Malaysia 13th General Election: Young Adult's Perceptions towards Election Commission (EC) on the Manipulation of the Issue of Indelible Ink in Social Networking Sites (SNSs)

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A C T

Background: the 13th General Election in Malaysia was over on 5th May and result showed Barisan Nasional (BN) won 133 parliamentary seats. **Objective:** this study attempts to identify young adult's perception toward Election Commission (EC) on electoral process regarding manipulation of the issue of indelible ink on Social Networking Sites (SNSs). At the same time, it also aims to identify the factors and impact that influence young adults' to participate towards Election Commission (EC) issue on social networking sites (SNSs). Social media are an emerging of information or can be considered as news source. **Results:** the rises of new communication as technology affords citizens varied and have opportunities to engage news content. The emerging of source of news in social media is (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube). This new media allow consumers to not only receive news from friends, family, or news organizations but they also easily disseminate this media content to their social network. The results indicated that young voters who engaged in social networking sites related to positive or negative perception towards EC. **Conclusion:** The manipulations of the issue in Social Networking Sites convince that the issue have affected on both young adults and the Election Commission (EC). Based on the finding, the perception among young adults towards EC regarding on the indelible ink issue could gives the bad impact on EC's integrity and credibility in handling electoral process.

INTRODUCTION

Last May 2013, Malaysia held its 13th General Election (GE13) following the dissolution of the Parliament announced by the Prime Minister on Wednesday, 3rd April 2013 and it was anticipated to be of the hotly contested in Malaysia election history. This is because the tight race between the two political coalitions today ruling coalition which is Barisan Nasional and opposition party Pakatan Rakyat. GE13 comprised elections for Parliament and twelve state legislative assemblies. According to Election Commision or *Suruhanjaya Pilihanraya* (SPR) Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Mohd Yusof, he saw in terms of citizen participation, this year was the highest recorded in the Malaysia history voter turnout which is 11.05 million voters, or almost 85 per cent of total registered voters.

In this election, Barisan Nasional (BN, or National Front) the incumbent ruling coalition, winning a total of 133 out of the 222 Parliamentary seats, 7 less than the 140 it got in 2008. BN continued its control of the Federal government when they won the election while the opposition coalition, Pakatan Rakyat (PR, or People's Alliance), took 89 seats. However, the result of GE13 was not accepted and unhappy by certain supporters or voters especially young adults of opposition party who disputed with SPR's integrity on organizing the election process. After the GE13, there are few of manipulation issues that been raised in Social Networking Sites (SNSs) like Facebook and Twitter to express their unhappiness over the conduct of the general election that is Election Commission (EC). EC credibility and integrity in organizing the election process being manipulated among them by claims that there have power blackouts at polling centers during the counting of votes, the switching and stuffing of ballot papers and boxes, phantom voters and the indelible ink that could be washed off (Shahanaaz, 2013).

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Pakatan Rakyat's President Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, also alleges that the elections were marred by fraud and victory has been stolen from them and he said that they will not recognize the Barisan Nasional Federal government (Shahanaaz, 2013). This issue happen because of the opposition party and their supporters is not trust in EC credibility for clean and fair in electoral process. The Election Commission said, if there was fraud people with evidence should come forward and lodge reports because EC too would to know. Election Commission has received so many complaints such as phantom voters that are some of the Malaysia people look like Bangladeshis, Indians, Nepali or Viatnamese. This issue is become worst and manipulated by supporters who not trust in EC being popular discussed in Social Networking Sites (SNSs) like Facebook and Twitter by uploading the video, post the picture, via status and tweet after the day of General Election.

The GE13 result was being protest mostly by young adults who actively using SNSs like Facebook, Twitter and You Tube. They held the discussion on the Facebook page, tweeting in Twitter such as do the hashtag "#" of unfair election results to make the issues trending and ask to create chaos in our country. In Putrajaya, a group of undergraduates protested againts what they claimed irregularities in the 13th general election. The protest was led by *Solidariti Mahasiswa Malaysia* (SMM) or Malaysia Student Solidarity and the protesters clad in black converged at the gate leading to EC heatquarters with carrying placards and cardboard spray-painted with the words "Demokrasi" and "SPR" (Shahanaaz, 2013). They sent student leaders Adam Adli and Safwan Anang as representatives to hand over a seven-page memorandum that called for fresh elections to be held and overseen by new EC officials to EC chairman Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Yusof. SMM also claimed the new government did not have the mandate from tha majority of voters.

