two main reasons why young Malaysians are largely 'cynical' towards political actors. First, the internal rifts and widespread political scandals faced by the ruling party and the opposition in Malaysia makes young people increasingly lose hope, trust, and confidence in political elites, which also provide a potential explanatory avenue for the large exit of young people from elite-directed political participation. Second, the remoteness of the political parties, poor communication and inadequate engagement from the politicians make them constantly disregard young people's needs as reflected in their failure to develop youth-friendly policies.

Building on the General Incentives model proposed by Seyd and Whiteley (1992), we found in Chapter 7, that political leaders are usually motivated to be members of a political party for a wide variety of purposive incentives such as a strong ideological commitment, satisfying policy-seeking needs and wanting to challenge the existing order. In order to change the *status quo* in a semi-democratic country like Malaysia, people have no choice but to join a political party instead of civil society groups because they operate under state repression. Political parties, especially the opposition, have also been subjected

to repression by the government such as placing the elections and mainstream media under tight control. This circumstance weakens the position of the opposition and denies their right to contest in a level playing field. However, over the recent years, particularly since the 2008 general election, the formation of an opposition coalition which successfully denied the ruling coalition a two-thirds parliamentary majority, has resulted in a more powerful scrutiny on the government power's will since the government is no longer able to amend most of the constitutional provisions except with the cooperation from the opposition (Muhammad Fathi, 2016:4). The formation of an opposition coalition, if they manage to sustain their electoral success, may provide a strong and reliable alternative to the ruling coalition in the elections.

The findings from qualitative analyses have also revealed further reasons why young people are refusing to be part of political parties and take on a role as voters. As explained in Chapter 8, the rise of the habit of non-voting amongst young people stems from their frustration with the existing electoral system in Malaysia, which is seen as too complicated, outdated and suffering from serious flaws, including the widespread concerns over the integrity of the electoral commission and the transparency of the electoral process. We also found that the complex structure of political parties, especially their complicated registration system, the hierarchical structure, and the culture of seniority, has dissuaded young people from joining them. Only those who aimed to become politicians are willing to go through the complex and long process of party membership because this is the only pathway to become a future leader in Malaysia. This reinforces the theory of relative deprivation, that the individuals feel a sense of grievance when they have not received a fair treatment or unfair political arrangement (Gurr, 1970; Mulgan and Wilkinson, 1997, Dalton, 1988). In this regard, the basic political system and institutional forms of Malaysian democracy such as the 'first-past-the-post' electoral system, economic policy, and media control create political inequality, and thus inhibit effective participation of young people in politics. When young people cannot bear the burden of intensifying deprivation, they are more likely to engage in collective protest (Buechler, 2007; Farah *et al.,* 1979; Dalton, 1988).

However, our findings indicate that not all deprived young people have manifested feelings of deprivation, injustice, and anger with the authorities through collective action, such as protest and social movement involvement, instead choosing to completely reject

and distance themselves from politics. Although there are major signs of discontent of young people about the system, there are certain priority issues of concern that have been raised by young people. The major issue facing Malaysian youth today is the economy, particularly the rising cost of living, including price increases in fuel, public transport, residential property, and the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax[68] creating a sudden increase in young Malaysians' expenses. Another issue cited by the youth is unemployment, largely amongst highly skilled and university graduates. The unemployment rates for young graduates tend to be higher than non-graduates because job creation in this country has remained concentrated on the low and middle-skilled sectors (Lim, 2016). With limited high-paying and high-skilled jobs, a mismatch of skills, the lack of professional experience makes young people less likely to be hired. As higher education in Malaysia is not free and an education fund is needed to bear the cost of tuition fees, so many borrowers, largely amongst young fresh graduates also face the problem of having to repay a high student-debt loan from the National Higher Education Loan Fund (PTPTN).[69] Defaulters who fail to pay back their study loan become blacklisted and are then unable to apply for other loans as well as being banned from leaving the country.

Life-cycle theories help to explain the 'exit' of young people from both elite-directed and elite-challenging repertoires by suggesting that young people are inhibited from to participating in politics since they are facing start-up problems such as starting a career and family, finding a partner, purchasing a house (Converse and Niemi, 1971) at their early age of political life, and this effect will diminish when young people grow older. In this context, this study has found that young Malaysians, in contrast to young people in established democracies, complete their studies and enter the job market at a much older age because the secondary education in this country lasts until the age of 17, while the tertiary education normally begins at 18 and lasts until the age of 23 years old. This longer transition to adulthood thus delayed the opportunity for young people to establish themselves in a community and political process and this could further contribute to their

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[68]The Goods and Services Tax (GST) is a consumption tax based on the concept of value-added. It was implemented on 1 April 2015 to replace the Sales and Service Tax and as part of the government's tax reform programme to increase the capability and efficiency of tax management in this country. Although the government has not fixed the rate of the GST, but the standard rate that is used now is in the range of 6 percent. (See http://www.gst.com.my/gst-malaysia-FAQ.html, for details).

[69]The National Higher Education Loan Fund (PTPTN) was established in 1997 and it is a government agency under the ministry of Education responsible for providing an education financing scheme to students pursuing their tertiary education in Malaysia. (See for details, http://www.ptptn.gov.my/web/guest/korporat).

lower levels of engagement as a group. However, there is a need for further study in this area to provide greater understanding of the ways in which these life-cycle mechanisms operate in the context of Malaysia and to successfully disentangle them from period and cohort effects to make sense of the underlying patterns of social change (Grasso 2014, 2016).

10.2.3 Findings on the attitudes of young people towards elite-challenging participation

The study confirmed that young people have always been less likely than older people to be engaged in elite-directed political participation, but showed no significant effects on elite-challenging participation. However, young people in general acknowledged the elite-challenging repertoire as a relevant democratic channel and a proper way to influence political decisions. As discussed in Chapter 9, most young non-participants chose to participate in 'everyday politics' or so-called day-to-day political activity (Parry, Moyser and Day, 1992:8), mainly low-risk types of activities such as informal discussion and online activism because these forms of participation are indeed easy, more fun and 'relaxed', require less commitment as well as being free from government interference. Although these political activities were not overtly political acts that aimed at challenging or influencing the government and incite genuine political change, they were understood as political by young people based on a loose and broad conception of political participation (O'Toole *et al.*, 2003). Moreover, it was found that young people are more likely to discuss political issues with their peers rather than outsiders because they are afraid of being harshly judged by other people and fear the government's surveillance and criminalisation of political dissent. In Chapter 6, we saw how the academics attributed the engagement of young people in elite-challenging activism with changes in their political values—specifically, the thawing of traditional political cleavages such as ethnicity being replaced by a new cleavage rooted in the opposition between materialist and postmaterialist values (Inglehart, 1990; 1997). Indeed, the findings in Chapter 9 provided evidence in favour of the central premise of postmaterialist value change theory by Inglehart (1990) that young people tend to be individualistic and fragmented, in favour of participation through loosely-structured groups such as an environmentalist, human rights and good governance networks, that require lower political commitment or long-term loyalty like political parties. As Norris (2002) noted, young people seem to have shifted

from the politics of loyalty to the politics of choice from citizen-oriented, conventional, or elite-directed activism to cause-oriented, unconventional, or elite-challenging action.

The findings in Chapter 8 further showed how most youth activists appeared to hold both instrumental and identity motives (Klandermans, 2004), driving them to be politically active citizens. In this respect, feelings of deprivation and injustice emerging from the government's policies, such as the erosion of universities' autonomy, academic freedom, and students' political rights,[70] alongside greater levels of political efficacy - their participation could bring a change have generated a strong sense for political and social changes amongst these activists. Simply put, these young people participated actively in politics because they believe that they could influence the decision-making process and create a better future for Malaysia. Apart from instrumentality, a strong attachment to a group or having a sense of belonging motivated some youth activists to engage in activist communities. This reaffirms the important of collective identity as emphasised by social movement researchers (Melucci, 1995; Hunt and Benford, 2007; Snow, 2001). In particular, these activists have constructed a shared ideology, objectives, emotions and common interest in a group also known as a collective identity and this identity, according to Hunt and Benford (2007), builds up the commitment and solidarity among activists to champion a cause. The Bersih rally is a perfect example of how this movement managed to create loyalty and commitment amongst its members who are largely different in their goals and identity. In this regard, Bersih has successfully empowered its members to make changes to the system outside of the Malaysia's democratic framework through the framing process: Bersih framed themselves as 'Bersih',[71] which clearly denotes the message that this movement is about peace, cleanliness and upholding the truth.

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[70]It is worth mentioning that the government has placed restrictions on academic freedom in Malaysia where certain subjects such as religious and ethnic issues are highly sensitive for research by academics. Since the government is sensitive to criticism, academics or students cannot be too critical towards the government's policy. There were numerous cases where the academics faced intimidation and displinary actions including losing their jobs because of the publication of academic materials. For example, Azmi Sharom who is a law lecturer was charged with sedition after commenting publicly about the constitutional crisis in Perak. Similarly, Dr. Abdul Aziz Bari who is also a law professor was also charged under the same Act for comments made allegedly insulting the Sultan of Selangor.

[71]The name Bersih was derived from the name of its organiser, BERSIH (Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections), a coalition of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the opposition parties, with an objective to reform flawed electoral process in Malaysia. The first incarnation of *Bersih 1.0 rally*, also known as 'yellow wave rally' was held on 10 November 2007, and followed by another four protests on

Moreover, this study finds that another reason why youth activists are more likely to engage in high-cost political activities is because they have personal contacts or social networks to access the activist community where they actively join the student movements or activities in the universities. Another factor that helps to ease their route into activism is the influence of political socialisation from the family and educational institutions. This also corresponds to findings in the previous literature (Snow *et al.*, 1980; McAdam, 1988) that political socialisation and greater access to social networks help to facilitate active engagement in politics.

10.2.4 Findings on youth and democracy

This thesis not only sheds light of the nature of youth participation and non-participation, but it also provides a vital exploration of whether youth engagement in politics strengthens the democratisation process in Malaysia. The analyses of qualitative interviews found that engagement of young people in the political process in Malaysia has pushed the government to open more democratic spaces and restore some democratic elements in Malaysia. Although there was an attempt, particularly during the *Reformasi* 1998, to complete the transition from authoritarian rule to democracy in Malaysia, it failed to create either a successful democratic transition or political reform (Abbott, 2004). However, in the 2008 and 2013 general elections, young people were the key players in determining the electoral outcome, and significantly produced a 'political tsunami' by denying the ruling coalition its two-third majority. Realising that young people are able to challenge the *status quo*, the government is now trying to please young people by introducing more youth-based policies and by making some political changes, such as the amendment of the University and University Colleges Act, mainly to Section 15.[72]

2011 (Bersih 2.0), 2012 (Bersih 3.0), 2015 (Bersih 4.0) and 2016 (Bersih 5.0). Bersih rallies successfully galvanised n thousands of participants, mostly young people from different races to take to the streets.

