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- In general, JournalMP is a journal for legislative studies in the Parliament of Malaysia, parliaments in the Southeast Asia region, and State Legislative Assemblies of all states in Malaysia.

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EDITORIAL

As we celebrate the fourth edition of our journal, we are humbled by the overwhelming response it has received from local writers, academics, politicians, and the public. The number of articles submitted is a testament to your interest and support. On behalf of the editorial board, I extend our deepest gratitude for your continued support of the journal. We want to encourage Members of Parliament to send articles to us to be published. MPs are provided with researchers they can utilise to conduct research and help them complete articles for our journal. Their debate skills honed on the floor of the House should be transformed into articles that critically evaluate issues that touch on the rights and interests of the people.

More than a year since the new government was installed, parliamentary sittings have never been quiet. Issues after issues, bills after bills, debates, discussions, and statements were made. Nonetheless, there is nothing to compare with the controversies surrounding the tabling of the constitutional amendment bill to the citizenship provisions. A brave move indeed, and no other government in the past had been willing to place their necks on the chopping board, given Malaysia's controversial and sensitive nature of citizenship law. The amendment was first tabled on 25 March 2024. Among other changes, the amendments proposed changes to Article 15 and Part II of the Second Schedule to allow children born overseas to Malaysian mothers with foreign spouses to be granted the automatic right to citizenship. The proposal was much applauded, considering the long-standing question of treating both parents equally when granting citizenship rights to their children.

However, some controversies have invited plenty of criticism from many quarters. Instead of maintaining the right of citizenship through law, foundlings and stateless children will have to apply for citizenship through registration. The proposal caused an uproar. On 22 March 2024, YB Datuk Saifuddin said Putrajaya decided to drop two proposed amendments involving Article 19B and Section 1(e) Part 2 of Schedule 2 of the Federal Constitution. If passed, these amendments would have deprived foundlings and stateless children of automatic citizenship and would see them needing to register for it instead. Be that as it may, the

bill has not been finalised and approved by both Houses of Parliament, and once approved, it must be forwarded to the Conference of Rulers for their Royal Highnesses' consent.

Another interesting issue is the Federal Court's decision in the *Nik Elin* case.¹ The Federal Court ruled that 16 out of 18 provisions of the Kelantan Shariah Criminal Code (I) Enactment 2019 are unconstitutional because the State Assembly has no jurisdiction to promulgate such laws. The applicants argued for the validity of 18 provisions under the Enactment of 2019, claiming that the Kelantan State Legislature does not have the power to enact laws on these offenses because there are federal laws covering the same. Most of the Federal Court (Abdul Rahman Sebli, FJ, dissented) decided that approaching the matter based on whether a federal law exists or not on the matter legislated by the state is too simplistic. The right question to ask, according to the Federal Court, is whether, in substance, the law deals with a subject matter that the legislature has the power to make laws on. What is essential is not the appearance of the law, but rather what the law is about.

The Federal Court ruled that 'offenses against the precept of Islam' have two types: controlling the propagation of religious doctrine, and any religious crimes will fall under the State List. The second type is purely religious offenses related to *Aqidah*, the sanctity of Islam or its institution, and those related to morality in Islam. Thus, the Federal Court concluded that if it is a 'purely religious offense,' the state has the power to make law, but if it is a criminal offense that is 'general in nature' and involves elements of public order, public safety, security, and morality, that apply equally to everyone in the country, such as murder, theft, robbery, and corruption, it falls under federal law that Parliament has the power to make law.

The repercussions of the Federal Court's ruling are tremendous. The possibility of more judicial challenges in other states is most likely. The government has taken prompt action after Iki Putra's decision by establishing a special committee to evaluate and propose changes to the law. The Special Committee to Study Issues Related to the Competence of the State Legislature to Enact Islamic Laws was established at the behest of His Majesty during the 70th MKI meeting on 28 Aug last year. His Royal Highness Sultan Sharafuddin said the special committee had

1 *Nik Elin Zurina bt Nik Abdul Rashid & Seorang Lain v Kerajaan Negeri Kelantan* [2024] 2 MLJ 150. See also *Iki Putra bin Mubarrak v Kerajaan Negeri Selangor & Seorang Lain* [2021] 2 MLJ 323.

been given one year to submit its recommendations to the MKI before bringing the matter to the Conference of Rulers.²

For this edition, the journal has chosen the following articles to be published:

The article entitled “Measures to Mitigate Covid-19 in the *Dewan Rakyat* (House of Representatives) of Malaysia: Implications to Parliamentary Privileges” explores the extent to which the standard operating procedures (SOP) for COVID-19 in the *Dewan Rakyat* (House of Representatives) of Malaysia should be permitted under the Federal Constitution of Malaysia on parliamentary procedure. Despite attempts to restrict parliament in many countries, legislatures such as in Canada, Australia, and Brazil have demonstrated their ability to adapt and move progressively to minimise disruptions that the pandemic might cause to parliament.

The second article, entitled “Empowering Development Planning and Implementation at the District Level of Governance in Peninsular Malaysia” discusses the district’s functions and roles that have seemingly taken a less visible and prominent role in development, particularly for the local communities from the district level and below. This paper provides a brief background on the development of the District Office in Peninsular Malaysia and its role in the development of the Malaysian nation and society. It examines the challenges faced by the District Office in Malaysia. The paper further discusses how the District Office can play a more prominent role in the nation-building and development process of the country, including in implementing an inclusive development agenda for local communities in Malaysia.

The article entitled “Parliamentary Debate Dynamics: Understanding the Paradigm of Young Parliamentarians in the 12th Malaysia Plan Mid-term Review Discourse” is a qualitative study exploring the dynamics of parliamentary debates, scrutinising the contributions of young parliamentarians through discourse analysis, utilising the Deliberative Quality Index (DQI) to analyse speeches during the 12th Malaysia Plan Mid-term Review Special Parliamentary Seating. Findings showcased a consistent range of DQI’s scores. Interestingly, no clear correlation between educational background and political exposure was evident, suggesting a complex array of factors influencing deliberative quality.

2 February 15, 2024, <https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2024/02/1013941/decision-mkis-special-committee-will-be-used-reference-empower-syariah>.

The fourth article is in Bahasa Melayu entitled “Helah dan Perbahasan Belanjawan 2024: Analisis Pragmatik (The Art of Evasion and 2024 Budget’s Debate: Pragmatic Analysis)”. The article deals with the tactical approach to parliamentary debate, where politicians master the art of rhetoric, analysis, and inference to navigate the dynamics of political legitimacy. The study used the Hansard as the substantial source, recording the strategies and art of evasive language in challenging-defending policies, addressing-mitigating issues, and strengthening-undermining the image that determines the integrity of the legitimacy of both the Government and the Opposition. Behaviour is more easily defined and justified. Lastly, the discourse background at the policy level is more heterogeneous, thereby enriching the performative nature of Evasive Language.

The next article is “Turning the Tide: A Comparative Analysis of Regional Parliamentary Approaches for Scaling up Climate Action.” The study explores the crucial role that regional parliaments play in promoting climate action across different regions. It underscores the necessity of cross-border climate action, given the interconnectedness of the climate system and the transboundary impacts of climate change. The study concentrates on the contributions of regional parliaments, often overlooked, in enhancing climate action through institutional structure. It identifies the approaches, work done, and strategies implemented by regional parliaments to fill the knowledge gap in the field. By empowering regional parliamentary institutions, this study highlights their potential to drive effective climate action and accelerate the transition toward a more sustainable future.

Another article in Bahasa Melayu, “Undi 18 di Malaysia: Pasca-pelaksanaan dan cabaran berterusan (Undi 18 in Malaysia: Post-implementation and the ongoing challenges), aims to analyse the implementation of ‘UNDI18’ as well as the challenges and post-challenges faced by young voters in this country presented by previous researchers and provide new findings in the aspects discussed by the Parliament of Malaysia. This qualitative study highlights the ‘desktop research’ strategy with thematic, narrative, and descriptive analysis. This article presents three main syntheses on ‘UNDI18’ and the government’s legitimacy formed through the themes generated from the content analysis. This article also found that social factors influence the challenges of young voters in this country and are dominated by external factors of voters.

An article entitled “Exploring the State of Mental Well-Being Among B40 Women” is a study about empowering communities, especially

women, through the All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on the Sustainable Development Goals (APPGM-SDG) through Income Generation (IG) and Community Learning Center (CLC) projects. The initiative consists of twelve modules on entrepreneurship skills and handholding, with a minimum of 10 to 25 beneficiaries from the B40 category who are mentored by the Solution Provider (SP) throughout the following three to four months. Each project was awarded an RM40,000 grant to provide the beneficiaries with skills and knowledge that will allow them to be an independent entrepreneur.

Another study on SDG entitled “Cultivating Sustainable Futures: Community-Led Farming Initiatives in Malaysia by APPGM-SDG” discusses food security and its challenges. Malaysia grapples with pressing food security challenges, marked by uneven resource access, fluctuating agricultural yields, and vulnerability to external factors. Recognising the urgency of these issues, APPGM-SDG has directed its efforts towards fostering food security and safety. With 200 ongoing projects this year and 53 completed projects in the previous year, this journal article explores APPGM-SDG’s initiatives in localising Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Malaysia, specifically focusing on community farming projects. The article aims to offer a holistic overview of these projects, delving into their multifaceted impacts and thoroughly examining their farming practices and socio-economic and community dimensions.

The Bahasa Melayu article with the title “Masyarakat Pribumi: Cabaran Masyarakat Orang Asli Peta Dalam Mencapai Pembangunan Mampan Di Taman Negara Endau - Rompin, Mersing, (Johor Indigenous Communities: The Challenges of Peta Indigenous Communities in Achieving Sustainable Development In Endau-Rompin National Park, Mersing, Johor) studies the implementation of various national development projects involving various agencies and the private sector, including in Orang Asli village areas, especially in achieving the 17 sustainable development goals that have been recommended by the government since 2015. However, the involvement and development changes in Orang Asli areas are still left behind now, and they should be considered so as not to disturb their original socio-culture. Therefore, this study was conducted in the Orang Asli Peta village (Endau Rompin National Park), Mersing, Johor, to examine the challenges of the Orang Asli Peta community in achieving sustainable development.

The article “Conceptualizing the People’s Parliament Approach in the Parliament of Malaysia” explores the Parliament of Malaysia’s transition

towards a more public-friendly institution, part of a global trend towards transparent and people-centric parliamentary processes. Utilising 16 articles from the Inter-parliamentary Union's Public Engagement Hub and additional literature, the research compares Malaysia's initiatives with those of the U.K., Australia, and New Zealand. The analysis focuses on public engagement strategies such as public broadcasting of sessions, committee hearings, public visits, research services, and the potential for a parliamentary budget office and petition systems. Findings indicate Malaysia's progress in some areas, like public broadcasting and committee hearings, while identifying gaps in others, like interactive visitor experiences and comprehensive digital engagement.

An article about SDG discusses SDG innovations and their impact. The article "SDG Innovations & Impact: Relational Approach in Enabling Innovative Solutions and Impact Creation at the Grassroots" where SDG localizing is a primary goal of APPGM-SDG and solution projects are the key component in this effort. Formed in 2019, mirroring the UK Parliament setup, the APPGM-SDG Malaysia has been the forefront organization in localizing SDGs in parliamentary constituencies. Despite Covid-19 and other practical challenges. The grounded research approach undertaken by APPGM-SDG paved the way for innovative grassroots solutions designed and undertaken by local organizations targeting vulnerable communities in their locality. From 2020 to November 2023, APPGM-SDG has undertaken targeted solution projects at an unprecedented level, with 664 SDG solution projects in 4 years with 364 solution providers around the country. These innovative solutions are developed through a unique relational approach between multiple stakeholders and engagements in multiple processes in the making.

The article "The Importance of Inclusive Development Planning to Ensure Social, Economic and Environmental Sustainability: Case Study of Kuala Langat Parliamentary Constituency" narrates the All-Parties Parliamentary Group Malaysia - Sustainable Development Goals (APPGM-SDG), the principle of "Leave No One Behind." Based on the findings of the issue, a mapping study conducted by APPGM-SDG in the Parliament of Kuala Langat in 2023 shows that inclusive development planning is seen to have a significant impact on ensuring social, economic, and environmental sustainability. This is evident when considering the level of awareness among the population in the Parliament of Kuala Langat regarding local government development plans, such as Local Plans and Proposed Development Reports, especially for industrial

development planning and new development areas, which are given significant attention.

The article “Youth participation in SDG-oriented volunteerism: Insights from Malaysia’s APPM-SDG platform” explains that engaging youth is paramount for advancing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The quantitative research studies the active involvement of Malaysian youth as volunteers in initiatives centered around the SDGs, specifically focusing on the All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on Sustainable Development Goals (APPGM-SDG) platform. Data was gathered from 323 volunteers who applied as volunteers at the Malaysian Youth SDG Summits, the Young Asian Voices for the United Nations We Need, and the Malaysian Youth SDG Agent 22/23 and 23/24 Cohort initiatives. The study aims to identify youths’ demographic involvement in volunteerism through the initiatives of APPGM-SDG. This research analyses the nature of youth participation in SDG-oriented volunteerism, investigating their demographic concentration in active engagement, including engagement by gender, organisational affiliation, and prior experience in volunteerism actively contributing to voluntary works related to the SDGs.

Finally, the article “UN Resolutions on the Role of Parliaments and Parliamentarians in Accelerating the Achievements of the SDGs.” discusses the impact of the adoption of “Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” on 25 September 2015 at the United Nations General Assembly. Strong calls for multi-stakeholder engagements have been in line with SDG 17.17 on partnerships between public and public-private sectors and civil society. This article highlights the role of four parliamentary groups actively mobilising MPs engaged with the SDGs at the international level. These are the *Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)*, the *Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)*, *Parliamentarians for the Global Goals*, and *Parliamentarians for Global Action*. These four groups have been pivotal in linking MPs with the UN on SDGs. The article ends with reflections and lessons on the role Malaysian MPs are playing through the APPGM-SDG. There is a need for greater visibility in public policy advocacy in Malaysia and on the global stage. To this end, more resources must be made available to MPs to encourage active involvement, especially at the United Nations in New York.

Prof Dr Nik Ahmad Kamal bin Nik Mahmud
Editor-in-Chief

CONTENTS

v **Editorial**

Prof. Dr. Nik Ahmad Kamal bin Nik Mahmud

Articles

- 1 Conceptualising the People's Parliament Approach in the Parliament of Malaysia
Azreen Haniza Abdul Hai, Mohd Zulhelmi Syafuddin Tan and Augustine Leonard Jen
- 25 Measures to Mitigate Covid-19 in the Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives) of Malaysia: Implications to Parliamentary Privileges
Muthanna Saari
- 51 Parliamentary Debate Dynamics: Understanding the Paradigm of Young Parliamentarians in the 12th Malaysia Plan Mid-Term Review Discourse
Mohd Shahar Abdullah, Mohd Zulhelmi Syafuddin Tan, and Ashka Ayla Saidin
- 85 Seni Helah dan Perbahasan Belanjawan 2024: Analisis Pragmatik
The Art of Evasion and 2024 Budget's Debate: Pragmatic Analysis
Muhammad Qhidir bin Mat Isa
- 121 Undi 18 di Malaysia: Pasca Pelaksanaan dan Cabaran Berterusan
Undi 18 in Malaysia: Post-Implementation and the Ongoing Challenges
Nuraini binti Roslan dan Mohd Zulhelmi bin Syafuddin Tan
- 167 Turning the Tide: A Comparative Analysis of Regional Parliamentary Approaches for Scaling up Climate Action
Amy Tam Lay Choon and Dr Teo Ho Pin
- 203 UN Resolutions on the Role of Parliaments and Parliamentarians in Accelerating the Achievements of the SDGs
Prof. Datuk Dr. Denison Jayasooria
- 223 Youth participation in SDG-Oriented Volunteerism: Insights from Malaysia's APPGM-SDG Platform
Philus Thomas and Siti Ghazali
- 253 Kepentingan Perancangan Pembangunan Inklusif bagi Memastikan Kelestarian Sosial, Ekonomi dan Alam Sekitar: Kajian Kes Parlimen Kuala Langat
The Importance of Inclusive Development Planning to Ensure Social, Economic and Environmental Sustainability: Case Study of Kuala Langat Parliamentary Constituency
Nurul Syaza Mazelan
- 271 Empowering Development Planning and Implementation at the District Level of Governance in Peninsular Malaysia
Teo Lee Ken

-
- 293 Exploring the State of Mental Well-Being Among B40 Women
Nurul Syahirah binti Abd Aziz
- 307 Masyarakat Pribumi: Cabaran Masyarakat Orang Asli Peta dalam Mencapai Pembangunan Mampan di Taman Negara Endau-Rompin, Mersing, Johor
Indigenous Communities: The Challenges of Peta Indigenous Communities in Achieving Sustainable Development in Endau-Rompin National Park, Mersing, Johor
Wan Suzita Wan Ibrahim
- 325 Cultivating Sustainable Futures: Community-Led Farming Initiatives in Malaysia by APPGM-SDG
Dana Claudia Undan Dumpangol
- 344 SDG Innovations & Impact: Relational Approach in Enabling Innovative Solutions and Impact Creation at the Grassroots
Paniirselvam Jayaraman

Conceptualising the People's Parliament Approach in the Parliament of Malaysia

*Azreen Haniza Abdul Hai, * Mohd Zulhelmi Syafuddin Tan** and Augustine Leonard Jen****

Abstract

This study explores the Parliament of Malaysia's transition towards a more public-friendly institution, part of a global trend towards transparent and people-centric parliamentary processes. Utilising 16 articles from the Inter-parliamentary Union's Public Engagement Hub and additional literature, the research compares Malaysia's initiatives with those of the U.K., Australia, and New Zealand. The analysis focuses on public engagement strategies such as public broadcasting of sessions, committee hearings, public visits, research services, and the potential for a parliamentary budget office and petition systems. Findings indicate Malaysia's progress in some areas, like public broadcasting and committee hearings, while identifying gaps in others, like interactive visitor experiences and comprehensive digital engagement. The study highlights the challenge of balancing security with accessibility, especially under legal frameworks like the Protected Areas and Protected Places Act 1959 (Act 298). Recommendations include enhancing the Parliament's virtual tour and establishing a more engaging visitor centre. The study concludes that while Malaysia has made commendable strides in public engagement, there are opportunities for improvement, particularly in areas requiring substantial legal and structural changes. This study contributes to understanding the dynamics of public engagement in parliamentary processes, underscoring the significance of a People's Parliament spirit in democratic governance.

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Keywords: People’s Parliament, Public Engagement, Parliamentary Transparency, Democratic Trust, Legislative Accessibility

Introduction

The Parliament of Malaysia is the nation’s highest legislative body in a constitutional monarch democratic system, where it enacts, amends, and approves federal laws, examines government policies and approves government spending. However, this institution was frequently perceived as ‘exclusive’ in Malaysia due to its closed-door approach during the past government era.¹ Starting from the 15th Parliament,² the Parliament of Malaysia has embarked on a commendable mission to foster a stronger bond between the institution and the citizens it represents. This endeavour resonates well with the mantra ‘*Merakyatkan Parlimen*’ or, in English, ‘People’s Parliament’, a sentiment passionately echoed by the management of the Parliament of Malaysia, aimed at making the Parliament more people-centric. Traditionally, governmental institutions, including the Parliament, have been bound by stringent regulatory frameworks such as the Protected Areas and Protected Places Act 1959 (Act 298), which tended to create a veil of exclusivity around these vital institutions. While crucial for maintaining security and order, this legal framework often contributed to a perceived distance between the Parliament and the people it serves.

The concept of a people-centric approach in parliamentary practices has garnered significant attention in recent years, emphasising the importance of fostering a closer relationship between legislative bodies and the citizens they represent.^{3,4,5,6,7,8} As democratic institutions

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- 1 Nazaruddin, M. I., & Yusoff, M. A. (2023). ‘Parliamentary Institutional Reforms in Malaysia: The Case of the Pakatan Harapan Era, 2018-2020’, *Kajian Malaysia*, 41(2), 21-41.
 - 2 Note: The 15th Parliament sitting commenced with the *Dewan Rakyat* convening for a two-day sitting on 19 and 20, followed by *Dewan Negara* on 21 December 2023.
 - 3 Narud, H. M., & Valen, H. (2008). ‘The Norwegian Storting: “People’s Parliament” or Coop for “Political Broilers”?’’, *World Political Science*, 4(2).
 - 4 Callenbach, E., Phillips, M., & Sutherland, K. (2008). *A People’s Parliament/A Citizen Legislature*. Exeter: Imprint Academic.
 - 5 Kimari, W., & Rasmussen, J. (2010). ‘“Setting the agenda for our leaders from under a tree”: The People’s Parliament in Nairobi’, *Nokoko*, 1, 131-159.
 - 6 Mocek, O. (2012). ‘Europe’s Parliament: People, Places, Politics’, *Czech Journal of Political Science*, 4, 388-391.
 - 7 Walker, A. (2012). ‘A people’s parliament?’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 65(1), 270-280.
 - 8 Russell, M. (2021). ‘Brexit and parliament: The anatomy of a perfect storm’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 74(2), 443-463.

worldwide strive for greater transparency and public engagement, the Parliament of Malaysia stands as a noteworthy case for examination. The nation's unique political landscape, coupled with its rich cultural fabric of society, offers a distinct backdrop against which its parliamentary practices can be evaluated. This study explores evolution, challenges, and successes of Malaysia's people-centric parliamentary initiatives' through a comprehensive analysis of existing literature.

Purpose of the review

Understanding the dynamics between parliamentary institutions and the public is crucial in evaluating the effectiveness of a people-centric approach. This review is dedicated to:

- i. assessing the strategies and measures undertaken by the Parliament of Malaysia to transition towards becoming a more public-friendly institution;
- ii. identifying and discussing challenges encountered by the Parliament of Malaysia in the people-oriented transformation; and
- iii. evaluating the potential implications of a people-oriented parliamentary approach for the citizens of Malaysia, considering how such an approach can influence civic participation, trust in governance, and the democratic process.

This review's objective was achieved by analysing different research findings related to parliamentary public engagement. The insights from the literature were then organised based on specific themes to provide a structured analysis. Sixteen (16) articles related to the global people-centric approach of parliaments worldwide, published between 2022 and 2023 and retrieved from the Inter-parliamentary Union's Public Engagement Hub,⁹ were meticulously assessed to form the basis of this review. Additionally, literature obtained from the databases subscribed by the Parliament of Malaysia was also subjected to content analysis.

⁹ Inter-Parliamentary Union. See Inter-Parliamentary Union, 'Public Engagement Hub' <https://www.ipu.org/innovation-hub/public-engagement-hub> accessed 3 November 2023.

Evidence of the exclusivity of the Parliament of Malaysia

In a recent session of the House of Representatives (*Dewan Rakyat*), Honourable Sim Tze Tzin, Member of Parliament for Bayan Baru, voiced concerns over the accessibility challenges faced by government officers at the Parliament of Malaysia. He highlighted the prolonged wait times and the burdensome security checks that these officers, some holding high ranks, must endure, especially during significant events like the tabling of Budget 2023.

... We, the Members of Parliament, have a proposal brought forward by the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs to ensure a smooth passage for the members of this House. However, for the officers outside (of the Parliament of Malaysia), especially this morning, every day, including today, tomorrow, and Friday (for Budget 2023 tabling); many government officers will enter the House to assist the (respective) Ministers in answering questions. I observed a very long queue. Some officers told me they had to wait at least 40 minutes. A 30-minute wait used to be usual, but now half an hour just to reach the security post (at the Parliament of Malaysia entrance) to enter the premise is quite long. I noticed that this process, where officers have to queue for such extended periods, results in a significant loss of productive hours. Each of these officers, holding ranks such as director-general and secretary-general, however, unfortunately, waste their time in these queues. I kindly request that you (the Speaker of Dewan Rakyat) instruct the Chief Administrator (of the Parliament of Malaysia) and Chief Security Officer (of the Parliament of Malaysia) to relax the process (of entering).¹⁰

However, the Speaker of *Dewan Rakyat*, Honourable Tan Sri Dato' Johari bin Abdul, responded:

... The issue raised by the Honourable Member (Honourable Sim Tze Tzin, Member of Parliament for Bayan Baru) will be looked into. However, I advise that Standing Order 1(e)¹¹ (of the Dewan Rakyat) should only be implied to the Members of Parliament. Nevertheless, I advise government officers to come early. Arrive early. They know their duties— the Honourable Member from Bayan Baru might arrive at 9:25 in the morning; hence I suggest officers come at 8:15 in the

10 Parliament of Malaysia, *Hansard of Dewan Rakyat*, 22 February 2023, p. 24.

11 Parliament of Malaysia, *Standing Orders of Dewan Rakyat*, para. 1(e).

morning. If they come at 8:15, there will not be any congestion. So, if that can be resolved, especially for the officers, please come early.

The second problem is that sometimes a car might have four people. So, (sometimes the) security requests clearance (was only being pre-applied) for one person. Therefore, they have to check (all the people in the car) because this is also about our safety. Imagine if— God forbid, there is someone with ill intentions, and we could all be at risk in this House. I do not want to take that risk, and I will ensure that the safety of the Honourable Members is of the utmost importance and prioritised by me.¹²

This exchange in the *Dewan Rakyat* brings to the forefront the underlying issue of the Parliament's exclusivity. While it stands as a symbol of democracy, the stringent security measures and limited accessibility suggest otherwise. The fact that even government officers, fundamental to the nation's administration, face such hurdles is a testament to the restrictive nature of the institution. It beckons a reflection on the balance between security and openness, emphasising the need for democratic institutions to be both secure and welcoming.

Protected areas and Protected Places Act 1959 (Act 298)

The Protected Areas and Protected Places Act 1959 (Act 298) is a Malaysian gazetted act enacted to safeguard areas and places designated as crucial for national security. Under this Act 298, the government is authorised to declare any area or place as "protected" if it is deemed necessary for the nation's security. Such designations come with stringent restrictions on access, photography, and other activities, which can only be undertaken with proper authorisation. The enforcement of these restrictions falls to the police and military, who are tasked with preventing any security breaches within these zones. Violations of Act 298 carry serious consequences, including fines and imprisonment, emphasising the government's commitment to maintaining the integrity and security of these protected areas and places. Act 298 acts as a critical component of Malaysia's legal framework to control access to sensitive locations, including military installations and government buildings, ensuring they are shielded from actions that could compromise national security.

Unintentionally, Act 298 shapes the image of the Parliament of Malaysia's as an exclusive institution. It imposes a legal framework that

12 Parliament of Malaysia, *Hansard of Dewan Rakyat*, 22 February 2023, pp. 24-25.

necessitates stringent security protocols by designating the parliamentary complex as a protected area. While essential for safeguarding the nation's legislative core, these protocols also create an aura of inaccessibility to the general public. The Act's provisions for security checks and restricted entry have a dual effect. On the one hand, they serve the critical function of ensuring the safety of the Members of Parliament and the integrity of the parliamentary proceedings. However, on the other hand, they inadvertently contribute to a perception of the Parliament of Malaysia as a distant, fortress-like entity, separated from the day-to-day lives of the citizens it represents. The necessity of balancing security with public accessibility becomes a pressing concern in this context. While Act 298 ensures the Parliament's security, it also raises questions about the extent to which such measures should impede the public's right to engage with their democratic institution. The challenge lies in finding a middle ground where security measures do not overly encroach upon the principles of openness and transparency that are fundamental to a democracy.

Parliament of Malaysia Open Day 2023

A significant manifestation of bridging this gap was vividly displayed during the grandiose event, Parliament of Malaysia Open Day, held from 6 to 7 May 2023, at the Parliament's building in Kuala Lumpur. Themed "*Merakyatkan Parlimen, Warisan Negara,*" which translates to "Bringing Parliament to the People, a National Heritage," the event served as a robust medium to foster closer relations between parliamentary proceedings and the public. The opening ceremony was graced by the Honourable Senator Tan Sri Dato' Seri Utama Dr. Rais Yatim, former President of the Senate, alongside the Honourable Tan Sri Dato' Johari Abdul, Speaker of the House of Representatives. The event featured enlightening speeches, a special video presentation, and a book launching titled "*Parliament of Malaysia: Pillar of the Nation's Democracy.*" During the officiating speech,¹³ the Honourable Senator Tan Sri Dato' Seri Utama Dr Rais Yatim emphasised:

... this building (the Parliament of Malaysia), which is protected under the National Heritage Act 2005, represents the pinnacle of legislative

13 "*Merakyatkan Parlimen, Warisan Negara*" (Parliament Open Day Ceremony), 6 May 2023, Official YouTube Channel Parliament of Malaysia, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQOBcCBpAHY&t=2744s> (accessed 7 October 2023), at 40:33 – 41:52.

structures as well as embodies the hopes and aspirations of the people for the future.

Meanwhile, in his social media posting,¹⁴ the Honourable Tan Sri Dato' Johari Abdul shared:

... I am here with visitors who came on the occasion of the Parliament of Malaysia Open Day. Most of the first-time visitors have given me positive feedback about this program, which is filled with valuable information. I hope that our citizens will get to know and appreciate the legislative institution that is the heartbeat of our country's democracy. Thank you for attending. Let us come in large numbers and get to know our Parliament.

The ceremony witnessed a diverse turnout, including foreign dignitaries, senior government officials, students, NGO representatives, and the general public, apart from Members of Parliament and officers from the Parliament of Malaysia, reflecting a broad spectrum of societal engagement. Notably, the event was live-streamed across the Parliament of Malaysia's social media channels, extending its reach beyond physical attendees. The two-day open day showcased 48 exhibitors from various ministries, government departments and agencies, NGOs, foreign embassies, and internal parliamentary exhibitors. This remarkable event marked a significant stride in breaking down the walls of exclusivity associated with the Parliament, transforming it into an institution that is both accessible and welcoming to the public, rendering it more transparent and engaging in parliamentary proceedings.¹⁵ Despite the open access to

14 S Johari Abdul (@JohariAbdul_MY), Twitter post, accessed 7 October 2023, https://twitter.com/JohariAbdul_MY/status/1654988794263916544.

15 Parliamentary proceedings refer to the formal actions and processes conducted within a parliament or a legislative body. These proceedings are guided by established rules and protocols, and encompass a variety of activities including, but not limited to:

- *Debates*: Discussions where members of the parliament express their opinions on proposed laws (bills) or issues of national importance.
- *Voting*: The process by which members of parliament cast their votes to pass or reject proposed laws or motions.
- *Question Times*: Sessions where members can question Cabinet Members about their work or current issues.
- *Committee Meetings*: Meetings of smaller groups of members to examine issues in more detail, often with input from experts and the public such as Public Accounts Committee or Special Select Committees.

the public during these days and the visitor count recorded at 10,000, the security and safety of the parliamentary compound were still meticulously maintained. The event was conducted without any security breaches or untoward incidents, demonstrating that public accessibility can be successfully balanced with the priority of maintaining the sanctity and security of such a critical legislative institution. This successful execution stands as a testament to the Parliament of Malaysia's commitment to fostering a secure yet inclusive environment for democratic participation. Notably, prior to the Parliament of Malaysia Open Day in 2023, the only occasion when the Parliament freely welcomed the general public¹⁶ was during the final tribute ceremony for the late second Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak, in 1976.¹⁷

Defining the concept of People's Parliament in the Parliament of Malaysia's

Suppose the essence of hosting Parliament of Malaysia Open Day 2023 is intrinsically linked to the People's Parliament concept; in that case,

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- *Legislation Process*: The stages a bill goes through to become law, including introduction, consideration in committees, debate, and voting.
 - *Presentations*: Presentation of reports, budgets, or other important documents to the parliament for examination and approval.
 - *Adjournment Debates*: Debates on various topics that occur at the end of a parliamentary sitting day.
 - *Special Chamber*: Special Chamber has been set up to allow matters of national importance or urgency to be discussed without interrupting the normal proceedings of the House of Representatives. It convenes for the first time on 16 May 2016.

Official Portal of Parliament of Malaysia, 'Glossary search', available at: <https://www.parlimen.gov.my/index.php?modload=glosari&action=10000> (accessed 4 October 2023)..

- 16 While an open day was also being organised in 2022, it differed significantly from the 2023 event. In 2022, visitors were not granted spontaneous access; instead, they were pre-invited and required to adhere to a standard operating procedure. This procedure mandated that interested visitors register their names in advance through the Parliament of Malaysia's e-Visitor Management System before being permitted entry.
- 17 The late Tun Abdul Razak, Malaysia's second Prime Minister, was accorded a State Funeral in 1976. His body was laid in state at the Banquet Hall of the Parliament of Malaysia, providing an opportunity for the public to pay their final respects and bid him farewell. Subsequently, Tun Abdul Razak was laid to rest at the National Hero Mausoleum (*Makam Pahlawan*), located within the grounds of the National Mosque (*Masjid Negara*). Available at: <https://www.parlimen.gov.my/bangunan-parlimen-malaysia.html?&uweb=web&view=238&lang=en> (accessed 10 October 2023).

it suggests that the Parliament of Malaysia is a space that is not only secure but also welcoming, where citizens can observe and participate in the legislative process without feeling alienated by excessive security protocols. The event's people-centric approach not only reflects the democratic ethos of the Parliament of Malaysia as a legislative pillar of the nation, but also strengthens the bond between the Parliament and the people it is meant to serve.

This study conducted a comprehensive search using phrase search, keyword search, and Boolean operators across Google Scholar and Scopus, as well as within two databases subscribed by the Parliament of Malaysia: the Journal of Legislative Studies and the Journal of Parliamentary Affairs. The search yielded a few direct results on the term "People's Parliament". Nonetheless, there was a significant number of literature on parliamentary public engagement, which aligns closely with the principles of the People's Parliament as envisioned by the Parliament of Malaysia.

In practice, the concepts of a People's Parliament and parliamentary public engagement revolve around the principle that the parliament should actively involve the public. This involves organising forums where citizens can voice their opinions, seeking public input on proposed legislation, and utilising online platforms to gather and consider public feedback. Both terms underscore the importance of maintaining a two-way communication channel between the parliament and its constituents. This approach sets straight the workings of the parliament, making it more approachable and transparent, and reinforces the notion that the parliament is a true reflection of the people's will.

Discussions

The criticality of augmenting public engagement stands prominently in the public sphere of parliamentary processes. Reflecting this, an analysis of the 16 articles previously mentioned¹⁸ revealed six key findings. These findings span a diverse range of thematic areas, underlining the vast nature of public involvement in parliamentary functions as follows:

- i. Public broadcasting of parliamentary sessions achieves transparency and accessibility in the legislative process, allowing citizens to observe and understand parliamentary operations directly;

18 Inter-Parliamentary Union (n 1).

- ii. Public hearings through a committee system mark a significant stride towards encouraging public participation. This platform enables citizens to contribute their opinions and expertise to the legislative process;
- iii. Petition system empowers the public to influence the parliamentary agenda directly, establishing a clear communication channel between citizens and their representatives;
- iv. Public visits to parliament serve a dual purpose; they are not only educational but also instrumental in raising awareness about the parliament's role and functions;
- v. Parliamentary Research Service, which gathers and provides unbiased information based on public feedback. This service ensures that Members of Parliament make informed decisions that resonate with public sentiment and needs; and
- vi. Parliamentary Budget Office plays a key role in enhancing fiscal transparency and accountability. This office underscores the importance of fiscal responsibility and public involvement in governmental financial decisions by providing non-partisan budgetary analysis and facilitating public engagement in budget planning.

Together, these initiatives highlight the significance of public engagement in parliamentary processes and form the central focus of this study's discussion. Each aspect will be examined to understand its contribution to the people-oriented approach within parliaments.

Benchmarking Parliament of Malaysia's public engagement with the other Parliaments

The public's engagement in parliamentary processes stands as a crucial barometer of a parliament's commitment to a democratic people-oriented approach. This benchmarking analysis compares the public engagement strategies of the Parliament of Malaysia with those of its counterparts in the United Kingdom (U.K.), Australia, and New Zealand. By examining various facets of public interaction and participation in parliamentary processes, the analysis seeks to highlight the strengths and potential areas for improvement in Malaysia's approach to fostering a people-oriented legislative environment.

Table 1: Benchmarking Parliament of Malaysia's Public Engagement Initiatives with the Parliament of the U.K., Parliament of Australia and Parliament of New Zealand

| Public engagements or people-oriented approach | Parliaments | | | |
|--|-------------|---------------|-----|----|
| | Mas | UK | Aus | NZ |
| 1. Public broadcasting of Parliamentary Sessions and Proceedings | / | / | / | / |
| 2. Public hearing through a committee system | / | / | / | / |
| 3. Petition system to allow the public to influence the parliamentary agenda directly | | / | / | / |
| 4. Public visit to the Parliament | / | / | / | / |
| 5. Parliamentary Research Service, which provides unbiased information to Members of Parliament from the public's feedback | / | / | / | / |
| 6. Parliamentary Budget Office, which provides non-partisan budgetary analysis and participatory budget planning through public engagement | | ¹⁹ | / | |

Legend: Mas = Malaysia, UK = United Kingdom, Aus = Australia, NZ = New Zealand

By benchmarking Malaysia's parliamentary engagement against counterparts in the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand, a comprehensive view emerges of the commitment to democratic engagement and transparency. All four countries, including Malaysia, publicly broadcast parliamentary sessions, a practice essential for maintaining transparency and keeping citizens informed and involved in the democratic process.

Furthermore, public hearings through committees in these nations allow significant public input into the legislative process, ensuring that diverse perspectives and expert testimonies shape laws and policies.

The ability for the public to visit the Parliament, as seen in all four countries, serves as an important educational tool, increasing awareness of the legislature's workings. Another notable similarity is the existence

¹⁹ Note: The Parliament of the UK has the Office for Budget Responsibility established in 2010. It is an independent body that provides comprehensive analysis and forecasts regarding the UK's public finances. Even though not labeled as a "Parliamentary Budget Office", but it serves a similar role in terms of providing non-partisan budgetary analysis.

of a Parliamentary Research Service in each country, which provides unbiased and comprehensive information to Members of Parliament based on public feedback. This service ensures that legislative decisions are based on balanced and thorough information.

Contrary to the U.K., Australia, and New Zealand, Malaysia lacks a public petition system that might directly influence the parliamentary agenda, fostering a communication channel between the electorate and their representatives. However, a distinct difference is observed in the aspect of Parliamentary Budget Offices. While the U.K. and Australia have established such offices for non-partisan budgetary analysis and participatory budget planning, Malaysia and New Zealand have not, indicating an area for potential development. Establishing a Parliamentary Budget Office in Malaysia could enhance fiscal transparency and public participation in budgetary matters, aligning it further with practices observed in the U.K. and Australia. Overall, Malaysia's approach to public engagement in its parliamentary processes mirrors that of its counterparts to a significant extent, demonstrating a strong commitment to democratic values. Continually enhancing these mechanisms, such as the potential addition of a Parliamentary Budget Office, remains crucial for deepening democratic practices and ensuring that the parliament remains responsive and accountable to its citizens.

The importance of institutionalising parliamentary public engagement

The perception of parliaments as entities that actively listen to and engage with the public is fundamental for the peaceful resolution of social and political conflicts. By providing a platform where diverse groups can share their perspectives, parliaments facilitate the discovery of common ground, fostering social cohesion and ensuring that every segment of society feels heard and represented. Such inclusivity bolsters public trust in the legislative process, ensuring adherence to laws and encouraging active democratic participation. Conversely, when parliaments appear indifferent to public sentiment, it can lead to national unrest, with strikes and protests emerging as a last resort for citizens to express dissent when their voices are ignored. For instance, the French people frequently engage in their routine nationwide strikes and protests, sparked by their legislative body acting contrary to and despite the popular will, reflecting public frustration.²⁰ In October 2014, the Hansard

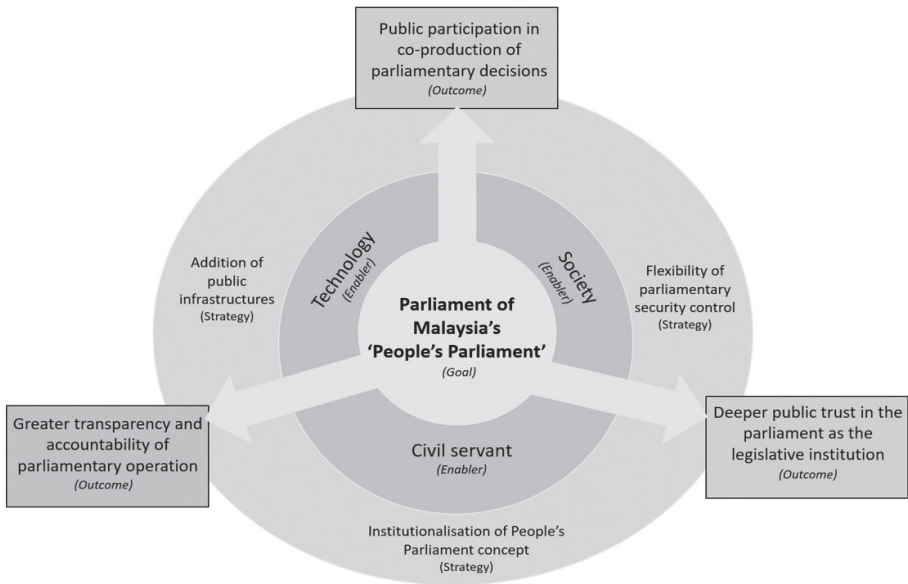
20 Burney, Nathaniel. "James Wilson." Biography Research Paper. Submitted April 30, 2023. Available at: <https://lawcomic.net/guide/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/James-Wilson-Part-One-Foundations.pdf> (accessed 22 October 2023).

Society,²¹ in collaboration with BritainThinks²² published a report titled “Listening Parliament”²³ which concluded that Parliament needs to show people that they are listening; otherwise, people will feel like they have no voice. This scenario underscores the vital role of parliamentary openness in maintaining a harmonious and functioning democracy.

The conceptual framework of the People’s Parliament of the Parliament of Malaysia

In an ambitious endeavour to transform the Parliament of Malaysia into a ‘People’s Parliament’, a comprehensive framework has been conceptualised, focusing on inclusivity, transparency, and public participation. This initiative aims to reshape the parliament into an institution that truly represents and actively engages with the Malaysian populace.

Figure 1: Proposed conceptual framework of Parliament of Malaysia’s People’s Parliament



21 Founded in 1944, the Hansard Society is the UK’s leading source of independent research and advice on Parliament and parliamentary affairs.
 22 BritainThinks. BritainThinks is a business consulting service that conducts market research and offers advice for growth and development in business. London, England, United Kingdom. Available at: <www.britainthinks.com> (accessed 11 November 2023).
 23 See Hansard Society & BritainThinks, available at: <https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/speaker/digital-democracy/Digi89HansardSociety...BritianThinks.pdf> (accessed 11 November 2023).

This transformation is underpinned by three key enablers: the dedication and expertise of civil servants, the strategic use of technology to bridge the gap between the parliament and the public, and the active involvement of society, including citizens, NGOs, academia, and the media. The strategy involves adding public infrastructures, essential for facilitating easy and meaningful public access to parliamentary processes. This includes both physical amenities and digital platforms, enabling both on-site and remote engagement.

Another critical aspect is the flexibility of parliamentary security control, ensuring that necessary security does not become a barrier to public access. Moreover, institutionalising the ‘People’s Parliament’ concept is vital, embedding it into the ethos and operations of the parliament through policy changes, capacity building, and legislative amendments.

The anticipated outcomes of this transformation are multifaceted. Firstly, it aims to foster public participation in the co-production of the Parliament of Malaysia’s decisions, ensuring that the legislative process reflects a wide array of public opinions and insights. This participatory approach is expected to lead to greater transparency and accountability in Parliament of Malaysia operations, thereby building public confidence in the institution. Ultimately, the most significant outcome would be the establishment of deeper public trust in the Parliament of Malaysia as a legislative body that truly represents and serves the interests of the people. This trust is the cornerstone of a robust, functioning democracy, and the transformation into a ‘People’s Parliament’ is a step towards strengthening this democratic foundation in Malaysia.

People-oriented parliamentary approach and trust deficit

The lack of confidence between citizens and parliamentary democracy has been a major issue in recent years, highlighting a widening gap between democratic institutions and the people they are supposed to serve. This trust deficit comprises several factors: diminished voter engagement and participation, unequal involvement in political procedures, lack of transparency and responsibility in governance, perceived ineffectiveness in meeting public demands, and a widespread perception of democratic systems’ inadequate performance. These circumstances contribute to what is commonly called an “imperfect democracy” or a “democratic deficit,” resulting in what can be defined as a crisis in citizenship.

Notable findings derived from the research encompass the notion of a ‘democratic deficit’, which denotes an absence of democracy and

detachment from the general populace and has emerged as a significant subject of controversy. The deficit can arise from various factors, including diminished voter engagement, limited citizen participation in decision-making processes, insufficient oversight of executive entities, intricate political mechanisms, and a perception of inadequate system performance. These factors contribute to a decline in trust regarding the provision and management of services.²⁴

Trust and cooperation are closely linked within the democratic public sphere, where the ideal democratic system is based on trust-based relationships. This link is predicated on the premise that either civil society or institutional frameworks are indispensable for a robust and enduring democracy.²⁵

Post-communist regimes have exhibited a notable lack of confidence in fundamental political institutions. To further progress towards civil society and democracy, it is crucial to focus on enhancing trust. This can be achieved by understanding politics and civil society as domains characterised by continuous diversity, rivalry, and conflict.²⁶

Trust in Parliament is essential for properly functioning of a democracy, as parliaments are the primary institutions responsible for creating laws. Distrust in Parliament poses a significant threat to democracy and can be particularly troublesome for emerging democracies when dominant parties maintain control over multiple election cycles, potentially deepening the divide between victors and losers.²⁷

When compared to established modern industrial democracies, the European Union (EU), which is sometimes criticised for lacking democratic representation, is deemed to be legitimate. The EU's institutions are subject to strict constitutional checks and balances. Overall, the EU corrects existing political representation, discussion, and output biases rather than creating them.²⁸

The lack of faith in parliamentary democracy is complex, encompassing concerns related to citizen involvement, openness, and the efficiency

24 Hill, Lisa. "Democratic deficit in the ACT: Is the citizen initiated referendum a solution?" *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 38, no. 4 (2003): 495-512.

25 Misztal, Barbara A. "Trust and cooperation: the democratic public sphere." *Journal of Sociology* 37, no. 4 (2001): 371-386.

26 Lovell, David W. "Trust and the politics of postcommunism." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 34, no. 1 (2001): 27-38.

27 Holmberg, Soren, Staffan Lindberg, and Richard Svensson. "Trust in parliament." *Journal of Public Affairs* 17, no. 1-2 (2017): e1647.

28 Moravcsik, Andrew. "Reassessing legitimacy in the European Union." *JCMS: journal of common market studies* 40, no. 4 (2002): 603-624.

of governing. To tackle this deficiency, it is necessary to adopt a comprehensive strategy that promotes public engagement, ensures accountability, and cultivates a perception of efficiency and significance in democratic institutions.

Enhancing the accessibility of Parliament to the general public can help mitigate the lack of trust. Studies have demonstrated that more transparency and openness in legislative proceedings might yield certain favourable outcomes, although they are not consistently direct or assured.

An assessment of the influence of Freedom of Information (FOI) on the UK Parliament revealed that FOI resulted in a modest increase in transparency and responsibility at Westminster. Nevertheless, it substantially failed to enhance public comprehension, engagement, or confidence. This implies that while initiatives such as FOI can increase the transparency of legislative operations, they may not be enough to restore or improve public trust.²⁹

It is important to further evaluate the interconnection between trust in legislators and compliance with public policies. An analysis of public health policies used during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that individuals with greater confidence in officials were more likely to adhere to containment measures. Consequently, improving confidence in parliamentary institutions could increase public adherence and involvement in legislative decisions.³⁰

The recognition of 'trust' as a fundamental element of contemporary democracy in Parliament has been largely accepted. The variations or fluctuations in trust levels across different countries can be ascribed to state attributes, such as accountability and dependability. According to Meer,³¹ increasing transparency could enhance these traits and promote trust in parliamentary systems.

In the case of Malaysia, trust in government and its determinants have been a subject of study, particularly in the context of public policy acceptability. A study specifically examined the level of public acceptance towards environmental taxes in Malaysia, emphasising the importance of trust in the government for the effective execution of new policies. The

29 Hazell, Robert, Gabrielle Bourke, and Benjamin Worthy. "Open house? Freedom of information and its impact on the UK parliament." *Public Administration* 90, no. 4 (2012): 901-921.

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31 Van der Meer, Tom. "In what we trust? A multi-level study into trust in parliament as an evaluation of state characteristics." *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 76, no. 3 (2010): 517-536.

study determined that the level of trust in government is impacted by the government's accountability, integrity, and competency. Although the research focused on environmental tax, the governance concepts it examines apply to parliamentary transparency and confidence.³²

Applying these discoveries to the specific setting of the Malaysian Parliament, it can be deduced that enhancing transparency and accountability in legislative proceedings could benefit public trust. This could involve fostering greater transparency in legislative procedures, enhancing avenues for public participation, and adopting more transparent methods for decision-making.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that the correlation between parliamentary transparency and public confidence is intricate and shaped by other elements, such as political culture, historical circumstances, and the specific dynamics of government-citizen engagement in Malaysia. Thus, while openness can contribute to mitigating the lack of confidence, it is more likely to be a component of a comprehensive approach that includes other elements of governance and public participation.

To summarise, enhancing public access to Parliament can potentially enhance transparency and accountability within the system. However, it may not always directly or definitively address the issue of diminishing public trust. Additional factors, such as promoting public comprehension and engagement and tackling wider concerns with political confidence, can have significant impacts.

Recommendations

Navigating the progressing landscape of public engagement in Parliament of Malaysia's parliamentary processes, the significance of broadening and deepening citizen involvement is always justified. In light of this, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the accessibility and effectiveness of the Parliament of Malaysia's engagement with the public. These recommendations emerge to address key areas with the intent of bridging geographical and logistical gaps, enabling wider and more diverse participation, and ensuring that the voices of all citizens

32 Muhammad, Izlawanie, Norfakhirah Nazihah Mohd Hasnu, Mohd Adha Ibrahim, Suhaila Abdul Hamid, and Mustafa Mohd Hanefah. "Trust in government and its determinants: An empirical study of public acceptability for carbon tax in Malaysia." *Sustainability* 14, no. 23 (2022): 15684.

are heard and considered in the parliamentary discourse. These are low-hanging fruits that can be implemented immediately by the Parliament of Malaysia.

Virtual Visit to the Parliament of Malaysia

In an era where digital accessibility has become increasingly paramount, the proposal to the concept of a virtual visit to the Parliament of Malaysia represents a significant stride towards inclusive public engagement. Notably, while other parliaments around the world have already embraced virtual tours as a means to facilitate broader public access, the Parliament of Malaysia has yet to implement this innovative approach fully. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of virtual experiences globally, underscoring their importance as both a convenience and a necessity. In the parliaments in countries like the United Kingdom,³³ Australia³⁴, and Singapore³⁵, 360° virtual tours have been effectively utilised to keep the parliamentary compound ‘accessible’ even during periods of restricted physical access.

These virtual experiences allow citizens, irrespective of their geographical location, to explore the intricacies of their parliament buildings and engage with parliamentary history and activities, all from the comfort of their homes. This digital approach is particularly vital for those outside major urban areas, such as Kuala Lumpur and Klang Valley in the Malaysian context, who may find it challenging to visit the parliament in person. This concurs with the Honourable Senator Datuk Seri Mohamad Ali bin Mohamad, former Deputy President of the Senate wish, during the closing ceremony of Parliament of Malaysia Open Day 2023 on 7 May 2023,³⁶ where he stated:

33 Parliament of the United Kingdom, ‘360° virtual tour to explore the Commons Chamber, Lords Chamber and many other parts of the building’, available at: <https://www.parliament.uk/visiting/virtualtour/> (accessed 20 November 2023).

34 Australian Parliament, ‘360° virtual tour to explore the Senate Chamber, House of Representatives Chamber and exterior of the building’, available at: <https://virtualtour.aph.gov.au/#?> (accessed 20 November 2023).

35 Parliament of Singapore, ‘Virtual tour’, available at: <https://www.parliament.gov.sg/visit-learn/ph-virtual-tour.html> (accessed 20 November 2023).

36 Parliament of Malaysia, ‘Majlis Penutup Hari Terbuka Parlimen “Merakyatkan Parlimen, Warisan Negara”’, minute 40:07 to 48:00, 7 May 2023, Official YouTube Channel Parliament of Malaysia, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQXk2UfhgBM&t=2852s> (accessed 18 October 2023).

... we wish to see more people and institutions outside of the Kuala Lumpur and Klang Valley to be able to come and participate in the next Parliament of Malaysia Open Day round.

While the Parliament of Malaysia has initiated its journey towards digital engagement with a virtual visit system, there is a significant scope for enhancement, especially when benchmarked against national and international standards. Though a step in the right direction, the current virtual tour falls short in delivering an immersive and engaging experience, particularly when compared to the more sophisticated and interactive platforms of the Department of Museums Malaysia³⁷ and the National Archive of Malaysia.³⁸ This gap in quality and engagement becomes even more pronounced when the virtual tour is likened to those of the U.K., Australian, and Singaporean parliaments, where virtual tours have set a high benchmark in terms of interactivity and user experience.

Honourable Senator Datuk Seri Mohamad Ali bin Mohamad's call for greater regional participation can be effectively addressed by elevating the existing virtual visit system. Revamping the virtual tour of the Parliament of Malaysia to align with global best practices would not only enhance its reach and impact but also democratise access to parliamentary proceedings. Such an enhancement should aim to provide rich, educational content in an interactive and user-friendly format, ensuring that all citizens, regardless of their location or physical ability, have the opportunity for meaningful engagement with their nation's legislative body.

Parliament of Malaysia's Visitor Centre

Be that as it may, traditional walk-in visits remain the best approach to experience the full Parliament of Malaysia. As such, it is necessary for the Parliament of Malaysia to establish a visitor centre to cater to these traditional visitors. At present, the only semblance of a visitor centre is

37 Currently 20 museums under Department of Museums Malaysia have 360° virtual gallery. See Department of Museums Malaysia, '360° virtual gallery', available at: <http://www.jmm.gov.my/ms/taxonomy/term/386> (accessed 22 July 2023).

38 eNegarawan, a virtual gallery, aptly tagged as #klikdijari, aligning seamlessly with the 'Ini Warisan Kita' or 'This is Our Heritage' initiative led by the Ministry of National Unity, launched on 6 July 2023, available at: <http://enegarawan.arkib.gov.my/> (accessed 22 July 2023).

a gallery³⁹ displaying basic information on the Parliament of Malaysia. Compared to the visitor centre in the Parliament of Singapore⁴⁰, Parliament of Austria⁴¹, European Parliament⁴², and Parliament of the U.K.⁴³, which offer comprehensive and interactive experiences, the existing gallery at the Parliament of Malaysia appears limited in scope and engagement. These international counterparts have set a high standard by providing extensive educational content, interactive exhibits, and multimedia presentations that offer deep insights into their parliamentary history and functioning. In contrast, the current facility in Malaysia primarily offers a basic historical overview, lacking the interactive and immersive elements that characterise modern visitor centres. Establishing a fully-fledged visitor centre in the Parliament of Malaysia would greatly enhance the visitor experience.

Additionally, during the Parliament of Malaysia Open Day 2023, exhibitions were held in the foyer area between the *Dewan Rakyat* and *Dewan Negara*, as well as in the Banquet Hall area. This exposes the Parliament building, which has been gazetted as a heritage building, to the risk of damage. In this regard, the proposal for the construction of a visitor centre for the Parliament of Malaysia might consider the approach of the U.S. Capitol Visitor Centre⁴⁴, which provides dedicated spaces for temporary exhibitions and events.

39 The gallery currently is closed for renovation until early of 2025.

40 Parliament of Singapore, 'Parliament Visitor Centre - ParlConnect', available at: <https://www.parliament.gov.sg/visit-learn/parlconnect> (accessed 11 October 2023).

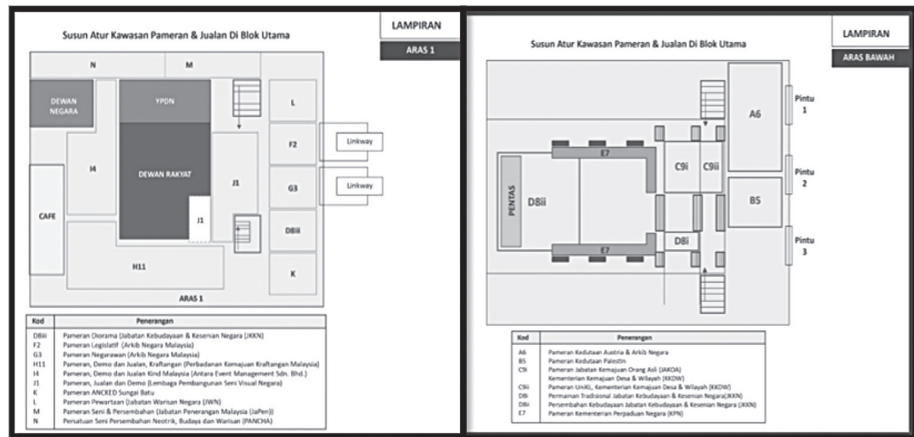
41 Visitor Center "Demokratikum – Experience Parliament", located directly under the Colonnaded Hall on an area of 1,500 m², welcomes visitors to learn about parliamentarism and explore the rich history of the Austrian Parliament. Available at: <https://www.parlament.gv.at/en/experience/visitor-center/index.html> (accessed 9 November 2023).

42 Discover the world of the European Parliament at the Parlamentarium, Europe's largest parliamentary visitors centre. More than 2 million people have already visited. See <https://visiting.europarl.europa.eu/en/visitor-offer/brussels/parlamentarium> (accessed 3 November 2023).

43 Offers first-hand experience with a tour of the Houses of Parliament along the interactive sessions which are directly integrated with the UK's four curriculums, tailored to the age and attainment of the group. See <https://learning.parliament.uk/en/uk-parliament-education-centre/> (accessed 28 November 2023).

44 The United States Capitol Visitor Center is a large underground addition to the United States Capitol complex which serves as a gathering point for up to 4,000 tourists and an expansion space for the U.S. Congress. Available at: <https://www.visitthecapitol.gov/> (accessed on 2 November 2023).

Figure 2: Floor plan showing how the foyer near Dewan Rakyat and Dewan Negara, as well as the Banquet Hall, were used as exhibition spaces during the Parliament of Malaysia Open Day 2023, exposing the parliament building to the risk of damage



Conclusions

In conclusion, this study has provided a comprehensive examination of public engagement within the parliamentary processes, with a particular focus on the Parliament of Malaysia. It highlighted the necessity of enhancing public interaction and accessibility, emphasising the importance of innovative approaches such as virtual tours and dedicated exhibition spaces. The comparative analysis with parliaments from other countries has revealed commendable progress in Malaysia, yet also identified areas ripe for development, such as enhancing visitor centres and digital platforms, drawing inspiration from models like the U.S. Capitol.

Significantly, the study acknowledges the People’s Parliament initiative as a decisive element in the transformation of Malaysia’s parliamentary processes. This initiative, demonstrated by events like the Parliament of Malaysia Open Day, embodies the essence of a people-centric approach, fostering greater transparency and public involvement. The success of the Open Day in 2023, with its inclusive and engaging activities, sets a positive precedent for future iterations. Therefore, it is recommended that the Parliament of Malaysia Open Day in 2024 should continue in this vein, further embedding the People’s Parliament ethos into the nation’s legislative framework. Such events play a crucial role in demystifying

the parliamentary process, making it more approachable and relatable to the Malaysian citizenry.

However, it is important to note that some potential recommendations were not included due to their complexity and the need for significant legal and structural reforms, like introducing the Parliament of Malaysia Petition System and developing a Parliamentary Budget Office. The ongoing struggle to re-implement the Parliamentary Services Act 1963^{45,46} exemplifies these challenges.

Future efforts should prioritise feasible improvements for immediate impact while acknowledging longer-term goals that necessitate more extensive changes. Continued research and observation are essential to gauge the impact of these initiatives on democratic participation and the effectiveness of various public engagement strategies over time. This balanced approach will ensure that the Parliament of Malaysia adapts to meet current needs and evolves to address future challenges in fostering a robust, participatory democracy.

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45 Note: Parliamentary Services Act 1963 in Malaysia was repealed in 1992. The repeal has been a subject of discussion in Malaysian political and legal circles, particularly regarding the implications for the independence and effective functioning of the Parliament of Malaysia. In the context of this 15th Parliament, the potential re-introduction of the Parliamentary Services Act has been the focus of the President of Dewan Negara and the Speaker of Dewan Rakyat to pave the way for a more autonomous functioning Parliament of Malaysia.

46 Tah, I. H. M., Saari, M., Jalil, F., Kamilan, I. H., & Abd Rahim, A. H. (2022). Keperluan Mewujudkan Semula Akta Perkhidmatan Parlimen di Malaysia: The Need to Re-enact the Parliamentary Service Act in Malaysia. *Journal of the Malaysian Parliament*, 2.

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Measures to Mitigate Covid-19 in the *Dewan Rakyat* (House of Representatives) of Malaysia: Implications to Parliamentary Privileges

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Abstract

The surge of Covid-19 cases worldwide has had its impact on how every institution discharges its functions, including the legislature. Governments, under the pretext of containing the spread of the virus, have paralysed parliament and incapacitated it from performing its duties, particularly its oversight function. This article explores the extent to which the standard operating procedures (SOP) for Covid-19 in the *Dewan Rakyat* (House of Representatives) of Malaysia should be permitted under the Federal Constitution of Malaysia on parliamentary procedure. Despite attempts to restrict parliament in many countries, legislatures such as in Canada, Australia and Brazil have demonstrated their ability to adapt and move progressively to minimise disruptions that the pandemic might cause to parliament. Taken together, legislatures' responses in times of Covid-19 offer an interesting impression of parliamentary privileges while also raise an important question of the role of parliament in representing people and checking the government actions.

Keywords: Dewan Rakyat, Parliamentary Privileges, Parliamentary Procedures, Standing Orders, Separation of Powers

Introduction

The devastation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic since it emerged in late 2019 has impacted how every institution discharges its functions, including the legislature. The scale of the damages is unprecedented to the extent that public health measures have always overridden the legislature's principal duty in checking the government into account.

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The executive, using Covid-19 as its passkey, holds all the aces over the legislative in carrying out their action without adequate checks and balances from the legislative. The pandemic, thus, has presented unexpected challenges for the legislature to perform its duties while at the same time ensuring the government is successful in managing the disease. Despite Jean Blondel's term 'viscosity' on the legislature's role in slowing down the realisation of the executive's action and proposal,¹ the balance must be struck in times of emergency to allow necessary measures to be taken.

The concept of separation of powers between the three branches of government, the executive, the legislative, and the judiciary, marks a salient feature of legislative institutions' ability to function effectively. The feature is demonstrated in the power of a parliament to regulate its procedure, which is non-justiciable by any court of law. The power to regulate its proceedings without possible interference from the judiciary is essential for a parliament to carry out its functions, although a Westminster parliamentary system means that there is a fine relationship with the executive. As the executive is also part of the legislative, the separation between these two branches seems vague. Still, as noted in the Commonwealth Latimer House Principles on the Separation of Powers, 'each branch of government to restrain the exercise of authority to its own sphere to avoid encroaching on the legitimate discharge of constitutional functions by the other branches'.² Article 62 of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia provides Parliament with the power to regulate its procedure. The non-justiciability of parliamentary proceedings in any court is provided in Article 63; hence, the parliamentary privileges are protected under the Constitution.

This paper analyses the impact of the change of rules and procedures on parliamentary privileges in Malaysia's *Dewan Rakyat* (House of Representatives). Measures to mitigate Covid-19 had been taken to prevent the spread of the virus while allowing parliament sittings. It is imperative for such measures to be implemented since the Parliament of Malaysia still held to the traditional method of physical meetings with no remote participation permitted, citing the country's legal scheme preventing so. Therefore, the paper considers the implications of the rules

1 P. Norton, 'Parliamentary reform' (2002) 11(XI-3) *Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique French Journal of British Studies* 18 <<https://doi.org/10.4000/rfcb.696>>.

2 Commonwealth, *The Commonwealth Latimer House Principles Practitioner's Handbook* (London, Commonwealth Secretariat, 2017).

and procedures changes towards the right of parliamentarians to attend parliamentary sittings and the impact of member seating changes in the chamber against parliamentary privileges. The paper also assesses the extent to which the standard operating procedures (SOP) for Covid-19 in the *Dewan Rakyat* should be permitted under Article 62(1) of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia on 'regulating own procedures'.

In so doing, the paper compares the different ways in which other legislatures, such as the House of Commons, Canada, the House of Representatives, Australia, and the Chamber of Deputies, Brazil, carry out their legislative businesses in times of Covid-19. The progressive aspect of these legislatures departing from conventional parliamentary sittings is corroborated by their creative approach to ensuring that legislative institutions continue to function. This paper, therefore, sets out to assess the justification for measures taken to mitigate Covid-19 in the *Dewan Rakyat* against parliamentary privileges. Understanding the ultimate objective of legislative institutions should hold the key to carrying out any measures to circumscribe parliamentary functions. Inasmuch as public health measures are crucial, the check on the intelligibility of those measures is also pivotal.

Parliamentary privileges: right to attend and free representational mandate

The right of parliamentarians to attend parliamentary sittings is an inherent and indispensable right of a parliamentarian. It forms part of parliamentary privilege that allows parliamentarians to discharge their duty, and as Erskine May states, 'without which they could not discharge their functions, and which exceed those possessed by other bodies or individuals'.³ The case of Richard Strode, a British Member of Parliament, marked the importance of the right to attend parliamentary sitting for parliamentarians to perform their functions. In 1512, as he attempted to introduce a bill to regulate the rights of tin miners in Dartmoor, Strode was arrested and imprisoned.⁴ Upon his release from imprisonment, the Privilege of Parliament Act, commonly known as

3 D. Natzler & M. Hutton, *Erskine May's Treatise on The Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament Twenty-fifth Edition* (London, LexisNexis, 2019).

4 M. Saari & W.N. Wan Hasan, 'The Extent of the Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression for the Parliamentary Immunity and Privilege' (2020) 4 *The Asian Yearbook of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law* 206, 211 <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004431768_010>.

Strode’s Act, was passed in Parliament, which gives immunity to bills or speeches in parliament.⁵

The centrality of the right to attend parliamentary sittings is shown in the motion moved in the House at the beginning of every session of Parliament, i.e. the first day of the sitting after Parliament commences after the General Election and the day after the King’s Royal Address for the subsequent new parliamentary session. The motion ordering the Inspector-General of Police to provide free passage to members of both Houses is moved by the Minister of Home Affairs as follows,

That this House orders the Inspector-General of Police to take care that during the present Session of this House the passages through the streets leading to this House be kept free and opened and that no obstruction be permitted to hinder the passages of Members to and from this House that there be no annoyance therein and thereabouts; and that Setiausaha Dewan Rakyat do communicate this Order to the Inspector-General of Police aforesaid.⁶

The motion passed in the House became an order or resolution that must be complied with, in this case by the Inspector-General of Police, to provide a safe passage to parliamentarians to attend Parliament. Any obstruction against members of Parliament to reach Parliament shall be deemed as violating the order or the resolution of the House.

The right to attend parliamentary sittings guarantees parliamentarians to exercise their free representational mandate. In contrast with an imperative mandate—parliamentarians are accountable to the electorate and are required by law to report regularly on their individual action and could be recalled if they are deemed to have betrayed the voters’ trust⁷—a free representational mandate ensures parliamentarians act independently and are not bound by certain special interest. The mandate is also illustrated in the oath taken by members of Parliament,

I,, having been elected (or appointed) as a member of the House of Representatives (or the

5 Privilege of Parliament Act 1512, s II <<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/aep/Hen8/4/8/section/II>>.

6 DR Order Paper 16 July 2018 <<https://www.parlimen.gov.my/files/opindex/pdf/OPDR16072018-Isnin.pdf>>.

7 M. Van der Hulst, *The Parliamentary Mandate: a global comparative study* (Geneva, Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2000) 10 <<https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reference/2016-07/parliamentary-mandate>>.

Senate) do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully discharge my duties as such to the best of my ability, that I will bear true faith and allegiance to Malaysia, and will preserve, protect and defend its Constitution.⁸

A member of Parliament is a member of the House and, thus, is responsible for carrying out the legislative functions of the House. The notion of viscosity, as mentioned earlier, calls for parliamentarians to take the government into account in the interest of the people they represent. Despite being free allows parliamentarians to act according to their conscience and the larger nation's interest, the public has become increasingly demanding to see parliamentarians regularly and routinely account for their actions and duties as a legislator.⁹

Rules and procedures changes in the *Dewan Rakyat* due to Covid-19

The third meeting of the *Dewan Rakyat* in 2020, supposedly the most important meeting of which the Federal Budget will be tabled, was called amid the rising Covid-19 cases. There was a surge of Covid-19 cases in early November 2020, as later admitted by the government,¹⁰ which was caused by the Sabah State Election in September 2020. Before the election, the daily Covid-19 cases were kept below 100, however, there was a tenfold increase ahead of the parliamentary sitting in November 2020. The country, under the Recovery Movement Control Order had managed a steady containment of the disease since June 2020 but was put under a stricter Conditional Movement Control Order in November 2020.

Against the backdrop of increasing Covid-19 cases, the scheduled Third *Dewan Rakyat* Meeting took extra precautionary measures. Transparent barriers were installed between MPs' seats in the *Dewan Rakyat* to reduce the risk of infection of Covid-19. Having the transparent barriers allowed MPs to return to their designated seats in the main chamber, which previously were denied to several MPs due to physical distancing. In

8 Federal Constitution of Malaysia, sch 6 (emphasis added).

9 G. Power, *Global Parliamentary Report: the changing nature of parliamentary representation* (Geneva & New York, Inter-Parliamentary Union & United Nations Development Programme, 2012) 56 <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/Global_Parliamentary_Report_English.pdf>.

10 'Emergency helped prevent further spike in Covid-19 cases, says Health DG' *The Edge Markets* (11 May 2021) <<https://www.theedgemarkets.com/article/emergency-helped-prevent-further-spike-covid19-cases-says-health-dg>> accessed 17 June 2021.

addition, MPs were required to undergo Covid-19 screening prior to the meeting and every fortnight during the sitting to ensure none had contracted the virus, thus reducing its spread to others. Furthermore, access to the Parliament building had been limited with a Police roadblock deployed only to allow MPs, parliamentary staff, and those with a negative result of Covid-19 screening to enter.

On top of all the safety measures taken, the Speaker of the *Dewan Rakyat* also introduced new rules and procedures for the House proceedings. Ahead of the Budget 2021 tabling in the *Dewan Rakyat* by the Minister of Finance on 6 November 2020, the Speaker made a ruling affecting the House's changes in rules and procedures. He necessitated the changes as a preventive measure to ensure the safety of proceedings in the House. Interestingly, the ruling was made through a consultation called the *Dewan Rakyat* business coordination meeting with all party whips of major blocks in the House consisting of 11 members, including the Speaker.¹¹

As a result, the Speaker announced nine changes on a temporary basis through a Speaker's ruling on 5 November 2020.¹² The changes are listed as follows:

1. Changes in the *Dewan Rakyat* proceedings commenced from Monday, 9 November 2020, until Tuesday, 15 December 2020, as follows:
 - (i) Sitting of the *Dewan Rakyat* began at 10.00 a.m. and continued until 2.00 p.m.
 - (ii) The Question Time session for oral answers on Mondays and Wednesdays was shortened to one hour from 10.00 a.m. until 11.00 a.m. The Question Time session for oral answers on Tuesdays and Thursdays was shortened to 55 minutes from 10.05 a.m. until 11.00 a.m. Only one supplementary question was permitted, and it had to be brief.
 - (iii) The Minister's Question Time was held on Tuesdays and Thursdays for five minutes from 10.00 a.m. The Member who put the question was called to read his or her question,

11 Party whips involved were from PPBM, UMNO (2 members), GPS, PAS (2 members), DAP, PKR, AMANAH and WARISAN. Seven independent MPs were not represented in this consultation meeting.