Through SNSs, there are many accusation of fraud by EC and not single credible evidence produced by the opposition to substantiate their claim. For example manipulation of the phantom voters issue. This because those who have their own perception easily judge them by their appearance and say they are foreigners. But, the highest complaint was about indelible ink (Razak & Samy, 2013). This indelible ink was the most debated in Social Networking Sites especially among young adults where people could wash off the ink on polling day itself. In this GE13, the police received 1,069 police reports on the elections. Election Commission received 1,943 complaints through the election campaign enforcement team and their elections operations room received 745 complaints from the date of (Parliament's) dissolution until May 5 (Razak & Samy, 2013).

Since the Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (also known by its Malay acronym BERSIH meaning "clean"), held a public rally in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia to call for the conduct of clean and fair elections in the country, EC try to improve their General Election process by obtain samples of indelible ink that has been adopted by other countries to be tested by the Department of Chemistry. The purpose of indelible ink is to prevent people perception of voting twice by using different identitiy card (IC). According to EC even if the ink dissapear , and people try to vote again, their name and IC number on the electoral roll would have been checked and crossed out at the polling centre by the political parties. This is also leads to positive and negative perception of Social Networking users especially young adults' towards this indelible ink issue during GE13 process.

Literature review:
Social networking sites (snss) and politics:

The rapid development and the increasing of information and communication technologies (ICTs) have facilitated the rise of highly networked societies in the political arena. Generally, there are many views that online media have the potential to transform the political landscape by introducing new means to produce, reproduce, and share information in a wide range of political contexts.

According to the Mass Communication and Society study, the ability to express political views and opinions online plays an important role for social media in campaigns. Social media allow users to not only seek information but also interact with others through online expression such as posting political commentaries on blogs and social network sites and sharing multimedia commentary (Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010).

In Malaysia, traditional media like television, radio, and newspaper are the medium that still priority to gain public attention compared to new media like Facebook and Twitter. The growth and popularity of social media is became the order of the day in cyberspace to demands for more political and social reforms by young urban middle class, transparency and accountability and also with discontentment on the government's. The question would be how far and how the powerful capability of new social media influences the involvement of Malaysia's youth in their attempt to review or even change Malaysia's political landscape.

Political Campaign and Social Networking Sites (SNSs):

New social media gives huge impact on political campaign especially towards youth voters and supporters who used it. In Malaysia, new social media such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn not really fully utilized by politicians to reach and interact with voters and supporters as practiced by Barrack Obama on his election campaign. Social media is now a major aspect of the news media, and today, it is not uncommon for news to break on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. During the 2008 election, Smith (2011) stated, it was

observed that Barack Obama, who won the election, had a large social media presence. In subsequent years after this election, many other candidates for political office created a presence on social media as well.

Young Adult's Engagement Activity and Participation:

In this modern age, the media is one of the most powerful influences on how an election runs inside the country, and how it is perceived from outside. For an election to go well, it must be free and fair to ensure the citizen trust towards the Election Commission who organizing the election process. Social network sites, like Facebook, are now an important conduit for communication and building social capital. SNSs have become one of the most widely recognized by young adults as one of several possible sources of political news, and that many receive at least some of their news from these site (Baumgartner & Morris, 2010). Youth are using social networking sites, such as Facebook.com, MySpace.com, and YouTube.com, to engage in politics. Such sites allow individual users to post information and interact with others either one-on-one or in groups. A survey by the Pew Internet and American Life Project discovered that of those who connect to social network sites, 40% had used them to engage in some political activity, from getting information or signing up as a friend of the candidate to discovering a friend's political interests or affiliations during the 2008 primary season (Baumgartner & Morris, 2010).