[72]*The University and University Colleges Act (UUCA)* was first enacted in 1971 and aimed to provide guidelines for the establishment, regulations, the administration of colleges and public universities. Following the student-led demonstrations on 1974, the government amended Section 15 of the UUCA in 1975, which prohibited any student or faculty member from expressing support for any political party, organisation, or trade union. However, it was revised in 2012 to give greater flexibility to the students by allowing them to take part in political activities off-campus, including the right to be a member of any political party.

Although the Malaysian economy generally experienced a rapid economic growth that spawned the rise of a new middle class in society, which is important for democratisation processes, this thesis, however suggests that a transition to democracy in Malaysia is relatively difficult to achieve. There are several factors that can be postulated to account for why Malaysia is arguably far from democracy. First, the existing regime has made little progress towards democracy and they remain significantly resistant to change. For example, the government has repealed the draconian ISA, but they replaced it with the Security Offences (Special Measures Act). Similarly, the Section 27 of the Police Act was substituted with a more repressive new law, which is the Peaceful Assembly Act (2002). Second, while there are mounting popular pressures from the people through a series of protests, with the aim of moving toward a more democratic country, the government has managed to silence the dissidents by employing brutal crackdowns. To some extent, they have successfully manipulated the political and electoral arenas to retain power. Furthermore, as civil society suffers from severe limitations from the government, it is very difficult for them to mobilise widespread membership of organisations across all parts of civil society and develop strong connection with the wider population, especially with young people. This makes civil society unable to play an important role as key advocates and agencies for democratisation. Third, the policies and the system emphasise too much racial composition. Ethnicity is continuously asserted as a dividing line between Malaysian people in a 'divide and conquer' type strategy. Finally, whilst many young people have embraced the idea of 'new politics', the society at large, particularly the older generation who are more traditionalist and conservative, still tend to support the *status quo* instead of democratic change. Therefore, young Malaysians in general choose to distance themselves from politics because they feel that they are powerless to bring about a democratic change in Malaysia, since the opportunity to become involved in a meaningful way has been 'blocked'.

10.3 Understanding youth political participation in Malaysia: Hirschman's "exit, voice and loyalty" (EVL) framework

As have been explained in Chapter 2, this thesis applies Hirschman's trilogy of Exit, Voice and Loyalty (1970) to understand the patterns of youth political participation in Malaysia, specifically to explain whether young Malaysians choose to exit, voice or remaining loyal

in their political activism. The detailed explanations of the extent to which the findings relate to the Hirschman's framework are as follows:

i.   Exit:

In his book, Hirschman (1970) argues that individual may choose to *exit* the organisation or to stop the buying goods or sevices as a reponse to the decline in the quality in products or services. The findings of this thesis suggest that young Malaysians are indeed frustrated and discontented with the regime due to the economic downturn, prevailing corruption, racial skirmishes, and government crackdowns on political freedoms. However, in response to dissatisfaction with the semi-democratic regime in Malaysia, young people in general do not choose to *exit* from politics completely. Instead they have *exited* from high-cost political activities such as voting, party membership and contentious politics, and have replaced this to some extent with participation in the forms of low-risk or 'everyday' politics such as online activism, community works and informal political discussion. Many young people in Malaysia are more likely to engage in these political activities because the costs or risks of participation in a semi-democratic country like Malaysia can be high and outweigh the perceived benefits since young people have to face a main political barrier—strict controls and crackdowns on political mobilisation and expression by the government through repressive laws like the Sedition Act, the UUCA, and the Official Secrets Act, etc.[73] In addition, young people also feel that the costs of engagement in politics are

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[73]*Sedition Act* was enacted in 1948 by the British colonial authority and was originally aimed for fighting against the local communist insurgents prior to Malayan independence. However, it continues to be used with full force by the Malaysian government today to limit citizens' freedom of expression by prosecuting individuals including activists, journalists, and politicians for actions or discourse deemed as seditious and critical towards the government which may threaten national security. In other words, it makes an offence to say or publish words that have a 'seditious' tendency.

The Internal Security Act (ISA) was enacted in 1960 as a preventive detention law that defended the internal security in Malaysia. It allows the government to detain people without trial. In 2012, the controversial Internal Security Act 1960 has been repealed and replaced by The Security Offences (Special Measures Act) or SOSMA. The Act was made under the Article 149 of Federal constitution, specifically aimed to prevent internal security issues including acts of terrorism, sabotage, public order, prejudice and espionage. The most important provision in this Act is Section 4 that gives powers of arrest and detention to the police over persons who are suspected of having committed security offences. In particular, the police also allow for detaining the suspect for 28 days and placing them under electronic monitoring if released.

The University and University Colleges Act (UUCA) was first enacted in 1971 and aimed to provide guideline for the establishment, regulation, the administration of colleges and public universities. Following the student-led demonstrations on 1974, the government amended Section 15 of the UUCA in 1975, which prohibited any student or faculty members from expressing support for any political party, organisation or trade union. However, it was revised in 2012 to give greater flexibility to the students by allowing them to take part in political activities off-campus, including the right to be a member of any political party.

high because they have a very low chance of bringing about changes to the system and to influence political decision-making. The findings also suggest that young Malaysians are alienated from political agents such as political parties and formal political processes as they feel that the existing electoral system in Malaysia suffers from serious flaws and politicians are remote and unresponsive to their needs. Young non-participants also do not have established networks and effective socialisation agents that are able to mobilise them to participate in political activities or to create a vibrant and exciting political environment.

ii. Voice:

Voice, according to Hirschman (1970:30), is "any attempt at all to change, rather than to escape from, an objectionable state of affairs." Despite the high risks of participation in semi-democratic regimes like Malaysia, and the 'blocked' opportunities for young people to participate meaningfully in politics due to the actions of the regime through various institutional barriers such as the use of repressive laws, there remains a small circle of young people who actively *voice* their discontent and challenge the *status quo* through their involvement in high-cost political activities, such as protests, party membership, NGOs and perhaps, electoral participation. Although this *voice* is costly because such activities require much effort, time, and the possibility of being punished by the authorities, some young people still tend to use this *voice* because they believe their participation in politics can bring about political changes or at least affect the government's decisions in some way. In particular, those young people who choose to use *voice* are more likely to have higher levels of political self-efficacy. The findings also show that youth activists are politically aware citizens and have effective functioning socialising agents, the family and educational institutions which provide greater exposure and access to political information and social networks. Furthermore, their *voices* or demands may sometimes receive positive or negative responses from the government. If the government responds positively, in returns it benefits the citizens. If not, youth activists must bear the cost of having used their *voice.* However, this group of young activists remains consistently active in using their *voice* or engaging in

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The Official Secret Act (OSA) was brought in force in 1972 as an Act that provides protection for information classified as an 'official secret'. Offical secrets refers to any document, information and material that maybe classified as 'top secret', 'secret', 'confidential' or 'restricted' by a Minister, the Chief Minister of a State or public officers.

political activism since they receive strong social support from the family and in-group members, alongside with a sense of inner strength to achieve their goals.

iii.   Loyalty:

The term *Loyalty* is akin to 'group loyalty' (Dowding *et al*., 2000) in which the citizens accept the decline in the quality in products or services, causing them to stand (voice) rather than to run (exit). In the case of Malaysia, we argued that there is a group of young Malaysians who accept the *status quo* and see no reason to engage in either *voice* or *exit*, but instead participate in *apathetic silence* or *enforced silence* (Gehlbach's concept of Silence, 2006). First, the findings suggest that examples of *apathetic silence* are those young Malaysians who do not complain but rather support and are satisfied with the *status quo*, abiding by its rules, and remaining loyal by engaging in elite-directed activities, mainly in the ruling party. Although there is only a small fraction of young people who actively become members of a political party, they are powerful in influencing the policy or decision-making process. Second, this thesis also found that there are some young people, particularly amongst the civil servants, who fall under the category of *enforced silence*. *Enforced silence* here refers to those young people who are discontented with the regime and dissatisfied with the *status quo*, but have very limited choice to reject the *status quo* because their opportunity to exit or voice have been 'blocked' by the regime. In this regard, civil servants in Malaysia are prohibited from joining politics as they are bound by the Rules for Public Workers (Conduct and Discipline) 1993 where they are required to be neutral, loyal to the ruling government and be independent in partisan politics.[74]

Therefore, overall, we conclude that Hirschman's concept of Exit, Voice, and Loyalty (1970) offers a sturdy framework to analyse the patterns of youth political participation even in semi-democratic settings like Malaysia. However, it is insufficient to provide explanations on the concept of loyalty in the context of Malaysia. Therefore, this thesis expanded the framework by applying also Gehlbach's concept of Silence (2006) to make

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[74]Rules for Public Workers (Conduct and Discipline) 1993 refers to the code of conduct for public service officers, including specific prohibitions and violations. Under freedom of expression, their rights are curtailed by three provisions, and actions can be taken against them if they: (1) provoke hatred against the government; (2) establish debates, discussions or talks containing anti-government elements; (3) show strong anti-government views directly or indirectly in any form, verbally or in writing. (see further: http://www.jpa.gov.my/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=73%3Adistribution-letter-2009&catid=43%3Adistribution-letter-list&Itemid=7&lang=en)

sense of which groups of young people have chosen to remain loyal and those instead who are forced to be loyal in supporting the *status quo* in Malaysia due to their professionalism, living conditions and the rules that govern them.

