

Social Media and Political Engagement: A Study of Malaysian Youth in the 15th General Election

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of social media on political engagement among youth in Selangor. Utilizing the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) model, the study investigates how performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, hedonic motivation, and habit influence youth's intentions to use social media for political purposes. Key findings highlight that performance expectancy and social influence are significant predictors of political engagement, while facilitating conditions also play a crucial role. Hedonic motivation and effort expectancy show moderate influence, whereas habitual use of social media does not significantly impact political engagement. The study underscores the importance of perceived usefulness, peer influence, and access to technology in shaping political behavior. These insights are valuable for policymakers, educators, and campaigners aiming to enhance youth political engagement through social media. Future research should further explore the nuanced roles of hedonic motivation and effort expectancy to develop targeted strategies for fostering political engagement among youth.

Keywords: social media, political engagement, political communication, Malaysian General Election

INTRODUCTION

Social media has significantly transformed political communication, especially among youth aged 18 to 29, who integrate these platforms into their daily lives, including political engagement and decision-making (Kahne & Bowyer, 2018). Social media facilitates access to information, political discourse, peer influence, and civic identity expression, shaping political engagement (Boulianne, 2020). Despite traditional political engagement waning, understanding social media's impact on youth political behavior is crucial (Boulianne, 2020). Youths use social media for political discourse and opinion expression (Wike et al., 2022), making it vital to understand its impact on decision-making (Bossetta, 2018).

The 15th General Election (GE15) in Malaysia in November 2022 was pivotal, with youth playing a crucial role. Legislative amendments in 2019 reduced the political age from 21 to 18 and implemented automated voter registration, leading to one-third of the 21 million eligible participants political for the first time. The election occurred amid political instability, with three prime ministers in four years. Social media use in Malaysia surged by 2 million users from 2020 to 2021, reaching 28 million (Kemp, 2021), reshaping the political environment and increasing youth political awareness and engagement (Zalinah & Zawiyah, 2021). Movements like Undi18, which lowered the political age and introduced Automatic Voter Registration (AVR), highlight this engagement, adding 4.5 million new participants by 2023 (Friedrich Naumann Foundation, 2021).

However, young Malay participants show lower political interest and are less inclined to seek political news on social media (Kasmani, 2023). Many youths lack motivation and civic responsibility, reducing political engagement (Holbein & Hillygus, 2020). The National Youth Survey (2021) found over two-thirds of respondents showed minimal political interest. Despite efforts by political parties to engage youth through social media and traditional campaigning, results have been minimal (Fujiwara et al., 2021; Ida et al., 2020; Marquart et al., 2020; Ohme, 2019; Roman Hadi Saputro et al., 2023). Should this pattern persist, Malaysia's democracy may face significant ramifications, including diminished voter participation and heightened political indifference (Halim et al., 2021). When specific demographics perceive a lack of representation, it can result in their marginalisation and a decrease in confidence in democratic establishments. Tackling this issue could yield substantial advantages for the nation and enhance our comprehension of this prevalent problem. The objective of this study is to investigate the relationship of social media and youth behavioural intentions towards political engagement.

This study seeks to explore how key variables from UTAUT2 - namely performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, hedonic motivation, price value, and habit - affect youth' intentions to use social media for political engagement. Performance expectancy and effort expectancy refer to the perceived usefulness and ease of use of social media platforms in a political context, while social influence examines the role of peer and societal pressures in shaping political behavior. Facilitating conditions, such as access to technology and digital literacy, are also crucial, as they determine the ease with which youth can engage with political content online. Hedonic motivation, or the enjoyment derived from using social media, along with price value and habit, further contribute to understanding the nuances of social media engagement and its impact on electoral decisions (Oliveira et al., 2016; Alalwan et al., 2017).

By focusing on youth, this study aims to shed light on the underlying mechanisms that drive social media usage in the context of political behavior, with a particular emphasis on political choice. Understanding these dynamics is essential for political campaigners, policymakers, and researchers who seek to engage and mobilize youth effectively. The insights gained from this research could inform strategies to enhance voter participation and ensure that social media serves as a tool for informed and democratic decision-making, rather than as a vehicle for manipulation or disengagement.