Young Adult's perception on Election Commission (EC) and Electoral System Regarding Manipulation of the Issue on Social Networking Sites (SNSs):

From the study on perceptions of electoral fairness and voter turnout by Birch (2010), one of the most topic that has received limited attention until today is electoral integrity. According to, Ran, Lo, & Lu, (2011), a survey 1,097 respondents indicate that they perceived news about election polls the results have a greater effect on others than themselves, regardless of whether the effects were perceived as negative or positive. From their findings, it show that attention to election polling news enhance the perceive positive effects on self and others. Past studies on widely covered in news media showed that public tends to evaluate polls skeptically.

The extent to which respondents thought themselves and others to be affected by new media such as Facebook, Twitter or Youtube was related to how much they believed them. Perception is important in order to motivated people in any kind of situations such as during election. For instance, in highly competitive political campaigns, voters need more information to reinforce their political efficacy, which increases voting intentions. Voters will seek information to increase their knowledge about the election in order to reinforce their confidence and reduce the risk of decision making in a complex electoral process. The perception has benefits to citizens either the message is negative or positive because it would lead them to seek more information about the current issue that happen and discuss about it with others. Perceived positive effects motivated civic participation in coming General Election.

The Factors that Influence Young Adults' Perceptions Toward EC:

Social media are an emerging of information or can be considered as news source. The rise of new communication technologies affords citizens to have opportunities to engage news content. The emerging of source of news in social media is (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube). This new media allow consumers to not only receive news from friends, family, or news organizations but they also easily disseminate this media content to their social network. Previous study of predicting dissemination of news content in social media by Weeks & Holbert, (2013) found that, that response of news is the strongest predictor of dissemination. The more people consume news within social media, the more possible they will share that news with others. It has been argued that the most likely effect of communication is more communication, and much research confirms that exposure to news can lead to conversations or online discussions and information sharing. From the discussion of study on amount of political communication data generated by SNSs, Se, Yon, Steven, Sang and Han (2011) found that, citizens particularly, young adults engaging in politics in SNSs tended to focus on the negative aspects of politicians by mentioning their mistakes or create a controversial argument which is related to their offline activities.

Electoral outcome are based on voters' attitudes toward parties, candidates, and policy issues and numerous studies have demonstrated that the three proposed variables such as candidate perception, partisanship and issue position was play a crucial role in determining how an individual votes. Voter frequently engaging in political discussion would make their electoral decisions based on party identification because everyday conversations about politics are typically held between like-minded people, which reinforce and activate their psychological party attachment. Hence, it clearly show that young adults perception towards EC is not clean and unfair regarding the election results because, before the Malaysians GE13 was held, people was talking, raising and shared similar political views and held discussion regarding their interested political party or leaders in SNSs through Facebook, Twitter or Blog.

The Impact of Social Networking Sites (Snss) Towards Young Adults on General Election Issue:

According to Mohd. Adnan, Melina, Norafidah, & Norzaidi, (2012), they believe that social media has proven to be very powerful in the political landscape of nations and at the same time people are skeptical on its effectiveness. In fact, some people also argued that the new media damage the hard work of the government at democratization and as a function of a government instrument to stifle opposing views towards its agenda. The utilization of social media views as a stimulation for social change where it's widespread in many other country particularly in the politically dictatorial regimes.

Survey research from the 2004 U.S presidential election shows that young adults (18 to 29) are more likely than any other age demographic to turn to the internet for political purposes. According to Tedesco, (2007) nearly a quarter of the young adults surveyed (24%) reported using the Internet to either get candidate issue information, send or receive campaign e-mails, visit Web sites of political interest groups, find information about local political activities, visit candidate Web pages, engage in online chat or discussion, or post to a blog. He indicate that the number of young adults citing that the internet is a source for poltical information nearly double between 2000 and 2004 (13% to 20%, respectively). Nowadays it is surprising to realized that the percentage of young adults indicating that they learn something from newspaper or traditional media dropped.

However, other researcher agreed that, people who utilize the social networking sites (SNSs) or internet become more interactive. So, the Internet is a "master medium" on the basis of its interactive potential. There was potential for the Internet to bypass the one-way, hierarchical flow of controlled political media.

