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# Political leadership and campaign strategies in determining youth behavior towards political participation

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**Abstract** The present research aimed to further investigate and understand youth behavior in political participation, specifically examining the factors contributing to Malaysian youth's political engagement. Several factors were identified as influential in this context. The research framework was developed based on scientific papers and publications to describe these factors. A qualitative approach was employed, involving 10 focus group interviews with members from 10 youth associations. The analysis revealed key themes such as leadership and campaign strategies that shape youth perceptions and behaviors in political participation. These findings validate the research propositions regarding the factors influencing Malaysian youth's political involvement. In addition to contributing to the literature on youth political behavior, this paper reinvigorates youth expectations and provides an in-depth understanding of current Malaysian youth political participation.

**Keywords:** political behavior, political participation, youth, leadership, campaign strategies

## 1. Introduction

Concerns about youth involvement in politics are widespread globally (Kitanova, 2019; Skoric & Poor, 2013). Youth are a crucial demographic for politicians and political parties due to their influence, viewpoints, and psychological propensity to embrace and promote new ideas (Fjerza et al., 2014). Early political involvement among youth is critical in predicting future political engagement (Vissers et al., 2012), as it serves as an indicator of adult participation (Earl et al., 2017). Additionally, Azis et al. (2020) note that youth are drivers of social change, and their current participation predicts future involvement. Political initiatives engaging youth may lead to more transparent and accountable policy processes, fostering a sense of citizenship among young people (de Sa Pinheiro et al., 2014; EACEA, 2013; Mohamad et al., 2018).

Research on political participation in Malaysia has primarily focused on the effects of social media, political campaigns, election processes, and voter turnout among young people (Halim et al., 2021; Shiratuddin et al., 2016; Salman et al., 2017; Zainon et al., 2017). However, these studies have not specifically examined youth behavior towards political participation. Leader characteristics and patronage are significant factors for youth involvement in politics (Avdeyeva & Matland, 2020; Azmi & Chinnasamy, 2019; Bakar et al., 2007). While young people are interested in politics and believe in the potential of the democratic system and elections to bring change, they lack faith in politicians (Khan & Musarrat, 2014; Pickard, 2022). Political campaigns and the media have influenced individuals to differentiate between voting rights and voting power. National and local issues, leader characteristics, and party manifestos are key factors influencing youth behavior towards political participation.

Research on political leadership and campaign strategies in Malaysia underscores the critical role of social media in engaging young people politically (Abdullah et al., 2021, 2022). The efficacy, knowledge, and perceived usefulness of social media significantly influence youth's behavior in seeking political information (Abdullah et al., 2022). Despite this, barriers to youth participation in politics remain, including factors such as age, experience, and perceptions of the differences between older and newer politicians (Nathen et al., 2021). The social environment and mass media are also pivotal in shaping youth political participation (Yaakub et al., 2023). As the political landscape continues to evolve, understanding these elements is increasingly important for political parties and leaders to engage effectively with young voters. Future research should focus on developing strategies to overcome these barriers and enhance youth involvement in the political process, particularly within the Malaysian context.

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Recent studies have highlighted a research gap in understanding youth political participation in Malaysia, particularly regarding the role of political leadership and campaign strategies. While Ting and Ahmad (2021) found low levels of conventional political engagement among Malaysian youth, they noted the potential of everyday interactions in fostering political interest. Yaakub et al. (2023) identified social environment and mass media as significant factors influencing youth political participation. Abdullah et al. (2021) emphasized the growing importance of social media in disseminating political information among Malaysian youth. Furthermore, Abdullah et al. (2022) revealed that efficacy, knowledge, and perceived usefulness of social media affected political information-seeking behavior among Malaysian youth. However, these studies have not extensively explored the direct impact of political leadership and campaign strategies on youth political behavior. This gap suggests a need for further research to examine how political leaders and their campaign approaches influence youth engagement in Malaysian politics.

Based on the discussion above, two key research questions emerge: 1) How do political leaders' engagement strategies influence youth political participation in Malaysia? and 2) How can political parties in Malaysia tailor their campaign strategies to better engage and mobilize the youth demographic? This study aims to bridge this gap by investigating the perceptions of cross-ethnic youth regarding leadership and campaign strategies and their impact on political behavior. Employing a qualitative approach, the study seeks to validate these perceptions and explore the underlying relationships.