12 DR Deb 5 November 2020, Bil. 30, 2-4 <<https://www.parlimen.gov.my/files/hindex/pdf/DR-05112020.pdf>> accessed 30 January 2022.

and the answer was given in writing on the same day. Both questions and answers were published in the Parliament's portal as soon as possible.

2. Debates on the Budget 2021 at the policy level were held for eight days from Monday, 9 November 2020, until Thursday, 19 November 2020.
3. Replies by Ministers at the policy level remained for three days from Monday, 23 November 2020, until Wednesday, 25 November 2020.
4. Debates on the Budget 2021 at the committee level were held for 11 days from Thursday, 26 November 2020, until Tuesday, 15 December 2020.
5. The number of sittings was to be extended for another two days, i.e. Wednesday, 16 December 2020, and Thursday, 17 December 2020, if required.
6. Provided the proceedings of the *Dewan Rakyat* ended at 5.30 p.m. according to the existing Order Business, there would be a total of 89 hours and 30 minutes for Members to debate, including replies by Ministers for the Budget 2021 at the policy and committee level. The new time limits would see the total hours for debates and replies at both policy and committee levels reduced to 66 hours.
7. The attendance of Members throughout the Third Meeting of 2020, including the Budget 2021 tabling session, is as follows:
 - (i) Limited to 80 members at one time in the main chamber, including the debating Member. The attendance breakdown was 41 members from the government bench and 39 from the opposition and independent bench.
 - (ii) Each party determined the attendance of its members in the main chamber.

The Secretary of the *Dewan Rakyat* distributed a special pass to the Member for Kota Bharu to coordinate the attendance for members of the government bench. Member for Sungai Petani coordinated the attendance for members of the opposition and independent bench.

8. The Member's attendance record in the *Dewan Rakyat* procedure is as follows:
 - (i) The 80 Members with the special pass to enter the main chamber had to record their attendance through their laptop's system as usual.
 - (ii) Members who were not given the special pass could record their attendance at Door 3 of the Main Block and the main entrance of the MP and Administration Block, Parliament of Malaysia. A number of serjeants-at-arms were stationed at both locations to assist Members in recording their attendance.
9. The voting process through division was amended. When a division had been ordered, the bell rang for two minutes, followed by a 10-minute break. Another two minutes bell would ring afterward before the division started. All members were permitted to enter the main chamber to vote.

Comparison with parliaments of Canada, Australia and Brazil

States and legislatures worldwide have been grappling with Covid-19 to discharge their functions properly. While governments were taken into tasks of overcoming the virus and protecting the health and lives of their people, legislatures, on the other hand, faced challenges in checking executive dominance in times of crisis. Despite being the highest law-making institution, legislatures were left struggling to play their law-making and oversight role. Covid-19 has exposed the strengths and weaknesses of many legislative systems in the world. Indeed, the state of emergency has further substantiated the government's expediency in bypassing the legislature's role in their actions. The situation has raised questions about the balance between executive law-making and parliamentary law-making inter alia whether the pandemic has been used to marginalise the legislature and its functions.¹³

On a micro level, legislatures' functions have been reduced under the pretext of limitation on parliamentary rules and regulations. Moreover, constitutional provisions have constantly been referred to by the Speaker

13 R. Cormacain & I. Bar-Siman-Tov, 'Legislatures in the Time of Covid-19' (2020) 8(1-2) *The Theory and Practice of Legislation* 3 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/20508840.2020.1816017>>.

of the *Dewan Rakyat* as a hindrance to parliament's ability to operate amidst the pandemic.¹⁴ Nevertheless, legislatures have been adapting to the situation of Covid-19 in each country and have responded through various approaches and mechanisms. As will be shown in this paper, legislatures have had their procedures improvised, particularly adapting technologies to enable their operations. In this regard, Philip Norton points out that the Covid-19 crisis has created two unprecedented threats to legislatures: first, the process in which legislature performs its duties, and second, the substance of the legislature's function, especially in dealing with the sweeping executive powers.¹⁵

After dealing with Covid-19 for more than a year, the sharing of practices and the utility of technology in legislatures is now widely available. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the global organisation of national parliaments, updates a compilation of parliamentary responses to the pandemic.¹⁶ Moreover, in the context of the latest innovation in parliament, the IPU Innovation Tracker has a more detailed sharing of practices, including practices during the pandemic.¹⁷ INTER PARES, a European Union (EU) global project to strengthen parliaments' capacity, has a data tracker for parliamentary responses during the pandemic.¹⁸ Presented as a dashboard, parliamentary practices could be grouped and filtered based on preset procedures. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) published a toolkit for Commonwealth parliaments for practice-sharing purposes, and it contains practical guidance and strategies for parliaments in response to the Covid-19 outbreak.¹⁹

14 A. Harun, 'Danger of quoting the constitution selectively for political purposes' *MalaysiaNow* (30 May 2021) <<https://www.malaysianow.com/opinion/2021/05/30/danger-of-quoting-the-constitution-selectively-for-political-purposes>> accessed 9 December 2023.

15 P. Norton, 'Global Legislative Responses to Coronavirus' (2020) 8(3) *The Theory and Practice of Legislation* 237 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/20508840.2020.1818369>>.

16 'Country Compilation of Parliamentary Responses to the Pandemic' *Inter-Parliamentary Union* (2020) <<https://www.ipu.org/country-compilation-parliamentary-responses-pandemic>> accessed 30 January 2022.

17 'IPU Innovation Tracker' *Inter-Parliamentary Union* (2020) <<https://www.ipu.org/knowledge/ipu-innovation-tracker>> accessed 30 January 2022.

18 'INTER PARES Parliamentary Data Tracker' *INTER PARES* (2020) <<https://www.inter-pares.eu/inter-pares-parliamentary-data-tracker>> accessed 30 January 2022.

19 CPA, *COVID-19: CPA Toolkit for Commonwealth Parliaments* (London, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), 2020) <<https://www.cpaq.org/media/gb1athp1/cpa-toolkit-covid-19-coronavirus-e-version.pdf>>.

The House of Commons, Canada

The House of Commons Canada established a Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic (COVI) on 20 April 2020. The Committee, consisted of all members and chaired by the Speaker, met to consider ministerial announcements, allowing Members to present petitions, make statements, and question ministers, including the Prime Minister, regarding the Covid-19 pandemic and other matters. The Committee meetings took place in the main chamber, and members could participate in person or via videoconference and continued to meet until 18 June 2020.²⁰ In the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs (PROC) report mandated to study ways for Parliament to continue its business during the pandemic, the Committee had suggested fully virtual and hybrid sittings of the House to support the House's function as a deliberative assembly.²¹

Members who participated in proceedings in person or remotely, maintained their usual parliamentary privileges. In presenting its report, the PROC raised at least four key procedural issues: the presence of members (quorum), the tabling of documents, reports and returns, participation in proceedings, and decision-making. The quorum of the House, as in the Constitution of Canada and the Standing Orders, states that at least 20 members must be present to constitute the meeting of the House. However, the exclusive rights of the House to regulate its internal affairs leave the definition of 'presence', hence Standing Order 29(1), was amended to clarify the remote participation of members count for quorum purposes.

Another procedural issue worth considerable attention towards parliamentary privileges is members' participation in proceedings and making a decision. Virtual participation provides certain challenges, particularly to the Chair, in preserving order and decorum while maintaining members' privileges. Impromptu speaking to raise points of order, questions of privilege, and making comments after a speech would be enabled through features built into the videoconferencing system. Decision-making in a virtual proceedings environment would require

20 H. Bradley, *Fact Sheet: Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic (COVI)* (Ottawa, House of Commons Canada, 2020) <<https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Newsroom/Articles/Factsheet-Special-Committee-COVID-19-EN-May-27.pdf>>.

21 A. Rota, *VIRTUAL CHAMBER: A Report in Response to the Statement of the Speaker of the House on April 8, 2020* (Ottawa, House of Commons Canada, 2020) <https://www.ourcommons.ca/content/Committee/431/PROC/WebDoc/WD10754665/431_PROC_reldoc_PDF/MP-RotaAnthony-2020-05-11-e.pdf>.

the Chair to cautiously ensure that the will of all participating members is understood. This includes the objection to requests of unanimous consent, required numbers for division requests, and finally, the recorded division method for all participating members. Changes to procedures were adopted in the House on 25 January 2021; these involve measures such as the suspension of standing orders, reinterpretation of particular standing orders to accommodate changes and voting mechanisms for both members participating in person and remotely.²²

The House of Representatives, Australia

As early as 23 March 2020, the House of Representatives Australia, too, adopted a Resolution entitled ‘Special provisions for human biosecurity emergency period’. The House resolved that it would meet in a manner and form not otherwise provided in the standing orders with the agreement of the Leader of the House and the Manager of Opposition Business. The manner in which members were present, so as to achieve a quorum, were determined by the Speaker. Secondly, the agreement of the Leader of the House and the Manager of Opposition Business was needed for any consequent changes to the rules and orders to enable such a meeting.²³ In another resolution to allow remote participation in proceedings, the House authorised using an official video facility. Members’ attendance and contribution through the official video facility would be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings of the House.²⁴

Two important circumstances could be summarised from the agreement of the Leader of the House and the Manager of Opposition Business for members to contribute remotely to parliamentary proceedings. Firstly, members could only participate remotely using the official parliamentary video facility at either an Electorate Office or a Commonwealth Parliament Office. Second, members participating remotely were stripped of certain rights, such as voting or being counted for the quorum, moving or

22 Canada HoC Journals 25 January 2021, No. 49, 1-4 <<https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/House/432/Journals/049/Journal049.PDF>>.

23 Australia HoR Deb 23 March 2020, 2769-71 <https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/chamber/hansardr/bead2837-76c9-4ce9-952b-eafe8e2d614f/toc_pdf/House%20of%20Representatives_2020_03_23_7656_Official.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf>.

24 Australia HoR Deb 24 August 2020, 5040-1 <https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/chamber/hansardr/29e6e8cb-9928-4774-850a-c2018b9b3e7e/toc_pdf/House%20of%20Representatives_2020_08_24_7992_Official.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf>.

seconding any motion, calling for a division, or calling for a quorum to be counted. Since voting was not permitted for members participating remotely, an already established pairing system —

can be used to enable a Member on one side of the House to be absent for any votes when a Member from the other side is to be absent at the same time or when, by agreement, a Member abstains from voting. By this arrangement a potential vote on each side of a question is lost and the relative voting strengths of the parties are maintained.²⁵

Notwithstanding deprived rights for members participating remotely, it must be noted that the practices were substituted with other procedures to accommodate the emergency period caused by the pandemic. Another essential practice to mention is the working democracy in terms of fairness between the government and opposition in reaching consensus. The fairness in the House was exemplified in the amendment of Standing Order 47(c)(ii) on the suspension of standing orders. The original provision ‘can be carried only by an absolute majority of Members’ was amended to include words ‘or by a majority of Members present if agreed by the Leader of the House and the Manager of Opposition Business’.

The Chamber of Deputies, Brazil

The Chamber of Deputies Brazil was relatively quick in putting forward a solution for Parliament to convene during the Covid-19 pandemic. On 17 March 2020, the Chamber approved Resolution No. 14/2020 to establish a Remote Deliberation System (SDR) enabling virtual plenary sessions of the House. The Brazilian Federal Senate also approved the SDR as the solution for parliamentary business in times of emergency. The SDR is defined as —

a technological solution that makes it possible to discuss and vote on matters, to be used exclusively in situations of war, social upheaval, public calamity, pandemic, epidemiological emergency, collapse of the transport system or situations of force majeure that prevent or make it impossible for the Senators to meet in person in the National Congress building or in another physical location.²⁶

25 D. Elder & P. Fowler (eds), *House of Representatives Practice Seventh Edition* (Canberra, Department of the House of Representatives, 2018) 283.

26 *Technology Transfer Handbook Remote Deliberation System of the Brazilian Federal Senate* (Brasília, Senado Federal, 2020) 8 <http://www.senado.leg.br/senado/hotsites/sdr/pdf/SDR_SF_DS_V162_eng.pdf>.

The Resolution specifically emphasised the mechanism for virtual plenary proceedings and the voting procedure, which, as the Resolution stated, 'must preserve the confidentiality' and 'will occur entirely in [the] institutional systems of the Chamber of Deputies'.²⁷

Therefore, the videoconferencing system utilising the Zoom application was integrated with the InfoLeg mobile app to provide attendance recording, and the voting mechanism was used for virtual proceedings. The SDR allowed all 513 members to participate virtually, although some MPs, usually party leaders,²⁸ were allowed to present physically in a place named the 'Tribune' if they chose to. The InfoLeg app, which had already existed to provide information on all bills, including the full text of bills and any amendments, was upgraded to incorporate secure voting during virtual proceedings. Data security remained essential, as emphasised in Article 3(IV) of the Resolution, 'no technological solution used by the SDR will involve the transfer of biometric data from parliamentarians over the Internet'. The first virtual proceedings for the Chamber of Deputies Brazil held on 25 March 2020, showed determination to ensure Parliament continued its operation, as stated by the Secretary-General of the Board of the Brazilian Senate, 'in times of crisis, Parliament cannot stop'.

Circumscription of the right to attend to parliamentary proceedings

The rules and procedures changes in the *Dewan Rakyat* were to be affected from the Budget 2021 tabling day on 6 November 2020, until the end of the session. However, as early as the Budget 2021 tabling day, the 80 members attendance in the main chamber ruling was challenged by the present members. Members from both political divides supported allowing all members to be present in the main chamber, specifically for the Budget 2021 tabling. In defending the ruling, the Minister of Law argued that the challenges were a *functus officio* as the ruling was agreed earlier. As pressure from members mounted, the Speaker finally allowed all members to be present in the main chamber.²⁹ It begs the

27 'Resolution of the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies No. 14/2020' *Camara Dos Deputados* (2020) <https://virtual.camara.leg.br/static/arquivos/Resolution_14_2020_ENGLISH.docx>.

28 Messages with Tadeu Cariolano dos Santos from Chamber of Deputies Brazil during the IPU Virtual e-Parliament Conference (17 June 2021).

29 DR Deb 6 November 2020, Bil. 31, 1-6 <<https://www.parlimen.gov.my/files/hindex/pdf/DR-06112020.pdf>>.

question of the logic of the limitation of members to be present in the main chamber since the decision had been overturned earlier without regard to why it was so.

Some of the changes were implemented through the suspension of standing orders. Standing Order 90(2) was repeatedly used to suspend relevant provisions relating to the shortened time of parliamentary questions and Minister's Question Time, the time change for the Special Chamber proceedings, and the procedure for Minister's Question Time being conducted.³⁰ Other changes were implemented, believed to be under the power of the Speaker, and in pursuance of Article 62(1) of the Federal Constitution on the House's prerogative in regulating its procedure.

The political context in which the government and Parliament operated during the pandemic³¹ would further problematise the reasons for other rules and procedures made throughout the sittings. It is worth questioning the government's political will to ensure the legislative institution is not heavily impeded by measures taken to fight the spread of the disease. As time is the legislature's most valuable commodity, the shortened time of parliamentary sittings has suffocated the legislature's role in carrying out its duties effectively, let alone in effectuating the notion of viscosity upon the government's legislative action. One, instead of the usual three supplementary questions allowed during the already shortened parliamentary question time, has put democratic accountability at risk. Furthermore, the way in which the Minister's Question Time was conducted, held for five minutes for questions to be read and only for the answer to be given in writing and posted on the Parliament's website, raises worrying concerns over the weakening of democracy practices.

Daily Police roadblocks leading to the Parliament building set in adhering to the Covid-19 parliamentary SOPs, albeit standing in the way of free and clear access for members, could be regarded as a health and safety precaution in limiting other than parliamentarians' presence in Parliament. However, during the Special Meeting of the *Dewan Rakyat* in July 2021, parliamentarians were entirely blocked from entering

30 Detailed discussions on the suspension of standing orders in M. Saari, 'Legitimacy of the Suspension of Standing Orders: The Case of the *Dewan Rakyat* (House of Representatives) of Malaysia' (2023) 76(3) *Parliamentary Affairs* 719, <<https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsab063>>.

31 Z. Azmi, 'Government's Powers During an Emergency' (2021) 1 *Journal of the Malaysian Parliament* 18, 19 <<https://doi.org/10.54313/journalmp.v1i.29>>.

Parliament, with Police roadblocks set on every road leading to the Parliament building.³² While public health concerns citing Covid-19 cases detected during the five-day parliamentary sitting as the reason for the shutdown, political reasons of the royal reprimand relating to the government's statements on emergency ordinances revocation made in Parliament were argued to have caused the remaining scheduled meeting to be postponed.³³

The incident raises the question of whether the right of members to enter and attend Parliament has been violated. Firstly, the motion ordering the Inspector-General Police to guarantee the safe passage for members that was passed at the beginning of every parliamentary session, usually takes effect for the whole parliamentary session until the next session, as traditionally it is unless otherwise provided.³⁴ Secondly, the impact of the motion on others outside the House, that is in this motion, the Inspector-General of Police, may be limited. The limitation of parliamentary orders on outsiders was shown in *Stockdale v Hansard (1839)*, in which the court ruled that an order of the House of Commons alone was inadequate to protect a person carrying out the order under the parliamentary privilege provision. Therefore, despite the validity of the motion to provide the right to attend for parliamentarians explicitly orders for free passage and prohibits any obstruction to Parliament, it seems that the Police roadblock under the pretext of Covid-19 has, one way or another, caused annoyance towards parliamentarians heading to Parliament.

In addressing the issue of parliamentary privilege limitations on the outside world, an Act of Parliament may be enforced to broaden the power of the House. As such, the Houses of Parliament (Privileges and Powers) Act 1952 (Act 347 onwards) stipulates such an obstruction as an offence and shall be punished for contempt of the House.³⁵ Despite the provision that protects the right to attend for members of Parliament, the relatively low threshold of the punishment of such an offence, makes the

32 'Malaysia opposition MPs gather at Merdeka Square after being blocked from entering parliament' *Channel News Asia* (2 August 2021) <<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/malaysia-opposition-dataran-merdeka-parliament-postponed-covid19-2084501>> accessed 14 February 2022.

33 'Malaysian premier faces calls to resign after palace rebuke' *Reuters* (29 July 2021) <<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/malaysian-premier-faces-calls-resign-after-palace-rebuke-2021-07-29/>> accessed 10 December 2023.

34 Elder & Fowler (n 25) 314.

35 Houses of Parliament (Privileges and Powers) Act 1952, s 9(e).

provision contradictorily with the nature of parliamentary privileges. Moreover, the statute has not been utilised to the extent that other lesser legislation used to reprimand such an obstruction offence. In 2017, eight people were charged at a magistrate court for attempting to attack Member of Parliament for Shah Alam at the parking lot of Parliament Complex in November 2016. Instead of the protection under the parliamentary privilege provision, the perpetrators were only subjected to the lesser legislation of the Minor Offences Act 1955,³⁶ which carries a fine not exceeding MYR100 conviction.³⁷

However, in an earlier incident in 2009, the House punished four members of a political party who confronted and mobbed a wheelchair-bound Member of Parliament for Bukit Gelugor in the Parliament's compound under Act 347.³⁸ In a rare move, a special committee was formed and chaired by the then Speaker of the *Dewan Rakyat* to investigate the incident for parliamentary contempt.³⁹ The committee proposed that those involved in obstructing the member of Parliament from entering the House be fined MYR1,000 each under Section 9(e) of Act 347.⁴⁰ These occurrences demonstrate that obstruction that violates the right to attend for parliamentarians is not tolerated, although the varying degree of punishment signals inconsistencies in protecting the sanctity of Parliament.

The Speaker's ruling to limit parliamentarians' attendance to parliamentary sitting in the main chamber of the *Dewan Rakyat* thus raises serious concerns over the right to attend. Understandably made to contain the spread of Covid-19, the ruling, albeit legitimate as the House shall regulate its procedure, is still contentious against the free representational mandate of parliamentarians. Having limited access to attend parliamentary sittings, how do MPs perform their duties and act according to their conscience? MPs are not bound to the specific slot

36 Minor Offences Act 1955, s 14.

37 '8 who attempted to attack Amanah MP outside Parliament charged' *New Straits Times* (3 April 2017) <<https://www.nst.com.my/news/2017/04/226858/8-who-attempted-attack-amanah-mp-outside-parliament-charged>> accessed 16 February 2022.

38 'RM1,000 fine for Umno Youth leaders who obstructed Karpal (Update)' *TheStar* (30 June 2009) <<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2009/06/30/rm1000-fine-for-umno-youth-leaders-who-obstructed-karpal-update>> accessed 16 February 2022.

39 DR Deb 26 February 2009, Bil. 8, 115 <<https://www.parlimen.gov.my/files/hindex/pdf/DR-26022009.pdf>>.

40 DR Deb 2 July 2009, Bil. 34, 70-122 <<https://www.parlimen.gov.my/files/hindex/pdf/DR-02072009.pdf>>.

given to them either in debating motions or bills or posing parliamentary questions. Their mandate includes arguing and counter-arguing any other matters raised in the House, which are carried out deliberatively among members. The attendance of MPs to parliamentary sitting would guarantee their ability to perform their representative function, which is otherwise impaired if they are stripped of the right to attend Parliament.

The importance of the right to attend for MPs is demonstrated in other legislatures in times of Covid-19. As shown in Canada, Australia, and Brazil, although physical attendance in the House was limited, an alternative attendance method was made available to MPs. The responsiveness of the House to immediately establish ways for parliaments to continue their business amid the uncertainty in the early stages of the virus spread marks the House's percipience. Such a restriction that does not deprive the principal right of MPs to attend and perform their duties would be understandable in its intention to contain the spread of the virus in the parliament precinct. The realisation, or otherwise, of the right to attend has escalated the parliamentary privileges issue, as this right constitutes a parliamentarian's fundamental principle. In the section that follows, related issues arising from the right to attend for MPs are discussed, and its implications on parliamentary privileges.

Members' seating and implication to parliamentary privileges

The 80 members limit at one time in the *Dewan Rakyat* is imposed by the SOP for parliamentary proceedings that stipulate that at least a metre of physical distancing must be observed in the main chamber.⁴¹ The limit represents only one-third of the total members of the House, thus denying the larger remaining members from attending the sitting. The rule seems rigid as to why alternatives were not in place to accommodate every member's right to attend. The Speaker argued that the limitation resulted from the King's Proclamation for parliamentary proceedings to be held in the Parliament building.⁴² The Federal Constitution Proclamation summoning Parliament for the First Meeting of the Third Session of the Fourteenth Parliament stipulated the date and time, including the place

41 'SOP Pelaksanaan Persidangan Parlimen dikemaskini pada 9 September 2020' *National Security Council* <<https://asset.mkn.gov.my/web/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2021/01/SOP-PELAKSANAAN-PERSIDANGAN-PARLIMEN.pdf>> accessed 25 February 2022.

42 'Speaker: Dewan Rakyat sitting cannot be held virtually' *New Straits Times* (23 October 2020) <<https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2020/10/634658/speaker-dewan-rakyat-sitting-cannot-be-held-virtually>> accessed 24 February 2022.

of the meeting, as accorded by Clause (1) of Article 55 of the Federal Constitution.

However, as stated in the Proclamation, the initial date of Monday, 9 March 2020, was varied by the Prime Minister as the Leader of the House to Monday, 18 May 2020.⁴³ The change was made under paragraph (2) of Standing Order 11, which allows the Leader or the Deputy Leader of the House to vary the dates appointed by the King from time to time. The Standing Order only allows for variation of the dates but not the place of the first sitting in each session, hence the Speaker's argument that the sitting location is as decreed by the King. Notwithstanding, the provision in the Standing Orders raises an issue as to whether the subsequent sittings' place is bound to the King's Proclamation since it explicitly specifies details for the first sitting of the session.

How can other legislatures that practise a Westminster system be more flexible in allowing remote participation in parliamentary proceedings? For example, the Proclamation of the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia summoning Parliament has provisions similar to Malaysia's King's Proclamation. It contains the date and time and states the Parliament House as the place to hold a session of the Parliament instead of the first sitting of the session.⁴⁴ Despite the very exact nature of the Proclamation, the Australian House of Parliament was still able to allow remote participation of members in parliamentary proceedings, as has been resolved on 23 March 2020 by way of that the remote participation of MPs is not considered to be in attendance and not counted for quorum purposes.

The enabling of remote participation by MPs in parliamentary proceedings legitimises such participation to be protected by parliamentary privileges, the same way as MPs participating in person.⁴⁵ It is not difficult for the Speaker to rule that parliamentary privileges cover the remote participation of Members since the Standing Orders have enabled parliamentary committees to conduct their proceedings using

43 P.U. (A) 144/2020 <[https://lom.agc.gov.my/ilims/upload/portal/akta/output/pua_20200506_P.U.%20\(A\)%20144.pdf](https://lom.agc.gov.my/ilims/upload/portal/akta/output/pua_20200506_P.U.%20(A)%20144.pdf)>.

44 Australia HoR Votes and Proceedings 2 July 2019, 1 <https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/chamber/votes/cf860efb-2aae-4521-aaab-79bb79f14428/toc_pdf/rep-vp.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22chamber/votes/cf860efb-2aae-4521-aaab-79bb79f14428/0000%22>.

45 Australia HoR Votes and Proceedings 24 August 2020, 1029 <https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/chamber/votes/e8769b7c-8f58-42c3-8bbc-700f3420583d/toc_pdf/rep-vp.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22chamber/votes/e8769b7c-8f58-42c3-8bbc-700f3420583d/0000%22>.

audio-visual or audio links with members of the committee or witnesses not present in one place.⁴⁶ Apart from the precedent of parliamentary committees' audio-visual proceedings, it is logical for remote participation by a member, complying with every rule and procedure of the House, to also be protected by parliamentary privileges.

There were wide senses of missed opportunity when Parliament opted to refrain from proceedings with plans to incorporate progressive procedures in its businesses the way other legislatures were willing to do. Technological and cybersecurity concerns, limitations on the Standing Orders, legal immunity and the way remote participation is conducted have been cited as the reasons why a hybrid parliament was not put into action.⁴⁷ The latter, including the way intervention during debates could take place and how voting could be done, as elaborated by the Speaker of the *Dewan Rakyat*, is not an easy task to devise, hence shooting down the hybrid parliament proposal.⁴⁸ Notwithstanding the outright reference to the Australian practice of the inability for remote participants to vote, the pairing system, as elaborated in this paper, is the solution to ensure fairness while allowing parliamentary proceedings to take place. Therefore, the pandemic, has been a blessing in disguise for legislative institutions to learn best practices from other legislatures with readily available resources compiled by IPU, INTER PARES and CPA.

The second issue of the limitation to attend parliamentary sitting is reflected in the seating arrangement in the *Dewan Rakyat*. The physical distancing regulation deprived certain members of their designated seats and moved them to other parts of the main chamber, namely in the officer seats behind members' seats in both aisles and the public gallery. The rearrangement caused difficulties for members seated in other parts of the chamber as their access to speak had been constrained by the limited number of available microphones, including lower visibility from the Speaker to get a chance to speak compared to members in their designated seats. This, in turn, denied an MP's free representational mandate to voice out his or her view in the House at his or her will.

46 Australia HoR Standing Orders, SO.235.

47 '5 reasons why hybrid Parliament wasn't implemented' *Free Malaysia Today* (24 August 2021) <<https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2021/08/24/5-reasons-why-hybrid-parliament-wasnt-implemented/>> accessed 9 December 2023.

48 'I'm not all-powerful, speaker tells critics on challenging road to hybrid Dewan debates' *MalaysiaNow* (10 June 2021) <<https://www.malaysianow.com/news/2021/06/10/im-not-all-powerful-speaker-tells-critics-on-challenging-road-to-hybrid-dewan-debates>> accessed 9 December 2023.

Nevertheless, the seating arrangement raises parliamentary privileges on the boundaries of the chamber that, at the time was considered for the protection of parliamentary immunity. Based on the practice and rulings of the Speaker, the public gallery and the government officials' gallery shall be regarded as part of the debating chamber for MPs. Furthermore, the public gallery was also designated for members under the Home Surveillance Order by the Ministry of Health to vote for any proposed bills or motions. These MPs must don complete personal protective equipment (PPE) before being allowed to attend and cast their vote.⁴⁹ The Standing Orders of the *Dewan Rakyat* are silent on the definition of members area in contrast with Australian practice, which defines the area for members and voting procedures in terms of the place eligible for voting.⁵⁰ Therefore, this ruling might be construed to have expanded the boundaries of members' seats and the permitted area to vote, which will have an implication on parliamentary privileges.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the measures to mitigate Covid-19 in the *Dewan Rakyat* and the implications towards parliamentary privileges. The standard operating procedures and the Speaker's rulings for parliamentary proceedings were meant to contain the spread of the virus, although they contended to have deprived parliamentarians of certain rights and privileges. The paper has shown that most of the decisions concerning the procedure for parliamentary proceedings made on the basis of the House shall regulate its procedure. Drawing out from this power lies the principles of separation of powers in which Article 63 of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia guarantees parliamentary immunity from being questioned in the courts of law. 'A hands-tied approach' has been primarily adopted by the courts in relation to matters brought before them for adjudication,⁵¹ signifying a near-absolute power for Parliament to determine its procedures.

As exemplified by other legislatures, the willingness to adapt and depart from conventional practices ensures Parliament continues its

49 'MPs under HSO wear PPE to vote for Supply Bill in Dewan Rakyat' *New Straits Times* (14 December 2020) <<https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2020/12/649315/mps-under-hso-wear-ppe-vote-supply-bill-dewan-rakyat>> accessed 3 March 2022.

50 Australia HoR Standing Orders, SO.2 & SO.128-129.

51 H.A. Kadouf & A.O. Sambo, 'Justiciability of Legislative Proceedings: A Legal Analysis of the Malaysian Courts' Approach' (2013) 21(2) *IJUM Law Journal* 233 <<https://doi.org/10.31436/iiumlj.v21i2.103>>.

sittings as the House is the master of its procedures. However, the same could not be said for the way in which the *Dewan Rakyat* mitigated the risk of Covid-19 while trying to carry out its legislative business as usual. Almost all changes in rules and procedures were temporary and ceased to be implemented once Parliament is back to normal times, except the rule on the voting process through division, which has been carried over into the mainstream of parliamentary procedure. It is also notably evident from the House of Representatives, Australia and the House of Commons, Canada, which have had their Standing Orders amended and incorporated with changes made during the pandemic, whereas no amendment to the Standing Orders of the *Dewan Rakyat* took place.

One of the more significant findings to emerge from this paper is that the parliamentarian's free representational mandate is closely related to his or her rights and privileges under the parliamentary privileges. The right to attend constitutes the building block of an MP's representative function, without which the free representational mandate could not be fulfilled. The Standing Orders provide adequate provision for the House, headed by the Speaker, to introduce and enforce rules and regulations to allow Parliament to perform its functions in times of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Speaker, through Standing Order 100, is given residuary powers to regulate any matters not specifically provided in the Standing Orders, as long as they are not inconsistent with the other orders.

Although the House is the master of its procedure and matters related to parliamentary proceedings are non-justiciable before courts of law, the percipience of the House is most sought-after in determining its procedure. Beyond everything, measures taken to mitigate the risk of Covid-19 in Parliament must be done reasonably as not to impede the rights and mandate of parliamentarians, parliamentary privileges and the functions of parliament, as 'there is also real danger of legislator's overestimating the [health] risk, and responding by taking unjustified and irrational decisions about their continued operation.'⁵²

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52 I. Bar-Siman-Tov, 'Covid-19 meets politics: the novel coronavirus as a novel challenge for legislatures' (2020) 8(1-2) *The Theory and Practice of Legislation* 11 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/20508840.2020.1800250>>.

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Australia HoR Deb 24 August 2020, 5040-1 <https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/chamber/hansardr/29e6e8cb-9928-4774-850a-c2018b9b3e7e/toc_pdf/House%20of%20Representatives_2020_08_24_7992_Official.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf>.

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Parliamentary Debate Dynamics: Understanding the Paradigm of Young Parliamentarians in the 12th Malaysia Plan Mid-Term Review Discourse

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Abstract

Young parliamentarians play a dynamic role in shaping Malaysia's economic trajectory, especially during parliamentary sittings such as the mid-term review of the 12th Malaysia Plan. This study explores the dynamics of parliamentary debates qualitatively, scrutinising the contributions of young parliamentarians through discourse analysis, utilising the Deliberative Quality Index (DQI) to analyse speeches during the 12th Malaysia Plan Mid-term Review Special Parliamentary Seating. Findings showcased a consistent range of the DQI's scores. Still, interestingly, no clear correlation between educational background and political exposure was evident, suggesting a complex array of factors influencing deliberative quality. The thematic analysis highlighted a priority towards food security and future-ready talent, contrasted against a noticeable unfamiliarity with the MADANI concept. For a more nuanced understanding of intergenerational collaboration in legislative

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discussions, this study advocates a holistic approach in future research. This exploration into contrasting perspectives and debating styles between young and seasoned parliamentarians could pave the way for a more inclusive, progressive, and forward-thinking parliamentary discourse in Malaysia, fostering a blend of youthful innovation and seasoned wisdom.

Keywords: Deliberative Quality Index, discourse analysis, 12th Malaysia Plan Mid-term Review, young parliamentarian, Inter-Parliamentary Union

Introduction

In Malaysia, parliamentary debates are crucial as they help shape the country's laws and policies. Young parliamentarians tend to introduce fresh ideas and show a keen interest in discussing contemporary issues, compared to their older counterparts.¹ Their participation is especially notable during important sessions like the mid-term review of the 12th Malaysia Plan,² which is a plan outlining Malaysia's development goals from 2021 to 2025.

The Malaysia Plans are not mere developmental blueprints; they embody the nation's vision and aspirations. Given their stature, these plans are tabled and debated in the Parliament of Malaysia, the country's highest legislative body. Down the memory lane, during the first presentation of the Malaysia Plan, the late Tun Abdul Razak, Deputy Prime Minister at that time, emphasised the significance of the plan to parliament, stating:

Mr Speaker, Sir, I rise to propose today no ordinary motion. I rise to propose before this parliament the symbol of our democracy, a plan for economic and social development for the next five years, a plan of purpose and intention to enable our country to travel yet further on the road to accelerated progress and prosperity, a plan to give Malaysia its rightful place in the international, economic community of free nations of the world.³

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- 1 Stockemer D, Sundström A, "Age Representation in Parliaments: Can Institutions Pave the Way for the Young?" (2018) 10 *European Political Science Review* 467.
 - 2 Note: The six-day special sitting of the *Dewan Rakyat* and four-day of *Dewan Negara* were called by Prime Minister to to evaluate the achievements of the five-year plan in its first two years (2021-2022) and the direction for the next three years (2023-2025). "Special sitting to table 12th Malaysian plan mid-term review" (The Star, 10 September 2023) <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2023/09/10/special-sitting-to-table-12th-msian-plan-mid-term-review> accessed 29 September 2023.
 - 3 *Dewan Rakyat, Hansard*, 15 December 1965 <https://www.parlimen.gov.my/files/hindex/pdf/DR-15121965.pdf>.

By emphasising that he was not proposing “no ordinary motion”, Tun Abdul Razak highlighted the gravitas of the occasion’s importance of the Malaysia Plan. It was not just another policy or proposal; it spoke of a forward-looking vision for the nation. The mid-term review is a chance to look at what has been achieved, what has not worked, and what might need to be changed. During this review, the debates led by young Members of Parliament (MPs) are essential as they provide fresh perspectives on these topics. This paper examined how young MPs contributed to these debates during the mid-term review of the 12th Malaysia Plan. Content and thematic analysis were used to understand the topics discussed by young MPs, how they presented their arguments, and the solutions they proposed. These debates will enhance the comprehension of how young MPs influence parliamentary discussions and endeavour to shape Malaysia’s destiny.

Literature review

In this section, the term ‘*Young Parliamentarian*’ is defined, followed by an exploration of the background and key components of the 12th Malaysia Plan, to lay a foundational basis for the subsequent discussions on parliamentary debate dynamics among young parliamentarians.

Definition of young parliamentarian

In 2013, the Forum of Young Parliamentarians was established as a result of the approval of a significant Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) resolution⁴ in 2010 on “*Youth Participation in Democratic Process*”. Youth are defined differently in various countries around the world. However, according to the Statutes of the IPU, a young parliamentarian is one who is under the age of 45.^{5,6}

There have been a variety of definitions of “*youth*” since a youth MP in their early forties and a young MP in their twenties encountered different

4 Resolution adopted by the 122nd IPU Assembly in Bangkok, Thailand on 1 April 2010.

5 The age limit of 45 was mentioned in the invitation letter of the Ninth IPU Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians 2023 in Hanoi, Viet Nam. See: Invitation letter of the Ninth IPU Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians 2023 in Hanoi, Viet Nam. See <https://www.ipu.org/event/ninth-global-conference-young-parliamentarians#event-sub-page-documents/> accessed on 29 September 2023.

6 Inter-Parliamentary Union, “Youth Participation in National Parliament” (2021) <https://www.ipu.org/youth2021> accessed on 12 September 2023.

circumstances. The IPU report has highlighted three age thresholds for young MPs: under 30, 40 and 45.⁷ Youth have transitional status since their status is not permanent, contrasting the situation experienced by most other under-represented groups, such as minority ethnic groups and others. In fact, a young MP elected in one cycle might have aged out of that status by the next election.

The study of young adult representation is crucial because they are likely to have different policy preferences than older adults. After all, ideology and policy preferences change with age.⁸ For instance, younger MPs are more interested in investments in education and upholding pro-globalisation attitudes. In contrast, older adults differ in their direction to focus more on supporting higher pensions⁹ and want to preserve traditional customs as well as being wary of global integration.¹⁰

Young Parliamentarians of Malaysia

Malaysia has experienced a significant uptick in youth representation within its parliamentary system. The *Dewan Rakyat*, the lower house of the Parliament of Malaysia, now has 58 young parliamentarians out of its 222 seats, marking an increase of approximately 20% compared to the previous decade.¹¹ Similarly, the *Dewan Negara*, or the Senate, has incorporated younger voices with five young parliamentarians out of its 70 seats. However, when contrasted with other ASEAN countries, Malaysia's youth representation in its legislative bodies is only at par. For

7 Ibid.

8 Stockemer D, Sundström A, "Age Representation in Parliaments: Can Institutions Pave the Way for the Young?" (2018) 10 *European Political Science Review* 467–90 <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755773918000048> accessed on 12 September 2023.

9 Metz D, "The Politics of Population Ageing" (2002) 73(3) *The Political Quarterly* 321–327 <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.00472> quoted in Stockemer D, Sundström A, "Age Representation in Parliaments: Can Institutions Pave the Way for the Young?" (2018) 10 *European Political Science Review* 467–90, accessed 12 September 2023.

10 Shin EH, "Political Demography of Korea: Political Effects of Changes in Population Composition and Distribution" (2001) 19(1) *East Asia: An International Quarterly* 171–204 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12140-001-0006-0> quoted in Stockemer D, Sundström A, "Age Representation in Parliaments: Can Institutions Pave the Way for the Young?" (2018) 10 *European Political Science Review* 467–90, accessed 12 September 2023.

11 Diyana Pfordten, "INTERACTIVE: A look at our slightly younger Dewan Rakyat" (The Star Online, 2 December 2022) accessed <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2022/12/02/interactive-a-look-at-our-slightly-younger-dewan-rakyat> on 16 October 2023.

instance, countries like Singapore, Vietnam, and Indonesia consistently integrate new faces of young leaders into their parliamentary ranks. However, Thailand has seen fast-tracked integration following the success of the *Move Forward Party*¹² in the recent election. This growing presence of young parliamentarians in Malaysia not only underscores the nation's commitment to fostering youthful leadership, but also positions Malaysia as a frontrunner among ASEAN countries for championing the inclusion of the younger generation in political decision-making. However, while youth representation has seen an increase, gender representation remains a challenge, with a limited number of young female parliamentarians, as illustrated in *Table 1* below.

Table 1: Young Parliamentarians of AIPA Members Parliament (Lower House)¹³

| No. | Country | Percentage (%) of Young Parliamentarians | Percentage (%) of Male Young Parliamentarians | Percentage (%) of Female Young Parliamentarians |
|-----|-------------|--|---|---|
| 1. | Brunei | 11.76 | 8.82 | 2.94 |
| 2. | Cambodia | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 3. | Indonesia | 26.26 | 18.61 | 7.65 |
| 4. | Laos | 12.20 | 7.93 | 4.27 |
| 5. | Malaysia | 26.13 | 21.17 | 4.95 |
| 6. | Myanmar | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 7. | Philippines | 31.51 | 20.58 | 10.93 |
| 8. | Singapore | 40 | 25.26 | 14.74 |
| 9. | Thailand | 43 | 24.16 | 18.84 |
| 10. | Vietnam | 29.26 | 13.43 | 15.83 |

12 The *Move Forward Party* in Thailand, established in 2020 as a successor to the dissolved *Future Forward Party*. In the recent elections, the party achieved significant success, securing a substantial number of seats in the parliament. Notably, the party's electoral triumph has led to an influx of young parliamentarians in the Thai Parliament, marking a departure from the traditionally older demographic of legislators.

13 IPU Parline, Global Data on National Parliaments. See https://data.ipu.org/node/103/data-on-youth?chamber_id=13454 accessed on 29 September 2023. Data on the age of parliamentarians is collected at the start of the legislature, following the most recent elections.

With 26.13% young parliamentarians, Malaysia stands in the mid-range among the listed ASEAN countries. It has a higher representation of young parliamentarians compared to Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar, but lower than the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

The gender disparity is notable, with male young parliamentarians (21.17%) significantly outnumbering female young parliamentarians (4.95%). This pattern of gender disparity is observed in most of the listed countries, with Thailand and Vietnam having a closer gender balance among young parliamentarians. The gender parity shown is not surprising, as the challenge of reaching a 30% representation of women in parliament is not unique to Malaysia¹⁴ but is a global issue faced by many countries.¹⁵ Hence, the political arena remains as an area where more concerted efforts are needed to address age and gender gaps.

The demographic of the young parliamentarians in the Parliament of Malaysia

It is a well-acknowledged notion in political science and sociology that an individual's demographic attributes, such as gender, race, religion, and education, can significantly influence their perspectives, priorities, and the way they articulate their ideas in various settings, including parliamentary discussions, or can be purely referred to as identity discourse¹⁶. *Appendix I* showcases demographic distribution and the diversity among the young representatives of the Parliament of Malaysia.

In the *Dewan Rakyat*, there are a total of 26 first-time young Members of Parliament. Among them, 14 are from the government block, while 12 are from the opposition block. On the other hand, there are four first-time young Senators in the Dewan Negara, with three representing the government block and one representing the opposition block.

14 Pfordten, *supra* note 11.

15 ASEAN countries have made commendable progress in enhancing women's representation in parliaments over the past two decades, however, there is still room for improvement. Despite a 9% increase in the past two decades (from 12% to 21% in 2023), the regional average is still well below the global figure of 26% and ASEAN Member States fall short of the global target of 30%. See <https://asean.usmission.gov/strengthening-womens-resilience-and-leadership-in-asean/> accessed 15 October 2023.

16 Verkuyten, Maykel, and Wybren Nooitgedagt. "Parliamentary identity and the management of the far-right: A discursive analysis of Dutch parliamentary debates." *British Journal of Social Psychology* 58, no. 3 (2019): 495-514.

Of the young parliamentarians listed, two hold diplomas, 26 have attained bachelor's degrees, five have master's degrees, and one has a PhD. Only ten young parliamentarians have qualifications in the disciplines related to economics, businesses or finances. Among the 45 young parliamentarians in the 15th Parliament of Malaysia, 37 are males, while eight are females. Regarding race, 31 are Bumiputras and 14 are non-Bumiputras. Concerning religion, 30 are Muslims, and 15 are non-Muslims.

Background of the Malaysia Plan

The developmental journey of Malaysia began with the Malaya Plans. The 1st Malaya Plan (1956-1960) was initiated during the final years of British colonial rule, marking the beginning of a series of five-year blueprints that have since guided the nation's economic and developmental trajectory. It aimed to rehabilitate an economy affected by the war and the Emergency period, focusing on infrastructure development, agricultural modernisation, and establishing essential social services. Following the 1st Malaya Plan, the 2nd Malaya Plan (1961-1965)^{17,18} was introduced to continue the government's efforts on rural development, poverty reduction, and economic diversification to reduce the country's reliance on tin and rubber. With the formation of Malaysia in 1963, which included Sabah, Sarawak, and Singapore, and Singapore's subsequent separation in 1965, the developmental framework transitioned from the Malaya Plans to the Malaysia Plans.

The First Malaysia Plan commenced in 1966. Each Malaysia Plan is meticulously crafted, reflecting the nation's evolving priorities and challenges.¹⁹ A significant feature of these plans is the mid-term review, typically conducted in the third year, which serves as a checkpoint to assess progress and recalibrate strategies if necessary. Most importantly, every stage of the Malaysia Plan, from its drafting and launching to its mid-term review and conclusion, is tabled in the Parliament of Malaysia. This process ensures transparency, inclusivity, and a collective national

17 Hussiin, Hasnah. "Integrasi kaum dalam rancangan pembangunan negara: Tumpuan selepas dasar ekonomi baru." *International Journal of Humanities Technology and Civilization* 1 (2018): 58-73.

18 Abdullah, Mohd Firdaus. "Bekalan Air Domestik Negeri Kedah dalam Rancangan Malaya Kedua 1960-1965." *Melayu: Jurnal Antarabangsa Dunia Melayu* 13, no. 1 (2020): 109-132.

19 Saari, M. (2022). *Legislative Role in the Poverty Alleviation Policy*. Workshop of Parliamentary Scholars and Parliamentarians. Research Papers. 2022 Wroxtton Workshop (30th-31st July).

approach to development. The 12th Malaysia Plan (2021-2025)²⁰ is the latest instalment, encapsulating the government's vision and strategies for the nation, especially in the face of contemporary challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 2: Date of the Malaysia Plan being tabled and reviewed in the Parliament of Malaysia

| No. | Policy | Effective Year | Tabled | Reviewed |
|-----|--------------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. | 1st Malaysia Plan | 1966-1970 | 15 December 1965 | 25 January 1969 |
| 2. | 2nd Malaysia Plan | 1971-1975 | 12 July 1971 | 26 November 1973 |
| 3. | 3rd Malaysia Plan | 1976-1980 | 19 July 1976 | 19 March 1979 |
| 4. | 4th Malaysia Plan | 1981-1985 | 27 March 1981 | 29 March 1984 |
| 5. | 5th Malaysia Plan | 1985-1990 | 21 March 1986 | 04 July 1989 |
| 6. | 6th Malaysia Plan | 1991-1995 | 10 July 1991 | 16 December 1993 |
| 7. | 7th Malaysia Plan | 1996-2000 | 6 May 1996 | 22 April 1999 |
| 8. | 8th Malaysia Plan | 2001-2005 | 23 April 2001 | 30 October 2003 |
| 9. | 9th Malaysia Plan | 2006-2010 | 31 March 2006 | 26 Jun 2008 |
| 10. | 10th Malaysia Plan | 2011-2015 | 10 June 2010 | n.a ²¹ |
| 11. | 11th Malaysia Plan | 2016-2020 | 21 May 2015 | 18 October 2018 |
| 12. | 12th Malaysia Plan | 2021-2025 | 27 September 2021 | 11 September 2023 |

20 The 12th Malaysia Plan was initially scheduled to be tabled in Parliament of Malaysia in August 2020. However, due to the unforeseen circumstances brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent political changes in Malaysia, the tabling of the 12th Malaysia Plan was postponed. In 2020, Malaysia saw a change in government with the resignation of Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad and the appointment of Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin as the new Prime Minister. This political transition led to a review and realignment of the 12th Malaysia Plan to ensure that it was in line with the new government's priorities and strategies. However, in August 2021, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin resigned as Prime Minister due to a loss of majority support in the Parliament. Subsequently, Dato' Sri Ismail Sabri Yaakob was sworn in as the 9th Prime Minister of Malaysia. Under his administration, the 12th Malaysia Plan was finally tabled in Parliament in September 2021.

21 Note: The 10th Malaysia Plan marked the first use of the two-year rolling plan approach, which entailed periodic reviews of the Malaysia Plan. This new approach led to the belief that a midterm review, and consequently its publication, was no longer necessary, resulting in the absence of a parliamentary review session for the 10th Malaysia Plan. However, during the 11th Malaysia Plan, the practice of conducting a midterm review was reinstated, reverting to the previous tradition.

Economic planning is essential in guiding a nation's development trajectory, ensuring sustainable growth, and addressing socio-economic challenges. Across the ASEAN region, every member country recognises the importance of such planning and has instituted its own national development strategy or plan.

Table 3: ASEAN countries' national economic plan equivalent to the Malaysia Plan

| No. | Country | National Economic Plan | Year |
|-----|-------------|---|----------------------|
| 1. | Brunei | National Development Plan | 2018-2023 (6 years) |
| 2. | Cambodia | National Strategic Development Plan | 2019-2023 (5 years) |
| 3. | Indonesia | The National Medium-Term Development for 2020-2024 | 2020-2024 (5 years) |
| 4. | Laos | 9th Five Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan | 2021-2025 (5 years) |
| 5. | Malaysia | 12th Malaysia Plan | 2021-2025 (5 years) |
| 6. | Myanmar | Myanmar Sustainable Plan | 2018-2030 (13 years) |
| 7. | Philippines | Philippine Development Plan | 2023-2028 (6 years) |
| 8. | Singapore | Singapore Economy 2030: Building a Vibrant Economy, Nurturing Enterprises | 2021-2030 (10 years) |
| 9. | Thailand | The 13th National Economic and Social Development Plan | 2023-2027 (5 years) |
| 10. | Vietnam | National Master Plan | 2021-2030 (10 years) |

Despite the overarching goal of promoting economic growth, reducing disparities, and enhancing the well-being of citizens being often similar, each plan is unique, reflecting the specific challenges, opportunities, and aspirations of the individual country. These plans not only set the strategic direction for the nation but also provide a framework for policymakers, ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently and that

development efforts are coordinated and aligned with the country's long-term vision.

Methodology

This study embraces a qualitative approach, amalgamating methodologies from two studies with a clear guide on qualitative research in parliaments.^{22,23} The emphasis is on exploring the dynamics of parliamentary debates in *Dewan Rakyat* and *Dewan Negara*, with a keen focus on the contributions of young parliamentarians. Utilising discourse analysis, inspired by Goplerud²⁴, and observational studies as suggested by Berthet *et al.*²⁵, this research aims to provide detailed insights into the interaction and engagement of young parliamentarians within the Malaysian parliamentary discourse.

Documents, content and thematic analysis

Content and thematic analysis method was utilised to dissect parliamentary debates and discussions, using the excerpt²⁶ of the Hansards²⁷ (considered as the documents for this study) dated 11 to 26 September 2023 from the Parliament of Malaysia. Out of the 58 young parliamentarians from *Dewan Rakyat*, 40 participated in the debates during the 12th Malaysia Plan Mid-term Review Special Parliamentary Seating, along with all five young Senators from *Dewan Negara*. For anonymity during further analysis, each participating young parliamentarian from *Dewan Rakyat* will be labelled ADR1 to ADR40 and *Dewan Negara* as ADN1 to ADN5, based on the order of their debates.

This qualitative analytic method aided in identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (or themes) within the data. It provided a complex,

22 Berthet, Valentine et al., "Guide to Qualitative Research in Parliaments: Experiences and Practices" (2023) <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-39808-7>.

23 Goplerud, Max, 'Methods for Analyzing Parliamentary Debates', in Hanna Back, Marc Debus, and Jorge M. Fernandes (eds), *The Politics of Legislative Debates* (Oxford, 2021; online edn, Oxford Academic, 18 Nov. 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198849063.003.0005> accessed 30 September 2023.

24 Ibid. pp 72-90.

25 Berthet *et al.* (n1) pp 2-7.

26 Note: The excerpt was prepared by extracting the segments of the debates that involve the young parliamentarians exclusively.

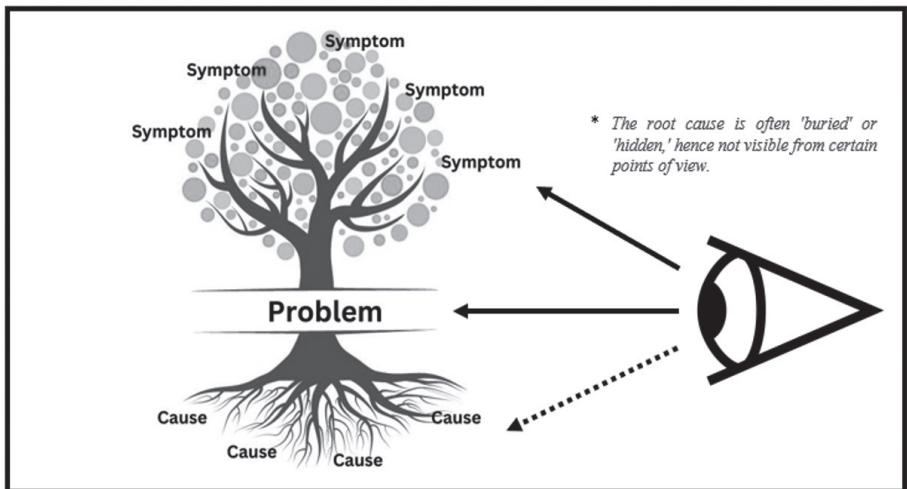
27 Archive of Hansards can be retrieved from <<https://www.parlimen.gov.my/hansard-dewan-rakyat.html?uweb=dr&>> for Dewan Rakyat and <<https://www.parlimen.gov.my/hansard-dewan-negara.html?uweb=dn&>> for Dewan Negara.

detailed, and nuanced understanding of the parliamentary discourse, mainly focusing on the contributions of young parliamentarians. By scrutinising the textual data, themes relating to young parliamentarians' engagement, their addressed issues, and proposed solutions were unearthed. This thematic exploration enriched the understanding of the dynamics within the Malaysian parliamentary setting, shedding light on the parliamentary debate dynamics and young parliamentarians' role in policy dialogues.

Root cause analysis

The 12th Malaysia Plan is framed as a long-term strategy, apart from the annual budget presented in the Parliament of Malaysia. Unlike the annual budget's financial outlook, this plan aimed to dive deep and fix the root causes of financial leakages continuously draining Malaysia's resources. The essence of the 12th Malaysia Plan should be a holistic approach focused on solving the basic financial challenges, which includes reducing financial losses and boosting revenue generation to refill the government's coffers. It is crucial that the 12th Malaysia Plan documents carefully outline these strategic steps to fix the financial issues Malaysia is facing. Besides, Root Cause Analysis could be key to identifying main issues rather than just addressing immediate symptoms.

Figure 1: Illustration of the complexity to identify the root cause of a problem



There is a common trend in parliament to focus on symptoms, maybe

due to a lack of understanding or because tackling symptoms might be politically and practically more effortless. Solutions targeting symptoms might provide quicker, more visible results or respond to public pressures. On the other hand, addressing root causes may need systemic changes and more resources, or may challenge established interests, making them harder to address. The discussion in parliament may reflect these complexities, as well as the interests and abilities of the parliamentarians themselves.

Speech analysis

A few studies related to evaluating parliamentary discourses or debates were identified. One such study was about the *Deliberative Quality Index* (DQI), which evaluated parliamentary speeches from the UK parliament using a point system, where each indicator was assigned a maximum value of 1, 2, or 3 points, totalling a DQI score of 14. This methodology hand-coded the speeches to assess deliberative quality. It proposed six indicators—participation, level of justification, content of justification, respect, counter-arguments, and constructive politics. The first edition was developed in 2003 by Steenbergen *et al.*, and several iterations have been introduced since then.²⁸

This study adapted the first edition with modifications. Five indicators were proposed: level of justification, content of justification, context understanding, counter-arguments, and constructive politics. *Level of Justification* assesses the extent to which a speaker provides substantial reasoning or evidence to support their claims. *Content of Justification* examines the relevance, accuracy, and credibility of the evidence or reasoning provided by the speaker. *Context Understanding* evaluates speakers' awareness of the broader discourse context and how effectively they situate their arguments. *Counter-arguments* specify whether a speaker engages with critiques made by others or attempts to address or respond to counterclaims, concerns, or countervailing evidence. *Constructive Proposal* refers to speakers proposing solutions to shared problems, alternative options, or compromises.

Findings and discussions

28 Fournier-Tombs, E., & MacKenzie, M. K. (2021). "Big data and democratic speech: Predicting deliberative quality using machine learning techniques." *Methodological Innovations*, 14(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/20597991211010416>.

In this research conducted on the Parliament of Malaysia, significant inspiration was drawn from a seminal analysis work in Australian Parliaments with those in the United Kingdom.²⁹ The compelling visual presentation of the findings in that study³⁰ was particularly noteworthy and resonated with the study's objectives in the Parliament of Malaysia. Hence, the findings of this study are presented with an aim to achieve similar precision by emulating the same clarity.

Finding 1: Content analysis on the young parliamentarians' debates in 12th Malaysia Plan mid-term review

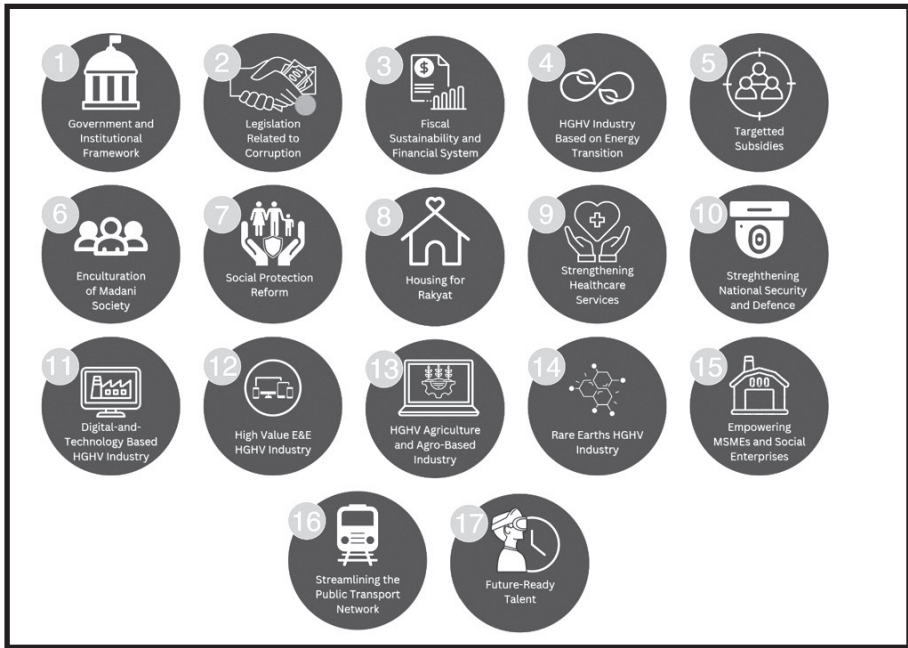
In the Mid-term Review of the 12th Malaysia Plan, Prime Minister Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim introduced 17 strategic initiatives, termed as "Big Bolds", aimed at propelling Malaysia's economic growth. These initiatives are part of a broader strategy that involves an increased budget allocation, with an additional MYR15 billion, bringing the total to MYR415 billion. This significant financial commitment underscores the government's dedication in improving administrative efficiency and strategically reallocating funds to address core societal needs.

The "Big Bolds" span a wide array of sectors, including efforts to eliminate extreme poverty, implement economic structural reforms, bolster the Islamic economy, and enhance infrastructure in critical areas such as health, education, and transportation. These initiatives are outlined along with 71 main strategies focusing on key enablers like strengthening sustainability and building a prosperous society. The mid-review serves as a roadmap for prioritising and reallocating resources efficiently to achieve desired outcomes in national development and societal well-being.³¹

29 Cullen, A, 'The Art of Persuasive Discourse in Parliament—A Comparative Analysis of Australian Parliaments with Those of the United Kingdom' (ACT Legislative Assembly, Canberra ACT, Australia). See <https://wrotonworkshop.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/2017-Session-6B-Cullen.pdf> accessed 10 October 2023.

30 Ibid. pp. 25-27.

31 MAMPU. (n.d.). Portal Rasmi MAMPU. See <https://www.mampu.gov.my/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/15-Mei-Astro-Awani-Kerajaan-persiap-kajian-semula-separuh-penggal-RMK12-PM-Anwar.pdf> accessed on 1 October 2023.

Figure 2: 17 Big Bolds of 12th Malaysia Plan Mid-term Review³²

A detailed thematic analysis was carried out using pre-determined themes taken from the “Big Bolds”. *Appendix II* below displays the results of this analysis, showing the frequencies of the young parliamentarians’ discussions that matched the “Big Bolds” themes. A tick was marked whenever a young parliamentarian mentioned something related to a particular “Big Bold” theme. In this manner, it helps to understand how closely the young parliamentarians’ discussions are aligned with these strategic initiatives which are introduced in the Mid-term Review of the 12th Malaysia Plan.

Big Bold 13 emerged as the most frequently highlighted topic, being mentioned 17 times. This was closely followed by Big Bold 17, which was discussed 16 times. Both Big Bold 4 and Big Bold 8 received equal attention, each being brought up 12 times. Subsequently, Big Bold 7 was mentioned 11 times, while Big Bold 3, Big Bold 9, Big Bold 11, and Big Bold 15 were each highlighted eight times.

32 Taken from 12th Malaysia Plan Mid-term Review pamphlet and speech text of Prime Minister, (n.d.), retrieved from <https://rmke12.ekonomi.gov.my/ksp/storage/fileUpload/2023/09/2023091325_teks_ucapan_yab_perdana_menteri_di_dewan_rakyat_pembentangan_usul_ksp_rmke_12_2021_2025.pdf> accessed at 11 October 2023.

After that, Big Bold 1 and Big Bold 2 were both discussed seven times, and Big Bold 5 was mentioned on six occasions. Next, Big Bold 10, Big Bold 12, and Big Bold 16 were each brought up five times. Lastly, Big Bold 14 received the least attention among those mentioned, being discussed only three times. Notably, Big Bold 6 was not highlighted by any parliamentarian during the debate. This pattern demonstrates the inclination or familiarity of young parliamentarians with certain topics, indicating which areas they deem significant or have more knowledge about.

Finding 1a: Young parliamentarians prioritise food security and future-ready talent

The emphasis placed by young parliamentarians on *Big Bold 13: High-growth, High-Value Agriculture and Agro-based Industry* and *Big Bold 17: Future-ready Talent* underscores their acute awareness of pressing national concerns. Malaysia's recent challenges with shortages of staple foods like rice, chicken, and eggs have heightened the importance of food security. The situation with rice has been further exacerbated by stricter protectionist policies adopted by exporting countries. The surge in imported white rice prices, primarily due to a 36% price hike by *Padiberas Nasional Berhad* (BERNAS) and an export ban by India, the world's largest rice exporter, has led to an increased demand for locally produced rice. This has resulted in a significant shortfall, with local rice being sold at a government-set ceiling price of MYR26 for a 10kg bag, compared to the MYR39 price tag for imported rice.³³

On the other hand, Since February 2022, the government has invested heavily in subsidies to stabilise the chicken and egg market. A whopping MYR3.8 billion was spent on these subsidies, which were introduced as a measure to control the sudden surge in prices and address the supply shortage. The primary objective of this temporary subsidy was to prevent a sudden price hike and ensure that consumers had consistent access to these essential goods.³⁴

33 Raevathi Supramaniam. Free Malaysia Today (FMT Online). Nation. 12 October 2023. "Why is Malaysia facing a rice shortage?" retrieved from <https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2023/10/12/why-is-malaysia-facing-a-rice-shortage/> accessed on 17 October 2023.

34 Kenneth Tee. Malay Mail. Malaysia. 13 October 2023. "PM Anwar: Chicken and eggs will no longer be controlled goods, prices to be determined by market demand" retrieved from <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2023/10/13/pm-anwar-chicken-and-eggs-will-no-longer-be-controlled-goods-prices-to-be...-determined-by-market-demand/96049> accessed on 17 October 2023.

The emphasis on “Future-ready Talent” by young parliamentarians could reflect their generational awareness and being closer in age to the individuals who will be entering the workforce, they may have a better grasp of the educational and skill-building needs that will be necessary for success in the coming years. They are also more attuned to unemployment and underemployment among the youth, and they have a greater desire to see that the next generation of workers is well-equipped for the changing nature of the labour market.

Finding 1b: Lack of familiarity with the MADANI Society concept among young parliamentarians

It was observed that none of the young parliamentarians made any reference to or addressed any of the key parameters associated with the “Big Bold 6: Enculturation of MADANI Society”, such as the importance of unity. This indicates a potential gap in their understanding or awareness of the MADANI society concept or MADANI in general³⁵. While the concept itself might be intricate and not as straightforward as other initiatives like “1Malaysia”³⁶, “Prihatin”³⁷, or “Keluarga Malaysia”³⁸, it is essential for these young parliamentarians to grasp its significance. It is not entirely surprising if young parliamentarians in the opposition overlook the idea of MADANI society enculturation. In fact, if young MPs

35 Malaysia Madani, a slogan introduced by the current Malaysian Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim on 19 January, 2023, aimed at leading the country headlong by promoting the values of MADANI, or in English acronym, SCRIPT, *i.e.*, Sustainability, Prosperity, Innovation, Respect, Trust, and Care and Compassion as **quoted in** Aziz, Nadiyah Abdul, and Rossilawati Rusli. “Embracing Islamic Values in Governance: Reflecting the Concept of ‘Madani’ In the Holy Qur’an.” *Research Studies* (2023) 3, no. 7: 1304-1312.

36 Dato’ Sri Najib Razak first introduced the term “1Malaysia” shortly after assuming the office of Prime Minister of Malaysia in 2009 as **quoted in** Chin, James. “Malaysia: The rise of Najib and 1Malaysia.” *Southeast Asian Affairs* 2010, no. 1 (2010): 164-179.

37 The term was introduced by the former Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin during his tenure. It was emphasized as a theme of unity and solidarity among Malaysians, especially in response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic as **quoted in** Shah, Ain Umaira Md, et al. “COVID-19 outbreak in Malaysia: Actions taken by the Malaysian government.” *International Journal of Infectious Diseases* 97 (2020): 108-116.

38 Note: The term was introduced by Dato’ Sri Ismail Sabri Yaakob on 22 August 2021 in his inaugural speech as prime minister as **quoted in** Aziz, Abdul Rashid Abdul, et al. “Kerangka Konsep Keluarga Malaysia dalam Mencapai Kesejahteraan.” *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (MJSSH)* 8, no. 1 (2023): e002196-e002196.

from the governing party also display a similar lack of understanding, it raises serious concerns about the dissemination and clarity of such national concepts. The name MADANI might not be immediately self-explanatory. Thus, the young MPs must be well-informed and must align with the nation's core values and visions regardless of their affiliations.

Finding 2: Synthesis from the speech analysis

A blind analysis was conducted using the Deliberative Quality Index (DQI) to ensure an unbiased speech quality assessment. In this index, a score of 1 represents the lowest rating, while 3 signifies the highest rating. The maximum cumulative score achievable is 15, categorised as 'very good'. Scores ranging from 12 to 10 are deemed 'good', scores between 9 to 6 are classified as 'average', and scores of 5 or below are labelled as 'poor'.

Appendix III shows two young members of *Dewan Rakyat* scored 'very good', 13 scored 'good', and 21 were 'average' based on the DQI. None scored 'poor'. On the other hand, among the young Senators of *Dewan Negara*, none scored 'very good', three scored well, and two were average. Just like the young members of *Dewan Rakyat*, none of the young Senators scored poorly.

Overall, members from both houses seemed to be doing well, with none falling into the poor category. However, young members of *Dewan Rakyat* showed more variation in their scores, with some reaching the very top of the scale. In contrast, young Senators of *Dewan Negara* had a narrower range of scores, with none reaching the very top. Nonetheless, members from both houses showed a generally good level of deliberative quality, which was a good sign for the Parliament of Malaysia.

Finding 2a: Correlation between the young parliamentarians' discourse with their educational background

No clear pattern indicated that higher education or a specific field of study led to a higher DQI score. For instance, the two young MPs with the highest DQI score (15) had diverse educational backgrounds — one in Engineering and the other in Chemical Engineering. Similarly, young MPs with average DQI scores had a mix of education levels and fields of study. This suggests that the deliberative quality, as measured by DQI, might be influenced by factors beyond merely educational level and discipline.

Finding 2b: Correlation between the young parliamentarians' discourse with their experience and party stance

No straightforward relationship between political exposure and DQI scores was observed. Some first-time young MPs scored within the 'good' range, while some with more political experience landed in the 'average' range. This implies that while experience may provide a platform for better deliberation, it does not necessarily guarantee a higher DQI score. The ability to deliberate effectively in the parliament might be influenced by a mix of experience, personal abilities, and perhaps other external factors. The uniformity in debate styles within each block, particularly the role of research officers, can, in part, be attributed to the support structure provided by the parties. Often working in teams, these officers are instrumental in preparing MPs for parliamentary sessions. In the case of the government block, it is observed that young MPs tend to show more refined and effective debating skills. This could be linked to the fact that most research officers in the government block are more experienced, providing better guidance and more comprehensive research support.

The role of research officers indirectly helps in framing the young MPs' arguments in a manner that aligns with the party's stance and legislative agenda. Moreover, the consistency in debate quality among the young MPs of the same block could also point to a systematic whip system³⁹ and orientation programs conducted by the parties, all tailored to reinforce the party's ideology and legislative priorities. Consequently, young MPs from the same block and same party, guided by similar philosophies and strategies, tend to exhibit a cohesive pattern in their parliamentary discourse.

Reflections and recommendations

This section reflects the topics covered in this study and offers some recommendations for moving forward. The recommendations aim to make the most out of the young parliamentarians' contributions, ensuring lively and well-rounded debates in the parliament.

39 Kam, Christopher, 'Party Discipline', in Shane Martin, Thomas Saalfeld, and Kaare W. Strøm (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Legislative Studies* (2014; online edn, Oxford Academic, 2 Sept. 2014), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199653010.013.0020>, accessed 26 December 2023.

Nuances of financial debates in the Malaysian Parliament

The Parliament of Malaysia is a legislative platform for financial and developmental discussions, each carrying its distinct weight and purpose. Among these, the annual budget stands out as a reflection of the government's fiscal intentions for the upcoming year. It serves as a response to the nation's immediate socio-economic challenges, with debates often zooming in on the symptoms of current issues.⁴⁰ The goal is to discern how the proposed financial allocations can provide short-term solutions to these pressing concerns.

Contrastingly, the supplementary budget emerges in response to unforeseen circumstances or emergencies that demand funds beyond the initially approved annual budget. Here, the heart of the debate is not so much about where the money goes, but about ensuring the utmost transparency and accountability in its expenditure. It is about trust, oversight, and to ensure that every *ringgit* is spent judiciously.