The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing the factors that drive technology use, making it particularly relevant for understanding social media engagement in the context of political behavior. UTAUT2 extends the original model by incorporating additional constructs such as hedonic motivation, price value, and habit, which are particularly pertinent to understanding social media usage among youth (Venkatesh, Thong, & Xu, 2012). Recent research has applied UTAUT2 to various contexts, including social media and political behavior, demonstrating its robustness in predicting technology adoption and usage intentions (Dwivedi et al., 2019; Oliveira, Thomas, Baptista, & Campos, 2016).

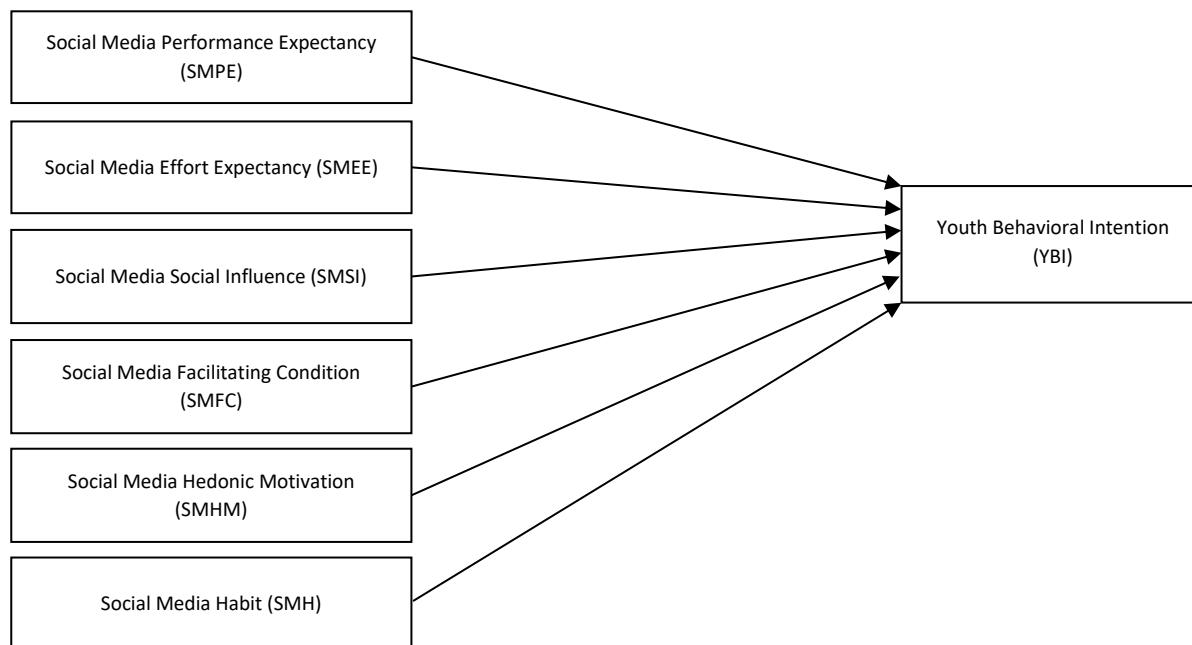


Figure 1: Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (Venkatesh et al., 2012)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Acceptance of Social Media and Intention to Use Social Media by Youth

In recent years, the widespread adoption of social media has significantly transformed political engagement, particularly among youth. As digital natives, youth aged 18 to 29 are highly active on social media platforms, making these platforms crucial for political communication and voter mobilization. Understanding the level of acceptance of social media and the intention to

use it for political purposes among youth is essential for comprehending modern political dynamics.

Social Media Acceptance among Youth

The acceptance of social media among youth can be examined through the lens of technology acceptance models, such as the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT2). Research has shown that youth are highly receptive to social media, primarily due to its ease of use, accessibility, and the interactive nature of these platforms. According to Venkatesh et al. (2012), UTAUT2 posits that factors such as performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions significantly influence technology acceptance. For youth, these factors are particularly relevant, as they expect social media to provide timely and accurate political information, while also being easy to navigate and conducive to engagement with peers (Dwivedi et al., 2019).