## 2. Literature Review

### *2.1. Political Behavior*

Political behavior refers to the actions and decisions of voters involved in politics (Kanwal et al., 2016). It encompasses sociological models, psychological models, and rational theories.

According to the sociological model proposed by Lazarsfeld et al. (1994), voter behavior is influenced by group affiliations rooted in religion, race, or class. Some individuals base their voting decisions on social group identity, geographic location, and religious affiliation. This paradigm emphasizes behavior based on social group membership rather than individual action.

The psychological model highlights the importance of party identification (Flanigan & Zingale, 1998). It suggests that voters' political behavior stems from their psychological ties to a particular group, which influences their consistent support for that group. For example, youth are often influenced by their parents' conservative viewpoints and tend to support the same party, reflecting family interests in their political involvement.

In contrast, the rational choice theory focuses on political behavior based on economic considerations (Blais, 2000). This theory posits that voters evaluate the costs and benefits before deciding to support a party or candidate. It is an individualistic and interactive approach, where voters determine which political party is most capable of meeting their needs by weighing the costs and advantages of their choices.

### *2.2. Political Participation*

Participation in political democracies involves more than just voting; it also includes various social responsibilities that reflect young people's engagement. These responsibilities encompass understanding the political process, developing strategic thinking, engaging with media, enhancing conversation and discussion skills, and participating in voluntary activities (Enchikova et al., 2019; Schusler & Krasny, 2008).

Scholars such as Zuniga et al. (2012) define political participation as the process of gathering and disseminating political information, communicating with elected officials, engaging in political campaigns or voting, persuading others to vote, and choosing representatives. This study examines political participation from both offline and online perspectives. Offline political participation includes actions taken in real life, such as attending political events, fundraising for a candidate's campaign, voting, or working for a political party or candidate. Online political participation involves activities like signing petitions online, learning about politics through social media, contacting politicians via Facebook or Twitter, and commenting on a candidate's website (Soedarsono et al., 2020; Jennings et al., 2020; Zuniga et al., 2012). These activities often occur on social networking sites like Facebook.

This study provides an in-depth explanation and understanding of political participation by evaluating both online and offline engagement. Given that young people engage in both offline and online political activities, voting alone cannot fully capture the extent of their political involvement.

### *2.3. Leadership and Youth Behavior*

Youth participation in politics varies significantly and has been underexplored in research focused on voting habits (Kanwal et al., 2016). For example, Tracey (2016) found that youth were less interested in political events because it heightened their sensitivity to leadership issues. This finding is supported by Avdeyeva and Matland (2020), who identified political leadership as a crucial factor influencing youth political behavior. Despite this, there is a lack of research on how younger

generations view leadership and the external factors that affect their voting behavior, such as issues directly impacting them, media coverage, social media accessibility, and the popularity of politicians (Pandian, 2014; Saud, 2020).

In Malaysia's 14th general election, the shift to the opposition was significantly influenced by young voters, partly due to the popularity of a 25-year-old politician, MP Syed Saddiq, who represented the voices of the younger generation (Rahman, 2018). This was corroborated by Chinnasamy and Manaf (2018), who found that young politicians like Syed Saddiq and MP Fahmi Fadzil dominated social media, particularly Twitter, to engage younger voters. This contrasted with Tekindal (2017), who found that youth were generally disinterested in politics due to distrust in politicians and political parties, despite their concern for national and global issues. They viewed politics as corrupt and political systems as excluding youth from freely expressing themselves, leading them to prefer expressing themselves in private domains, which they found more transparent and free.

Parvin (2018) noted that youth participation has been declining over the years as they feel ignored by politicians. Youth involvement in politics reflects their aspiration for freedom of speech, open communication, and up-to-date information (Ismail & Azzis, 2016; Nonato et al., 2023). Known for 'fence sitting,' their support tends to be short-term, influenced by the success of political parties in resolving issues and fulfilling election promises (Abd Rahim et al., 2017). Azmi and Chinnasamy (2019) confirmed that youth political behavior considers party policies, leaders' attitudes, and current concerns discussed before elections.

Youth should not be criticized for their views; otherwise, they may withdraw from political participation (Pontes et al., 2018). Ongoing activities that engage youth should involve politicians, political parties, and youth groups. Youth should be seen as part of the solution to social problems rather than as sources of problems (Conner et al., 2016; Forbig, 2005; Mohamad et al., 2017).