Then there is the Malaysia Plan, a visionary document that sketches the nation's long-term developmental aspirations. Spanning typically five years, this plan is not just about numbers but about dreams, ambitions, and the path to a brighter future.⁴¹ Therefore, debates around this plan should probe deeper, addressing the root causes of challenges and charting a visionary course for Malaysia's sustained growth.

Nevertheless, visions need check-ins, and that is where the mid-term review of the Malaysia Plan comes into play. The review is a moment of introspection to assess what has been achieved and what remains. During these discussions, Parliamentarians are responsible for critically evaluating the journey thus far, pinpointing successes and highlighting areas that need recalibration.

While all these discussions orbit the area of finance and development, their unique objectives demand bespoke debates. It is this nuanced approach that ensures not just productive discussions but also paves the way for a prosperous Malaysia.

40 Siddiquee, Noore Alam, John Antony Xavier, and Mohd Zin Mohamed. "What works and why? Lessons from public management reform in Malaysia." *International Journal of Public Administration* 42, no. 1 (2019): 14-27.

41 Lee, Cassey & Lee, Chew Ging. (2017). The Evolution of Development Planning in Malaysia. *Journal of Southeast Asian Economies*. 34. 436-461. 10.1355/ae34-3b.

Bridging the age gap: A call for youthful representation in Parliament

The IPU's "*I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!*"⁴² initiative underscores a global representation gap: though half the world's population is under 30⁴³, only 2.6% of MPs worldwide represent this age group. While individuals aged 20-39 constitute 38.6% of the global population, only 17.5% of MPs are under 40. Furthermore, 37% of parliamentary chambers have no MPs under 30. Notably, fewer than 1 in 6 parliaments have a caucus for young MPs.⁴⁴ The IPU aims to address this discrepancy through this initiative, advocating for a more youthful representation in parliaments to ensure a broader demographic participation in political discourse and decision-making. IPU has established an international framework for young democracy participation alongside the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, aiming to attract new and young candidates to the political process. Through the forum, the IPU supports young politicians to enhance and revitalise democracies, ensuring they represent all generations.

Given that the *Dewan Rakyat* currently accommodates 58 young parliamentarians out of 222 seats, and the *Dewan Negara* has only five young parliamentarians out of 70 seats, it is pertinent that Malaysia also rallies behind the "*I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!*" initiative. Supporting this campaign would be a stride towards bridging the representation gap and fostering a more inclusive political discourse that resonates with the younger demographic, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives in legislative deliberations, which is crucial for a robust democracy.

IPU became the first international organisation to introduce incentives to encourage more young parliamentarians to attend its meetings in 2018. Parliamentary delegations that bring more young MPs would be given

42 "I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!" campaign was launched on 28th April 2021 at the IPU Secretariat in Geneva, with support from 24 Speakers of Parliaments, including those from two Southeast Asian countries, Indonesia and Timor Leste. See <https://www.bgipu.org/activity-reports/ipus-i-say-yes-to-youth-in-parliament-campaign-goes-global/> accessed on 12 September 2023.

43 According to 2022 data from the Institut Penyelidikan Pembangunan Belia Malaysia (IYRES), youth constitute almost 30% of Malaysia's population, totaling 9.07 million individuals, of which 4.9 million are male and 4.17 million are female. See <<https://ydata.iyres.gov.my/iyresbankdataV2/www/index.php?r=pub/home/datavizleft&id=19&cat=10>> accessed on 11 September 2023.

44 "I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!". Inter-Parliamentary Union (n.d.) <https://www.ipu.org/i-say-yes> accessed on 12 September 2023.

extra votes and speaking time while attending the IPU assemblies.⁴⁵ IPU encourage young parliamentarians by:

- i. monitoring youth representation and participation, and issuing policy and legislative guidance to boost it;
- ii. supporting parliaments in facilitating the access of youth to political decision-making, empowering young MPs and young people in general, and incorporating youth perspectives in policies;
- iii. providing networking opportunities for young MPs to come together, through, for example, the IPU annual global conference of young parliamentarians; and
- iv. organising campaigns to raise awareness and motivate action to enhance youth participation.

Limitations of the study

Several inherent limitations need to be acknowledged in regard to the findings of the study. One such limitation is the subjectivity deep-rooted in qualitative methods, where the researchers' biases and preconceptions might influence data collection and interpretation. This subjectivity can lead to issues with the consistency and objectivity of the findings, affecting their reliability. Additionally, the unique nature of the Parliament of Malaysia makes replication difficult; the specific context, researcher perspectives, and participants (change of the members of *Dewan Rakyat* and *Dewan Negara*) can yield different outcomes when a study is repeated, complicating the validation of results. Another significant challenge is the time and resources required for conducting qualitative studies. These methods are time-consuming and resource-intensive, which might restrict the scope of the study or the depth of analysis, potentially leading to less comprehensive data exploration. Lastly, the flexible nature of qualitative methods might introduce inconsistencies in data collection and analysis, raising concerns about the overall reliability and validity of the research. Incorporating expert views into this study might provide credibility and authority to the results and significantly enhance its validity, which would deepen the study's comprehensiveness.

45 "Youth Participation". Inter-Parliamentary Union (n.d.) <https://www.ipu.org/i-say-yes/youth-participation> accessed on 12 September 2023.

Conclusions

The dynamism and fresh perspectives young MPs bring to the parliamentary debates, especially during sessions like the mid-term review of the 12th Malaysia Plan, are indispensable. Their active participation not only enriches the discourse but also ensures that the younger generation's voice is adequately represented in shaping the nation's future. The insights gleaned from the content and thematic analysis of their contributions underscore the evolving nature of parliamentary debates in Malaysia. As the nation progresses, it is imperative to recognise and harness these young parliamentarians' potential continually. Their unique viewpoints, combined with the wisdom of their seasoned counterparts, will undoubtedly pave the way for a more inclusive, progressive, and forward-thinking Malaysia.

In this study, the focus has been primarily on the debates spearheaded by young MPs. However, expanding the scope of future research is essential to gain a comprehensive understanding of parliamentary discourse. This would involve exploring young parliamentarians' contrasting perspectives with respect to their more seasoned counterparts. A deeper examination of their respective debating styles, priorities, and methodologies is crucial. Such an analysis would provide clearer insights into how various generations tackle national issues and the distinct advantages they each bring to the table. This holistic approach would enrich our understanding of parliamentary dynamics and highlight the importance of intergenerational collaboration in legislative discussions.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I

The demographic of the young parliamentarians' of the 15th Parliament of Malaysia

| Members of Parliaments | Block | Gender | Race | Religion | Tertiary Education Discipline | Experience as Parliamentarian/ Assemblyman |
|------------------------|------------|--------|---------------|------------|---|--|
| Dewan Rakyat | | | | | | |
| ADR1 | Opposition | Male | Bumiputra | Muslim | Bachelor in Economics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A first-time Member of Parliament. |
| ADR2 | Opposition | Male | Bumiputra | Muslim | Master in Geopolitics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-year experience in the House of Senate. • One-year experience as a deputy minister. • A first-time Member of Parliament. |
| ADR3 | Opposition | Male | Bumiputra | Muslim | Bachelor in Religious Studies and Bachelor in Business Administration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A second-term Member of Parliament. |
| ADR4 | Opposition | Male | Bumiputra | Muslim | Bachelor in Islamic Studies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A first-time Member of Parliament. |
| ADR5 | Government | Male | Bumiputra | Muslim | Bachelor in Engineering | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-year experience as a deputy minister. • A second-term Member of Parliament. |
| ADR6 | Government | Male | Non-Bumiputra | Non-Muslim | Master in Business Administration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A first-time Member of Parliament. |

| Members of Parliaments | Block | Gender | Race | Religion | Tertiary Education Discipline | Experience as Parliamentarian/ Assemblyman |
|------------------------|------------|--------|---------------|------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Dewan Rakyat | | | | | | |
| ADR7 | Government | Male | Non-Bumiputra | Non-Muslim | Bachelor of Laws | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-term experience as an assemblyman. • A second-term Member of Parliament. • Two-year experience as a chair of a standing committee. |
| ADR8 | Government | Female | Bumiputra | Muslim | Bachelor in Engineering | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-year experience as a deputy minister. • A second-term Member of Parliament. |
| ADR9 | Opposition | Female | Bumiputra | Muslim | PhD in Islamic Management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A first-time Member of Parliament. |
| ADR10 | Government | Male | Bumiputra | Muslim | Bachelor in Social Science | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three-term experience as an assemblyman and state executive councillor. • A first-time Member of Parliament. |
| ADR11 | Opposition | Male | Bumiputra | Muslim | Master in Asset Management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-term experience in the House of Senate. • A first-time Member of Parliament. |
| ADR12 | Government | Female | Non-Bumiputra | Non-Muslim | Bachelor in Political Science | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-term experience as an assemblyman. • A second-term Member of Parliament. • Deputy-chair in a standing committee. |
| ADR13 | Government | Female | Non-Bumiputra | Non-Muslim | Bachelor in Public Relation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A second-term Member of Parliament. |

| Members of Parliaments | Block | Gender | Race | Religion | Tertiary Education Discipline | Experience as Parliamentarian/ Assemblyman |
|------------------------|------------|--------|---------------|------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Dewan Rakyat | | | | | | |
| ADR14 | Government | Male | Non-Bumiputra | Non-Muslim | Bachelor of Laws | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A second-term Member of Parliament. |
| ADR15 | Government | Male | Bumiputra | Muslim | Bachelor in Marketing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A first-time Member of Parliament. |
| ADR16 | Government | Male | Non-Bumiputra | Non-Muslim | Bachelor of Arts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-term experience as an assemblyman. • A first-time Member of Parliament. |
| ADR17 | Government | Male | Non-Bumiputra | Non-Muslim | Bachelor Degree | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A first-time Member of Parliament. |
| ADR18 | Government | Male | Bumiputra | Muslim | Doctor of Medicine | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A first-time Member of Parliament. |
| ADR19 | Government | Female | Bumiputra | Muslim | Master in Business Administration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A first-time Member of Parliament. |
| ADR20 | Government | Male | Non-Bumiputra | Non-Muslim | Master in Accounting and Finance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-term experience as an assemblyman. • A first-time Member of Parliament. |
| ADR21 | Opposition | Male | Bumiputra | Muslim | Bachelor in Arabic Language | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A first-time Member of Parliament. |
| ADR22 | Government | Male | Bumiputra | Muslim | Bachelor Degree | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-term experience as an assemblyman and state executive councillor. • A first-time Member of Parliament. |
| ADR23 | Government | Male | Non-Bumiputra | Non-Muslim | Master in Transportation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-term experience as an assemblyman. • A first-time Member of Parliament. |

| Members of Parliaments | Block | Gender | Race | Religion | Tertiary Education Discipline | Experience as Parliamentarian/ Assemblyman |
|------------------------|------------|--------|---------------|------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Dewan Rakyat | | | | | | |
| ADR24 | Government | Female | Bumiputra | Muslim | Bachelor in Graphic | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-term experience as an assemblyman • A first-time Member of Parliament. |
| ADR25 | Government | Male | Bumiputra | Muslim | Bachelor of Laws | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A first-time Member of Parliament. |
| ADR26 | Government | Male | Bumiputra | Muslim | Bachelor of Laws | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A former minister. • A second-term Member of Parliament. |
| ADR27 | Opposition | Male | Bumiputra | Muslim | Bachelor Busniess Administration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A first-time Member of Parliament. |
| ADR28 | Government | Male | Non-Bumiputra | Non-Muslim | Bachelor Degree | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-term experience as an assemblyman and state executive councillor. • A first-time Member of Parliament. |
| ADR29 | Opposition | Male | Bumiputra | Muslim | Bachelor in Business Administration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A first-time Member of Parliament. |
| ADR30 | Government | Male | Non-Bumiputra | Non-Muslim | Diploma in Science | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-term experience as an assemblyman and state executive councillor. • A first-time Member of Parliament. |
| ADR31 | Government | Male | Non-Bumiputra | Non-Muslim | Bachelor Degree | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-term experience as an assemblyman and state executive councillor. • A second-term Member of Parliament. |

| Members of Parliaments | Block | Gender | Race | Religion | Tertiary Education Discipline | Experience as Parliamentarian/ Assemblyman |
|------------------------|------------|--------|---------------|------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Dewan Rakyat | | | | | | |
| ADR32 | Opposition | Male | Bumiputra | Muslim | Master in Nationhood Studies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A first-time Member of Parliament. |
| ADR33 | Government | Male | Non-Bumiputra | Non-Muslim | Bachelor in Mechatronics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-term experience as an assemblyman and one-term as state executive councillor. • A first-time Member of Parliament. |
| ADR34 | Government | Male | Bumiputra | Muslim | Bachelor Degree | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A first-time Member of Parliament |
| ADR35 | Government | Female | Non-Bumiputra | Non-Muslim | Master in Chemical Engineering | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-term experience as an assemblyman. • Former minister. • A second-term Member of Parliament. |
| ADR36 | Government | Male | Bumiputra | Muslim | Bachelor Degree | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-term experience as an assemblyman. • A first-time Member of Parliament. |
| ADR37 | Government | Female | Bumiputra | Muslim | Diploma in Nursing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-term experience as an assemblyman. • A first-time Member of Parliament. |
| ADR38 | Opposition | Male | Bumiputra | Muslim | Bachelor in Islamic Studies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A first-time Member of Parliament. |
| ADR39 | Government | Male | Bumiputra | Muslim | Bachelor of Laws | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A first-time Member of Parliament. |
| ADR40 | Government | Male | Bumiputra | Non-Muslim | Bachelor of Aquatic Science | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A second-term Member of Parliament. |

| Members of Parliaments | Big Bolds highlighted during the debate | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|---|---|---|----|---|---|----|----|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| Dewan Rakyat | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ADR15 | | | | / | | | / | | | | | / | | | | | / |
| ADR16 | | | | | | | | | | | | | / | | | | / |
| ADR17 | | | | / | | | | | / | | | | | | / | | |
| ADR18 | | | | | | | | | / | | | / | | | / | | |
| ADR19 | | | | | / | | / | | / | | / | | / | | | | |
| ADR20 | | | | / | | | / | | / | / | | | | | / | | |
| ADR21 | / | / | | | | | / | | | | | / | | | | | |
| ADR22 | | | | / | | | | | | | / | / | / | | | | |
| ADR23 | | | | / | | | | | | | / | / | / | | | | |
| ADR24 | | | | | | | / | / | | / | | | / | | | | |
| ADR25 | / | / | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | / |
| ADR26 | / | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ADR27 | | | | / | | | | | | | | | / | | | | |
| ADR28 | | | | | | | | | | | / | | | | | | |
| ADR29 | | / | | | | | | | | / | | | | | | | / |
| ADR30 | | | | | | | | | | / | | | | / | | | |
| ADR31 | | | | | | | | | | | | | / | | | | |
| ADR32 | | | | / | | | | | | | | | / | | | | / |
| ADR33 | | | | | | | | / | | / | | | | | | | / |
| ADR34 | | | | | | | | | | | | / | | | | | / |
| ADR35 | | | | / | | | | | | | | | | | | / | |
| ADR36 | | | | | | | | / | | | | | | | | | |
| ADR37 | | | | | | | / | / | / | | | / | | | | | / |
| ADR38 | | | / | | | | | | | | | / | | | | | |
| ADR39 | | | | | / | | / | | | | | | | | | | / |
| ADR40 | | | | | | | | | | | | | / | | | | / |
| Dewan Negara | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ADN1 | | | | | | | | | | | / | | / | | / | | |
| ADN2 | | | | | | | | / | | | | | / | | | | |
| ADN3 | | | / | | | | | | | | | | | | | | / |
| ADN4 | | | / | | | | | | | | | | | | | | / |
| ADN5 | | | / | | | | / | | | | | | | | | | / |
| Frequency counts | 7 | 7 | 8 | 12 | 6 | 0 | 11 | 12 | 8 | 5 | 8 | 5 | 17 | 3 | 8 | 5 | 16 |

Appendix III

Analysis of the young parliamentarians' speech using the Deliberative Quality Index (DQI)

| Members of Parliaments | Deliberative Quality Index (DQI) | | | | | Cumulative score |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| | Level of Justification | Content of Justification | Context Understanding | Counter-arguments | Constructive Politics | |
| Dewan Rakyat | | | | | | |
| ADR1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 8 |
| ADR2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 8 |
| ADR3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 9 |
| ADR4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 |
| ADR5 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 14 |
| ADR6 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 14 |
| ADR7 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 13 |
| ADR8 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 14 |
| ADR9 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| ADR10 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 15 |
| ADR11 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| ADR12 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| ADR13 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| ADR14 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| ADR15 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 9 |
| ADR16 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 11 |
| ADR17 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| ADR18 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| ADR19 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 10 |
| ADR20 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 12 |
| ADR21 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 6 |
| ADR22 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| ADR23 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 11 |
| ADR24 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 12 |
| ADR25 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 11 |
| ADR26 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 12 |

| Members of Parliaments | Deliberative Quality Index (DQI) | | | | | Cumulative score |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| | Level of Justification | Content of Justification | Context Understanding | Counter- arguments | Constructive Politics | |
| Dewan Rakyat | | | | | | |
| ADR27 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 7 |
| ADR28 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 13 |
| ADR29 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 10 |
| ADR30 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 12 |
| ADR31 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 12 |
| ADR32 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| ADR33 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 12 |
| ADR34 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| ADR35 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 15 |
| ADR36 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| ADR37 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| ADR38 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| ADR39 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 11 |
| ADR40 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 8 |
| Dewan Negara | | | | | | |
| ADN1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| ADN2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| ADN3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 11 |
| ADN4 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 13 |
| ADN5 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 |

Seni Helah dan Perbahasan Belanjawan 2024: Analisis Pragmatik

The Art of Evasion and 2024 Budget's Debate: Pragmatic Analysis

Muhammad Qhidir bin Mat Isa*

Abstrak

Integriti pentadbiran mana-mana kerajaan sebahagian besar terletak pada dasar kewangan yang relevan dan jelas seperti, Rancangan Jangka Pendek atau Belanjawan Tahunan. Secara periodikal, Belanjawan Tahunan sebagai komponen terpenting wacana Parlimen, akan dibentang untuk dibahas, sama ada disokong atau dikritik di kedua-dua Dewan Perwakilan. Pasti, perbahasan dan perdebatan berlaku mengkehendaki ahli-ahli politik menguasai seni beretorik, analitikal serta inferensial untuk menguasai dinamika legitimasi politik. Untuk itu, dokumen penting iaitu Penyata Rasmi adalah sumber subtansial, merekodkan strategi dan seni Bahasa Berhelah semasa mempertikai-mempertahankan dasar, memainkan-meredakan isu, memperkuat-meruntuhkan imej yang menjadi penentu kepada integriti legitimasi Kerajaan mahupun Pembangkang. Walau bagaimanapun kajian korpus Penyata Rasmi pada topik Respons Berhelah sebelum ini hanya tertumpu kepada bentuk perbahasan struktural. Oleh sebab itu, tiga model Pragmatik digunakan iaitu *Framework of Respons Harris* (1991), *Notion of Implicator Thomas* (1995) dan *Dimension of Resistance Claymen* (2012). Kajian kualitatif ini bertujuan menganalisis sesi perbahasan yang lebih kompleks, intens dan natural iaitu dengan mengambil data perbahasan dasar Belanjawan 2024. Dapatan menemukan bahawa ketiga-tiga jenis Respons ada beberapa fitur distingtif dan pemilihan ketiga-tiganya berkadar kepada skala impak atas imej Kerajaan-Pembangkang. Selain itu, menambat kepada pelanggaran maksim-maksim Grice (1975) konfigurasi lakuan Bahasa Berhelah lebih mudah didefinitif serta dijustifikasikan. Terakhir, latar perbahasan peringkat dasar lebih heterogenous lantas memperkayakan performatif Bahasa Berhelah.

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Kata Kunci: Parlimen Malaysia, Belanjawan 2024, Ekonomi MADANI, Bahasa Berhelah, Pragmatik Melayu

Abstract

The integrity of the administration of any government largely depends on relevant and clear financial policies, for instance, Short-Term Plans or Annual Budgets. Periodically, the Annual Budget, the most important component of Parliamentary discourse, will be tabled for discussion, either to gain support or face criticism in both Houses of Representatives. Certainly, discussions and debates require politicians to master the art of rhetoric, analysis, and inference to navigate the dynamics of political legitimacy. For this purpose, the important document known as the Hansard serves as a substantial source, recording the strategies and art of Evasive Language in challenging-defending policies, addressing-mitigating issues, and strengthening-undermining the image that determines the integrity of the legitimacy of both the Government and Opposition. However, previous corpus studies by Hansard on the topic of Evasive Response have focused only on the structural forms of debate. Therefore, employing three Pragmatic models, namely Harris's Framework of Respons (1991), Thomas's Notion of Implicator (1995), and Claymen's Dimension of Resistance (2012), this qualitative study aims to analyse more complex, intense, and natural debate sessions, specifically the policy debate on the 2024 Budget. The findings reveal that all three types of Responses have some distinctive features, and their selection correlates with the scale of their impact on the image of the Government-Opposition. In addition, adhering to the Gricean Maxims (1975), the configuration of Evasive Language behavior is more easily defined and justified. Lastly, the discourse background at the policy level is more heterogeneous, thereby enriching the performative nature of Evasive Language.

Keywords: Malaysian Parliament, 2024 Budget, Ekonomi MADANI, Evasive Language, Malay Pragmatics

Pengenalan

Sistem terpenting institusi negara ialah sistem politik. Malaysia, sebagai sebuah negara Demokrasi Berparlimen dan Raja Berperlembagaan mentadbir dengan doktrin tripatri (*Tripartite*) yang membahagikan punca kuasa kepada tiga badan utama, iaitu Eksekutif (Kementerian-kementerian), Legislatif (Parlimen) dan Judisiari (Mahkamah Sivill dan Mahkamah Syariah). Kelazimannya, dasar kewangan yang berasal

daripada manifesto parti akan menjadi fundamental dan esensi pembangunan negara.¹

Dalam model pembangunan, Malaysia mengguna pakai tiga peringkat perancangan secara sinkronis, iaitu Rancangan Jangka Panjang, Rancangan Jangka Sederhana dan Rancangan Jangka Pendek.² Dasar pembangunan sosioekonomi Tanah Melayu pada era kolonial terawal bermula dengan perancangan lima tahun, iaitu dengan *Draf Pembangunan Malaya* (1950-1955) atau nama poplarnya *Buku Kuning*.³ Pascamerdeka, dasar pembangunan negara masih bersifat jangkauan lima tahun tetapi diberi jenama baharu sebagai *Rancangan Malaya*; *Rancangan Malaya Pertama* (1956-1960) dan *Rancangan Malaya Kedua* (1961-1965). Tertubuhnya Persekutuan Malaysia berdasarkan Perjanjian Malaysia 1963, sekali lagi memberikan nama baharu kepada dasar ini iaitu *Rancangan Malaysia*.⁴ Hingga kini, dari tahun 1966 terdapat 12 Rancangan Malaysia telah diperkenalkan oleh pihak kerajaan.

Rangka Rancangan Jangka Panjang (RRJP) berbeza dengan jangka sederhana daripada segi jangkauan tahun dan matlamat.⁵ RRJP 1 misalannya bermula pada 1971-1990. RRJP 1 sebenarnya lebih popular disebut sebagai *Dasar Ekonomi Baru* (DEB). Dasar ini diperkenalkan oleh Kabinet Tun Abdul Razak bertitik tolak daripada tercetusnya rusuhan kaum iaitu tragedi 13 Mei 1969. Menurut Tun Abdul Razak⁶ dasar ini pada dasarnya adalah reformasi ekonomi mendesak sebagaimana kenyataan beliau;

Dasar Ekonomi Baru yang bertujuan membasmi kemiskinan dan menyusun semula masyarakat memberikan peluang kepada rakyat berbilang bangsa untuk menikmati kemakmuran negara dengan lebih adil dan saksama.⁷

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- 1 I. Aman, "Manifesto Pilihan Raya Dan Prestasi Parti Politik Utama Malaysia Dalam Pilihan Raya Umum Ke-13: Suatu Analisis Linguistik" (2014) 10(4) *Malaysian Journal of Society and Space* 65-82.
 - 2 Kementerian Ekonomi, "Horizon Perancangan" (*Portal Rasmi Kementerian Ekonomi*, 19 Oktober 2020 <<https://www.ekonomi.gov.my/ms/pembangunan-ekonomi/pengurusan-ekonomi/horizon-perancangan>> diakses pada 29 Disember 2023
 - 3 Jabatan Perdana Menteri, "Pembangunan Ekonomi" (*Portal Rasmi Jabatan Perdana Menteri*, 1 Julai 2019) <<https://www.pmo.gov.my/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Pembangunan-Ekonomi.pdf>> diakses pada 31 Disember 2023
 - 4 Jabatan Perdana Menteri (n 3) 2.
 - 5 Kementerian Ekonomi (n 2) 1.
 - 6 J. Faaland, *Dasar Ekonomi Baru: Pertumbuhan Negara Dan Pencapaian Ekonomi Orang Melayu*. (Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications, 2005)
 - 7 Jabatan Perdana Menteri (n 3) 10-12.

Kejayaan DEB awalnya diukur daripada dua indikator iaitu statistik kemiskinan dan kadar guna tenaga. Namun, ramai pengkaji berpandangan selepas 20 tahun pelaksanaan, DEB berjaya mencapai lebih daripada sasaran, iaitu kemiskinan bumiputera menurun dua kali ganda dalam tempoh 10 tahun dan pertambahan 145 peratus pendapatan B40 dalam pelaksanaannya selama 20 tahun meliputi RMKe-2 dan RMKe-5.⁸⁹

Pasca-DEB, Kabinet Tun Mahathir Mohamad pada 17 Jun 1991 melancarkan Rangka Rancangan Jangka Panjang Kedua (RRJP 2). RRJP pada asasnya masih tertumpu kepada ranah sosial dan ekonomi dengan sasaran utama untuk mereformasi Malaysia daripada negara agrikomoditi kepada negara perindustrian baharu.¹⁰ RRJP2 bermula dengan Dasar Pembangunan Nasional (DPN) sebagai dasar awal yang tidak lari jauh daripada acuan DEB. Walau bagaimanapun, DPN bawah Tun Mahathir Mohamad telah mula memberi suntikan baharu seperti peranan sains dan digital terutama sekali bidang perindustrian dalam DPN Fasa Kedua. Ketiga-tiga aspek tersebut dirangkulkan bersekali sebagai Wawasan 2020. Antara implimentasi bawah gagasan ini adalah dasar-dasar liberalisasi ekonomi seperti Dasar Penswastaan dan Dasar Pandang Ke Timur. DPM turut menjadi dasar utama merentasi RMKe-6 (1991-1995) dan RMKe-7 (1996-2000).

Kesemua peringkat dan jenis-jenis dasar kewangan di atas wajib dibentangkan dan dibahaskan di kedua-dua Dewan Rakyat dan Dewan Negara. Semasa pembentangan, terdapat tiga peringkat perlu dilalui, iaitu bacaan pertama, bacaan kedua dan bacaan ketiga. Pada bacaan kali kedua iaitu perbahasan dasar, sering terjadi perdebatan yang intens, natural dan spontan kerana berlaku pertembungan langsung ideologi antara Kerajaan-Pembangkang. Ketika inilah, Ahli Parlimen (AP) Kerajaan dan Pembangkang akan saling berbincang, mengupas-berbahas, sehingga ke tahap lebih intens seperti mempersoal-menyangguh, mempertikai-menyangkal, menuduh-menangkis bagi meruntuhkan atau mempertahankan dasar yang akhirnya penentuan penguasaan medan wacana. Peringkat dasar ini lebih intens kerana strukturnya lebih subjektif dan terutama sekali fleksible, iaitu tidak

8 N. Yatim, "Berjaya Capai Sasaran Pendidikan DEB" Utusan Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur, 15 Jun 2022) <<https://www.utusan.com.my/rencana/2022/06/berjaya-capai-sasaran-pendidikan-deb/>>

9 Faaland (n 6) 4.

10 A. A. G. Hassan, & W.R. Fadzim, "Strategi Rancangan Pembangunan Ekonomi Negara" dalam A. A. G. Hassan (ed.), *Halatuju dan Cabaran Pembangunan Sektor dan Sumber Manusia dalam Rancangan Malaysia Kesembilan* (UUM Press, 2007)

teringkat kepada rujukan butiran, angka-angka atau nombor rujukan yang perlu disebutkan.

Oleh sebab itulah, perbahasan dasar sangat banyak menonjolkan aneka ragam kecerdasan, kecekapan, pola serta fitur-fitur komunikasi yang dikuasai oleh ahli-ahli politik. Fitur-fitur komunikasi ini akan diteliti daripada perspektif Linguistik-Pragmatik mengguna pakai data-data daripada dasar kewangan iaitu Belanjawan 2024, RMKe-12 yang membawa gagasan *Ekonomi MADANI: Memperkasakan Rakyat*.

Kajian literatur

Kajian bersumberkan Penyata Rasmi kebelakangan kini mulai bercorak kepada fenomena bahasa termasuklah hubungan ekonomi dan wacana politik. Meskipun secara numeratif kajian-kajian bersumberkan korpus Penyata Rasmi (*Hansard*) ini boleh dikatakan masih nominal, namun dapatan ditemukan sangat signifikan membantu kita memahami peranan bahasa dalam wacana politik. Beberapa kajian lampau yang menjadi rujukan utama adalah seperti berikut;

Kajian Abidin & Jan (2022) bertajuk "*A Pragmatic Analysis of Responses in Malaysian Parliamentary Discourse*"¹¹ menerapkan tiga model utama disiplin Linguistik-Pragmatik iaitu *Framework of Respons* oleh Harris (1991), *Notion of Implicator* oleh Thomas (1995) dan *Dimension of Resistance* oleh Clayman (2001). Menggunakan metodologi kualitatif sepenuhnya, kajian tekstual ini menumpukan kepada analisis kandungan (*content-analysis*) khusus menjustifikasikan fenomena kebahasaan iaitu "merespons" berbentuk soal-jawab semasa sesi Pertanyaan-pertanyaan bagi Jawab Lisan.

Mengguna pakai empat set dokumen Penyata Rasmi, kajian ini merumuskan bahawa terdapat tiga jenis pilihan merespons ketara diguna pakai oleh Kerajaan bagi menjawab soalan Pembangkang iaitu Jawapan Langsung (*Direct Answer*), Jawapan Tidak Langsung (*Indirect Answer*) dan yang paling menarik ialah pilihan ketiga, iaitu jenis Respons yang dinamakan sebagai "Jawapan Berhelah" (*Evasive Answer*). Rumusan pengkaji menyatakan, ketiga-tiga pilihan ini ada motif-motif distingtif yang merelevansikan mengapa dan bagaimana ia digunakan oleh Menteri dan Timbalan Menteri semasa merespons kepada soalan diajukan. Selain itu, kajian turut menemukan bahawa apabila berhadapan

11 N.Z. Abidin, & J.M. Jan, "A Pragmatic Analysis of Responses in Malaysian Parliamentary Discourse" (2022) 4(2) *Journal of Pragmatics Research* 92-106.

dengan isu kepentingan bumiputera, strategi Jawapan Berhelah sangat ketara digunakan berbanding Jawapan Langsung dan Jawapan Tidak Langsung .

Kajian kedua adalah N. Z. Abidin, & J.M. Jan, (2023) berpandukan *Cooperative Principle* (Grice, 1975) and *Clayman's Levels of Resistance* (2012). Sebagaimana tajuknya "*Influence of (Non) Observance of Maxims on Evasion in Malaysian Parliamentary Question Time*"¹² penelitian lanjutan daripada kajian sebelum ini tertumpu kepada memahami karakteristik bahasa "Berhelah" (*Evasive*) berdasarkan kepada ketidakpatuhan (*non-observance*) kedua-dua model oleh Grice (1975) dan Clayman (2001;2012). Didapati, semasa menjawab secara berhelah, Menteri dan Timbalan Menteri memang dengan eksplisit melanggari Maksim-maksim Kerjasama Grice (1975) seperti;

- (i) Mengelak jawapan berbentuk tindakan, tetapi hanya memberikan bujukan jaminan (*Providing reassurance without a concrete answer*);
- (ii) Mengakui permasalahan tanpa ingin menangani isu berbangkit (*Acknowledging without addressing the issue*);
- (iii) Menyatakan langkah terdahulu telah diambil untuk menangani permintaan terkini (*Stating past actions taken to address the current request*);
- (iv) Menolak kebertanggungjawaban kepada pihak lain (*Shifting responsibility to another party*); dan
- (v) Menolak langsung seluruh Prinsip Kerjasama Grice (*Opting out of the Grice's Cooperative Principles*).

Kesimpulan yang dirumuskan oleh Abidin & Jan, (2023) adalah terdapat beberapa pola mengapa Menteri dan Timbalan Menteri eksplisit melanggar Prinsip Kerjasama Grice atau menolak terus kesemuanya sekali. Kesemua strategi ini dimanfaatkan secara dinamik dan relatif dengan tujuan utama iaitu mengelakkan kebertanggungjawaban kerana penting untuk menjaga Air Muka *Positive Face* pihak kerajaan. Kedua-dua pengkaji berpandangan bahawa pelanggaran maksim-maksim seperti Kuantiti (*Quantity*), Hubungan (*Relation*) dan Cara (*Manner*)

12 N.Z. Abidin, & J.M. Jan, "Influence of (Non) Observance of Maxims on Evasion in Malaysian Parliamentary Question Time" (2023) 25(1) *K@ta* 1-15.

sebagai darjah Helah (*Evasive*) yang minimum. Manakala gaya penolakan langsung seluruh Maksim Kerjasama Grice (*opting-out of the Grice's Cooperative Principles*) sebagai helah maksimum.

Menurut Abidin & Jan, (2023) Respons Berhelah (*Evasive Respons*) juga terbahagi kepada secara lisan dan bukan lisan. Helah lisan menurut kedua-dua pengkaji masih boleh dianggap sebagai memberi kerjasama terhadap berbanding dengan helah bukan lisan yang diambil contoh sebagai kesenyapan total yang secara implikturnya sebagai penolakan kepada konsep asas Prinsip Kerjasama Grice iaitu “*kehendak segera bersama*” (*the common immediate aim*).¹³

Walaubagaimanapun, berdasarkan kedua-dua kajian di atas, didapati terdapat kelompangan iaitu bentuk-bentuk Respons dan juga pelanggaran sebagai strategi berhelah dalam sesi perbahasan yang lebih dinamik dan kompleks seperti perbahasan di peringkat dasar bagi Belanjawan 2024. Sehubungan dengan itu, kajian ini akan bertujuan untuk;

- (i) Mengenal pasti dan menganalisis jenis-jenis Respons dengan *Framework of Respons* oleh Harris (1991), *Notion of Implicator* oleh Thomas (1995) dan *Dimension of Resistance* oleh Clayman (2001);
- (ii) Mengenal pasti, menganalisis dan merumuskan Bahasa Berhelah berpandukan pelanggaran kepada Maksim Kerjasama Grice (1975) dan *Clayman's Levels of Resistance* (2012).

Terminologi teknikal

Berkaitan dengan kelompangan kajian di atas, terdapat konsep kata kunci yang perlu diperjelaskan relevansi terjemahannya terlebih dahulu kerana kajian ini bersifat teknikal disiplin Pragmatik berbantuan perbincangan analisis wacana kritis. Terminologi teknikal utama ialah “*Evasive*” berdasarkan rujukan pengkamus sesuai dipadankan dengan terma “Helah”.

Berdasarkan analisis kamus, *Evasive* sebagai kata adjektif dijelaskan makna sebagai intuisi secara sengaja dan bermuslihat oleh seseorang untuk mengelakkan pernyataan jelas¹⁴. Ia juga merujuk kepada ketidakinginan untuk memberikan respons yang merugikan diri

13 Hassan & Fadzim (n 10) 23-25

14 HarperCollins Publishers, “*Evasive*”, *CollinsDictionary.com* (2024) <<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/evasive> diakses pada 31 Disember 2023

sendiri¹⁵ serta manipulasi untuk mengelakkan sesuatu yang buruk atau mengganggu¹⁶. Berdasarkan PRPM, “*Evasive*” diberi takrif “sifat berdolak-dalih, mengelak dan sukar difahami”¹⁷.

Daripada ketiga-tiga penjelasan makna kamus dinyatakan, *evasive* jelas membawa konotasi negatif lantas relevan dengan padanan terma “Helah” yang juga berkonotasi sama iaitu bermaksud “muslihat, tipu daya, alasan yang dibuat-buat, dalih, bersifat memperdaya, mengakali, menipu”¹⁸. *Evasion* yang bersinonim dengan *equivocation* yang menurut beberapa ahli Pragmatik merujuk kepada ujaran yang bersifat “kekaburan sengaja” iaitu *deliberate vagueness* (Goss & Williams, 1973); berniat menggunakan bahasa tidak jelas atau “*intentional use of imprecise language*” (Hamilton & Mineo, 1998); strategi lazim untuk merespons tanpa menjawab jelas soalan “*routine strategy for responding to a question without answering it*” (Dillon, 1990).

Evasion atau helah adalah kecenderungan pilihan yang digunakan apabila respons wajib diberikan dan tentunya mendatangkan kesan negatif kepada individu (Alfahad, 2016) dan disebabkan itu, pernyataan kabur diberikan atau subjek sengaja diubah “...*employ obscure statements or subject deliberately switches*” (Bavelas et al., 1988).

Selain itu, dalam *Dimension of Resistance Claymen* (20012) terdapat dua parameter analisis yang perlu diperjelaskan iaitu *Topical Agenda* dan *Action Agenda*. *Topical Agenda* merujuk kepada butir cakupan isu atau permasalahan yang dibangkitkan dalam komunikasi.¹⁹

Butiran dalam *Topical Agenda* wacana Parlimen biasanya terdiri daripada realiti umum atau statistik atau petikan terus daripada sumber-sumber rujukan tertentu. *Topical Agenda* atau permasalahan disentuh

15 Merriam-Webster Inc. “*Evasive*”, *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (2024) <<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/evasive#dictionary-entry-1>> diakses kepada 31 Disember 2023

16 Cambridge University Press & Assessment, “*Evasive*”, *Cambridge Dictionary* (2024) <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/evasive> diakses pada 31 Disember 2023)

17 Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, “*Evasive*”, *Kamus Inggeris-Melayu Dewan* (2012) <<https://prpm.dbp.gov.my/Cari1?keyword=evasive&d=172780&#LIHATSINI>> diakses pada 31 Disember 2023

18 Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, “*Evasive*”, *Kamus Dewan Perdana* (2021) <<https://prpm.dbp.gov.my/Cari1?keyword=evasive&d=172780&#LIHATSINI>> diakses pada 31 Disember 2023

19 S.E. Clayman, “Conversation Analysis in the News Interview Context” dalam J. Sidnell & T. Stivers (eds.), *The Handbook of Conversation Analysis* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012)

adalah sumber kepada bentuk kuasa atau tekanan yang dinamakan sebagai *responding burden*. Kuasa atau tekanan ini kemudiannya melalui proses membentuk tuntutan (*requirement*) melalui beberapa persoalan *WH-question*. Proses inilah yang dinamakan sebagai *Action Agenda*. Produk daripada proses ini kemudian disalurkan kepada pihak lawan bicara bersekali dengan beban merespons (*responding burden*).

Metodologi kajian

Kajian korpus ini pada asasnya mengguna pakai kaedah kualitatif ke atas 12 set Penyata Rasmi (*Hansard*) Dewan Rakyat daripada Mesyuarat Ketiga, Penggal Kedua, Parlimen Kelima Belas. Cakupan isi kandungan perbahasan meliputi sesi-sesi seperti berikut;

- (i) Waktu Pernyataan-pertanyaan Menteri;
- (ii) Pertanyaan-pertanyaan Bagi Jawab Lisan;
- (iii) Perbahasan rang undang-undang dibentangkan (bacaan pertama hingga diluluskan);
- (iv) perbahasan usul-usul persendirian dan Menteri;
- (v) perbahasan Belanjawan 2024; dan
- (vi) Penerangan Perdana Menteri, Menteri-menteri dan Timbalan-timbalan Menteri.

Kebiasaanya, perbahasan persidangan yang diadakan pada akhir tahun khusus memfokuskan kepada pembentangan Rancangan Jangka Pendek iaitu Bajet Tahunan, dan untuk Mesyuarat Ketiga 2023 ini juga termasuk Belanjawan 2024.

Daripada segi teknikal dan prosedur arlimen, pembentangan Belanjawan 2024 dalam persidangan mempunyai prosedur dan terma khusus. Belanjawan ini tidak dirujuki secara teknikal sebagai "*Belanjawan 2024*" tetapi dirujuki dan dibentangkan sebagai "*Rang Undang-undang Perbekalan 2024*". Di Dewan Rakyat, Rang Undang-Undang Perbekalan ini, telah dibentang pada 13 Oktober 2023 dan dibahaskan di peringkat dasar dan jawatakuasa selama 25 hari. Dalam Mesyuarat Ketiga ini juga, Majlis Dewan Rakyat telah meluluskan 11 pembentangan dan pindaan rang undang-undang, lima usul Menteri dan Ahli Yang Berhormat, dua laporan awam iaitu Laporan Ketua Audit Negara Siri 2 dan Laporan SUHAKAM serta pindaan khusus kepada Peraturan Mesyuarat Dewan.

Konsep Penyata Rasmi (*Hansard*) menurut May (2004) secara ringkas bermaksud; “*leaves nothing that adds to the meaning of the speech or illustrates the arguments*”. Oleh sebab itu, proses mengekstrak dan migrasi data juga dilakukan secara verbatim daripada korpus Penyata Rasmi.

Bagi objektif yang memfokuskan kepada Respons, seperangkatan data disaring daripada 12 set Penyata Rasmi yang dianalisis dengan kaedah analisis kandungan (*content-analysis*) melalui model-model Pragmatik seperti *Framework of Respons* oleh Harris (1991), *Notion of Implicator* oleh Thomas (1995) dan *Dimension of Resistance* oleh Claymen (2012). Huraian kepada analisis tersebut pula dilakukan secara heuristik dan topikal. Berdasarkan ketiga-tiga model tersebut, bentuk analisis kandungan menggunakan tiga parameter iaitu *Topical Agenda*, *Type of Response*, *Action Agenda*.

Manakala bagi objektif kedua iaitu mengenal pasti, menganalisis dan merumuskan Bahasa Berhelah (*Evasive Language*), Maksim Kerjasama Grice (1975) diaplikasikan bagi memahami apa, mengapa dan bagaimana bentuk-bentuk helah ini digunakan semasa perbahasan belanjawan.

Dapatan kajian bentuk-bentuk respons

Dalam kajian ini, didapati, Lakuan Bahasa Respons pada peringkat dan objektif pertama, dikenal pasti terdiri daripada tiga bentuk, iaitu Respons Langsung (*Direct Responses*), Respons Tidak Langsung (*Indirect Respons*) dan Respons Berhelah (*Evasive Respons*). Didapati juga, ada korelasi signifikan antara jenis Respons dengan imej pihak Esekutif Kerajaan.²⁰

Sama seperti dapatan Abidin & Jan (2022), bentuk Respons Langsung cenderung digunakan untuk jawapan-jawapan yang diyakini pasti menyumbang kepada imej positif kepada pihak Kerajaan. Sebaliknya, Respons Tidak Langsung digunakan apabila jawapan yang perlu diberikan sedikit sebanyak akan memberikan impak negatif.

Namun, berbeza kedua-dua di atas, lakuan bahasa ketiga iaitu Respons Berhelah (*Evasive Respons*) didapati mempunyai fitur distingtif daripada segi intensiti impak negatif, implikatur dan struktur soalan yang diajukan. Bertepatan dengan Bevales et al., (1988), “*evasion is employed when ... all of the possible replies to a question have significantly negative impact but nevertheless a reply is definitely liabled*”.

20 Faaland (n 6) 9.

Respons langsung (*Direct response*)

Menurut Clayman (2012) dan Abidin & Jan (2022), “Respons Langsung” (*Direct Respons*) adalah fitur Respons yang mempunyai kandungan dan kandungan itu adalah berkualiti yang sesuai untuk menangani terus keperluan satu-satu pertanyaan iaitu *Topical Agenda* dan *Action Agenda*. Kualiti yang baik dan bersesuaian ini dicerminkan oleh eksplisiti (*explicitly*) dengan adanya beberapa perkataan seperti “ya”, “tidak”, “tentu”, “benar” atau “salah” (Clayman, 2012).

Selain itu, ahli politik yang ingin menjawab secara terus biasanya “...*“copy” type answer involving deletion in response to question requesting polarity choice or the selection of one disjunct*” (Harris, 1991). Menurut beliau lagi, kebanyakan Respons Langsung sebegini juga mempunyai unsur-unsur penambahan seperti data, statistik, rujukan yang konkrit dan relevan sekali gus membantu menangani kemungkinan persoalan-persoalan berbangkit lain (*WH-question*) yang berkelanjutan daripada soalan asal; “...*responses which supply a value for missing variables in response to a “WH-question”*”.

Namun bagi Wilson (1990), beliau berpandangan bahawa Respons Langsung lebih terbuka, fleksible dan dinamik. Ia tidak terkongkong oleh kontinum dan dikotomi “ya-tidak”. Yang penting adalah jawapan tersebut pada kualiti dan kuantiti tertentu memenuhi keperluan soalan. Penyataan Wilson (1990) menawarkan pemahaman tentang lakuan bahasa “Respons Langsung” kepada dua peringkat iaitu; Semantik – menimbangkan kepada fungsi golongan kata atau kelas kata tertentu dalam ayat terhadap makna literal dan Pragmatik – menyelidiki sintaksis ayat, frasa serta simbiosisnya dengan sistem makna selain faktor implikatur, kerelevanan, konteks dan wacana.

Data 1 menunjukkan interaksi antara tiga Ahli Parlimen biasa (*backbencher*)²¹ berkenaan dengan isu pendidikan percuma dalam ucapan perbahasan dasar YB Tasek Gelugor bagi Rang Undang-Undang Perbelanjaan 2024 seperti berikut;

Data 1: DR 16 Oktober 2023²²

YB Sri Gading: Terima kasih. Pertama sekali, apabila disebutkan tentang PTPTN, selaku pernah menjadi pengerusi pada PTPTN, apa yang saya – yang kita dengar dalam Dewan yang mulia ini, ucapan daripada Parit

21 Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (n 17)

22 Dewan Rakyat Debat 16 Oktober, Bil. 54, 119

Buntar dan juga daripada Tanjong Karang tadi mengatakan bahawa seolah-olahnya PH yang memberikan janji. Sedangkan kalau kita lihat daripada apa yang banyak diutarakan tadi adalah berkaitan dengan ucapan daripada Kubang Kerian. Jelas. Itu satu.

...

YB Tasek Gelugor: *So, sat* ni Parit Buntar bagi kat saya jawapan. Saya nak jawab spesifik Sri Gading tadi.

Sebenarnya, betul semasa PRU14, memang berlaku janji yang ditawarkan. Pakatan Harapan ada janjinya. Saya duduk dalam sebelah Pakatan Harapan masa itu. PAS ada janjinya, Barisan Nasional ada janjinya.

Tetapi pada PRU-15— saya nak baca janji Pakatan Harapan pada PRU15. "*Pengampunan Hutang PTPTN Bersasar. Untuk mengatasi masalah pinjaman pendidikan tidak munasabah dalam kalangan siswa termasuk keberhutangan PTPTN pula, program pemansuhan hutang bersasar khas kepada golongan miskin dan isi rumah B40 akan diperkenalkan*". Ini janji Pakatan Harapan. [*Tepuk*] Jadi, tak ada dalam apa yang disebut oleh Tambun. Jadi, saya nak minta kita berhenti kat situ...

YB Hulu Langat: Sebab tempoh kerajaan ni sepenggal. Sepenggal ni lima tahun.

YB Tasek Gelugor: Jadi...

YB Hulu Langat: Lima tahun. Jadi, jangan jatuhkan.

YB Tasek Gelugor: Relakslah sekejap.

YB Hulu Langat: Jangan nak tebuk atap kerajaan ini.

YB Besut: Ini apa benda ni?

YB Hulu Langat: Biar kerajaan ni berjalan lancar. Biar kerajaan ni berjalan lancar lima tahun. *Insya-Allah*, saya rasa Perdana Menteri akan mengetengahkan...

Analisis kandungan adalah seperti berikut;

Konteks: YB Sri Gading menyanggah pernyataan YB Parit Buntar dan YB Tanjong Karang yang menurut beliau menimbulkan persepsi negatif kepada kerajaan tentang Belanjawan 2024 yang dikatakan kedua YB Pembangkang tersebut tidak mengotakan janji PH berkaitan PTPTN.

Topical Agenda: Menyanggah YB Parit Buntar dan YB Tanjong Karang dan mengatakan tawaran tersebut sebaliknya disebutkan YB Kubang Kerian "*mengatakan bahawa seolah-olahnya PH yang memberikan janji*"

Action Agenda: [*Ayat Penyataan*] Pihak Pembangkang dan Kerajaan saling mempertikaikan satu sama lain tentang janji penghapusan hutang

PTPTN “apa yang banyak diutarakan tadi adalah berkaitan dengan ucapan daripada Kubang Kerian”

Respons: YB Tasek Gelugor menyanggah kembali pernyataan dan memberikan respons balas memetik secara langsung pernyataan manifesto PH dalam PRU-15 iaitu: “...program pemansuhan hutang bersasar khas kepada golongan miskin dan isi rumah B40 akan diperkenalkan”.

Berdasarkan analisis Data 1, respons balas YB Tasek Gelugor dikategorikan sebagai “Respons Langsung”, yang terang dan eksplisit (Harris, 2001). Fitur distinguishingnya adalah petikan terus daripada buku manifesto, relevan dalam *Topical Agenda* serta tepat dengan *Action Agenda* iaitu menyanggah kembali pertikaian oleh *backbencher* kerajaan.

Daripada perspektif wacana, respons balas YB Tasek Gelugor boleh dipertimbangkan sebagai contoh baik kerana menyumbang nilai positif pada imej Pembangkang sekali gus mencabar legitimasi kerajaan. Ini kerana, sanggahan kembali pihak kerajaan pada fiturnya lemah kerana tidak secara eksplisit seperti pembuktian tarikh, petikan langsung atau rujukan dokumen penting semasa mencelah. Beban atau imej negatif di sini adalah di pihak kerajaan.

Respons tidak langsung (*Indirect response*)

Data 2: DR 17 Oktober 2023²³

YB Pengkalan Chepa: Saya tak bagi laluan. Nanti Yang Berhormat boleh bercakap.

Kemudian, Tuan Yang di-Pertua, dalam masa yang terbatas, saya hendak sebutkan juga apa yang disebut oleh Ipoh Timur satu ketika dulu, yang *viral*, bising satu Malaysia. Ipoh Timur yang membacakan Al-Quran, isinya bukan semata-mata dibaca Al-Quran dan menterjemahkan, tapi lebih daripada itu. Apa yang berlaku adalah beliau menggunakan ayat itu sebagai dalil untuk menghukum Pembangkang sebagai *khawarij*.

Dalam disiplin ilmu Islam, ini bukan sekadar menterjemah atau mentafsir, bahkan cubaan meng-*istinbat*-kan, mengeluarkan hukum daripada Al-Quran atau nas syarak. Dalam ilmu Islam, perbuatan seperti ini hanya boleh dilakukan oleh seorang yang berkeahlian seperti ulama mujtahid.

23 Dewan Rakyat Debat 17 Oktober, Bil. 55, 71-72

▪ 1520

Saya nak tanya, Ipoh Timur belajar mana sehingga boleh jadi ulama mujtahid ini? Mufti atau institusi fatwa. Orang awam Islam pun tidak dibenarkan melakukannya.

...

YB Pengkalan Chepa: Nanti saya habis dulu. Saya akan bagi...
[Disampuk] Tak! Tunggu saya habis dulu.

YB Ipoh Timur: Dan apa yang disampaikan...
[Sistem pembesar suara dimatikan] [Dewan riuh]

...

YB Ipoh Timur: Perintah tetap, 36(6).

Timbalan Yang di-Pertua: Kalau katakan bangkitkan isu peraturan, saya benarkan. Sebentar Yang Berhormat. Apa dia Ipoh Timur, dan bawah peraturan mana?

YB Ipoh Timur: Perkara 36(6). Sangkaan buruk dilontarkan kepada saya. Memetik nama saya secara tidak betul dengan sangkaan buruk yang dikatakan tafsir atau terjemah. Apa salah atas penterjemahan yang saya nukilkan?

YB Pengkalan Chepa: Ya, boleh saya jelaskan.

YB Ipoh Timur: Apa salahnya?

YB Pengkalan Chepa: Okey, saya jelaskan.

YB Ipoh Timur: Salah atau tidak?

YB Pengkalan Chepa: Nanti saya...

YB Ipoh Timur: Tanya dulu...

[Sistem pembesar suara dimatikan]

Timbalan Yang di-Pertua: Kedua-dua Yang Berhormat, kedua-dua Yang Berhormat, saya selesaikan satu per satu.

Sekarang ini saya nak dengar bila Yang Berhormat Ipoh Timur bangkitkan peraturan, Yang Berhormat sebentar ya. Sebentar, saya akan bagi ruang. Masa yang luang pun saya akan tambahkan. *No issue*. Baik, teruskan Yang Berhormat Ipoh Timur.

YB Ipoh Timur: Adakah penterjemahan yang dinukilkan oleh saya itu salah? Soalan nombor satu.

Keduanya, mengapakah di luar sana, ada ramai orang yang alim, orang yang berpengetahuan, bukan sahaja berpengetahuan secara nak cakap, yang punya kelulusan masing-masing yang menyatakan, "Sebenarnya Yang Berhormat Ipoh Timur, apa yang dinukilkan itu tak salah." Adakah Yang Berhormat lagi alim daripada mereka?

Ketiganya, sehingganya saya rasa saya terpaksa memohon maaf- atas kerana sudah memohon maaf.

Respons Tidak Langsung menurut Abidin & Jan (2022) adalah maklum balas yang umumnya masih relevan pada memenuhi *Topical Agenda* dan *Action Agenda*, meneruskan kontinum “ya-tidak” dan ada unsur-unsur huraian atau penambahan yang membantu menangani lanjutan “*WH-question*”.

Jelas Harris (1991), Respons Tidak Langsung umumnya masih relevan dengan konteks interaksi kerana ia dibantu pada fitur-fitur substansial seperti koheren, kohesi, praandaian, mekanisme praandaian dan koheren illokusi. Walau bagaimanapun, Respons Tidak Langsung mempunyai perimeter andaian makna yang sederhana longgar yang memberi ruang penerbitan makna-makna lain yang kabur.

Thomas (1995) dalam menjelaskan perbezaan ini menyatakan, timbulnya makna implisit antara pengucap dan pendengar adalah kerana muncul beberapa pelencongan-pelencongan sengaja terhadap asas komunikasi harmonis seperti mana digariskan Maksim Kerjasama Grice (1975). Pengucap secara eksplisit ingin mencurahkan kepada pendengar beberapa praandaian lain yang bentuknya sama ada berlainan atau memperluaskan batasan makna daripada makna literal asal.

Menurut Thomas lagi, makna utama tersimpul daripada beberapa praandaian yang dipertimbangkan pendengar secara teknikal dinamakan sebagai “*conversational implicature*”. Dalam erti kata lain, *conversational implicature* adalah produk daripada proses memahami dilalui pendengar sama ada dengan cara membezakan terus ataupun meluaskan cakupan makna daripada makna literal asal (Cruse, 2000). Analisis Data 2 adalah seperti yang berikut;

Konteks: Konfrontasi lisan antara YB Pengkalan Chepa dengan YB Ipoh Timur berkenaan isu penggunaan ayat Al-Quran oleh YB Ipoh Timur yang menurut YB Pengkalan Chepa berniat jahat untuk menimbulkan persepsi buruk di pihak Pembangkang bahkan tidak layak dilakukan YB Ipoh Timur. YB Ipoh Timur menyanggah dengan membangkitkan P.M. 36(6).

Topical Agenda: YB Pembangkang menyebutkan bahawa YB Kerajaan tersebut tidak hanya membacakan dan menterjemah ayat Al-Quran tetapi memanipulasikan sebagai “...dalil untuk menghukum Pembangkang sebagai *Khawarij*”. Beliau menegaskan bahawa hak “... mengistinbatkan, mengeluarkan hukum ... atau nas syarak hanya layak dalam kalangan pihak “... berkeahlian seperti ulama mujtahid”.

Action Agenda: [Ayat Soalan Retorik] Mempertikaian kelayakan pendidikan Al-Quran YB Kerajaan dengan ujaran; “*belajar mana sehingga*

boleh jadi ulama mujtahid ini? Mufti atau institusi fatwa. Orang awam Islam pun tidak dibenarkan melakukannya”.

Respons: YB Kerajaan membalas kembali dengan soalan retorik “*penterjemahan yang dinukilkan oleh saya itu salah?*”. Keduanya, menyatakan bahawa apa dilakukan beliau tidak salah kerana “*...ramai orang yang alim ... berpengetahuan punya kelulusan masing-masing ... menyatakan, “Sebenarnya Yang Berhormat Ipoh Timur, apa yang dinukilkan itu tak salah”* dan menyatakan atas sangkaan jahat terhadapnya beliau telah terpaksa memohon maaf.

Data 2 di atas berlatarkan isu yang hangat diperkatakan bahkan di luar Parlimen berkenaan dengan ayat Al-Quran dan salah seorang tokoh bukan Islam blok Kerajaan. Konfrontasi berlaku secara intens iaitu saling memotong percakapan antara keduanya dan dibangkitkan P.M. 36(6) berkenaan sangkaan jahat. Berdasarkan analisis kandungan, dalam *Action Agenda* apabila diajukan dengan pertanyaan berkenaan apakah sumber pendidikan yang mewajarnya YB Kerajaan dikatakan “*mengistinbatkan*”, “*mengeluarkan hukum*” atau “*menghukum*” Pembangkang sebagai “*Khawarij*”, respons balas daripada YB Kerajaan tersebut, masih kekal relevan dengan isu diulas.

Analisis lanjut mendapati, asas respons balas adalah jelas untuk menyatakan ketidaksetujuan dengan tanggapan YB Pembangkang. Namun, fitur respons balas dinyatakan tidak secara eksplisit menyatakan sumber pendidikan, tetapi melencong kepada tiga respons balas iaitu;

Pertama, menyempitkan pertikaian dengan soalan retorik bertanyakan dikotomi “*salah-betul*” hanya tentang “*penterjemahan*” dan “*penukilan*”. Kedua, memberikan pernyataan dengan alibi bahawa terdapat kelompok yang “*berpengetahuan, bukan sahaja berpengetahuan secara nak cakap, yang punya kelulusan*” yang mereka tidak menyatakan beliau salah. Ketiga, menyatakan bahawa beliau adalah “*mangsa*” sangkaan jahat Pembangkang.

Menurut Abidin & Jan (2022), pilihan respons ini digunakan apabila isu yang ditimbulkan tidak menguntungkan pihak merespons dan merujuk kembali pada Data 2, nyata kedudukan YB Kerajaan awal-awal lagi tidak dalam posisi neutral daripada segi imej atau menguntungkan kerana jelas latar pendidikan beliau sama sekali tidak mewajarkannya melakukan apa dinyatakan Pembangkang “*mengistinbatkan*” atau “*mengeluarkan hukum*”.

Berdasarkan Abidin & Jan (2022) juga, didapati respons balas jenis tidak langsung dalam Data 2 adalah berjela-jela (*long-winded*), melanggar

Maksim Cara (*Manner Maxim*) dan memberikan maklumat berlebihan atau relevan dengan pertanyaan iaitu tentang kelompok yang menyokong YB Kerajaan dalam isu ini.

Oleh sebab itu, kesannya Respons Tidak Langsung ini tetap produktif kerana masih merugikan di pihak YB Kerajaan. Kerugian ini diperjelaskan lagi dengan petua oleh YB Timbalan Yang di-Pertua yang menolak Peraturan Mesyuarat 36(6) yang dibangkitkan YB Kerajaan dengan penjelasan berikut; "... Yang Berhormat Ipoh Timur tidak, tidak memberi keterangan dengan jelas apa yang dimaksudkan bahagian atau frasa ucapan Yang Berhormat Pengkalan Chepa, yang dikaitkan dengan sangkaan jahat ...".²⁴

Respons berhelah (*Evasive response*)

Menurut Abidin & Jan (2022), Respons Berhelah adalah jenis ketiga yang berbeza dengan Respons Langsung dan Respons Tidak Langsung. Asas utama Respons Berhelah adalah kerana gagal untuk kekal dalam konteks iaitu menepati *Topical Agenda* atau *Action Agenda* ataupun kedua-duanya sekali. Ini kerana, Dillion (1990) menjelaskan bahawa bentuk Respons ini adalah strategi yang biasa digunakan hanya untuk memberi respons kepada soalan tanpa perlu menjawab secara jelas.

Menurut Bavelis et al., (1988) fitur distinguishingnya berbeza dengan dua bentuk Respons sebelumnya pada ketidakjelasan (*vague*), pernyataan bolak-balik (*inconsistent statement*) dan menukar isu perbuatan (*subject switch*). Berdasarkan kajian lakuan Bahasa Berhelah khusus dalam kalangan ahli politik, didapati terdapat dua bentuk helahan yang kerap berlaku:

- (i) menolak untuk menjawab pertanyaan; dan
- (ii) melakukan penolakan khusus iaitu pada ketidakcukupan kualiti atau kuantiti jawapan. Sebagai contohnya hanya merespons sebahagian sahaja soalan atau memberi jawapan yang tidak relevan langsung (Clayman, 2012).

Menurut Clayman (2001) apa yang disebut sebagai "Penolakan" (*Resistance*) sama dengan aras keberhelahan (*level of Evasion*) yang pernah disebut oleh beberapa pengkaji lain seperti Rasiah (2007); Hanafe & Thani (2016). Selain itu, konsep Penolakan (*Resistance*) atau Berhelah (*Evasive*) merujuk kepada lakuan bahasa bersifat dimanipulasikan dengan intuisi

24 Dewan Rakyat Debat 18 Oktober 2023, Bil. 56, 33.

untuk mengelakkan imej negatif di pihak sendiri. Dalam lakuan ini, melalui beberapa penelitian, ahli-ahli Pragmatik mendapati terdapat empat tahap penolakan (*degree of Resistance*) iaitu;

- (i) pelencongan daripada objektif nyata soalan diajukan;
- (ii) penolakan positif dengan secara halus mengubah terma dan prasyarat soalan;
- (iii) mengkaburkan parameter atau batasan agenda; dan
- (iv) mengubah langsung parameter topik perbualan.

Didapati selalunya ahli-ahli politik melakukan penolakan dengan cara menambahkan *Topical Agenda* atau *Action Agenda* baharu secara bergerakan sebagai kebalikan beban merespons (*reverse of responding burden*) antara ahli politik dan lawan bicaranya. Apabila kebalikan itu berhasil dikenakan ke atas lawan bicaranya, pertentangan atau hubungan binari yang membolehkan perpindahan beban akan terganggu lantas kesan daripada beban merespons (*consequence of responding to the question*) tidak lagi ditanggung oleh ahli politik berkenaan.

Tambah Clayman (2001) lagi, salah satu indikator lakuan ini adalah apabila ahli politik berkenaan mempertimbangkan bahawa kesan buruk Penolakan (*Resistance*) itu lebih rendah berbanding menuruti menjawab sebagaimana dikehendaki *Topical Agenda* atau *Action Agenda* soalan. Data 3 di bawah merupakan contoh jawapan yang diteliti yang menepati fitur dan lakuan Respons Berhelah;

Data 3: DR 16 Oktober 2023²⁵

YB Petaling Jaya: Okey, terima kasih. Tadi, disebut bahawa di pihak Perikatan Nasional tidak akan sama sekali bersetujui dengan kegiatan yang tidak bermoral untuk membangunkan ekonomi.

Soalan saya adalah, adakah cara pembangunan ekonomi Perikatan Nasional dibuat melalui dengan penambahan cabutan khas perjudian yang berlangsung, yang dinaikkan daripada lapan kali kepada 22 kali semasa pemerintahan Perikatan Nasional?

YB Larut: Terima kasih, Petaling Jaya. Mungkin sebab itu menyebabkan Yang Berhormat Senator Zafrul diambil, dan ditukarkan ke Kementerian MITI... [Tepuk]

YB Petaling Jaya: *Collective responsibility*. Yang Berhormat Larut, Kabinet ada *collective responsibility*, dengan izin. Terima kasih.

Analisis dengan data 3 adalah seperti di bawah;

Konteks: Interaksi lisan antara YB Petaling Jaya di pihak Kerajaan dan YB Larut di pihak Pembangkang berkenaan konsep pembangunan ekonomi bermoral dan cabutan undi.

Topical Agenda: YB Pembangkang mempertikaikan imej moral (*moral ground*) dalam konsep pembangunan ekonomi semasa kerajaan PN mentadbir melalui tindakan yang diimplikaturkan YB Kerajaan tersebut sebagai kontradiktif iaitu menambah jumlah cabutan khas perjudian daripada lapan kali kepada 22 kali.

Action Agenda: [*Ayat Pertanyaan Retorik*] Menanyakan; “adakah cara pembangunan ekonomi Perikatan Nasional ... dengan penambahan cabutan khas perjudian ... yang dinaikkan daripada lapan kali kepada 22 kali semasa pemerintahan Perikatan Nasional?”

Respons: YB Kerajaan merespons kembali secara berhelah iaitu mengaitkan “*pengambilan*” salah seorang yang dahulunya Menteri Kabinet PN yang berautoriti menentu jumlah cabutan khas judi telah dilantik semula dalam Kabinet semasa PH.

Pertikaian ditimbulkan oleh AP Kerajaan terhadap Ketua Pembangkang semasa giliran perbahasan peringkat dasar Belanjawan 2024 oleh Ketua Pembangkang. Pencelahan dibenarkan tersebut dimanfaatkan dengan intuisi mencabar imej moral pihak Pembangkang sebagai *Topical Agenda*. Pada *Action Agenda* pula, soalan retorik yang mempunyai nilai implisit diajukan sebagaimana dinyatakan di atas.

Respons daripada Ketua Pembangkang pula jelas dengan karakteristik keberhelahan (*evasiveness*) yang didapati pada parameter berikut; kehendak untuk menukar topik daripada memfokuskan tentang konsep pembangunan ekonomi bermoral PN kepada pernyataan tentang pelantikan semula seorang bekas Menteri Kewangan PN ke dalam Kabinet semasa PH. Selain itu, didapati pada aspek kuantiti iaitu struktur dan kompleksiti ayat, respons tersebut boleh dikatakan sangat ringkas iaitu dengan hanya satu ayat sahaja. Pada aspek tahap penolakan pula, didapati respons balas YB Pembangkang tersebut memberi impak pada tahap pelencongan daripada objektif nyata soalan diajukan dan penolakan positif secara halus mengubah terma dan prasyarat dituntut dalam soalan.

Kesan akhir Respons Berhelah ini secara sederhana, iaitu berjaya menterbalikkan beban merespons (*reverse of responding burden*) kepada YB Kerajaan yang bertanya dan menjaga imej di pihak Pembangkang. Kesederhanaan ini adalah kerana, fakta disebutkan YB Kerajaan iaitu kerajaan PN dahulunya mengadakan cabutan sebanyak 22 kali tidak disanggah dengan . diberikan Respons Langsung.

Pertimbangan ini adalah kerana, kesan penolakan (*resistance*) melalui Respons Berhelah ini kurang implikasi negatifnya berbanding Jawapan Langsung iaitu menjawab 'Ya-Tidak' tentang pernyataan YB Kerajaan.

Pelanggaran maksim grice (1975) sebagai respons berhelah

Titik mula kajian Respons Berhelah (*Evasive Respons*) dalam disiplin Pragmatik, bermula daripada kajian silang-bidang iaitu fenomena semiosis antara lakuan-lakuan bahasa, makna dan simbol dalam medan khusus iaitu wacana Politik.

Awalnya, penelitian ini bermula hanya bertumpu kepada lakuan bahasa dan sistem kesopanan masyarakat di England. Kemudian, setelah 40 tahun penelitian dan perbahasan yang berkembang pesat pada tahun 1975, Profesor Herbert Paul Grice daripada University of California, Berkeley, antara pakar Pragmatik terkemuka telah menggagaskan sebuah model maksim universal tentang sistem kesopanan yang dinamakan sebagai Maksim Kerjasama Grice (*Grice Cooperation Maxims*).

Asas kepada model ini adalah mewujudkan komunikasi produktif dan efektif dengan pematuhan kepada beberapa prasyarat © "*make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. One might label this the COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE*" (Grice, 1989). Menariknya, daripada Maksim Kerjasama Grice (1975) inilah munculnya beberapa teori lain iaitu Teori Kesopanan dan aliran Neo-Gricean Pragmatics (Lindblom, 2001).

Menurut Al-Sahlane, & Abd Al-Muhsen (2021), konsep berhelah (*evasive*) merupakan hasil lanjutan yang bertitik tolak daripada perbahasan konsep utama Maksim Kerjasama Grice iaitu Konsep Air Muka Positif (*Positive Face*). Perbahasan tentang konsep utama tersebut terutamanya yang memanfaatkan data-data daripada wacana politik melanjutkan lagi kepada gagasan tiga pola utama menjaga Air Muka, iaitu *Equivocation*, *Evasion* dan *Hedging*. Bagi konsep Berhelah (*Evasive*), para pengkaji memperkembangkannya kepada dua aspek iaitu tahap berhelah (*levels of Evasive*) dan cara berhelah (*ways of Evasive*) seperti berikut;

- (i) mengabaikan soalan (*ignoring the question*);
- (ii) mengakui permasalahan tanpa ingin menangani secara objektif (*acknowledge the question without answering it*);
- (iii) menanyakan kembali soalan (*question the question*);
- (iv) menyerang soalan (*attacking the question*);
- (v) menyerang penanya (*attacking the interviewer*);
- (vi) menolak untuk menjawab (*declining to answer*);
- (vii) membuat pernyataan politik (*making a political point*);
- (viii) memberi jawapan tidak lengkap (*incomplete answer*);
- (ix) mengulangi jawapan kepada soalan (*repeating answer to question*);
- (x) berpendapat bahawa soalan telah dijawab (*stating that the question has been answered*); dan
- (xi) memohon maaf (*apologising*)²⁶

Menurut beberapa pengkaji, dengan menambat atau meneliti pengertian besar Lakuan Bahasa Berhelah (*Evasive Speech Act*) kepada teori utama yang telah mantap seperti Maksim Kerjasama Grice (1975) sebenarnya sangat membantu menerangkan objektif lakuan bahasa yang umumnya sangat dinamik, relatif dan kompleks kerana ketiga-tiga sifat itu berkait dengan sistem makna, latar dan budaya.

Analisis kandungan dilakukan terhadap set Penyata Rasmi dan didapati terdapat beberapa bentuk perbahasan berhelah (*evasive*) yang paling ketara melanggar Maksim Kerjasama Grice (1975). Tinjauan mendapati, umumnya, data-data yang dinilai sebagai Lakuan Bahasa Berhelah menunjukkan beberapa fitur ketara seperti kekurangan penjelasan (*under-description*), tidak relevan (*irrelevant*) dan ujaran kabur (*vague utterances*). Berdasarkan sumber, jenis-jenis helahan yang melanggar Maksim Kerjasama Grice adalah seperti yang berikut;

26 M. K. A., Al-Sahlanee & D. A. A., Al-Muhsen, "A Pragmatic Analysis of Evasion in Political Interviews *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology* (2021) 18(10), 3078-3099.