Hedonic motivation, which refers to the enjoyment derived from using technology, also plays a critical role in social media acceptance among youth (Oliveira et al., 2016). Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter are not only sources of information but also spaces for entertainment, which increases the likelihood of their adoption for political purposes. Studies have shown that youth are more likely to engage with political content that is presented in an entertaining or visually appealing manner (Alalwan et al., 2017). This aligns with the broader trend of infotainment, where information is blended with entertainment to capture the attention of younger audiences.

Furthermore, the social influence of peers and influencers on social media cannot be understated. Youth are highly susceptible to the opinions and behaviors of their online social networks, which can significantly impact their acceptance of social media for political engagement (Kahne & Bowyer, 2018). The presence of politically active peers and influencers on social media platforms can encourage youth to accept and use these platforms as tools for political engagement.

Intention to Use Social Media for Political Engagement

The intention to use social media for political engagement among youth is closely linked to their level of acceptance of these platforms. According to the UTAUT2 model, behavioral intention is a direct predictor of actual use, influenced by factors such as performance expectancy, effort expectancy, and social influence (Venkatesh et al., 2012). Research indicates that youth's intention to use social media for political purposes is driven by the perceived effectiveness of these platforms in achieving desired political outcomes, such as staying informed, influencing others, and participating in discussions (Yamamoto et al., 2019).

Social media platforms offer unique affordances that appeal to youth, such as the ability to quickly share opinions, participate in viral campaigns, and engage in discussions with a broad audience (Boulianne, 2020). These features make social media an attractive tool for political engagement, particularly for youth who value immediacy and interactivity. Studies have also highlighted the role of social media in lowering the barriers to political engagement,

making it easier for youth to engage with political content and express their opinions (Ong, 2023).

However, the intention to use social media for political purposes is not solely positive. Concerns about the credibility of information, privacy issues, and the potential for online harassment can deter youth from fully embracing social media for political engagement (Rahman & Ismail, 2023). Despite these concerns, the overall trend indicates a strong intention among youth to use social media as a key component of their political behavior.

The level of acceptance of social media and the intention to use it for political engagement among youth are influenced by a combination of factors, including perceived usefulness, ease of use, social influence, and hedonic motivation. Youth are particularly drawn to the interactive and entertaining aspects of social media, which enhance their engagement with political content. While concerns about misinformation and privacy persist, the overall trend shows that social media is a critical tool for political engagement among youth. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for political campaigners and policymakers seeking to engage this demographic effectively in the digital age.

Social Media as a Source of Political Information

Social media platforms have become a critical source of political information for youth, often surpassing traditional media in terms of influence. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok provide real-time updates, diverse perspectives, and easy access to political content, making them attractive to youth who seek immediate and engaging information (Kahne & Bowyer, 2018). According to Boulian (2020), the interactive nature of social media allows users to not only consume content but also to share and discuss it with peers, thereby deepening their political knowledge and awareness.

The algorithmic design of social media platforms plays a significant role in shaping the political information youth receive. These algorithms prioritize content that is likely to engage users, often reinforcing existing political beliefs and creating echo chambers (Tucker et al., 2018). While this can enhance political involvement by providing users with tailored content, it also risks limiting exposure to diverse viewpoints, potentially leading to increased polarization among youth.

Social Media and Political Engagement

Social media has been instrumental in increasing political engagement among youth. The ease of sharing opinions, participating in discussions, and engaging in political campaigns has transformed how youth interact with the political process (Bode et al., 2020). Social media platforms serve as a space for mobilization, where youth can participate in movements, sign petitions, and join virtual protests, often with minimal effort (Yamamoto et al., 2019). This low barrier to participation has led to a surge in youth political engagement, particularly around issues that resonate with younger demographics, such as climate change, social justice, and education reform.

Moreover, social media enables youth to connect with like-minded individuals and form communities around shared political goals. These online communities can amplify voices and

drive collective action, making social media a critical tool for grassroots movements (Bossetta, 2018). The viral nature of social media content also means that political messages can spread rapidly, reaching millions of users in a short period, thereby increasing the visibility and impact of political campaigns targeted at youth.