Youth political engagement is significantly influenced by interest and knowledge (Aboelazm, 2023; Halim et al., 2020). A lack of awareness and political apathy are basic measures of low voter turnout (Gauthier, 2003; Pap et al., 2018). To increase youth interest and involvement in politics, it is important to educate them at local and national levels, hold politicians accountable to youth, and provide appropriate channels for their participation (Cammaerts et al., 2016).

### *2.4. Campaign Strategies and Youth Behavior*

During the general election's campaign, competing political parties would continue to attract the interest of voters, especially among young generations by using different strategies and techniques. A certain sum of money was spent on "emotional content," which aimed to inform and draw attention to a political goal. Because these campaigns allow for a systemic and coordinated dissemination of knowledge, penetration, and consequence rather than focusing on a particular subject, they have the potential to impact young political behavior (Azmi & Chinnasamy, 2019). Thus, this will affect the interest of the younger generation to get involved in political parties (Abd Rahim et al., 2017).

In the Malaysian youth context, the campaigns involving youth participation were more focused on economic issues such as unemployment and desire to have a better future. They wanted a country free of corruption, propaganda and racial issues (Fang, et al., 2017; Halim et al., 2018; Pandian, 2014). Due to the campaign themes or political manifestos that influenced them, the Malaysian youth were excited to vote during election (Azis et al., 2020). For example, in political manifestos includes cash rebates on mobile purchases priced under RM500, the reduction education loan system (for example, the PTPTN), lower car prices, implement better minimum salary and this were expectedly influence the young generations.

An updated political strategy that used the application of universal requirements and adapted to particular social circumstances replaced the earlier type of political campaigning that involved racial disparity. This relates to Pandian's (2014) findings which revealed that the behavior of young people, in terms of political involvement was no longer influenced by racial or religious inclinations. Today's generation regardless of race or religion, desires to be active in a more inclusive and multiracial politics.

## 3. Methodology

This study was conducted as part of a larger research project investigating youth perceptions of political participation in Malaysia. For this research, we defined youth as individuals aged 18 to 35, following UNESCO's definition. We randomly identified youth associations in Malaysia and contacted their leaders. From these associations, we selected participants and divided them into 10 focus groups representing the three major ethnicities in Malaysia: Malay, Chinese, and Indian. The composition was four Malay youth groups, three Chinese youth groups, and three Indian youth groups, with each group consisting of five to seven participants who openly discussed their opinions on political participation.

The Malay ethnic group consisted of four groups with 24 participants, having a mean age of 23 years, with 37.5% male (9 participants) and 62.5% female (15 participants). The Chinese ethnic groups had 19 participants with a mean age of 22.5 years, of which 58% were male (11 participants) and 42% female (8 participants). The Indian ethnic groups also had 19 participants, with a mean age of 23 years, 79% male (15 participants) and 21% female (4 participants). All 62 participants contributed to the discussions.

The focus group discussion was conducted with ethical approval to ensure the rights of participants were respected. Before data collection, each participant provided written consent. The principles of beneficence, justice, and respect for participants were rigorously adhered to. Participation was entirely voluntary, and any decision not to participate was respected without imposing any negative consequences on the participants.

Before the interviews, participants received an information sheet detailing the research. Researchers explained the study's purpose and key concepts to ensure participants fully understood the goals. Each interview, lasting between 60 and 90 minutes, was audio-recorded. A researcher led each focus group with assistance from a research assistant close in age to the participants, which helped establish rapport. The facilitators, skilled in leading group processes, followed a structured interview protocol.

This study employed a qualitative approach, using various theoretical lenses to analyze the data and identify themes and connections emerging from the focus group discussions (Fairhurst, 2007). In qualitative research, sample size often relies on the concept of saturation, where additional sessions do not yield new information or themes, indicating that the data collected is comprehensive (Mohamad et al., 2019). For most research aiming to understand shared perceptions and experiences among a homogeneous group, six to twelve interviews are typically sufficient (Fareed et al., 2022; Fareed et al., 2019). Researchers continuously analyzed data from each session, comparing new insights with existing data to identify recurring themes and patterns (Adamu et al., 2018; Hennink et al., 2017). The iterative nature of data collection and analysis was critical, helping researchers monitor when discussions began to repeat, signaling that saturation was near (Krueger & Casey, 2015). In this study, saturation was achieved by the eighth focus group, but the researchers continued to conduct two additional groups to ensure thoroughness. Peer debriefing and consultation with colleagues enhanced the validity of the saturation determination, ensuring that no new themes emerged (Hagaman & Wutich, 2017; Mohamad et al., 2022). Finally, researchers reviewed, examined, and analyzed the transcriptions of each discussion, classifying the accounts into distinct categories.