Mengelak jawapan tindakan, hanya bujukan jaminan

Data 4: DR 30 Oktober 2023²⁷

YB Puncak Borneo: Yang Berhormat Menteri, sebelum – saya nak – sebab pencelahan hari itu. Terima kasih atas penjelasan dan juga data-data yang diketengahkan oleh Yang Berhormat Menteri. Tetapi, saya rasa jurangnya itu saya dengar dengan teliti tadi, masih terlalu besar. Jadi, kalau boleh saya nak mencadangkan demi untuk kebaikan kita semua.

Sebab, kita di dalam tiga wilayah ini, Sabah dan Sarawak sepatutnya kita diberi kesamarataan. Kalau boleh, kita juga boleh kena ada wakil dalam lembaga perjawatan awam itu dan di dalam SPA itu sendiri kena ada wakil Sabah dan Sarawak. Supaya mereka ini boleh menjadi wakil kita untuk meneliti segala kebaikan yang boleh diformulasikan bersama untuk kebaikan bersama.

Kita tak nak menidakkan hak wilayah, Semenanjung atau sebagainya, tetapi kita cuma sebenarnya dalam Perjanjian MA63 itu tadi komposisi ini kena adil. Tetapi, mungkin pada masa itu, mungkin kita terima hakikat orang Sarawak belum mencapai tahap pendidikan yang dikehendaki pada ketika itu dan secara tidak langsung dia *is become eroded* dia, secara tidak langsung.

Lack of better word, dia dinodai secara tidak sengaja. Jadi, sekarang ini kita telah mempunyai ramai anak-anak Sarawak, anak-anak Sabah yang mempunyai pendidikan tinggi. Jadi, sudah sampai masanya perkara ini harus dipertimbangkan dan diperhalusi.

Saya mohon pertimbangan Yang Berhormat Menteri, selaku Menteri yang menjaga perkara ini memperjuangkan hak kitalah. Kita tidak mengambil hak orang lain, kita cuma minta apa yang – *what is due to us*, dengan izin. Terima kasih.

Menteri di Jabatan Perdana Menteri (Hal Ehwal Sabah, Sarawak dan Tugas-tugas Khas): Terima kasih Yang Berhormat. Sungguhpun pemilihan ataupun pengambilan pegawai-pegawai dan anggota kakitangan sokongan dalam perkhidmatan awam ini tidak menetapkan syarat perwakilan kaum, wilayah dan sebagainya, namun saya fikir cadangan dan *consent*, dengan izin yang dikemukakan oleh Yang Berhormat tadi merupakan satu perkara baik yang perlu diambil kira untuk memastikan perwakilan yang lebih baik, meliputi semua aspek.

Kalau boleh saya kongsiikan Tuan Yang di-Pertua, kerana ada pihak tertentu yang mungkin membangkitkan jumlah penjawat awam daripada

27 Dewan Rakyat Debat 30 Oktober 2023, Bil 62, 63.

bangsa Melayu yang terlalu ramai. Namun ingin saya kongsi, kalau dilihat jumlah itu memang ramai, tetapi kalau kita lihat daripada peratus pelantikan contohnya.

Kalau bangsa Melayu contohnya, jumlah yang memohon adalah seramai 952,300 orang dan yang dilantik adalah 16,126. Ini bermaksud daripada jumlah permohonan 952,000 tersebut, hanya 1.69 peratus permohonan yang berjaya. Apa pun, perkara yang dibangkitkan oleh Yang Berhormat tadi merupakan satu perkara yang amat baik untuk memastikan integrasi antara kaum dan juga wilayah itu juga dapat diterjemahkan dalam komposisi perkhidmatan awam kita.

Menurut Abidin & Jan (2023), apabila Lakuan Bahasa Berhelah (*Evasive Speech Act*) digunakan, akan berlaku pelanggaran terhadap tiga maksim utama Grice, iaitu Kuantiti (*Quantity*), Hubungan (*Relation*) dan Cara (*Manner*). Data 4 di atas menunjukkan pelanggaran ketiga-tiga yang disebutkan apabila jawapan Menteri yang meskipun bersetuju dengan YB Puncak Borneo, tetapi mengelak untuk memberikan pernyataan tindakan objektif dan konkrit sebagaimana dituntut sebagai *Action Agenda*.

Menurut Abidin & Jan (2023), bagi jenis berhelah ini, biasanya respons balas yang diberikan berbentuk panjang berjela-jela yang akan "meredakan" beban tuntutan asal iaitu "... lembaga perjawatan awam itu dan di dalam SPA itu sendiri kena ada wakil Sabah dan Sarawak".

Analisis kandungan mendapati, dalam respons balas yang dikemukakan, pelanggaran Maksim Relevan berlaku disebabkan oleh respons balas YB Menteri tidak ada pernyataan operatif sama ada berbentuk "bersetuju-tidak bersetuju" atau "akan dilakukan-tidak akan dilakukan". Ringkas dalam respons balas tersebut menyatakan tiga poin berikut;

- (i) "... pengambilan pegawai-pegawai dan anggota kakitangan sokongan dalam perkhidmatan awam ini tidak menetapkan syarat perwakilan kaum, wilayah",
- (ii) "... ada pihak tertentu yang mungkin membangkitkan jumlah penjawat awam daripada bangsa Melayu yang terlalu ramai" dan
- (iii) statistik sokongan iaitu "... daripada jumlah permohonan 952,000 tersebut, hanya 1.69 peratus permohonan yang berjaya".

Maksim Cara (*Manner*) pula dilanggari dengan cara tidak menjelaskan lanjut apakah langkah-langkah lanjut pernyataan komitmen "... yang perlu diambil kira". Memandangkan respons balas dalam Data 4 di atas

tidak mempunyai pernyataan operatif sebagaimana diminta lantas respons balas tersebut melanggar maksim kuantiti disebabkan oleh kekurangan penjelasan (*under-decribed*) yang relevan.

Mengakui permasalahan tanpa ingin menangani isu berbangkit

Menurut Abidin & Jan (2023) ketiga-tiga maksim kerjasama juga boleh terjejas apabila respons yang diberikan bersifat mengakui dan memperakui isu di peringkat *Topical Agenda*. Namun, kelompangan besar pada pengesahan dan perakuan itu adalah tidak adanya langkah-langkah operatif sebagaimana yang dinyatakan di peringkat *Action Agenda*.

Data 5 menunjukkan respons yang proposional dengan jenis berhelah kedua ini.

Data 5: DR 30 Oktober 2023²⁸

YB Titiwangsa: Saya setuju. Yang Berhormat Menteri, saya setuju apa ini kerajaan cuba mengimbangi ini tetapi kita ada satu faktor yang sangat penting juga kita mempertimbangkan iaitu ketidakcukupan *production* beras putih tempatan sebab kita tahu kita cuma ada 62 peratus sahaja, 61, 62 peratus. Jadi kalau kita nak seimbangkan di antara pesawah, pengilang, pengedar dan peruncit, kita ingin meningkatkan harga padi supaya ramai pesawah-pesawah ini berminat untuk tanam padi sebab dia dapat untung yang agak munasabah.

Kemudian kita dalam masa yang sama, apabila kita sekat harga RM26 ini, adakah Yang Berhormat Menteri merasakan bahawa itu sudah jadi macam dah tak *balance*? Dalam satu peringkat, pesawah nak harga padi yang baik. Kemudian, bila nak jual, tak boleh lebih daripada RM26 sedangkan beras-beras import semua boleh jual.

Bagaimanakah kita mengimbangi ini untuk memastikan bahawa satu hari nanti kita mempunyai beras yang mencukupi, yang dikeluarkan oleh negara kita sebab kita ada *short* lebih kurang dalam 37 peratus. Apakah tindakan Menteri jangka masa panjang atau kerajaan untuk memastikan perkara ini? Menteri Pertanian dan Keterjaminan Makanan

Menteri Pertanian dan Keterjaminan Makanan: Macam saya sebut tadilah kerajaan bertindak untuk *balance* supaya rakyat, pihak majoritinya berpuas hati. Itu yang – kalau nak ikut bermain dengan harga, ini RM2.60 ini sekilo adalah harga tahun 2008. Saya ingat saya Tingkatan 5 dahulu, mi rebus RM1. Kalau bubuh telur, RM1.20. Tapi sekarang mi rebus sudah

RM6, RM7 tapi kita kena ingat, harga beras 2008 RM26 untuk 10 kilo sampai sekarang. Jadi, apakah perlu perubahan harga itu?

Sebab itulah kita lihat Kementerian Ekonomi, Kementerian Kewangan, KPKM kena berbincang dan supaya kalau berlaku kenaikan dan sebagainya, ia dapat dinikmati oleh semua pihak, *win win*. Jadi pandangan Titiwangsa itu berkali-kali beliau mengatakan supaya biarlah sedikit sebanyak pasaran menentukan daripada kongkongan itu. Tapi kita akan lihat ini dari masa ke semasa.

Perdana Menteri kita ini amat susah untuk menaikkan suatu harga. Dia berbincang berkali-kali walaupun saya mengadu kepada Menteri Kewangan, lepas itu mengadu kepada Perdana Menteri tetapi dia tetap dengan pandangan-pandangannya, sikap pro-rakyat itu. [Tepuk]

Data 5 di atas berbeza dengan data-data sebelumnya kerana melibatkan dua pihak dari blok yang sama iaitu blok Kerajaan. Latar konteks perbahasan di atas berhubungan dengan permasalahan dasar kerajaan iaitu antara dua pilihan iaitu sama ada kekal mengawal harga beras putih tempatan atau mengapungkan harga bagi mewujudkan pasaran lebih kondusif yang pantas mencapai sasaran kadar sara diri negara. YB Titiwangsa membekalkan juga unsur penambahan dalam ujarannya iaitu data bahawa Malaysia dalam kadar 37 peratus masih bergantung kepada beras putih dari luar.

Ujaran YB Titiwangsa secara literal menanyakan jawapan menuntut respons berbentuk operatif seperti mekanisme atau formula khusus telah dirangka untuk mengimbangi kedua-dua keperluan tersebut; *“adakah Yang Berhormat Menteri merasakan bahawa itu sudah jadi macam dah tak balance?”*; *“Bagaimanakah kita mengimbangi ini untuk memastikan bahawa satu hari nanti kita mempunyai beras yang mencukupi”* dan *“Apakah tindakan Menteri jangka masa panjang atau kerajaan untuk memastikan perkara ini?”*

Walau bagaimanapun, didapati respons daripada YB Menteri Pertanian dan Keterjaminan Makanan, kurang memperlihatkan respons konkritif. Inti respons beliau adalah seperti berikut

- (i) Kerajaan memang bertindak untuk mengimbangi supaya rakyat berpuas hati;
- (ii) Memasukkan data daripada pengalaman peribadi dan perbandingan harga antara tahun;
- (iii) Menyatakan KPKM mengadakan perbincangan dengan Kementerian Ekonomi dan Kementerian Kewangan supaya mencapai keputusan menang-menang;

- (iv) Mengakui akan melihat pandangan YB Titiwangsa; dan
- (v) Memasukkan unsur penambahan bahawa Perdana Menteri keberatan untuk menggunakan kaedah mengapungkan harga kerana sikap prorakyat.

Hasil penelitian kandungan mendapati, ketiga-tiga soalan yang diajukan, dijawab secara umumnya sebahagian-sebahagian. Juga, terdapat dua pelanggaran maksim berlaku iaitu Maksim Hubungan dan Maksim Kaedah.

Pelanggaran Maksim Hubungan dilihat pada pernyataan YB Menteri yang dengan baik memberi respons kepada kedua-dua aspek iaitu *Topical Agenda* tetapi tidak dalam *Action Agenda*. YB Menteri menyatakan bahawa beliau memang menyedari terdapat kesan buruk daripada dasar semasa yang merugikan industri beras putih tempatan lantas menghalang negara mencapai tahap ekonomi sara diri yang baik. YB Menteri juga memberikan jaminan bahawa daripada semasa ke semasa akan berbincang dengan tiga kementerian besar lain untuk menemukan keputusan menang-menang dalam ekosistem bekalan beras putih. Namun YB Menteri tidak setuju dengan kehendak implisit YB Titiwangsa kerana lebih cenderung untuk mengawal harga beras putih. Ini jelas disebut pada pernyataan bahawa sikap Perdana Menteri lebih ingin menjaga kebajikan disebabkan oleh beras adalah makanan ruij rakyat.

Terdapat pelanggaran pada Maksim Kaedah iaitu pada soalan kedua, *Action Agenda* dituntut oleh YB Titiwangsa secara literal menanyakan sama ada Kerajaan mempunyai mekanisme atau formula mengimbangi masalah ini. Walau bagaimanapun, ia direspons dengan pernyataan kurang relevan iaitu "*Kementerian Ekonomi, Kementerian Kewangan, KPKM kena berbincang*". Juga apabila diajukan soalan berkenaan tindakan jangka masa panjang mengenai masalah dibangkitkan, dijawab dengan "*... kita akan lihat ini dari masa ke semasa.*"

Pelanggaran pada Maksim Hubungan dan Maksim Kaedah ini asasnya disebabkan oleh respons-respons kabur, tidak konkritif dan lantas memberi kesan negatif. Maksim Hubungan menuntut supaya respons balas berkait rapat terutamanya pada peringkat *Action Agenda*. Pelanggaran maksim kaedah pula adalah disebabkan oleh dua contoh jawapan yang dipetik di atas juga tidak praktikal dan konkrit meskipun ia diiringi dengan pernyataan komitmen.

Menyatakan tindakan lepas untuk menangani tuntutan terkini

Selain daripada menyatakan komitmen tetapi tiada langkah praktikal, didapati juga terdapat pola berhelah yang memanfaatkan langkah-langkah yang telah diambil pada masa lalu untuk menangani tuntutan *Action Agenda* yang terbaharu. Menurut Abidin & Jan, (2023), jenis berhelah ini melanggar tiga maksim Grice, iaitu Maksim Kuantiti dan Maksim Hubungan. Di bawah merupakan Data 5 yang didapati bercirikan jenis berhelah sebegini;

Data 6: DR 2 November 2023²⁹

YB Beluran: Dato' Seri, jika dibanding peruntukan pembangunan untuk Sabah RM6 bilion tahun ini dengan Pahang RM3 bilion. Dia tidak boleh *compare* macam itu kerana Pahang lebih di hadapan. Sabah, *a lot of catching up. A lot of catching up. We have been deprived of a proper allocation.*

Saya hargai peruntukan tambahan interim itu yang dinaikkan daripada RM120 *something* kepada RM300 juta tahun ini. Itu merupakan satu penambahan yang agak signifikan, tetapi kalau asas penambahan itu dilihat daripada Perjanjian Malaysia 63, *then it is-it should be more than RM300 million* kerana kalau kita tengok peruntukan Perlembagaan Persekutuan 1,2(c) dengan (d), *it should be 40 percent of whatever is collected.*

So, is this government going to look into that, the 40 percent supaya pemberian interim itu dapat ditambah dan boleh digunakan oleh Kerajaan Negeri Sabah bagi menguntukkan tambahan peruntukan dana permohonan bagi negeri.

So, kita hargai 6 bilion tetapi jika dibanding dengan Pahang 3 bilion, definitely is not comparable kerana Pahang lebih ke hadapan dari segi infrastruktur, perolehan infrastruktur.

YAB Perdana Menteri: Terima kasih. Betul, saya tidak pertikai prinsip itu. Cuma, macam pembayaran khas interim. Ini kali pertama Kerajaan Perpaduan lakukan dan tidak dibuat sebelumnya. Itu kena akui.

Keduanya, Yang Berhormat saya akui tetapi jangan lupa bahawa *Pan Borneo* itu belanja yang kita luluskan ini RM16 bilion yang tak termasuk dalam apa yang saya sebutkan tadi. Penjanaan Solar Hibrid Sabah Timur, jaringan talian penghantar elektrik di selatan *Sabah Southern Link* itu semua dilakukan.

Kalau Yang Berhormat menyebut bahawa ini masih berkurang saya setuju tetapi janganlah harapkan untuk satu tahun kita selesaikan masalah yang tertunggak berpuluh-puluh tahun ya.

29 Dewan Rakyat Debat 2 November, Bil 64, 120.

Latar konteks Data 6 berkenaan dengan interaksi antara YB Beluran daripada pihak Pembangkang dan YAB Perdana Menteri semasa penggulangan peringkat dasar Belanjawan 2024. Isu ini mengenai kesenjangan antara peruntukan pembangunan kepada Sabah dan Sarawak dalam Belanjawan 2024 dengan ketetapan yang telah dinyatakan dalam Perjanjian Malaysia 1963.

Topical Agenda adalah sebagaimana yang telah dinyatakan. Beberapa unsur penambahan yang memperkuatkan hujah dimasukkan iaitu menolak perbandingan antara peruntukan RM6 billion kepada Sabah dan RM3 billion kepada Pahang, pengakuan menghargai bantuan interim berjumlah RM300 juta dan ketiganya pertikaian yang utama, iaitu tentang jumlah sewajarnya Kerajaan patuh kepada jumlah sebenar berdasarkan Perjanjian Malaysia 1963 iaitu RM300 juta berbanding hanya memberi peruntukan tahunan RM6 billion ditambah RM300 juta.

Manakala, bagi *Action Agenda* terdapat pada ayat; “*So, is this government going to look into that, the 40 percent supaya pemberian interim itu dapat ditambah dan boleh digunakan oleh Kerajaan Negeri Sabah bagi menguntukkan tambahan peruntukan dana permohonan bagi negeri*”. Respons balas daripada pihak Kerajaan menunjukkan dua pelanggaran maksim iaitu kuantiti dan hubungan.

Pada pelanggaran maksim kuantiti, didapati *Action Agenda* yang menuntut respons sama ada pihak Kerajaan berkehendak atau tidak untuk mematuhi jumlah pembangunan berdasarkan MA63 tidak dijawab secara literal dan jelas. Didapati respons pihak Kerajaan sebaliknya adalah meminta pihak Pembangkang mengakui bahawa;

- (i) pembayaran interim adalah dasar baharu yang baik dilakukan oleh pihak Kerajaan;
- (ii) menggunakan projek-projek pada masa kerajaan sebelumnya iaitu Lebuhraya Pan Borneo, Solar Hibrid Sabah Timur dan Sabah Southern Link; dan
- (iii) mengakui bahawa komitmen dalam perjanjian MA63 masih belum ditunaikan dan meminta untuk mengakui bahawa ia tidak boleh diselesaikan dengan segera.

Akan tetapi, penelitian mendapati bahawa respons balas daripada YAB Perdana Menteri ini sememangnya sangat baik pada maksim kualiti kerana masih kekal dalam parameter *Topical Agenda*. Ketiga-tiga poin dalam pernyataan selari dengan tuntutan soalan dengan memberikan maklumat tentang sumbangan daripada Kerajaan kepada negeri Sabah.

Ini diperkuatkan lagi dengan meneliti lakuan beban kebertanggungjawaban dan nilai tambahnya kepada imej Kerajaan. Didapati, respons balas berbentuk memperakukan dahulu masalah dan kemudiannya menyatakan secara terperinci dasar yang telah dan sedang diambil, dilihat memberi nilai positif kepada pihak Kerajaan. Ini kerana, beban kebertanggungjawaban yang diletakkan atas pihak Kerajaan itu berhasil dineutralkan sekali gus mengangkat imej di pihak Kerajaan sebagai pihak yang realistik dan secara praktikalnya sedang berusaha ke arah pembetulan.

Dalam pada masa yang sama, strategi ini bersifat berhelah kerana salah satu dasar konkrit yang disebutkan oleh pihak Kerajaan itu adalah program-program lampau, produk daripada bukan kerajaan semasa. Ini melanggar maksim hubungan kerana pihak Kerajaan memberikan informasi yang tidak dituntut dalam soalan.

Memindahkan beban kebertanggungjawaban kepada pihak lain

Jenis berhelah ini asasnya melanggar prinsip kuantiti dan hubungan dengan cara memindahkan beban untuk memberikan respons balas kepada pihak lain yang sama penting dengan tujuan untuk menjauhkan penanya kepada isu; "... *distancing the questioner from the issues.*" (Abidin & Jan, 2023). Data yang menunjukkan ciri sebegini adalah seperti di bawah;

Data 7: DR 30 Oktober 2023³⁰

YB Kota Bharu: Yang Berhormat, soalan saya tak jawab Yang Berhormat.

Menteri di Jabatan Perdana Menteri (Undang-Undang dan Reformasi Institusi): Kejap, kejap. Satu-satulah Yang Berhormat. Kemudian Akta Perlindungan Pemberi Maklumat 2010 — apa dia Yang Berhormat?

Timbalan Yang di-Pertua: Yang Berhormat masa sudah tamat.

Menteri di Jabatan Perdana Menteri (Undang-Undang dan Reformasi Institusi): Oh, kejap. Kerajaan — soalan Yang Berhormat berkenaan dengan SPRM? Tentang apa?

YB Kota Bharu: Damansara membangkitkan siasatan dibuat, tidak ada pendakwaan. Saya membangkitkan tidak ada siasatan yang lengkap dibawa ke mahkamah dan kemudiannya dibuang oleh mahkamah. Kenapa jadi begitu?

Menteri di Jabatan Perdana Menteri (Undang-Undang dan Reformasi Institusi): Yang Berhormat sebab *separation of power*-lah saya tak boleh jawab. Saya bukan Menteri yang — *Commissioner for SRPM* untuk

30 Dewan Rakyat (n 27) 47

menjawab pada hari ini dan saya juga bukan Pendakwa Raya dan juga bukan Ketua Hakim Negara...

YB Kota Bharu: So, siapa Menteri yang jaga SPRM sekarang?

Menteri di Jabatan Perdana Menteri (Undang-Undang dan Reformasi Institusi): Saya pada saya setakat ini jawapan saya ialah saya bukan Menteri yang jaga SPRM. Saya tak bertanggungjawab.

YB Kota Bharu: Saya dulu jawab mengenai SPRM Yang Berhormat.

Menteri di Jabatan Perdana Menteri (Undang-Undang dan Reformasi Institusi): Saya boleh jawab tapi saya bukan bertanggungjawab. Jawab itu berlainan dengan bertanggungjawab. Jawab itu saya dapat jawapan yang diberi.

YB Kota Bharu: Jadi tak bertanggungjawablah sekarang.

Menteri di Jabatan Perdana Menteri (Undang-Undang dan Reformasi Institusi): Tapi kalau saya nak jawab. Saya boleh bagi jawapan bertulis tapi saya nak jawab sekarang kesediaan saya kepada isu-isu yang saya nak jawab dalam belanjawan. Yang Berhormat bawa isu tentang belanjawan. Yang Berhormat tanya pada SPRM, saya boleh bagi jawapan bertulis, secara spesifik. Tak ada masalah.

YB Kota Bharu: Saya minta jawapan bertulis. Saya minta jawapan bertulis.

Menteri di Jabatan Perdana Menteri (Undang-Undang dan Reformasi Institusi): Tak adanya Kerajaan Perpaduan Madani nak lari pada tanggungjawab. Tak adanya. [*Tepuk*]. Kalau salah, tetap salah. Tapi sebelum saya duduk. Saya baca sosial media ini. Saya tahu saya nak duduk ini — yang lain saya akan bagi jawapan bertulis supaya jangan kata Kerajaan Perpaduan Madani ini lari daripada tanggungjawab.

Latar konteks interaksi di atas berlaku semasa penggulungan sesi dasar oleh Menteri di Jabatan Perdana Menteri (Undang-Undang dan Reformasi Institusi). Berlaku pencelahan oleh pihak Pembangkang oleh YB Kota Bharu yang meminta penjelasan pada pernyataan; "*Saya membangkitkan tidak ada siasatan yang lengkap dibawa ke mahkamah dan kemudiannya dibuang oleh mahkamah*". Interaksi tidak menyatakan secara spesifik kes yang dirujuki oleh YB Kota Bharu.

Topical Agenda adalah ialah apabila YB Kota Bharu meminta Menteri di Jabatan Perdana Menteri (Undang-Undang dan Reformasi Institusi) memberikan respons mengenai salah satu agensi di bawahnya iaitu Suruhanjaya Pencegahan Rasuah Malaysia. Didapati, respons daripada pihak Kerajaan di peringkat *Topical Agenda* adalah relevan kerana masih dalam memperkatakan isu yang sama. Manakala, bagi *Action Agenda* pula, terdapat beberapa pelanggaran maksim yang berlaku.

Pelanggaran Maksim Kuantiti dan Maksim Hubungan dikenal pasti apabila tiada maklumat yang relevan berkenaan mengapa terdapat kes yang telah disiasat dan disabitkan tetapi telah dibuang di peringkat perbicaraan mahkamah dalam respons balas pihak Kerajaan. Lebih jelas, poin kedua Menteri pada pernyataan; “... *separation of power-lah saya tak boleh jawab. Saya bukan Menteri yang — Commissioner for SRPM untuk menjawab pada hari ini dan saya juga bukan Pendakwa Raya dan juga bukan Ketua Hakim Negara*” dan dinyatakan lagi “*jawapan saya ialah saya bukan Menteri yang jaga SPRM. Saya tak bertanggungjawab*” menepati jenis berhelah yang disebutkan sebelumnya.

Selain itu, kesan kepada respons maklum balas ini juga sama seperti jenis berhelah ini, iaitu penanya tidak melanjutkan persoalan yang diajukan. Dalam Data 7, YB Kota Bharu meminta supaya pihak Kerajaan menjawab secara bertulis.

Menolak seluruh maksim kerjasama Grice

Menurut Abidin & Jan (2023), perbahasan dalam wacana politik turut dikenal pasti dilakukan secara berhelah dengan cara tidak mematuhi kesemua maksim-maksim (*opting-out*) yang dituntut dalam model kerjasama Grice (1975). Menurut kedua pengkaji itu lagi, jenis pilihan ini dilakukan apabila bentuk pertanyaan yang mengandungi sub-sub soalan dalam pertanyaan diajukan yang membolehkan pihak yang menyoal, untuk menjawab soalan dengan cara berdiam diri (*total silence*). Contoh bagi jenis helah ini adalah seperti berikut;

Data 8: DR 16 Oktober 2023³¹

YB Tasek Gelugor: Dalam kita mempersiapkan rakyat untuk masyarakat menua, rayuan pengeluaran KWSP bersasar bagi rakyat yang terdesak adalah lebih baik dan lebih logik berbanding pengenalan akaun fleksibel atau Akaun 3.

Mewujudkan Akaun 3 yang hampir sama macam savings account biasa di bank-bank adalah tidak logik kerana jumlah simpanan nanti adalah terlalu kecil dan pencaurum terbeban hari ini. Bagaimana mungkin mewujudkan akaun fleksibel tahun 2024 boleh bantu mereka yang tertekan pada hari ini?

Dari segi menggalakkan penabungan dalam KWSP untuk akaun semasa ini pun, kalau nak banding antara tabungan KWSP dengan

31 Dewan Rakyat (n 22) 125

Simpan SSPN lah, contohnya, sebab tadi sebut pasal PTPTN, saya rasa KWSP kalah dari segi insentif yang ditawarkan. Jadi, tidak ada tarikan sebenarnya untuk menabung dalam *savings account* yang macam *savings account* dalam KWSP.

YB Shah Alam: Shah Alam.

YB Tasek Gelugor: Seterusnya...

YB Ipoh Timur: Tasek Gelugor, rasanya apa yang disampaikan...

YB Tasek Gelugor: Seminit lagi.

YB Ipoh Timur: *Liberalism* rasanya.

YB Tasek Gelugor: Nanti.

YB Ipoh Timur: Adakah Tasek Gelugor nak sampaikan *liberalism* ke dalam budaya Malaysia ni?

YB Tasek Gelugor: Saya...

YB Ipoh Timur: Itu dengar liberal. Sering kali kita dengar serangan daripada — kadang-kadang kita ni...

YB Alor Setar: Dato' Speaker, Ipoh Timur ni minta izin dululah. Tak minta izin, terus cakap. Apa ni?

YB Ipoh Timur: Itu adalah *liberalism*!

YB Alor Setar: Ada peraturan Dewan, ikutlah peraturan Dewan! Dewan tak bagi laluan, tak usah bercakaplah Ipoh Timur!

Timbalan Yang di-Pertua: Alor Setar, *you* pun tak bagi laluan pun cakap.

YB Alor Setar: Ya, saya minta maaf. Saya minta dia juga minta maaf. Terima kasih Speaker.

YB Shah Alam: Shah Alam minta laluan.

YB Tasek Gelugor: Yang di-Pertua, saya hilang dekat tujuh minit.

Timbalan Yang di-Pertua: Sila duduk semua. Sudah tak cukup masa.

YB Tasek Gelugor: Sudah tak cukup masa. Bagi saya habis, boleh ya?

Timbalan Yang di-Pertua: Ya, Tasek Gelugor, gulung.

YB Tasek Gelugor: Bagi saya habis. Seperti yang disebut oleh Ketua Pembangkang, pembangunan ekonomi Malaysia menuntut supaya kita menjadi lebih *pro-growth* dan *pro-business*. Tapi, jangan lupa bahawa ada yang disebut...

YB Ipoh Timur: Liberal.

YB Tasek Gelugor: Adajuga yang disebut oleh Yang Berhormat Larut...

Timbalan Yang di-Pertua: Ipoh Timur.

YB Tasek Gelugor: ...Iaitu pro rakyat.

YB Kuala Krau: Bagi amaran satu ah. Amaran satu.

YB Tasek Gelugor: Kerajaan juga mesti menjadi pro rakyat.

Berdasarkan Data 8 di atas, konteks interaksi berlaku semasa ucapan perbahasan dasar oleh YB Tasek Gelugor, di pihak Pembangkang. Berlaku pencelahan oleh pihak Kerajaan daripada Ipoh Timur yang menjelaskan *Topical Agenda* dalam komunikasi iaitu berkenaan dengan cadangan untuk mengadakan pengeluaran KWSP bersasar berbanding dasar kerajaan untuk mewujudkan Akaun 3 KWSP. Pihak Kerajaan mempertikaikan cadangan ini dan mempersoalkan sama ada langkah membolehkan pengeluaran KWSP bersasar adalah langkah ekonomi liberal.

Backbencher Kerajaan mempersoalkan pihak pembangkang secara pertanyaan retorik sama ada beliau menyokong pemikiran liberalisme dalam budaya Malaysia; “Adakah Tasek Gelugor nak sampaikan liberalism ke dalam budaya Malaysia ni?”. Respons kepada soalan tersebut memperlihatkan ciri pelanggaran seluruh Maksim Kerjasama Grice iaitu Kualiti, Kuantiti, Hubungan dan Kaedah pada ayat; “Yang di-Pertua, saya hilang dekat tujuh minit.” Pada Maksim Kualiti dan Maksim Kuantiti, jawapan tersebut tidak membekalkan maklumat relevan dan struktur kepanjangan adalah ringkas. Ini tidak memenuhi keperluan maksim Kualiti dan Kuantiti.

Selain itu, berdasarkan ayat tersebut, YB Pembangkang tersebut tidak membalas kepada pertanyaan YB Kerajaan, sebaliknya mengalihkan ucapannya kepada Timbalan Yang di-Pertua yang lantas melanggari Maksim Hubungan. Dengan tidak melayan pertanyaan tersebut dan lalu meneruskan kepada topik “pembangunan ekonomi Malaysia menuntut supaya kita menjadi lebih pro-growth dan pro-business ... pro rakyat ...” dan sekaligus tidak menepati tuntutan Maksim Kaedah yang mensyaratkan Respons perlu kekal dalam *Topical Agenda* yang dibincangkan.

Kesimpulan

Berdasarkan dua objektif dalam kajian ini, terdapat beberapa kesimpulan yang perlu ditekankan. Pertama, ketiga-tiga bentuk Respons telah dikenal pasti terdapat dalam lingkungan data-data iaitu semasa perbahasan peringkat dasar Belanjawan 2024. Ketiga-tiga bentuk Respons mempunyai fitur-fitur distingtif yang dinamik antara satu dengan yang lain.

Menurut Abidin, & Jan (2023) dalam kajian mereka, daripada segi kesan kepada imej, didapati Respons Langsung berupaya memberikan imej positif dengan menonjolkan kualiti kompetensi, berjaya menonjolkan relevansi menguasai isu dibangkitkan di pihak Kerajaan.

Manakala, bagi Respons Tidak Langsung, jenis ini diimplimentasikan apabila berlaku secara implisitnya ketidaksetujuan atau pertentangan pandangan antara pihak Kerajaan dan Pembangkang (Abidin & Jan, 2023). Walau bagaimanapun, Respons Langsung tidak boleh diberikan kerana diandaikan akan memberikan impak buruk kepada imej pemberi respons. Oleh sebab itu, dengan intuisi mengelakkan pertembungan dasar secara terang-terangan (*blatant collision*) yang berpotensi merugikan, pemberi respons akan memilih untuk mengurangkan magnitud melalui Respons dengan pelbagai andaian makna. Berdasarkan data juga, didapati Respons Tidak Langsung digunakan untuk lebih memfokuskan kepada justifikasi moral iaitu pemberi respons mempunyai cara lain untuk mencapai matlamat atau dipersoalkan.

Berdasarkan data Respons Berhelah, didapati jenis ini digunakan apabila pemberi respons atau pihak yang ditanya telah mengenal pasti beberapa praandaian (*presuppositions*) yang melahirkan keyakinan daripada awal bahawa sebarang apapun Respons diberikan akan memberikan impak negatif pada magnitud yang tinggi. Respons Berhelah mempunyai beberapa fitur iaitu menjarakkan posisi pemberi respons sebagai pihak utama yang bertanggungjawab, menyatakan bahawa terdapat langkah yang telah dilakukan dan meletakkan tanggungjawab tersebut di pihak yang lain. Selain itu, ciri keberhelahan (*evasiveness*) juga dikenal pasti pada tindakan pemberi respons dengan mengubah tuntutan kepada *Action Agenda* meskipun masih kekal relevan dalam *Topical Agenda* yang sama. Penelitian juga mendapati, bagi Respons Berhelah, pemberi respons memberikan Respons yang hanya menjawab separuh atau sebagaimana dinyatakan sebelumnya, tidak menjawab.

Meneliti lakuan Bahasa Berhelah (*Evasion Language*) dalam wacana Parlimen membantu memperkembangkan penyelidikan untuk memahami bagaimana dan mengapa bentuk-bentuk ini dimanipulasikan dalam persoalan lebih besar yang mencorak imej dan legitimasi Kerajaan dan Pembangkang.

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Undi 18 di Malaysia: Pasca Pelaksanaan dan Cabaran Berterusan

*Undi 18 in Malaysia:
Post-Implementation and the Ongoing Challenges*

Nuraini binti Roslan dan Mohd Zulhelmi bin Syafuddin Tan***

Abstrak

Kebanyakan negara di dunia telah pun membenarkan rakyat mereka yang berumur 18 tahun mengundi dalam pilihan raya umum negara; namun, terdapat juga negara yang membenarkan rakyat seawal 16 tahun mengundi. Kesediaan pengundi muda merupakan isu yang diketengahkan oleh ramai penyelidik melalui analisis pasca pelaksanaan UNDI18 di Malaysia. Ini berikutan penglibatan pengundi muda yang mempengaruhi keabsahan kerajaan yang baru ditubuhkan. Selain itu, naratif penyelidikan sedia ada memfokuskan pada konteks dari sudut demografi tertentu atau analisis isu topikal secara umum. Objektif penulisan artikel ini adalah untuk menganalisis pelaksanaan 'UNDI18' serta cabaran dan cabaran pasca yang dihadapi oleh pengundi muda di negara ini yang dibentangkan oleh penyelidik terdahulu dan memberikan penemuan baharu dalam aspek yang dibincangkan oleh Parlimen Malaysia. Kajian kualitatif ini mengetengahkan strategi 'penyelidikan desktop' dengan analisis tematik, naratif dan deskriptif. Artikel ini membentangkan tiga sintesis utama tentang 'UNDI18' dan kesahihan kerajaan yang dibentuk melalui tema yang dihasilkan daripada analisis kandungan. Artikel ini juga mendapati bahawa unsur-unsur sosial membentuk kesukaran yang dihadapi oleh pengundi muda di negara ini, dengan faktor luaran yang menerajunya. Sebagai kesimpulan, dasar strategik yang mendidik pengundi muda tentang isu politik dan demokrasi perlu dibangunkan

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dan golongan muda perlu diperkasakan untuk membuat keputusan yang lebih meyakinkan. Artikel ini turut membincangkan kewajipan kerajaan untuk menangani isu pendidikan politik atau pilihan raya untuk golongan muda serta mengenal pasti jabatan atau agensi tertentu yang bertanggungjawab untuk tugas ini.

Kata kunci: UNDI18, golongan muda, belia, demokrasi, parlimen, perwakilan, pilihan raya

Abstract

Most countries in the world have already allowed their 18-year-old citizens to vote in the country's general elections; however, there are also countries that allow citizens as young as 16 to vote. The readiness of young voters is an issue highlighted by many researchers through post-implementation analysis of UNDI18 in Malaysia. This is due to the involvement of young voters which affects the legitimacy of the newly formed government. Additionally, existing research narratives focus on context from a specific demographic point of view or the analysis of topical issues in general. The objective of writing this article is to analyze the implementation of 'UNDI18' as well as the challenges and post-challenges faced by young voters in this country presented by previous researchers and provide new findings in the aspects discussed by the Parliament of Malaysia. This qualitative study highlights the 'desktop research' strategy with thematic, narrative and descriptive analysis. This article presents three main syntheses on 'UNDI18' and the legitimacy of the government formed through the themes generated from the content analysis. The article also discovered that social elements shape the difficulties faced by young voters in this nation, with external factors taking the lead. The article concluded that we need to develop a strategic policy that educates young voters on political and democratic issues, empowering them to make more persuasive decisions. This also entails the government's obligation to address the issue of political education or elections for young people, and to identify specific departments or agencies that are responsible for this task.

Keywords: UNDI18, young people, youth, democracy, parliament, representation, elections

Pendahuluan

Perkataan “demokrasi” telah wujud sejak tamadun Yunani melalui bahasa asalnya iaitu *demos* (rakyat) dan *kratos* (kuasa) dan kemudiannya ditafsirkan sebagai proses “pemerintahan daripada rakyat, oleh rakyat dan untuk rakyat” oleh beberapa pemerintah terdahulu termasuklah Abraham Lincoln. Model pelaksanaan demokrasi boleh dibahagikan kepada dua iaitu demokrasi langsung (*direct democracy*) dan juga demokrasi tidak langsung (*indirect democracy*).¹ Malaysia mempraktikkan sistem demokrasi berparlimen yang dijalankan secara perwakilan.² Sistem ini membentuk satu pemerintahan dengan kuasa penggubalan undang-undang oleh rakyat melalui perwakilan yang dipilih dalam proses pilihan raya. Justeru, proses demokrasi yang dipraktis oleh Malaysia menjurus kepada demokrasi tidak langsung (*indirect democracy*). Malaysia mengamalkan sistem demokrasi perwakilan secara berparlimen dan raja berperlembagaan. Dalam sistem ini, Yang di-Pertuan Agong (YDPA) mengetuai ketiga-tiga cabang kuasa pemerintahan, iaitu perundangan (legislatif), pentadbiran (eksekutif) dan kehakiman (judisiari).

Sistem demokrasi ialah sebuah fungsi yang penting kerana sistem ini menjaga dan mengutamakan kepentingan rakyat, melaksanakan sebarang perubahan kepada negara tanpa keganasan, memelihara kebebasan dan hak-hak rakyat, menukar pemimpin, menegakkan prinsip keadilan serta menyelesaikan konflik atau perselisihan melalui perbincangan, pujukan dan kompromi.³ Melalui perubahan pembangunan sosial dan politik serta inisiatif ke arah pendemokrasian dan pilihan raya yang matang, keadilan dan kesaksamaan hendaklah diberikan tumpuan sejajar dengan perubahan zaman. Kemajuan teknologi serta perubahan demografi juga turut menyumbang kepada cabaran proses pendemokrasian konvensional, terutamanya apabila melibatkan perihal orang muda.⁴ Orang muda atau belia masa kini perlu disiapkan dengan

1 Abbas, A., & Dompok, T. (2020) ‘Dampak Demokrasi terhadap Kesejahteraan (Studi Kasus di Indonesia)’ *Dialektika Publik*, 5(1), pp. 43–49. [Online]. Available at: <http://ejournal.upbatam.ac.id/index.php/dialektikapublik>.

2 Abdul Aziz Abdul Rahman, Ahmad Sabri Ahmad Zaharuddin Sani, & Nordin Muhamed Nor Azman (2014) *Demokrasi di Malaysia*. Institut Terjemahan & Buku Negara.

3 Ibid.

4 Azmir, M., Nizah, M., Sabri, &, Sharif, M., & Teras, P. (2020) ‘Undi 18: Belia dan Politik Konvensional’ *Jurnal Sains Insani*, 5(1), pp. 180–186. [Online]. Available at: <https://scholar.archive.org/work/kflhsyvntrenxmqf2cgvijkgtm>.

pengetahuan demokrasi yang sewajarnya dalam membantu proses pembentukan negara yang berterusan.

Definisi belia menurut Pertubuhan Bangsa-Bangsa Bersatu ialah golongan yang berada dalam kelompok usia 15 hingga 24 tahun.⁵ Menurut kamus, belia atau anak muda ialah tempoh kehidupan apabila seseorang dalam usia muda, berada antara fasa kanak-kanak dengan dewasa.⁶ Pada tahun 1995, Kerajaan Malaysia telah meratifikasi Konvensyen Pertubuhan Bangsa-Bangsa Bersatu Mengenai Hak Kanak-Kanak (*United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - UNCRC*). Konvensyen ini menegakkan hak sivil, politik, ekonomi, sosial, kesihatan dan budaya semua kanak-kanak di bawah umur 18 tahun. Melihat kepada *endorsement* prinsip penyertaan kanak-kanak di bawah umur 18 tahun oleh UNCRC dalam pelbagai hak asasi, oleh yang demikian, mereka yang berada di luar kelompok takrifan kanak-kanak, iaitu umur 18 tahun dan lebih wajar dilihat sebagai cukup dewasa atau belia dan boleh membuat keputusan yang lebih daripada apa yang diperjuangkan oleh UNCRC. Penyertaan kelompok belia dalam proses demokrasi juga membantu golongan muda untuk berkembang secara pragmatik dalam membangunkan tanggungjawab sebagai rakyat dan mendorong mereka untuk bertindak dalam menyokong perihal komuniti mereka.⁷ Hal ini jelas menunjukkan bahawa keterlibatan golongan muda wajar diketengahkan dan diberikan peluang untuk mengambil bahagian. Malahan, kerajaan wajar membuka jalan bagi membolehkan aspirasi dan suara mereka diambil kira dan didengari.

Malaysia telah memperkukuh amalan sistem demokrasinya dengan menggalakkan lebih banyak penglibatan lapisan warganegaranya dalam pemilihan pemerintah negara melalui Rang Undang-undang (RUU) Undi 18 atau dikenali sebagai 'UNDI18' yang diluluskan pada 16 Julai 2019. RUU ini membolehkan warganya yang berumur 18 tahun ke atas untuk turut terlibat mengundi dan menjadi calon dalam pilihan raya berbanding had umur sebelum RUU tersebut diluluskan iaitu 21

5 Talib@Khalid, K. A., Shiratuddin, N., Hassan, S., Rahman, Z. S. A., & Rahman, N. L. A. (2018) 'Belia dan Sosialisasi: Tingkahlaku Relatif dan Perspektif Terhadap Media Baru' *Jurnal Komunikasi (Malaysia Journal of Communication)*, Jilid 34(3), pp. 208–225. [Online]. Available at: <https://journalarticle.ukm.my/13112/1/21493-87986-1-PB.pdf>.

6 Macmillan English Dictionary for Advance Learners (n.d.) MacMillan Publisher Limited.

7 Queensland Family & Child Commission (n.d.) 'Model of Participation'. [Online]. Available at: <https://scholar.archive.org/work/kflhsyvntrenxmqf2cgvijkgtm>. Accessed 5 January 2023.

tahun ke atas. UNDI18 merangkumi tiga perkara yang diluluskan di Parlimen iaitu yang pertama menurunkan umur warganegara yang layak untuk menjadi ahli Dewan Rakyat kepada 18 tahun melalui pindaan perenggan (b) Perkara 47 Perlembagaan Persekutuan, kedua perenggan (a) Fasal 1 Perkara 119 Perlembagaan Persekutuan adalah bagi tujuan menurunkan umur seseorang warganegara yang layak untuk mengundi kepada 18 tahun, serta ketiga pendaftaran warganegara sebagai pengundi secara automatik sejourus mereka mencapai umur 18 tahun. Perbandingan sebelum dan selepas pindaan Perlembagaan Persekutuan bagi pelaksanaan UNDI18 adalah seperti berikut:

Jadual 1: Perbandingan Sebelum dan Selepas Pelaksanaan Rang Undang-Undang Undi18 di Malaysia

| Perkara yang dipinda | Sebelum RUU Undi 18 | Selepas RUU Undi 18 |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| Kelayakan menjadi ahli Dewan Rakyat | Warganegara yang berumur 21 tahun ke atas layak menjadi ahli Dewan Rakyat. | Umur minimum warganegara yang layak untuk menjadi ahli Dewan Rakyat adalah 18 tahun. |
| Kelayakkan mengundi | Umur minimum warganegara untuk mengundi adalah 21 tahun. | Warganegara yang berumur 18 tahun ke atas layak mengundi. |
| Pendaftaran pengundi | Warganegara yang berumur 21 tahun hendaklah mendaftar sebagai pengundi dengan Suruhanjaya Pilihan Raya. | Pendaftaran warganegara secara automatik sejourus mereka mencapai umur 18 tahun. |

Isu dan permasalahan

Sebelum pelaksanaan UNDI18 pada 15 Disember 2021, had umur terendah untuk melayakkan seseorang itu menenjalani proses pengundian di Malaysia ialah 21 tahun.⁸ Hak mengundi telah menjadi

8 Suruhanjaya Pilihan Raya Malaysia (n.d.) 'FAQ Pengundi 18 Tahun dan Pelaksanaan Umur Kelayakan Pengundi 18 Tahun dan Pendaftaran Pemilih Secara Automatik (PPSA)', accessed 10 Ogos 2023. Available at: <https://www.spr.gov.my/ms/pelaksanaan-umur-kelayakan-pengundi-18-tahun-dan-pendaftaran-pemilih-secara-automatik-ppsa>.

isu di Malaysia apabila golongan muda berumur antara 18 hingga 20 tahun tidak dibenarkan mengundi berdasarkan peruntukan Perlembagaan Persekutuan yang belum dipinda. Pindaan melalui UNDI18 bukan sahaja menurunkan had umur pengundi, tetapi turut mendaftarkan warganegara Malaysia sebagai pemilih secara automatik sebaik sahaja mencapai usia 18 tahun.⁹ Pelbagai isu dalam dunia hari ini menuntut penglibatan aktif golongan muda dalam pelbagai aspek kehidupan termasuklah perihal politik negara.¹⁰ Ini termasuklah meletakkan beban tanggungjawab sebagai pengundi dalam pilihan raya, malahan calon wakil rakyat dalam menyuarakan pandangan dan hasrat masyarakat setempat. Penglibatan dalam proses demokrasi merupakan salah satu cara paling kritikal oleh individu kerana boleh mempengaruhi pembuatan keputusan kerajaan melalui perwakilan yang dipilih hasil daripada proses pengundian. Melalui tinjauan kajian lalu juga, kebanyakan negara OECD telah menurunkan had umur sah mengundi kepada 18 tahun seawal empat dekad yang lalu.¹¹ Kelangsungan dan kematangan sesebuah parti politik juga boleh dilihat berdasarkan keterlibatan rakyat yang membolehkan parti tersebut mendapat mandat dan kemudiannya diterjemahkan untuk menjadi pemerintah. Oleh yang demikian, penglibatan warganegara yang lebih menyeluruh termasuk keterlibatan pengundi muda dapat mempertingkatkan keabsahan parti politik yang menang melalui potensi pertambahan jumlah pengundi.

Walau bagaimanapun, penurunan had umur berkaitan undi dan politik muda di negara ini telah menambah jurang pemahaman mengenai cabaran-cabaran yang dihadapi oleh generasi muda dalam kajian literatur sedia ada. Ini kerana, pembangunan teknologi sentiasa berkembang cepat dan pesat dengan pelbagai peluang inovasi dan kreativiti juga cabaran daripada aspek sosiopolitik. Data empirikal berkaitan tahap pengetahuan, minat, sikap, sumber informasi dan kesedaran pelajar terhadap proses demokrasi di negara menuntut penyelidikan yang

9 Ibid.

10 Mallow Muzaffar Syah (2021) 'Undi 18: Give Our Youths the Opportunity To Vote', *Malaysia Gazette*, March 17. Available at: <https://malaysiagazette.com/2021/03/17/undi-18-give-our-youths-opportunity-vote/>.

11 Takao, Y. (2019) 'Japan's agenda setting to lower the voting age from 20 to 18: Prioritizing constitutional revision over democratic legitimacy' *Pacific Affairs*, 92(3), pp. 419–442. [Online]. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.5509/2019923419>.

berterusan bagi penambahbaikan dari semasa ke semasa.¹² Tahap pengetahuan yang cetek berkaitan politik, kenegaraan dan demokrasi di kalangan belia turut menjadi permasalahan dalam kajian.¹³

Justeru, kajian lanjut terhadap pasca-pelaksanaan dan cabaran UNDI18 wajar dilaksanakan untuk menambah ruang lingkup penumpuan literatur sedia ada, di samping mengetengahkan perkara-perkara yang perlu dicakna oleh semua pihak yang berkepentingan terutamanya aspek cabaran bagi membantu pelbagai pihak dalam memastikan pengundi akan datang mampu membuat keputusan besar dalam hidup mereka berkaitan aspek pemerintahan negara dengan lebih tepat dan meyakinkan.

Skop kajian dan batasan kajian

Penulisan kajian ini memfokuskan situasi pengundi dalam negara berdasarkan penulisan kajian terdahulu. Sungguhpun pelaksanaan UNDI18 melibatkan tiga pindaan dalam Perlembagaan Persekutuan iaitu kelayakan umur menjadi ahli Dewan Rakyat, kelayakan umur mengundi dan pendaftaran pengundi secara automatik, penulisan kajian ini hanya akan bertumpu kepada pindaan yang berkaitan dengan had umur minimum warganegara untuk melaksanakan tanggungjawab mengundi yang diturunkan daripada 21 tahun kepada 18 tahun. Kajian ini juga bersifat *cross-sectional*¹⁴ dengan membawakan sorotan literatur bermula daripada inisiatif UNDI18 iaitu tahun 2019 sehinggalah pasca pelaksanaan pada tahun semasa iaitu 2023. Metodologi penyelidikan secara '*desktop*' adalah lebih menjimatkan walau bagaimanapun penyelidikan ini bergantung kepada sumber sedia ada. Metodologi ini akan dijelaskan dalam sub-tema '*metodologi*' dalam kajian ini.

12 Azmir, M., Nizah, M., Sabri, &, Sharif, M., & Teras, P. (2020) 'Undi 18: Belia dan Politik Konvensional' *Jurnal Sains Insani*, 5(1), pp. 180–186. Available at: <https://scholar.archive.org/work/kflhsyvntrenxm2cgvjikgtm>.

13 Wan Abdul Ghapar Wan Rohila Ganti, Che Mohd. Razali Che Hamdan, Ahmad Muhammad Fazil, & Abdul Latip Abdul Rahman (2021) 'Pembentukan Modul Undi18@School untuk Pendidikan Kenegaraan dan Demokrasi kepada Belia 18-21 Tahun' *I-Spike 2021 International Exhibition & Symposium E-Proceedings*, pp. 28–32. Available at: <https://ispike2021.uitm.edu.my/>.

14 Nota: Kaedah yang digunakan adalah *comparative cross-sectional*, iaitu perbandingan antara maklumat yang sama tetapi pada titik masa yang berbeza. Pemilihan kaedah ini adalah disebabkan keupayaannya untuk membongkar pelbagai hasil akhir secara serentak (*expose multiple outcomes simultaneously*).

Objektif kajian

Kajian ini menyasarkan dua objektif yang dilihat sangat penting untuk dibincangkan berkaitan UNDI18 oleh kerajaan Malaysia. Pertama, artikel ini cuba untuk mengenal pasti kepentingan dan kerelevanan pelaksanaan UNDI18. Kedua, penyelidikan ini akan membincangkan cabaran-cabaran yang dihadapi dan masih dihadapi (*ongoing challenges*) dalam pasca pelaksanaan UNDI18.

Metodologi kajian

Terdapat beberapa pendekatan digunakan dalam penulisan kajian ini untuk menyokong dapatan mengenai isu yang diketengahkan, dapatan-dapatan serta analisis terhadapnya. Penyelidikan kualitatif ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan pemahaman kita tentang proses sosial, fenomena dan aktiviti. Kajian kualitatif ini akan memberi tumpuan kepada makna dan pemahaman dan bukannya penjelasan penemuan melalui pengukuran digit daripada aspek kuantiti sahaja.¹⁵ Mengikuti Denzin dan Lincoln (1998), metodologi penyelidikan kualitatif boleh dilihat daripada sudut penyelidik merupakan '*jack-of-all-trades*' yang akan mencuba apa-apa sahaja dan menghasilkan konstruk yang muncul, mencantumkannya yang boleh menyediakan jawapan kepada masalah tertentu.

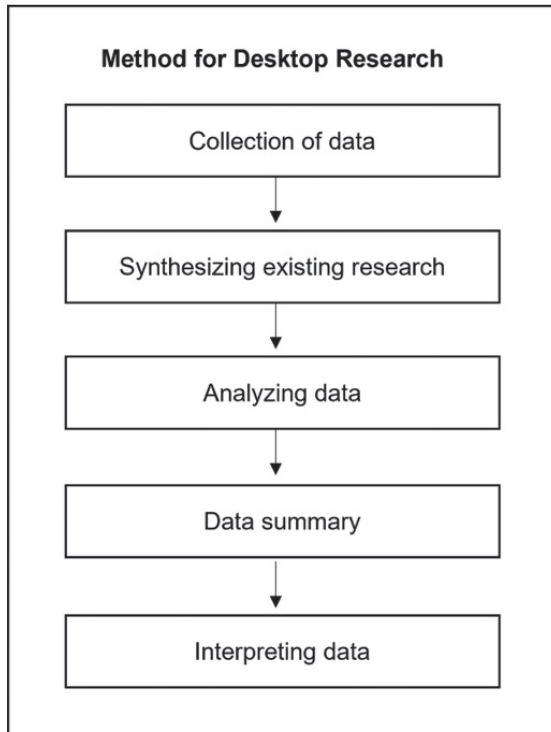
Penggunaan kaedah kajian kualitatif turut digunakan dalam *European Parliament*. Kaedah ini telah membantu meningkatkan pemahaman tentang cara institusi ini berfungsi dan proses serta interaksi yang berlaku di sana untuk menambah literatur semasa. Bidang seperti mekanisme perubahan dan sosialisasi, masih tidak dapat disimpulkan dan kerja lanjut kepada beberapa bidang dan konsep memerlukan penerokaan dan penerangan sebelum analisis statistik selanjutnya boleh dilakukan. *European Parliament* mengguna pakai beberapa kaedah kualitatif termasuklah penyelidikan arkib (*archival research*) dan analisis wacana (*discourse analysis*). Penyelidikan arkib membolehkan pemahaman *European Parliament* berkembang sebagai badan perundangan dan tekanan serta pengaruh yang ditimbulkannya untuk menjadikannya institusi seperti sedia ada serta membantu pemahaman perkara-perkara yang tidak berubah. Perkembangan dalam analisis wacana pula membolehkan ucapan, naratif dan wacana dalam ucapan politik,

15 N Denzin, & Y Lincoln. (1998). *Entering The Field of Qualitative Research*. Sage.

kesusasteraan dan media, membantu dalam pemahaman cara pengaturan institusi sarat dengan andaian, bermula daripada andaian bahawa semua objek dan tindakan adalah bermakna. Projek-projek penyelidikan ini bermula dari tempat yang berbeza bergantung kepada definisi pengkaji tentang wacana dan pendekatan epistemologi yang digunakan seperti positivis, kritis, pasca-strukturalis dan sebagainya.¹⁶

Seterusnya, strategi penulisan metodologi secara terperinci mengenai '*desktop research*' dalam penghasilan penulisan jurnal khususnya adalah masih kurang. Justeru, penulisan kajian ini akan mengetengahkan strategi metodologi penyelidikan yang telah digunakan oleh para pengkaji terdahulu seperti berikut:

Rajah 1: Strategi pelaksanaan metodologi penyelidikan secara *desktop research*. (Sumber: Dr. Ladislava Knihora)



16 Sussex European Institute (n.d.) 'Qualitative Methods'. University of Sussex. Retrieved May 14, 2023, from <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/research/european-parliament-qualitative-research-network/qualitativemethods>.

Dalam metodologi kajian ini, pengkaji mengguna pakai strategi daripada Dr. Ladislava Knihora (2014).¹⁷ Pengkaji memperuntukkan usaha untuk mendapatkan sumber-sumber penulisan berkaitan UNDI18. Sumber-sumber diperoleh daripada penulisan jurnal terdahulu, penulisan ilmiah, keratan akhbar, sumber berita dalam talian, dan laman sesawang. Sumber-sumber ini membolehkan pengkaji membaca keseluruhan tema besar berkaitan UNDI18 sebelum menentukan perincian skop penulisan, permasalahan kajian, jurang kajian sedia ada serta objektif kajian. Setelah menentukan objektif kajian yang ingin diketengahkan, pengkaji mensistesis data-data sedia ada, menganalisis mengikut objektif, meringkaskan dapatan tersebut bagi tujuan penterjemahan data. Dapatan kajian ini diinterpretasi secara naratif dan deskriptif dan analisis secara tematik dibangunkan bagi membantu pembaca untuk memahami dapatan konstruk-konstruk kajian. Bagi sumber penulisan jurnal terdahulu, carian kajian difokuskan kepada 'Undi18, Undi 18 atau Undi+18' untuk menjana artikel. Pengkaji turut mendapatkan pandangan 'peer review' bagi analisis tematik yang dibangunkan untuk mengelakkan 'bias' dalam kecenderungan untuk membangunkan analisis tersebut.

Sorotan literatur

Pemilihan demokrasi

Dalam pilihan raya demokrasi, warganegara yang layak akan diberikan hak mengundi apabila mereka telah mencapai had umur untuk mengundi.¹⁸ Hak bagi membolehkan seseorang itu mengundi dalam pilihan raya ialah perkara utama yang perlu diberi perhatian oleh kerajaan dan agensi yang mengendalikan proses pilihan raya dalam sebuah negara yang melaksanakan demokrasi berperwakilan seperti yang dijamin di bawah peruntukan undang-undang negara iaitu Perlembagaan Persekutuan. Sebelum tahun 1970-an, had umur minimum layak mengundi di negara-negara demokrasi ialah 21 tahun ke atas. Setelah itu, inisiatif untuk menurunkan had umur minimum pengundi kepada 18 tahun bermula selepas tahun 1970-an di beberapa buah negara seperti United Kingdom (1969-70), Eropah Barat (1970-an), Amerika Syarikat (1971), Kanada, Jerman (1972), Australia, Perancis

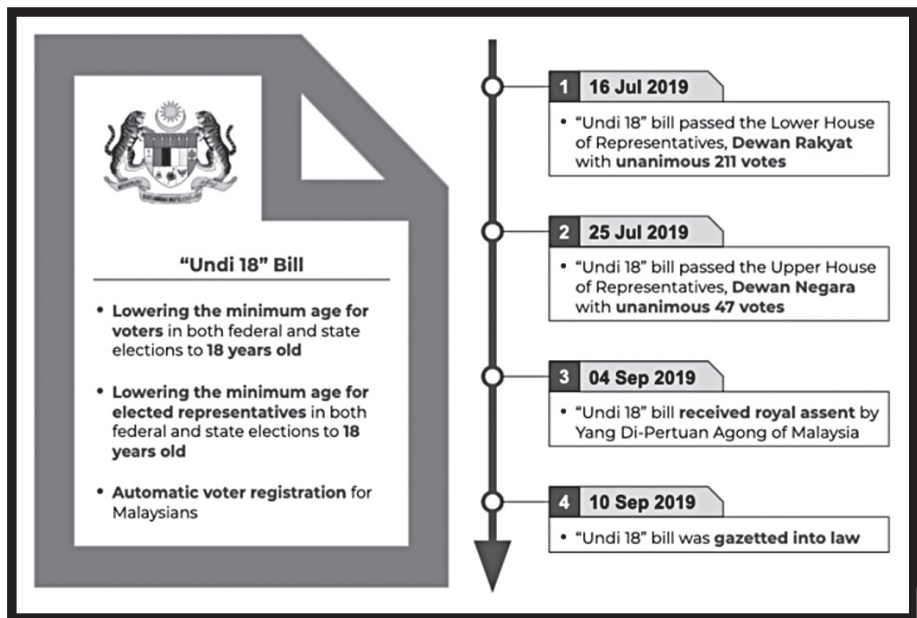
17 Knihora Ladislava. (2014). *Research*. <https://www.slideshare.net/kniha/research-42774060>.

18 Mohd Hed Norhafiza, & Grasso Maria T. (2020) 'Age Group Differences in Political Activism In Malaysia' *Journal of Youth Study*, 23(6), pp. 765–779. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13676261.2019.1636948>.

(1974), diikuti India, Pakistan, New Zealand dan semua negara di Amerika Latin, Afrika dan Asia pada 1980-an serta Jepun yang merupakan negara yang terakhir untuk mengambil langkah ini pada Tahun 2016. Dalam kalangan negara-negara ASEAN pula, negara Indonesia dan Timor Leste telah membenarkan warganegaranya yang berumur seawall 17 tahun untuk melaksanakan tanggungjawab sebagai pengundi pilihan raya bagi negara-negara tersebut.¹⁹

Inisiatif UNDI18 di Malaysia pada asalnya telah bermula pada tahun 2016 oleh golongan belia di bawah naungan *Malaysian Students Global Alliance* iaitu Tharma Pillai dan Qyira Yusri yang bergelar pelajar pada ketika itu untuk mengurangkan umur minimum layak mengundi di Malaysia daripada 21 tahun kepada 18 tahun dengan pindaan terhadap Perkara 119(1)(a) Perlembagaan Persekutuan Malaysia yang mengatur umur minimum layak untuk mengundi di Malaysia. Ringkasan usaha-usaha bagi merealisasikan UNDI18 adalah seperti rajah berikut:

Gambar 1: Perjalanan pelaksanaan UNDI18. (Sumber: Laman web UNDI18)²⁰



19 Wan Omar Wan Ahmad (2018) 'Umur 18 Tahun Wajar Dapat Hak Mengundi' *Berita Harian Online*, July 9. Available at: <https://www.bharian.com.my/rencana/muka10/2018/07/446925/umur-18-tahun-wajar-dapat-hak-mengundi>.

20 Undi18 (n.d.) Available at: <https://undi18.org/>.

Rang Undang-undang Perlembagaan (Pindaan) 2019 bagi had umur minimum layak mengundi yang baharu serta peruntukan berkaitan pendaftaran pemilih automatik untuk semua warganegara Malaysia dan pindaan kepada umur minimum pencalonan untuk bertanding dalam pilihan raya telah di bawa untuk perbahasan Dewan Rakyat dan Dewan Undangan Negeri di Malaysia. Pada 16 Julai 2019, Rang Undang-undang Perlembagaan (Pindaan) 2019 telah diluluskan sebulat suara oleh semua ahli Dewan Rakyat yang hadir dan merupakan rang undang-undang pertama dalam sejarah Malaysia yang mendapat sokongan oleh Dewan Rakyat dan Dewan Negara. Pada 4 September 2018, Rang Undang-undang UNDI18 telah mendapat perkenan oleh Yang Di-Pertuan Agong dan kemudiannya diwartakan pada pada 10 September 2019.

Pelaksanaan UNDI18 oleh Kerajaan Malaysia mempunyai justifikasi yang jelas, terutamanya daripada sudut kematangan pengundi pada usia yang sering dikatakan sebagai 'terlalu muda'.^{21,22,23} Walau bagaimanapun, pewartaan Rang Undang-Undang ini tidak berjaya menamatkan stigma bahawa umur 18 tahun adalah masih terlalu muda untuk mengundi. Stigma ini secara tidak langsung menyebabkan pengundi muda, walaupun telah terdaftar secara automatik, merasa tidak bersemangat untuk membuang undi dalam Pilihan Raya Negeri Johor ke-15, pada 12 Mac 2022²⁴ yang merupakan pilihan raya pertama di negara ini seusai termaktubnya Rang Undang-Undang UNDI18. Hasilnya, hanya

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- 21 Sah Allam, S. N., Hassan, M. S., Jamri, M. H., Abdul Rani, N. S., Ab Hadi, S. N. I., & Meerangani, K. A. (2022) 'New Young Voters' Decision to Vote: Impact of Access, Analysis and Evaluate, Create and Act' *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 12(4). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v12-i4/13080>.
 - 22 Weiss, Meredith L. (2022) 'Can Youth Save Malaysia's Democracy?' *S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies*. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep40186>.
 - 23 Haiqal Moshidi, M., Syifaa, N., Fasihah, ', Latif, A., Chai, &, & Yi, S. (2021) 'Youth Perceptions Towards Readiness Of Youth In Kuching, Malaysia: Are They Ready To Vote?' *E-Proceeding 8th International Conference On Public Policy And Social Science (ICoPS) 2021*, pp. 569–574. Available at: <https://ir.uitm.edu.my/id/eprint/55224/1/55224.pdf>.
 - 24 Mahzan, S., Nurr Sadikan, S. F., Osman, S., Md Shah, M. A. M., Jaafar, M. R., Abdul Latip, M. S., Zubir, A. M., & Shafie, S. (2023) 'UNDI18: Analisa Keperluan Literasi Politik Pengundi Muda Melayu Johor di Institusi Pengajian Tinggi Awam Pasca PRN Johor Ke-15' *Insight Journal*, 10(2), pp. 185–198. Available at: <https://myjms.mohe.gov.my/index.php/insightjournal/article/view/23121/13286>.

5% sahaja pengundi berumur seawal umur 18 yang telah turun untuk melaksanakan tanggungjawab mengundi.²⁵

Hak-hak asasi manusia

Di Malaysia, hak-hak asasi manusia telah disenaraikan dalam Bahagian II Perlembagaan Persekutuan 1957 yang memperuntukkan perkara-perkara seperti berikut:

- Perkara 5 : Kebebasan individu.
- Perkara 6 : Larangan keabdian dan kerja paksa.
- Perkara 7 : Perlindungan terhadap undang-undang jenayah retrospektif dan perbicaraan berulang.
- Perkara 8 : Kesamarataan.
- Perkara 9 : Larangan buangan negeri dan kebebasan bergerak.
- Perkara 10 : Kebebasan bercakap, berhimpunan dan berpersatuan.
- Perkara 11 : Kebebasan agama.
- Perkara 12 : Hak-hak berkenaan dengan pelajaran.
- Perkara 13 : Hak terhadap harta.

Mengikut pemakaian seksyen (4) Akta Suruhanjaya Hak Asasi Manusia Malaysia 1999 (Akta 597), hak asasi manusia yang tidak disebut dalam Bahagian II Perlembagaan Persekutuan tetapi termaktub dalam Perisytiharan Hak Asasi Manusia Sejangat 1948 harus dirujuk selagi tidak bertentangan dengan Perlembagaan Persekutuan. Dalam klausa Perkara 29 perisytiharan tersebut ada menyatakan bahawa batasan yang ditentukan oleh perundangan adalah bagi tujuan menjamin pengiktirafan dan penghormatan yang sepatutnya terhadap hak-hak dan kebebasan serta perkara lain seperti akhlak, kententeraman awam dan kebajikan umum dalam suatu masyarakat yang demokratik.

25 Sanusi, R. M. (2022) 'Peratusan keluar mengundi tidak seperti diharapkan' *Sinar Harian*. Available at: <https://www.sinarharian.com.my/article/193828/berita/nasional/peratusan-keluar-mengundi-tidak-seperti-diharapkan>

Penetapan had umur dalam pelaksanaan undang-undang

Kajian politik konvensional dan keterlibatan belia adalah antara bidang kajian yang semakin menarik perhatian ahli sains politik dan pengkaji polisi sosial kerana belia merupakan kumpulan besar dalam sesebuah masyarakat serta mempengaruhi ukuran demokrasi sesebuah masyarakat atau negara.²⁶

Dalam konteks lokaliti, mengikut Seksyen 2 Akta Pembangunan Belia dan Pertubuhan Belia 2007 (Akta 688), belia ditakrifkan sebagai seseorang yang berumur tidak kurang daripada 15 tahun dan tidak lebih daripada 40 tahun. Secara tidak langsung, golongan ini telah berada dalam penglibatan sosial serta membuat keputusan dalam beberapa sudut kehidupan seperti pertimbangan untuk memilih dan memasuki alam pekerjaan, membayar cukai kepada negara serta pemilihan calon pasangan hidup serta keputusan untuk mendirikan rumah tangga.

Di Malaysia, terdapat agensi atau majikan yang menawarkan peluang pekerjaan yang meletakkan syarat permohonan pengajian akademik serendah Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR). Antaranya agensi yang menawarkan peluang sedemikian adalah Suruhanjaya Perkhidmatan Awam (SPA) yang melatakan syarat permohonan sekurang-kurangnya mempunyai sijil PMR bagi permohonan Jawatan Kumpulan Pelaksana. Kebiasaan umur bagi pemegang sijil PMR ialah 15 tahun iaitu ketika tamat Tingkatan Tiga. Walau bagaimanapun, selaras dengan pemegang sijil akademik yang semakin kompetitif pada masa kini, rata-rata agensi atau majikan meletakkan syarat Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) atau Sijil Vokasional Malaysia (SVM) untuk pengambilan sebagai pekerja, iaitu kira-kira pada umur 17 tahun atau tamat Tingkatan Lima. Secara ringkasnya, warganegara yang tidak memilih untuk melanjutkan pelajaran mereka ke peringkat yang lebih tinggi boleh membuat keputusan dalam hidup mereka untuk terus melangkah ke dalam alam pekerjaan seawal umur 15 tahun.

Di dalam perundangan lain seperti Akta Kanak-kanak dan Orang Muda (Pekerjaan)(Pindaan) 2019 (Akta A1586), kanak-kanak di negara ini ditafsirkan sebagai orang yang berumur 15 tahun ke bawah. Manakala orang muda pula didefinisikan sebagai mereka yang berumur 18 tahun ke bawah. Seksyen 2(2A) dalam akta yang sama ini juga telah menyatakan bahawa had umur minimum yang membolehkan seseorang bekerja ialah

26 Azmir, M., Nizah, M., Sabri, &, Sharif, M., & Teras, P. (2020) 'Undi 18: Belia dan Politik Konvensional' *Jurnal Sains Insani*, 5(1), pp. 180–186. Available at: <https://scholar.archive.org/work/kflhsyvtrenxmqf2cgvijkgtm>.