Social Media Performance Expectancy

The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) is used to understand technology adoption, including social media use for political engagement among youth. Performance expectancy, a key construct, predicts behavioral intentions toward social media use for political engagement. It refers to the belief that using technology will help achieve desired outcomes (Venkatesh et al., 2012). Studies show that when youth perceive social media as effective for accessing political information and engaging in discourse, their intention to use it increases (Alalwan et al., 2017; Shareef et al., 2019). Social media's evolving nature, with multimedia features and credible information, enhances its utility and performance expectancy, influencing youth's political engagement (Chang et al., 2020; Arora et al., 2022). Choi and Park (2021) suggest that perceived credibility and relevance of information on social media also impact youth's engagement and behavioral intentions. The literature consistently shows that performance expectancy is a crucial determinant of youth's intentions to use social media for political engagement. The perceived utility of social media in providing accessible, relevant, and credible political information significantly influences their willingness to incorporate these platforms into their political decision-making processes. Therefore, the following hypothesis is established:

H1: Social media performance expectancy (SMPE) has a significant positive effect towards youth' behavioural intention (YBI).

Social Media Effort Expectancy

Effort expectancy, a key construct in UTAUT2, refers to the ease of use associated with technology and its influence on users' behavioral intentions (Venkatesh et al., 2012). In the context of social media and political engagement, youth, as digital natives, have high expectations for ease of use, which significantly influences their intention to engage politically. Studies show that when social media platforms are user-friendly, youth are more likely to use them for political purposes (Arora et al., 2022; Shareef et al., 2019). The rapid evolution of social media technologies, with new features and improved interfaces, enhances perceived ease of use, increasing political engagement (Chang et al., 2020). Effort expectancy also influences perceived enjoyment, leading to higher engagement levels (Al-Maroof et al., 2020; Chatterjee & Kar, 2021). When social media is easy to use, youth are more likely to enjoy and engage with it for political engagement. The literature strongly supports the notion that effort expectancy is a critical factor influencing youth' intentions to use social media for political engagement. The perceived ease of use of social media platforms significantly impacts their willingness to participate in political discussions and decision-making processes online. Therefore, the following hypothesis is established:

H2: Social media effort expectancy (SMEE) has a significant positive effect towards youth' behavioural intention (YBI).

Social Media Social Influence

Social influence, a key construct in UTAUT2, refers to the impact of important others on an individual's technology use (Venkatesh et al., 2012). In social media and political engagement among youth, social influence significantly shapes behavioral intentions. Studies show that youth are influenced by peers' political activities on social media, leading them to engage similarly (Al-Hasan et al., 2020). This influence extends to broader social media networks, where widespread political engagement encourages youth involvement (Chu & Kim, 2021). Social influence is linked to social capital, motivating youth to engage for peer approval and network influence (Shin & Jin, 2020). Influencers and opinion leaders also play a crucial role in shaping youth political behaviors (Vafeiadis et al., 2019). The literature consistently shows that social influence is a key determinant of youth' intentions to use social media for political engagement. The impact of peers, social networks, and opinion leaders significantly shapes their willingness to participate in political discourse online, underscoring the critical role of social influence in the digital age. Therefore, the following hypothesis is established:

H3: Social media social influence (SMSI) has a significant positive effect towards youth' behavioural intention (YBI).

Social Media Facilitating Conditions

Facilitating conditions in UTAUT2 refer to the resources and support available for using technology (Venkatesh et al., 2012). For youth's political engagement via social media, these conditions include access to technology, technical support, and relevant content. Studies show that reliable internet and devices are crucial for youth's social media use for political purposes (Khan et al., 2020). Technical support, whether formal or peer-based, boosts confidence in using social media for political discussions (Zhang & Dong, 2021). The availability of credible political content also encourages engagement (Alharbi et al., 2019). Additionally, seamless integration of social media with other technologies enhances political engagement (Rahi et al., 2021).

The literature underscores the critical role of facilitating conditions in determining youth' intentions to use social media for political engagement. Access to technology, technical support, and the availability of relevant content are essential components that significantly impact their willingness to engage in political activities online. Therefore, the following hypothesis is established:

H4: Social media facilitating conditions (SMFC) has a significant positive effect towards youth' behavioural intention (YBI).