10.4 Revisiting the debate between the elitist and popular conceptions of democracy

The main aim of this thesis is to provide a robust understanding of youth political participation in the context of contrasting elitist and popular conceptions of democracy, and to elucidate the extent to which participation is desirable in this country. Based on the findings of the thesis and the conclusions presented above, several main points can be interpreted in light of the elitist and popular conceptions of democracy debate more specifically in order to analyse the position of both conceptions in Malaysia. First, the reality of Malaysia in our findings appears to correspond better with the elitist position, which argues that citizen engagement in politics should be limited to electoral participation (Schumpeter, 1952), because young people in Malaysia in general have a very low level of political participation. However, as we have seen, since the 2008 general election, young voters in Malaysia who are the largest group, play a decisive role in determining electoral outcomes. The 2008 and 2013 general elections were seen as the most closely fought battles between two major blocs of party coalition, the incumbent government and the opposition. The high level of electoral competition, as argued by Franklin (2004), has significantly stimulated people to vote. The previous election recorded a high voter turnout with more than 80 percent of the 13.3 million registered voters casting ballots, especially 2.6 million new voters. Still, a large number of people (4.2 million), mainly young Malaysians, do not vote and even refuse to register as voters. Similarly, although there is a rise of protests and social movements in Malaysia against the existing *status quo* since the *Reformasi* 1998, only a small fraction of young people, predominantly the activists, are participating.

Second, the popular view is clearly not reflected in the realities of political life in Malaysia. True, to some extent young people are still participating in politics, but they change their styles of participation towards 'low-risk' informal channels, such as online activism, community works and political discussion, since the political context makes it impossible for widespread citizen-participation to occur without democratic freedom. The

decline of 'elite-directed' participation and the enlargement of 'elite-challenging' signals an emphasis on single issue priorities such as the environment, democratic rights, and good governance, and means moving further from representing class or ethnic interests. In this sense, politics is seen by the people as a set of single issues that need to be addressed by the government rather than lived experience of the demos to decide on their collective political destiny. To some extent, the shift of young people from mainstream politics may exacerbate political inequality in the future (Verba, 2003) because strong political voice no longer lies in the hand of political parties, instead it is centred on various pressure groups who only benefit some segments of society. Therefore, the expansion of participatory repertoires cannot be seen to replace the important role of the parties in a representative democracy (Mair, 2006). In addition, the advocates of popular democracy believe that the underlying aim of citizen participation is to achieve a common good. However, the findings suggest that young people in this country are less likely to engage in politics mainly because the government has blocked the opportunity for citizens to participate by imposing despotic laws to limit political freedom and only allow reasonably open discussion of its policy as long as not affecting the decisions of elites. In this regard, young people feel that the costs or the risks are high and outweigh the benefits of participation and they are fearful of the personal consequences of participation.

The findings of this thesis support the position of the popular conception of democracy that the disengagement of young people in politics is due to the system and its actors, rather than the people itself (Bale *et al.,* 2006). In particular, in a semi-democratic setting like Malaysia which is fundamentally elitist, political participation is kept at relatively low levels through various means, including the enactment of repressive laws, censorship of the media, and electoral manipulation. Political activities and organisations like protests, social movements and civil society are allowed to form or operate within the system, but they are heavily constrained and can potentially be eliminated if the government feels that these groups have become threats to the system and its elites. For popular democracy, political participation has an educational role in increasing citizens' knowledge to understand and improve the system. As the findings show, young Malaysians have a very narrow understanding of politics and relatively low levels of political knowledge. Lack of political knowledge amongst young people makes it dangerous to involve them in a complex decision process.

Finally, popular democracy aims to improve the flaws of the representative system by allowing more people to engage in the decision-making process. Bottom-up participation is needed to ensure that representatives are fully accountable and act to preserve citizens' rights, not the interests of elites (Barber, 1984). Although young people desire to be actively included in the system, they are unable to see more opportunities to be involved in a meaningful way due to several circumstances. First, the system has limited possibilities for mass participation in 'everyday politics'. Second, the elites prefer depoliticized citizens since the less people think about politics, the less the elites will need to confront people who want to change the *status quo* for a better political system. Third, due to these 'blockages' in participation channels, young people are just not convinced that their participation in politics can bring about change. Finally, the massive surge in the usage of the Internet and mainly social networking has opened up spaces for citizens' participation. In Malaysia, the exploitation of the top-down approaches of mainstream media outlets by the government to control the news makes more young people, who are regarded as the 'internet generation' (Loader, 2007), switch to the Internet. However, young people are more likely to use this avenue for consuming political news or 'information-based' activities (Jensen, 2013), instead of communicating with representatives or discussing political matters. There are 'populist' attempts made by the elites to have the so called 'consultative council' such as the Youth Parliament and the Perdana fellowship programs, to improve the policy by providing young people with more opportunities to participate and to influence political decisions. However, these programmes only benefit and reflect the interests of a particular group, not the whole of society.

10.5   Major results of the investigation

This thesis aimed to solve the puzzle of whether young people in Malaysia are politically apathetic or have simply shifted from mainstream politics to other forms of political activism. We have succeeded in solving this puzzle by concluding that young people in Malaysia are politically inactive in either elite-directed or elite-challenging political activism. However, they are not dropping out completely from politics. Instead, they are engaged, to an extent, in low-risk unconventional channels like online activism, popular cultural representations and informal political discussion. In a semi-democratic country like Malaysia, where many channels of participation are heavily controlled by the

government, the engagement of the youth in politics, mainly in conventional political participation, is extremely important for regime change.

In addition, as evidenced earlier, there are some shared characteristics between youth political participation in Malaysia and Western democracies. For example, young Malaysians understand politics as politicians and political parties, rather than interpreting politics in a wider context—which is similar to youth in established democracies. Young people in Malaysia, as in established democracies, share the feeling of alienation and cynicism towards political agents and the political process which they believe are unresponsive to their interests and feel they have a lower ability to influence political decisions. Despite these similarities, it would be inaccurate to conclude that young people in Malaysia display common patterns with those of young people in established democracies. This thesis found that specific characteristics of Malaysia, particularly the long established 'semi-democratic' style of politics and the socio-political setting, are salient for making sense of the differential patterns of youth political participation in this country.

The solution to our puzzle is rather incomplete without analysing the overarching barriers to youth political participation in Malaysia. The cost-benefit analysis of rational choice theory advocates such as Downs (1957), Riker and Ordeshook (1968), and based on the framework of *Exit, Voice and Loyalty* by Hirschman (1970) are strengthened by this thesis, which clearly shows that it is reasonable to expect that young people in Malaysia to politically 'exit', mainly from high-costs political activities like voting, party membership and contentious politics, because they perceive the 'costs' or the risks of harm in the course of participating in this country as outweighing the opportunities for them to have a decisive effect on political outcomes. Indeed, there are twofold 'costs' or political barriers to youth political participation in Malaysia and we discuss these in more detail below.

10.5.1 Institutional barriers

First, the implementation of ongoing undemocratic actions by the government, with respect to the draconian laws like the Sedition Act, the UUCA, and the Official Secrets Act, etc. to stifle the political rights of people are the main institutional barrier that inhibits most young people in Malaysia from becoming politically active citizens. These laws,

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which are justified as ostensible means for maintaining the political stability of the state, have created a constant fear amongst people (especially the Mahathir and post-Mahathir generations) to express their political views and to have a say in political decisions. The radical reforms – primarily economic, political, and constitutional reforms – embarked on by the government after the 13 May ethnic riot and during Mahathir's premiership are seen as having produced a 'depoliticized generation'. Second, the nature of the public policy-making process in Malaysia is a 'top-down' or elite-centred approach. Therefore, it has ignored young people's voices and discouraged their greater citizen participation. Third, the government's tight control over the electoral process by using the Electoral Commission as their primary instrument has created a system that is less than fair, particularly for the opposition. As the electoral process is tainted with persistent manipulation and abuse of power by the regime, and worsening practices of money politics, so young people increasingly lose their confidence to participate in the system. Finally, many political parties in Malaysia have a complicated structure and recruitment system, and they draw much of their support from distinct racial community because the system is fundamentally based on ethnic lines rather than competing political ideologies. With voting on an ethnic basis, the political parties would typically manipulate ethnic issues and raise fears of ethnic outsiders in their electoral campaign. Since many young people feel that communal politics is no longer relevant, and they are more likely to embrace the idea of multicultural identity, therefore, ethnic-based political parties in Malaysia appears to be unattractive to youth.

10.5.2 Personal barriers

Being a politically active citizen requires resources, including time, money, education, or psychological traits such as interest and efficacy. As evidenced in the findings, young Malaysians in general have low levels of perceived political efficacy, political knowledge, and interests, which may act as psychological barriers inhibiting them from being politically active citizens. Firstly, in order to prepare youth to engage in political activities, we first need to develop their interest in politics (Verba, Nie and Kim, 1978; Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995; Milbrath and Goel, 1977) through positive interactions with political socialisation agencies such as the family and educational system in a given society (Almond and Verba, 1963), and mobilising networks (Putnam, 2000; Diani, 2007). However, such interactions are absent amongst young people. Therefore, we can conclude

that the key personal barrier for young people to participate lies in an ineffective process of political socialization and mobilizing networks. Secondly, political efficacy is important not only as a driving force of political participation, but also as a personal quality. Political efficacy is linked with political confidence which makes a citizen confident to take part in political actions to try to make changes to the system. In the case of Malaysia, it could be argued that the very low levels of political efficacy amongst young people may stem from their personal experiences of a semi-democratic regime where they often characterise politicians as corrupt, repressive, and unresponsive to their needs. Low trust in political elites, and the entire political system makes many young people in Malaysia choose to withdraw completely from political life. Undeniably, a younger cohort in Malaysia today is well-educated group, tech-savvy and largely belong to the middle class (Norshuhada *et al.,* 2016). Young people may be the most politically-informed citizens because they are highly dependent on social media to gain political information. However, they commonly have below-par knowledge and skills relevant for politics due to the inadequate education in politics and government. As mentioned earlier, the absence of formal civic and political education makes young people find 'politics' complex, dull and difficult to understand. As a result, young people do not see political participation as a part of their civic duty.

Since participation in politics in Malaysia is somewhat risky and involves such a very high cost only those young people who are brave enough, have a high level of determination for democratic change, and a greater amount of resources are willing to take part in political activities. Typically, politically active young people possess in Malaysia vast knowledge on politics, effective socialising agents, and close relationships to political organisations, which in turn drive them to participate in high-risk political activism, including protests and social movements. Therefore, the gap between youth activists and young people at large in political participation will remain substantial unless these barriers to political participation can be successfully reduced.