## 4. Findings and Discussions

From the interviews, several themes related to youth political participation emerged, including social media usage, perceived information quality, political interest, and political knowledge. Notably, two additional themes surfaced: perceptions of leadership and campaign strategies, and their impact on political participation. The youth discussed various aspects of leadership, such as the criteria for selecting leaders, opportunities for young generations to engage in politics, and the age of political leaders.

### *4.1. Leadership and Youth behavior*

An effective concept of leadership style, especially in politics, is crucial for determining a country's level of development. Candidate selection is essential in a democratic country. Trust was the primary leadership characteristic emphasized by the respondents, as revealed in the following comments:

….trust for leader...because trust is the main thing, so if they just go move forward with the manifesto but they have not trust towards the leader then I think there is no points of you voting [...] because here is not just about the manifesto, you need to believe the leader can do. So, the leader could be a leader for 5 years so we must trust and on the same time it's very important for leader itself to keep his words and if not, there is no use of vote from the citizens…. [Respondent 4, I1].

…citizen need to realize that they are going to choose the leader is not about short-term but for a long-term victory...so short-term victory is not rationale as citizen so don't just get influence by the manifesto […] actually have trust for leader, because trust is the main thing, so if they just go move forward with the manifesto but they have no trust towards the leader then I think there is no points of you voting because here is not just about the manifesto, you need to believe the leader can do... [Respondent 10, M2].

The findings reveal a significant relationship between trust in political leaders and youth behavior in Malaysian politics. Political trust, linked to leadership legitimacy, influences voters' decisions and is shaped by leaders' performance in areas such as economics, education, and health (Mohamad & Othman, 2020). Youth political thinking has evolved, with university students' perceptions of party leadership playing a crucial role in voting behavior (Pandian, 2014). Additionally, social media usage, perceived information quality, political interest, and knowledge are key factors motivating youth political participation (Halim et al., 2021). The increasing use of social media platforms among Malaysian youth for seeking political information has become a notable trend, potentially impacting their engagement in politics (Abdullah et al., 2021). These findings align with previous studies that highlight the importance of political trust, leadership performance, and social media in shaping youth political behavior in Malaysia, suggesting a complex interplay between traditional and modern factors influencing youth participation in the country's political landscape.

Youth participation is crucial for determining future political engagement, as their involvement often surpasses that of adults. Acting as catalysts for social change, their participation today is a strong indicator of future political involvement. This is highlighted by the following respondents:

… younger generation must include in discussion parliament, because now we are seeing that old generations sitting in parliament...now we are in Era 2020 […] they are still implementing the 1990's in this Era, it is not relevant at all. At least let youngsters, they know about current era with new fresh ideas […] it must be implemented […] because if we don't learn to be adult, we will be left behind [..] if they give opportunities for young generations, then we can learn to adapt. [Respondent 52, I3]

The old generation need to give opportunities to the young generations, when they not have the opportunity, many new generations are not interested in politics […] the old generation has to give way to the new generation or otherwise they will find another good way like migrate abroad [Respondent 3,M1]

However, another respondent from Chinese group has different arguments:

I don't think that it is wrong with the generations. Even if he is older as long as they are wised. Even younger generation will come out with something in matured... [Respondent 35, C3]

Research on youth political participation in Malaysia reveals a complex landscape. Traditional forms of political engagement among youth are declining (Halim et al., 2021), yet young Malaysians are more active in civic participation compared to political activities (Salman et al., 2017). Factors influencing youth motivation for political participation include social media usage, perceived information quality, and political interest (Halim et al., 2021). Despite lower participation rates compared to older generations, Malaysian youth engage in low-risk, diffused forms of everyday political activities, such as online activism and political discussions (Mohd Hed, 2017). Volunteering is another avenue for youth engagement, with motivational factors positively influencing participation (Abdullah Sahimi et al., 2018). However, draconian laws limit broader political activism among youth (Mohd Hed, 2017). To enhance youth participation, additional resources for economic, cultural, and social development are needed, along with a level playing field for both marginalized and mainstream youth (Salman et al., 2017).