Social Media Hedonic Motivation

Hedonic motivation, a key construct in UTAUT2, refers to the fun or pleasure derived from using technology (Venkatesh et al., 2012). In social media and political engagement among youth, it significantly shapes behavioral intentions. Social media platforms, designed to be engaging and entertaining, enhance user experience through gamification, multimedia content, and interactive features. Studies show that when social media is enjoyable, youth are more likely to engage in political discussions and share content (Phua et al., 2019). Intrinsic motivation, driven by internal rewards, also plays a role, as youth engage more when they find the process enjoyable (Tuncer & Toraman, 2021). Social interactions and community building on social media further influence youth's behavioral intentions, fostering a sense of belonging and deeper engagement with political content (Alhabash & Ma, 2020).

The literature strongly supports the idea that hedonic motivation is a critical factor in shaping youth's intentions to use social media for political engagement. The entertainment value, intrinsic enjoyment, and social interactions associated with social media platforms significantly enhance youth's willingness to participate in political activities online, making hedonic motivation a key driver of their behavioral intentions. Therefore, the following hypothesis is established:

H5: Social media hedonic motivation (SMHM) has a significant positive effect towards youth' behavioural intention (YBI).

Social Media Habit

Habit in UTAUT2 refers to behaviors performed automatically due to learning (Venkatesh et al., 2012). For youth, habitual social media use significantly influences their intentions to engage politically. Social media, ingrained in daily life, drives consistent engagement with political content. Studies show that regular social media users are more likely to encounter and engage with political information passively, making political engagement a natural extension of their habits (Limayem et al., 2020). Habitual use also influences the frequency and depth of engagement, with repeated interactions reinforcing the habit of using social media for political purposes (Mamonov & Benbunan-Fich, 2021). This habitual engagement fosters behavioral consistency, making youth more likely to participate in political activities regularly (Raza et al., 2021).

The literature strongly supports that habit is a critical determinant of youth's intentions to use social media for political engagement. The habitual use of social media platforms, driven by routine and behavioral consistency, significantly influences the likelihood of youth engaging with political content, making habit a key driver of their behavioral intentions. Therefore, the following hypothesis is established:

H6: Social media habit (SMH) has a significant positive effect towards youth' behavioural intention (YBI).

METHODOLOGY

This study uses quantitative method of research. The researcher used items based on the variables in the UTAUT2 Model which have been tested by Venkatesh (2012) in his study. The dependent variables in this study are Performance Expectancy, Effort Expectancy, Social Influence, Facilitating Conditions, Hedonic Motivation, and Habit. At the same time, the independent variable is Behavioural Intention. The sample consisted of 150 youths in Selangor.

The items from the different constructs were adopted from the study by Venkatesh et al. (2012), which were then adapted based on the characteristics of this study. SPSS is used to analyze the data for its reliability, and correlation. If any of the items showed a loading value <0.5 , then the items would be omitted. This is because the items would have measured the same characteristics as other items in the constructs.

Reliability analysis is a measure to define the degree to which measurements are free from error and therefore yield consistent results. Correlation analysis measures the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the respondents' details for this study. This study involved 150 youths in Selangor. 39.3% of the total respondents were between the age of 21-23, 16% from 24-26 years of age. 40.7% of the respondents spent 2 – 3 hours searching for political information and only 8.0% spent more than 6 hours searching for political information. In terms of experience of using social media for political information, 30.7% of the respondents have less than 2 years of experience while 22.0% have 4-5 years' experience of using social media for political information.