Methodology:
Participants:

For the research design, this study employed quantitative research method specifically the survey with a questionnaire set. The sampling frame for this study was conducted among young adults ages of 18 to 30 years old that are staying in Section Seven (7) Shah Alam, Selangor. It is a quantitative research where by the close-ended questionnaire will be submitted among the respondents by walking down the street and looking for young adults by asking their age. Moreover, there will be 150 respondents who are willing to spend their time answering questions on the paper provided. For this research the selection of sample was the convenience sampling or available sampling technique. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2014), it is a collection of readily accessible subject for study. It means, they are easy to find anywhere and anytime. The survey answered in about 30 minutes by the respondents. The research was administered to young adults at various places such as at the library, bus stop, shopping mall, and restaurant.

Furthermore, they are the group who spend most of their time surfing to the Internet than sleeping. In fact, this level of ages are actively has psychological stimulus and they will absorb and react based on what they have seen on Internet. For this research, the selection of sample was based on probability technique as the researcher will execute the random sample will be drawn as to conduct the survey as everyone on the road has potential to be selected, however, it also selected based on the age decided.

Procedure:

Instrument used by researcher in conducting this study is questionnaires set. The researcher has divided the questionnaires for 4 sections. Section A represents "Demographic Information", Section B represents "Young adult's perception toward Election Commission (EC) on electoral process regarding manipulation of the issue of indelible ink on Social Networking Sites (SNSs)", Section C represents "the factors that influence young adults' to participate towards Election Commission (EC) issue on social networking sites (SNSs)", Section D represents "The impact of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) on young adults on 13th General Election Issues", The questionnaires set is constructed in English language and overall there are 36 questions answered by each respondent.

Data Collection Procedure:

The survey has been carried out to identify the perception toward election commission (EC) on manipulation of the issue of indelible ink failure on Social networking Sites (SNSs). The question will be based on each variable of perception toward Election Commission (EC) and factor that influence young adult's perception toward Election Commission (EC) and the impact of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) on young adults on 13th General Election Issues. The process of procedure started with pilot study.

The researcher has used pilot study in order to ensure the validity and reliability of Likert scale instrument. Therefore, there were only ten samples used by researcher in Pilot Study. Referring to Wimmer and Dominick (2014) reported that, ten to fifty samples are acceptable to pre-test instrument. From the pilot study, respondents used approximately answers all questions only for 15 minutes. Fortunately, respondents have returned all the questionnaires to the researcher and respondents have also fully understood in every instrument.

Results:
Demographic Background:
     The respondents of this study consist of male and female young adults who live at Section 7, in Shah Alam,, between ages 22 to 24 years old (46%) while most of them are still not married (91.3%). In addition, most of the respondents (57.3%) are female. Besides that, most of the respondents (61.3%) are possessed Bachelor Degree and did their cast during GE13 (51.3%). Finally, majority of the respondents (96.7 %) involved in this study have Social Networking Sites (SNSs).

Research Question 1:
     What is young adult's perception toward Election Commission (EC) on electoral process regarding the manipulation of the issue of indelible ink on Social Networking Sites (SNSs)?
     Majority of respondents answered with a mean of score of 3.58 and the standard deviation is 1.227 (M=3.58, SD=1.227) which it could be concluded that the perception of young on the manipulation of the indelible ink in SNSs agree (33.3%) that "the manipulation of the issue of indelible Ink on SNSs gives bad impact on EC's integrity and credibility". The second highest mean is (M=3.28, SD=1.265) which is the perception of young adults on the manipulation of the indelible ink issue in SNSs is neutral (32.7%) based on their "believe the manipulation of indelible ink issue failure on You Tube has affected the reputation of the EC". Meanwhile, the lowest mean is (M=2.72, SD=1.437) which is the percentage of the perception of young adults on the manipulation of the indelible ink issue is (30%) strongly disagree that the issue being manipulated by opposition party which is "I feel that the manipulation of indelible ink issue toward EC is being manipulated by opposition through SNSs to gain sympathy from the supporters".