10.6 How can the problem of low levels of youth political participation in Malaysia be solved?

Against the backdrop of a semi-democratic setting in Malaysia, youth political participation is vital to undermine autocratic rule and bring about a democratic breakthrough. Therefore, routes for political participation need to be expanded, designed

specifically to encourage greater and meaningful youth participation. By looking at the barriers to politics, we can identify key solutions to the problem of youth disengagement. The most common suggestion to increase youth political participation in Malaysia is to provide a better electoral system by lowering the voting age from 21 to 18 years old. The main argument for lowering the voting age is that young Malaysians today are politically informed, and they are mature enough to be able to make rational decisions. By lowering the age of voting, the hope is that more young people would have a greater say in decision-making and determining the country's direction. However, this could only be achieved if the 'threats' to scare young people from expressing their political views and rights are removed by the government. Not many young people dare speak up due to the punishing systems that dampen free speech. By restoring political freedom and opening up democratic spaces, one could encourage more youth to participate. Another effective way to facilitate youth political engagement is to implement a formal civic or political education curriculum in school so that the school-leavers would be widely exposed to general knowledge about politics and how the system works. Indirectly, the stimulus received at such early age could further develop a motivation and habit of engagement.

10.7   Avenues for future research

This thesis provides an empirically-rich study on youth political participation in Malaysia by analysing comprehensively how and why young Malaysians participate in politics, with respect to both elite-directed and elite challenging repertoires. Given the findings that young people in Malaysia are indeed inactive in elite-directed politics, but this is being compensated by their being active in very low-risk political activities, such studies needed a mixed-method approach to develop a value-added explanatory model fits specifically for youth in Malaysia. In this regard, the data from quantitative surveys was contextualised with the qualitative analyses from the interviews. However, there is a key limitation of its methodology. As this is a single case study, which focuses only on a country, the findings could not be generalised to young people in other countries, except perhaps for those countries which have relatively similar socio-political structures as Malaysia. As such, there is a need for further in-depth comparative or cross-countries studies in the Southeast Asian region, specifically in the future.

It is clear from this research that those young people aged 21 to 40 years old were less likely than their older counterparts to actively engage in political activism. This group of young people are regarded as the Mahathir and post-Mahathir generation, who were born between the 1970s to the 1990s and came of age during the Mahathir era when the country experienced autocratic and dictatorial rule. Low youth political participation is linked to the feelings of fear for the negative ramifications of participation, including a fear of being arrested by the government, and other explanatory factors such as lack of political knowledge and political efficacy, life-cycle effects, as well as feeling alienated from the system and politicians. Future studies however will need to further disentangle these effects investigating in particular evidence for generational change and cohort analysis where there is over time repeated data to provide statistical evidence and attempt to make sense of young people's participation relative to the older cohorts. By doing so, we may develop a clearer picture of whether there will be a constant decline or an increase in the future of youth political participation in Malaysia.

Another area where we need further strong *prima facie* evidence is the study of youth online political participation in Malaysia and its potential for democratic engagement and renewal. Although there is a growing body of literature in this area (e.g: Salman and Saad, 2015; Norshuhada *et al.,* 2016; Teng and Joo, 2016), most of these studies examine mainly the role of social media for youth online and offline participation, without thoroughly investigating to what extent youth political uses of media influence the online and offline political participation, what motivates more young people to use social media for political purposes and how online political participation influences and shapes the political decision-making in Malaysia. The conventional wisdom holds that social media has witnessed an upsurge in youth political activism in Malaysia, but we do not find wider evidence for this finding. Our qualitative research rather suggests that most of young Malaysians generally use social media only for seeking political information, rather than participating in online political activities such as political debate, communicating with politicians, or interacting with political groups. This needs to be tested further with a wider and representative sample of the population in Malaysia by employing quantitative methods of analysis.

Perhaps, the most important area which urgently needs to be addressed through further research is the role and impact of formal civic or political education programmes in

Malaysia. The findings presented here indicate that one factor contributing to youth non-participation in Malaysia is young people's lack of basic political knowledge about politics and its processes, due also to the absence of formal civic education programmes in educational institutions. A civic or political programme is important to teach democratic values to the youth, and to develop a sense of civic duty. In particular, we need to ascertain whether such programmes are viable to be implemented in Malaysia and whether they could really help to increase youth's interest in participating in politics. Answers to these and other questions raised by this investigation will hopefully provide useful tools to resolve the problem of youth disengagement in Malaysia in the future.

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INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview questions for Academicians
Length of Interview: 60 – 90 minutes

Section 1: Politics in General
Bahagian 1: Politik secara Umum

1.1   In general, what is your opinion on the participation of young people in Malaysian politics?
Apakah pandangan anda mengenai penglibatan belia dalam politik Malaysia, secara umumnya?

1.2   Aren't these young people generally interested in politics?
Adakah golongan belia ini sebenarnya berminat dengan politik?

1.3   Do you feel that young people in Malaysia are free to participate in politics? Why/ Why not?
Adakah anda rasa belia di Malaysia ini bebas untuk melibatkan diri dalam politik? Mengapa/Kenapa tidak?

Section 2: The pattern of youth political participation
Bahagian 2:   Corak Penglibatan Politik Belia

2.1   Do you agree that there is a dramatic decline of youth political participation in Malaysia?
Adakah anda bersetuju bahawa terdapat penurunan drastik penglibatan politik belia di Malaysia?

2.2   Why are young people not engaging with politics?
Mengapa belia tidak mahu terlibat dalam politik?

2.3   Do you think that there is a shift from conventional to unconventional forms of participation? If yes, what are the new forms of expression?
Adakah anda rasa bahawa terdapat peralihan daripada bentuk penglibatan konvensional kepada penglibatan bukan konvensional? Jika ada, apakah bentuk baru itu?

2.4   Do you think that young people must be allowed to engage in activities other than voting and party membership? Why?
Pada pandangan anda, adalah belia Malaysia perlu dibenarkan melibatkan diri dalam kegiatan politik lain selain daripada mengundi dan menjadi ahli parti politik? Mengapa?

2.5   To what extent has the government of Malaysia accepted and normalised protest?
Sejauhmanakah kerajaan Malaysia menerima protes politik? Adakah protes politik ini dianggap sebagai satu norma atau budaya dalam politik Malaysia?

2.6   How do they respond to the engagement of young people in protests?
        Bagaimanakah respons kerajaan terhadap penglibatan belia dalam protes politik?

Section 3: Political Attitudes of Young people
Bahagian 3: Sikap Politik Belia

3.1   What are the factors that influence young people to disengage from conventional politics?
        Apakah faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi belia untuk menjauhkan diri dari politik konvensional?

3.2   What motivates them to participate in unconventional political activities?
        Apakah yang memotivasi mereka untuk melibatkan diri dallam kegiatan politik bukan konvensional?

3.3   Do you think that political parties or politicians have adequately engaged and communicate with young people?
        Adakah anda fikir parti politik atau pemimpin-pemimpin politik melibatkan diri dan berkomunikasi sepenuhnya dengan belia?

Section 4: Young people and democracy in Malaysia
Bahagian 4: Belia dan Demokrasi di Malaysia

4.1   Does youth political participation strengthen the democratisation process in Malaysia or does it simply legitimise the semi-democratic regime?
        Adakah penglibatan politik belia ini semakin mengukuhkan proses pendemokrasian di Malaysia atau adakah mereka hanya menguatkan keabsahan rejim semi-demokrasi?

4.2   Do you think that communalism still determines young people's political preference?
        Adakah politik perkauman masih menjadi keutamaan politik belia? Mengapa?

4.3   What sorts of topics/issues are important or of concern to the young people today?
        Apakah isu-topik penting yang menjadi perhatian belia pada hari ini?

Section 5: Future prospect for young people in Malaysian politics
Bahagian 5:   Masa depan belia dalam politik Malaysia

5.1   Who are responsible to mobilise youth engagement in politics? Is it the political party, civil society, educational institution, the de'facto leader or other actors?
        Siapakah yang bertanggungjawab untuk menggerakkan belia dalam politik? Adakah parti politik, kumpulan masyarakat sivil, institusi pendidikan, pemimpin de facto' atau aktor lain?

5.2   What are the best ways or strategies to encourage young people political participation?
        Apakah jalan atau strategi terbaik untuk menggalakkan belia terlibat aktif dalam politik?

5.3　For the next 10 years, do you think that more young people will actively participate in politics or the situation is getting worse?
Dalam masa 10 tahun akan datang, adakah anda rasa bahawa akan lebih ramai belia yang terlibat aktif dalam politik atau keadaan ini semakin merosot?

Section 1: Demographic Background
Bahagian 1: Latar Belakang Demografi

1.1 Can you please tell me briefly about yourself and your current position in party/organisation?
Boleh ceritakan sedikit mengenai latar belakang anda dan kedudukan anda dalam parti/organisasi?

Section 2: Politics in General
Bahagian 2: Politik secara Umum

2.1 How you interpret the words 'politics' and 'political participation'?
Apakah tafsiran anda mengenai perkataan 'politik' dan 'partisipasi politik'?

2.2 Do you think young people in Malaysia are generally interested in politics? Why?
Pada pandangan anda, adakah belia di Malaysia ini berminat dengan politik? Mengapa?

2.3 Do you agree that there is a dramatic decline of youth political participation in Malaysia?
Adakah anda bersetuju bahawa terdapat penurunan drastik penglibatan politik belia di negara ini?
    2.3.1 Why do young people engage/disengage with politics?
    Mengapa belia terlibat/menjauhkan diri dari politik?

2.4 Do you think that there is a shift from conventional to unconventional forms of participation? If yes, what are the new forms of expression?
Adakah anda rasa bahawa terdapat peralihan daripada bentuk penglibatan konvensional kepada penglibatan bukan konvensional? Jika ada, apakah bentuk baru itu?

Section 3: Motivations
Bahagian 3: Motivasi

3.1 How long have you been involved in this party/organisation?
Sudah berapa lamakah anda melibatkan diri dalam parti/organisasi ini?

3.2 What inspired you to involve in the party/organisation?
Apakah yang memberi inspirasi kepada anda untuk terlibat dalam parti/organisasi ini?

3.3 Why do you think other young people joined this party?
Pada pandangan anda, mengapa belia melibatkan diri dalam parti ini?

3.4　Do you think that young people have the same reasons as older members for joining?
Adakah anda rasa belia mempunyai alasan/sebab yang sama dengan ahli yang lebih senior untuk menyertai parti/organisasi ini?

3.5　How do you see your future in the party?
Bagaimana anda melihat masa depan anda dalam parti/organisasi ini?

3.6　Are your family/friends involved in politics?
Adakah keluarga/teman rapat anda terlibat dalam politik?

3.8　Do you discuss politics at home/with friends?
Adakah anda membincangkang mengenai isu politik di rumah atau bersama teman-teman?