Table 1: Respondents' Profile

| Characteristics | | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Gender | Male | 83 | 55.3 |
| | Female | 67 | 44.7 |
| Respondents' Age | 18-20 | 3 | 2.0 |
| | 21-23 | 59 | 39.3 |
| | 24-26 | 23 | 16.0 |
| | 27-29 | 6 | 4.0 |
| | 30-32 | 19 | 12.7 |
| | 33-35 | 10 | 6.7 |
| | 37-39 | 4 | 2.7 |
| | 38-40 | 25 | 16.7 |
| | Never | 2 | 1.3 |
| | Less than 1 hour | 45 | 30.0 |
| Use of social media for political information | 2-3 hours | 61 | 40.7 |
| | 4-5 hours | 30 | 20.0 |
| | More than 6 hours | 12 | 8.0 |
| | Less than 2 years | 46 | 30.7 |
| | 2-3 years | 37 | 24.7 |
| Experience of using social media for political information | 4-5 years | 33 | 22.0 |
| | 6 hours and more | 34 | 22.7 |

All items have been validated (Venkatesh et al., 2012). Nevertheless, the instruments were re-validated. An instrument is said to be valid when the Cronbach Alpha is more than 0.8 and not less than 0.6 (Chua, 2006; Henseler et al., 2009; Nunnally & Berstein, 1994). Table 2 showed the The Cronbach's alpha reliability test results indicate high internal consistency for all constructs measured in the study. Social Media Social Influence (SMSI) has the highest reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.900, followed closely by Social Media Effort Expectancy (SMEE) at 0.898 and Social Media Performance Expectancy (SMPE) at 0.863. Social Media Facilitating Condition (SMFC) and Social Media Habit (SMH) also demonstrate strong reliability with alpha values of 0.856 and 0.843, respectively. Social Media Hedonic Motivation (SMHM) and Youth Behavioural Intention (YBI) show good reliability with alpha values of 0.840 and 0.839, respectively. These results suggest that the constructs used in the study are reliable and consistent measures for assessing the factors influencing youth behavioral intentions regarding social media use for political information.

Table 2: Cronbach Alpha Reliability Test

| Constructs | Cronbach's alpha |
|--|------------------|
| Social Media Effort Expectancy (SMEE) | 0.898 |
| Social Media Facilitating Condition (SMFC) | 0.856 |
| Social Media Habit (SMH) | 0.843 |
| Social Media Hedonic Motivation (SMHM) | 0.840 |
| Social Media Performance Expectancy (SMPE) | 0.863 |
| Social Media Social Influence (SMSI) | 0.900 |
| Youth Behavioural Intention (YBI) | 0.839 |

Pearson correlation is widely used in research to measure the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two variables. The significance of the correlation coefficient can be tested using methods such as the t-distribution. Researchers should be aware of the limitations of Pearson correlation, including its sensitivity to outliers and the assumption of a linear relationship. Despite these limitations, Pearson correlation remains a valuable tool in statistical analysis for understanding relationships between variables. Table 3 reveals significant relationships between the constructs. Social Media Performance Expectancy (SMPE) shows strong positive correlations with Youth Behavioural Intention (YBI) ($r = .616, p < 0.01$) and Social Media Social Influence (SMSI) ($r = .563, p < 0.01$), indicating that higher performance expectancy and social influence are associated with greater behavioral intention to use social media for political information. Social Media Facilitating Condition (SMFC) also correlates positively with YBI ($r = .535, p < 0.01$), suggesting that better facilitating conditions enhance behavioral intention. Social Media Hedonic Motivation (SMHM) and Social Media Effort Expectancy (SMEE) show moderate correlations with YVBI ($r = .491, p < 0.01$ and $r = .173, p < 0.05$, respectively), highlighting the roles of enjoyment and effort in influencing behavioral intention. Social Media Habit (SMH) has a weaker, non-significant correlation with YBI ($r = .098$), indicating that habitual use is less impactful. Overall, the analysis underscores the importance of performance expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions in shaping youth intentions to use social media for political information.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation for Construct

| | SMPE | SMEE | SMSI | SMFC | SMHM | SMH | YBI |
|------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|-----|
| SMPE | 1 | | | | | | |
| SMEE | .354** | 1 | | | | | |
| SMSI | .563** | .254** | 1 | | | | |
| SMFC | .507** | .388** | .494** | 1 | | | |
| SMHM | .286** | 0.078 | .385** | .395** | 1 | | |
| SMH | .163* | .456** | .211** | 0.156 | 0.082 | 1 | |
| YBI | .616** | .173* | .627** | .535** | .491** | 0.098 | 1 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

DISCUSSION

The reliability analysis of the constructs used in this study, as indicated by Cronbach's alpha values, demonstrates high internal consistency across all measures. Social Media Social Influence (SMSI) exhibited the highest reliability ($\alpha = 0.900$), followed closely by Social Media Effort Expectancy (SMEE) ($\alpha = 0.898$) and Social Media Performance Expectancy (SMPE) ($\alpha = 0.863$). These high alpha values suggest that the constructs are robust and reliable for assessing the factors influencing youth behavioral intentions regarding social media use for political information.