13 tahun dengan syarat hanya pekerjaan ringan sahaja dibenarkan ke atas golongan tersebut. Dalam konteks perundangan ini pula, dapat dirumuskan bahawa had umur untuk membuat Keputusan mengenai pekerjaan di negara ini ialah seawal umur 13 tahun ataupun Tingkatan Satu sekolah menengah.

Dari sudut pelaksanaan tanggungjawab pembayaran cukai di Malaysia pula, mengikut Akta Cukai Pendapatan 1967 seseorang individu yang mempunyai jumlah pendapatan melebihi nilai ambang yang ditetapkan oleh kerajaan boleh dikenakan cukai dan perlu mendaftar fail cukai pendapatan mereka bagi urusan rekod dan pengauditan. Skop pengenaan cukai ke atas seseorang individu pula adalah bergantung kepada taraf mastautinnya. Individu bermastautin boleh dikenakan cukai mengikut kadar cukai yang telah ditetapkan serta layak menuntut potongan cukai menurut Seksyen 45A hingga seksyen 49 akta tersebut. Walaupun Akta ini tidak mengenakan sebarang syarat umur pembayar cukai, tetapi adalah jelas bahawa pelaksanaan tanggungjawab pembayaran cukai turut merangkumi golongan berumur 18 tahun yang telah memenuhi syarat untuk dikenakan tindakan membayar cukai. Oleh yang demikian, pembayar cukai dilihat wajar dibabitkan dalam sebarang bentuk pembuatan keputusan oleh kerajaan memandangkan golongan pembayar cukai turut menyumbang kepada modal atau dana pendapatan negara. Justeru, adalah tidak adil kepada golongan ini untuk tidak diberi hak mengundi hanya kerana berumur 18 tahun dan belum mencapai umur 21 tahun.

Daripada perspektif kebertanggungjawaban dalam pembinaan keluarga, Undang-undang Keluarga Islam di negara ini telah menetapkan bahawa, umur minimum bagi calon lelaki yang ingin berumah tangga adalah 18 tahun manakala calon perempuan pula adalah seawal 16 tahun. Di Malaysia, perkara berkaitan hal ehwal agama Islam adalah berada di bawah bidang kuasa kerajaan negeri melalui perundangan negeri mengikut Perlembagaan Persekutuan. Sebagai contoh, Seksyen 8 Enakmen Undang-undang Keluarga Islam (Negeri Selangor) 2003 telah memperuntukkan perihal had umur untuk berumah tangga yang sama. Bagi warganegara yang bukan Islam pula, Seksyen 10 Akta Membaharui Undang-undang (Perkahwinan dan Perceraian) 1976 telah menyatakan bahawa had umur perkahwinan minimum yang sah ialah 18 tahun bagi calon lelaki dan wanita. Justeru, dalam konteks pembuatan keputusan dalam hal berumah tangga oleh calon yang faham serta memenuhi syarat, had umur terendah yang dibenarkan adalah serendah 16 tahun. Berbeza dengan pemilihan calon pilihan raya yang berkemungkinan

bertukar setiap lima tahun, pemilihan pasangan hidup dan keputusan yang dibuat adalah implikasi sepanjang hidup jika tidak diuji dengan faktor-faktor lain seperti konflik penceraian atau kematian.

Dari sudut perundangan yang melibatkan proses perbincaraan pula, warganegara yang berumur 18 tahun dianggap sebagai dewasa dan dibicarakan di mahkamah serta jika disabitkan dengan kesalahan, warganegara tersebut akan menerima hukuman sebagai rakyat dewasa yang bertanggungjawab atas kesalahannya. Bagi pesalah kanak-kanak pula, dalam hal berkaitan prosiding jenayah sebagai seseorang yang di bawah umur 18 tahun manakala berhubung dengan prosiding jenayah, had umur minimum bagi '*criminal responsibility*' adalah sepuluh tahun seperti yang telah ditetapkan dalam seksyen 82 Kanun Keseksaan. Jika seseorang warganegara boleh dibicarakan seawal umur 10 tahun, justeru, adalah wajar umur 18 tahun dilihat lebih sebagai lebih matang dalam berfikir dan membuat keputusan.

Utility (Nilai)

Selain daripada perbincangan demokrasi melalui kematangan umur, hak asasi dan kebebasan dalam mendukung pelaksanaan UNDI18, perspektif dari segi utiliti atau nilai juga wajar diambil kira. Warganegara berumur antara 18 hingga 21 tahun tidak wajar dipinggirkan manakala hasrat dan suara mereka juga wajar digunakan dalam memperkembangkan lagi pembangunan sistem demokrasi negara. Perspektif utiliti mengukur kebaikan masyarakat melalui keterlibatan dalam jumlah pengundi yang merupakan jalan kepada penentuan destini sesebuah negara.²⁷ Setiap jumlah pengundi adalah bernilai dalam menentukan perwakilan yang diangkat sebagai suara mereka dalam pembangunan demokrasi negara. Justeru, golongan ini tidak wajar dipinggirkan dalam proses pilihan raya serta berhak untuk dilibatkan dalam proses memutuskan perwakilan, sebagaimana hak mereka dalam sudut kehidupan lain dijamin oleh dasar kerajaan dan perundangan negara.

Persediaan teknologi

Sebagai persediaan untuk melibatkan mereka yang berumur 18 tahun dalam Pilihan Raya Umum ke-15, Suruhanjaya Pilihan Raya Malaysia

27 Sloam, J., & Henn, M. (2019) Rejuvenating Politics: Young Political Participation in a Changing World. In Palgrave Studies in Young People and Politics. Springer Nature. Available at: https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-97469-9_2.

(SPR) telah mengambil inisiatif dengan memohon agar 5.8 juta bakal pemilih berusia 18 tahun dan ke atas untuk menyemak dan mengesahkan maklumat mereka kepada agensi tersebut melalui semakan Pra-Pendaftaran Pemilih Automatik (SPPA). Warganegara yang berkelayakan juga boleh hadir ke 604 cawangan SPPA di seluruh negara dan mengimbas kod QR Bahagian Pilihan Raya Parlimen yang disediakan oleh agensi terbabit bagi tujuan semakan butiran diri. Pendaftaran automatik yang dilaksanakan oleh SPR adalah mengikut alamat seperti yang tertera pada kad pengenalan individu yang memberi implikasi kepada tempat membuang undi serta penentuan perwakilan di tempat tersebut.²⁸

Negara pada katika itu bukan sahaja bersedia dalam aspek teknologi pendaftaran secara automatik, tetapi juga penyaluran kefahaman mengenai fungsi Parlimen dengan pewujudan inisiatif Parlimen Digital oleh Gerakan UNDI18 seperti yang terdapat di platform laman rasmi Gerakan tersebut yang memperlihatkan proses pendemokrasian dalam era digital.²⁹ Parlimen Digital merupakan sebuah platform simulasi Parlimen Belia secara maya yang pertama di Malaysia untuk kegunaan golongan muda dalam meneroka kefahaman, fungsi dan implikasi proses demokrasi berparlimen.

Persekitaran

Golongan muda adalah sangat sensitif kepada perubahan yang berlaku di persekitaran mereka dan sangat kritikal kepada dasar-dasar kerajaan yang tidak memberikan keuntungan kepada mereka. Golongan ini mampu menterjemah protes mereka terhadap kegagalan kerajaan dalam melaksanakan dasar, program yang bermanfaat dan memberi keuntungan kepada belia dalam bentuk pembuangan undi semasa pilihan raya. Oleh itu, usaha mendekati belia oleh kerajaan dalam perihwal proses demokrasi perlu dilakukan secara konsisten dan bukan hanya menjadi rutin apabila tibanya musim pilihan raya.³⁰

28 Suzalina, H. (2021, September 29). Pendaftaran Automatik, 5.8 Juta Individu Diminta Semak. *Berita Harian Online*. Available at: <https://www.bharian.com.my/berita/nasional/2021/09/870237/pendaftaran-automatik-58-juta-individu-diminta-semak>.

29 Alami, A. N., Luong, D. N. A., Prihatini, E., Ramadhani, E., Go, J. R. R., Hafidzah, N., & Atiyah, U. (2022). Democratization in the Digital Era: Experience from Southeast Asia. *Journal of ASEAN Studies*, 10(2), pp. 227–246. [Online] Available at: <https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v10i2.9361>.

30 Dollah, R., Sakke, N., Wan Hassan, W. S., Omar, M. A., & Jafar, A. (2018). Peranan Belia Dan Pru-14 Di Sabah: Kajian Kes Di P.188 Silam. *Jurnal Kinabalu*, p. 319. [Online] Available at: <https://doi.org/10.51200/ejk.vi.1654>.

Dalam kajian oleh Mohamad Razali & Ilham Hussin (2021)³¹ mendapati bahawa pengundi berumur 18 hingga 40 tahun menggunakan akhbar dalam talian untuk memperoleh berita dan maklumat politik dan mendapati bahawa hubungan yang signifikan antara penggunaan media baharu dan kawasan tempat tinggal mereka. Kajian ini membincangkan kesan penggunaan media baharu terhadap penyertaan politik, iaitu penglibatan belia terhadap aktiviti politik melalui medium baharu.³²

Selain itu, sistem pendidikan negara adalah yang terbaik dan perkara ini telah mempengaruhi cara pelajar berfikir secara kritis dan mempunyai hala tuju yang kuat. Oleh itu, pendedahan awal mengenai proses demokrasi negara melalui sistem pendidikan dapat memberikan manfaat kepada golongan berusia 18 tahun dalam memberikan pendapat dan membuat pilihan yang betul.³³

Ke arah pelaksanaan UNDI18

UNDI18 pada asalnya dicadangkan untuk dilaksanakan pada bulan Julai 2021 sebelum kemudiannya dicadangkan untuk dilaksanakan pada September 2022 meskipun Rang Undang-undang UNDI18 telah diluluskan. Penangguhan pelaksanaan UNDI18 pada Julai 2021 tersebut telah membawa kepada permohonan semakan kehakiman yang telah difailkan oleh sekumpulan belia di dua buah lokasi dan jurisdiksi yang berasingan iaitu di Mahkamah Tinggi Kuala Lumpur dan Mahkamah Tinggi Kuching. Semakan di mahkamah Kuching oleh pemohon-pemohon yang kesemuanya berumur dari 18 hingga 19 tahun, telah meminta pengisytiharan bahawa kelewatan menurunkan umur mengundi adalah tidak rasional dan tidak munasabah dan bahawa belia berumur 18 hingga 20 mempunyai hak untuk mengundi dalam pilihan raya yang akan diadakan dalam masa terdekat pada tahun tersebut. Pesuruhjaya Kehakiman di Mahkamah Tinggi Kuching pada 3 September 2021 kemudiannya telah mendapati bahawa kelewatan dalam pelaksanaan pindaan perlembagaan adalah sebagai “tidak rasional dan

31 Mohamad Razali, M., & Ilham Hussin, N. (2021). New media and political activities among Malay youth in Selangor. *EDUCATUM Journal of Social Sciences*, 7(1), pp. 45–54. [Online] Available at: <https://doi.org/10.37134/ejoss.vol7.1.5.2021>.

32 Ibid.

33 Othman, I. W., Ibrahim, M. A., & Esa, M. S. (2022). Democratization And Mature Elections: A Study Of Youth Political Participation In Voters 18 And Automatic Voter Registration. *International Journal of Law, Government and Communication*, 7(29), pp. 600–622. [Online] Available at: <https://doi.org/10.35631/ijlgc.729041>.

tidak munasabah” dan selanjutnya mengeluarkan perintah *mandamus* iaitu sebuah perintah oleh Mahkamah Tinggi yang menyuruh seseorang atau agensi menjalankan tugas untuk orang awam. Dalam hal ini, agensi tersebut merujuk Suruhanjaya Pilihan Raya.³⁴ Susulan itu, Kerajaan selanjutnya melaksanakan pindaan perlembagaan untuk menurunkan had umur minimum mengundi dan bertanding untuk pilihan raya ke Dewan Rakyat serta melaksanakan pendaftaran pemilih automatik pada 15 Disember 2021. Tindakan kerajaan dalam menyahut perintah mahkamah tersebut jelas menunjukkan keluruhan undang-undang yang terjunjung.

Bagi perkembangan di setiap negeri dalam negara pula, negeri terawal yang meminda Undang-undang Tubuh Kerajaan Negeri untuk menurunkan had umur mengundi kepada 18 tahun ialah Negeri Sabah iaitu pada 21 November 2019 manakala negeri terakhir yang meluluskan pindaan undang-undangnya bagi pelaksanaan Undi 18 ialah Negeri Johor. Dewan Undangan Negeri (DUN) Johor pada 6 Januari 2022 telah sebulat suara meluluskan pindaan Enakmen Undang-Undang Tubuh Kerajaan 1895 (Pindaan) 2021 bagi menurunkan kelayakan had usia calon bertanding pilihan raya, daripada 21 tahun kepada 18 tahun.

Cabaran pengundi muda Undi 18

Semakan dan penelitian terhadap literatur dengan carian kunci berkaitan “Undi 18”, “Undi18” ataupun “Undi+18” turut membincangkan bukan sahaja pelaksanaan Undi 18, malahan cabaran-cabaran yang wajar diketengahkan bagi menambah baik medium pelaksanaan Undi 18. Setelah tapisan literatur dilaksanakan terhadap kajian-kajian terdahulu (Azmir et al., 2020; Cheng & Welsh, 2021; Haiqal Moshidi et al., 2021; Ismayuddin & Awang Besar, 2022; Kaur & Puyok, 2021; Mohd Nizah & Abu Bakar, 2022; Saahar @ Saabar et al., 2022; Wan Abdul Gharpar Wan Rohila Ganti et al., 2021; M. L. Weiss, 2022; Zhang & Hutchinson, 2022), pengkaji mendapati beberapa cabaran yang boleh diketengahkan secara tematik dan akan dibincangkan dalam dapatan dan perbincangan. Sungguhpun literatur-literatur ini tidak secara spesifik menyebut cabaran-cabaran oleh pengundi muda dalam UNDI18, keseluruhan

34 Ling, S. (2021, September 3). Undi18: Kuching High Court Orders Federal Govt To Implement Lowering of Voting Age By Dec 31. *The Star Online*. Available at: <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2021/09/03/undi18-federal-govt-ordered-to-implement-lowering-of-voting-age-by-dec-31>.

kandungan literatur perlu ditekuni bagi membolehkan pengkaji memahami sudut cabaran dalam naratif dan deskriptif penulisan yang disampaikan.

UNDI18: Peluang golongan muda mengundi tapi bukan diundi

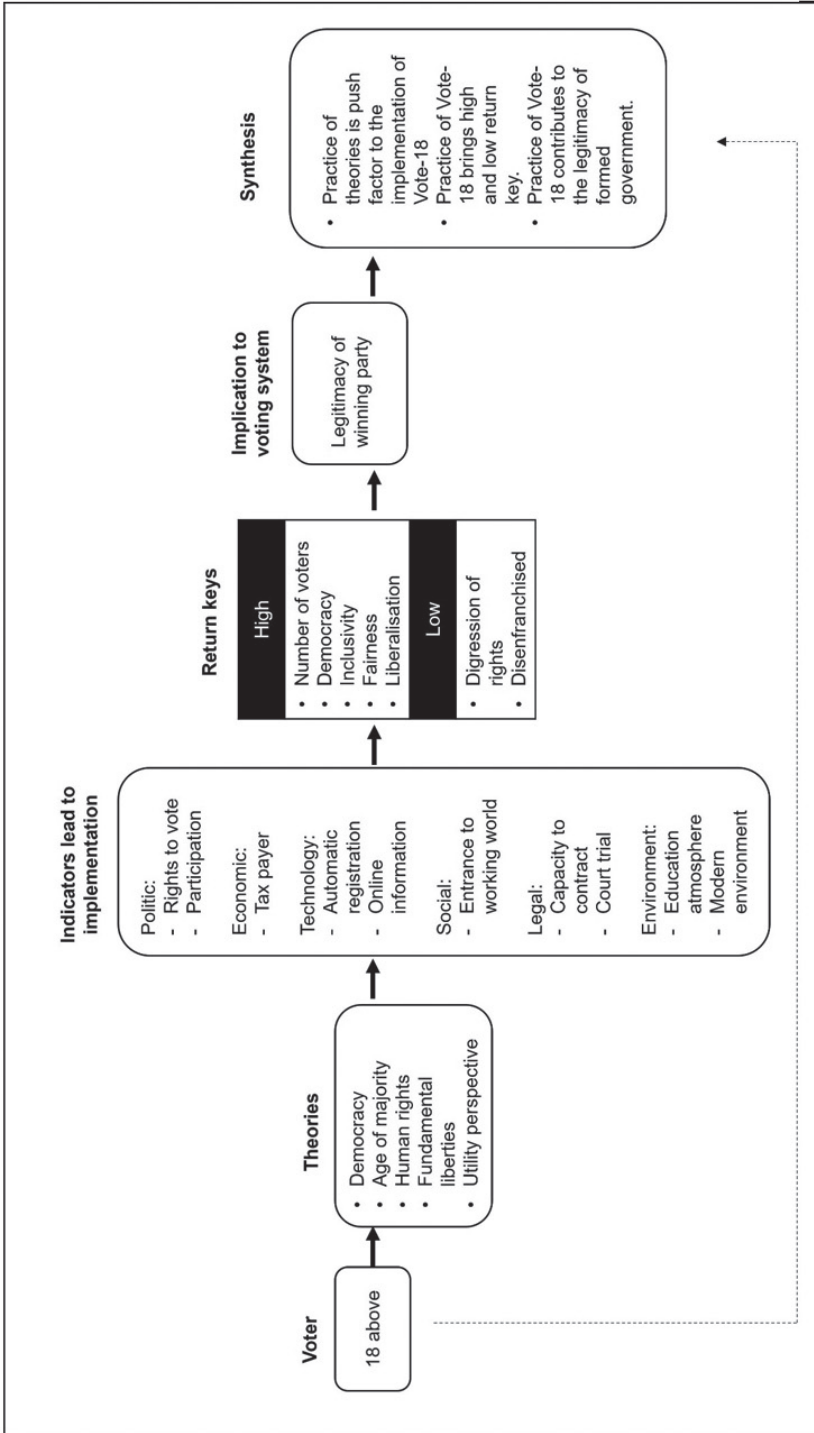
Bagi memperkasa golongan belia terutamanya seawal umur 18 tahun dalam penglibatan demokrasi negara, penyertaan politik golongan muda tidak harus terhad pada impak pengundian dalam pilihan raya sahaja, malah sepatutnya digalakkan untuk terlibat secara langsung dalam kegiatan politik, seperti menyertai organisasi politik, bahkan bertanding dalam pilihan raya. Pemerksaan penglibatan golongan ini dalam proses pembangunan demokrasi negara selain membuang undi akan memperkukuhkan pengalaman dan pemahaman mereka tentang perjalanan keseluruhan proses demokrasi, sekaligus melahirkan pemimpin muda yang berpotensi serta mampan.

Inisiatif UNDI18 setakat ini masih merupakan satu perjuangan yang muda dalam carta perjalanan politik golongan muda yang masih panjang. Pengukuran impak inisiatif UNDI18 sewajarnya tidak hanya diukur dalam penyertaan membuang undi dalam pilihan raya, tetapi juga penglibatan golongan tersebut sebagai perwakilan dalam Ahli Dewan Rakyat. Daripada sudut yang lain pula, pelaksanaan UNDI18 mempunyai paradoks dalam hal penglibatan golongan muda dalam politik. Umum menyedari bahawa penyertaan dalam politik memerlukan kos mahal seperti logistik ketika berkempen dari satu tempat ke satu tempat dan rata-rata golongan muda tidak mempunyai keupayaan kewangan yang besar bagi melaksanakan perkara tersebut. UNDI18 juga telah menjadikan kos pentadbiran yang perlu ditanggung berkaitan aktiviti politik meningkat kerana pertambahan jumlah pengundi di sesuatu kawasan melalui inisiatif pendaftaran pengundi secara automatik dan penurunan kelayakan umur mengundi.^{35,36}

35 Chai, J. (2022). The Paradox of Malaysia's Lowering of Voting Age-Expanded Enfranchisement Devalued by More Unequal Representation (Issue 63). <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/2022-63-the-paradox-of-malysias-lowering-of-voting-age-expanded-enfranchisement-devalued-by-more-unequal-representation-by-james-chai/>

36 Weiss, Meredith L (2022). RSIS Commentary. "Undi18: Youth Vote Only Part of Story." S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, NTU Singapore.

Rajah 2: Kerangka Konsep Pelaksanaan UNDI18 oleh Pengkaji



Dapatan kajian dan perbincangan

Selaras dengan pelaksanaan menurunkan had umur mengundi kepada 18 tahun oleh kerajaan Malaysia, hanya negara Singapura yang didapati masih mengekalkan had umur mengundi atas 18 tahun iaitu 21 tahun bagi kalangan negara-negara ASEAN sehingga tahun 2023. Walau bagaimanapun, dalam kalangan negara-negara ASEAN, Indonesia didapati melaksanakan had umur mengundi seawal 17 tahun.

Jadual 2: Had umur minimum mengundi serta punca kuasa had umur mengundi bagi negara-negara ASEAN

| Bil | Negara ASEAN | Had umur minimum mengundi | Punca kuasa had umur mengundi |
|-----|--------------|---------------------------|--|
| 1 | Indonesia | 17 Tahun | <i>1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia.</i> |
| 2 | Malaysia | 18 Tahun | Perkara 119, Perlembagaan Malaysia 1957 |
| 3 | Filipina | 18 Tahun | Perkara 5, <i>The 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines</i> |
| 4 | Singapura | 21 Tahun | <i>The Constitution of Republic of Singapore</i> |
| 5 | Thailand | 18 Tahun | <i>The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, Buddhist Era 2550 (2007)</i> |
| 6 | Brunei | 18 Tahun | Hanya wakil di peringkat kampung. Brunei ialah sebuah negara beraja mutlak di mana sultan menjalankan kuasa eksekutif. Tiada wakil rakyat di peringkat kebangsaan. |
| 7 | Cambodia | 18 Tahun | <i>Article 34 (2), Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia</i> |
| 8 | Laos | 18 Tahun | <i>Article 36, Lao People's Democratic Republic 1991 (rev. 2003)</i> |

| Bil | Negara ASEAN | Had umur minimum mengundi | Punca kuasa had umur mengundi |
|------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| 9 | Vietnam | 18 Tahun | <i>Article 54, Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam 1992</i> |

Menurut sumber daripada Worldatlas.com pada tahun 2017, umur minimum terendah mengundi ialah di Scotland, Jersey, Guernsey, Ecuador, Cuba, Brazil dan Austria iaitu 16 tahun, manakala umur minimum paling tinggi bagi membolehkan seseorang warganegara untuk melaksanakan tanggungjawab mengundi ialah di negara Arab Saudi iaitu 25 tahun.³⁷ Kebanyakan negara di dunia meletakkan had umur minimum mengundi kepada sekurang-kurangnya 18 tahun, ini menunjukkan langkah yang diambil oleh Kerajaan Malaysia adalah suatau pembangunan sistem demokrasi yang positif dan bukanlah satu langkah yang asing dalam aspek mengembangkan penglibatan warganegaranya dalam pembentukan kerajaan.

Malaysia menduduki tempat teratas dalam kalangan negara di Asia Tenggara dalam laporan demokrasi tahunan terbaru yang dikeluarkan oleh *The Economist Intelligence Unit* (EIU), dengan skor keseluruhan 7.24.³⁸ Laporan Indeks Demokrasi 2021 oleh Bahagian Penyelidikan dan Analisis *the Economist Group* ini pada tahun 2022 meletakkan Malaysia tertinggi dalam kalangan negara ASEAN iaitu lebih tinggi daripada Indonesia (6.71), Filipina (6.62), Singapura (6.23) dan Thailand (6.04).

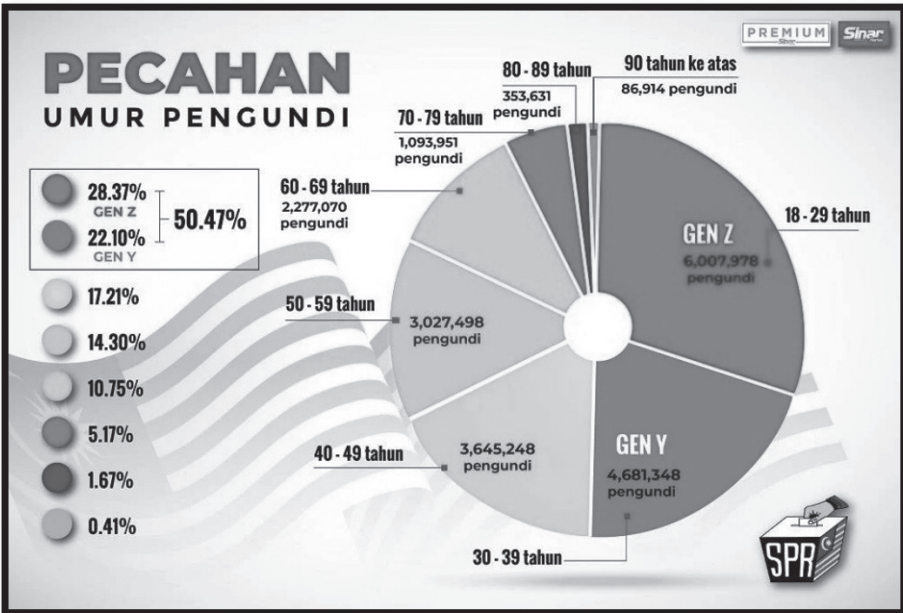
Berdasarkan Gambar 2 di bawah, menurut Sinar Harian,³⁹ sejumlah 6,007,978 orang warganegara berumur 18 hingga 29 tahun merupakan pengundi bagi Pilihan Raya Umum Ke-15 dan merupakan peratusan terbesar pengundi dikenali sebagai golongan pengundi Generasi Z atau 'Gen Z' manakala campuran pengundi daripada kelompok 'Gen Y' dan 'Gen Z' mendominasi keseluruhan jumlah pengundi di negara.

37 Omondi, S. (2017, September 7). Legal Voting Age by Country. Worldatlas.Com. Available at: <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/legal-voting-age-by-country.html>.

38 Bernama. (2022, February 10). Malaysia Top EIU's Democracy Index Among ASEAN Countries. Mida.Gov.My. Available at: <https://www.bernama.com/en/news.php?id=2050965>.

39 Mat Khazi, M. F. H. (2022, November 14). PRU15: Tsunami Pengundi Muda Tidak Akan Berlaku Besar-besaran. Sinar Harian Premium. Available at: <https://www.sinarharian.com.my/article/625572/berita/nasional/pru15-tsunami-pengundi-muda-tidak-akan-berlaku-besar-besaran>.

Gambar 2: Pecahan umur pengundi bagi Pilihan Raya Umum Ke-15. (Sumber: Sinar Harian)



Analisis ketersediaan pelaksanaan undi 18

Melalui **Rajah 2**, pelaksanaan UNDI18 didasari oleh beberapa teori sedia ada seperti demokrasi, umur majoriti, hak kemanusiaan, kebebasan asasi mahupun perspektif utiliti. Ini bukanlah satu cadangan yang timbul secara tiba-tiba hanya untuk melibatkan kumpulan yang dipinggirkan (*marginalize group*) dalam pembangunan demokrasi negara, sebaliknya satu inisiatif terpuji kerajaan dalam menzahirkan langkah untuk mengembalikan hak yang sepatutnya kepada golongan tertentu, dalam hal ini, hak warganegaranya yang telah mencecah 18 tahun untuk sama berpartisipasi dalam pembentukan kerajaan. Malahan penandaarasan di Jadual 2 turut menunjukkan bahawa sudah sampai masanya terdapat keperluan untuk melaksanakan reformasi undang-undang dalam penyertaan politik agar Malaysia tidak keterbelakang dalam perihal ini berbanding negara-negara lain di ASEAN.

Terdapat pelbagai aspek yang membawa kepada pelaksanaan UNDI18 di Malaysia yang boleh diukur melalui indikator kerangka P.E.S.T.L.E (*Politics, Economy, Social, Technology, Legal dan Environment*). Hak dan kebebasan untuk mengundi dan keterlibatan pengundi muda dalam

pilihan raya merupakan indikator politik yang diambil kira untuk pelaksanaan UNDI18. Indikator ekonomi dalam aspek mereka yang berumur 18 tahun turut dikenakan dan membayar cukai yang menjadi penyumbang kepada modal pembangunan negara turut menyumbang kepada keperluan meletakkan hak mereka untuk memilih wakil rakyat dan kerajaan. Keupayaan dan kesediaan digital (*digital capability and readiness*) oleh Suruhanjaya Pilihan Raya juga telah membolehkan negara bersiap siaga untuk melicinkan pendaftaran pengundi bagi kemasukan kumpulan baharu iaitu mereka yang berumur 18 hingga 21 tahun. Tambahan pula era digital telah memudahkan akses capaian maklumat dan informasi yang diperlukan oleh golongan ini untuk memahami proses dan prosedur sebagai pengundi, maklumat berkaitan calon serta parti politik. Selain itu, Gerakan UNDI18 juga telah melaksanakan inisiatif Parlimen Digital untuk mewujudkan rangka kerja Parlimen bersidang secara maya. Parlimen Digital merupakan sesi Parlimen maya pertama di dunia yang dipimpin oleh belia.

Peruntukan sejumlah undang-undang yang membolehkan mereka yang berumur 18 tahun untuk menceburi hal-hal berkaitan norma sosial menunjukkan keupayaan yang diiktiraf oleh perundangan dalam aspek kapasiti pembuatan keputusan. Malahan pelaksanaan prosedur perundangan secara bukan tatakelola kanak-kanak terhadap pesalah yang berumur 18 tahun wajar mengangkat kematangan golongan ini dalam berfikir mengenai implikasi kebaikan dan keburukan terhadap kesan tindak-tanduk mereka. Sehubungan itu, golongan ini perlu, diraikan hak sama rata dalam kebolehan untuk turut terlibat dalam proses pembangunan demokrasi negara melalui pembuangan undi ketika pilihan raya.

Perkembangan persekitaran turut menjadi indikator pelaksanaan UNDI18, di mana pada hari ini, ilmu dan pendidikan dapat diperoleh daripada pelbagai kaedah, medium dan sumber. Pendidikan politik masih lagi menjadi isu besar kepada pengundi muda. Rata-rata mereka mengalami jurang pendidikan politik dan banyak bergantung kepada propaganda dan manipulasi media sosial untuk mereka mendapatkan infomasi sebelum mengundi.

Pendidikan secara konvensional pula seperti perbincangan antara ahli keluarga serta rakan taulan serta penyampaian maklumat melalui dunia digital, wadah akhbar kontemporari dan sebagainya telah memberikan pelbagai medium maklumat kepada segenap lapisan masyarakat untuk mendapatkan input-input yang diperlukan termasuklah perihal politik, demokrasi dan pilihan raya.

Pelaksanaan UNDI18 secara jelasnya telah memberi peningkatan dan penurunan kepada kunci-kunci tertentu seperti dalam **Rajah 2**. UNDI18 bukan sekadar meningkatkan jumlah pengundi dan peratusan pemilihan, malah merupakan satu manifestasi perkembangan demokrasi negara, menggalakkan inklusiviti pada warganegaraanya, meningkatkan keadilan pada lapisan masyarakat, meningkatkan autonomi rakyat dan liberalisasi dalam aspek keterlibatan warga malah mengurangkan pengabaian dan penindasan hak serta menjumudkan retorik kehilangan hak bagi golongan terpinggir.

Selanjutnya, peningkatan keterlibatan warganegara sebagai pengundi telah meningkatkan jumlah mengundi yang natijahnya akan menambah keabsahan kepada parti yang menang. Semakin tinggi jumlah pengundi yang turun padang dan melaksanakan tanggungjawab mereka untuk mengundi, maka semakin jelas sokongan terhadap kepimpinan yang terpilih. Peratusan keyakinan rakyat dalam tampuk kepimpinan sesungguhnya amat penting dalam mengungkap makna kestabilan politik.

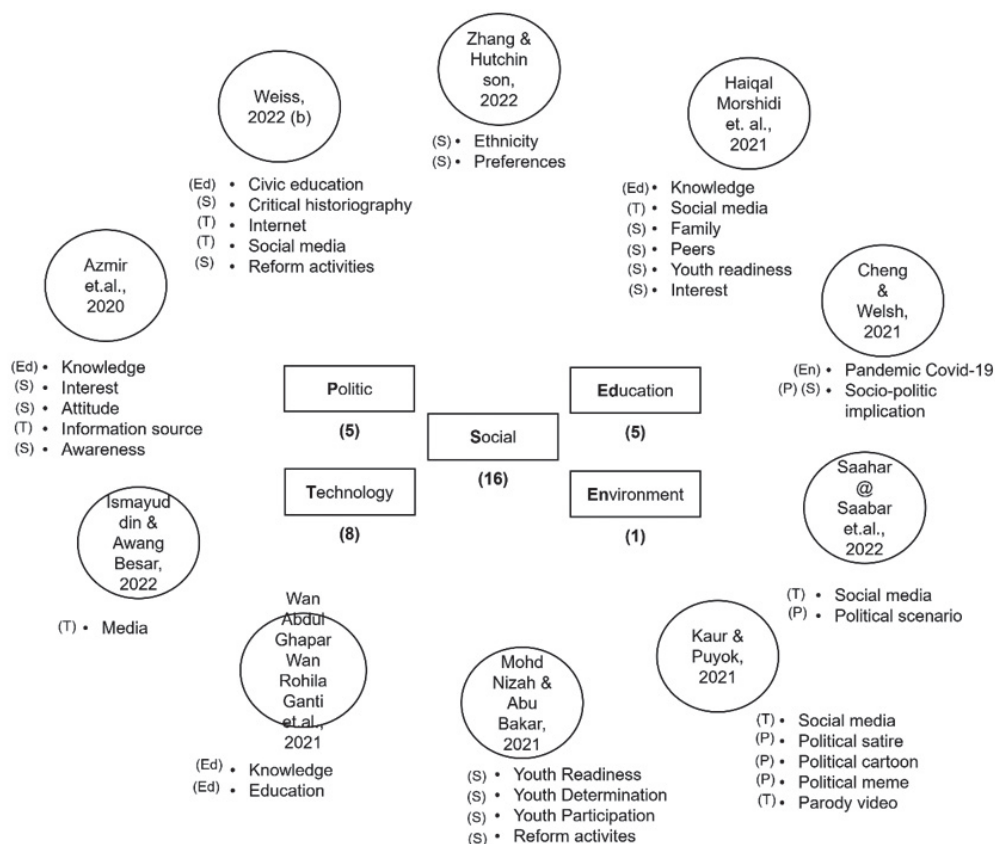
Pengkaji dapat menyimpulkan tiga sintesis terhadap pelaksanaan UNDI18 iaitu:

- i. Teori-teori sedia ada pada hari ini menyokong kepada pelaksanaan UNDI18;
- ii. Pelaksanaan UNDI18 telah memberikan peningkatan dan penurunan kepada kunci-kunci tertentu; dan
- iii. Pelaksanaan UNDI18 menyumbang kepada keabsahan kerajaan yang dibentuk.

Analisis cabaran-cabaran Undi 18

Berdasarkan penelitian daripada kajian literatur sedia ada sehingga tahun 2022 yang memfokuskan perbincangan mengenai UNDI18, pengkaji mendapati bahawa terdapat beberapa tema cabaran yang boleh dibangunkan seperti berikut:

Rajah 3: Cabaran-cabaran pelaksanaan Undi 18 di Malaysia



Berdasarkan literatur-literatur yang diteliti seperti dalam **Rajah 3**, terdapat lima tema besar cabaran-cabaran Undi 18 di Malaysia iaitu *Politics*, *Technology*, *Social*, *Education* dan *Environment*, yang dibangunkan daripada *coding* literatur berkenaan. Daripada tema-tema ini, tema *social* mempunyai kekerapan (*frequency*) yang paling tinggi, manakala tema *environment* memiliki kekerapan yang paling rendah. Perkara ini menunjukkan cabaran sosial adalah cabaran utama yang perlu diberi perhatian oleh pihak berkepentingan terhadap pengundi muda pada masa akan datang.

Cabaran-cabaran di bawah tema sosial termasuklah elemen-elemen seperti etnik, keutamaan pengundi, keluarga dan rakan taulan, kesediaan, pilihan, impak sosiopolitik, kesungguhan, keterlibatan, aktiviti reformasi, sikap, kesedaran serta sejarah latar belakang pengundi muda. Haiqal

Moshidi et al., (2021)⁴⁰ berpendapat, ahli keluarga merupakan unit paling dekat dalam pengenalan orang muda kepada idea dan hal berkaitan dunia politik. Pendekatan secara konvensional ini seperti perbualan tidak formal atau santai dalam kalangan keluarga boleh bermula seawal umur yang muda. Walau bagaimanapun, tidak semua keluarga menggunakan pendekatan konvensional ini untuk membicarakan hal-hal berkaitan politik secara terbuka. Memetik pendapat daripada Mallow Muzaffar Syah (2021b)⁴¹ pula, pengenalan hal-hal berkaitan politik kepada kanak-kanak boleh membawa kepada satu bentuk indoktrinasi awalan politik dan berpendapat bahawa kanak-kanak perlu dilindungi daripada perkara ini. Sekiranya pendapat Mallow Muzaffar Syah (2021b) terpakai, kanak-kanak tidak boleh terdedah kepada politik sebelum berumur 18 tahun dan terus perlu mengundi setelah mencecah 18 tahun. Perkara ini akan mewujudkan polemik kewujudan masa yang sesuai untuk memberikan pendedahan proses demokrasi kepada golongan muda.

Satu dasar yang jelas mengenai keterlibatan orang muda dalam perkara berkaitan politik perlu dibincangkan dengan jelas berkaitan kesesuaian umur, kandungan yang wajar diketengahkan serta jenis medium pengantaraan. Garapan daripada pendidikan dan pengetahuan yang jelas dijangka dapat membantu dalam menyelesaikan dilema tema sosial yang turut akan dihadapi oleh pengundi muda akan datang sekiranya masih belum ditangani dengan baik. Medium penyertaan secara bukan konvensional boleh diketengahkan seperti yang disarankan dalam kajian Wan Abdul Ghapar Wan Rohila Ganti et al., (2021)⁴² yang mengetengahkan unsur-unsur interaktif seperti 'Kahoot!', 'Powtoon' dan 'Toonly' dalam pengenalan kepada Modul Undi18@School kepada para pelajar Tingkatan Enam Atas.

40 Haiqal Moshidi, M., Syifaa, N., Fasiah, F., Latif, A., Chai, & Yi, S. (2021). Youth Perceptions Towards Readiness Of Youth In Kuching, Malaysia: Are They Ready To Vote? e-Proceeding 8th International Conference On Public Policy And Social Science (ICoPS) 2021, 569–574. Available at: <https://ir.uitm.edu.my/id/eprint/55224/1/55224.pdf>.

41 Mallow Muzaffar Syah. (2021b, November 2). Lecturer Welcomes Undi18, Caution Against Political Indoctrination of Children. Borneo Post, 5. Available at: <https://www.pressreader.com/malaysia/the-borneo-post/20211102/281689733033694>.

42 Wan Abdul Ghapar Wan Rohila Ganti, Che Mohd. Razali Che Hamdan, Ahmad Muhammad Fazil, & Abdul Latip Abdul Rahman. (2021). Pembentukan Modul Undi18@School untuk Pendidikan Kenegaraan dan Demokrasi kepada Belia 18-21 Tahun. I-Spike 2021 International Exhibition & Symposium E-Proceedings, 28–32. Available at: <https://ispike2021.uitm.edu.my/>.

Selanjutnya, *coding-coding* cabaran daripada literatur tersebut dapat dibahagikan kepada dua kelompok faktor iaitu faktor dalaman pengundi dan faktor luaran pengundi seperti berikut:

Jadual 3: Faktor dalaman pengundi dan faktor luar pengundi yang menyumbang kepada cabaran-cabaran UNDI18

| Faktor dalaman pengundi | Faktor luaran pengundi |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>Ethnicity</i> | <i>Social Media</i> |
| <i>Preferences</i> | <i>Family</i> |
| <i>Knowledge</i> | <i>Peers</i> |
| <i>Youth readiness</i> | <i>Pandemic Covid-19</i> |
| <i>Interest</i> | <i>Socio-political implication</i> |
| <i>Youth Determination</i> | <i>Political scenario</i> |
| <i>Youth Participation</i> | <i>Political satire</i> |
| <i>Critical historiography</i> | <i>Political cartoon</i> |
| <i>Attitude</i> | <i>Political meme</i> |
| <i>Awareness</i> | <i>Parody video</i> |
| | <i>Reform activities</i> |
| | <i>Education</i> |
| | <i>Media</i> |
| | <i>Information source</i> |
| | <i>Internet</i> |

Daripada **Jadual 3**, faktor luaran pengundi telah mendominasi cabaran pengundi muda. Dalam kajian-kajian berkaitan pembuatan keputusan, dominasi sama ada daripada faktor dalaman dan luaran adalah sesuatu yang subjektif. Faktor ini boleh dipengaruhi oleh bidang atau hala tuju organisasi, tampuk kepimpinan dan sebagainya. Menurut David, (2011)⁴³ dalam teori membuat keputusan, faktor luaran adalah lebih penting daripada faktor dalaman sebagai contoh, dalam pendekatan organisasi industri, faktor luaran (industri) adalah lebih penting daripada faktor dalaman dalam mencapai kelebihan daya saing industri. Manakala

43 David, F. R. (2011). *Strategic Management: Concepts and Cases*. PEARSON. [Online] Available at: https://pracownik.kul.pl/files/12439/public/3_David.pdf.

dalam Islami et al., (2018),⁴⁴ kajian tersebut mendapati bahawa faktor dalaman, perniagaan mempunyai kesan positif yang lebih besar terhadap prestasi firma berbanding faktor industri.

Walau bagaimanapun, dalam konteks pengundi muda, faktor luaran pengundi muda merupakan satu cabaran besar kepada semua pihak yang berkepentingan dalam menyuntik maklumat kepada pengundi muda, kerana pada akhirnya, secara jelas dan nyata, pengundi itu sendiri menjadi penentu besar dalam keputusan pilihan raya. Perkara ini juga perlu penelitian lanjut daripada sudut '*phenomenology methodology*' dalam memahami sejauh mana pengaruh nilai (*value*) dan pengalaman (*experience*) mempengaruhi pengundi muda dalam membuat keputusan mengundi.

Antara contoh lain perkaitan faktor dalaman pengundi dengan faktor luaran pengundi ialah *voter preferences* dan *demography*. Penganalisis politik turut melihat perubahan dengan pengundi muda UNDI18, sokongan akan ditunjukkan bukan untuk parti pilihan tetapi untuk calon individu yang bertanding di kawasan tertentu sebaliknya seperti calon yang peka dan sensitif terhadap isu-isu golongan muda seperti bantuan pendidikan, pekerjaan belia, rumah pertama, dan dasar lain yang melibatkan kepentingan golongan muda.⁴⁵

Dalam *coding-coding* cabaran yang dikumpul, terdapat *coding* (pengekodan) yang mempunyai pengulangan atau diulang dalam beberapa penulisan artikel iaitu media sosial. Cabaran media sosial berlaku apabila terdapat hidangan dan pertembungan maklumat berkaitan politik sama ada sahih ataupun palsu. Perkara ini perlu diambil perhatian bagi mengelakkan fenomena kecelaruan maklumat. Mengikut Intyaswati et al., (2021)⁴⁶ terdapat kepentingan yang signifikan hubungan antara media sosial sebagai sumber maklumat politik utama untuk membangunkan pengetahuan politik dalam kalangan pengundi

44 Islami, X. A., Mulloli, A. S., & Mustafa, N. (2018). 'The Effect of Industrial and Internal Factors to the Firm's Performance.' *Acta Universitatis Danubius*, 15(5), 154-166. [Online] Available at: <https://journals.univ-danubius.ro/index.php/oeconomica/article/view/4895/5336>.

45 Qistina, T. (2021). 'Undi18 youth votes should be heard, say experts.' *Institute of Strategic & International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.isis.org.my/2021/08/23/undi18-youth-votes-should-be-heard-say-experts/>.

46 Intyaswati, D., Maryani, E., Sugiana, D., & Venus, A. (2021). 'Using media for voting decision among first-time voter college students in West Java, Indonesia.' *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 10(1), 327-339. [Online] Available at: <https://doi.org/10.36941/ajis-2021-0028>.

muda baharu. Saahar @ Saabar et al., (2022)⁴⁷ pula mengesahkan bahawa *political chaos* dan media sosial telah mempengaruhi niat dan tingkah laku pengundi. Kaur & Puyok (2021)⁴⁸ menyatakan bahawa kesan media boleh mempengaruhi keputusan khalayak atau membuat mereka membentuk pertimbangan tentang kumpulan atau idea atau konsep tertentu yang ditunjukkan pada skrin.

Justeru, suatu langkah perlu diambil terhadap peningkatan *trend* aktiviti politik dalam talian kerana *trend* ini menarik minat golongan pengundi muda untuk cakna isu termasuk sosioekonomi dan politik seterusnya boleh mempengaruhi keputusan pengundian pengundi muda. Walau bagaimanapun, media sosial boleh memainkan peranan untuk menyebarkan maklumat yang diperlukan oleh pengundi muda melalui akaun yang sah seperti akaun milik kerajaan. Selain itu, platform media sosial wajar memberikan simulasi pilihan raya yang menyeluruh bermula bermula dengan pengundian, kemenangan calon-calon, pembentukan kerajaan dan pemilihan ketua kerajaan bagi mengelakkan salah faham di kalangan pengundi muda berkaitan perjalanan sistem demokrasi dalam memilih pemerintah.

Menurut Ismayuddin & Awang Besar (2022)⁴⁹ 38 peratus responden mereka telah menyatakan bahawa media merupakan faktor yang mempengaruhi pandangan manakala 92 peratus responden bersetuju bahawa penggunaan media sosial seperti Whatsapp, Facebook dan lain-lain telah menarik minat untuk cakna berkaitan isu sosioekonomi dan politik. Sementara itu, 78 peratus respondennya dalam kajian mereka pula bersetuju bahawa pandangan mereka terhadap isu sosioekonomi dan politik memberi pengaruh dalam pilihan politik mereka. Ini jelas menunjukkan bahawa *information source* (faktor luaran pengundi) mempunyai kaitan dengan *voter preferences* (faktor dalaman pengundi). Selain itu, 98 peratus responden juga bersetuju bahawa pihak berkuasa

47 Saahar @ Saabar, S., Othman, M. K., & Faris Anuar, A. D. (2022). 'Kesan Senario Politik Ke Atas Tingkah Laku dan Niat Pengundi PRN Johor 2022.' *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (MJSSH)*, 7(5), e001479. [Online] Available at: <https://doi.org/10.47405/mjssh.v7i5.1479>.

48 Kaur, H., & Puyok, A. (2021). 'Political Satire and Its Influence on the Youth Political Perception.' *Trends in Undergraduate Research*, 4(2), h18-28. [Online] Available at: <https://doi.org/10.33736/tur.4096.2021>.

49 Ismayuddin, B. F., & Awang Besar, J. (2022). 'Pandangan Belia Terhadap Isu Sosioekonomi dan Politik di Kawasan DUN Peramu Jaya, Pekan, Pahang.' *Jurnal Wacana Sarjana*, 6(4), 1–20. [Online] Available at: <https://spaj.ukm.my/jws/index.php/jws/article/view/491>.

wajar mengambil tindakan tegas terhadap penyebar maklumat palsu atau yang bertujuan menghina pihak lain. Sebuah kajian di Filipina⁵⁰ mendapati bahawa pengundi muda yang mempunyai keupayaan mengenal pasti berita palsu mempunyai keyakinan untuk hadir membuang undi ketika pilihan raya, manakala pengundi muda yang tidak mempunyai keupayaan seperti itu akan merasa ‘keliru’ dan menjadi kurang motivasi untuk membuang undi.

Perjuangan memperkasakan integriti pilihan raya dengan membendung kegiatan sebaran maklumat politik palsu telah menjadi agenda utama banyak negara lain,^{51,52,53} tetapi usaha ini kurang terlihat di Malaysia. Agenda ini penting bagi memastikan wakil rakyat yang menang pilihan raya adalah terpilih atas dasar merit dan kualiti, dan bukannya disebabkan oleh informasi yang disampaikan melalui penyebaran berita palsu. Hal ini perlu diambil kira dan ditangani secara serius bagi pilihan raya akan datang memandangkan UNDI18 telah membawa masuk 5.8 juta pengundi kali pertama, dengan 1.2 juta merupakan pengundi 18 hingga 20 tahun. Statistik tahun 2022 turut menunjukkan bahawa kadar capaian jalur lebar negara adalah pada 89.6% manakala sebanyak 43.3% populasi Malaysia berusia 18 hingga 24 tahun merupakan pengguna aktif internet. Capaian jalur lebar dan penggunaan internet telah menjadi salah satu platform meraih undi yang penting serta boleh mempengaruhi keputusan pilihan raya. Kohort pengundi yang aktif melayari internet ini boleh dilihat sebagai antara sasaran kempen dalam talian oleh parti politik melalui pelbagai platform media social.⁵⁴ Aktiviti-aktiviti kempen

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- 50 Mendoza, G. A., Ballar, K. J., Yap, J., & Imelda, D. (2022). ‘Misinformed or Overconfident? Fake News and Youth Voting Likelihood in the Philippines.’ In *SSRN Electronic Journal* (Issue June 2023). [Online] Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4064584>.
- 51 Steinfeld, N. (2022). ‘The disinformation warfare: how users use every means possible in the political battlefield on social media.’ *Emerald Insight*, 46(7), 1313–1334. [Online] Available at: <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/OIR-05-2020-0197/full/html>.
- 52 Chadwick, A., & Vaccari, C. (2019). ‘News sharing on UK social media: misinformation, disinformation, and correction.’ [Online] Available at: https://repository.lboro.ac.uk/articles/report/News_sharing_on_UK_social_media_misinformation_disinformation_and_correction/9471269.
- 53 Shu, K., Bhattacharjee, A., Alatawi, F., Nazer, T. H., Ding, K., Karami, M., & Liu, H. (2020). ‘Combating disinformation in a social media age.’ *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Data Mining and Knowledge Discovery*, 10(6). [Online] Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1002/widm.1385>.
- 54 Neelapaichit, K. A. (2022). ‘Youth and Disinformation in Malaysia: Strengthening Electoral Integrity.’ [Online] Available at: <https://asiacentre.org/wp-content/uploads/Youth-and-Disinformation-in-Malaysia-Strengthening-Electoral-Integrity-1.pdf>.

yang 'tidak sihat' seperti mempunyai elemen berita palsu dan fitnah, serta termasuklah unsur 'pembunuhan karekter' figura-figura politik tertentu perlu dihentikan bagi meraih proses pembangunan demokrasi yang lebih matang, sihat dan meyakinkan.

PASCA pelaksanaan UNDI18 dan perbincangan dalam parlimen Malaysia

Perbincangan mengenai UNDI18 direkodkan dalam penyataan rasmi Dewan Rakyat dan Dewan Negara yang dapat diakses melalui laman web rasmi parlimen Malaysia yang menyimpan dokumen perbahasan dewan melalui tab 'Penyata Rasmi' kedua-dua dewan adalah seperti berikut:

1. 36 carian dalam penyata rasmi Dewan Rakyat bermula 5 November 2019 sehingga 18.3.2024; dan
2. 6 carian dalam penyata rasmi Dewan Negara bermula 24 Julai 2019 sehingga 9.8.2022.

Menurut kenyataan penyata rasmi Dewan Rakyat bertarikh 14 Februari 2023 yang memetik laporan akhbar '*The Edge*' bertarikh 24 Oktober 2022, jumlah mereka yang layak mengundi bagi pilihan raya terakhir di negara ini telah mengalami peningkatan sebanyak 6.32 juta pengundi, 1.47 juta daripadanya berumur 18 hingga 20 tahun.⁵⁵ Seperti dalam perbincangan terdahulu, pilihan raya Negeri Johor pada 9 Mac 2022 merupakan medan pengalaman pertama bagi pelaksanaan UNDI18 yang telah diluluskan oleh Parlimen Malaysia. Walau bagaimanapun, mengikut rekod penyata rasmi Dewan Negara bertarikh 31 Mac 2022, peratus keluar mengundi adalah masih rendah bagi keseluruhan negeri tersebut iaitu hanya 54.92%. Antara isu peratus keluar mengundi yang rendah di sebalik pelaksanaan UNDI18 ini ialah ada di kalangan rakyat yang tidak sedar bahawa mereka telah didaftarkan layak mengundi secara automatic.⁵⁶

Analisis perbincangan bagi pasca pelaksanaan pertama UNDI18 yang substantif di Parlimen bermula pada 9 Mac 2022 hanya ditemui dalam penyata rasmi Dewan Rakyat seperti berikut:

55 Penyata Rasmi Dewan Rakyat (14 Februari 2023).

56 Penyata Rasmi Dewan Negara (31 Mac 2022).

Jadual 4: Perbincangan mengenai PASCA pelaksanaan pertama UNDI18 di Parlimen Malaysia

| Tarikh penyata rasmi | Kenyataan dalam dewan |
|----------------------|--|
| DR. 18.3.2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kita telah memberikan kepercayaan kepada anak muda untuk menentukan masa depan negara. • Undi18 itu harus datang dengan segala pakej yang perlu kita sempurna. Contohnya, kita perlu ada platform-platform, pakej-pakej yang memberikan pencerahan, umpamanya dalam kurikulumkah ataupun dalam platformplatform yang lain, bagi pendedahan politik awal kepada Undi18, golongan umur yang 18 dan juga perlu memperbanyakkan lagi aktiviti-aktiviti yang memberikan pencerahan kepada mereka. • Kita ada Undi18, kesemua ini harus kita memberikan penghargaan kepada perjuangan masyarakat sivil dan perubahan landskap politik dalam negara kita dan akhirnya menyumbangkan kepada segala hak asasi dan kebebasan yang ada pada kita pada hari ini. |
| DR. 28.11.2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kita dapat melahirkan sebuah generasi muda yang bersahsiah dan jati diri yang lebih baik kerana kita sekarang ini mengimplementasikan Undi18 supaya kita mempunyai sebuah negara Malaysia yang lebih baik, bukan generasi yang rosak, yang cuba dibentuk sekarang ini. |
| DR. 21.11.2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seterusnya, saya ingin menyentuh mengenai kekusaran pemahaman politik dalam kalangan belia. Kita lihat bahawa sekarang kita telah mengimplementasikan Undi18 dan kita mengimplementasikan Undi18 dalam keadaan kita tidak menyediakan satu platform yang baik. Maka, dengan adanya platform-platform yang baru yang diperkenalkan kementerian, diharapkan supaya anak-anak belia lebih cakna tentang politik. Bukan semata-mata politik kepartian, tetapi politik untuk membangun negara. |

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| <p>DR. 23.10.2023</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Yang pertama ialah kurikulum sejarah yang ada sekarang ini di-review antara lain selepas tahun 2000, yakni selepas siri, beberapa siri seminar dan program-program yang pada masa itu berkaitan dengan patriotisme. Saya tahu sebab saya antara penganjurnya. Saya cadangkan kurikulum sejarah itu kena review balikkah. Sebab itu dah lama dan review balik kerana untuk bersesuaian dengan Undi18.</i> • <i>Namun begitu, saya ucapkan- kerana proses ataupun kelulusan Undi18 ini telah memberikan pelbagai reaksi dan juga manfaat kepada proses pengundian dan juga kepada proses kebebasan hak memilih seawal 18 tahun. Yang penting kepada kita ialah pengundi muda tidak boleh kita hendak tentukan mengundi di satu-satu lokaliti tertentu. Ia mengikut keputusan ataupun mengikut IC alamat kad pengenalan yang termaktub, dan juga yang telah didaftarkan.</i> |
| <p>DR.30.03.2023</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Seterusnya, Yang Berhormat Kuala Selangor telah pun membangunkan isu berkenaan dengan pendidikan Undi18. Dalam hal ini, Akademi Pilihan Raya mengambil inisiatif untuk memberikan pendidikan pengundi kepada pengundi muda. Ini adalah satu inisiatif yang telah dimulakan oleh akademi tersebut.</i> • <i>Sedikit sahaja. Sangat mustahak untuk kita memberikan pelaksanaan yang segera atas pencerahan dan pendidikan politik dan demokrasi pada Undi18 ini untuk memaknakan penglibatan mereka kerana berdepan dengan PRN, enam buah negeri dan apa yang telah kita saksikan dalam PRU15 yang lalu. Terima kasih.</i> |
| <p>DR.20.03.2023</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Undi 18 ini sudah jadi satu main topic. Walaupun selepas PRU, sekarang ini kita berhadapan pula dengan pilihan raya negeri. Maka semua orang masih membincangkan soal partisipasi golongan belia dan juga literasi politik dalam golongan yang — terutama sekali bakal menjadi pengundi kali pertama beberapa bulan daripada sekarang. We are racing against time. Saya yakin dan KBS sentiasa terbuka daripada segi melibaturuskan semua pihak yang berkepentingan, pemegang-pemegang taruh dalam sektor belia ini.</i> |

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| DR.14.03.2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empat tahun setelah pindaan Perlembagaan berkenaan Undi18 dilaksanakan. Kerajaan perlu lebih fokus dalam proses memberikan pendedahan pendidikan demokrasi kepada pengundi baharu ini agar mereka bersedia dan menjadi pengundi yang bermaklumat dalam membuat keputusan serta pertimbangan. Tuan Pengerusi, saya melihat bahawa Undi 18 ini amat penting dan kita lihat bagaimana anak muda ketika ingin mengundi, tidak semata-mata hanya memangkah di kertas tetapi anak muda ini perlu benar-benar faham bahawa yang mereka menentukan itu adalah masa hadapan negara Malaysia. Selain anak-anak muda 18 tahun sehingga 21 tahun, bagi saya, pendidikan demokrasi juga harus diberikan kepada pengundi baharu tanpa mengira umur. |
| DR.13.03.2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pembangunan Suruhanjaya Pilihan Raya (SPR). PRU-15 yang lepas merupakan sebuah hasil daripada pelaksanaan Undi18 yang diluluskan oleh Parlimen sebelum ini. Untuk PRN akan datang, SPR menghadapi cabaran yang agak besar untuk memastikan statistik pengundi sekurang-kurangnya tidak berkurang daripada yang lalu. • Keduanya, saya melihat fungsi di bawah Jabatan Komunikasi JKOM ini yang pertama membina komuniti berbudaya ilmu dengan memperkasakan Pendidikan perlembagaan, pendidikan politik untuk belia Undi18 dan apresiasi nilai estetika seni budaya. • Saya hendak sentuh pendidikan politik untuk Undi18 itu. Tidakkah ini bertindan dengan peranan yang dimainkan oleh akademi SPR? Sebaiknya, lebih baik peruntukan itu diberikan kepada pihak SPR memandangkan dalam Butiran T.7 Suruhanjaya Pilihan Raya Malaysia dan saya minta pihak kerajaan memberikan tambahan kepada Akademi Pilihan Raya ini memandangkan akademi ini akan memberikan pendidikan kepada masyarakat terutama sekali untuk pelajar-pelajar sekolah dan juga pelajar-pelajar universiti serta memberi pendidikan mengenai pilihan raya kepada masyarakat untuk jangka masa panjang dan sebaiknya bajet itu dapat diperincikan. • Di negara ini juga terdapat beberapa langkah yang bersifat inovatif, dengan izin, seperti Undi18 dan juga automatic registration, dengan izin Tuan Pengerusi, yang merupakan langkah-langkah progresif dalam isu ini. |

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|----------------------|---|
| DR.01.03.2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walaupun jumlah pengundi keluar mengundi pada PRU Ke-15 adalah lebih tinggi berbanding PRU sebelumnya tetapi denominator yang digunakan iaitu jumlah pemilih pendaftar juga adalah tinggi kesan daripada pelaksanaan Undi18 dan pendaftaran pemilih secara automatik. Tiada maklumat peratus keluar mengundi mengikut umur pengundi pada PRU Ke-15. SPR hanya melaporkan peratus keluar mengundi keseluruhan di peringkat nasional, negeri atau mengikut bahagian pilihan raya terlibat sahaja. |
| DR.22.02.2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minta Menteri Pendidikan menyatakan tahap kesediaan kementerian untuk memperkenalkan subjek pilihan raya atau memasukkan elemen Undi18 dalam mata pelajaran di peringkat sekolah menengah seperti yang dituntut oleh Kesatuan Perkhidmatan Perguruan Kebangsaan Malaysia (NUTP). Untuk makluman Ahli Yang Berhormat, kandungan yang berkaitan pilihan raya telah dimasukkan secara khusus dalam mata pelajaran Sejarah dan elemen berkaitan pilihan raya dilaksanakan dalam Pendidikan Sivik serta aktiviti kokurikulum. |
| DR.14.02.2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuan Yang di-Pertua, memberi respons kepada pandangan Yang Berhormat Kapar berkaitan dengan Undi18 sebentar tadi, kita sebenarnya tidaklah menolak ataupun menidakkan kematangan Undi18, tetapi pada pandangan sayalah secara peribadi, kita seharusnya memberikan pendidikan, literasi dan kesedaran sebelum melaksanakan ataupun memperbaiki apa yang telah berlaku dalam PRU-15 baru-baru ini. • Saya dalam kesempatan ini memohon supaya Kementerian Pendidikan, Kementerian Pendidikan Tinggi dan Kementerian Belia dan Sukan untuk bekerjasama supaya pengetahuan literasi politik dan kenegaraan dapat diterapkan dalam kalangan pengundi muda kita. Kalau kita masih memiliki semangat Biro Tatanegara (BTN) kalau masih ingat dan juga Program Latihan Khidmat Negara (PLKN) ataupun program-program seumpamanya, saya percaya pendedahan terhadap Undi18 ini dapat dijelaskan dengan lebih baik. |

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| <p>DR.18.07.2022</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Saya hendak cadangkan terutamanya untuk anak muda di Sabah dan Sarawak. Kalau Undi18, banyak mereka kena keluar dari negeri mereka sendiri untuk belajar di kolej-kolej, universiti, mungkin di Semenanjung Malaysia seperti di Kuala Lumpur, Penang dan sebagainya. Apakah pendirian kerajaan?</i> • <i>Terima kasih Yang Berhormat. Soalan yang baik. Sebenarnya saya sendiri yang membangkitkan soalan ini kepada Tuan Yang di-Pertua semasa Tuan Yang di-Pertua menjadi Pengerusi SPR dahulu, semasa satu libat urus. Adalah penting pihak SPR untuk memikirkan bahawa postal voting, voting electronic dan semua sekali demikian itu ataupun mengundi contohnya ramai orang daripada Sarawak dan Sabah yang berada di Semenanjung dan orang Semenanjung berada di Sabah yang sepatutnya diberi peluang mengamalkan pengundian ini dan mengamalkan demokrasi ini menerusi supaya tidak mengganggu gugat sangat tugas dan tanggungjawab mereka dan boleh mengundi di tempat mana mereka berada.</i> |
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Menerusi perbincangan dan perdebatan Parlimen mengenai pasca pelaksanaan UNDI18, terdapat dua intipati yang perlu diketengahkan itu:

1. Rakyat perlu diberi pengetahuan yang lebih mendalam mengenai pendidikan politik termasuklah UNDI18; dan
2. Perlunya satu badan atau agensi yang menggalas tanggungjawab bagi melaksanakan pendidikan politik kepada rakyat terutamanya kepada golongan muda termasuklah pelajar sekolah.

Menurut Kesatuan Perkhidmatan Perguruan Kebangsaan Malaysia (NUTP), pendidikan mengenai subjek pilihan raya termasuklah elemen UNDI18 adalah dituntut untuk diketengahkan pada tahap pendidikan menengah.⁵⁷

Parlimen Malaysia turut membincangkan beberapa jabatan atau agensi yang difikirkan wajar menerajui pendidikan politik kepada golongan muda. Cadangan ini termasuklah Jabatan Komunikasi, Akademi Pilihan

57 Penyata Rasmi Dewan Rakyat (22 Februari 2023).

Raya, Kementerian Belia dan Sukan, Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kementerian Pendidikan Tinggi.

Selain itu, Parlimen Malaysia turut membahaskan beberapa isu yang wajar diketengahkan dalam pelaksanaan pengundian oleh golongan muda terutamanya pelajar-pelajar di universiti, disebabkan kekangan lokasi untuk mengundi yang begitu jauh. Ini termasuklah cadangan pelaksanaan *postal voting* atau *electronic voting* tertamanya bagi pelajar-pelajar Sabah dan Sarawak yang sedang melanjutkan pelajaran di Semenanjung Malaysia.⁵⁸⁵⁹ Perkara ini sewajarnya diambil perhatian oleh Kerajaan agar pengundi muda dapat melaksanakan tanggungjawab mereka tanpa faktor kewangan yang membebankan mereka.

Rumusan dan penutup

Kesimpulannya, penglibatan pengundi berusia 18 tahun adalah penting dalam membantu negara melibatkan semua peringkat masyarakat dalam memilih kerajaan yang berkuasa. Secara idealnya, tiada sesiapa pun yang boleh dinafikan hak untuk mengambil bahagian dalam mana-mana proses demokrasi termasuklah hak untuk mengundi. Ini kerana mengundi menjadi instrumen penting kepada warganegara untuk menentukan tampuk kepimpinan negara, di samping mempamerkan sikap nasionalismenya. Peningkatan peratusan pengundi yang dilengkapkan dengan pengetahuan yang diperlukan berkaitan pilihan raya dan demokrasi akan membantu dalam meningkatkan legitimasi kerajaan yang dibentuk, menambahkan keyakinan, bukan sahaja masyarakat dalam negara, malahan pihak luar negara yang berkepentingan.

Kajian yang berterusan dapat meningkatkan ilmu pengetahuan, data tambahan dan sebagai rujukan kepada pihak berkenaan mengenai kelompok belia khususnya dalam bidang politik dan pilihan raya di Malaysia amat diperlukan. Pengundi baharu dan pengundi muda perlu diyakinkan tentang kepentingan kesedaran untuk cakna mengenai pilihan raya dan sistem demokrasi negara melalui saluran yang betul serta menyedari tentang kepentingan menyertai proses pilihan raya serta implikasinya yang akan mempengaruhi kehidupan mereka pada masa hadapan melalui dasar-dasar yang akan diperkenalkan atau dilaksanakan oleh barisan pemimpin kerajaan yang dipilih. Manakala pihak kerajaan

58 Penyata Rasmi Dewan Negara (31 Mac 2022).

59 Penyata Rasmi Dewan Rakyat (18 Julai 2022).

pula perlu meneruskan pelbagai inisiatif pasca pelaksanaan UNDI18, menambah baik inisiatif sedia ada melalui kajian impak untuk meningkatkan penglibatan anak muda dalam pembuatan keputusan melalui penyertaan awam pada masa yang akan datang. Setelah Malaysia mempunyai kerangka dan konsep pendidikan yang jelas mengenai proses demokrasi dan pilihanraya, serta inisiatif UNDI18 mencapai maksud keseluruhannya, barulah kajian lanjut untuk menurunkan lagi had umur mengikut negara-negara lain boleh dilaksanakan.

Penambahbaikan untuk meningkatkan inklusiviti rakyat dalam proses demokrasi negara adalah penting. Walaupun pendaftaran pengundi berjalan secara automatik selepas pindaan akta ini, namun proses mengundi tidak dijadikan secara mandatori kepada pengundi. Pada masa ini, terdapat 21 negara⁶⁰ yang telah menguatkuasakan undi mandatori, dan warganegara yang gagal membuang undi tanpa alasan yang munasabah akan dikenakan penalti seperti disenaraihitamkan daripada menerima sebarang bantuan kerajaan. Prinsip pelaksanaan undi mandatori bagi memastikan peratusan keluar mengundi berada pada tahap yang tinggi.⁶¹ Kebanyakan negara yang menetapkan mengundi adalah mandatori mencatatkan peratusan keluar mengundi melebihi 90%⁶² berbanding Malaysia yang hanya mencatatkan 76% pada PRU-14⁶³ dan 74.4% pada PRU-15.⁶⁴ Sehubungan dengan itu, kajian masa hadapan juga perlu melihat kepada potensi pengenalan undi mandatori.

60 Nota: Daripada 21 negara ini, hanya 10 negara yang benar-benar menguatkuasakan undi mandatori. Terdapat 2 negara ASEAN yang mempunyai undang-undang undi mandatori, iaitu Singapura dan Thailand. Walau bagaimanapun, hanya Singapura yang menguatkuasakan undi mandatori, manakala Thailand tidak menguatkuasakan undang-undang ini walaupun termaktub dalam warta negaranya. Perbezaan dapat dilihat daripada peratusan keluar mengundi di Singapura pada kadar 95% berbanding 67% di Thailand. Sebagai rekod, sebuah lagi negara ASEAN, iaitu Filipina pernah menguatkuasakan undi mandatori ketika rejim Ferdinand Marcos pada tahun 1965 sehingga 1986.

61 Umbers, L. M. (2020). 'Compulsory Voting: A Defence'. *British Journal of Political Science*, 50(4), 1307–1324. [Online]. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123418000303>. (Accessed: 11 December 2023)..

62 Kostelka, F., Singh, S. P., & Blais, A. (2024). 'Is compulsory voting a solution to low and declining turnout? Cross-national evidence since 1945'. *Political Science Research and Methods*, 12(1), 76–93. [Online]. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2022.57>. (Accessed: 11 December 2023).

63 Dashboard PRU-14 (n.d.). Portal Rasmi Suruhanjaya Pilihanraya. Available at: <https://dashboard.spr.gov.my/PRU15>. (Accessed: 11 December 2023).

64 Dashboard PRU-15 (n.d.). Portal Rasmi Suruhanjaya Pilihanraya. Available at: <https://dashboard.spr.gov.my/PRU14>. (Accessed: 11 December 2023).

Cadangan kajian masa hadapan

Dalam mengembangkan lagi kajian berkaitan pengundi muda ini, terdapat beberapa kajian lanjut yang boleh dilaksanakan oleh pengkaji pada masa hadapan. Pertama, satu kajian lapangan berbentuk kuantitatif atau kualitatif berkaitan kerangka konseptual pelaksanaan cabaran-cabaran pengundi muda boleh dilaksanakan dengan menggunakan sampel tertentu untuk menilai dapatan dalam **Rajah 2** dan **Rajah 3**. Kedua, satu kajian lanjut yang komprehensif terhadap cadangan-cadangan yang boleh diambil oleh pihak kerajaan bagi memastikan kerangka pemahaman mengenai pilihan raya dan demokrasi dapat dibangunkan bagi manfaat setiap lapisan masyarakat terutamanya pengundi baharu akan datang. Ketiga, kajian impak UNDI18 terhadap beberapa siri PRN serta PRU yang berlangsung bagi mengukur pencapaian inisiatif tersebut. Keempat, kajian masa hadapan untuk mengkaji ketersediaan kerajaan untuk menurunkan had umur pengundi lebih rendah daripada 18 tahun.

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Turning the Tide: A Comparative Analysis of Regional Parliamentary Approaches for Scaling up Climate Action

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Abstract

This study explores the crucial role that regional parliaments play in promoting climate action across different regions. It underscores the necessity of cross-border climate action, given the interconnectedness of the climate system and the transboundary impacts of climate change. The study concentrates on the contributions of regional parliaments, often overlooked, in enhancing climate action through institutional structure. It identifies the approaches, work done, and strategies implemented by regional parliaments to fill the knowledge gap in the field. By empowering regional parliamentary institutions, this study highlights their potential to drive effective climate action and accelerate the transition towards a more sustainable future.