Section 4: Structure of Party/Organisation
Bahagian 4: Struktur Parti/Organisasi

4.1　How many members registered in this party/organisation?
Berapa ramaikah ahli yang berdaftar dengan parti/organisasi ini?

4.2　Do this number increases or decreases?
Adakah jumlah ahli semakin meningkat dari tahun ke tahun atau semakin menurun?

4.3　Does the party encourage young people to join?
Adakah parti/organisasi anda menggalakkan belia untuk terlibat sama?
　　4.8.1　If yes – how? If no-why not?
　　　　　Jika ada, bagaimana? Apakah caranya?
　　　　　Jika tiada, mengapa?

4.4　Is it challenging or relatively easy to encourage young people to join this party? Why?
Adakah sukar atau mudah untuk menarik belia terlibat dalam parti/organisasi ini? Mengapa?

4.5　Does the party have links with other groups – NGOs, community groups, other parties etc?
Adakah parti/organisasi ini mempunyai hubungan dengan kumpulan lain seperti NGOs, kumpulan komuniti, dan parti politik lain?

4.6　Do you think that ethnicity must be played as the main issue by political parties and organisations to attract young people to join in?
Pada pandangan anda, adakah perkauman masih perlu dijadikan sebagai isu utama oleh sesuatu parti/organisasi untuk menarik belia untuk terlibat dalam politik?
　　4.6.1　If yes, why?
　　　　　Jika ya, mengapa?
　　4.6.2　If not, what other important issues?
　　　　　Jika tidak, apakah isu lain yang lebih penting?

4.6   Do you think that this party/organisation have adequately engaged and communicate with young people?
        Adakah anda fikir bahawa parti/ organisasi ini telah melibatkan diri sepenuhnya dan berkomunikasi dengan belia?

4.7   What are the strategies using by this party/organisation to attract young people?
        Apakah strategi yang digunakan oleh parti/organisasi untuk menarik belia?

4.8   Over the past 10 years, do you think that your party/organisation still could gain support from the young people? Why?
        Pada masa 10 tahun akan datang, adakah anda rasa parti/organisasi ini masih mampu meraih sokongan dari belia?Mengapa?

Section 5: Informal Participation
Bahagian 5: Penglibatan Politik Tidak Formal

5.1   Do you think there are other forms of political participation that are more important from voting and party membership?
        Pada pandangan anda, adakah terdapat bentuk penglibatan politik lain yang lebih penting dari mengundi dan menjadi ahli sesebuah parti/organisasi?

5.2   Do you consider activities like protests, petition and boycotts as part of political participation?
        Adakah anda menganggap aktiviti politik seperti protes, petisyen dan boikot sebagai sebahagian daripada penglibatan politik?

5.3   Do you think that young people must be allowed to engage in activities other than voting and party membership? Why?
        Adakah belia perlu dibenarkan untuk terlibat dalam kegiatan politik lain selain daripada mengundi dan menjadi ahli sesebuah parti?

5.4   Do you encourage people to participate in informal of political participation? If so what, and why?
        Adakah anda menggalakkan rakyat untuk terlibat dalam kegiatan politik lain tidak formal seperti protes, petisyen dan cyber-politics? Jika ya, apakah kegiatan itu dan Mengapa?

5.5   In your opinion, what motivates young people to participate in informal activities?
        Pada pandangan anda, apakah faktor-faktor yang memotivasi belia untuk terlibat dalam kegiatan politik yang tidak formal ini?

5.6   How do the government respond to the engagement of young people in protests?
        Bagaimanakah respons kerajaan terhadap penglibatan belia dalam protes politik?

Section 6: Role and Experiences
Bahagian 6: Peranan dan Pengalaman

6.1   What do you feel about the role of the youth wing within the party and within the society?

Apakah pandangan anda mengenai peranan sayap pemuda dalam parti ini dan dalam masyarakat sendiri?

6.2   What do you feel about your role in the party?

      Apakah pandangan anda mengenai peranan anda sendiri dalam parti/organisasi ini?

6.3   Do you think that by involving in political party, you have the chance to change this country to be more democratic or at least influence the political decisions?

      Adakah anda rasa dengan melibatkan diri dalam parti/organisasi politik ini anda mempunyai peluang untuk mengubah negara menjadi lebih demokratik atau sekurang-kurangnya mempengaruhi keputusan politik.

Section 7: Future Prospect for Democracy
Bahagian 7: Masa Depan Demokrasi Malaysia

7.1   What are the best way to encourage young people to become more politically interest and active?

      Apakah cara atau strategi yang terbaik untuk menggalakkan belia untuk bergiat aktif dan mempunyai minat yang tinggi dalam politik?

7.2   Do you think that youth participation in politics help to strengthen the democratisation process in Malaysia or does it simply legitimise the semi-democratic regime?

      Adakah penglibatan politik belia ini semakin mengukuhkan proses pendemokrasian di Malaysia atau adakah mereka hanya menguatkan rejim semi-demokrasi?

Interview Questions for Youth Activists
Length of Interview: 30 – 60 minutes

Section 1: Demographic Background
Bahagian 1: Latar Belakang Demografi

1.1   Can you please tell me briefly about yourself and your current position in this organisation?
Boleh ceritakan sedikit mengenai latar belakang anda dan kedudukan anda dalam organisasi ini?

Section 2: Politics in General
Bahagian 2: Politik secara Umum

2.1   How you interpret the words 'politics' and 'political participation'?
Apakah tafsiran anda mengenai perkataan 'politik' dan 'partisipasi politik'?

2.2   Do you think young people in Malaysia are generally interested in politics? Why?
Pada pandangan anda, adakah belia di Malaysia ini berminat dengan politik? Mengapa?

2.3   Do you agree that there is a dramatic decline of youth political participation in Malaysia?
Adakah anda bersetuju bahawa terdapat penurunan drastik penglibatan politik belia di negara ini?
   2.3.1   Why do young people engage/disengage with politics?
      Mengapa belia terlibat/menjauhkan diri dari politik?

2.4   To what extent young people in Malaysia can participate in politics?
Sejauh manakah belia di Malaysia ini boleh melibatkan diri dalam politik di Malaysia?

2.5   Do you think that there is a shift from conventional to unconventional forms of participation? If yes, what are the new forms of expression?
Adakah anda rasa bahawa terdapat peralihan daripada bentuk penglibatan konvensional kepada penglibatan bukan konvensional? Jika ada, apakah bentuk baru itu?

Section 3: Motivations
Bahagian 3: Motivasi

3.7   How long have you been involved in political activities?
Sudah berapa lamakah anda melibatkan diri dalam aktiviti politikini?

3.8   What inspired you to involve in politics?
Apakah yang memberi inspirasi kepada anda untuk terlibat dalam politik?

3.9 Why do you think other young people joined politics?

Pada pandangan anda, mengapa belia melibatkan diri dalam politik?

3.10 How do you see your future in politics?

Bagaimana anda melihat masa depan anda dalam politik?

3.11 Are your family/friends involved in politics?

Adakah keluarga/teman rapat anda terlibat dalam politik?

    3.5.1 Do you discuss politics at home/with friends?

    Adakah anda membincangkang mengenai isu politik di rumah atau bersama teman-teman?

Section 4: Informal Participation
Bahagian 4: Penglibatan Politik Tidak Formal

4.1 Do you think that most young people are more likely to involve in political parties or social movement like this? Why?

Pada pandangan anda, adakah belia lebih berminat untuk terlibat dalam parti politik atau organisasi sosial seperti ini?Mengapa?

4.2 Do you think there are other forms of political participation that are more important from voting and party membership?

Pada pandangan anda, adakah terdapat bentuk penglibatan politik lain yang lebih penting dari mengundi dan menjadi ahli sesebuah parti/organisasi?

    5.2.1 Do you consider activities like protests, petition and boycotts as part of political participation?

    Adakah anda menganggap aktiviti politik seperti protes, petisyen dan boikot sebagai sebahagian daripada penglibatan politik?

4.3 Do you think that young people must be allowed to engage in activities other than voting and party membership? Why?

Adakah belia perlu dibenarkan untuk terlibat dalam kegiatan politik lain selain daripada mengundi dan menjadi ahli sesebuah parti?

4.4 Do you encourage people to participate in informal of political participation? If so what, and why?

Adakah anda menggalakkan rakyat untuk terlibat dalam kegiatan politik lain tidak formal seperti protes, petisyen dan cyber-politics? Jika ya, apakah kegiatan itu dan Mengapa?

    5.6.1 What are the tactics or approaches that your organisation use to attract young people to join the protest?

    Apakah taktik atau cara yang digunakan untuk menarik golongan belia untuk terlibat dalam protes?

4.5   In your opinion, what motivates young people to participate in informal activities?
Pada pandangan anda, apakah faktor-faktor yang memotivasi belia untuk terlibat dalam kegiatan politik yang tidak formal ini?

4.6   To what extent have the government of Malaysia accepted and normalised protest?
Sejauhmanakah kerajaan Malaysia menerima protes politik? Adakah protes politik ini dianggap sebagai satu norma atau budaya dalam politik Malaysia?

Section 5: Role and Experiences
Bahagian 5: Peranan dan Pengalaman

5.1   What do you feel about your role in political activism?
Apakah pandangan anda mengenai peranan anda sendiri dalam politik?

       5.2.1   What are the best aspects of being an activist?
Apakah pengalaman manis atau perkara terbaik yang pernah anda lalui sepanjang menjadi aktivis?

       5.2.2   What are the worst aspects of being an activist?
Apakah pengalaman pahit atau perkara buruk yang pernah anda lalui sepanjang menjadi aktivis?

5.3   Do you think that by involving in political activism, you have the chance to change this country to be more democratic or at least influence the political decisions?
Adakah anda rasa dengan melibatkan diri dalam politik anda mempunyai peluang untuk mengubah negara menjadi lebih demokratik atau sekurang-kurangnya mempengaruhi keputusan politik.

5.4   What are the main challenges faced by young activists in achieving their goals?
Apakah cabaran utama yang dihadapi oleh aktivis belia dalam mencapai matlamat mereka?

Section 6: Future Prospect for Democracy
Bahagian 6: Masa Depan Demokrasi Malaysia

6.1   What are the best way to encourage young people to become more politically interest and active?
Apakah cara atau strategi yang terbaik untuk menggalakkan belia untuk bergiat aktif dan mempunyai minat yang tinggi dalam politik?