The Pearson correlation analysis reveals significant relationships between the constructs. Social Media Performance Expectancy (SMPE) shows a strong positive correlation with Youth Behavioral Intention (YBI) ($r = .616, p < 0.01$) and Social Media Social Influence (SMSI) ($r = .563, p < 0.01$). This indicates that higher performance expectancy and social influence are associated with greater behavioral intention to use social media for political information. These findings align with the UTAUT2 model, which posits that performance expectancy and social influence are critical determinants of behavioral intention. The strong positive correlation between Social Media Performance Expectancy (SMPE) and Youth Behavioral Intention (YBI) ($r = .616, p < 0.01$), along with Social Media Social Influence (SMSI) ($r = .563, p < 0.01$), underscores the significant impact of perceived benefits and social influence on youth engagement with social media (Klöckner, 2013). Performance expectancy, the belief that social media enhances academic and social performance, aligns with literature emphasizing the psychology behind behavioral intentions. Factors like performance alignment and social reinforcement intensify user engagement, solidifying intentions to engage with social media (Chin et al., 2015).

Junejo et al. (2024) highlight the critical role of social media influencers in shaping youth behavioral intentions, reinforcing the strong association between SMSI and YBI. Influencers motivate actions beyond consumer behavior, promoting a cycle of influence within social networks (Stubb et al., 2019). Webb and Sheeran's meta-analysis supports the idea that social influences can significantly boost the intention-behavior relationship, particularly in online environments (Webb & Sheeran, 2006). This connection emphasizes the importance of understanding how digital social environments enhance the likelihood of youth fulfilling their behavioral intentions, reinforcing the roles of both SMPE and SMSI.

Additionally, research on health behaviors contributes to understanding the linkage between social influences and behavioral intentions. Interventions incorporating social norms have proven effective in modifying risky behavior intentions among adolescents (Polgar & Auslander, 2009; Nugroho et al., 2021). This suggests that social media could similarly play an influential role in fostering positive behavioral intentions, particularly when young people anticipate positive social outcomes or rewards for specific behaviors. The findings indicate that perceived benefits and social influence are powerful motivators for youth intentions, translating into actual behavioral outcomes.

Social Media Facilitating Condition (SMFC) also correlates positively with YBI ($r = .535$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that better facilitating conditions, such as access to technology and technical support, enhance behavioral intention. This underscores the importance of ensuring that youths have the necessary resources and support to engage with social media for political purposes. The positive correlation between Social Media Facilitating Condition (SMFC) and Youth Behavioral Intention (YBI) ($r = .535$, $p < 0.01$) highlights the importance of enabling factors in shaping youth engagement with social media. Facilitating conditions, such as resources, support, and infrastructure, enhance the capability to use technology effectively. Puriwat and Tripopsakul (2021) found that strong facilitating conditions positively impact user behavior in online applications. For youth, adequate resources and guidance empower effective social media use, aligning with technological acceptance frameworks (Alber et al., 2015).

Lim et al. (2019) noted that facilitating conditions, including quality information and services, are crucial for non-urban communities adopting social media for nonprofit activities. This support enhances youth behavioral intentions toward social media use for community involvement or academic collaboration. In health communication, Alber et al. (2015) emphasized the necessity of competency in social media, suggesting that perceived capability, supported by resources, increases intentions to communicate health information. Additionally, Sun et al. (2022) explored how social media self-efficacy correlates with health communication intention, reinforcing the interconnectedness of facilitating conditions and user confidence. This interaction highlights the importance of competency and supportive conditions in fostering meaningful youth engagement with social media.