Keyword: AIPA, Arab Parliament, Climate Action, European Parliament, Regional Parliaments

Introduction

One and a half million people have shared their hopes and fears, and identified climate change and environmental issues as the number one long-term global challenge.¹ Climate change is a pressing issue requiring urgent and coordinated action. It is crucial to acknowledge

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1 United Nations, 'UN Common Agenda' <https://www.un.org/en/common-agenda> (accessed 1 December 2023).

the common priorities and work together for solutions to reduce the accelerated heating of the planet and mitigate the damages caused or potential damages. How should parliaments develop strategies at the regional level to scale up climate action?

Legislatures hold immense power in shaping collective response. Their actions in a regional context are vital for the success of climate action plans, fostering a sense of regional ownership and amplifying the overall impact. An understanding of the institutional framework of how the regional parliaments take climate action fosters greater understanding and cooperation, paving the way for a more sustainable future. Within this context, supranational and regional parliamentary assemblies emerge as key players, wielding the ability to navigate the complexities of interconnectedness and translate regional aspirations into concrete action. Their influence extends beyond steering economic development to influencing socio-political dynamics and shaping a collaborative future based on shared responsibility and solidarity.

One example is the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA), which embodies this collaborative spirit. Recognised as the premier entity among ASEAN's seventy-nine affiliates, AIPA reflects the crucial role of parliamentarians in driving change and forging a common path forward to tackle climate change. In 2019, the AIPA Caucus mooted a discussion on the need to enhance cooperation on climate action in ASEAN through enabling laws and policies. This aligns with AIPA's role to encourage member parliaments to adopt harmonised policies on Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions reduction, renewable/clean energy development, and disaster management. Regional parliaments' actions can directly contribute to addressing climate change.

This study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how supranational and regional parliamentary assemblies covering Southeast Asia, Europe, and the Arab world can leverage their unique positions and resources to 'turn the tide' on climate change. Collective climate action is crucial for a sustainable future, not just at a national level but globally.

Methodology

This study is based on the data and information collected from websites, official reports, academic publications, and policy documents. A due diligence exercise was conducted, including data verification, source checks, and cross-referencing with multiple sources to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data and information. The analysis identifies the

impact of climate change on Southeast Asia, Europe, and the Arab world. A comparison is made of the regional parliaments' responses, actions, and initiatives (if any) in shaping climate policy. While efforts have been made to collect as much data and information as possible to make the comparison more accurate, it is not possible for the study to obtain data and information that can be confidential or sensitive to the respective regional parliaments. Thus, the study can only provide a general overview of the current involvement of regional parliaments in climate action.

The study regions represent different geographical and socio-economic contexts, leading to diverse perspectives on climate action. Southeast Asia, a region of high population growth, faces challenges like rising sea levels and extreme weather events. As a key contributor to historical emissions, Europe² now holds the power to chart a different course – a leader in climate action as it grapples with decarbonisation. As for the Arab world, how would a region heavily relying on fossil fuels for energy take action to tackle Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions? Its commitment to climate change can tip the scales in the energy mix and GHG emissions, not just in the region. It is a key changemaker to a sustainable future for all.

Global milestone events and opportunities from climate change: a balancing act

The impact of climate change has become increasingly evident in recent decades, with a growing number of extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and changes in ecosystems. Climate change is undeniably causing a significant increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events. These events include heatwaves, droughts, floods, hurricanes, and wildfires, and they are disrupting agricultural production, which, in turn, is threatening food security. Climate change is expected to displace millions due to rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and other climate-related disasters. Furthermore, climate change is creating highly favourable conditions for the spread of vector-borne diseases such as malaria, dengue fever, and Zika virus. It is exacerbating respiratory illnesses and other health problems. According to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in 2023, droughts are becoming

2 H. Ritchie, 'OurWorldInData.org: Who has contributed most to global CO2 emissions?' <https://ourworldindata.org/contributed-most-global-co2> (accessed 15 April 2024).

increasingly severe worldwide, with 1.84 billion people affected and 4.7 per cent experiencing severe or extreme conditions.³ It further highlighted that most of those impacted are from low or middle-income countries.⁴ Hence, to tackle the challenges of climate change, a regional perspective and long-term planning are crucial and cannot be ignored. Moreover, the economic costs of climate change are already substantial and projected to rise significantly. For instance, total damages from the catastrophic flooding in Pakistan in 2022 are estimated to exceed US\$ 14.9 billion, and total economic losses are estimated at US\$ 15.2 billion.⁵

International agreements, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Kyoto Protocol, and Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), have been adopted since the first World Climate Conference in 1979. The Paris Agreement 2015⁶ and the Glasgow Climate Pact 2021 stressed the need for urgent action. The IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report 2022 emphasised the need for immediate action to curb the accelerating impacts of climate change. At COP28, the Climate Action Commitment Counter mobilised over US\$ 83 billion⁷ in new financial commitments for climate action and held its first global stocktake to assess collective progress. At COP28, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) urged cross-sectoral collaboration to develop protective legislation, green economy initiatives, and global parliamentary partnerships to enhance climate resilience.⁸ The global parliamentary network recognised the chance to emerge stronger and more sustainable amidst the undeniable threat of climate change.

Parliaments must collaborate to turn global climate goals into concrete actions in their regions. This will require transboundary cooperation and coordination, as no country can address the climate crisis alone. National

3 United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, *Global Drought Snapshot 2023: The Need for Proactive Action* (UNCCD Publication, 2023) 11.

4 Ibid.

5 See <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/10/28/pakistan-flood-damages-and-economic-losses-over-usd-30-billion-and-reconstruction-needs-over-usd-16-billion-new-assessme> accessed 26 December 2023.

6 See <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement> accessed 1 December 2023.

7 See https://prod-cd-cdn.azureedge.net/-/media/Project/COP28/COP28-President_Remarks_ClosingPlenary_13-Dec.pdf?rev=5041a1b245c249a5a392e8ddaa3a2156, accessed on 14 December 2023.

8 Inter-Parliamentary Union, 'Parliamentary meetings at COP28,' <https://www.ipu.org/event/parliamentary-meetings-cop28#event-sub-page-documents> accessed 1 December 2023.

parliaments have already recognised the urgency and seriousness of the threat and are acting through legislation, budgeting, oversight, representation, and international cooperation. For instance, the Houses of the Oireachtas established a Joint Committee on Climate Action to carry out oversight responsibility. They debated on ‘Just Transition’, which forms a crucial part of Ireland’s Climate Action policy to ensure that individuals and communities are safeguarded and ready to face the challenges brought by climate change.⁹ While national governments deliberate, regional parliaments can lead the way with more concrete and immediate measures. Regional parliaments can combat climate change by promoting environmental legislation and fostering regional cooperation on low-carbon economies, clean energy, and sustainable development. What specific actions can regional parliaments take to make a difference?

Supranational parliaments and regional parliamentary assemblies: a key driver of climate action

The global challenge of climate change demands concerted action at all levels of governance, including parliaments. While supranational parliaments and regional parliamentary assemblies are crucial players in taking climate action, their approaches to responding to climate change can differ significantly.

A supranational parliament is a unique political body that transcends national boundaries and represents the interests of a broader region or community. It operates beyond the jurisdiction of the national parliament and has the power to pass laws and regulations that can apply to all member states. The European Parliament is supranational—a directly elected body representing European Union (EU) citizens and it shares legislative power with the Council of the EU (Council).¹⁰ The European Commission (EC) is the executive branch of the EU.

A regional parliamentary assembly is a body composed of representatives from the parliaments of individual countries within a specific region. It serves as a platform for dialogue, cooperation, and collaboration on issues of common interest to the member parliaments. AIPA is a regional organisation that promotes collaboration and coordination among member parliaments on political, economic, social,

9 See https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/joint_committee_on_climate_action/2019-12-18/ accessed 6 April 2024.

10 See <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/> accessed 14 December 2023.

and cultural issues. For this study, the Arab Parliament is classified as a regional parliamentary assembly – it primarily serves as a consultative and advisory body and lacks the authority to override national laws or policies.¹¹

1. AIPA

Southeast Asia is one of the most vulnerable regions to the impacts of climate change due to its complex geography, reliance on agriculture, and high population density. Rising sea levels and frequent extreme weather threaten its environment, economy, and society. The Mekong Delta, a crucial agricultural and economic region, is sinking due to rising sea levels and groundwater extraction, threatening food security and displacement of millions.¹² El Niño 2015 caused prolonged drought across Southeast Asia, leading to water shortages, crop damages, and wildfires.¹³ In April 2024, a ‘historic heatwave’ is being experienced across Southeast Asia. In central Myanmar, 44°C was recorded for the first time – marking the highest temperature ever reached so early in the month in Southeast Asia’s climatic history. At least 30,000 people have been evacuated from the areas hardest hit by Cyclone Talim¹⁴ in north-eastern Vietnam. Additionally, the passage of Talim over northern Luzon in July 2023 resulted in almost 10,400 displaced people and more than 95,000 affected.¹⁵ The flooding that affected several Malaysian states in December 2021 and early January 2022 resulted in losses of US\$ 1.46 billion (RM 6.1 billion).¹⁶ Addressing these calamities requires urgent action, including mitigation strategies to reduce GHG emissions, adaptation measures to build resilience and international cooperation to support vulnerable communities.

11 M.A. Abdulhameed, ‘Measuring the Arab Parliament’s institutional development’ (2019) *Review of Economics and Political Science*, Vol. 8 No. 6, 448-468. <https://doi.org/10.1108/REPS-06-2019-0079> accessed 28 December 2023.

12 See <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/eastasiapacific/how-vietnams-mekong-delta-adapting-changing-climate> accessed 15 April 2024.

13 See <https://reliefweb.int/disaster/dr-2015-000180-vnm> accessed 28 December 2023.

14 See <https://e.vnexpress.net/news/environment/about-30-000-to-be-evacuated-due-to-storm-talim-4630395.html> accessed 24 December 2023.

15 See <https://reliefweb.int/report/china/china-philippines-vietnam-laos-tropical-cyclone-talim-update-gdacs-dromic-dswd-media-echo-daily-flash-19-july-2023> accessed 24 December 2023.

16 See <https://v1.dosm.gov.my/v1/index.php?r=column/pdfPrev&id=ZlkxS0JnNThiRHk0ZlZlZjdyVm44UT09> accessed 24 December 2023.

ASEAN is an inter-governmental organisation comprising ten (10) member states: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. With a combined GDP of over US\$3.6 trillion, it is the world's fifth-largest economy.¹⁷ With its growing economic prowess, ASEAN is uniquely positioned to take a prominent role in taking on global challenges of climate action and sustainable development. AIPA represents the inter-parliamentary organisation of ASEAN. Besides the ten-member parliaments, it has twenty-three (23) observer-member parliaments¹⁸ and other affiliated organisations. The Parliament of Timor Leste will soon join AIPA as the newest member parliament.

The basis of the relationship between ASEAN and AIPA is defined in their respective charters: the ASEAN Charter and the Statute of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly. The Charter lists AIPA as the utmost '*entity associated with ASEAN*', as provided in the ASEAN Charter 2020, Article 16 (1) and Annex 2. The Statute explicitly recognises ASEAN as a partner and includes a dedicated section in the Statute (2021), Article 18, on '*Partnership With ASEAN*'. It specifically provides for the establishment of '*regular communication, interaction and consultation with ASEAN to ensure better coherence and cooperation between the ASEAN government, the National Parliaments of ASEAN Member States, and stakeholders in ASEAN, as well as to enhance relationships with ASEAN bodies.*' In addition, the Statute Article 3 (4) provides, among others, the aim and purpose of '*study, discuss and suggest solutions to problems of common interest and express its views on such issues with the aim of bringing about action and timely response by the members of AIPA.*' The General Assembly is the highest body in AIPA, convening annually to set policy directions and serve as a forum for member parliaments. The Presiding Officer of the national parliament of the member state

17 ASEAN and Allurentis, Investing in ASEAN 2023 (n.a, Allurentis Limited, 2022) 4.

18 Observer Member Parliaments from the National Assembly of Armenia, the Parliament of Australia, the Milli Majlis of the Azerbaijan Republic, the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus, Parliament of Canada, the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, the National Assembly of People's Power (Cuba), European Parliament, Parliament of Georgia, Parliament of India, National Diet of Japan, the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea, the House of Representatives of Morocco, the House of Representatives of Nepal, New Zealand Parliament, the Storting of Norway, National Assembly of Pakistan, National Parliament of Papua New Guinea, Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, Parliament of Timor Leste, the Grand National Assembly of Turkiye, the Verkhovna Rade of Ukraine, the United States Congress.

hosting the General Assembly shall serve as the President of AIPA and the President of the General Assembly. The AIPA Secretariat is headed by the Secretary-General and assisted by two Assistant Secretary-General. The General Assembly has seven (7) committees: Executive Committee, Political Matters, Economic Matters, Social Matters, Organisational Matters, the Women Parliamentarians of AIPA (WAIPA) and Young Parliamentarians of AIPA (YPA).

AIPA's contribution to climate action can be categorised into three key areas: (1) legislation and policy advocacy, (2) legislative harmonisation and monitoring, and (3) capacity building, knowledge sharing and regional cooperation.

Legislation and policy advocacy

AIPA regularly adopts resolutions urging member parliaments to take specific action on climate change. Between 1990 and 2023, 58 climate-related resolutions¹⁹ were approved and adopted, addressing matters concerning climate action, sustainable development, and green initiatives. These resolutions can be powerful tools to influence national policies and promote regional collaboration.

- As early as 1990, AIPA recognised the link between environmental stewardship and sustainable development, calling for regional and global cooperation for collective action.²⁰
- In 2007, AIPA declared climate change a regional challenge and set ambitious goals to establish an agenda on global warming, lower GHG and formulate an action plan to mitigate the risks in ASEAN. The call for enhanced environmental cooperation underscored AIPA's commitment to a unified front against this threat.²¹
- In 2014, AIPA proposed establishing an ASEAN Green Growth Centre to promote sustainable practices and clean technologies through information dissemination and joint research.²²

19 Based on the resolutions database extracted from the AIPA website.

20 11th AIPA General Assembly, Singapore, 'Resolution on ASEAN Cooperation on the Environment,' accessed 14 December 2023.

21 The 28th AIPA General Assembly, Kuala Lumpur, 'Resolution on Climate Change as a Regional Challenge,' accessed 14 December 2023.

22 The 35th AIPA General Assembly, Laos PDR, 'Resolution on Fostering Green Growth Development Strategy in ASEAN,' accessed 14 December 2023.

- AIPA's 2018 resolution advocated for investments in climate-smart agricultural practices, recognising the vital role of agriculture in regional food security and the potential impact of climate change on food production.²³
- AIPA passed a resolution²⁴ in 2019 urging ASEAN to expedite clean energy policies, scale up zero-emission industries, ensure climate-friendly investments, and utilise AIPA as a platform for exploring carbon pricing initiatives and developing legal frameworks for climate action.

AIPA has been leading initiatives for climate change by promoting clean technologies, sustainable agriculture, and green growth in ASEAN. In 2009, AIPA established a special interface session during the ASEAN Summit to facilitate regular communication with the ASEAN member leaders. At the 42nd ASEAN Summit, AIPA recommended that ASEAN promote a green economy and sustainable economic stability to align with its legal agreements and policies. During the 44th AIPA General Assembly, two resolutions on driving energy transition, developing a green economy in ASEAN, and accelerating green transition for sustainable and resilient economic growth were debated, approved, and adopted unanimously.

Legislative harmonisation and monitoring

The AIPA Caucus was established in 2007²⁵ in Kuala Lumpur and subsequently held its first meeting there in 2009. The Caucus promotes information sharing among member parliaments to develop common legislative initiatives to harmonise AIPA legislation.²⁶ While the first AIPA Caucus had working groups to harmonise laws on combating drug menace and human trafficking, climate action and sustainable developments were popular themes in the subsequent meetings covering disaster management, sustainable tourism, cooperation on climate action

23 The 39th IPA General Assembly, Singapore, 'Resolution on Environmental Sustainability and Sustainable Urban Ecosystem,' accessed 14 December 2023.

24 The 40th AIPA General Assembly, Bangkok, 'Resolution on Regional Parliamentary Initiative for Enhancing Climate Action in ASEAN,' accessed 14 December 2023.

25 The 28th AIPA General Assembly, 19 – 24 August 2007, Kuala Lumpur, 'Resolution on the Establishment of an AIPA Caucus,' accessed 14 December 2023.

26 The 28th AIPA General Assembly, Kuala Lumpur, 'Resolution on the Establishment of an AIPA Caucus,' accessed 14 December 2023.

and green growth.²⁷ Often, discussions during the Caucus working group can lead to a consensus at the General Assembly to take further action on green growth, carbon pricing and emergency planning for extreme weather events. For instance, during the 40th AIPA General Assembly in 2019, a resolution on ‘Regional Parliamentary Initiative for Enhancing Climate Action in ASEAN’ was adopted, following through an earlier deliberation during the 10th AIPA Caucus to expedite clean energy policies and explore carbon pricing initiatives. This will streamline regional efforts and promote an integrated approach to climate action.

In addition, the Caucus tracks the implementation status of the resolutions adopted. Member parliaments must report the implementation status, legal provision and related legislation, and parliamentary and national initiatives. The AIPA secretariat tracks the implementation status through the dashboard on the website and monitors resolutions for further follow-up, such as exploring collaboration. As of July 2023, the implementation status of AIPA resolutions adopted between 2017 and 2022 indicated that 87 per cent were implemented, 10 per cent were partially implemented, and 3 per cent were not implemented/unavailable.²⁸

Capacity building, knowledge sharing and regional cooperation

Observer member parliaments are permitted to attend and make statements at the first plenary session of the General Assembly. The dialogue between AIPA member parliaments and observer member parliaments is an agenda item in the General Assembly’s business. Statements by observer member parliaments shall be confined to matters of mutual concern and common interest. AIPA and the European Parliament have taken the formal relationship further by holding an exclusive dialogue session annually beginning in 2021.

Training programs and workshops have been organised to educate AIPA officials about climate change challenges, such as the ‘ASEAN-UN Regional Dialogue (AURE) VI on Climate, Peace and Security.’ AIPA also shares reports and guidelines on climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, such as ‘Promoting the Application of the

27 1st AIPA Caucus, <https://aipasecretariat.org/elements/aipa-caucus-report/> accessed 23 December 2023.

28 AIPA, *Status of Implementation of AIPA Resolutions on Organisational Matters Adopted in 2017 – 2022* as of July 2023 <https://aipasecretariat.org/status-of-implementation/> accessed 23 December 2023.

ASEAN Guidelines for Responsible Investment in Food, Agriculture, and Forestry: A Practical Handbook for ASEAN Parliamentarians.²⁹

AIPA plays a multifaceted role in advancing climate action within Southeast Asia. The commitment of AIPA member parliaments to protecting the environment is evident from their adoption of 58 climate-related resolutions and their involvement in programs and initiatives concerning climate action and disaster management. However, the AIPA lacks concrete legislative authorities on climate change, as it is mandated to foster inter-parliamentary cooperation and promote sustainable development policies through dialogue mechanisms, solidarity, understanding, collaboration, and enabling measures among its member parliaments.³⁰

2. European Parliament

The European Parliament is crucial in driving and shaping the EU's response to climate change. The Mediterranean Sea, a vital part of Europe's tourism industry, is rising at an alarming rate, threatening coastal cities like Venice,³¹ Greece, and Barcelona. In 2021, Germany experienced its deadliest floods³² in centuries, causing billions of euros in losses and displacing thousands. The European Parliament also recognises the Alps' critical role as a water source for millions. However, with the massive annual glacier mass loss, the European Parliament is pushing for adaptation strategies like rainwater harvesting, better irrigation systems, and more investments in water-saving technologies.³³ Droughts in Spain³⁴ and Portugal are jeopardising harvests, pushing up food prices that impact farmers' livelihoods. Heatwaves and wildfires deter tourists from visiting popular destinations like Greece and southern

29 Food and Agriculture Organization, 'Climate Change and Food Security: Risks and Responses' <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cc6333en> accessed 1 December 2023.

30 AIPA, *AIPA Strategic Plan 2023*.

31 Sheryl L. Hummel, 'Rising Waters: Can a Massive Sea Barrier Save Venice from Drowning?' <https://e360.yale.edu/features/rising-waters-can-a-massive-sea-barrier-save-venice-from-drowning> accessed 1 December 2023.

32 'Germany Floods: July 2021 Update' <https://floodlist.com/europe/germany-floods-july-2021-update> accessed 1 December 2023.

33 'Alpine Glaciers' <https://climate.copernicus.eu/alpine-glaciers> accessed 1 December 2023.

34 Nicola Jones, 'Drought Depletes a Reservoir in Spain, Revealing a 'Ghost Village'' <https://e360.yale.edu/digest/drought-depletes-a-reservoir-in-spain-revealing-a-ghost-village> accessed 16 December 2023.

France, harming local economies.³⁵ Storm surges and floods damage coastal infrastructure like ports and dikes, requiring expensive repairs and hindering trade.³⁶

The EU and the European Parliament are intertwined entities, each drawing authority and legitimacy from the other. First established in 1952 as the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community, the European Parliament is the EU's law-making body and is directly elected by EU voters every five years. The last election was in May 2019. The Treaty on European Union³⁷ (TEU) signed in Maastricht in 1992, established the European Parliament as a co-legislator alongside the Council of the EU,³⁸ granting it equal footing in shaping EU laws. Article 14(1) TEU expressed, '*the European Parliament shall, jointly with the Council, exercise legislative and budgetary functions.*' This means the Parliament has a direct say in shaping EU laws and controlling the EU's budget. Article 288 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)³⁹ defines the legal acts the EU can adopt, such as regulations, directives, and decisions. It also specifies which acts require the Parliament's assent or co-decision with the Council of the EU, further solidifying its legislative, supervisory, and budgetary roles. As the only directly elected EU institution, the European Parliament represents the diverse voices of European citizens on climate issues. This gives it significant political clout to push for ambitious climate policies. The President of the European Parliament, who serves as the speaker of the Parliament, is elected for a two-and-a-half-year term. The Secretary-General heads the Parliament's Secretariat. The 705 Members of EPs (MEPs) from various

35 Colleen Barry, 'Tourism at Risk as Heat Wave, Wildfires Sweep Mediterranean' <https://apnews.com/article/tourism-mediterranean-wildfires-heat-wave-b29f1368f3789ca17c5b79516c4945ec> accessed 1 December 2023.

36 Andreas Christodoulou, Panayiotis Christidis, and Hasan Demirel, 'Sea-level rise in ports: a wider focus on impacts' (2019) ResearchGate, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328345003_Sea-level_rise_in_ports_a_wider_focus_on_impacts accessed 1 December 2023.

37 See also <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/eut/teu/article/14> accessed 12 December 2023.

38 European Union, 'The Council is an essential EU decision-maker. It negotiates and adopts legislative acts in most cases with the EP through the ordinary legislative procedure, also known as 'co-decision'. Co-decision is used for policy areas where the EU has exclusive or shared competence with the member states. In these cases, the Council legislates based on proposals submitted by the European Commission.' See also <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/>.

39 European Union regulations.

political groups of 27 EU member states can join forces to champion climate action, leveraging their combined strength to influence legislation and hold other EU institutions accountable.

The European Parliament wields significant authority and influence in shaping the EU's climate action agenda. Its shared legislative and budgetary powers with the Council of the EU directly impact climate-related laws and funding. Additionally, it has a third role of supervising all EU institutions. The European Parliament holds the EU accountable through mechanisms like hearings and votes of no confidence. This oversight function strengthens the Parliament's role as a check and balance on other EU institutions.

The European Parliament was crucial in securing aid for flooding in Germany in July 2021. In its legislative role, it approved the EU's European Union Solidarity Fund, which offered financial assistance to the EU hit by major natural disasters. In another unrelated milestone, in March 2023, the European Parliament adopted the Effort Sharing Regulation (ESR) revision with 486 votes to 132 and 10 abstentions. The Regulation sets binding annual reductions for GHG emissions for road transport, heating of buildings, agriculture, small industrial installations, and waste management for each EU member state. Currently, it regulates roughly 60 per cent of all EU emissions. The revised law increases the 2030 GHG reduction target at the EU level from 30 per cent to 40 per cent compared to 2005. For the first time, all EU member states must now reduce GHG emissions with targets ranging between 10 and 50 per cent.⁴⁰

To increase transparency and accountability, the European Commission (EC) publishes national actions in an easily accessible format, as requested by the European Parliament. Additional instances demonstrating the European Parliament's commitment to climate action are outlined below:

- The European Parliament played a crucial role in adopting the European Climate Law, demonstrating its commitment to achieving climate neutrality by 2050 and setting obligatory intermediate targets for reducing emissions.⁴¹

40 See https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/effort-sharing-member-states-emission-targets/effort-sharing-2021-2030-targets-and-flexibilities_en accessed 24 December 2023.

41 See <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/72/combating-climate-change> accessed 24 December 2023.

- The European Parliament approved the negotiated deal on the EU's Deforestation Regulation⁴² after requesting a modification from the EC.
- The EU's founding treaties prioritise environmental protection in all policy areas. The European Parliament considers climate impacts when shaping legislation across sectors, from agriculture to transport, to align with the Effort Sharing Regulation (ESR) revision.

The European Parliament's contribution to climate action can be categorised into four key areas: (1) legislative scrutiny, (2) budgetary control, (3) international cooperation, and (4) public awareness.

Legislative scrutiny

The European Parliament's committees are pivotal in scrutinising, shaping, and advancing the EU's climate action agenda. The committees can instruct legislative proposals, appoint a negotiation team to conduct negotiations with the Council of the EU, propose amendments, issue recommendations, and even reject proposals deemed insufficient. They can also adopt their own initiative reports, organise hearings with experts and scrutinise the other EU bodies and institutions. There are twenty-four (24) specialised standing committees, many of which actively contribute to advancing climate-related policies. The Committee on Environment, Public Health, and Food Safety (ENVI)⁴³ leads legislation on emissions reduction, renewable energy, and adaptation strategies, for instance, the EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) to reduce GHG emissions from power plants and industrial facilities. The system was proposed in 2002 and launched in 2005, and it has helped reduce emissions and generate revenue for member states. The EC presented policy reforms in July 2021, known as Fit for 55,⁴⁴ to reduce emissions by 55 per cent below 1990 levels by 2030. The European Parliament's approval is necessary for any changes to the EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS), and they

42 See <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20230414IPR80129/parliament-adopts-new-law-to-fight-global-deforestation> accessed 24 December 2023.

43 Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, *Work in Progress*.

44 See <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/fit-for-55-effort-sharing-regulation/#:::text=Infographics-,Fit%20for%2055%3A%20reducing%20emissions%20from%20transport%2C%20buildings%2C%20agriculture,to%201990%20levels%20by%202030> accessed 14 December 2023.

have consistently advocated for more ambitious emissions reduction targets, measures to address carbon leakage, and investments in clean technologies. ENVI members also exchanged views with the EC on implementing the Deforestation Regulation, which was adopted on 31 May 2023. The European Parliament has pushed for a more ambitious timeline of achieving a net-zero GHG emissions target and increasing the share of renewable energy to 42.5 per cent by 2030.⁴⁵

Budgetary control

- Budgets Committee members approved Euro 279 million⁴⁶ in EU aid following extreme weather events in Austria, Italy, Portugal, and Spain in 2019.
- The European Parliament successfully increased the budget for the LIFE program,⁴⁷ which has been supporting environmental and climate action projects across the EU.
- The European Parliament allocated significant funds to Horizon Europe,⁴⁸ the EU's research and innovation program, prioritising projects focused on climate solutions and clean technologies.

International cooperation

- The European Parliament promotes international cooperation on climate change through resolutions, dialogues with other parliaments, and participation in global forums.
- During COP28, the European Parliament⁴⁹ demonstrated its climate commitment by calling for increased national contributions to limit

45 See <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20221128STO58001/how-the-eu-is-boosting-renewable-energy> accessed 14 December 2023.

46 See <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20200520IPR79528/austria-italy-portugal-spain-receive-EU279m-after-natural-disasters-in-2019> accessed 14 December 2023.

47 See <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20201106IPR91014/compromise-on-long-term-eu-budget-ep-obtains-EU16-billion-more-for-key-programme-s> accessed 14 December 2023.

48 European Parliament, Legislative Train 03.2024, *Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Missions (Non-Legislative, Q4 2020) – Q3 2020*, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/carriage/horizon-europe-missions/report?sid=7901> accessed 14 December 2023.

49 European Parliament, *Resolution of 21 November 2023 on the UN Climate Change Conference 2023 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (COP28) (2023/2636(RSP))*

global temperature rise to 1.5°C. The resolution also emphasises civil society participation and the need to assist vulnerable nations.

- The European Parliament and AIPA have engaged in several dialogues on climate action in recent years to promote regional and international cooperation on climate change and foster the exchange of best practices and ideas between the two regions. Notable instances include the Inaugural European Parliament-AIPA Inter-Regional Dialogue on Climate Change on 22 June 2021, the 2nd AIPA-EP Inter-Regional Dialogue on Climate Action on 14 December 2022, and bilateral meetings and exchanges between the European Parliament committees and AIPA members.

Public awareness

- MEPs raise public awareness about climate challenges and solutions through debates, hearings, and outreach activities. For instance, the public hearing on the ‘Impact of the War in Ukraine on Global Food Security and the Fight Against Climate Change’ in 2023 and the debate on the ‘Proposal for a Regulation on deforestation-free products’ in 2022.

The European Parliament, with its legal authority and political influence, is a powerful force for climate action within the EU. The Parliament’s various groups have been instrumental in driving climate action with their commendable leadership skills, influencing legislation, and raising awareness. For instance, the President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola, has demonstrated a keen interest in environmental sustainability by prioritising it in the ‘Conference on the Future of Europe.’⁵⁰

Another instance of leadership commitment is the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance Ska Keller, which advocates for higher renewable energy targets and stricter emissions standards.

The European Parliament’s commitment to ambitious targets, ability to hold other institutions accountable, and engagement with the public make it a key driver of change at a critical moment for the planet. As the EU grapples with climate change, the European Parliament’s role will remain vital in ensuring a sustainable future for future generations.

50 See <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20231215STO15940/future-of-europe-how-parliament-is-turning-people-s-ideas-into-reality> accessed 18 December 2023.

3. Arab Parliament

The Arab world is also among the most vulnerable to climate change. Exposed to arid and semi-arid climates, the region is predicted to become even hotter and drier due to climate change. Temperatures have risen faster than the world average, with a possible 5°C increase over pre-industrial levels by 2100.⁵¹ A severe drought⁵² in Morocco in 2022 led to water rationing and crop failures, raising concerns about food security in the region. In July 2016, Kuwait recorded a temperature of 54°C, the third-highest temperature ever recorded on Earth – the highest in recent history.⁵³ Kuwait has also experienced an increase in the frequency and severity of dust storms caused by drought and deforestation.

Rising sea levels are threatening coastal communities in the region. As a result, the historic city of Alexandria in Egypt is sinking, causing flooding and damage to infrastructure.⁵⁴ Coastal communities in Tunisia are also facing erosion and displacement due to rising sea levels.⁵⁵ Oil-rich Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have pledged net-zero emissions in the coming decades. The MENA Region Cooling Status Report⁵⁶ noted that the region's energy demand will increase by 50 per cent by 2040. Most Arab League members are in the MENA region.

The Arab League and the Arab Parliament are distinct yet closely interconnected entities within the Arab world, both playing crucial roles in promoting regional cooperation, stability, and development. The Arab League comprises 22 member states in the Arab region that work together to promote solidarity and resolve disputes. The highest decision-making body is the Council of the Arab League. The Arab Parliament, on the other hand, was established during the summit of the

51 See <https://climatepromise.undp.org/news-and-stories/how-arab-states-region-scaling-climate-action#:~:text=Temperatures%20in%20the%20region%20have%20been%20rising,further%20decline%20by%2020%20percent%20by%202030> accessed 18 December 2023.

52 See, <https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/catastrophic-moroccan-drought-boost-import-subsidy-costs-2022-02-18/> accessed 18 December 2023.

53 See <https://www.dw.com/en/kuwaits-climate-crisis-a-scorching-nation-in-denial/a-61261999> accessed 18 December 2023.

54 See <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20221102-sinking-alexandria-faces-up-to-coming-catastrophe> accessed 18 December 2023.

55 See <https://www.euronews.com/green/2023/02/23/why-are-tunisias-beaches-disappearing-and-what-does-it-mean-for-the-country> accessed 19 December 2023.

56 A Pohl, *MENA Region Cooling Status Report: Progress, Opportunities and Insight, Issue 2*, International Climate Initiative (Berlin, Guidehouse Germany GmbH, 2023).

League Council in Algiers in March 2005 as a representative institution within the framework of the Arab League. On 29 March 2012, the 23rd Ordinary Session of the League Council held in Baghdad, Iraq, issued Resolution 559, which adopted the Statute of the Arab Parliament where the principles of *shura* and democracy are practised, freedom and human rights are respected, '*as a tool for dialogue, decision making, a popular impetus to Arab Action system, and an active partner in making of a joint Arab policy that serves the supreme interests of the Arab nation and confirms the principle of widening the scope of political participation as a basis for promoting democracy in Arab countries for closer ties among Arab people.*' The adoption of Resolution No. 559 in 2012 marked a crucial step in the evolution of the Arab League towards greater regional parliamentary representation and potential democratisation. Thus, with the amendments, the Arab Parliament has moved from a transitional to a permanent parliamentary institution.

The Arab Parliament comprises 88 parliamentarians representing the 22 member parliaments of the Arab League. The President of the Arab Parliament is elected to serve a three-year term. The General Secretariat is headed by a Secretary-General and assisted by Assistant Secretary-General. The Arab Parliament has established the Centre for Arab Parliamentary Diplomacy to assist the parliament to achieve the goals identified in the diplomacy strategic plan.

While not directly involved in implementing climate action or sustainable development, the Arab Parliament shapes the policy environment and builds regional consensus on these issues. One notable initiative to rally for collective action in building an Arab framework responsive to climate challenges is the Arab Children's Parliament programme entitled, '*The Arab Children: A Sustainable Effort for the Climate.*'⁵⁷ The program showcased the potential of the children of the Arab League as the future generation to lead climate-focused initiatives.

The Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union (AIPU) is an independent organisation that serves as a forum for national Arab parliaments to foster cooperation and dialogue. It operates alongside the Arab League and aims to promote communication and collaboration among member states through sharing best practices and advocating for common interests. The AIPU provides a broader platform for dialogue than the Arab Parliament and complements its efforts.

57 See <https://sharjah24.ae/en/Articles/2023/07/23/Arab-Childrens-Parliament-Unites-for-Climate-Action> accessed 18 December 2023.

The contribution of the Arab Parliament to climate action can be categorised into four key areas: (1) legislative framework, (2) oversight function, (3) capacity building, knowledge sharing and regional cooperation.

Legislative framework

The Arab Parliament operates under the Statute of the Arab Parliament, which outlines its formation, tasks, and powers. It empowers the parliament to address ‘economic integration, social solidarity and sustainable development.’ This provides a framework for its activities, programs, and collaborations in tackling the region’s climate challenges in accordance with Article 5 of the Statutes,

Parliament exercises its powers in a way that enhances joint Arab action and achieves economic integration, social solidarity, and sustainable development, leading to Arab unity. Its roles and responsibilities include:

- o Working to strengthen Arab-Arab relations, developing forms of joint Arab action, strengthening its mechanisms, and working to ensure Arab national security and strengthen human rights. He may submit recommendations and proposals that he deems appropriate for this.
- o Following up on the process of joint Arab action and hold hearings with the heads of the ministerial councils, the Secretary-General of the League, or the heads or general directors of specialised Arab organisations.
- o Discussing the matters referred to by the Council of the League, the Ministerial Councils, the Secretary-General of the League, or the heads or directors of specialised Arab organisations and express an opinion on them. He may issue recommendations to be a basis when the relevant councils issue the relevant decisions.
- o Directing questions in writing to the heads of the ministerial councils, the Secretary-General of the League, and the directors of specialised Arab organisations on any subject within their jurisdiction. These bodies must answer the members’ questions within a period specified by the bylaws.
- o Approving draft unified laws and collective Arab agreements referred to it is mandatory before the Council of the League approves.

In 2023, the Arab Parliament approved a general framework⁵⁸ to guide the development of policies, plans, activities and mechanisms for environmental protection and development in the Arab League member states. While Article VIII of the framework provides for the Arab League member states to have joint action programs related to climate affairs and Article XVII of the document encourages the Arab national parliaments to establish a permanent committee on environmental matters, the role of the Arab parliament is not explicitly stated.

Oversight function

The Arab Parliament's regulation provides that parliamentarians can review draft budgets and final accounts of the Arab League. Article 5 of the Statute,

Reviewing draft budgets and final accounts of the General Secretariat of the League before they are approved by the competent authorities, as well as reviewing the final accounts of specialised Arab organisations.

Capacity building, knowledge sharing and regional cooperation

The Arab Parliament can facilitate dialogue and cooperation between member parliaments on climate action and sustainable development. For instance, it promotes awareness about climate change adaptation in mountainous regions.⁵⁹ The Parliament raises public awareness about climate change and sustainable development through media outreach and targets groups such as young parliamentarians. Additionally, parliamentarians are also encouraged to support global initiatives aimed at mitigating the adverse effects of human actions on the environment.

Since the Paris Agreement in 2015, the Arab world has intensified its commitment to addressing climate change. The AIPU has partnered with the IPU to co-host the 2022 Arab Parliamentary Forum on the 2030 Agenda, focusing on enabling parliaments to implement climate commitments. Additionally, by hosting COP22 Marrakesh (2016), COP27 Sharm El-Sheikh (2022), and COP28 UAE (2023), the Arab League member states are enhancing their role in promoting climate action.

58 Arab Parliament, *Arab Document for Environmental Protection and Development*, n.d.

59 See <https://www.ipu.org/news/press-releases/2023-11/helping-parliaments-reach-new-heights-in-mountain-adaptation> accessed 18 December 2023.

Comparative analysis

The regional parliaments in the study have varying levels of influence on climate-related laws and policies.

Profile of the regional parliaments

| | AIPA | European Parliament | Arab Parliament |
|--|--|--|---|
| Provision for Regional Parliament | Statute of the AIPA The ASEAN Charter | Treaty on European Union (TEU) Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) | The Statute of the Arab Parliament |
| Year of Establishment | AIPA in 1977 ASEAN in 1967 | European Parliament (Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community) in 1952 European Union (European Coal and Steel Community) in 1951 (formally established in 1992)* | The Arab Parliament in 2005 (transitional) 2012 (permanent) The League of Arab States in 1945 |
| Population | 672 million (9% of global population) 3 rd largest in the world | 448 million (6% of global population) 5 th largest in the world | 465 million (6% of global population) 4 th largest in the world |
| No. of Member Parliament | 10 (excl. Timor Leste) | 27 | 22 |
| Memberships | Max 150 | 705 | 88 |
| Leadership | President of AIPA/ President of the General Assembly | President of the European Parliament | President of the Arab Parliament |
| Objective | Advisory and consultative roles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-legislating with the Council of the EU • Can propose to EC to present legislation to call for a community act to be drawn up • Oversight function over the EU budget • Scrutinise policies and programs by EC and EU institutions • Public hearings | Advisory and consultative roles |

| | AIPA | European Parliament | Arab Parliament |
|--|--|---|--|
| Flagship Legislation of Regional Organisation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Pollution • ASEAN Strategy on Carbon Neutrality • ASEAN Centre for Climate Change • ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity • ASEAN Disaster Management and Emergency Relief • ASEAN Agenda 2045 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Green Deal⁶⁰ • Fit for 55 Package • Effort Sharing Regulation • EU Deforestation Regulation • The EU Emissions Trading System | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arab Strategy for Sustainable Development 2030 • Arab Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2015 – 2030 • Arab Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction 2020 • The Arab Water Security Strategy 2010 – 2030 |
| Climate Action by Regional Parliament | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building, advocacy, and knowledge-sharing • Adopted 58 climate-related resolutions on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carbon pricing • Energy transition • Green technology • Green growth • Green economy • Deforestation and forest degradation | Debate, scrutinise, revise, and adopt the EU policy on climate change, especially the European Green Deal, a set of ambitious climate targets and initiatives. | Capacity building, advocacy, and knowledge-sharing |

* The Treaty of European Union (TEU)/the Maastricht Treaty 1992.

AIPA

AIPA operates within the framework of its statute, supporting ASEAN's efforts to address climate change. While AIPA does not possess direct legislative authority, it has made concerted attempts to shape the region's climate legislative landscape. This influence is achieved by actively promoting the adoption of critical resolutions and facilitating constructive discussions on climate action policies. A prime example is AIPA's proposal to establish the ASEAN Green Growth Centre and promote investments in climate-smart agricultural practices.⁶¹

60 See <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/climate-change/eu-climate-action/> accessed 18 December 2023.

61 See 35th AIPA General Assembly Resolution. See also 39th AIPA General Assembly Resolution.

AIPA plays a pivotal yet nuanced role in the regional landscape by convening together parliamentarians from across ASEAN. Despite lacking direct legislative power, AIPA's influence on national policy-making and its promotion of regional cooperation, particularly in climate action, is gaining traction. However, the current framework within which AIPA operates upholds the principle of state sovereignty, which inherently limits its capacity to enforce resolutions. While reflecting a collective vision, the resolutions adopted by AIPA are not binding and thus do not compel member states/parliaments to act. As a result, AIPA's effectiveness in climate action hinges on voluntary cooperation among member states and parliaments, leading to variability in the implementation of harmonised laws. This challenges the accountability of regional commitments, potentially affecting the strength and effectiveness of a united effort to take climate action.

In light of these considerations, exploring opportunities to enhance AIPA's oversight capabilities is prudent. Climate action discourse within AIPA primarily falls under the purview of the Committee on Social Matters and the Committee on Economic Matters during the annual AIPA General Assembly. Given the pressing nature of climate-related challenges, there may be merit in dedicating more specialised attention to this issue. Forming a dedicated committee focused on monitoring the implementation of harmonised laws and actions could prove instrumental. A dedicated committee would supplement the existing efforts of the Committees on Social Matters and Committee on Economic Matters and provide a focused and strategic approach to oversee the implementation of agreed-upon legislation. Such a committee would embody the collaborative spirit of AIPA and reinforce the commitments made by member parliaments, thereby ensuring that the collective aspirations for climate action are translated into tangible progress.

AIPA could also consider exploring a more proactive approach. One potential avenue could be establishing a dedicated mechanism, such as a Climate Action Foundation, to address climate change and climate action. The mechanism could focus on mobilising resources to support effective programs combating climate change. These programs should include:

- Facilitating the exchange of best practices and evidence-based legislation on climate action among member states.
- Promoting capacity-building initiatives for research and training in climate-related fields.

- Encouraging the adoption of ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) principles within businesses across the region, fostering their role in implementing climate action measures.
- Supporting public awareness campaigns to educate communities on ways to tackle climate change at the local level.

In addition, the mechanism could lead to facilitating regional climate policy development through collaboration and knowledge sharing. It could also play a vital role in monitoring progress and providing recommendations to national Parliaments, supporting them in refining their climate action plans.

To enhance its climate agenda, AIPA should prioritise decisive leadership, taking cues from effective governance models such as the European Parliament. This leadership is essential to unify diverse perspectives, create unified regional strategies, and ensure consistent execution of climate action plans across ASEAN.

European Parliament

The European Parliament plays an essential role in ensuring that proposed laws from the EC align with climate action objectives and strategies. It exercises its authority through voting, hearings, resolutions, and oversight powers to hold the EC accountable for delivering on climate commitments and effectively implementing legislation. For instance, in the Fit for 55 package, the European Parliament had pushed for a higher EU-wide renewable energy target by 2030, from the EC's initial proposal, demonstrating their power to impact final legislation. Additionally, the European Parliament's resolution to include aviation and maritime emissions in the EU ETS, while not legally binding, significantly impacted the EC and the Council's decision-making processes regarding these sectors. Specialised committees like the ENVI, are also vital in scrutinising and shaping GHG emission legislation.

Additionally, the European Parliament participates in international climate negotiations and advocates for ambitious global action, representing the EU's voice on the world stage. The most recent negotiation is its participation in COP28. They have played a crucial role in propelling climate action forward by demonstrating leadership abilities, influencing legislation, and creating awareness.

Arab Parliament

While the Arab Parliament and the European Parliament both contribute to regional climate action, the scope of their influence differs significantly. This difference stems from the distinct powers enshrined within their respective founding documents. The European Parliament, established under the TEU, occupies a unique position as a supranational parliament. This means it transcends national borders and wields genuine legislative authority within its designated areas, including environmental and climate change matters. The TEU empowered the European Parliament with tools like budgetary control and legislative co-decision, enabling it to shape EU climate policies and legislation actively.

In contrast, the Arab Parliament, established under the framework of the Arab League, operates primarily as a consultative body. While it holds immense value in facilitating dialogue, sharing best practices, and advocating for regional climate action initiatives, it does not wield the direct legislative influence seen in its European counterpart. This means its influence relies on persuasion, collaboration, and encouraging member states to adopt its recommendations.

The Arab Parliament, though a relatively recent establishment, holds the potential to emerge as a pivotal force in the region. Given the diversity of national priorities and political contexts within the Arab world, a concerted effort towards a unified climate action strategy within the Arab Parliament could be highly beneficial. By championing decisive climate action and fostering stronger regional cooperation, the Arab Parliament can make a profound impact. Fostering greater collaborations and ensuring that the Arab Parliament is equitably represented will be instrumental in amplifying the effectiveness of the shared environmental initiatives.

The global community has witnessed the Arab world's contributions to the collective effort of combating climate change, as evidenced by COP28 UAE's ambitious targets and innovative solutions. The outcomes of COP28 reflect a mix of constructive dialogue and divergent views. While there were differing opinions on the timing of the fossil fuel phase-out, the efforts of the Arab world in pursuing a sustainable, low-carbon future cannot be ignored. The Arab world has the potential to become a leader in the transition to low-carbon economies due to its abundant solar resources and economic resources. Hosting COP22, COP27, and COP28 catalyses this transformation towards a low-carbon future. Some benefits of hosting the COP series are raising public awareness,

pressuring governments to take more climate action, setting ambitious goals, and showcasing the host countries' domestic climate action efforts. These benefits can create a ripple effect that elevates climate action as top domestic and international priorities. Hosting a COP can also attract private sector participation, leading to new investment opportunities and partnerships in clean energy technologies and sustainable development projects, such as launching a financial mechanism - Altéra during COP28. Altéra aims to mobilise US\$ 250 billion for climate action by 2030, and it presents an opportunity to accelerate global progress on climate action by mobilising resources and promoting responsible investment practices. In addition, some Arab League member states are actively revising their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement, demonstrating a proactive approach to fulfilling their pledges. The Climate Change Performance Index 2024⁶² provides insights into progress and areas for improvement in the Arab world. Morocco's impressive 9th rank and Egypt's 22nd rank, compared to the EU's 16th rank, showcase regional potential. Whether the Arab Parliament can effectively support the transition from a fossil fuel-reliant region to low-carbon remains to be seen, but the momentum is encouraging.

Conclusions and recommendations

The analysis of regional parliamentary strategies for scaling up climate action reveals mixed responses but also encouraging progress. The European Parliament's leadership on climate action is a benchmark of how regional parliament can play a vital role in addressing global challenges. Its ambitious goals, legislative power, and commitment to international cooperation have made it a key changemaker in the fight against climate change.

Establishing collaborative efforts towards common goals, such as achieving consensus among the member parliaments on the government-proposed targets for renewable energy generation or GHG reduction, would be a good starting point for creating a buy-in commitment to tackle climate change for renewable energy generation or GHG reduction. This could significantly amplify the impact of the regional parliament's actions.

Increased collaboration across regions through dedicated platforms and joint action plans can significantly enhance the effectiveness of

62 Climate Change Performance Index: Ranking, <https://ccpi.org/ranking/> accessed 31 December 2023.

national climate action efforts. The AIPA and the Arab Parliament should continue collaborating with the European Parliament to share knowledge, best practices, and technical expertise on climate action. This could involve workshops, exchange programs, and joint research projects. The network could expand into a global network of regional parliaments, connected through online platforms or regular exchange programs which could foster knowledge sharing, best practice adoption and the development of collaborative initiatives.

To navigate towards the most impactful strategies for regional climate action and a sustainable future, regional parliaments need to:

- Equip parliaments with dedicated staff who are well-versed in climate science and policy, which is crucial for informed decision-making.
- Technical resources and training programs can empower parliamentarians and staff to navigate the complexities of climate action and develop effective strategies.
- Financial support is essential for regional parliaments to undertake research, implement initiatives, and participate in international forums.
- Regional collaboration on common targets and enforcement mechanisms can amplify impact.
- Invest in robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track progress and identify areas for improvement.
- Harmonising legislative frameworks across regions can amplify impact and facilitate knowledge sharing.
- Sharing best practices, resources, and knowledge across regions can enhance the effectiveness of individual efforts.
- Building partnerships with civil society, indigenous communities, and the private sector can strengthen public ownership and drive implementation.
- Establish dedicated inter-parliamentary committees focused on climate action, fostering regular dialogue and exchange of best practices.
- Publish an annual Sustainability Report to track the measurable impact of carbon reduction and climate change action measures.

Addressing climate change is a multifaceted and constantly evolving issue that requires a nuanced approach. Regional parliaments play a crucial role in promoting and guiding climate action, particularly through their integrative and collaborative relationships within regional and international political systems. To take effective climate action, regional parliaments must be well-equipped to take on leading roles in proposing, reviewing, amending, approving, and monitoring climate legislation. They should remain receptive to learning from successes and setbacks, and adjust their strategies based on emerging technologies and emerging scientific insights. Embracing a flexible and iterative approach informed by diverse perspectives and scientific expertise enables regional parliaments to stay at the forefront of combating climate change effectively.

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UN Resolutions on the Role of Parliaments and Parliamentarians in Accelerating the Achievements of the SDGs

*Prof. Datuk Dr. Denison Jayasooria**

Abstract

Since the adoption of “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” on 25 September 2015 at the United Nations General Assembly, there have been strong calls for multi-stakeholder engagements in line with SDG 17.17 on partnerships between public, public-private sectors, and civil society. The various calls to different stakeholders include the three resolutions (A/RES/76/270, A/RES/72/278 and A/RES/77/159) adopted by the UN General Assembly on the role of parliaments and parliamentarians in the implementation of the SDGs at the international, national, and local levels. While the socio-economic development agenda is primarily seen as the responsibility of the state, different branches of the governance institutions have distinctive roles. The singling out of the parliaments and parliamentarians through UN General Assembly resolutions is very significant, marking a recognition of the distinctive roles and contributions of the legislative bodies in member states. These resolutions highlight the relationship and partnership between the UN and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in SDGs. Elected Members of Parliament (MPs) are the people’s representatives. They have a close relationship with the grassroots. They represent their voters at the highest legislative body with an oversight role in areas including the allocations of the national resources through the annual budget and monitoring the effective delivery of services. The MPs play the additional role of being the vehicle to highlight the grievances of the people. In this context, the MPs deliberate relevant policies, programmes and legislation associated with the SDGs such as poverty, health, education, employment, climate change and good governance. This article further highlights the role of four parliamentary groups actively mobilising MPs

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engaged with the SDGs at the international level. These are the *Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)*, the *Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)*, *Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA)* and *Parliamentarians for the Global Goals (PfGG)*. These four groups have been playing a key role in linking MPs with the UN on SDGs. The article ends with reflections and lessons of the role Malaysian MPs are playing through the APPGM-SDG. There is a need for greater visibility in public policy advocacy in Malaysia and on the global stage. To this end, more resources need to be made available to MPs to encourage their active involvement especially at the United Nations in New York.

Keywords: *public advocacy, multi-stakeholder partnerships, parliamentarians, parliaments, SDGs*

Introduction

Parliamentarians play a major role not only in politics but also determine the direction of the development agenda through decisions on policies, legislation and financial resources of the nation. The Eleventh Malaysia Plan (2015 -2020) was tabled in Parliament on 21 May 2015¹ and the Twelfth Malaysia Plan (2021-2025) on 27 September 2021.² Both these documents make specific reference to the *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*. Members of Parliament (MPs) have the responsibility to read, study and debate the plans and determine the financial allocations in line with the nation's key priority areas.

In an earlier article on the role of parliamentarians, there is a brief description on the MPs' legislative and constituency roles.³ Their dual roles in parliament and in the constituency can enhance the localisation of SDGs. While they are involved in policy advocacy using the 17 SDGs as development policies in parliament, they also use this framework at the constituency level in efforts to address and resolve the local economic, social and environmental concerns.

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In this article, we discuss three aspects:

1. What does the 2030 Agenda say about the involvement of parliamentarians and parliaments?
2. Which organisations are involved in engaging parliamentarians and the UN SDG Agenda globally?
3. Which United Nations resolutions are on the role of parliamentarians and parliaments, and the SDGs?

What does the 2030 Agenda say about the involvement of Parliamentarians and Parliaments?

There is a call for multi-stakeholder engagements in the localisation of SDGs, specifically in SDG 17.17, which encourages effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships. There is a place within this equation for leaders, elected by citizens or appointed within the democratic system, who have a specific task in the delivery of SDGs. Here, parliamentarians are one of the many stakeholders involved in the implementation of SDGs. In that vein, there is a specific reference to leadership in governance as outlined in SDG 16.7, which reads, *'ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels'*.⁴ Additionally, there is a specific indicator, SDG 16.7.1 which highlights the need for *'Proportions of positions in national and local institutions, including (a) the legislatures..., compared to national distributions, by sex, age, persons with disabilities and population groups'*.⁵ Here, the indicator emphasises the need to identify representation in public institutions that reflect sex, age, disabilities, and population groups at national and local legislatures, with the parliament being the national legislature.

Furthermore, the 2030 Agenda points out the specific role of the parliament and parliamentarians:

We acknowledge also the essential role of national parliaments through their enactment of legislation and adoption of budgets and their role in ensuring accountability for the effective implementation of our

4 United Nations Statistics Division, 'Global Indicator Framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/Global%20Indicator%20Framework%20after%202023%20refinement_Eng.pdf accessed 2 August 2023.

5 Ibid.

commitments. Governments and public institutions will also work closely on implementation with regional and local authorities, sub-regional institutions, international institutions, academia, philanthropic organisations, volunteer groups and others.⁶

The above affirms the important oversight role of parliamentarians as the peoples' elected representatives in ensuring good governance, accountability, particularly in the allocation and use of public funds, and independent monitoring to ensure that *no one is left behind*. This global mandate unifies the role that parliamentarians play globally in advancing the SDGs.

Drawing from the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda, this section highlights five points on the role of parliaments in relation to the SDGs. First, representation is key in the SDGs, therefore, the leaders must represent the different segments of society, namely men and women, young and old, people with disabilities or able-bodied persons, and different population groups that reflect racial, ethnic and religious diversity. This is basically to ensure that *no one is left behind*. Second, parliamentarians are significantly responsible for the enactment of legislation. In Malaysia, no SDG legislation had been introduced between 2015 and 2023. However, the SDGs have been introduced through development policies that provide the direction for the localisation of SDGs.

Third, a key function of the parliament is the adoption of annual national budgets. MPs have the opportunity to raise questions and comments based on the budget presented. In terms of a national budget allocation for the SDGs, the Ministry of Finance (MoF) of Malaysia undertook a mapping of the budget with the SDGs. Following a pilot test, MoF has been funding the localising of SDGs since 2020 through the *All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on SDGs (APPGM-SDG)*.

Fourth, the Parliament plays a key role in ensuring accountability for the effective implementation of the SDGs. Currently, 85 MPs have undertaken this journey with the APPGM-SDG between 2020 and 2023 through mapping exercises and situational analyses.⁷ The MPs are encouraged to take note of the gaps and challenges highlighted in their respective constituency's report and call upon public sector agencies to

6 United Nations, 'Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' Item 45, <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda> accessed 2 August 2023.

7 All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on Sustainable Development Goals (APPGM-SDG), 'Constituencies with SDG' <https://appgm-sdg.com/constituencies-with-sdg/> accessed 4 August 2023.

address these issues and concerns. The Ministry of Economy has instituted several mechanisms such as the National SDG Council,⁸ chaired by the Prime Minister and the National SDG Centre⁹ which coordinates and monitors the various SDG activities. The Ministry of Finance and the UN country team also established the SDG Foundation¹⁰ to enhance financing for development.

Fifth, parliamentarians are encouraged to work with local and international partners in addressing SDGs concerns. Here, the APPGM-SDG has been the principal vehicle, both locally and internationally.

Which organisations are involved in engaging parliamentarians and the UN SDG Agenda Globally?

At the global level, there are four parliamentary groups mobilising MPs from around the world in addressing SDGs. While MPs operate at a national level, there is solidarity and partnership in addressing global and international concerns, in particular, matters pertaining to security, climate change, world trade and migration issues including human trafficking.

Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)¹¹

The IPU was set up in 1889 by a small group of parliamentarians, dedicated to promoting peace through parliamentary diplomacy and dialogue. It has since grown into a truly global organisation with 180 members and 15 associate members. One of the many themes they work on is the SDGs.¹² IPU mobilises parliaments towards the global development agenda. By fulfilling legislative, oversight and budget responsibilities, MPs are most suited as key players in reducing social and economic inequalities, improving the health of the people it represents and taking action to save the planet from the climate emergency.

8 Ministry of Economy, Malaysia, 'Sustainable Development Goals' <www.ekonomi.gov.my/en/sustainable-development-goals> accessed 4 August 2023.

9 Povera, A., 'Govt to Establish National SDG Centre' New Straits Times (Kuala Lumpur, 6 September 2022) <www.nst.com.my/news/government-public-policy/2022/09/828867/govt-establish-national-sdg-centre> accessed 4 August 2023.

10 Ministry of Finance, Malaysia, 'MySDG Foundation' <https://www.mof.gov.my/portal/en/mysdg> accessed 4 August 2023.

11 Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), 'About Us' <https://www.ipu.org/about-us> accessed 7 August 2023.

12 IPU, 'Sustainable Development' <https://www.ipu.org/impact/sustainable-development> accessed 7 August 2023.

IPU has produced a useful self-assessment SDG toolkit which helps parliamentarians identify good practices, opportunities and lessons learnt on how to institutionalise and mainstream the SDGs into the legislative process.¹³ IPU organises seminars, workshops, and meetings on the SDGs as an attempt to help MPs exchange knowledge and experience with peers on best practices and set common action to advance the Sustainable Development agenda.

Two key IPU events have reaffirmed the role of parliamentarians in the SDGs. The first was the 132nd IPU Assembly, where the ‘Hanoi Declaration - The Sustainable Development Goals: Turning words into action’¹⁴ was adopted on 1 April 2015; clearly outlining the roles and commitment of parliamentarians in the implementation of SDGs. Another event held more recently was the first global parliamentary meeting on achieving SDGs held on 28 - 30 September 2021.¹⁵

The APPGM-SDG chair was invited as a panel speaker and members of the APPGM SDG secretariat were also invited to participate at the IPU event on SDGs.¹⁶ This was held at the UN in New York on 13 July 2022, in conjunction with the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). In the following year, the APPGM-SDG chair was invited to be a panel speaker but was not able to attend. On 21 September 2023, a representative from the Head of Secretariat, Pn Nur Rahmah Othman, participated at the event held in conjunction with the SDG Summit when IPU hosted an SDG meeting with parliamentarians.¹⁷ The IPU meetings and discussions on SDGs provide a good platform for Malaysian MPs to showcase the Malaysian experience and best practices.

13 IPU, ‘Parliaments and the Sustainable Development Goals: A Self-Assessment Toolkit’ <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/toolkits/2017-01/parliaments-and-sustainable-development-goals-self-assessment-toolkit> accessed 7 August 2023.

14 IPU, ‘Hanoi Declaration: The Sustainable Development Goals: Turning Words into Action’ <http://archive.ipu.org/conf-e/132/rpt-gendebate.htm> accessed 7 August 2023.

15 IPU, ‘First Global Parliamentary Meeting on Achieving the SDGs’ <https://www.ipu.org/event/first-global-parliamentary-meeting-achieving-sdgs-0#event-sub-page-documents/> accessed 7 August 2023.

16 IPU, ‘Parliamentary Forum at the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development’ <https://www.ipu.org/event/parliamentary-forum-un-high-level-political-forum-sustainable-development#event-sub-page-26252/> accessed 7 August 2023.

17 IPU, ‘Parliamentary Event at the SDG Summit and other High Level Meetings’ <https://www.ipu.org/event/parliamentary-event-sdg-summit-and-other-high-level-meetings> accessed 7 August 2023.

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)¹⁸

CPA, established in 1911, is one of the oldest parliamentary groups, comprising over 180 legislatures, categorised into nine geographic regions of the Commonwealth. It offers a vast opportunity for parliamentarians and parliamentary staff to collaborate on issues of mutual interest and to share good practices.

One major innovation of CPA is the CPA Parliamentary Academy.¹⁹ Among the courses offered is the CPA Sustainable Development Goals Certificate (Course 601) with a focus on the parliamentary role. This course is designed for elected or appointed parliamentarians and parliamentary staff. During this course, participants will explore how to advance the SDG Agenda through, amongst others, the role as a parliamentarian. It focuses on key SDG engagements including SDGs Financing. By the end of the course, participants will understand what the SDGs are and what can be done to achieve them before the deadline in 2030.

Malaysia is active in the CPA activities and the course on SDGs will provide some good insights for Malaysian MPs. The MySDG Academy is seeking to collaborate with the CPA Parliamentary Academy to conduct some of these courses in 2024. In this context, it is important to note that both the IPU and UNDP have produced valuable resource materials for the capacity building and training of MPs.^{20,21}

Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA)²²

PGA, founded in 1978 during the Cold War, is a Washington-based organisation for mobilising parliamentarians in support of nuclear disarmament and in addressing global problems. PGA, as a non-governmental, multi-party, international network of legislators acting in their individual capacity, informs and mobilises parliamentarians in

18 Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), 'About Us' <https://www.cpahq.org/about-us/> accessed 9 August 2023.

19 CPA, 'CPA Parliamentary Academy' <https://www.cpahq.org/parliamentary-academy/> accessed 9 August 2023.

20 IPU (n 13).

21 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Parliament's Role in Implementing the SDGs Handbook* (New York, 2017), <https://www.undp.org/publications/parliaments-role-implementing-sustainable-development-goals> accessed 7 August 2023.

22 Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA), 'About Us' <https://www.pgaction.org/about/> accessed 8 August 2023.

all regions of the world to advocate for human rights and the rule of law, democracy, human security, inclusion, gender equality and justice, including climate justice.

PGA has a special initiative on human rights and environment.²³ In 2021, PGA launched a ‘Campaign for a Human Rights-based Approach to Climate Action’ with a regional focus on the Caribbean.²⁴ The approach was to create awareness among parliamentarians on climate change issues and seek support for action at both at the national and global level. Currently, M. Kulasegaran, the MP for Ipoh Barat parliamentary constituency, and Deputy Minister of Law and Institutional Reform in the Prime Minister’s Department in Malaysia are members of the International Council.²⁵

Parliamentarians for the Global Goals (PfGG)²⁶

PfGG, also known as 2030beyond, is a Danish non-profit organisation founded by Kirsten Brosbøl in July 2020. She is a former Member of Parliament (2005-2019) and was the Minister of Environment (2014-2015) of Denmark. She also founded and chaired the Danish All-Party Parliamentary Group on the SDGs (2017-2019). Unlike the other parliamentary groups, the focus of PfGG is solely on the SDGs. PfGG is an initiative for parliamentarians to promote the SDGs through a network of parliamentary action around the world. It supports legislators in building networks, learning best practices and approaches for action.

Since 2021, the Malaysian APPGM-SDG has been actively participating in online discussions among these parliamentarians. This network of MPs includes MPs from Europe presenting opportunities to learn best practices on SDGs from Scandinavian countries such as Norway and Sweden.

It is therefore significant that APPGM-SDG’s MPs and the secretariat have established contact and engaged with these organisations. Over the next few years, APPGM-SDG is committed to network more with these global bodies and contribute towards Malaysia’s visibility in global advocacy.

23 PGA, ‘Human Rights and Environment Program’ <https://www.pgaction.org/hre/> accessed 8 August 2023.

24 PGA, ‘Campaign for a Human Rights-based Approach to Climate Action’ <https://www.pgaction.org/hre/climate-action/> accessed 8 August 2023.

25 PGA, ‘Who We Are’ <https://www.pgaction.org/about/who-we-are.html> accessed 8 August 2023.

26 2030beyond, ‘About Us’ <https://www.2030beyond.org/who> accessed 9 August 2023.

Which United Nations Resolutions are on the role of parliamentarians and parliaments?

There are three resolutions adopted at the UN General Assembly on the role of parliaments and parliamentarians in the context of the SDGs. It is important to clarify the relevance of resolutions with the UN system and how member states adopt them. According to Article 10 of the UN Charter which defines the functions and powers of the General Assembly:

The General Assembly may discuss any questions or any matters within the scope of the present Charter or relating to the powers and functions of any organs provided for in the present Charter, and... may make recommendations to the Members of the United Nations or the Security Council or to both on any such questions or matters.²⁷

The key point here is that the General Assembly does make resolutions but these are only recommendations and are not legally binding on the Member States except when adopted by the Security Council. This clarifies the position on resolutions but it is still significant to note that there are three such resolutions regarding the UN and parliamentarians, with specific reference to the SDGs.

The First Resolution is A/RES/72/278 - Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments, and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (22 May 2018)²⁸

This is a general engagement between the UN and the IPU for a systematic engagement. There is a recognition to work together in several areas including sustainable development.

Paragraph 4 states, *'Encourages the continued active involvement of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in promoting the enhanced contribution of parliaments at the national, regional and global levels in support of the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;'*

27 United Nations, 'Model United Nations' <https://www.un.org/en/model-united-nations/how-decisions-are-made-un#:~:text=may%20make%20recommendations%20to%20the,binding%20on%20the%20Member%20States> accessed 12 August 2023.

28 United Nations, 'Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 22 May 2018 A/RES/72/278' <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1627506?ln=en&v=pdf> accessed 12 August 2023.

Paragraph 5 states, *‘Welcomes the practice of including parliamentarians as members of national delegations to major United Nations meetings and events, as appropriate, and invites Member States to continue this practice in a more regular and systematic manner;’*

Paragraph 11 states, *‘Welcomes the contribution of the Inter-Parliamentary Union to the work of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, through the participation of parliamentarians, in convening a regular parliamentary side event on the work of parliaments to institutionalize the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as through its efforts to encourage parliaments to engage in the voluntary national reviews of participating countries;’*

Paragraph 23 states, *‘... to support the role of parliaments in translating international commitments into national policies.’*

The Second Resolution is A/RES/76/270 - Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments, and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (21 June 2022)²⁹

There were similarities noted with the earlier resolution. The new points are highlighted below:

Paragraph 2 states, *‘Encourages the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union to continue to work closely in various fields, including the three dimensions of sustainable development – the economic, social and environmental...’*

Paragraph 15 states, *‘...the participation of parliamentarians, in convening a parliamentary event on the work of parliaments to institutionalize the Sustainable Development Goals...’*

Paragraph 18 states, *‘...strengthening parliamentary capacities, ... in regard to the allocation of budgetary resources for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda... and helping to align national legislation with international commitments, and to facilitate, within existing resources, greater South-South and triangular cooperation between parliaments and parliamentarians;’*

29 United Nations, ‘Interactions between United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 21 June 2022 A/RES/76/270’ <https://www.ipu.org/file/14716/download> accessed 12 August 2023.

Paragraph 20 states, *‘Recognizes that the contributions of young people are important for the full and successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and ... in consultation with youth, youth-led and youth-focused and young women’s organizations, to explore and promote concrete new avenues for the full, effective, structured, increased and sustainable participation of young people, youth-led and young women’s organizations in relevant decision-making processes and monitoring, in all spheres of political, economic, social and cultural life, including in designing and implementing policies, programmes and initiatives, in particular when implementing the 2030 Agenda;’*

Paragraph 28 states, *‘...to increase the representation and participation of women in parliaments.’*

The Third Resolution is A/RES/77/159 - Enhancing the role of parliaments in accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (14 Dec 2022)³⁰

Paragraph 5 states, *‘... a strong and constructive relationship between parliaments and independent oversight bodies is important for improving the effectiveness of efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and encourages parliaments to ensure that their oversight mechanisms are well structured and have appropriate resources and equipment, as well as access to expertise and resources, to ensure qualified monitoring and evaluation of national development plans and strategies aimed at fully implementing the 2030 Agenda;’*

Paragraph 6 states, *‘Encourages public awareness of parliamentary processes and opportunities for public engagement in monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda;’*

Paragraph 7 states, *‘... the importance of analytical support to parliamentarians on the respective government budget proposal to enable effective financing for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals;’*

Paragraph 8 references the empowerment of women, while Paragraph 9 references persons with disabilities and Paragraph 10, on youth;

30 United Nations, ‘Enhancing the role of parliaments in accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 14 December 2022 A/RES/77/159’ <https://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?OpenAgent&DS=A/RES/77/159&Lang=E> accessed 12 August 2023.

Paragraph 12 states, *'Calls upon Member States to promote the leadership role of parliaments in accelerating the achievement of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals ... [and in] strengthening the institutional capacity of parliaments in this regard;'*

From these three resolutions, we can note that there are some specific expectations on the role of parliament and parliamentarians in accelerating the achievement of the SDGs. These clearly emerged in the third resolution (A/RES/77/159). The direct reference to a leadership role as indicated by the UN is very significant.

At the first IPU global parliamentary meeting on achieving SDGs held in September 2021, parliamentarians affirmed the importance of holding governments accountable with periodical monitoring of government action and through oversight mechanisms with the participation of citizens. In this context, the IPU document states:

Each parliament should find effective ways to hold governments accountable for the goals to which they have subscribed. In doing so, parliaments should define frameworks for periodical monitoring of government action. We, parliamentarians, should monitor the process by which SDG programmes are delivered at the local level, to ensure the context's specificities are considered and citizens are engaged. Oversight mechanisms, such as parliamentary questions, committee hearings, inquiries and reports, are important tools for assessing the concrete impact of government policies and for bringing the SDGs to the attention of the public and the media, thereby encouraging accountability at all levels.³¹

Here, the importance of the oversight role is evident. Amy Tam draws a distinction among the three types of oversight institutions, namely parliaments with a dedicated oversight mechanism, parliaments which use existing structures in undertaking monitoring tasks and parliaments which established an APPG mechanism such as Malaysia.³²

Currently, there is neither a dedicated mechanism nor independent mechanism set up in Malaysia. While groups have been working with the government and focus group discussions held in preparation for

31 IPU (n 15).

32 A.L.C. Tam, 'Parliamentary Oversight to Uphold Accountability in the Review Process of Sustainable Development Goals' (2022) 2 Journal of the Malaysian Parliament 177-199, <https://journalmp.parlimen.gov.my/jurnal/index.php/jmp/article/view/57/31> accessed 13 August 2023.

the VNR in 2017 and 2021, as well as in the preparation of the SDG Roadmap, there have been no formal oversight mechanisms identified. With the APPGM-SDG directly working with MPs on localising the SDGs, this oversight could emerge from the mapping and situational analyses reports. There is a proposal for the APPGM-SDG to prepare a *Voluntary Parliamentary Review* when Malaysia presents its third VNR at the HLPF in July 2025.