Besides, other respondents include three ethnics (e.g. Malay, Chinese and Indian) indicated that the popularity elements of politicians influence them to involve in politics. This revealed with the following statements:

For me, for example Syed Saddiq, he is one of the politicians who can attract us to get involved in politics […] he is a role model for us as I see, he visualizes a lot and for exposure about politics in Twitter. [Respondent 10, M2]

Syed Saddiq is as a perfect example for the youngsters to come to the place, so they should stop criticize and start saying people as a role model and trying to follow their step and then you do the changes that they want to do. [Respondent 55, I3]

He is kind of attractive because he is young to compare with other politicians. [Respondent 24, C2]

Based on the findings above, younger generations in Malaysia are more idealistic in their aspirations, more open to change compared to older generations, and less attached to longstanding traditions. Notable individuals within this age group have taken the initiative to engage in politics, demonstrating this shift (Chinnasamy & Manaf, 2018). The relationship between the popularity of political figures and youth political involvement in Malaysia is significant, as charismatic and well-liked leaders can greatly influence the political engagement of young Malaysians. Popular political figures often have a substantial following on social media platforms, where they can effectively communicate with and mobilize young voters. The ability of these leaders to connect with youth through relatable and resonant messaging is crucial in fostering political interest and participation (Abdullah et al., 2021). Research indicates that Malaysian youth are more likely to engage in political activities when they perceive a political figure as trustworthy, relatable, and authentic. Additionally, the visibility of popular political figures in addressing issues pertinent to young people, such as education, employment, and social justice, further enhances youth political involvement (Mohamad & Othman, 2020). This dynamic suggests that the popularity of political figures plays a pivotal role in shaping the political landscape by influencing the level of youth engagement and participation in Malaysia.

Furthermore, another respondent highlighted the increasing significance of the youth voice in driving universal change toward social inclusion. The perspectives of young generations are crucial because government decisions and policies made today will directly impact their future. This is illustrated by the following comment:

For me, young generations still dare to voice something, if we look back at Twitter or Facebook, which gives a lot of views that cannot be voice […] if they want to get involved in politics they have to make sure there is a medium to make sure they can voice… [Respondent 62, M4]

The findings show that young people are increasingly recognized as crucial contributors to the country's development, with their ideas and participation significantly shaping the political landscape (Ahmad & Zain, 2021). Social media has emerged as a key platform for youth engagement in political discourse, enabling young Malaysians to voice their opinions and mobilize support for various causes (Ahmad & Zain, 2021; Salman et al., 2017). While civic participation among Malaysian youth is higher than political participation, there is still considerable potential for improvement in both areas (Salman et al., 2017). The 2008 General Election underscored the influence of young voters in shaping political outcomes, emphasizing the importance of addressing their concerns (Noordin et al., 2010). Recognizing student leadership and empowering youth voices are essential

for creating a progressive society. There are calls for reforms in legislation and constitutional systems to better represent student rights and ensure freedom of expression (Othman et al., 2023).

Overall, respondents from all ethnic groups exhibited a shared understanding of the concept of political leadership and its influence on their political engagement. As discussed in the interviews, exemplary leadership skills attract significant attention. According to studies by Colquitt et al. (2007), Halim & Azizan (2017), and Mourtgos et al. (2020), youth expect political leaders to possess qualities such as trust, which they perceive as indicators of decisive action. Leaders who uphold their own principles are highly esteemed by their followers, who look to them as role models demonstrating responsibility and depth of knowledge.

The results underscore that young people are a crucial demographic for politicians and political parties due to their ability to influence, their unique perspectives, and their openness to innovative ideas (Fjerza et al., 2014). Youth also serve as drivers of social change (Azis et al., 2020), and their current participation is a reliable predictor of future engagement. Furthermore, the findings indicate that younger generations relate well to younger politicians, are adaptable, and aspire to have more opportunities to express themselves.

### 4.2. Campaign Strategies and Youth Behavior

Based on the group interview discussions, respondents also emphasized that campaign strategies significantly influence their political participation. Across various ethnic groups, several respondents expressed agreement on the importance of studying the manifesto of each political party before deciding to engage. This sentiment is illustrated in the following statements:

The main criteria for me to involve in politics is manifesto […] the manifesto that benefit for me for example like education. [Respondent, 56, I3]

[…] which gives us benefit like allowance, PTPTN, job opportunity and also what will getting in return. [Respondent 1, M1]

[…] the benefit we can get thru the political that they promised to us […] […] during few years they can reach the achievement but as netizen we have to give them time not just talk bad and give the positive and should support towards the end. [Respondent 35, C3].