Social Media Hedonic Motivation (SMHM) and Social Media Effort Expectancy (SMEE) show moderate correlations with YBI ($r = .491$, $p < 0.01$ and $r = .173$, $p < 0.05$, respectively). These results highlight the roles of enjoyment and perceived ease of use in influencing behavioral intention. However, the relatively lower correlation of SMEE suggests that while ease of use is important, other factors may play a more significant role in shaping youths' intentions.

The moderate correlation between Social Media Hedonic Motivation (SMHM) and Youth Behavioral Intention (YBI) ($r = .491$, $p < 0.01$) and the weaker correlation for Social Media Effort Expectancy (SMEE) ($r = .173$, $p < 0.05$) highlight key factors influencing youth engagement with social media. The substantial correlation between SMHM and YBI suggests that enjoyment and pleasure from social media strongly influence youth intentions to engage with these platforms. This aligns with literature indicating that hedonic motivations, such as

entertainment and personal satisfaction, are significant drivers of social media use (Al-Saify et al., 2024; Dhewandrie & Yuniawan, 2023).

The weaker correlation for SMEE indicates that perceived effort may play a less critical role compared to hedonic factors. Youth may prioritize the intrinsic rewards of social media over the effort required to use it (Puriwat & Tripopsakul, 2021). This suggests that enjoyable technologies can enhance behavioral intentions despite usage complexity (Dhewandrie & Yuniawan, 2023).

Additionally, contextual factors like peer influence and access to supportive technology can mediate the impact of hedonic motivations on behavior (Puriwat & Tripopsakul, 2021; Çiftçi et al., 2023). Platforms that enhance user enjoyment through entertaining content and social connectivity are likely to see greater engagement among youth, emphasizing the role of hedonic factors in technology acceptance (Ratten, 2011).

Interestingly, Social Media Habit (SMH) has a weaker, non-significant correlation with YBI ($r = .098$). This indicates that habitual use of social media is less impactful on behavioral intention compared to other constructs. This finding suggests that while youths may frequently use social media, this habitual behavior does not necessarily translate into intentional political engagement. This may be because habits reflect repetitive behaviors without conscious decision-making, as youth might access social media out of routine rather than deliberate intention. Social media habits may indicate usage patterns rather than motivational behavior, highlighting the need for understanding the distinction between habitual and intentional engagement (Reich et al., 2021).

The variability in social media interactions based on social contexts, content types, and user demographics also contributes to this weak correlation. The disconnect between habitual usage and proactive engagement strategies further explains the lack of significant correlation. Intentional interactions on social media, as seen in specific populations like homeless youth, emphasize the importance of deliberate engagement skills (Barman-Adhikari et al., 2016).

Thus, the analysis underscores the importance of performance expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions in shaping youth intentions to use social media for political information. These findings provide valuable insights for policymakers and educators aiming to enhance political engagement among youth through social media platforms.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the significant role of social media in influencing the political behavior of Malaysian youth during the 15th General Election, utilizing the UTAUT2 model. The findings underscore the importance of performance expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions in shaping youth intentions to use social media for political information. High performance expectancy and social influence were strongly correlated with increased behavioral intention, highlighting the perceived benefits and peer influences as critical motivators. Facilitating conditions, such as access to technology and technical support, also played a crucial role in enabling political engagement.

Hedonic motivation and effort expectancy showed moderate correlations with behavioral intention, indicating that enjoyment and ease of use are important but not the primary drivers.

Interestingly, habitual use of social media did not significantly impact political engagement, suggesting that routine use does not necessarily translate into intentional political behavior.

These insights are valuable for policymakers, educators, and political campaigners aiming to enhance youth political engagement through social media. By focusing on improving the perceived usefulness of social media platforms, leveraging social influence, and ensuring adequate facilitating conditions, stakeholders can better engage and mobilize youth. Additionally, addressing concerns about misinformation and privacy can further strengthen the effectiveness of social media as a tool for democratic engagement.

Future research could delve deeper into the nuanced roles of hedonic motivation and effort expectancy across different demographic contexts to develop more targeted strategies for fostering political engagement. Understanding the complex interplay of these factors can help create more effective interventions to increase youth engagement in the political process, ultimately contributing to a more informed and active electorate.

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