It is also necessary to state that there is no formal budgetary review process using an SDG lens. This exercise might be a useful practice. In addition, an engagement process with the public might also serve as a good feedback mechanism. Currently, in all the 85 parliamentary constituencies, APPGM-SDG has conducted focus group discussions which differ from town hall meetings.

Reflections on the roles Malaysian MPs Play through the APPGM-SDG

The role of parliament and parliamentarians in the SDGs have been clearly highlighted by the many UN SDG-related documents and resolutions. Since 2020, the APPGM-SDG has become the major vehicle for the articulation of policy issues and micro-solution projects at the grassroots level, highlighting economic, social and environmental concerns to Malaysian MPs.

MPs at the Local Stage: Addressing Local Grievances from a National Perspective

Parliamentarians in Malaysia need to advocate for an effective grievance mechanism which can receive complaints from the public; a body that can investigate and ensure that the problems identified are resolved.

APPGM-SDG through its mapping exercise has identified about 20 to 30 critical SDG issues in each parliamentary constituency. A simple listing would mean over 2,000 unresolved issues at the ground level. These issues encompass economic, social, environment and governance concerns, with many of them remaining unresolved.

In several cases, local issues such as land conversions from estate or agricultural land that have been subdivided to individual lots, remain unresolved since the British owners sold the land to the locals. In another case, an on-going issue for the past 30 years involved squatter dwellers who were moved to temporary housing (longhouses) but are still waiting to be relocated to permanent low-cost housing. The coastal fishing community, on the other hand, have experienced numerous

problems with sand mining activities and mangrove swamp clearances. Contemporary issues also include the struggles faced by B40 women and welfare recipients against the backdrop of the multi-dimensional nature of poverty.

In this regard, the recommendation made by the government in the 2021 *Voluntary National Review* report is timely and requires the MPs to ensure it is executed in practice at the grassroots. This refers to the establishment of an inter-agency delivery taskforce at the district level:

In localising SDGs, in addition to working with local authorities, efforts are being made to engage with the district offices. This is to ensure an inter-agency SDG delivery taskforce is organised at the district level to enhance the role of all agencies including a multi-stakeholder group (civil society, private sector and academic networks) in addressing economic, social and environmental concerns at the grassroots level.³³

A good example of unresolved issues pertaining to over 800 complaints received by the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM), is on the National Inquiry into the Land Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Malaysia, namely the natives of Sabah, Sarawak and Orang Asli community of Peninsular Malaysia.³⁴ It has been 10 years since the release of the report yet relevant government agencies have failed to resolve the matters raised.³⁵ SUHAKAM has called for ‘parliamentary and/or State level discussion to deliberate the NI recommendations.’ SUHAKAM has further called on the ‘government to re-examine the establishment of a National Commission or Customary Land Tribunal to address issues related to Orang Asal/Asli.’

One positive move of the government since the launch of the *Twelfth Malaysia Plan* is the announcement of an independent mechanism called the Ombudsman. This mechanism was first instituted by the Swedish

33 Ministry of Economy, Malaysia, ‘Malaysia Voluntary National Review (VNR) 2021’ 120 https://www.ekonomi.gov.my/sites/default/files/2021-07/Malaysia_Voluntary_National_Review_%28VNR%29_2021.pdf accessed 14 August 2023..

34 National Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM), ‘Report of the National Inquiry into the Land Rights of Indigenous Peoples’ April 2013, <https://www.forestpeoples.org/sites/fpp/files/publication/2013/07/suhakam-enquiry-full-text2013.pdf> accessed 14 August 2023..

35 SUHAKAM, ‘Press Statement No. 44-2023 - A Decade After National Inquiry – Striding towards Respect and Recognition for the Orang Asal & Orang Asli’ https://suhakam.org.my/2023/11/press-statement-no-44-2023_a-decade-after-national-inquiry-striding-towards-respect-and-recognition-for-the-orang-asal-orang-asli/ accessed 14 August 2023.

Parliament in 1809.³⁶ The term ombudsman means, ‘representative of the people’ and as one who serves as ‘an ear to the people.’ Chapter 13 of the *Twelfth Malaysia Plan* on page 13-18, reads:

... a new legislation on Ombudsman of Malaysia will be introduced to enhance integrity and governance of public institutions.³⁷

This policy promised by the government was reaffirmed by the Anwar administration through the Mid-Term Review of the 12th Malaysia Plan which was tabled in Parliament on 11 September 2023. On pages 2-13, there is a direct reference on improvising public complaints management. It reads:

In the remaining Twelfth Plan period, an ombudsman act will be enacted and an ombudsman body introduced. The ombudsman act will improve enforcement, increase transparency and efficiency in addressing public complaints. Meanwhile, the ombudsman body will be empowered to ensure that public complaints are duly addressed and resolved.³⁸

This is a major step forward in resolving local issues through citizens participation and enhancing grassroots democracy by giving a voice to ordinary people.

Earlier in 2023, the Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department, Datuk Seri Azalina Othman affirmed that ‘the proposed Ombudsman to deal with public complaints will be an independent statutory body answerable to Parliament.’³⁹ She indicated that it will not be like the Public Complaints Bureau (PCB) which comes under the Prime Minister’s Department. It is also important to note that the proposed Office of the Ombudsman will be for a term of six years. It will be headed by a person not from the civil service.

36 United Nations, ‘Ombudsman and Mediation Services,’ <https://www.un.org/ombudsman/about-us/an-ombudsman> accessed 14 August 2023.

37 Ministry of Economy, Malaysia, ‘Chapter 13: Strengthening Public Sector Service Delivery’ in *Twelfth Malaysia Plan 2021-2025* <https://rmke12.ekonomi.gov.my/en/13-18>, accessed 14 August 2023.

38 Ministry of Economy, Malaysia, *ibid.* ‘Chapter 2: Enhancing Efficiency of Public Service Delivery, in *Mid-Term Review of the Twelfth Malaysia Plan 2021-2025*’ https://rmke12.ekonomi.gov.my/ksp/storage/fileUpload/2023/09/2023091108_3_chapter_2.pdf accessed 14 August 2023.

39 M. Carvalho, ‘Azalina: Proposed Ombudsman system to be independent, answerable to Parliament’ *The Star* (Putrajaya, 8 May 2023) <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2023/05/08/azalina-proposed-ombudsman-system-to-be-independent-answerable-to-parliament> accessed 16 August 2023

More recently, the Chief Secretary to the Government, Tan Sri Mohd Zuki Ali affirmed that:

‘the move to set up the Malaysian Ombudsman, a platform for the public to voice their grievances against the public service delivery system, is an important step to improve governance in the public service delivery system.’⁴⁰

The parliamentary oversight role is extremely important to ensure key plans, programmes and proposals are fulfilled in practice. The Ombudsman proposal in development plans was made in 2021 and reaffirmed in 2023. As there are only two more years before the 12th Malaysia Plan period ends, parliamentarians must strengthen their policy oversight role and strengthen the mechanism of solving local issues.

MPs at the global stage: Giving visibility for inclusive development

In addition to addressing national and local concerns, MPs must increase their visibility at the global stage especially at the HLPF in July each year. This is an opportunity for them to share Malaysia’s experiences and provide input for global delivery in partnership with global parliamentary movements. For this, the Parliament and the Ministry of Finance (MoF) must make funds available for MPs to be active on SDGs matters at the United Nations.

There is also the need to strengthen South-South cooperation through which Malaysia can support low-income countries in SDGs implementation. This will serve as an avenue to showcase and share best practices and the role of APPGM-SDG in providing bipartisan support for the development for all.

In conclusion, it is clear that the parliament and parliamentarians have a critical role to play in advancing and achieving the SDGs. These have not only been highlighted in UN resolutions but also supported by global organisations committed to engage with MPs worldwide in the implementation of SDGs. There remains opportunities for partnerships and platforms for the Parliamentarians of Malaysia to increase their visibility and engagement locally and globally towards achieving the 2030 Agenda.

40 ‘Zuki: Ombudsman an essential step to improve governance’ The Star (Putrajaya, 11 October 2023) <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2023/10/11/zuki-ombudsman-an-essential-step-to-improve-governance> accessed 16 August 2023.

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- 'About Us' *2030beyond*, <https://www.2030beyond.org/who>, accessed 9 August 2023.
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- ___ 'Hanoi Declaration: The Sustainable Development Goals: Turning Words into Action', <http://archive.ipu.org/conf-e/132/rpt-gendebate.htm>, accessed 7 August 2023.
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Youth participation in SDG-Oriented Volunteerism: Insights from Malaysia's APPGM-SDG Platform

Philus Thomas and Siti Ghazali***

Abstract

Engaging youth is paramount for progressing towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This quantitative research studies the active involvement of Malaysian youth as volunteers in initiatives centred around the SDGs, with a specific focus on the All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on Sustainable Development Goals (APPGM-SDG) platform. Data was gathered from 323 volunteers who applied as volunteers at the Malaysian Youth SDG Summits, the Young Asian Voices for the United Nations We Need, and the Malaysian Youth SDG Agent 22/23 and 23/24 Cohort initiatives. The objective of the study is to identify the demographic involvement of youths in volunteerism through the initiatives of APPGM-SDG. This research analyses the nature of youth participation in SDG-oriented volunteerism, investigating their demographic concentration in active engagement, including engagement by gender, organisational affiliation, and prior experience in volunteerism and how these factors contribute to voluntary work related to the SDGs. Descriptive analysis was conducted to identify the demographic distribution of youths toward the involvement in SDG-oriented volunteerism. Findings indicated a moderate distribution between males and females, a greater number of participants affiliated in organisations, and a greater number of participants with prior experience in volunteerism. By examining the quantitative nature of these volunteers with the comprehensive study of literature and discussion, we gain valuable insights into the dynamics of youth engagement in localising the SDGs. These insights, rooted in the context of Malaysia, can inform strategies for fostering youth-driven

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progress toward the SDGs both nationally and globally, providing recommendations to parliamentarians, civil societies, and youth groups as a whole.

Keywords: APPGM-SDG, Youth, Sustainable Development Goals, Volunteerism, Parliamentarian

Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) initiated by the United Nations (UN) as a call to action in addressing global narrative issues entailing people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership necessitates the collaborative actions of stakeholders including governmental agencies and civil societies. Youths indefinitely play a pivotal role in the thrust of the agenda as partners.¹ Making up the largest age demographic in the world, the UN Office of the Secretary General's Envoy on Youth quotes *"It is impossible to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 without the active participation of the largest generation of changemakers."*² With the catalysing role of the UN, parliamentarians, civil societies, non-governmental organisations (NGO), and governmental agencies in optimising the involvement of the young generation in the civic space and integrating them into national and global agendas for a better future, it is important to identify the demographics of the current youth state in the active participation toward the 2030 Agenda. This will provide in depth and realistic propositions for raising the bar to activate and mobilise more youths in the social sphere of sustainable development.

Drawing attention to the central theme of this study, as highlighted in various stakeholder discourses including the parliament and civic spaces, the ideation of youth as the "torchbearers"³ continues to echo in initiatives aimed at involving youth in sustainable development and nation building. This research studies quantitatively the active

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- 1 United Nations Development Programme, Fast Facts: Youth as Partners for the Implementation of the SDGs (UNDP, 2017) <https://www.undp.org/publications/fast-facts-youth-partners-implementation-sdgs>.
 - 2 United Nations Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, Youth SDG Dashboard (Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, 2020) <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/youth-sdg-dashboard/> [Accessed 12 December 2023].
 - 3 Hakim, L., & Sallehuddin, Q., 'Dewan Rakyat Speaker: Youth Are Torchbearers of Country's Development' (NST Online, 14 September 2023) <https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2023/09/955177/dewan-rakyat-speaker-youth-are-torchbearers-countrys-development> [Accessed 12 December 2023].

involvement of Malaysian youth in volunteer initiatives aligned with the SDGs, with a specific focus on the All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on Sustainable Development Goals (APPGM-SDG) platform.

Background and objective of study

Youth in Malaysia is termed as the demographic of those between the ages 15-30 per the 2019 change instituted through Youth societies and Youth Development Act (Amendment 2019) which limits the cut off age from 40 to 30 years of age. However, the government has set Jan 1, 2026 for the Act to come into force. A trend that has been of recent youth inclination includes the entrance into gig economy preference over tertiary education; indicating a motivational factor that seems to be directing toward a causal relationship toward a downward national development and competence building in par with neighbouring nations. Similar to the aforementioned, literature also indicates a slack in the grand involvement of youth in volunteerism and civic spaces.⁴ Volunteerism has played a pivotal role in the social development of societies by addressing social and national concerns through various initiatives. The essence of voluntary work has been a catalyst to instil a moral and social responsibility that individuals play for their nation⁵. With regard to the platforms presented to the youth demographic in differentiation to adult involvement in volunteerism, the conversation on youth-led spaces and initiatives continues on from policymakers to civil society leaders. This sheds light on viewing youth not as mere leaders of the future, but as leaders of today.

The SDGs are provided as guiding frameworks with targets and indicators to contribute to the developments of social, economic, and environmental aspects through raising awareness and increasing conscious sustainable practices. The ultimate goal is to ensure a better and more inclusive future for all. Volunteering ensures that people are involved in planning and decision-making processes about their own priorities, thereby providing new channels for interaction between the government and people. The UN volunteers record that the engagement of volunteers fosters intergovernmental dialogue contributing to 149 out

4 Sparks, S. D., 'Volunteerism Declined among Young People' (Education Week, 17 July 2018) <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/volunteerism-declined-among-young-people/2018/07..>

5 Sahri, M., et al., 'Empowering Youth Volunteerism: The Importance and Global Motivating Factors' (2013) 3 Journal of Educational and Social Research.

of 288 VNR reports submitted that acknowledged the work of volunteers throughout the spectrum of the SDGs⁶. There was also an integration of volunteering work in the national SDG strategies and plans across the member states of the UN. This calls relevance to the present nature of activism amongst youth and underscores the need for localised studies specifically focused on youth engagement in volunteerism for SDG initiatives in Malaysia.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on sustainable development goals: Youth development

The All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on Sustainable Development Goals (APPGM-SDG) is a bipartisan initiative with the objectives to implement the SDGs in the two-hundred twenty-two parliamentary constituencies in Malaysia. The initiative strives to implement the SDGs as a common goal regardless of any political affiliations through the analysis of issues and solutions, policy research, and facilitating multi-stakeholder partnerships, including the raising of awareness and building capacity at the local levels⁷. The organisation consists of parliamentarians, academicians, solution providers, and civil society activists that work toward the accomplishments of the 2030 Agenda at the national level.

The youth development arm of APPGM-SDG began with the agenda and thrust to mobilise and empower Malaysian youths under the training arm of MySDG Academy to take up the 2030 agenda and contribute to localising the SDGs in their respective localities. They are encouraged to participate in curated initiatives as well. The focal attention that the department involves itself includes organising the Malaysian Youth SDG Summit annually, coordinating the Malaysian Youth SDG Agent initiative, conducting research and development on Malaysian youths in the SDGs agenda. The department envisions the empowerment and coordinated mobilisation of Malaysian youths in the SDG implementation

6 UN Volunteers, 'Volunteerism and the SDGs | Knowledge Portal on Volunteerism' (knowledge.unv.org, 2023) <https://knowledge.unv.org/theme/volunteerism-and-the-sdgs>.

7 Mohd Yusof, D., & Sanusi, Z. A., 'The APPGM-SDG (All Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia for Sustainable Development Goals): Towards Mainstreaming SDG in Issues and Solutions of Parliamentary Constituencies' (2021) 1 Journal of the Malaysian Parliament <https://journalmp.parlimen.gov.my/jurnal/index.php/jmp/article/view/39/23> [Accessed 12 December 2023].

agenda. Additionally, the department stands as a representative body between youth leaders across civil societies and the parliament through its initiatives. The thrust of the department is its ethos of a bottom-up approach in the involvement and development of youths through mentorship, and youth training programmes. Through the platform, the department envisions a local to global approach in sending Malaysian youth representation to national and global platforms on representing the youth in SDG developments of Malaysia⁸.

The current study contributes to the body of research on youth development from the data of the All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on Sustainable Development Goals. The objectives outlined are to study the nature of youth volunteerism in SDG oriented initiatives, specifically focusing on a descriptive nature of the data, including gender involvement among the youth demographic, prior experience, and organisational affiliation that contributes to the involvement in SDG-oriented volunteerism. The study discusses the practical ways in which stakeholders and parliamentarians can effectively engage youths from their respective constituencies in more voluntary work and civic spaces.

Significance

This study is significant to various stakeholders including research bodies, parliamentarians, and civil societies to encourage and enhance the factors of increasing the interest and rate of youth in the SDGs and its oriented voluntary activity. It holds significance within the academic and research community providing insights into the dynamics of youth engagement in SDG-oriented volunteerism. The quantitative findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge, offering an understanding of the factors influencing youth participation. It is hoped that researchers can build upon these insights to further explore the complexities of youth involvement in sustainable development initiatives, potentially informing future studies and methodologies.

In the context of parliamentarians, the findings of this research carry important implications for parliamentarians and policymakers. Understanding the demographic concentrations and influential factors in youth participation in SDG volunteerism allows for the formulation of targeted policies and initiatives that can be undertaken by the relevant

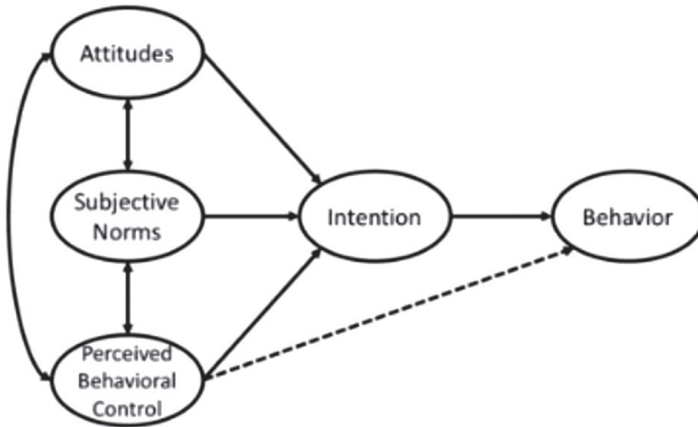
8 MySDG Academy, '2024 Target and Deliveries: Corporate Communication and MySDG Academy' (2023).

parties in building the capacity and involvement of youths for national developments through the SDGs. Parliamentarians can leverage this research to design strategies that encourage and support youth-driven progress towards the SDGs. It provides evidence-based information that can guide the creation of legislative frameworks fostering youth engagement in the national development agendas.

Civil societies and organisations (CSOs) play a key role in the encouragement of youth involvement in volunteerism. This research outcomes offer CSOs valuable insights into the specific characteristics and preferences of youth volunteers. This knowledge can be instrumental in tailoring outreach efforts, volunteer recruitment strategies, and programme designs to effectively engage the youth demographic. Furthermore, CSOs can use the research findings and discussion to enhance their advocacy and collaboration efforts, ensuring a more targeted and impactful approach to achieving the SDGs through youth involvement.

Theory of planned behaviour and youth engagement in volunteerism

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) by Ajzen (2005) provides a valuable lens for understanding youth engagement in volunteerism. According to TPB, individuals' behavioural intentions are crucial predictors of their actual behaviours, where these intentions are shaped by three main factors, namely; attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. In the context of youth volunteerism, attitudes refer to the individual's evaluation of volunteering activities, recognizing the positive outcomes such as personal development, skill acquisition, and community impact. Subjective norms capture the perceived social pressure or approval regarding engaging in volunteerism, reflecting the influence of peers, family, and societal expectations on the youth's intentions. Perceived behavioural control which is the third factor, reflects the individual's belief in their ability to successfully carry out the behaviour. For youth considering volunteerism, perceived behavioural control encompasses their confidence in overcoming barriers, accessing opportunities, and effectively contributing to community initiatives. The interlinked three factors affect the intention of the youth to cognitively decide on their participation in volunteering, therefore affecting the behaviour to participate in volunteerism.

Figure 1: Theory of Planned Behaviour adopted from Ajzen (2005)

The present study outlines the focus on the norms of the volunteer pool, where data collects the demographic concentration of the volunteers originating from based on gender based involvement, affiliation, and prior experience. It then provides, recommendations to stakeholders on steps to increase youth participation in voluntary work related to the SDG agenda and increase accessibility to opportunities within societal norms. Youth active participation in volunteerism is the conscious decision and action that they take to dedicate their time purposefully in helping communities and initiatives without any form of expectation for material or monetary reward.⁹

Literature review

The role of youth in the sustainable development goals

Youth participation in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals constitutes a significant role for advocating social change. The tradition of youth and activism in grassroots movements globally has resulted in the change of policy, organisational transformation and development of healthier communities and ecosystems.¹⁰ Youth are the driving force

9 Siti Raba'ah Hamzah et al., 'Understanding the Reasons for Malaysian Youth Participation in Volunteering Activities' (2015) 3 Athens Journal of Social Sciences 39.

10 Larsson, J., & Holmberg, J., 'Learning While Creating Value for Sustainability Transitions: The Case of Challenge Lab at Chalmers University of Technology' (2018) 172 Journal of Cleaner Production 4411 [<https://research.chalmers.se/en/publication/?id=253757>].

behind progress in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Their activism, advocacy, participation in various SDG-based programmes, and efforts to raise awareness about the SDGs are important to advocate for these goals, mobilise communities, and influence policies. By bringing attention to issues such as climate change, social inequalities, and education, they can make an impact within the communities and on a global scale. This is supported by studies that emphasised on the ability of youth to effectively fill the important gaps in SDG implementation.¹¹

According to Ng and Thomas (2023), youth actively participate in implementing and leading SDG-oriented projects and programmes, contributing their time, skills, and energy to create positive changes aligned with the SDGs. This can be illustrated by their participation in APPGM-SDG organised programmes such as the Malaysian Youth SDG Agent.¹² Engaging youth in the SDGs is considered crucial due to their demographic significance, as they bring innovative perspectives, fresh ideas and potential for long-term impact. Their creativity and adaptability contribute to finding new solutions to complex global challenges addressed by the SDGs. Similarly, UN agencies highlight the role of youth engagement in achieving the SDGs, as these 17 goals directly shape the future that today's young generation will inherit. Furthermore, studies emphasise the need of perceiving youth not merely as beneficiaries but as active contributors and agents of change in sustainable development initiatives. Demographically, in the engagements with the SDGs, United Nations Volunteers (UNV) indicated a balanced involvement of volunteers in 2019 and 2020 originating from gender involvements, which contributes to the gender equal engagements. Furthermore, many volunteers were affiliated with organisations, and a higher percentage of those who continued in civic spaces as adults had prior experience in the contribution of their volunteerism as youths, as was noted in similar research. Even though, this connotes a demographic involvement, regional perspectives were found to be at a deficit.

Mohd Yusof and Ariffin (2021) in their research stated that youth engagement in SDGs activities within ASEAN countries can be grouped

11 Lee, B., et al., 'Students Leading Students: A Qualitative Study Exploring a Student-Led Model for Engagement with the Sustainable Development Goals' (2022) 24 *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*

12 Ng, Z., & Thomas, P., 'Perspectives, Experiences, and Involvement of Youths in Promoting Sustainable Development Goals in Malaysian Parliamentary Constituencies' (2023) 3 *Journal of the Malaysian Parliament* 110 [<https://journalmp.parlimen.gov.my/jurnal/index.php/jmp/article/view/85/43>].

into three. Firstly, the 'providers' for activities related to the SDGs and voluntary work engagement, which include youth organisations and government partners. This group participates in reporting on SDGs, collecting data, and initiating roles in community projects aligned with SDGs. Second group is SDG 'receivers' who take on the role as participants in education, health services, training and development and are involved in multi-tier meetings based on respected capacities. This is the group that has often been targeted by most of the SDG-based programmes. Lastly, the 'providers and receivers' who act simultaneously and participate in policy making with the government and are involved in high-level discussions.¹³ However, the strength and volume of the engagement varies upon the desire and the willingness of governments to accept youth as their partners.

Youth engagement in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) initiatives has also been observed globally. The United Nations recognized 17 young advocates who lead efforts to combat global challenges thus inspiring a better future.¹⁴ UNESCO also highlighted the role of media and information literacy in promoting green skills among youth, empowering them to navigate complex environmental issues and contribute to a more sustainable future.¹⁵ However, youth-led efforts face challenges such as climate change, unemployment, poverty, gender inequality, conflict, and migration despite being known by the world for a tech-savvy generation..¹⁶ Despite these challenges, lessons learned from these efforts emphasise the importance of equipping youth with the tools to promote sustainable development.¹⁷ These lessons underscore the need for active listening, acknowledging and acting

13 Mohd Yusof, M. I., & Ariffin, M. M., 'Youth Engagement in the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS) in Asean Countries' (2021) 10 International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development.

14 'Leveraging Youth to Shape a Better Future, UN Announces 17 Young Leaders for SDGs' (UN News, 18 September 2020) <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/09/1072732> [Accessed 21 April 2024].

15 UNESCO, 'Empowering Youth for Sustainable Development' (Unesco.org, 2023) <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/empowering-youth-sustainable-development>.

16 'World Youth Report: Addressing the Complex Challenges Facing Young People Today' (UN DESA | United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 20 February 2019) <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/social/world-youth-report-addressing-the-complex-challenges-facing-young-people-today.html>.

17 Martin, 'UN SG Launches #Youth2030 Strategy' (United Nations Sustainable Development) <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2018/09/youth2030-launch/>.

upon information learned and supporting the roles that young people want to assume and cultivate.

Platforms and parliamentary support to encourage youth volunteerism in Malaysia

Mohd Yusof and Ariffin (2021) reported that youth engagement in SDGs within ASEAN countries is readily accomplished through voluntary works and youth-led activities. In the Malaysian context, efforts to encourage and facilitate youth engagement in SDGs are channelled through various platforms and parliamentary mechanisms.¹⁰ APPGM-SDG spearheads initiatives dedicated to fostering an environment conducive to youth volunteerism.¹⁸ Collaborations between parliamentary bodies, government agencies, civil society organisations, and youth-led initiatives further enhance the landscape of youth volunteerism in Malaysia. These collaborations highlight volunteerism as a tool for addressing societal challenges and advancing the SDGs.

The chairman of the Malaysian Red Crescent Kapitan Chapter noted the decrease in the spirit of volunteerism, attributing the decline to the rapid pace of development and modernization, leaving individuals overwhelmed to cope with the demands of their daily lives.¹⁹ Malaysia's then serving prime minister had announced 2013 as the year of Volunteer and allocated RM100 million for 1M4U volunteer programme to constantly instil the spirit of volunteerism among youth. The 1.2 million students within Malaysian Higher Education Institutions (HEI) were highlighted to be empowered to actively contribute to the country's development. One crucial aspect of their contribution involves fostering strong character, idealism, skills, and leadership qualities to become valuable assets to society; offering experiential learning opportunities that complement formal education. These qualities are not solely acquired through classroom lectures but through active engagement in social initiatives and volunteer programmes which emphasises the significance of hands-on experiences in fostering critical thinking and cultural competence among volunteers. Thus, in the 2024 budget, the

18 '2022 Annual Report, All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on Sustainable Development Goals (APPGM-SDG)' (2022) <https://www.parlimen.gov.my/resources/files/rsaindex/pdf/0-%202022-APPGM-SDG%20Annual%20Report.pdf>.

19 'MRC Kapit Takes up Challenge to Host Event' (*Borneo Post Online*, 2 October 2014) <https://www.theborneopost.com/2014/10/02/mrc-kapit-takes-up-challenge-to-host-event/> [Accessed 20 December 2023].

Malaysian government had indicated monetary incentives to be given to youths between 18 to 20 years of age to engage in voluntary work in government recognised bodies.²⁰

In addition, educating the youth should not be narrowly defined with an emphasis solely on academic achievement. Volunteerism has also been a method to promote active learning, providing experience that will strengthen their commitment to civic participation, expand their educational experience, and better serve their communities. In order for the quality of youth to move in tandem with the current societal concerns based on 17-SDG needs and to inculcate pro-social behaviour in the youth, volunteerism is essential. This active involvement is essential in shaping robust characters and cultivating invaluable human capital toward the nation's development. Additionally, the United Nations Volunteer programme highlights the role of volunteering and social activism in promoting social inclusion and participatory development.⁸

Volunteers are seen as valuable sources of knowledge in development programmes, ensuring the relevance and legitimacy of advocacy campaigns. There are several studies that emphasise the substantial contribution of volunteer efforts to address social challenges and promote the well-being of the community. At the same time, economically viewed, it demonstrates how volunteerism positively influences economies by creating job opportunities and enhancing community resources. A study conducted in the UK indicated that volunteering contributed an estimated 40 Billion Pounds annually, ranking as the nation's third-largest contributor to the Gross Domestic Product. Moreover, according to Independent Sector, volunteering programmes conducted by non-profit organisations in the USA have been approximated to equate to 9 million full time positions. In Canada, out of 24 million individuals aged 15 or older, 7.5 million engage in volunteer work. Additionally, volunteerism generates job opportunities within the community.²¹

In recent years, there has been a growing momentum to mainstream Education of SDGs (ESD) at HEIs, including advancements made to curricula and student engagement programming which have long been viewed as incubators of innovation in sustainability, achieved through research, curricula and empowering staff, faculty and students as change

20 Bernama, 'Gov't Provides RM500 Incentive for Youths Involved in Volunteerism' (*Bernama*, 13 October 2023) <https://www.bernama.com/en/news.php?id=2234689> [Accessed 29 December 2023].

21 Maniam, V. A, 'Volunteerism for Youth Development' (2004) *INTI Journal*.

agents.²² One Study conducted in Canada aimed to better understand how student-centric SDG programmes can advance SDG engagement in the campus by introducing an active leadership role in the SDGA. The findings recommend integrating youth into institutional SDG-based initiatives, demonstrating that youth-led models for SDG action which possess unique capacities to foster empowered youth leaders while boosting institutional efforts to advance the SDG. Participants assumed roles such as executive members, advisors and event planners, enhancing their understanding of the SDGs beyond the classroom and linking learning to personal experiences. This heightened self-awareness, empowerment, and the drive to assume leadership positions aimed at instigating systemic changes. In particular, the study also emphasised the importance of collaboration between individuals, government, and civil society in implementing the SDGs. Accordingly, the incorporation of SDG workshops through platforms like APPGM-SDG in Malaysia reflects the country's commitment to mainstreaming SDGs into educational spheres.

Furthermore, achieving the SDGs by 2030 necessitates the inclusion of stakeholders' collective voices through a multi-layer governance model, treating youth as essential partners and empowering them with specific SDG initiatives, thus leveraging the youth as a catalyst of change. By recognizing the youth as the future generation, their involvement in these initiatives contributes to their country's development. Stakeholder engagement and youth empowerment promote significant cooperation across various levels to create sustainable policies. However, study unveils a significant finding that stakeholder engagement in youth-led SDG-related programmes in Malaysia depends on the commitment of the youth movement²³. Moreover, it highlights limited engagement between international SDG stakeholders and Malaysian youth movement, contrasting with moderate engagement with state, local governments, associated institutions, legislators, and the private sector. The landscape of youth movement in Malaysia engaging with SDGs involves varied partnerships at national levels. One of them is that they collaborate extensively with government agencies, legislative members, NGOs

22 Karatzoglou, B., 'An In-Depth Literature Review of the Evolving Roles and Contributions of Universities to Education for Sustainable Development' (2013) 49 *Journal of Cleaner Production* 44.

23 Mohd Yusof, M. I., Ho Nyuk Onn@Ariffin, M., & Dwi Harsono, 'Stakeholder Engagement in Implementation of Youth-Led SDG-Related Programmes in Malaysia' (2022) 7 *Environment-Behaviour Proceedings Journal* 323.

and educational institutions, enhancing their SDG knowledge and youth participation. However, associations with government agencies, politicians, and private firms remain selective and limited as they are more mutual with the fellow NGOs and educational institutions. Meanwhile, for the youth movement affiliated to national and state youth councils, significant support in terms of financial and material support for SDG implementation is received. Yet, they struggle with exposure to the SDG and face selective involvement in consultation processes. Next, non-affiliated youth movements usually prioritise independence, avoiding partnerships that might compromise their autonomy. This movement, is more focused on advocating for youth issues despite facing economical constraints. There are also some youth movements now gradually forming partnerships to boost their visibility of advocacy for SDGs as it strengthens the funding of the movement and the implementation of large-scale initiatives.¹⁰

The global progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals faces notable slowdowns despite universal support. Overcoming these challenges necessitates global solidarity, cross-sectoral support, and intergovernmental leadership. Malaysia's utilisation of platforms and parliamentary mechanisms reflects an effort to foster youth engagement in achieving the SDGs. However, to achieve the localization of the SDGs, the decentralisation of authority and dedicated actions from the specified officials to drive it forward are required. The execution of SDGs at the national level hinges on the political determination of a country's leadership. There are three stakeholders' support that play an important role. Firstly, the non-political executive which functions as the SDG implementer across various administrative tiers. Government institutions will align their objectives with the SDGs, reflecting the services they provide to citizens. Consequently, the execution of it will entail both horizontal and vertical responsibilities across multi-tier governance levels.²⁴ Second is the legislator's involvement in evaluating SDG-related legislation that has to be framed and appraised in the parliament.²⁵ Next, the statistical agencies and consultants who provide

24 Cummings, S., et al., 'Critical Discourse Analysis of Perspectives on Knowledge and the Knowledge Society within the Sustainable Development Goals' (2018) 36 *Development Policy Review* 727.

25 Goyannes Gusmão Caiado, R., et al., 'A Literature-Based Review on Potentials and Constraints in the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals' (2018) 198 *Journal of Cleaner Production* 1276 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959652618320754> accessed 18 October 2019..

reliable SDG-related data.²⁶ Following this, audit agencies and institutions are responsible for scrutinising the accountability of the SDGs.²⁷ Thus, the role played by parliamentary bodies, government agencies, and civil society organisations, particularly through the APPGM-SDG, demonstrates a commitment to promoting youth involvement in SDG-oriented initiatives.

In the pursuit of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), various multi-stakeholder partnership models have emerged as effective strategies. Public-private partnerships have been instrumental in mobilising resources and expertise, leveraging the strengths of both sectors to address complex challenges. The SDG Fund supports the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development by implementing innovative joint programmes and focuses on public-private partnerships to accelerate the achievement of SDGs in more than 20 countries.²⁸ Civil society collaborations have played a crucial role in ensuring inclusivity and grassroots participation, often serving as a bridge between local communities and larger institutional structures. This has been shown when Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) from around the world, including the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE), called on governments and other global development stakeholders to redouble their efforts to address gaps and work towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda.²⁹ Academia-industry partnerships, on the other hand, have fostered innovation and research, driving technological advancements aligned with SDGs during the development and implementation of all projects. In addition, the SDG Partnership Guidebook provides a practical guide in building high-impact multi-stakeholder partnerships for Sustainable Development Goals.

26 Allen, C., et al., 'Indicator-Based Assessments of Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): A Case Study from the Arab Region' (2017) 12 *Sustainability Science* 975.

27 Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen, S., Dahl, A. L., & Persson, Å., 'The Emerging Accountability Regimes for the Sustainable Development Goals and Policy Integration: Friend or Foe?' (2018) 36 *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space* 1371.

28 Duran y Lalaguna, P., & Dorodnykh, E., 'The Role of Private–Public Partnerships in the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals: Experience from the SDG Fund' [2017] *World Sustainability Series* 969.

29 Myarcia, '13 CSOs Launch Report on SDGs Implementation' (*CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness*, 24 February 2022) <https://csopartnership.org/2022/02/13-csos-launch-report-on-sdgs-implementation/> [Accessed 21 April 2024].

Methodology

This study utilises a quantitative descriptive research methodology. Quantitative research methods quantify and analyse variables to obtain results, encompassing the use and analysis of numerical data through specialised statistical techniques in order to address inquiries of who, what, where, when, and how in the scope of study. Data was compiled from 323 volunteers who participated in the APPGM-SDG Youth Development initiatives that were SDG-oriented namely; Malaysian Youth SDG Summit 2022 and 2023, The Young Asian Voices for the United Nations We Need 2.0, and Malaysian Youth SDG Agent 22/23 and 23/24 cohort. Demographics, including gender distribution, organisational affiliations, and prior volunteerism experiences, were analysed to identify the nature of youth participation in SDG-oriented volunteerism. Data was collected via questionnaire on google forms while informed consent was obtained stating that the data gathered will be used for research and development purposes. Inclusion criteria included (a) youths 30 and below, (b) initiatives as volunteers with the organisers. The participant recruitment was done for the initiatives through the sharing of applications via the APPGM-SDG network of organisations and strategic partners. The instrument was designed specific to the project initiative of the department that gathered demographic data of youths who applied as volunteers to the initiatives. The questionnaire was circulated prior to each of the initiatives across 2022-2023 through snowball sampling. Google forms were circulated through APPGM-SDG youth department's strategic partners consisting of civil societies, non-governmental organisations, social enterprises, think tanks, government agencies, and institutions that later circulated them among their networks across Malaysia. The forms to express interest included demographic questions, which covered gender distribution, organisational affiliations, and prior volunteerism experience. The data collection process prioritised ensuring diversity within the sample to capture a representative picture of youth engagement in SDG initiatives. Data was collected across 2022-2023 via these initiatives. Descriptive statistical analyses, including mean, standard deviation, and variance, were conducted in SPSS to identify the distribution of the variables in relation to the involvement of youth in SDG-oriented volunteerism. The findings derived from this methodology aim to provide valuable insights into the dynamics of youth engagement, thereby informing strategies for fostering localised progress towards the SDGs, both at the national and global levels.

Findings and discussion

The findings recorded a descriptive analysis of the data collected from the pool of youths who joined as volunteers in the initiatives of APPGM-SDG in youth and SDG developments. Mean, and distribution of the data were documented from the data obtained.

Summary of demographic profile

| Demographic Profile | Frequency | Percentile (%) |
|-----------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Gender: | | |
| Male | 148 | 45.8 |
| Female | 175 | 54.2 |
| Age: | | |
| 15 | 4 | 1.2 |
| 16 | 5 | 1.5 |
| 17 | 10 | 3.1 |
| 18 | 14 | 4.3 |
| 19 | 13 | 4.0 |
| 20 | 30 | 9.3 |
| 21 | 38 | 11.8 |
| 22 | 35 | 10.8 |
| 23 | 41 | 12.4 |
| 24 | 35 | 10.8 |
| 25 | 24 | 7.4 |
| 26 | 22 | 6.8 |
| 27 | 16 | 5.0 |
| 28 | 8 | 2.5 |
| 29 | 19 | 5.9 |
| 30 | 9 | 2.8 |
| Organisational Affiliation: | | |
| Affiliated | 247 | 76.5 |
| Non-Affiliated | 76 | 23.5 |
| Prior Experience in | | |
| Volunteerism | 233 | 72.1 |
| Has prior experience | 90 | 27.9 |
| No prior experience | | |

Descriptive analysis

Table 1 shows the descriptive analysis of the demographic variables studied in the research, focusing on the representation of the data of youth in SDG-oriented volunteerism. Firstly, on gender distribution, the mean gender score is 0.54, indicating a relatively balanced distribution between male and female participants. The standard deviation and variance values suggest a moderate level of variability in gender representation within the sample. Secondly, on the organisational affiliation of participants, mean score is 0.76, pointing to a significant proportion of participants having affiliations with organisations that include NGOs, CSOs, or Think Tanks. The moderate standard deviation and variance suggested diversity in organisational affiliations among the participants. Thirdly, participants, on average, have a prior experience score of 0.72, suggesting a substantial presence of individuals with past volunteerism engagement. The moderate standard deviation and variance indicated some variability in the extent of prior volunteerism experience among the participants.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of gender, organisation affiliation and prior experience in SDG-oriented volunteerism participation

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|----------------------------|-----|---------|---------|------|----------------|
| Gender | 323 | 1 | 2 | 1.46 | .499 |
| Organisational Affiliation | 323 | 0 | 1 | .76 | .425 |
| Prior Experience | 323 | 0 | 1 | .72 | .449 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 323 | | | | |

The frequency measure of the nominal value of the data presents findings that are influential to understand further the nature of youth participation in the SDG-oriented initiatives as volunteers.

Table 2: Frequency table of Gender demographic involvement in SDG-oriented volunteerism

| Gender | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--------|--------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Female | 175 | 54.2 | 54.2 | 54.2 |
| | Male | 148 | 45.8 | 45.8 | 100.0 |
| Total | | 323 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Based on the frequency table breakdown of the gender involvement in SDG-oriented activities, it appears that more women than men engage in SDG-oriented volunteerism. However, the difference in distribution is not significant to conclude a difference. 54% of participants in the SDG-oriented volunteerism activities organised by APPGM-SDG were females; this orients to the literature indicating women’s participation in volunteering in the social and health fields is higher than men.³⁰ The findings thus complement existing research.

Table 3

Frequency table of organisational affiliation demographic involvement in SDG-oriented volunteerism

| | | Organisational Affiliation | | | |
|-------|-----|-----------------------------------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Valid | No | 76 | 23.5 | 23.5 | 23.5 |
| | Yes | 247 | 76.5 | 76.5 | 100.0 |
| Total | | 323 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Results show that 76.5% of participants in the SDG-oriented volunteerism were those who had an affiliation with an organisation. In context of the platform’s recruitment, affiliation referred to those who were attached to any non-governmental organisation (NGO), civil society organisation (CSO), and think-tanks. A difference can be seen where, more participants who have been previously in organisations, continue to engage in volunteerism and activism, while on the contrary, participants without any form of affiliation constituted 23.5% of the participants. The pool of participants were garnered from the network of strategic partners of APPGM-SDG Youth Development, consisting of non- governmental organisations, social enterprises, think tanks, government agencies, and institutions that were oriented in their work toward youth empowerment across Malaysia. The motivating factors that encourage participants to join in the Youth SDG programmes with or without affiliations with organisations could be a topic for future research. Nonetheless, it can be classified that aligning with the Planned Behaviour Theory, participants

30 United Nations Volunteers, ‘Beyond Averages: Do Gender Disparities Exist in Volunteering?’ (United Nations Volunteers, 2021) <https://www.unv.org/Success-stories/beyond-averages-do-gender-disparities-exist-volunteering>.

who volunteered to the initiatives stem from the individual alignment of their attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behaviour control.

Table 4: Frequency table of prior experience demographic involvement in SDG-oriented volunteerism

| | | Prior Experience | | | |
|-------|-------|------------------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Valid | No | 90 | 27.9 | 27.9 | 27.9 |
| | Yes | 233 | 72.1 | 72.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 323 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Participants who engaged in the SDG-oriented initiatives as volunteers were found to constitute 72.1% of those already with prior experience in volunteerism, while 27.9% of them without any prior experience in volunteerism. This provides insights that youth who have previous engagement and experience in voluntary work continue to engage in their voluntary portfolio through a variety of initiatives. Previous experience is connoted by the defining narrative of volunteerism, constituting the conscious participation on a pro-bono basis for a cause or to engage in community development. Thus the findings are expanded to confer that 72.1% participants had experience in volunteerism prior to joining as volunteers with APPGM-SDG's youth development initiatives.

Gender demographic variation was average between the males and females; with females slightly higher in percentage. In coherence with this, literature indicated a larger percentage of females who engaged in voluntary engagement and civic spaces especially in the social and health sectors.³¹ Similarly, the United Nations Volunteers data indicated a 50-50 engagement from males and females between 2019 to 2020. The findings indicated a reduction in gender disparity and involvement of youths in SDG oriented volunteerism moving towards gender equality in the civic spaces.

Data collected on the organisational affiliation of participants shows results that lean toward higher youth involvements from organisations. However, this can be an effect of the marketing of the initiatives from which participants are involved in, as the recruitment was done from the

31 Mohd Ramlan, et al., 'Gender Differences among Youth in Volunteerism' (2015) 12 Journal of Administrative Science https://jas.uitm.edu.my/images/2015_DEC/5.pdf accessed 23 March 2024.

network of organisations directly or indirectly affiliated with APPGM-SDG. Literature also indicated the relatedness of increased voluntary engagement that was subsequent through the activism of non-profits and organisations; indicating that many voluntary engagements originated from an affiliated body that promoted the action. Unique to the findings, the percentage of the volunteers that joined the initiatives independently are noteworthy; this shows such a prospective growing audience of youths that are exploring in the field of social activism and meaningful engagement to gain experience via voluntary works. Although the group constituted below 30% of participants, it should be taken to hope for greater engagement of youths from various groups to join volunteerism activities and be involved in the larger civic spaces. Promotions and marketing of various kinds play a pivotal role to the accessibility of information to voluntary works across the nation to engage youths.

On the concentration of participation of volunteers that had prior experience, results indicated a larger mean of participants that had prior experience in volunteerism. This indication aligns with research that suggests many who engaged in volunteerism as youths also engaged in volunteerism as adults. In literature, the impact that volunteerism has towards a national and global narrative calls for attention to the demographic encouragement and factors to involve more youth to participate in the civic space with encouragement from parliamentary processes and civil movements. Through active participation in volunteer activities, individuals not only contribute to community welfare but also hone essential skills; fostering personal growth. The symbiotic relationship between volunteerism and human capital development underscores its potential as a transformative force in shaping knowledgeable and empowered societies.

Literature also indicated that youth participation in voluntary activism had an impact on the national economy.³² Volunteer-driven initiatives generate social values, promoting economic sustainability by addressing societal needs transcending traditional GDP metrics. By quantifying this social capital, the holistic economic benefits should also be acknowledged. Therefore, the present study indicating the demographic factors should enable stakeholders to focus on developments and diversify participation from different groups of individuals who join the voluntary movements for the SDGs and national developments.

32 Mohd Hafiz Mohd Nor, Asmidar Alias, & Mohd Faizal Musa, 'Social Capital in Youth Volunteerism' (2018) 16 *Planning Malaysia Journal*.

Volunteerism is a versatile and dynamic tool in addressing a spectrum of societal challenges. From poverty alleviation to environmental sustainability, the collective efforts of volunteers are the driving force for positive change. The clear indication of the distribution of demographics found in participation at SDG-oriented volunteerism initiatives connoted that, actionable steps proposed in the recommendations are relevant in being the cornerstone of increasing interest and participation for the 2030 agenda from a local to global perspective.

In line with the potentiality of youth participation in the SDG oriented voluntarism lies the potential struggles that stakeholders face in activating youths into the social sphere for national and global developments as voluntary networks. Some of these struggles identified in light of the decline of youth participation can be taken as a starting point to improve services to cater to the need-based and passion-driven initiatives aimed at actively engaging the youth demographic in the voluntary action. This is demonstrated by the model used at APPGM-SDG youth development to align the interest of the youth SDG Agents with their passion to the SDG themes and to themselves while leading and honing their skills as teams to push the SDG agenda. Challenges that literature indicated in essence include the lack of awareness on the platforms and initiatives that drive youth voluntary programmes, which shows a gap in accessibility to information especially in the larger scheme of the demographics. Extrinsic and intrinsic value found within the initiatives are also factors that influence participation. Engaging youth in volunteer work requires tapping into their interests and motivations. Relevant stakeholders may face challenges if the volunteer opportunities do not align with the passions and causes that resonate with the youth. Thus, the need to create diverse and appealing projects is essential to capture their interest. Youth also may prefer short-term commitments due to changing priorities or uncertainties about their future plans; thus affecting participation. Moreover, a lack of recognition and feedback often associated with post-participation in voluntary work will also affect the future engagement of youths in volunteerism, calling for civic spaces to be open for dialogue, recognition and encouragement.

Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) in upscaling youth participation in volunteerism

The theory of planned behaviour as proposed by Ajzen connotes that human behaviours are shaped by intentions, which are influenced by factors including attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural

control.³³ The framework presented in TPB can be of essential utility in the context of volunteerism and activating the youth involvement by increasing focus towards demographic encouragement to engage in voluntary work in relation to the SDG agenda. The behaviour (ie. volunteerism in SDG-oriented initiatives) is influenced by the intentions to volunteer, which in turn is influenced by the attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control of the individuals.

The attitude referred to in TPB coheres with the individual predisposition of youths towards engaging in volunteer activities aimed at achieving sustainable development. This encompasses their beliefs about the importance and effectiveness of volunteerism in creating positive change. Concurrently, the subjective norm, i.e. the accessibility to information on the APPGM-SDG youth development initiatives for volunteerism, availability of resources and time willingly spent to volunteer enhances the possibility of engagement in volunteerism for the SDGs. The perceived behavioural control includes internal constraints such as skills, resources, and self-efficacy needed to take action, while external constraints may involve logistical barriers or societal limitations. When the youth feels confident in their capacity to overcome these barriers and perceive volunteering as feasible, they are more likely to take action.

The study focusing on the demographic involvement of youths in volunteerism, indicated the gender percentage participation, affiliation participation, and prior experience participation-; Hence, it can be undertaken that the norms of the youth demographic as a whole has its sub-category of preference of groups that engage in the voluntary initiatives. Stakeholders can utilise the framework of TPB to encourage a greater number of participation from youths in SDG-oriented volunteerism without nullifying the quality of the engagements. By the involvement of parliamentarians and civil society organisations in improving the environment that promotes youth engagement in voluntarism by impacting the subjective norms, attitudes, and perceived behaviour control of youths, the greater engagement can be encouraged. This begins with breaking the negative stereotypes of voluntarism, increasing social awareness on voluntarism, and having knowledge of the intrinsic and extrinsic value of volunteerism.

This study recommends a bottom-up approach, where by stakeholders are able to influence and encourage subjective norms of the focus group

33 Ajzen, I., *Attitudes, Personality and Behavior* (Open University Press, 2005).

(i.e. youths), to improve their intentions, and to enhance participation of the community in SDG-oriented volunteerism. Recommendations are drawn from this approach to encourage and mobilise youths, creating a conducive norm among youths to actively engage in volunteerism for the SDGs.

Recommendation

Recommendations are presented for parliamentarians, civil society agencies, and youths in general for the promotion of active engagement in volunteerism and SDG developments from a local to global narrative. The Malaysian government offered RM500 as incentive for youths between 18-20 years of age to increase their engagement in volunteerism with government recognised bodies. Similar incentive-based encouragement may have its benefits of engaging more youths in social work and volunteerism. However, their motivation system may be queried from a qualitative approach. Nonetheless, incentive-based approaches can be implemented more frequently in various forms including educational credits and tangible benefits. Secondly, parliamentarians could advocate for increased budgetary allocations to support youth-led initiatives and programmes focused on SDG-oriented volunteerism to enhance the impact and reach of such initiatives. Thirdly, by increasing support for the development and implementation of educational programmes within parliamentary constituencies to raise awareness about the SDGs and the importance of youth engagement, parliamentarians will encourage more involvement in the developments through passionate involvement. Partnership from government agencies with youth led organisations and platforms especially bridging the gap between youths and constituency development hand-in-hand with government agencies will promote the involvement of youths in contributing to the SDGs and localised solutions.

In terms of the recommendations presented for civil societies in increasing or promoting the increase of volunteerism among youths, firstly, the provision for youth-based capacity building is pivotal. For instance, training and capacity-building programmes for youth groups which include workshops on project management, advocacy, and sustainable development can enhance their skills and knowledge in SDG-oriented volunteerism. An example is the work of the Malaysian Youth SDG Agent platform that provides training and capacity building for youths. Besides, a larger outreach to the unreached and marginalised communities, and focused demographic of youth can enhance the

directory of youth in SDG-oriented volunteerism. Secondly, network and partnerships among civil societies to create an SDG-Youth Community can boost the outreach to various groups, networks and explore more trendy ways of attracting the current youth generation. Recognition and award programmes also should be tied with the efforts to encourage participation for outstanding youth-led initiatives contributing to the SDGs. This will motivate and celebrate the efforts of young volunteers. A further development in research should be done in this scope of topic to contribute greater insights for informed decision-making among stakeholders.

Recommendations are also outlined for the youth demographic to involve actively in volunteerism and align their efforts with the themes of SDGs for personal, local, national, and global developments. Youths should be encouraged to take advantage of skill development programmes offered by civil societies and other organisations to enhance capabilities in contributing to SDG-oriented volunteerism. Thirdly, the importance of data collection and reporting should be emphasised within youth volunteer initiatives with tools such as surveys to gather meaningful data that can inform future projects and demonstrate impact. Finally, incorporating sustainability planning into youth initiatives can facilitate the considerations for long-term impact and scalability of projects to ensure they contribute to lasting change in alignment with the SDGs. It is hoped that these recommendations are implemented with the right framework and suitable theoretical approaches from evidence-based work, cross-cultural perspectives, and research in the Malaysian context.

Limitations

Firstly, the study acknowledges the limitations present including the sample size, which comprised volunteers from specific programmes and summits conducted by APPGM-SDG only and does not include representation of the broader population of the Malaysian youth involved in SDG-oriented volunteerism. Thus, generalizability to the broader population may be constrained. Secondly, the data was collected via the network of organisations under APPGM-SDGs network, which influences the findings on organisational affiliation participation. Thirdly, due to the cross-sectional design, the study may identify associations between variables but cannot establish causation. Understanding the causal relationships between demographic factors and youth engagement requires a more longitudinal approach. Finally, the study predominantly relies on mean, standard deviation, and variance, providing quantitative

insights. Instead, a more comprehensive understanding of youth engagement could be achieved by incorporating qualitative methods to capture the richness of experiences and motivations. Despite the limitations, the study outlines the need to identify the demographic engagement within the context of the organisation while increasing the provision of insights in the recommendations to activate and encourage more youth participation in SDGs volunteerism.

Conclusion

This research studies demographic involvement of youth in SDG-oriented volunteerism, focusing on the APPGM-SDG platform and drawing data from dedicated volunteers participating in the Malaysian Youth SDG Summits, the Malaysian Youth SDG Agent cohorts, and The Young Asian Voices 1.0 and 2.0 programmes. These programmes are platforms initiated bringing Malaysian youths to discussions, forums, and focus groups in the agenda of accelerating the UN SDGs. Through a quantitative lens, the study provided insights focusing on gender distribution, organisational affiliations, and prior volunteer experiences that offered comprehension of the engagement of youth in volunteering with initiatives aimed at localising the SDGs. While the findings illuminate the quantitative nature of dedicated volunteers, the research acknowledges the study's limitations. In addition, the research contributes to the understanding of youth-driven progress towards the SDGs in the Malaysian context, offering a foundation for informed strategies by parliamentarians, civil societies, and youth groups to foster sustainable development both nationally and globally. Moving forward, a holistic approach that combines quantitative analyses with qualitative insights and addresses identified limitations can further enrich the contextual understanding of youth engagement in achieving the 2030 agenda.

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Keperluan Perancangan Pembangunan Inklusif bagi Memastikan Kelestarian Sosial, Ekonomi dan Alam Sekitar: Kajian Kes Parlimen Kuala Langat

*The Importance of Inclusive Development Planning
to Ensure Social, Economic and Environmental Sustainability:
Case Study of Kuala Langat Parliamentary Constituency*

*Nurul Syaza Mazelan**

Abstrak

Kumpulan Rentas Parti Parlimen Malaysia berfokuskan Matlamat Pembangunan Lestari atau juga dikenali *All Parties Parliamentary Group Malaysia – Sustainable Development Goals (APPGM-SDG)* sentiasa mendukung prinsip “Tiada Sesiapa Ditinggalkan” (*Leave No One Behind*). Sehubungan dengan itu, berdasarkan dapatan kajian pemetaan isu oleh APPGM-SDG di Parlimen Kuala Langat yang telah dijalankan pada tahun 2023, perancangan pembangunan inklusif dilihat memberi impak yang signifikan dalam memastikan kelestarian sosial, ekonomi dan alam sekitar. Hal ini jelas dilihat apabila tahap kepekaan penduduk di Parlimen Kuala Langat terhadap pelan pemajuan kerajaan tempatan seperti Rancangan Tempatan dan Laporan Cadangan Pemajuan terutamanya bagi perancangan pembangunan industri dan kawasan pembangunan baharu sangat diberi perhatian. Penduduk ingin memastikan perancangan pembangunan yang dicadangkan lebih bersifat inklusif dengan mengambil kira pandangan dan impak yang diterima daripada komuniti tempatan. Namun begitu, cabaran seperti pengetahuan yang terhad terhadap proses perancangan pembangunan dalam kalangan komuniti tempatan, limitasi dalam membuat keputusan perancangan pembangunan dan kurang komunikasi dua hala antara agensi kerajaan telah menyebabkan aktiviti

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pembangunan semasa yang dijalankan tidak bersifat lestari. Kaedah penglibatan masyarakat awam dalam perancangan pembangunan perlu diteliti semula untuk memastikan hasil perancangan pembangunan yang lebih inklusif melibatkan semua pihak berkepentingan. Pada masa yang sama, Matlamat Pembangunan Lestari ke-17 dapat dimanifestasikan dengan jayanya bagi memastikan pembangunan dilaksanakan dengan lebih inklusif dan lestari untuk kesejahteraan semua.

Kata Kunci: *perancangan pembangunan, inklusif, lestari; Matlamat Pembangunan Lestari, Parlimen Kuala Langat*

Abstract

All Parties Parliamentary Group Malaysia - Sustainable Development Goals (APPGM-SDG) always advocates the principle of “Leave No One Behind”. APPGM-SDG conducted an issue mapping study in the Parliament of Kuala Langat in 2023, which revealed that inclusive development planning significantly contributes to social, economic, and environmental sustainability. This is evident when considering the level of awareness among the population in the Parliament of Kuala Langat regarding local government development plans, such as Local Plans and Proposed Development Reports, especially for industrial development planning and new development areas, which are given significant attention. The population wants to ensure that the proposed development plans are more inclusive by considering the views and impacts received from the local community. However, challenges such as limited knowledge about the development planning process among the local community, limitations in making development planning decisions, and insufficient two-way communication between government agencies have led to unsustainable current development activities. The method of public engagement in development planning needs to be re-examined to ensure more inclusive development planning outcomes involving all stakeholders. Concurrently, the Sustainable Development Goal 17 (SDG 17) can be successfully manifested to ensure that development is implemented in a more inclusive and sustainable manner for the well-being of all.

Keywords: *Development Planning; Inclusive; Sustainable; Sustainable Development Goals; Parliament Kuala Langat*

Pengenalan

Perancangan merupakan satu kaedah untuk mencapai sesuatu tujuan.¹ Perancangan disediakan sebelum gerak kerja pembangunan sebenar dijalankan. Dessler juga menyatakan bahawa perancangan ialah kaedah pratetap sebelum melakukan tindakan tertentu.² Bagi memastikan pembangunan dijalankan dengan mampan dan inklusif, perancangan merupakan satu langkah dan kaedah yang penting untuk dilaksanakan pada peringkat awal. Selain itu, melalui perancangan yang dibuat, matlamat dan strategi pembangunan akan lebih jelas seterusnya mengenal pasti cabaran yang akan mempengaruhi impak pembangunan pada masa akan datang.

Pandangan umum melihat pembangunan bermaksud penggunaan sumber semula jadi untuk menyediakan infrastruktur, utiliti dan kemudahan untuk penggunaan yang lebih produktif atau mengeksploitasi kawasan terbiar atau penggunaan teknologi baharu untuk produktiviti yang lebih efisien.³ Pembangunan berlaku apabila terdapat perubahan bentuk geomorfologi bumi, tindakan ke atas tanah, air, udara dan hutan disebabkan pertambahan penduduk dan perkembangan kawasan bandar.⁴ Hal ini menyebabkan aktiviti penerokaan dan penggunaan sumber alam dijalankan. Seterusnya, pembangunan juga boleh memberi kesan terhadap persekitaran sesebuah kawasan dari segi kehidupan sosial dan pertumbuhan ekonomi setempat.⁵

Rujukan utama bagi perancangan pembangunan di Parlimen Kuala Langat adalah merujuk kepada rancangan pemajuan, iaitu

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- 1 Merriam Webster, 'Definition of Plan' (Merriam-webster.com) <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/plan> accessed 28 November 2023.
 - 2 Gary Dessler, *A Framework for Human Resource Management* (Prentice Hall, 2009).
 - 3 Mark McGillivray, *International Development: Issues and Challenges* (Third edition, Palgrave, 2016) pp. 21–49 <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/134/2017/07/Henson-reading-for-Julhy-7-What-is-development.pdf> accessed 30 November 2023.
 - 4 Zainal Md Zan, 'Kebekesanan Pelaksanaan "Local Agenda 21" Di Malaysia: Kajian Kes Majlis Perbandaran Seberang Perai (MPSP), Pulau Pinang' (PhD thesis, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 2019) p. 2 <http://eprints.usm.my/id/eprint/44932> accessed 30 November 2023.
 - 5 Elizebeth Gustin and Dayangku Aslinah Abd. Rahim, 'Kesan Pembangunan Luar Bandar Ke Atas Kesejahteraan Hidup Masyarakat Di Sabah' (2020) 2 *Jurnal Dunia Perniagaan* 36 <https://myjms.mohe.gov.my/index.php/jdprn/article/view/11561/5531> accessed 30 November 2023.

Rancangan Tempatan (RT) dan *Rancangan Struktur Negeri* (RSN) yang telah diwartakan. *Rancangan Tempatan* ialah suatu peta dan pernyataan bertulis disokong oleh garis panduan pelaksanaan bagi memandu pembangunan di kawasan pihak berkuasa perancang tempatan. Ia menterjemahkan dasar dan strategi utama *Rancangan Struktur* dan mengenal pasti projek serta program utama daerah di bawah peruntukan Seksyen 12 hingga 16A, Akta 172.⁶ *Rancangan Tempatan Majlis Daerah Kuala Langat 2030* yang diwartakan pada 5 Julai 2018 telah mengalami dua kali pengubahan kerana tekanan pembangunan yang tinggi dan memerlukan pembangunan infrastruktur utiliti. *Rancangan Tempatan Perbandaran Kuala Langat 2030* (Pengubahan 1) telah diwartakan pada 31 Disember 2020 dan *Rancangan Tempatan Perbandaran Kuala Langat 2030* (Pengubahan 2) telah diwartakan pada 22 September 2022.⁷ Berdasarkan garis masa pengubahan RT ini menunjukkan bahawa proses pengubahan rancangan pemajuan ini mengambil tempoh masa yang lama dalam lingkungan dua tahun kerana memerlukan proses tertentu seperti publisiti awam untuk diwartakan.

Seterusnya, bagi merealisasikan perancangan pembangunan di tapak berdasarkan RT dan RSN semasa yang telah diwartakan, pihak pemaju perlu melalui beberapa proses untuk mendapatkan kelulusan gerak kerja pembangunan di tapak. Berdasarkan Seksyen 2, Akta Perancangan Bandar Dan Desa 1976 (Akta 172), pemajuan merangkumi kerja bangunan, kerja kejuruteraan, kerja perlombongan, kerja perindustrian, perubahan material penggunaan tanah, perubahan material penggunaan bangunan dan susunan penggunaan tanah untuk tujuan memecah sempadan atau mencantumkan tanah. Pihak pemaju perlu menghantar permohonan *Kebenaran Merancang* (KM) kepada Pihak Berkuasa Perancang Tempatan (PBPT) untuk dipertimbangkan. Pada masa yang sama, Subseksyen 18(1) Akta 172 turut menegaskan aktiviti pembangunan tidak dibenarkan untuk dijalankan melainkan menurut rancangan tempatan. Manakala, bagi kes permohonan KM yang bercanggah dengan rancangan tempatan namun diluluskan pada peringkat PBPT dan Jawatankuasa Perancang Negeri (JPN), perlu melalui proses pindaan RT terlebih dahulu.

6 Jabatan Perancangan Bandar dan Desa (PLANMalaysia), *Manual Rancangan Tempatan Edisi 2022* (2nd edn., Jabatan Perancangan Bandar Dan Desa (PLANMalaysia) 2023) p. 10 https://www.planmalaysia.gov.my/planmalaysia/resources/Manual%20Rancangan/MANUAL_RT_2022_VERSI_2.pdf accessed 1 December 2023.

7 Nurul Syaza Mazelan, 'Laporan Pemetaan Isu Parlimen Kuala Langat' (APPGM-SDG, 2023).

Dalam proses penyediaan KM pula, pihak pemaju perlu melantik perunding berdaftar untuk menyediakan *Laporan Cadangan Pemajuan* (LCP) yang juga merangkumi penilaian impak cadangan pemajuan seperti Penilaian Impak Alam Sekitar (*Environmental Impact Assessment* atau *EIA*), Penilaian Impak Sosial (*Social Impact Assessment* atau *SIA*) atau lain-lain berdasarkan kategori pembangunan yang dicadangkan.⁸ Melalui proses penyediaan LCP ini juga akan melibatkan orang awam untuk memberikan pendapat dan bantahan sekiranya ada terutamanya bagi pembangunan di bawah kategori A dan kategori B. Berdasarkan Panduan Pelaksanaan Penilaian Impak Sosial bagi Projek Pembangunan (PPSIA)⁹ yang disediakan oleh PLANMalaysia, jenis pembangunan yang tertakluk kepada SIA adalah projek di bawah kategori A iaitu penebusgunaan pinggir laut, infrastruktur utama negeri, kemudahan utama, perbandaran baharu, pembangunan di puncak atau lereng bukit, infrastruktur berkepentingan negara dan projek di bawah kategori B yang mempunyai impak sosial ketara yang ditetapkan oleh PLANMalaysia Negeri dan Pihak Berkuasa Tempatan (PBT).

Maka, dapat disimpulkan bahawa terdapat ruang diberikan kepada masyarakat awam untuk bersuara dan menyatakan pendapat dan bantahan dalam perancangan pembangunan tempatan sama ada melalui medium proses penyediaan RT dan KM. Kertas ini akan membincangkan cabaran merancang pembangunan inklusif dan kesan pembangunan tanpa mendapatkan keputusan yang kolektif.

Reka bentuk kajian

Skop kajian ini adalah berbentuk kajian kes yang memberi penelitian mendalam terhadap proses perancangan pembangunan di Parlimen Kuala Langat. Kajian ini juga berbentuk pelbagai kes (*multi-case*) dan pelbagai tempat (*multi-site*) lokaliti. *Multi-case* merujuk kepada beberapa penduduk berbilang etnik dan kaum, manakala *multi-site*

8 Jabatan Kerajaan Tempatan, Manual OSC 3.0 plus Proses Dan Prosedur Cadangan Pemajuan Serta Pelaksanaan Pusat Setempat (OSC) (1st edn., Kementerian Perumahan Dan Kerajaan Tempatan, 2019) https://www.mdlabis.gov.my/sites/default/files/manual_osc_3.0_plus_cetakan_kedua_jun_2020.pdf accessed 1 December 2023.

9 PLANMalaysia, Panduan Pelaksanaan Penilaian Impak Sosial Bagi Projek Pembangunan (PLANMalaysia, 1st edn., 2023) pp. 2–1 <https://mytownnet.planmalaysia.gov.my/index.php/books/panduan-pelaksanaan-penilaian-impak-sosial-bagi-projek-pembangunan/> accessed 1 December 2023.

pula merangkumi beberapa kawasan petempatan yang bertumpu di parlimen Kuala Langat. Kajian ini adalah bersifat kualitatif iaitu pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui temu bual dalam perbincangan kumpulan bersasar (*Focus Group Discussion*) semasa kajian pemetaan isu dijalankan di Parlimen Kuala Langat.

Kumpulan sasaran kajian

Dalam kajian kes ini, sasaran kumpulan utama adalah lebih berfokus kepada penduduk tempatan Kuala Langat terutamanya di kawasan yang terkesan dengan pembangunan industri yang semakin aktif dan kawasan yang telah dizonkan kepada aktiviti pembangunan baharu berdasarkan *Rancangan Tempatan Perbandaran Kuala Langat 2030* (Pengubahan 2). Antara peserta yang ditemu bual berkaitan isu kelestarian kesejahteraan sosial yang dipengaruhi oleh pembangunan industri di Parlimen Kuala Langat ialah penduduk Kg. Batu 9, Kg. Sungai Manggis, dan penduduk sekitar Jenjarom. Komuniti nelayan Kg. Kelanang dan penduduk kampung Orang Asli Pulau Carey pula memfokuskan isu kelestarian alam sekitar dan ekonomi tempatan daripada aktiviti pembangunan ekonomi maritim.

Dapatan kajian

Ruang penglibatan awam dalam perancangan pembangunan

Berdasarkan Akta 172, terdapat asas panduan yang jelas bagaimana sesuatu publisiti dan penyertaan awam dijalankan. Program publisiti dan penyertaan awam perlu dilaksanakan sama ada pada peringkat *Rancangan Struktur* (RS), *Rancangan Tempatan* (RT) dan *Rancangan Kawasan Khas* (RKK), iaitu seperti dalam *Jadual 1* di bawah.

Jadual 1: Keperluan mengadakan publisiti dan penyertaan awam mengikut peruntukan Akta 172

| Rancangan Pemajuan | Peringkat | Peruntukan Akta 172 |
|------------------------|--|---|
| Rancangan Struktur | Laporan Tinjauan | Subseksyen 9(1) |
| | Draf RS | Subseksyen 9(2) Subseksyen 9(3) Subseksyen 9(5) Subseksyen 10(3) |
| | Pewartaan | Subseksyen 10(7) |
| | Kajian Semula | Subseksyen 11(A) |
| | Pengubahan | Subseksyen 11B(3) Subseksyen 11B(4) Subseksyen 11B(7) |
| Rancangan Tempatan | Publisiti Awal | Seksyen 12A |
| | Draf RT | Subseksyen 13(1) Subseksyen 13(2) Subseksyen 15(1) |
| | Pewartaan | Subseksyen 15(4) |
| | Pengubahan, Pembatalan dan Penggantian | Subseksyen 16(3) |
| Rancangan Kawasan Khas | Sama seperti penyediaan RT | Subseksyen 16B(3) |

Sumber: Portal e-publisiti 2.0, PLANMalaysia, 2022.¹⁰

Pada tahun 16 Januari 2017, Akta 172 telah dipinda dan kini dikenali sebagai Akta A1522. Antara perkara yang dipinda dalam pindaan kelima ini yang berkait dengan penyertaan awam dalam perancangan pembangunan adalah memasukkan keperluan *Social Impact Assessment* (SIA) berdasarkan jenis pembangunan dan memperkukuh kandungan LCP dengan mengambil kira impak sosial. Berdasarkan Panduan Pelaksanaan Penilaian Impak Sosial bagi Projek Pembangunan, SIA ini disediakan bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti dan mengurus impak negatif yang terhasil daripada pelaksanaan projek tersebut dan juga memastikan

10 Jabatan Perancangan Bandar dan Desa (PLANMalaysia), 'Keperluan Akta 172' (www.planmalaysia.gov.my, 8 November 2022) <https://www.planmalaysia.gov.my/index.php/pages/view/407?mid=544> accessed 28 November 2023.

manfaat diterima secara menyeluruh oleh komuniti setempat. Antara jenis projek yang memerlukan SIA adalah seperti yang disenaraikan dalam *Jadual 2*.