6.2   Do you think that youth participation in politics help to strengthen the democratisation process in Malaysia or does it simply legitimise the semi-democratic regime?
Adakah penglibatan politik belia ini semakin mengukuhkan proses pendemokrasian di Malaysia atau adakah mereka hanya menguatkan rejim semi-demokrasi?

Interview Questions (Groups of Young people)
Length of Interview: 30 – 60 minutes

Section 1: Demographic Background
Bahagian 1: Latar Belakang Demografi

1.1 Can you please explain briefly about yourself.
Boleh ceritakan secara ringkas mengenai latar belakang anda.

Section 2: Politics in General

2.1 Are you interested in politics? Why/Why not?
Adakah anda berminat dengan politik?Mengapa/kenapa tidak?

2.2 What do you think of when you hear the word 'politics' and 'political participation'?
Apakah yang anda fikirkan apabila anda mendengar perkataan 'politik' dan 'penglibatan politik'?

2.3 Do participate in politics is important to you? Why/Why not?
Adakah penting bagi anda untuk melibatkan diri dalam kegiatan politik? Kenapa/kenapa tidak?

2.4 Do you feel that you are free to participate in politics? Why/ Why not?
Adakah anda rasa anda bebas untuk melibatkan diri dalam politik? Mengapa/Kenapa tidak?

2.5 What sorts of issues are important to you?
Apakah isu-isu yang penting bagi anda?

Section 3: Formal Participation (Voting and Party Membership)
Bahagian 3: Penglibatan Politik Formal (Mengundi dan Politik Kepartian)

3.1 Is it important to vote at an election? Why/why not?
Adakah mengundi dalam pilihanraya itu penting? Kenapa/kenapa tidak?

3.2 Did you vote in the last election?
Adakah anda mengundi pada pilihan raya yang lalu?

    3.2.1 If not, why?
        Jika tidak, mengapa?
    3.2.2 If yes, what motivates you to vote?
        Jika ya, apakah faktor yang mendorong anda untuk keluar mengundi?

3.3 Do you think your vote can make a difference in an election?
Adakah anda rasa undi anda dalam pilihan raya akan membawa perubahan pada negara?

3.4 Do you think that communalism still determines young people's political preference?
Adakah politik perkauman masih menjadi keutamaan politik belia? Mengapa?

3.5   Are you a registered member of political parties or any political organisations?
        Adakah anda ahli berdaftar bagi mana-mana parti atau organisasi politik?

        3.5.1   If yes, what motivates you to participate in political parties/organisations?
                Jika ya, apakah yang mendorong anda untuk melibatkan diri dalam parti/organisasi ini? If no, why not? *Jika tidak, mengapa?*

3.6   Do you think that political parties or politicians have adequately engaged and communicate with young people?
        Adakah anda fikir parti politik atau pemimpin-pemimpin politik mendekatkan diri dan berkomunikasi sepenuhnya dengan belia?

3.7   Do you think that participation in the election and be a member of political organisations are the best ways to influence political decisions?
        Adakah anda rasa dengan mengambil bahagian dalam pilihan raya dan menjadi ahli parti/organisasi politik adalah satu-satunya cara terbaik untuk mempengaruhi keputusan pemerintah atau membawa perubahan pada negara?

3.8   In your opinion, why many Malaysian youngsters refuse to participate in election and political parties/organisations?
        Pada pandangan anda, mengapa ramai belia Malaysia enggan melibatkan diri dalam mengundi dan menyertai mana-mana parti/organisasi politik?

Section 4: Informal Participation
Bahagian 4: Penglibatan Tidak Formal

4.1   Apart of voting and party membership, have you been engaged in any of the following activities?
        Selain daripada mengundi dan menjadi ahli parti/organisasi politik, adakah anda melibatkan diri dalam aktiviti-aktiviti berikut:

BI	BM
Personal contacting	*Menghubungi pemimpin politik*
Seek help from acquaintances in Government or from persons with influence on officials	*Mendapatkan bantuan daripada kenalan atau orang yang mempunyai pengaruh dalam kerajaan*
Organizing/Participating in a group/movement (including student movement)	*Membentuk kumpulan sosial atau pergerakan sosial (termasuklah gerakan mahasiswa)*
Community Service	*Aktiviti Kemasyarakatan*
Attending political meetings	*Menghadiri mesyuarat politik*
Campaign activity	*Terlibat dalam aktiviti kempen semasa pilihan raya*
Protest/Demonstrations and strikes	*Protes/demonstrasi jalanan dan mogok*
Consumer boycotts	*Boikot barang*

Economic support to parties and groups	Memberi sumbangan kewangan kepada parti atau organisasi
Civil disobedience -Wearing of buttons, t-shirts, etc. that market a political cause	Ketidakakuran sivil -memakai lencana, t-shirt, topi, dll yang berunsurkan politik
Signing of petitions	Menandatangani petisyen
Writing of letters to political actors or newspapers	Menulis surat terbuka kepada pemimpin politik atau suratkhabar
Involvement with Internet political chat sites	Mengakses blog politik/media sosial pemimpin Sembang politik bersama rakan di media sosial Post/shared informasi mengenai politik di media sosial

4.2 Are you or have you been engaged in any other activities that you consider political?
Atau adakah anda pernah terlibat dalam aktiviti lain yang anda anggap sebagai aktiviti politik?

4.3 Do you feel that these activities are part of democracy?
Adakah anda merasakan aktiviti-aktiviti ini adalah sebahagian daripada demokrasi?

4.4 Have you ever taken part in a protest of any kind? (give examples)
Adakah anda pernah menyertai mana-mana protes/demonstrasi? (Beri contoh)
  4.4.1 If yes, are you associated with any organisations, family and friends or are you simply participating at your own accord? Or any other reasons?
  Jika ya, adakah anda menyertai protes ini kerana dipengaruhi oleh kempen yang dibuat sesebuah parti/organisasi, pengaruh keluarga dan kawan-kawan atau atas kehendak sendiri?Atau ada sebab-sebab lain?
  4.4.2 If no, why not?
  Jika tidak, mengapa anda tidak berminat menyertai protes?

4.5 Is it important to protest when you disagree with something or discontent with the government? Why/why not?
Adakah penting untuk anda protes apabila anda tidak bersetuju dengan sesuatu atau tidak berpuas hati dengan kerajaan? Kenapa/kenapa tidak?

4.6 Do you think that young people must be allowed to engage in activities other than voting and party membership? Why?
Pada pandangan anda, adalah belia Malaysia perlu dibenarkan melibatkan diri dalam kegiatan politik lain selain daripada mengundi dan menjadi ahli parti politik? Mengapa?

Section 5: Future Prospect for Democracy
Bahagian 5: Masa Depan Demokrasi

5.1   What are the best way to encourage young people to become more politically interest and active?
Apakah cara atau strategi yang terbaik untuk menggalakkan belia untuk bergiat aktif dan mempunyai minat yang tinggi dalam politik?

5.2   In your opinion, do you think that your participation in politics help to strengthen the democratisation process in Malaysia or does it simply legitimise the semi-democratic regime?
Pada pandangan anda, adakah penglibatan anda dalam politik membantu mengukuhkan proses pendemokrasian di Malaysia atau penglibatan anda hanya akan menjadikan kerajaan lebih bersifat semi-demokratik?

Appendix B

Variables for Analysis

Variables	Coding	WVS Questionnaire Items
Young	Recode of age of respondents 1 (21-40 yrs) 0 (41-70 yrs)	Age. This means you are___years old
Male	Recode of sex 1 (Male) 0 (Female)	Interviewer-coded
Married	Recode of marital status 1 (married) 0 (other)	What is your marital status?
Employed	Recode of employment status 1 (employed) 0 (other)	Are you employed now or not?
University	Recode of highest educational level attained 1 (University or Higher) 0 (other)	What is the highest educational level that you have attained
Party Identification	Recode of which party would you vote for if there were a national election tomorrow? 1 (Attached) 0 (Not Attached)	Which party appeals to you most?
Interest	Recode of interest in politics 1 (very interested) 0 (other)	How interested would you say you are in politics?
Left-Right	10-point scale where 0 means Left and 10 Right	In political matters, people talk of "the left" and "the right". How would you place your views on this scale?
Satisfaction with democracy	10-point scale where 0 means not satisfied and 10 very satifsied	How democratically is this country being governed today?
Confidence in government	Recode of Confidence: government 1 (very confident) 0 (other)	How much confidence you have in government?
Confidence in political party	Recode of Confidence: political party 1 (very confident) 0 (other)	How much confidence you have in political parties?
Assessment of degree of fair voting system	Recode of votes are counted fairly 1 (Yes) 0 (other)	How often are votes counted fairly in this country's elections?
Assessment of degree of respect for human rights	Recode of respect for individual human rights 1 (very much respect) 0 (other)	How much respect is there for individual human rights nowadays in this country?
Vote in elections, party membership, membership of labour union, signing a petition, joining in boycotts, attending peaceful demonstrations	Each coded as a dummy variable where 1 (yes) 0 (no)	I'm going to read out some forms of political action that people can take, and I'd like you to tell me, for each one, whether you have done any of these things, whether you might do it or would never under any circumstances do it:

Appendix C

Variables for Analysis

Variables	Coding	Asian Barometer Questionnaire Items
Young	Recode of age of respondents 1 (21-40 yrs) 0 (41-70 yrs)	Age. This means you are___years old
Male	Recode of sex 1 (Male) 0 (Female)	Interviewer-coded
Married	Recode of marital status 1 (married) 0 (other)	What is your marital status?
Employed	Recode of employment status 1 (employed) 0 (other)	Are you employed now or not?
University	Recode of highest educational level attained 1 (University and Higher) 0 (other)	What is the highest educational level that you have attained
Urban	Recode of Urban-Rural 1 (urban) 0 (other)	Interviewer-coded
Party Identification	Recode of which party if any do you feel closest to? 1 (Attached) 0 (Not Attached)	How close do you feel to the party?
Interest	Recode of interest in politics 1 (very interested) 0 (other)	How interested would you say you are in politics?
Internal Efficacy	Recode of question 133 1 (Yes) 0 (other)	I think I have the ability to participate in politics.
External Efficacy	Recode of question qII116 1 (Very responsive) 0 (other)	How well do you think the government responds to what people want?
Left-Right	Recode of two items 1 (Left) 0 (other)	If you had to choose between reducing economic inequality and protecting political freedom, which would you say is more important? In order to preserve social justice, the government should prevent the gap between rich and poor from growing any larger.
Dissatisfaction with democracy	Recode of Question 98 1 (dissatisfied) 0 (other)	On the whole, how satisfied and dissatisfied are you with the way democracy works in this country?
Trust in Political Parties and Parliament	Recode of trust in institutions 1 (A great deal of trust) 0 (other)	How much trust do you have in political parties? How much trust do you have in the parliament?