Besides, the Chinese and Indian respondents stated that they were no longer considering religious or racial issues to involve in politics and cast their vote:

…for me, other races can also give commitment compared to our own race, so we choose commitment compared looking at their race and the appearance. [Respondent 18, C1]

…I don't think I will look more on races [….] contribute and fair to all races […] as long as he is dedicated to do a job and his responsibility as a leader or he wants to do something. [Respondent 54, I3]

However, a Malay respondent tend to focus on religious issues before getting involved in politics:

For me, politics and religion play a role too […] if you want to get involved, you must look at religion. [Respondent 60, M4].

The relationship between campaign strategies and youth political participation in Malaysia is significant, as specific strategies such as manifestos, job opportunities, social benefits, and fairness play a crucial role in engaging young voters. Campaign manifestos that address the concerns and aspirations of youth, such as education, employment, and digital innovation, are particularly effective in garnering their support (Ahmad & Mohd Zain, 2021). Promises of job opportunities and career development resonate strongly with young Malaysians, who prioritize economic stability and career prospects (Halim et al., 2021). Additionally, social benefits, including affordable housing, healthcare, and education subsidies, are key incentives that can motivate youth to participate in the political process. The perception of fairness and transparency in the political system also influences youth engagement, as young voters are more likely to support candidates and parties that demonstrate integrity and a commitment to social justice (Ting & Ahmad, 2021). Overall, these campaign strategies significantly impact youth political participation by addressing their immediate needs and long-term aspirations, thereby shaping the political landscape in Malaysia (Huey et al., 2024).

Based on the above findings, the majority of respondents demonstrate an inclination towards multiracial political parties, reflecting youth's growing interest in politics due to campaign strategies that resonate with them. Additionally, respondents were motivated by the belief that voting could benefit them in various ways. This observation aligns with earlier research findings by Azis et al. (2020), Fang et al. (2017), and Pandian (2014).

## 5. Conclusions

Focus group interviews were utilized in this study to delve deeper into young people's perceptions of political participation. Factors such as leadership and political campaigns emerged as influential in positively shaping political engagement among the participants. The findings are expected to inform leaders, policymakers, governmental, and non-governmental organizations in crafting effective policies that actively involve youth in political processes. Additionally, this

research contributes to the literature on intercultural communication, political communication, and youth development studies.

However, the study also reveals limitations, notably low engagement in conventional electoral politics among youth, reflected in minimal interest in voting or attending campaign rallies (Ting & Ahmad, 2021). Contributing to this disengagement are perceptions of a closed political climate and politics viewed as self-serving. While social media and online activities show some correlation with political participation, their impact remains moderate (Muhamad et al., 2021). Youth's hesitance to participate is partly attributed to concerns about potential government repercussions, despite legal amendments aimed at increasing freedom (Muhamad et al., 2021). The influence of the social environment and mass media on youth political participation is significant, yet research in this area is limited in Malaysia (Yaakub et al., 2023). Although social media usage has risen among Malaysian youth, their enthusiasm for political engagement remains tepid (Abdullah et al., 2021). These findings underscore the necessity for further research to comprehensively grasp and address the factors constraining youth political participation in Malaysia.

In conclusion, this research provides significant insights into the factors influencing youth political engagement. It emphasizes the pivotal role of trustworthy, relatable, and authentic political leadership in mobilizing youth, who increasingly rely on digital platforms like social media for political information and engagement. Campaign strategies that address youth-relevant issues such as education, employment opportunities, and social justice are crucial in garnering their support and involvement. The study highlights the dynamic interplay between traditional campaign methods and modern digital strategies in shaping youth political behavior. Moving forward, it recommends that political parties and leaders adapt their approaches to effectively engage and empower young voters, thereby fostering a more inclusive and participatory political landscape in Malaysia. Given the globalized context, enhancing political empowerment among youth is imperative, recognizing their role as a significant demographic and potential future policymaker.

**Ethical considerations**

The focus group discussion was conducted following ethical approval to ensure respect for participant rights. Before participating, all participants provided informed consent, and confidentiality was maintained for all shared data during discussions. The study adhered to ethical principles of integrity, fairness, and transparency.

**Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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