Research Question 2:
     What is the factors that influence young adults' to participate towards Election Commission (EC) issue on social networking sites (SNSs)?
     Mainly there are high percentages of "Agree" for each of perception item. However, respondents have been less chose for 'Disagree" scale. Majority of respondents answered with a mean of score of 3.82 and the standard deviation is 1.049 (M=3.82, SD=1.021) which it could be concluded that the factor that might influence young adults to participate towards EC issue on SNSs is agree on "use social media to seek for source of political information Compared to traditional media e.g. TV, Radio, Newspaper. The second highest mean is (M=3.62, SD=1.096) which is the factor that might influence on young adults to participate towards EC issue on SNSs is neutral (35.3%) that "SNSs can provide me a platform of political discussion among other users". Meanwhile, the lowest mean of young adults to participate towards EC issue on SNS is neutral (36%) with (M=3.10, SD=1.199) which is "I would like to discuss the controversial of the issue because I can maintain my relationship with my Friend".

Research Question 3:
     What is the impact of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) towards young adults on General Election issue?
     Majority of respondents answered with a mean of score of 3.71 and the standard deviation is 1.031 (M=3.71, SD=1.031) which it could be concluded that the impact of SNSs to young adults is neutral (39.3%) on the current issue such as general election issue. The second highest mean of the impact of SNSs to young adults is (M=3.58, SD=.906) which is "SNSs gives me the awareness of issues happened in 13th General Election". Meanwhile, the lowest mean is (M=3.24, SD=1.104) which is "I believe that social media provides me true Information about EC".

Conclusion:
     Based on the finding acquired from the data analysis, it can be concluded that most of young adult's percentage agree for each of the perception item. However, respondent have been less chose for disagree scale towards Election Commission (EC) on electoral process regarding the manipulation of the issue of indelible ink on Social Networking Sites (SNSs). Based on the items of perception, majority of young adult's perception towards EC (33.3%) agree that the manipulation of the issue of indelible ink on SNSs gives bad impact on EC's integrity and credibility in handling electoral process.
     From the result of the analysis data, the most important factor that might influence young adults' to participate towards EC issue on SNSs is agree (51.3%) that they used social media to seek for source of political information compared to traditional media such as Television, radio and news paper which is the highest (M=3.82, SD=1.021). This result is similar to Scheufele and Nisbet, (2002) in survey of 468 residents of Tompkins County, New York found on the role of the Internet in promoting democratic citizen found that, at a normative level, Internet has great potential to overcome some of the shortcomings of more traditional communication channel by overcoming space or time constrain that limit coverage in newspaperrs or on television news programs and from Internet it has social media for example Facebook, twitter and YouTube that

satisfies individual particularly young adults preferences rather than being tailored toward a specialized audience segment.

For the the impact of SNSs based on the finding acquire from the data analysis towards young adults mostly agreed (40%) that SNSs increase their level of awareness regarding the GE13 issue. This is consistent with the study of Tedesco (2007) when he stated that, nearly a quarter of the young adults surveyed (24%) reported using the Internet to either get candidate issue information, send or receive campaign e-mails, visit Web sites of political interest groups, find information about local political activities, visit candidate Web pages, engage in online chat or discussion, or post to a blog. The number of young adults using traditional media such as newspaper and Television is dropped. The researcher found that, (47.3%) SNSs have the the potential to shape young adults on negative perception to the EC without distinguish for the facts about the issue.

Through this study, researcher has demonstrated the factor and implication of the manipulation of the issue to young adults. The manipulations of the issue in Social Networking Sites convince that the issue have affected on both young adults and the Election Commission (EC). Based on the finding, the perception among young adults towards EC regarding on the indelible ink issue could gives the bad impact on EC's integrity and credibility in handling electoral process. The factors that influence them to participate towards the EC issue on SNSs is because they used social media to seek for source of political information compared to traditional media thus, by the utilization of SNSs among young adults it force them to expressed their opinion towards Election Commission for not being transparent and fair in election process. There is no doubt that SNSs can be used as a possible means of facilitating discussion talk such as on a election result issue on last GE13. This study also reveals that positive impact of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) towards young adults which is SNSs increase their level of awareness regarding the GE13 issue.

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