Exposure to political news	Recode of Question 57 1 (Everyday) 0 (other)	How often do you follow news about politics and government?
Group Membership	Recode of psychological involvement 1 (Yes) 0 (other)	Are you a member of any organisation or groups?
Political Discussion	Recode of psychological involvement 1 (frequently) 0 (other)	When you get together with your family members or friends, how often do you discuss political matters?
Vote in elections, party membership, contacted officials, attend a campaign meeting, signing a petition, joining in boycotts, attending a demonstration or protest march, used force or violence for a political cause	Each recoded so that a dummy variable 1 (yes) 0 (no)	I'm going to read out some forms of political action that people can take, and I'd like you to tell me, for each one, whether you have done any of these things, whether you might do it or would never under any circumstances do it:

Table 5.16
Further interaction effects

	Wave 2				Wave 3			
	Citizen Activism		**Cause Activism**		**Citizen Activism**		**Cause Activism**	
	Model 8	Model 9	Model 8	Model 9	Model 8	Model 9	Model 8	Model 9
N	1072	1072	1072	1072	1074	1074	1074	1074
R²	42.00 %	42.10%	6.90%	7.10%	35.10%	35.30%	14.40%	14.60%
Young	**-.619***	**-.647***	.013	-.057	**-.627***	**-.532***	-.080	-.007
	(0.173)	(0.130)	(0.123)	(0.092)	(0.137)	(0.075)	(0.148)	(0.081)
University	-.239	-.250	-.005	-.020	.080	-.097	-.030	-.091
	(0.224)	(0.225)	(0.160)	(0.060)	(0.224)	(0.168)	(0.241)	(0.181)
University*young	.193	.153	.171	.148	.098	.215	-.146	.008
	(0.269)	(0.262)	(0.192)	(0.187)	(0.269)	(0.198)	(0.290)	(0.213)
Urban	-.131	-.006	-.128	.003	-.064	-.082	-.101	.011
	(0.106)	(0.199)	(0.075)	(0.142)	(0.074)	(0.036)	(0.079)	(0.147)
Urban*young	.266	.313	.097	.183	.055	-.030	.113	-.056
	(0.144)	(0.172)	(0.102)	(0.122)	(0.108)	(0.154)	(0.116)	(0.166)
Male	**.141***	**.138***	**.128****	**.126****	.112	**.113***	**.272***	**.273***
	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.059)	(0.058)	(0.063)	(0.063)
Married	**.314***	**.313***	-.019	-.021	.085	.090	-.016	.009
	(0.063)	(0.063)	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.064)	(0.064)	(0.068)	(0.069)
Employed	**.137***	**.140***	.010	.011	.093	.094	-.058	-.059
	(0.062)	(0.061)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.060)	(0.060)	(0.064)	(0.064)
Party Identification	**.259****	**.387***	.121	**.253***	.041	.047	.148	**.239***
	(0.094)	(0.181)	(0.067)	(0.129)	(0.096)	(0.093)	(0.103)	(0.100)
Political Interest	**.265***	**.265***	**.135****	**.137****	**.260***	**.258***	-.014	-.017
	(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.043)	(0.043)	(0.060)	(0.060)	(0.065)	(0.065)
Internal Efficacy	**.115***	**.114***	**.109***	**.107***	**.176****	**.171****	**.323***	**.321***
	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.056)	(0.056)	(0.061)	(0.061)
External Efficacy	.012	.012	.028	.027	-.077	-.085	-.045	-.050
	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.066)	(0.066)
Dissatisfaction with democracy	-.034	-.030	.047	053	.011	.015	.095	.097
	(0.063)	(0.063)	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.068)	(0.068)	(0.073)	(0.073)
Trust in Political Parties	.078	.080	**-.100***	**-.098***	.035	.031	.083	.083
	(0.062)	(0.062)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.060)	(0.060)	(0.065)	(0.065)
Trust in Parliament	**.131***	**.134***	-.062	-.056	-.051	-.041	-.075	-.074
	(0.066)	(0.067)	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.067)	(0.067)	(0.073)	(0.072)
Left-wing	.016	.016	-.038	-.036	-.078	-.075	-.090	-.088
	(0.087)	(0.087)	(0.062)	(0.062)	(0.056)	(0.056)	(0.061)	(0.060)
Exposure to political news	**.159****	**.159****	-.033	-.034	**.162****	**.154****	.005	.006
	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.058)	(0.058)	(0.062)	(0.063)
Group Membership	**.926***	**.927***	.046	.049	**.720***	**.717***	**.348***	**.352***
	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.066)	(0.066)
Political Discussion	**.207***	**.205****	-.044	-.046	**.204***	**.215***	**.206****	**.208****
	(0.060)	(0.060)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.062)	(0.062)	(0.067)	(0.067)
Party identification*University	.287		-.024		.057		.161	
	(0.302)		(0.215)		(0.268)		(0.288)	
Party identification*Young	-.028		-.089		.146		.114	
	(0.135)		(0.096)		(0.140)		(0.151)	
Party identification*University*Young	-.467		-.031		-.204		-.117	
	(0.352)		(0.251)		(0.327)		(0.352)	
Party identification*Urban		-.148		-.156		-.010		-.169
		(0.204)		(0.145)		(0.152)		(0.164)
Party identification*Urban*University		.306		.000		**.503***		.390
		(0.303)		(0.216)		(0.252)		(0.272)
Party identification*Urban*Young		-.050		-.109		.182		.312
		(0.142)		(0.101)		(0.182)		(0.196)
Party identification*Urban*University*Young		-.423		-.003		**-.657***		-.631
		(0.348)		(0.248)		(0.323)		(0.348)

	Wave 2				Wave 3			
	Citizen Activism		Cause Activism		Citizen Activism		Cause Activism	
	Model 10	Model 11	Model 10	Model 11	Model 10	Model 11	Model 10	Model 11
N	1072	1072	1072	1072	1074	1074	1074	1074
R^2	42.00%	42.10%	6.90%	6.90%	35.10%	35.64%	14.40%	14.80%
Young	**-.647*****	**-.644*****	-.091	-.071	**-.517*****	**-.523*****	.003	.001
	(0.142)	(0.129)	(0.101)	(0.092)	(0.090)	(0.074)	(0.097)	(0.080)
University	.119	.096	-.008	-.012	.008	-.134	-.125	-.008
	(0.334)	(0.334)	(0.238)	(0.238)	(0.222)	(0.070)	(0.239)	(0.183)
University*young	-.285	-.224	.230	.209	-.111	.228	.029	-.115
	(0.353)	(0.352)	(0.251)	(0.251)	(0.255)	(0.197)	(0.274)	(0.212)
Urban	-.137	-.147	-.138	-.112	-.055	.038	-.091	-.070
	(0.105)	(0.129)	(0.075)	(0.092)	(0.073)	(0.095)	(0.079)	(0.103)
Urban*young	.273	.210	.112	.095	.032	.046	.092	.234
	(0.142)	(0.155)	(0.101)	(0.111)	(0.106)	(0.130)	(0.114)	(0.140)
Male	.142	.078	**.129***	.173	.102	**.207****	**.256****	**.353*****
	(0.086)	(0.131)	(0.061)	(0.094)	(0.078)	(0.075)	(0.084)	(0.081)
Married	**.319*****	**.324*****	-.015	-.016	.085	.081	-.014	-.033
	(0.063)	(0.063)	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.065)	(0.064)	(0.070)	(0.069)
Employed	**.145***	**.147***	.005	.008	.095	.088	-.056	-.059
	(0.062)	(0.062)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.060)	(0.060)	(0.065)	(0.065)
Party Identification	**.225*****	**.228*****	.064	.063	.096	.103	**.222*****	**.227*****
	(0.062)	(0.062)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.064)	(0.064)	(0.069)	(0.069)
Political Interest	**.266*****	**.265*****	**.142****	**.142****	**.261*****	**.255*****	-.015	-.024
	(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.043)	(0.043)	(0.061)	(0.060)	(0.065)	(0.065)
Internal Efficacy	**.117***	**.115***	**.108***	**.107***	**.172****	**.160****	**.321*****	**.315*****
	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.056)	(0.056)	(0.061)	(0.061)
External Efficacy	.013	.019	.032	.032	-.077	-.076	-.039	-.039
	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.066)	(0.066)
Dissatisfaction with democracy	-.029	-.030	.051	.052	.012	.006	.096	.089
	(0.063)	(0.063)	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.068)	(0.067)	(0.073)	(0.073)
Trust in Political Parties	.082	.080	**-.100***	**-.098***	.030	.019	.076	.079
	(0.062)	(0.062)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.060)	(0.061)	(0.065)	(0.065)
Trust in Parliament	**.131***	**.129***	-.063	-.063	-.044	-.036	-.069	-.070
	(0.067)	(0.066)	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.067)	(0.067)	(0.073)	(0.072)
Left-wing	.013	.020	-.035	-.036	-.075	-.074	-.088	-.092
	(0.087)	(0.087)	(0.062)	(0.062)	(0.056)	(0.056)	(0.061)	(0.060)
Exposure to political news	**.163****	**.163****	-.036	-.035	**.169****	**.164****	.011	.001
	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.058)	(0.058)	(0.062)	(0.062)
Group Membership	**.925*****	**.925*****	.046	.045	**.717*****	**.717*****	**.348*****	**.348*****
	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.062)	(0.061)	(0.066)	(0.066)
Political Discussion	**.207*****	**.208*****	-.044	-.046	**.210*****	**.211*****	**.209*****	**.211****
	(0.060)	(0.060)	(0.043)	(0.043)	(0.062)	(0.062)	(0.067)	(0.067)
Male*University	-.266		-.023		.168		.306	
	(0.374)		(0.266)		(0.267)		(0.288)	
Male*Young	.007		.059		.026		.035	
	(0.119)		(0.084)		(0.119)		(0.128)	
Male*University*Young	.260		-.156		-.251		-.423	
	(0.406)		(0.289)		(0.320)		(0.345)	
Male*Urban		.023		-.055		**-.260***		-.071
		(0.156)		(0.111)		(0.133)		(0.143)
Male*Urban*University		-.222		-.013		**.597***		.199
		(0.376)		(0.268)		(0.253)		(0.273)
Male*Urban*Young		.132		.057		.052		-.243
		(0.131)		(0.094)		(0.179)		(0.194)
Male*Urban*University*Young		.135		-.131		**-.681***		-.334
		(0.409)		(0.291)		(0.330)		(0.356)

Key: ***p≤ 0.001 **p< 0.01 *p≤ 0.05

	Wave 2				Wave 3			
	Citizen Activism		Cause Activism		Citizen Activism		Cause Activism	
	Model 12	Model 13	Model 12	Model 13	Model 12	Model 13	Model 12	Model 13
N	1072	1072	1072	1072	1074	1074	1074	1074
R²	42.10%	42.20%	6.90%	7.20%	35.40%	35.20%	14.40%	14.60%
Young	**-.613***	**-.628***	-.112	-.058	**-.607***	**-.518***	.028	.004
	(0.141)	(0.129	(0.101)	(0.092)	(0.094)	(0.075)	(0.101)	(0.081)
University	-.100	-.085	.048	.026	-.047	-.065	-.090	-.028
	(0.231)	(0.231)	(0.164)	(0.165)	(0.209)	(0.164)	(0.226)	(0.177)
University*young	-.189	-.224	.088	.088	.045	.125	-.046	-.109
	(0.255)	(0.254)	(0.181)	(0.181)	(0.241)	(0.191)	(0.260)	(0.206)
Urban	-.137	-.147	-.143	-.044	-.073	-.106	-.090	-.162
	(0.105)	(0.128)	(0.075)	(0.091)	(0.073)	(0.097)	(0.079)	(0.105)
Urban*young	.270	**.326***	.120	.051	.067	.083	.089	.206
	(0.143)	(0.151)	(0.102)	(0.107)	(0.107)	(0.124)	(0.116)	(0.134)
Male	**.138***	**.140***	**.131****	**.134****	.109	.105	**.267***	**.262***
	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.063)	(0.063)
Married	**.315***	**.319***	-.023	-.028	.079	.081	-.016	-.017
	(0.063)	(0.063)	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.063)	(0.063)	(0.068)	(0.068)
Employed	**.145***	**.145***	.014	.014	.090	.099	-.054	-.052
	(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.060)	(0.060)	(0.064)	(0.064)
Party Identification	**.225***	**.223***	.067	.070	.088	.095	**.220***	**.228***
	(0.062)	(0.062)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.064)	(0.064)	(0.069)	(0.069)
Political Interest	**.260***	**.272***	.090	**.246***	.149	**.238***	-.010	-.027
	(0.088)	(0.131)	(0.063)	(0.093)	(0.080)	(0.075)	(0.087)	(0.081)
Internal Efficacy	**.118***	**.116***	**.108****	**.107***	**.169***	**.166***	**.319***	**.319***
	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.056)	(0.056)	(0.061)	(0.061)
External Efficacy	.016	.014	.030	.030	-.080	-.080	-.044	-.045
	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.066)	(0.066)
Dissatisfaction with democracy	-.037	-.039	.052	.050	.006	.011	.095	.091
	(0.062)	(0.062)	(0.045)	(0.044)	(0.067)	(0.068)	(0.073)	(0.073)
Trust in Political Parties	.077	.073	**-.092***	**-.098***	.039	.031	.080	.078
	(0.062)	(0.062)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.060)	(0.060)	(0.065)	(0.065)
Trust in Parliament	**.140***	**.143***	-.060	-.056	-.049	-.042	-.073	-.071
	(0.067)	(0.067)	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.067)	(0.067)	(0.072)	(0.072)
Left-wing	.011	-.012	-.040	-.038	-.073	-.071	-.089	-.087
	(0.087)	(0.087)	(0.062)	(0.062)	(0.056)	(0.056)	(0.061)	(0.061)
Exposure to political news	**.164****	**.164****	-.032	-.032	**.165***	**.163***	.006	.004
	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.058)	(0.058)	(0.062)	(0.062)
Group Membership	**.930***	**.931***	.051	.049	**.727***	**.715***	**.349***	**.344***
	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.066)	(0.066)
Political Discussion	**.211***	**.212****	-.045	-.042	**.211***	**.211***	**.209***	**.209****
	(0.060)	(0.060)	(0.043)	(0.043)	(0.062)	(0.062)	(0.067)	(0.067)
Political interest*University	.010		-.114		.286		.267	
	(0.302)		(0.215)		(0.258)		(0.279)	
Political interest*Young	-.074		.102		.181		-.021	
	(0.120)		(0.085)		(0.118)		(0.127)	
Political interest*University*Young	.271		.092		-.139		-.303	
	(0.343)		(0.245)		(0.313)		(0.339)	
Political interest *Urban		.028		-.206		.055		.122
		(0.157)		(0.112)		(0.133)		(0.144)
Political interest*Urban*University		-.029		-.064		.434		.241
		(0.304)		(0.217)		(0.255)		(0.275)
Political interest*Urban*Young		-.190		.134		-.098		-.229
		(0.133)		(0.095)		(0.186)		(0.200)
Political interest *Urban*University*Young		.401		.090		-.325		-.305
		(0.348)		(0.248)		(0.347)		(0.374)

Key: ***p≤ 0.001 **p< 0.01 *p≤ 0.05

	Wave 2				Wave 3			
	Citizen Activism		Cause Activism		Citizen Activism		Cause Activism	
	Model 14	Model 15	Model 14	Model 15	Model 14	Model 15	Model 14	Model 15
N	1072	1072	1072	1072	1074	1074	1074	1074
R²	42.40%	42.20%	6.80%	6.90%	35.38%	35.30%	14.50%	14.59%
Young	**-.689***	**-.663***	-.061	-.051	**-.531***	**-.515***	-.011	.032
	(0.137)	(0.130)	(0.098)	(0.093)	(0.083)	(0.075)	(0.089)	(0.080)
University	-.169	-.165	-.090	-.093	.278	.247	.250	.184
	(0.198)	(0.199)	(0.141)	(0.142)	(0.171)	(0.154)	(0.184)	(0.167)
University*young	.143	.097	.233	.221	-.113	-.144	**-.432***	-.345
	(0.221)	(0.220)	(0.158)	(0.157)	(0.198)	(0.180)	(0.214)	(0.194)
Urban	-.141	-.164	-.138	-.093	-.052	-.114	-.093	-.020
	(0.105)	(0.124)	(0.075)	(0.089)	(0.073)	(0.085)	(0.079)	(0.092)
Urban*young	.260	.245	.109	.109	.034	.073	.105	.040
	(0.142)	(0.149)	(0.102)	(0.106)	(0.107)	(0.114)	(0.115)	(0.123)
Male	**.133***	**.136***	**.130****	**.129****	.101	.107	**.263***	**.264***
	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.063)	(0.063)
Married	**.316***	**.317***	-.016	-.017	.084	.086	-.017	-.018
	(0.063)	(0.063)	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.063)	(0.063)	(0.068)	(0.069)
Employed	**.146***	**.148***	.015	.015	.097	.101	-.053	-.055
	(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.060)	(0.060)	(0.064)	(0.064)
Party Identification	**.225***	**.222***	.064	.067	.100	.091	**.220****	**.227***
	(0.062)	(0.062)	(0.044)	(0.045)	(0.064)	(0.064)	(0.069)	(0.069)
Political Interest	**.263***	**.264***	**.138****	**.136****	**.257***	**.260***	-.013	-.012
	(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.043)	(0.043)	(0.060)	(0.060)	(0.065)	(0.065)
Internal Efficacy	**.123***	**.122***	**.107***	**.107***	**.169****	**.173****	**.318***	**.319***
	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.056)	(0.056)	(0.061)	(0.061)
External Efficacy	.012	.012	.030	.029	-.075	-.074	-.043	-.040
	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.066)	(0.066)
Dissatisfaction with democracy	-.023	-.029	.050	.051	.009	.011	.091	.097
	(0.062)	(0.063)	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.067)	(0.067)	(0.073)	(0.073)
Trust in Political Parties	.071	.077	**-.098***	**-.099***	.030	.037	.082	.072
	(0.062)	(0.062)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.060)	(0.060)	(0.065)	(0.065)
Trust in Parliament	**.138***	**.135***	-.060	-.060	-.046	-.049	-.076	-.071
	(0.066)	(0.066)	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.067)	(0.067)	(0.072)	(0.072)
Left-wing	.015	-.012	-.040	-.039	-.074	-.073	-.091	-.092
	(0.087)	(0.087)	(0.062)	(0.062)	(0.056)	(0.056)	(0.060)	(0.061)
Exposure to political news	**.159****	**.159****	-.033	-.031	**.166****	**.165****	.008	.008
	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.058)	(0.058)	(0.062)	(0.062)
Group Membership	**.899***	**.856***	.048	.141	**.730***	**.666***	**.322***	**.418***
	(0.086)	(0.134)	(0.061)	(0.095)	(0.080)	(0.077)	(0.087)	(0.083)
Political Discussion	**.206***	**.205****	-.043	-.044	**.210***	**.211***	**.212***	**.207****
	(0.060)	(0.060)	(0.043)	(0.043)	(0.062)	(0.062)	(0.067)	(0.067)
Networking*University	.182		.148		-.324		-.333	
	(0.303)		(0.216)		(0.247)		(0.267)	
Networking*Young	.182		.002		.136		.103	
	(0.126)		(0.090)		(0.138)		(0.149)	
Networking*University*Young	-.668		-.192		-.055		.404	
	(0.351)		(0.251)		(0.322)		(0.348)	
Networking*Urban		.055		-.105		.251		-.202
		(0.162)		(0.115)		(0.148)		(0.160)
Networking*Urban*University		.170		.160		-.452		-.207
		(0.306)		(0.219)		(0.271)		(0.292)
Networking*Urban*Young		.169		-.031		-.054		.123
		(0.141)		(0.101)		(0.248)		(0.267)
Networking*Urban*University*Young		-.564		-.165		.163		.242
		(0.359)		(0.256)		(0.422)		(0.455)

Key: ***p≤ 0.001 **p< 0.01 *p≤ 0.05