Jadual 2: Kategori SIA mengikut jenis pembangunan

| Kategori SIA | Kategori A | Kategori B |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| Akta berkaitan | Seksyen 20B dan Subseksyen 22(2A), Akta 172 | Subseksyen 21(1), Akta 172 |
| Jenis pembangunan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penebusgunaan pinggir laut • Infrastruktur utama <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lapangan terbang - Pelabuhan laut/darat - Pengangkutan kereta api - Lebuh raya - Pembuangan sisa toksik - Stesen jana kuasa - Empangan - Perbandaran baharu - Pembangunan di puncak atau lereng bukit • Infrastruktur lain yang berkepentingan negara. Tumpuan kepada: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Infrastruktur yang merentasi dua negeri atau lebih - Infrastruktur yang melibatkan tadahan penduduk dua negeri atau lebih | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perindustrian • Pengurusan sisa • Tenaga dan utiliti • Jalan raya • Penebusgunaan pinggir laut (keluasannya kurang daripada 50 hektar dan lebih daripada 20 hektar) • Rumah pekerja • Komersial <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Taman tema - Lot perdagangan berskala besar - Hypermarket/ superstore • Lain-lain projek pembangunan termasuk perlombongan, pertanian, takungan air pinggir sungai dan yang ditentukan PBN atau PBT |

*Sumber: Panduan Pelaksanaan Penilaian Impak Sosial bagi Projek Pembangunan, 2023.*¹¹

11 PLANMalaysia, Panduan Pelaksanaan Penilaian Impak Sosial Bagi Projek Pembangunan (1st edn., PLANMalaysia, 2023) pp. 2–1 <https://mytownnet.planmalaysia.gov.my/index.php/books/panduan-pelaksanaan-penilaian-impak-sosial-bagi-projek-pembangunan/> accessed 1 December 2023.

Bagi kajian kes Parlimen Kuala Langat, berdasarkan temu bual bersama-sama penduduk Jenjarom, terdapat pelaporan EIA dan SIA perlu disediakan dalam penyediaan LCP bagi projek perindustrian yang dibangunkan. Penduduk Jenjarom juga menyatakan mereka pernah terlibat dalam perbincangan berfokus bagi projek tersebut.

Tahap penglibatan awam

Rancangan Tempatan Majlis Daerah Kuala Langat 2030 yang diwartakan pada 5 Julai 2018 telah mengalami dua kali pengubahan kerana tekanan pembangunan yang tinggi dan memerlukan pembangunan infrastruktur utiliti. *Rancangan Tempatan Perbandaran Kuala Langat 2030* (Pengubahan 1) telah diwartakan pada 31 Disember 2020 dan *Rancangan Tempatan Perbandaran Kuala Langat 2030* (Pengubahan 2) telah diwartakan pada 22 September 2022. Berdasarkan perbincangan yang diadakan bersama-sama Majlis Perbandaran Kuala Langat (MPKL) semasa sesi dialog antara agensi¹², pihak MPKL memaklumkan bahawa penyertaan awam bagi *Rancangan Tempatan Perbandaran Kuala Langat 2030* (Pengubahan 2) hanya mendapat lebih kurang 100 respon sahaja daripada masyarakat awam.

Pihak MPKL juga telah memaklumkan bahawa mereka telah mengikut tatacara dan kaedah pelaksanaan publisiti seperti yang diperuntukkan dalam Akta 172 dan juga pendekatan terkini untuk membuat hebahan termasuk di media sosial dan ruang perbualan atas talian seperti WhatsApp. Namun begitu, pihak MPKL juga tidak menafikan sekiranya hebahan tersebut masih belum mencapai tahap capaian yang maksimum kepada semua penduduk tempatan Kuala Langat.

“Kita haritu, dalam 100 lebih je dia punya bantahan.” – Pegawai Perancang Bandar, MPKL.

“Sesi bantahan tu, berdasarkan apa yang kita terima borang bantahan tu. Tak banyak pon. Betul, memang tidak akan mendapat maklum balas penuh daripada masyarakat yang berkaitan dengan pengubahan tu tadi, dan akhirnya bila dah berlaku pembangunan tu, mereka akan bersuara.” – Pegawai Perancang Bandar, MPKL.

“Kalau ikut kaedah tu, habis channel dah kita blast. Dalam akhbar, tu memang tak pernah gagal. Di website. Kita punya channel iaitu ahli majlis, kita mintak mereka blast (tapi berkaitan kawasan tertentu).

12 APPGM-SDG, Interview with MPKL, ‘Sesi Dialog Bersama Agensi Kerajaan’ (27 March 2023).

Kita punya iklan dekat digital board dan Whatsapp group. Kita blast melalui tu la. Itu antara kaedah-kaedahnya.” – Pegawai Perancang Bandar, MPKL.

Dengan jumlah respon daripada penduduk yang tidak begitu banyak semasa program publisiti RT diadakan, hal ini menunjukkan bahawa masyarakat awam masih kurang peka dan cakna. Penduduk masih kurang jelas mengenai hak mereka untuk bersuara dalam membantah dan memberi pandangan mengenai perancangan pembangunan seperti yang telah diperuntukkan dalam Akta 172. Namun begitu, hal ini juga terjadi disebabkan terdapat beberapa cabaran dan limitasi penduduk tempatan yang menghadkan mereka untuk tampil bersuara kepada agensi kerajaan.

Cabaran dan limitasi perancangan pembangunan inklusif

Berdasarkan dapatan kajian pemetaan isu di Parlimen Kuala Langat,¹³ terdapat beberapa cabaran dan limitasi untuk mencapai perancangan pembangunan yang inklusif. Antara cabaran yang dihadapi oleh penduduk tempatan dalam bersuara semasa proses perancangan pembangunan berjalan ialah pengetahuan yang terhad mengenai cadangan pemajuan yang dilaksanakan oleh pihak berkuasa tempatan. Hal ini juga terjadi apabila hebahan yang dilakukan kurang meluas dan tidak sampai kepada penduduk tempatan yang terkesan.

Sebagai contoh, penduduk Kg. Batu 9 telah menghadapi krisis pencemaran bunyi dan bau selama lebih 20 tahun sejak pembangunan industri mula dibina pada tahun 2000. Kedudukan industri tersebut terletak bersebelahan dengan kawasan perkampungan mereka yang hanya dipisahkan dengan zink sahaja. Penduduk dan ahli Parlimen Kuala Langat menyatakan bahawa maklumat perancangan pembangunan tidak melibatkan penduduk dan hebahan perancangan pada waktu dahulu tidak dihebah secara meluas seperti sekarang. Oleh hal yang demikian, penduduk hanya mula membantah setelah pembangunan industri telah dibina dan mula beroperasi.

“Kami tidak pernah dilibatkan dalam perancangan pembangunan. Jadi, tiada medium untuk kita bantah pada waktu itu. Tapi kalau dia tahu kami duduk di sana beratus-ratus orang, kaedah terbaik mereka perlu lakukan adalah memanggil kami untuk berbincang. Di

13 Nurul Syaza Mazelan, ‘Laporan Pemetaan Isu Parlimen Kuala Langat’ (APPGM-SDG, 2023).

waktu itu kami tidak dilibatkan dalam perbincangan. Jadi, tahu-tahu je kawasan tu telah pon digazetkan. Pembangunan pada tahun 2000 dah mula naik. Begitulah situasinya.” – Wakil penduduk Kg. Batu 9.

“Pada masa itu masyarakat pon mungkin tak peka dan daripada sudut hebahan ni pon tidak sebaik seperti sekarang. Sekarang saya tak nafikan ada tanah kecil pon dia akan bagitahu, ada surat yang terus kepada jiran-jiran.” – Ahli Parlimen Kuala Langat.

Selain itu, limitasi dalam membuat keputusan perancangan pembangunan terjadi apabila hebahan dan perbincangan hanya melibatkan ketua kampung dan ahli majlis sebagai wakil kepada penduduk tempatan. Ketua kampung dan ahli majlis bertanggungjawab untuk memberikan pendapat dan bantahan sekiranya perlu semasa proses perancangan pembangunan dijalankan. Namun begitu, tanggungjawab ketua kampung dan ahli majlis dalam menyampaikan maklumat penting kepada penduduk tempatan yang berisiko terjejas tidak dilaksanakan dengan baik. Hal ini menyebabkan kompetensi ketua kampung dan ahli majlis turut dipertikaikan oleh penduduk seperti yang terjadi di Jenjarom kerana tidak membantu penduduk tempatan dalam membantah perancangan pembangunan yang memberikan impak negatif kepada komuniti setempat.

“Penduduk di sana tidak tahu mengenai projek tersebut (industri) kerana apabila soal selidik dijalankan oleh mereka (Pihak Berkuasa Tempatan), mereka hanya memaklumkan kepada ketua kampung. Ketua kampung hanya menutup mulut sekiranya apa-apa berlaku. Hanya beberapa pihak sahaja yang tahu mengenai projek tersebut. Jadi, majoriti penduduk di sana tidak tahu mengenai projek tersebut sehingga projek mula dilaksanakan.” – Wakil penduduk Jenjarom 1.

“Majlis (MPKL) buat satu sesi jemput ketua kampung. Tapi apa yang berlaku di kawasan ni, ketua-ketua kampung, mereka hanya tunduk patuh. Mereka akan keluar pernyataan mewakili penduduk kampung. Walhal, semua penduduk kampung ni tak setuju la dengan kilang tu. Jadi, pihak kerajaan akan dengar kenyataan ketua kampung. Ini ketua kampung dah buat kenyataan, kenapa kamu pulak bantah?.” – Wakil penduduk Jenjarom 2

Ketelusan pelaporan penilaian impak yang disediakan oleh pihak pemaju kepada pihak berkuasa tempatan juga menjadi pertikaian dalam memastikan perancangan pembangunan dilaksanakan secara inklusif dan lestari. Pihak pemaju akan melantik perunding untuk penyediaan

LCP yang merangkumi laporan penilaian impak seperti SIA, EIA atau lain-lain. Pihak perunding perlu menjalankan proses penyertaan awam bersama-sama penduduk tempatan untuk memahami impak dan mitigasi yang harus dilaksanakan semasa proses penyediaan laporan penilaian impak tersebut. Namun begitu, hasil akhir laporan penilaian impak oleh pihak perunding lebih memihak kepada pihak pemaju untuk tujuan kelulusan projek seperti yang dinyatakan oleh wakil NGO, Persatuan Tindakan Alam Sekitar Kuala Langat.

“Ketelusan EIA sekarang menjadi satu tanda tanya kerana perunding dibayar terus oleh pihak pemaju. Oleh itu, saya telah cuba menghubungi mereka. Kebanyakan perunding yang menyediakan EIA ini, mereka tidak mahu bercakap dengan kami kerana mereka tidak boleh menyebelahi kami. Jadi, siapa yang boleh menyebelahi penduduk?.”
– Wakil NGO, Persatuan Tindakan Alam Sekitar Kuala Langat.

“Mereka (perunding) telah menjalankan Focus Group Discussion (FGD), tetapi mereka mengelak daripada kami. Walaupun dia jemput kami, dia sengaja mengabaikan kita. Mereka hanya berjumpa dengan orang tertentu dan mereka tidak memberitahu perkara sebenar kepada penduduk. Mereka hanya memberitahu perkara yang baik dan kemudian memberikan hadiah kepada penduduk. Ini adalah cara mereka memproses EIA tersebut.” – Wakil NGO, Persatuan Tindakan Alam Sekitar Kuala Langat.

Walaupun penduduk telah cuba bersuara dengan membuat aduan dan bantahan, keputusan akhir kepada perancangan pembangunan masih tertakluk kepada keputusan daripada agensi kerajaan. Perbincangan dua hala antara agensi kerajaan dan penduduk pernah dilaksanakan untuk membincangkan isu pencemaran yang berlaku daripada pembangunan industri. Namun begitu, perbincangan tersebut tiada hasil kerana pihak agensi kerajaan cuba mengelak dan menolak tanggungjawab antara satu sama lain kerana pertindihan bidang kuasa.

“Dua-dua selalu sepak bola macam ni. Dulu kami buat aduan, JAS kata kita tak boleh ambil tindakan, ini kena pergi MPKL, MPKL bagi lesen. Bila pergi MPKL, ini kena pergi JAS. Jadi, siapa punya kuasa?.” – Wakil penduduk Jenjarom 1.

Kesan pembangunan

Kurang penglibatan awam dalam perancangan pembangunan akan menyebabkan kesan yang negatif kepada penduduk setempat apabila

pembangunan yang dibangunkan memberikan ketidakselesaan dan mengganggu-gugat kehidupan seharian penduduk. Antara kesan pembangunan yang dibangunkan tanpa penglibatan awam yang telus di Parlimen Kuala Langat adalah seperti kehilangan hak, kehilangan sumber pendapatan, dan risiko pencemaran yang menjejaskan kesihatan penduduk.

Sebagai contoh, penduduk Kg. Batu 9 tersepit dalam pembangunan industri baharu di sekeliling kawasan penempatan mereka yang telah dizonkan sebagai zon perindustrian. Akhirnya, mereka kehilangan hak terhadap tanah asal penempatan mereka apabila mereka perlu ditempatkan semula ke kawasan penempatan baharu. Kawasan penempatan baharu telah dibina sebagai pampasan kepada penduduk Kg. Batu 9. Walau bagaimanapun, terdapat isu pemindahan milik tanah yang telah melambatkan proses penempatan semula tersebut.

“Pada tahun 2000, kami start merasakan perubahan pembangunan. Terutamanya bila mana di kawasan antara sepanjang Jalan Rajawali dan Kasawari termasuklah kawasan penempatan itu dizonkan sebagai zon industri. Jadi, 8 ekar tu dia jadi tersepit antara tanah-tanah indsutri yang telah digazetkan..” – Wakil penduduk Kg. Batu 9

“Tahun 2008, kami memulakan usaha untuk mengutarakan masalah yang kita hadapi itu dengan bantuan YB bersama-sama dengan kerajaan negeri Selangor pada waktu itu. Dia bersetuju untuk memperuntukkan sebidang tanah untuk petempatan baru penduduk dan juga petempatan madrasah. Kita dapat (petempatan) yang baru, lebih kurang 10 minit dari petempatan asal tersebut.” – Wakil penduduk Kg. Batu 9.

“Sudah tentu ia mengambil masa yang sangat lama, daripada tahun 2008 sampailah sekarang. Walaupun dia dah hampir siap untuk petempatan penduduk tapi masih ada beberapa isu yang kami kena selesai berkaitan dengan tanah 8 ekar tu. Dia banyak nama. Ada yang dah meninggal dan sebagainya. Jadi, kami terpaksa berurusan dengan kerajaan negeri.” – Wakil penduduk Kg. Batu 9.

Selain itu, komuniti nelayan Kg. Kelanang dan penduduk kampung Orang Asli Pulau Carey juga menerima impak daripada aktiviti pembangunan ekonomi maritim yang semakin aktif di Pelabuhan Klang. Sumber pendapatan komuniti nelayan dan orang asli semakin terjejas apabila zon penangkapan ikan semakin terhad dan sumber hutan paya bakau juga semakin merosot kerana jumlah kapal semakin bertambah di kawasan laluan kapal. Malah, terdapat juga kapal terpaksa menambak

di Sungai Langat kerana kawasan berlabuh yang tidak mencukupi. Hal ini telah mengganggu kawasan pencarian penangkapan ikan. Tambahan pula, perancangan pembangunan untuk meluaskan kawasan pelabuhan juga telah dirancang seperti yang dimaklumkan oleh wakil Jabatan Laut Negeri Selangor.

“Kalau dahulu kapal tu dalam 10 ke 15. Ini hari boleh mencapai sehingga 50 biji.” – Wakil nelayan Kg. Kelanang.

“Dulu kawasan kami tu kira 1 ekar. Sekarang kami nak menjala tu tinggal setengah lebih ekar sikit je. Sebab pelabuhan kapal dari Port Klang dah ke mari.” – Wakil nelayan Kg. Kelanang.

“Hakisan laut yang tepi pun menyebabkan kepah tiada, siput buluh tiada, kerang tiada..semua tiada.” – Wakil Orang Asli Kg. Sungai Judah.

“Ni pun kiri kanan kire pembangunan lah. Di sebelah belakang tu dah takde dah. Takde hutan ape dah. Kita nak cari ketam apa semua pun dah takde dah.” – Wakil Orang Asli Kg. Kepau Laut.

“Sebenarnya kawasan Kuala Langat tiada kawasan untuk kapal berlabuh ni. Kebanyakannya di Pelabuhan Klang. Kami tidak benarkan untuk kapal berlabuh melainkan kecemasan atau berlaku kesesakan dekat Pelabuhan Klang, Baru boleh diberi kebenaran la untuk masuk ke port limit Kuala Langat.” – Wakil Jabatan Laut Negeri Selangor.

“Cuma yang saya ada maklum adalah pembesaran pelabuhan sedia ada.” – Wakil Jabatan Laut Negeri Selangor.

Manakala, majoriti penduduk di Jenjarom dan Kg. Manggis pula menghadapi risiko keselamatan dan ancaman kesihatan kerana terdedah kepada pencemaran air, udara dan bau yang berpunca daripada operasi kilang-kilang yang aktif menjalankan aktiviti industri berat dan sederhana. Hal ini menjadi semakin buruk apabila pembangunan industri yang dibangunkan sangat berdekatan dengan kawasan penempatan asal penduduk. Sewajarnya, perancangan pembangunan industri perlu menitikberatkan kesan kepada kehidupan penduduk sekitar yang berdekatan melalui perbincangan bersama-sama penduduk yang paling terjejas dan dilaksanakan dengan telus dan terbuka.

“Dan isu yang paling kritikal dalam hab industri ni, jarak. Jarak di antara industri dan sekolah. Jarak dengan perumahan. Faizal dengan En Amir tu memang duduk di Taman Bakti. Memang mereka setiap malam boleh nampak asap, boleh dengar bunyi.” – Wakil penduduk Kg. Manggis.

“Benda yang paling nyata la. Jarak. Kami ukur sendiri jarak, kilang ke sekolah tak sampai 50 meter. Hanya 48.2 (meter).” – Wakil penduduk Kg. Manggis.

“Dulu bila pencemaran plastik berlaku. Itu kilang-kilang malam bakar. Ada penduduk mereka batuk.-batuk sampai darah keluar. Sampai dia perlu admit ICU. Doktor cek, doktor kata, sistem imunisasi sangat lemah.” – Wakil NGO, Persatuan Tindakan Alam Sekitar Kuala Langat.

Cadangan penyelesaian

Pembangunan masih menjadi keperluan untuk memastikan pertumbuhan ekonomi yang seimbang dengan keperluan semasa. Namun begitu, perancangan pembangunan yang inklusif adalah sangat penting untuk memastikan hasil pembangunan yang mampan dan mengurangkan impak negatif sosial terjadi. Oleh itu, hal ini perlu diambil perhatian dan memerlukan tindakan khusus untuk menambah baik proses perancangan pembangunan pada masa akan datang.

Pengukuhan proses pembentukan rancangan pemajuan

Rancangan pemajuan termasuk dalam sistem hierarki pelan pembangunan dalam negara yang mengandungi empat peringkat iaitu Rancangan Fizikal Negara (RFN), Rancangan Struktur Negeri (RSN), Rancangan Tempatan (RT) dan Rancangan Kawasan Khas (RKK).¹⁴ Perancangan pemajuan ini akan menjadi rujukan utama dalam pemerolehan kelulusan untuk menjalankan aktiviti pembangunan di sesuatu kawasan selepas diwartakan.

Pengetahuan yang terhad terhadap sistem rancangan pemajuan dan tahap penglibatan golongan rentan yang rendah menjadi cabaran utama kepada pembentukan rancangan pemajuan yang inklusif. Justeru itu, proses pembentukan rancangan pemajuan perlu ditambah baik seperti:

- i) Penambahbaikan dalam kaedah hebahan publisiti draf rancangan pemajuan yang lebih inklusif, seiring dengan sosiobudaya semasa dan perkembangan teknologi yang lebih bergantung kepada penggunaan digital. Berdasarkan Akta 172, notis pemberitahuan penyediaan dan semakan draf rancangan pemajuan perlu disiarkan sekurang-kurangnya di akhbar tempatan sahaja.

14 PLANMalaysia@Johor, 'Rancangan Pemajuan' (jpbid.johor.gov.my) <https://jpbid.johor.gov.my/index.php/rancangan-pemajuan> accessed 20 December 2023.

- ii) Semakan tahap daya laksana dasar dan cadangan terutamanya terhadap golongan rentan pada peringkat akar umbi yang secara langsung terkesan dengan cadangan berimpak tinggi yang dinyatakan dalam rancangan pemajuan.

Peningkatan tahap penyertaan dan penglibatan awam

Penglibatan daripada golongan tidak aktif perlu dipertingkatkan demi menjaga hak masyarakat awam dan memastikan pembangunan yang lebih mampan dan inklusif. Antara cadangan meningkatkan tahap penglibatan awam adalah seperti:

- i) Kerjasama yang aktif antara Jawatankuasa/Persatuan Penduduk, Jawatankuasa Keselamatan dan Kemajuan Kampung (JKKK), NGO dan penduduk setempat bagi membolehkan mereka menyatakan pendapat dalam perkongsian maklumat dan perbincangan untuk mencapai keputusan bersama sebelum mewakili pihak penduduk dalam sesi perbincangan bersama-sama agensi.
- ii) Menggunakan kaedah penyampaian maklumat kepada penduduk berdasarkan sosiobudaya tempatan seperti memperbanyakkan forum, dialog, bengkel dan persidangan bersama-sama penduduk tempatan secara terbuka untuk memberi pengetahuan dan maklumat yang lebih jelas mengenai perancangan pembangunan.
- iii) Meningkatkan pengetahuan dan kepekaan masyarakat awam mengenai dasar dan perundangan berkaitan terutamanya untuk memahami ruang-ruang hak masyarakat awam untuk bersuara.
- iv) Pelaksanaan penilaian impak cadangan pemajuan perlu dijalankan secara lebih telus, bersifat menyeluruh dan terbuka kepada semua pihak berkepentingan yang berisiko menerima impak secara langsung dan tidak langsung.

Kesimpulan

Berdasarkan undang-undang dan dasar semasa, terdapat keperluan untuk agensi kerajaan dan pemaju untuk mengadakan publisiti awam dan perbincangan bersama untuk membuka ruang kepada masyarakat awam untuk bersuara serta menyatakan pendapat dan bantahan terhadap perancangan pembangunan yang akan dilaksanakan sebelum keputusan akhir dilakukan. Namun begitu, masih terdapat cabaran dan limitasi masyarakat awam dalam penglibatan secara langsung dalam membuat

keputusan kepada perancangan pembangunan. Antara cabaran tersebut ialah penglibatan awam yang terhad, kebergantungan kepada ketua komuniti tempatan, kaedah, pelaporan penilaian impak yang tidak telus, dan pertikaian terhadap kompetensi ketua komuniti tempatan dan agensi kerajaan. Akhirnya, hal ini telah menyebabkan pembangunan yang dibangunkan tidak bersifat inklusif dan lestari. Maka, tindakan yang lebih proaktif oleh agensi kerajaan dan juga komuniti tempatan perlu dipertingkatkan dengan menambah pengetahuan terhadap undang-undang dan keperluan pembangunan serta menggalakkan sesi perbincangan bersama bagi mencapai kata putus yang saksama.

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Empowering Development Planning and Implementation at the District Level of Governance in Peninsular Malaysia

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Abstract

The District Office occupies a significant position in the federal and administrative structure of the country. Yet over the decades, the roles of the District Office and Officer have seemingly taken a less visible and prominent role in the area of development, particularly for the local communities from the district level and below. This paper provides a brief background on the development of the District Office in Peninsular Malaysia and its role in the area of development for the Malaysian nation and society. It examines the challenges faced by the District Offices in Malaysia. The paper further discusses how the District Offices can play a more prominent role in the nation-building and development processes of the country, including in implementing an inclusive development agenda for local communities in Malaysia. To do so, the paper refers to the issue mapping findings of the APPGM-SDG from 2020 to 2023. It focuses on and features these findings to assess the roles and challenges, and the prospective initiatives the District Offices and the APPGM-SDG can together act on to spearhead sustainable development and the formation of inclusive communities.

Keywords: Development; SDGs; social justice; district office; multistakeholder partnerships; governance; inclusive communities

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Introduction

“In the current five-year development plan, the objectives of achieving economic balance among the multiracial society has been a major concern of both central and district governments. A tremendous burden is placed on the District Office to search for strategies of rectifying economic imbalance and to attempt to restructure society.”

– Abdullah Sanusi Ahmad, *The District Office as an Institution of Development, 1977*

Development has been a primary priority in Malaysia since independence. At the macro level, the goals of development have been expressed through the five-year plans formulated by the government since independence. Beginning with the *First Malaysia Plan* (1MP, 1966-1970) in 1966, we are now midway through the *Twelfth Malaysian Plan* (12MP, 2021-2025). Development efforts have particularly focused on the populace in the rural areas or rural communities. This focus stems from the attempts to correct economic and social imbalances that exist between urban cities, and rural centres and towns.

While the discourse and programme of development have been at the center of national debates since the declaration of independence, and the journey towards building a Malaysian nation, including the inclusion of Sabah and Sarawak into the Federation of Malaya in 1963, the agenda and scope of development took on a renewed dimension with the inception of the sustainable development agenda by the United Nations in 2015, with the announcement of the *Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs*. Encompassing 17 goals, 169 targets and 247 indicators, from poverty to climate to gender and partnerships, the SDG agenda seeks to achieve the set targets by the year 2030. The UN SDGs agenda, which is an enhancement to the *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs) from 2000 to 2015, has become the principal reference for development at the global, and national levels.

In the context of Malaysia, the UN SDG agenda has been given a national and local character through the establishment of the *All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on Sustainable Development Goals* or APPGM-SDG. The inauguration of the APPGM-SDG in 2019 built on the prior incorporation and application of the SDGs in national planning through the *Eleventh Malaysia Plan* (11MP, 2016-2020), reflecting Malaysia’s strong commitment to global endeavours and the emphasis on development in the project of nation-building.

The APPGM-SDG is mandated with the task of undertaking the localisation of the 17 goals at the domestic and local levels. This process, consisting of the main activities of issues mapping, solution projects, capacity building, and policy advocacy, is implemented by the APPGM-SDG secretariat based in Petaling Jaya; and the regional offices in Sabah and Sarawak. The secretariat is overseen by a bipartisan parliamentary committee, which consists of Members of Parliament from the government and opposition benches, and also senators from the upper chamber of the Parliament or the *Dewan Negara*. The bipartisan nature of the SDG programme structure and agenda constitutes the hallmark of the SDGs localisation and implementation process. Thus, bypassing political ideologies, affiliations and goals, focusing on resolving issues that affect the most vulnerable communities and communities in need by concentrating on development in terms of socio-economic upliftment and empowerment, through addressing service delivery, project implementation and cross-sectional issues and multi-stakeholder engagements.¹

Further, the localisation process is applied at the parliamentary, district and local levels, which builds strong links with government agencies and offices at the state and local levels, and with various communities at the grassroots levels. Throughout this process, the APPGM-SDG has received tremendous support and endorsement from the Malaysian Parliament and the Office of the Speaker, Members of Parliament, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Economy, various other ministries and departments, and State governments and agencies, and district-level offices throughout Malaysia.

As of 2023, the APPGM-SDG Secretariat has undertaken the localisation programme in 85 parliamentary constituencies. In 2024, the secretariat has earmarked another 30 parliamentary constituencies for the localisation process, and as of December 2023, the process has started in earnest with the meeting of various Members of Parliament of the prospective constituencies and the district officers or *pegawai daerah* of those areas.

In view of the centrality of the development agenda in Malaysia and its relation to the SDGs programme, the mandate of the APPGM-SDG in localisation of SDGs processes, and the position of the government machinery and delivery mechanisms in this context, this paper focuses

1 Please see Denison Jayasooria, Role of Parliamentarians in Localizing SDGs in Malaysia, *Journal of the Malaysian Parliament*, Vol. 1, 2021: pp. 137-158

on the role of the District Office in the development planning and implementation within the SDGs framework, and in the ground work of the APPGM-SDG, in Peninsular Malaysia. The paper begins by providing a brief background on the establishment of the District Office, and the pivotal role of its leading figure, the District Officer, in the country's development agendas and programmes. It then highlights key areas of focus and challenges faced by the District Offices in Malaysia. Finally, the paper concludes by discussing how the District Offices can enhance their roles in implementing an inclusive development agenda for local communities at the grassroots level. This approach aligns with the Malaysia's national development vision and programmes, contributing significantly to country's growth and progress, and of nation-building efforts.

Development in Malaysia and its implementation at the local level

Early emergence and expansion of the District Office

The district level administration and rule have historically held a pivotal role in Malaysia's political structure. The modern iteration of the District Office emerged relatively recently. District-level governance was formalised with the signing of the *Pangkor Treaty* in 1874. This treaty between the British colonial officers and the Malay rulers of Perak is a significant moment, representing the emphasis on direct intervention by the British in politics and the economy of then Malaya, and the start of the institutionalisation of British administration in Malaya through the Malay States.² Under this treaty, a British resident would advise the Sultan on all spheres of the State and governance. Following this, a State Council was also established to deliberate on issues of legislation and administration. This same process occurred in the States of Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang, and in 1895 culminated in the formation of the Federated Malay States or *Negeri-negeri Melayu Bersekutu*.

The process of systematising the ruling and governance structure extended to the district and village levels. In each state, district level governance was established in the form of District Offices, led by a District Officer. Under a district, smaller fields of administration in the form of *Mukims* existed, and after which a field of several *kampungs* or villages would then in turn make up a *mukim*.

2 Khoo Kay Kim, *The Origin of British Administration in Malaya*, *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (209), July (1966), pp. 52-91: 52-53, and 84

The role of the District Officer was to overlook the “collection of revenue, the administration of justice, land settlement, and the supervision of headmen.”³ After Malaya’s independence in 1957, the District Officer also took on the role of “development planner, implementor and a change agent.”⁴

The structure and form of the district offices and governance though modern and recent, however, was not something entirely novel and which only emerged with the political and economic domination of Malaya by the British. In the traditional Malay political structure, previously existed divisions and hierarchy facilitated the royal and feudal rule. In this structure, the Malay *Raja* or *Sultan* occupied the pinnacle of the political hierarchy. The *daerah* or *jajahan* (district), was the next political unit. Each was led by a local chief with close relations and ties to the area and its people, and who helped the *Sultan* in governing the State.⁵ The difference between pre-colonial and during the colonial period was that the figures in charge of the district, who were the *penghulus* during the pre-colonial period, were replaced by European and British officers when colonialism took place in Malaya.

This systematisation of governance was implemented throughout the Federated Malay States, and similarly occurred in the non-Federated Malay States, consisting of Kedah, Kelantan, Terengganu and Perlis, as well as the state of Johor, and the Straits Settlement States comprising Penang and Malacca. However, variations existed due to the specific context and historical and political trajectory of each state.⁶ The non-Federated Malay States, for instance, not only have a federal civil service, but also a state civil service under the authority of the Sultan and state government.⁷

3 Abdullah Sanusi Ahmad, *The District Office as an Institution of Development*, Theses: University of Southern California, 1977, p. 98; See also Yeo Kim Wah, *The Grooming of an Elite: Malay Administrators in the Federated Malay States, 1903-1941*, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 1980, pp. 287-319: 307

4 *Ibid*, p. 9

5 *Ibid*; Please see also Anthony Milner, *Kerajaan: Malay Political Culture on the Eve of Colonial Rule* (Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 1982); Mohd. Shariff bin Abu Samah, *Modenisasi Pentadbiran Negeri Kedah: Ke Arah Penubuhan Perkhidmatan Tadbir Negeri (Kedah Civil Service) 1895-1957*, *Doctoral Thesis*, Universiti Utara Malaysia (2010), p. 34 and 36

6 Please see Yeo Kim Wah, *The Grooming of an Elite*; Mohd. Shariff bin Abu Samah, *Modenisasi Pentadbiran Negeri Kedah*, p. 41

7 *Ibid*, p. 181

The District Office after Independence to the Late 1960s

Following the Federation of Malaya's attainment of independence in 1957, the administrative structure remained intact and constituted a central component of the state bureaucracy. Whereas during the colonial period the district office served as an entity to streamline colonial rule and ensure "law and order", in the post-independent period, it evolved into a focal point for "grassroots development."⁸ At the state level, the District Officer has a close relationship with the State Secretary, and the State Development Officer. Serving as a focal point, the District Office coordinates the projects and development work of all departments or offices at the district level. For instance, it collaborates closely with the District Education Office (*Pejabat Pendidikan Daerah*) and District Health Office (*Pejabat Kesihatan Daerah*), among others.

Though debates on development and national progress today in Malaysia are centred on economic indicators and material achievements, the nature and scope of development in its tradition builds on the idea of social justice and pursuance of national unity.⁹ Such an orientation is significantly shaped by the racial riots of 1969, and the economic disparities and imbalances that political leaders point to as the cause of the event. In response, the Second Malaysia Plan (1971-1975) prioritised two pivotal objectives deemed essential for Malaysia's development which are: 1) to reduce and eventually eradicate poverty, by raising income levels and increasing employment opportunities for all Malaysians, irrespective of race; and 2) accelerating the process of restructuring Malaysian society to correct economic imbalance, so as to reduce and eventually eliminate the identification of race with economic functions.¹⁰

Coinciding with the rule of Tun Abdul Razak as the second prime minister, he identified and marked the District Office as a central institution to coordinate and implement development at the local level, especially with the rural populace. The development agenda under his leadership also prioritised addressing rural poverty, as agriculture was a cornerstone of Malaysia's economy and farmers constituted one of the economically disadvantaged groups. It was during the time of Tun Abdul Razak, who was a key figure in the government, that saw the

8 Ibid, p. 197

9 Ibid, p. xx; Ahmad Sarji, *My Recollections of Tun Abdul Razak* (Petaling Jaya: MPH Publishing, 2016), p. 32

10 The Second Malaysia Plan, 1971-1975

elevation and expansion of the role and powers of the District Offices, and Officers. As Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National and Rural Development from 1957 to 1970, Tun Abdul Razak emphasised the importance of the district office to provide services to the public, and to facilitate development programmes. It was also during his time in the 1960s that the “operations room technique” to promote development was implemented. The approach involved establishing development committee and also operations room at federal, state and district levels.¹¹

The District Office, and development after 1970

The significance of Tun Abdul Razak’s role and vision for development, and the centrality of the District Office in enabling development at the district and local levels is recounted by Tun Ahmad Sarji in the ruminations of his time in public service under the former. Tun Ahmad Sarji was a former Deputy Assistant District Officer of Klang, Assistant District Officer of Seremban and Mantin, and District Officer of Rembau and later, Port Dickson. He later became the Under Secretary to the Cabinet and Constitution Division in the Prime Minister’s Department in December 1972, and Chief Secretary to the government from 1990 to 1996.

Tun Ahmad Sarji noted how the need and implementation of projects for development with ease and speed was insisted on by Tun Abdul Razak through the execution of the *Red Book* agenda and programme.¹² These projects were located primarily for the rural areas and consisted of projects such as roads and bridges, water supplies, rural industries, schools, health centres and public facilities, and electricity and telecommunication services.¹³ For Tun Abdul Razak, development programmes and projects should be implemented in a “purposeful” and “speedy manner.”¹⁴

At the District Rural Development Committee level, practices such as weekly “morning prayers”, involving the addressing and resolving of issues inhibiting the execution of projects, weekly updates and briefings on the development agendas, and the exercise of good leadership in the form of understanding the needs of government and the capacity to divide and delegate tasks and power were observed.¹⁵ The scope of

11 Sanusi, *The District Office*, p. 302

12 Ahmad Sarji, *My Recollections*, p. 5

13 Sanusi, *The District Office*, p. 308

14 Ahmad Sarji, *My Recollections*, p. 6

15 *Ibid*, p. 8-10

power and role of the district office envisioned by Tun Abdul Razak during his leadership as deputy prime minister (1957-1970) and later prime minister (1970-1976), the *Red Book* that outlining rural development programmes and subsequently formulated the *Green Book* aimed at increasing food production, boosting income, and promoting multi-stakeholder participation in development initiatives at the district level,¹⁶ have served as the gold standard for formulating and implementing development projects at the local community level in Malaysia, even to this day.¹⁷

The position of the District Office as a centre or institution for grassroots development, as Abdullah Sanusi terms it, however seemed to have become less prominent in the 1980s. While the institution continued thereafter, and still remains to this day, a principal point for coordination and implementation of government programmes and projects at the local level, the role of the District Office in the context of development planning at the community level is somewhat limited. Its scope of powers and decision-making are narrower. It also faces constraints such as funding limitations, and the need to adopt and adapt new governance and social approaches. Several factors may explain this reduced visibility of the district office in the realm of national-to-local development. Firstly, at the macro level, beginning in the 1980s, the government made a shift from agriculture to the building of industries and manufacturing. It also began a process of privatisation of government and national institutions and businesses, thus converting and placing them in the private sector and market. Secondly, since the 1980s and after, power and jurisdiction in governance and planning have increasingly been centralised at the federal level and among key government agencies and State institutions, and political and government leaders.

In the next section, building on this background and developments, the paper discusses the work of the APPGM-SDG at the local parliamentary level, its identification of social, environmental and economic issues faced by local communities, and its relation with the District Office and District Officers in this process.

16 Ibid, p. 306-311

17 Please see Denison Jayasooria, Taking a Red and Green Path to Post-COVID Success, *Free Malaysia Today*, 13 December 2020; Denison Jayasooria, Towards 2030: Malaysia's Development Agenda, *Siri Kertas Kajian Etnik UKM* (UKM Ethnic Studies Paper Series), Institut Kajian Etnik (Bangi, 2016)

APPGM-SDG's Issue Mapping Process and Collaborations with the District Office at the Parliamentary Constituency Level

APPGM-SDG and the localisation of SDGs through grounded research

As of 2023, the APPGM-SDG has conducted issue mapping visits utilising fieldwork and grounded research in 85 parliamentary constituencies. In carrying out the localisation process, and the issue mapping fieldwork in particular, the APPGM-SDG adopts the SDGs framework. This consists of several key elements: 1) the use of the tripartite dimensions of the social, economic, and environmental in identifying issues; 2) the interrelatedness of the 17 sustainable development goals where each goal is affected and shaped by the other; 3) embracing the mantra of *leaving no one behind* and *building inclusive communities*; and 4) the gathering and amplifying of the voices and concerns of local communities, and in particular vulnerable communities.

It is in this sense, that the SDGs and the APPGM-SDG give renewed meaning and urgency to the discourse and field of development in Malaysia. The APPGM-SDG has through its fieldwork identified over 300 issues that can be divided into 6 main categories covering: infrastructure and basic amenities; environmental preservation and management; land and housing ownership; border security; living conditions, waste management and sanitation; and welfare assistance, financial support and poverty. These issues fall within the sphere of development, and it is in this domain that the *sustainable development goals* or *SDGs* give prominence to problems and challenges faced by the local communities at the grassroots level.

In 2020, fieldwork in 10 parliamentary constituencies were undertaken. They consisted of Pendang, Jeli, Bentong, Selayang, Petaling Jaya, Tanjung Piai, Papar, Pensiangan, Batang Sadong, and Bandar Kuching. In these constituencies, the APPGM-SDG identified issues pertaining to the themes of poverty and imbalance development, social protection and welfare, land tenure and settlements, youth development and employment, food security and supply chain in the agriculture and food industry, digital connectivity, health, welfare and rights of single mothers, environmental governance, disaster management, affordable housing and urban poverty, sustainable tourism, refugees and migrants, and social cohesion and unity.¹⁸ *Table 1* below illustrates the number

18 Please see *Annual Report 2020*, APPGM-SDG, p. 19-23; Alizan Mahadi, Zainal Abidin Sanusi (eds), *Localising SDGs and Local Issues: Ten Parliamentary Constituencies in Malaysia* (PJ: Persatuan Promosi Matlamat Pembangunan Lestari, 2021), p. 107

and parliamentary constituencies that were covered by the APPGM-SDG in 2020.

Table 1: Parliamentary Constituencies Mapped by APPGM-SDG in 2020

| No. | Parliament Constituencies |
|-----|---------------------------|
| 1. | Pendang |
| 2. | Jeli |
| 3. | Bentong |
| 4. | Selayang |
| 5. | Petaling Jaya |
| 6. | Tanjung Piai |
| 7. | Papar |
| 8. | Pensiangan |
| 9. | Batang Sadong |
| 10. | Bandar Kuching |

The work carried out on the *SDGs* by the APPGM-SDG is distinguished from the work done by, for instance, the Department of Statistics or *DOSM*, and other agencies as their work focuses on statistical data and quantitative methods. The APPGM-SDG on the other hand, employs a qualitative approach that utilises interviews and data gathering, and issues identification through focus group discussions. The methodology of the APPGM-SDG is therefore targeted in nature, and problem posing in orientation.¹⁹ In line with its localisation efforts and pursuance of targeted vulnerable groups for issue identification and solution projects, the APPGM-SDG builds local connections and interactive rapport with local communities, NGOs, government agencies and offices, and social collectives that are present in the parliamentary locality. The APPGM-SDG places great emphasis on these local connections in accordance with the call to create and empower partnerships as per *SDG 17*, and

19 Denison Jayasooria and Nur Rahman Othman, *Parliamentarians and Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships in Implementing SDGs: In 57 Parliamentary Constituencies (Between 2020 and 2022) During the 14th Parliamentary Session*, *Journal of the Malaysian Parliament*, Vol. 3, 2023: pp. 130-154: 137-142; See also Syed Hussein Alatas, *Intellectuals in Developing Societies* (London: Cass, 1977)

guided by the value of *leaving no one behind*, hence encouraging grassroots participation and democracy in development efforts. An institution that has stood out, among others, in this grounded and collaborative process is the District Office.

APPGM-SDG and Partnerships with the District Office in the Localisation Process

The APPGM-SDG had less visibility and was not so well known in the early years of its localisation work. Two factors, however, contributed to highlighting its profile among government agencies and officials. Firstly, in 2021, the then Minister for Economy in the Prime Minister's Department, Dato' Mustapha Mohamed, issued letters of introduction of the APPGM-SDG to the secretaries of government of each state. Hence, from 2021, the APPGM-SDG was able to build closer linkages with District Offices at the State and local levels.

Secondly, a change in methodology to the issue mapping process in early 2023 further enhanced the relationship between members of the APPGM-SDG, including researchers, and officers of the District Offices in the various states. An additional step, consisting of a pre-visit to the District Office to meet the district officer of the parliamentary constituency that was being covered, was included to the fieldwork process. Prior to 2023, the members of the issue mapping team had only met the District Officer and officers of the District Office in the form of an inter-agency dialogue chaired by the District Officer on the last day of the fieldwork that spanned around 3 to 4 days. With an earlier meeting with the District Officer, members could directly introduce the APPGM-SDG to the district staff and local community leaders, such as the *penghulus* (headmen) and *ketua kampungs* (village chiefs) and provide an in-depth briefing of the mandate and groundwork of the APPGM-SDG. It also allowed members of the research and issue mapping team to understand the profile of the locality better, and the needs of and challenges faced by the government officers, and the local communities.

In the issue mapping process in 2021, covering 20 parliamentary constituencies between February to November, the APPGM-SDG documented issues in the categorised themes of youth development and employment; food security and the supply chain in agriculture; welfare and rights of single mothers; poverty and imbalanced development; environmental governance; social protection and welfare; land security and settlements; disaster management and climate change; refugees and

migrants; sustainable tourism; affordable housing and urban poverty; border security; and digital connectivity. The issues documented are also placed and assessed in accordance with the dimensions of the economic, social and environment.

Under the theme of youth development and employment, for instance, a critical and widespread issue is that of unemployment. There is a lack of available and dignified jobs for youths. These have led to many youths moving to the bigger cities and urban centres to search for better paying jobs and financial security. In addition, there is also a mismatch between the knowledge gained by youths and young workers in institutions of learning and the skills required in the industry and markets by employers. In 2021, these issues of employment and development were documented in the parliamentary constituencies of Kubang Pasu, Ipoh Barat, Kuala Selangor, Lembah Pantai, Muar, Simpang Renggam, Pasir Mas, Kota Belud and Libaran. Many of the categories of themes found in 2021 were similar to those identified in 2020. Two additional themes formulated in 2021 were related to waste management, and local governance and delivery.²⁰

In 2022, the APPGM-SDG team undertook fieldwork in 27 parliamentary constituencies from February to October. Some of the issues that were prevalent in the preceding years, similarly emerged in the reports of the constituencies covered throughout 2022. These issues could be generalised in the themes of, among others, environmental degradation and climate change, lack of employment and economic opportunities, lack of social mobility and social displacement, absence of welfare protection and social safety net, land security and ownership, and poor infrastructure and basic amenities. However, in 2022, not only were thematic areas generated and documented, but vulnerable groups were also identified and categorised in line with the findings from the ground. These groups consisted of farmers, fishers, the youths, single parents, people with disabilities, senior citizens, the *Orang Asal* and *Orang Asli*, and B40 community.²¹ This is not to say that in the preceding years such groups were not highlighted or documented, but they were formed through the focus of the APPGM-SDG's work since its inception. Nevertheless, these groups were also highlighted

20 Please see *Annual Report 2021*, APPGM-SDG, p. 33-36

21 Please see *Annual Report 2022*, APPGM-SDG, p. 35-37; See also *Compilation of Issues from Mapping Reports (2022)*, compiled and edited by Teo Sue Ann, unpublished

in addition to the issues and thematic areas to provide more visibility to the affected communities and to bring to the fore those who are left behind in Malaysia's development agenda and programme implementation.

In 2022, strong links were also established with the District Officers in the process of conducting the fieldwork, and undertaking the subsequent micro solution and capacity building projects. However, in 2023, these strong relations with the District Offices were reinforced. As highlighted in the preceding section, the change in the process of methodology that involved a pre-visit to the District Office before the undertaking of the fieldwork enabled the researchers from the APPGM-SDG to build closer relations with the District Officer. The pre-visit session facilitated discussions that allowed the research team a better understanding of the locality, including the issues and limitations of both the local level agencies and communities. Such interactions were impactful in two ways.

Firstly, a more personalised and collaborative relationship was shaped between the District Officer and his office and members of the APPGM-SDG research team. Secondly, and resulting from the first point, was that the District Office and its coordinating district level agencies and offices of ministries were better able to address the issues raised by the APPGM-SDG team as they understood the SDG framework, and provide concrete solutions to those community issues. Another distinguishing factor between the years 2022 and 2023 is that while inter-agency dialogues were present in the fieldwork process, in 2022 they were not necessarily held on the last day of the visit. In 2023, however, all the inter-agency dialogues were arranged on the last day. Thus, allowing better feedback gathering by the APPGM-SDG team from the respective district level agencies in the dialogue chaired by the District Officer. In this way, better solutions and strategies to address issues identified by the researchers could be strategised and implemented. The nature of relationship between the APPGM-SDG and the District Office as it developed from 2022 to 2023 is illustrated in *Table 2*.

Table 2: Parliamentary Constituencies Visited by APPGM-SDG and the Nature of Relationship with the District Office in 2022 and 2023

| Year | Parliament Constituencies | Intersecting Themes | Pre-Visit to District Office | Nature of Inter-Agency Dialogue with District Office and Government Agencies |
|------|---------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|--|
| 2022 | 27 | 16 | N/A | During the duration of the issue mapping site visit |
| 2023 | 28 | 26 | 23 | On the last day of the issue mapping site visit |

In the 28 parliamentary constituencies visited by the APPGM-SDG team in 2023, 26 of the constituencies conducted inter-agency dialogues that were chaired by the District Officer. This support on behalf of the institution of the district and the District Officers signalled a breakthrough in the localisation work and the local level multi-stakeholder initiatives of the APPGM-SDG. Throughout the 28 constituencies, some of the thematic areas generated included socio-economic implications of border security, environmental pollution, under recognition of heritage, imbalanced development, drugs abuse, indeterminate support for people with disabilities, poor social conditions of low-cost flats, well-being of island communities, food security, citizenship, gender and poverty, and the social dislocation of youths.

Through the strong links cultivated with the District Offices, those local and community issues under those themes were brought to the attention of the District Officers and their staff. Additionally, due to the support given by the District Office to the localisation work of the APPGM-SDG in these parliamentary constituencies, participation from various agencies and institutions at the district level in the inter-agency dialogues was also forthcoming and strong. It was from the District Officer's desk that coordination and deliberations on the implementation of projects, and any gaps on government outreach and programmes, and service delivery, were monitored.

The development agenda and challenges of the District Office

As such, the district office has played a pivotal role in the groundwork of the APPGM-SDG,²² in addition to the other support also given by the different groups including the Member of Parliament's office, local NGOs and community activists, and local leaders both from the formal and informal side. These partnerships and efforts established by the District Office-APPGM-SDG are pertinent as they allow critical issues faced by vulnerable and local communities that are identified through the SDGs framework, to be brought to the centre of district level government planning, implementation and troubleshooting of development programmes. They form part of the policy and service delivery advocacy chain that the APPGM-SDG has built and continues to build, connecting and flowing from the uppermost level of government, federal ministries and leadership, to the grassroots level of local agencies and offices, and leadership. Members of Parliament also participate and facilitate throughout this interactional process.

There have been many achievements and successes in ensuring development projects are implemented at the local level that contribute to the improvement of the lives of local communities. The work of the APPGM-SDG with the District Office and local partners on the ground in the past 4 years have also contributed to these positive changes. Nevertheless, while these interventions are significant, there remain several challenges that limit the progress and successful execution of social programmes and public delivery that addresses community-based issues.

One such challenge is the lack of financial resources at the disposal of the District Office. The absence and unavailability of funds impede the district office from implementing new projects or programs that are much needed by the community. Thereby, failing to ensure the sustainability and long-term running of specific programmes that could benefit the people and vulnerable groups in a longer duration of time. Financial support is also needed to support and boost social and infrastructural projects that may have encountered problems or face high risks, particularly in an era of uncertainty that has seen the

22 Please see Denison Jayasooria and Nur Rahman Othman, *Parliamentarians and Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships in Implementing SDGs*; See also Malaysia Voluntary National Review (VNR), p. 120

occurrence of a severe global pandemic, and geopolitical conflicts that have consequences on the local life of communities. These interventions are needed, for instance, in the sectors of the food industry and agriculture, environment and biodiversity, and health and medical services.

The second challenge, which is related to and builds on the first, is the limited powers and jurisdiction of the District Office. This is particularly so in the context of the pooling and collection of financial resources, and the planning of development programmes and policies specifically in and for the district level governance and administration. The former, as discussed earlier, is crucial for the running and implementation of social programmes by the District Office, and its committees. In relation to the latter case, the District Office and its personnel led by the District Officer are the focal point for manifestations of government policies and agendas, ensuring development projects serve to elevate the community's quality of life are properly implemented. Yet, the District Officer may not necessarily be involved in the process of policy formulation and decision-making.

This returns to a previous discussion above, where many of the powers and decision-making authority is centralised at the federal level and among the elite leadership.²³ The role of the District Officer, therefore, is primarily to implement executive orders and policy blueprints. As the District Office is placed at the intersection between federal and state agendas, the need and role for the District Officer to be a key decision maker in the process of development planning and policy formulation is even more central.

Further to the two key challenges faced by the District Office, there is also the challenge of the one-dimensional approach and perspective to policy making and implementation. One-dimensional refers to the

23 Lee Hwok Aun, *Insufficient States: Revisiting the Roles and Resources of Malaysia's Subnational Governments*, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak, *Perspective*, Issue No. 97, 14 December 2023, p. 3-5

Please see also Kai Ostwald, *Power Distribution and Decentralization in New Malaysia*, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak, *Perspective*, Issue No. 66, 29 August 2019; Tricia Yeoh, *Reviving the Spirit of Federalism: Decentralization Policy Options for a New Malaysia*, *Policy Ideas*, IDEAS, No. 59, April 2019; Francis Loh, *Centralized Federalism in Malaysia: Urgent Need to Decentralize*, *Aliran*, 20 June 2018, accessed at <https://m.aliran.com/aliran-csi/centralised-federalism-in-malaysia-urgent-need-to-decentralise>; Kai Ostwald, *Federalism without Decentralization: Power Consolidation in Malaysia*, *Journal of Southeast Asian Economies*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (2017), pp. 488-506

understanding of social issues and solving of public problems only through a singular domain or discipline. For instance, the phenomena of lack of employment opportunities are approached only through the economic perspective and involving only government ministries and agencies related to the subject matter of the economy. Another notable case is attempting to understand the phenomena of flooding and landslides from the environmental perspective only.

In the former case, health and environmental perspectives and policy areas are also related and crucial for job creation. For the latter, economic and governance perspectives, among others, are necessary to address rising water levels that affect urban and rural localities. Thus, what is needed is a multi-dimensional and multi-stakeholder approach²⁴ to development planning, policy formulation, programme implementation and impact monitoring and assessment.²⁵ This approach should extend from the federal echelons to the local levels of governance including the district office.

Fourth and finally, there is the challenge of political instability. In the absence of a stable political order and leadership, the governmental structure and administrative composition at different levels of government will be affected. When this occurs, administrative certainty and consistency at the district level are also disrupted and rendered inefficient. The composition and members of the *penghulus* and *ketua kampungs*, for instance, come under the purview of and are appointed by the State governments. They assist the district office in information dissemination and project implementation at the district level and below, involving the *mukims* and *kampungs*. Hence, when there is instability in the political structure and uncertainty in the chain of command, development work is ultimately disrupted.

The four challenges of lack of financial resources, limited powers and jurisdiction, the one-dimensional approach in policy making and development implementation, and political instability, are critical issues

24 Please see Denison Jayasooria and Nur Rahmah Othman, Parliamentarians and Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships in Implementing SDGs: In 57 Parliamentary Constituencies (Between 2020 and 2022) during the 14th Parliamentary Session, *Parliament Journal Article*, March 2023

25 Please see: Work together to provide safety nets for children – commissioner, Malaysiakini, 13 April 2023, quoted from Bernama, <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/662015>; Sekolah komuniti di Semporna: perlu perbincangan rentas kementerian – KPM, 26 Disember 2023, <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/691256>

that affect the project of nation-building, and the *SDGs* in particular.²⁶ By addressing these challenges, through the *SDGs* and in pursuance of the *SDGs*, we are better equipped to create a society and nation that is inclusive and developed.

Conclusion

Despite these challenges, and the complexity of the remedies that are needed to address and resolve them, the institution of the District Office is a vital institution in the administrative structure of the State and government. The District Office ensures that government policies materialise and that programmes are implemented, contributing to the country's development agenda. This ensures that developments in the form of infrastructure and facilities, public services, social programmes, and assistance, among others, reach the most vulnerable and needy of society. The District Office is a centre of diffusion and balance, ensuring that development and its outcomes are not accumulated and concentrated in the urban cities and among the elites and those privileged in society. Instead, it reaches widely to the further regions of Malaysia, the rural areas and those on the margins.

The elevation and empowerment of the district office is not a recent phenomenon in Malaysia. It originates from a development paradigm established in the late 1960s and thereafter, guided by the principles of social justice and aimed at improving the quality of life for the poorest and most disadvantaged in society. Under Tun Abdul Razak's leadership, significant emphasis was given to rural development to address poverty in the rural areas. Today, social conditions may have changed, but the principles of justice and need for development remain unchanged.

Moving forward, the *SDGs* agenda can be situated and contextualised within this developmental tradition that has shaped Malaysia. This approach imbues development with a contemporary and global dimension, aimed at improving the well-being of all Malaysians. Bridging Malaysian development planning with the *SDGs*, the *Malaysia Voluntary*

26 See Teo Lee Ken and Debbie Loh (eds), *SDG Policies and Practices in Malaysia* (PJ: Society for the Promotion of *SDGs*, 2023); Teo Sue Ann (ed), *SDGs and Grassroots Realities: Seven Community Case Studies in Malaysia* (PJ: Society for the Promotion of *SDGs*, 2023); Teo Sue Ann (ed), *Localizing SDGs and Grassroots Concerns of Six Vulnerable Groups in Malaysia* (PJ: Society for the Promotion of *SDGs*, 2023); Alizan Mahadi and Nazran Zhafri (eds), *Sustainable Development, Making SDGs Matter: Leaving No One Behind* (Kuala Lumpur: ISIS Malaysia, 2021)

National Review of 2021 on the United Nations 2030 SDG Agenda has also highlighted and emphasised the importance of the role of the District Office in realising the SDGs. Citing the empowering of the District Office as one of the opportunities and way forward, the report noted that:

In localising SDGs, in addition to working with local authorities, efforts are being made to engage with the district offices. This is to ensure an inter-agency SDG delivery taskforce is organised at the district level to enhance the role of all agencies including a multi-stakeholder group (civil society, private sector and academic networks) in addressing economic, social and environmental concerns at the grassroots level.²⁷

The District Office unquestionably plays a central role in the Malaysian SDGs Agenda and localisation efforts. The APPGM-SDG, guided by this note and through its own initiatives, has initiated partnerships with District Offices and local agencies in several selected parliamentary constituencies for the purpose of resolving longstanding local issues. For instance, multi-stakeholder taskforces in the constituencies of Ipoh Barat and Petaling Jaya. In 2023, the *MySDG Center for Social Inclusion*, under the APPGM-SDG, began engagements with the district offices in Kubang Pasu, and Seberang Perai Selatan in one of its initiatives to undertake the pilot project of establishing a multi-stakeholder platform involving the *Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat* (Department of Social Welfare), focusing on welfare services delivery, training, and policy for local communities at the district level. The *Center* also seeks to establish several more multi-stakeholder platforms at the district level of designated constituencies, focusing on selected thematic and policy areas in the coming year.

The groundwork, documentation and activities of the APPGM-SDG in previous years, alongside the ongoing work of the *MySDG Center for Social Inclusion* this year, have provided valuable insights and lessons for moving forward. As the APPGM-SDG seeks to strengthen its policy advocacy component and consolidate its presence and work at the grassroots level, these experiences are crucial. As the UN 2030 Agenda is approaching the midpoint, all enablers that can accelerate the attainment of the SDGs and in building inclusive communities should be expanded and reinforced. The District Office and the APPGM-SDG serves as a pivotal vehicle and foundation for positive progress.

27 Malaysia Voluntary National Review (VNR) 2021, p. 120

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Exploring the State of Mental Well-Being Among B40 Women

*Nurul Syahirah binti Abd Aziz**

Abstract

The solution projects under The All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on the Sustainable Development Goals (APPGM-SDG) have played a significant role in empowering the local communities, particularly women through Income Generation (IG) and Community Learning Center (CLC) projects. The initiative consists of twelve modules on entrepreneurship skills and handholding, with a minimum of 10 to 25 beneficiaries from the B40 category who are mentored by the Solution Provider (SP) throughout the following three to four months. Each project was awarded a RM40,000 grant to provide the beneficiaries with skills and knowledge that will allow them to be independent entrepreneurs. It was discovered through the four case studies that adhered to SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) that certain female beneficiaries were experiencing such high levels of life pressure that negatively impacted their mental health due to a lack of necessary coping strategies to manage the stress and uncomfortable emotions. The reasons vary, ranging from personal issues and societal pressures to the inherent challenges of entrepreneurship. The finding shows that the project's method of group activities or social groups enhances the beneficiaries' mental health by providing them with encouragement, hope, and drive to succeed in life. It is also highly recommended to provide mental health awareness as one of the compulsory modules in the solution projects to equip women with appropriate coping techniques for overall success.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals, Women, Entrepreneurs, Mental Well-being, Social Support

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Introduction

The APPGM-SDG agenda is to localize SDG to the marginalized community where the central theme is the notion of 'leaving no one behind'. The main emphasis is on disadvantaged and marginalized individuals, families, and communities that deal with issues that concern the poor, women, indigenous people, disabled people, migrants and refugees, youths, and the elderly. As the beneficiaries of the solution projects, the B40 women entrepreneurs will be the focus of four case studies that address the concerns of SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being).

Moore and Buttner defined women entrepreneurs as leaders who initiate business ventures, oversee daily operations and risks, manage finances, organize administrative tasks, and uphold social obligations.¹ Women have run small enterprises for generations, serving as a source of additional income and a means of surviving difficult times such as the economic depression.² In light of the new economy's dynamic macro- and microenvironmental rapid changes, women entrepreneurs should be understood as risk-takers, lifelong learners, influential leaders, excellent managers, and well-organizers with visionary, innovative creation, conscientiousness, values-driven, and social responsibilities.³ From here, we can understand that women entrepreneurs are characterized by qualities like vision, innovation, conscientiousness, and a commitment to social responsibilities.

Citing Basit, Hassan and Sethumadhayan stated, that women entrepreneurs' success is not restricted to only economic aspects, as it does not take into account the aspect of entrepreneurial behaviors.⁴ Women can be defined as successful when they can contribute to their

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- 1 E. H Buttner and D. P. Moore, 'Women's Organizational Exodus to Entrepreneurship: Self-Reported Motivations and Correlates with Success' (1997) 35 *Journal of Small Business Management* 34–46.
 - 2 Buttner, E. H., 'Female entrepreneurs: how far have they come?' (1993) 36 *Business Horizons-Bloomington* 59-59 <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/149230427.pdf>.
 - 3 Kerr, S. P., Kerr, W. R., & Xu, T., 'Personality traits of entrepreneurs: A review of recent literature' (2017) *National Bureau of Economic Research* <https://doi.org/10.3386/w2409>.
 - 4 Basit, A., Hassan, Z., & Sethumadhavan, S., 'Entrepreneurial success: Key challenges faced by Malaysian women entrepreneurs in 21st century' (2020) 15(9) *International Journal of Business and Management* 122-138 <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijbm.v15n9p122>.

community, have happy jobs, produce quality offspring, live well,⁵ have self-fulfillment, be in charge of their fate, and establish enduring relationships with clients. Hence, to prevent success measurement bias, women entrepreneurs' success should be assessed in both financial and non-financial dimensions.⁶ Acknowledging and prioritizing the importance of mental well-being among the B40 women entrepreneurs helps to provide an environment where not only material success should be celebrated but also psychological well-being that contributes to the sustainability of the business.

The World Health Organization defines mental health as a state of well-being in which the individual realizes their abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and can contribute to their community.⁷ Additionally, factors related to society, culture, and history influence how mental health is defined.⁸ For example, cultures that prioritize autonomy and independence could have distinct ideas about mental health than cultures that support actions that benefit the community as a whole. From the definition, it is evident that mental health is defined as part of a larger set of behaviors that result in healthy, happy, and meaningful living. This article seeks to gain a better understanding of the mental health of the B40 women entrepreneurs who participate in APPGM-SDG solution projects.

Social support emerges from the dynamics of personal relationships in natural contexts. The relationship gives supportive meaning to behaviors, and supportive behaviors, in turn, add significant dimensions to interactions within the relationship.⁹ According to Harandi, social

5 Fenwick, T., & Hutton, 'Women crafting new work: The learning of women entrepreneurs' (2000) <https://newprairiepress.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2162&context=aerc>.

6 Powell, G. N., & Eddleston, K. A., 'Linking family-to-business enrichment and support to entrepreneurial success: do female and male entrepreneurs experience different outcomes?' (2013) 28(2) *Journal of Business Venturing* 261-280 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2012.02.007>.

7 World Health Organization, 'Promoting mental health: Concepts, emerging evidence, practice: Summary report.' (2004) https://www.who.int/mental_health/evidence/en/promoting_mhh.pdf.

8 de Cates, A., Stranges, S., Blake, A., & Weich S., 'Mental well-being: An important outcome for mental health services?' (2015) 207(3) *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 195-197 <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.bp.114.158329>.

9 Gottlieb, B. H., & Bergen A.E., 'Social support concepts and measures.' (2010) 69(5) *Journal of Psychosomatic Research* 511-520 <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1016/j.jpsychores.2009.10.001>.

support is a phenomenon that involves human relationships; therefore when a person provides social interaction, it has a significant impact on his health.¹⁰ When people are negotiating difficult physical and psychosocial situations, social support can help them both psychologically and physically. It is recognized as an essential component in reducing psychological distress when faced with stressful events.

Issues

Researchers found that work-life balance is the most significant challenge faced by women entrepreneurs due to the difficulty of managing multiple responsibilities between businesses and families¹¹ as well as personal needs.¹² Studies found that work conflicts and family life had more impact on women entrepreneurs than men¹³ due to women's multiple roles in the family, such as child care and other domestic responsibilities, in addition to the entrepreneurial challenges that they must face.¹⁴ It has been discovered that having dual domestic responsibilities is a significant impediment to their career progress.¹⁵ Often, women are referred to as "multitasking women" due to their ability to balance work and family duties.¹⁶ This shows that women entrepreneurs struggle with balancing work and family responsibilities, facing challenges due to their multiple roles at home, and hindering their career progress.

10 Harandi, T. F., Taghinasab, M. M., & Nayeri, T. D., 'The correlation of social support with mental health: A meta-analysis.' (2017) 9(9) *Electronic Physician* 5212 <https://doi.org/10.19082/5212>.

11 A Alam, S. S., Jani, M. F. M., & Omar, N. A., 'An empirical study of success factors of women entrepreneurs in southern region in Malaysia' (2011) 3(2) *International Journal of Economics and Finance* 166-175 <https://doi.org/10.5539/IJEF.V3N2P166>.

12 Rehman, S., & Azam Roomi, M., 'Gender and work-life balance: a phenomenological study of women entrepreneurs in Pakistan' (2012) 19(2) *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development* 209-228 <https://doi.org/10.1108/14626001211223865>.

13 Al-Hossienie, C. A., 'Socio-economic impact of women entrepreneurship in Sylhet City, Bangladesh' (2011) 12 *BDRWPS* 1-22 <https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1890681>.

14 Mahi Uddin, M. D., & Chowdhury, M. M., 'An Investigation into the issues of Work-Life Balance of Women Entrepreneurs in Bangladesh' (2015) *Journal of Business and Management (IOSR-JBM)* 17(4) 07-17 <http://dx.doi.org/10.9790/487X-17430717>.

15 Cross, C., & Linehan, M., 'Barriers to advancing female careers in the high-tech sector: empirical evidence from Ireland' (2006) 21(1) *Women in Management Review* 28-39 <https://doi.org/10.1108/09649420610643394>.

16 Bullough, A., & Abdelzaher, D., 'Global Research on Women's Entrepreneurship: An Overview of Available Data Sources & Limitations' (2013) 2(3) *Business and Management Research* <https://doi.org/10.5430/BMR.V2N3P42>.

According to Shmiln, home and family are the priorities of women in most developing countries.¹⁷ Women's attempts to integrate, sort, and balance diverse problems and activities in their multiple roles and responsibilities have put them under a lot of pressure¹⁸ and caused a work-life imbalance that affects themselves, their families, and the community. The capacity to achieve flexibility and control over work-home obligations is one of the primary characteristics driving successful female entrepreneurs.¹⁹ In Malaysia, it is also found that for women to succeed in their careers, they should implement innovative strategies for balancing work and life, such as gaining support from spouses and families, practicing stress management skills, and altering their work structure so it becomes more flexible.²⁰ Family and social support have been emphasized as important components that contribute to the success of women entrepreneurs.²¹

One of the respondents in this article has even raised a similar issue, as stated in the above literature. One of the beneficiaries of a solution project called Program Pemerkasaan Ekonomi Ibu Tunggal di Pasoh, implemented by ATOA Enterprise as the SP, faced significant struggles and difficulties in her life due to her status as a single mother and the limited support system available to her for child care. Since the day she lost her husband, she has taken full responsibility for her children's welfare, and her mental health is also greatly affected by this event. This situation has caused her huge difficulties in managing her livelihood as well as her small business. Hence, it can be seen that:

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- 17 Shmiln, A. W., 'Female entrepreneurs in developing countries: a comparative with developed countries as explorative study' (2017) 7(331) *Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review* 2 <https://www.hilarispublisher.com/open-access/female-entrepreneurs-in-developing-countries-a-comparative-with-developedcountries-as-explorative-study.pdf>.>
 - 18 Horner Mitnick, D., 'The Impact of Working Women on Work/Life Balance Perspectives' (2006) Master of Science in Organizational Dynamics Theses 4 <https://repository.upenn.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/4080d2e4-49bb-46b8-b764-f09e67073c41/content>.
 - 19 Agarwal, S., & Lenka, U., 'Study on work-life balance of women entrepreneurs—review and research agenda' (2015) *Industrial and Commercial Training* <https://doi.org/10.1108/ICT-01-2015-0006>.
 - 20 Romli, L., & Ghani, N. A., 'Innovative strategies between work and life balance among female entrepreneurs in the state of Terengganu, Malaysia' (2018) 8(5) *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss%2Fv8-i5%2F4084>.
 - 21 Abbas, T., Abrar, M., Saleem, R., & Iqbal, A., 'What Leads to Success for Women Entrepreneurs? An Empirical Study of Southern Punjab in Pakistan' (2016) [http://www.savap.org.pk/journals/ARInt./Vol.7\(5\)/2016\(7.5-12\).pdf](http://www.savap.org.pk/journals/ARInt./Vol.7(5)/2016(7.5-12).pdf).

... “Saya sebagai single mom memang terasa sangat-sangat struggle untuk mencari rezeki untuk dua orang anak saya..tanpa..saya tidak dibantu oleh keluarga. Saya berdiri atas kaki sendiri. Susah ke penat ke, saya tetap kena jalani” ... – Beneficiary 1

Another respondent raised a similar concern regarding work-life imbalance stemming from a lack of social support. Beneficiary 4, enrolled in the SPARKLE project, which stands for “Skills Program for Advancing Resourceful Knowledge in Beauty for Low-income Entrepreneurs,” with Paradise Beauty Parlour as the SP, shared akin challenges in managing her life. Juggling work responsibilities as a single mother, she must also care for her ailing mother and support her daughter, who is categorized as a Person with Disability (PWD), all while grappling with ways to enhance her modest income. She openly acknowledges feeling mentally fatigued and stressed as she endeavors to maintain balance in her life.

... “Actually to be frank I have been mentally struggling my life previously. Work, family, illness mother and daughter, and low income. It is really a stressful life. Do not know which part of life I need to move forward.” ... – Beneficiary 4

Women entrepreneurs are more vulnerable to work-life imbalance and need sufficient social support to build successful careers. To quote an example, this can be observed through one of the solution projects with Ana CB Enterprise as the SP, for a project called From Sewing Shop to Community Learning and Cafer Centre at Baling, Kedah, where the place has now become an empowerment and therapeutic center for B40 women entrepreneurs through sewing skills learning. The participants can even bring their children while training and working. The center also provides sewing machines for the beneficiaries to practice without charge. These initiatives show a promising future that can contribute to women-entrepreneurial success, where women not only gain new business-specific skills and grow their businesses but also have more flexibility and control over their work-life balance, which helps a lot for them to cope well with their life challenges.

Another example can be studied from a solution project by an SP called Persatuan Wanita Inspirasi Mampan for project Kiosk Jerlun Ohsem. It has evolved into a one-stop women’s entrepreneur center in Jerlun, Kedah, with 30 members who have a high interest in making food goods. The kiosk or station functions as a community development center, offering psychosocial support to the local community, notably B40 women. The purpose of the center is to serve as a place for women to broaden their

knowledge and experience about the food industry business, as well as obtain moral support and endless guidance from other women who share the same interest and passion in this supportive atmosphere. This holistic approach emphasizes the value of social support in assisting women entrepreneurs by boosting women's self-esteem and giving them the courage to pursue business growth.

These case examples highlight the importance of providing social support and work-life balance for B40 women entrepreneurs. This kind of assistance is very meaningful and helps women entrepreneurs become more confident and proactive in growing their businesses. Access to knowledge, skills, and a conducive business environment is pivotal for women entrepreneurs. This facilitates not only effective business management but also enables them to better balance familial responsibilities, leading to enhanced mental well-being. With the right resources and practical business spaces, women can efficiently allocate time to strategize for their businesses, consequently elevating product quality and overall success. This article aims to explore more on the mental well-being aspect of the selected beneficiaries through four identified solution projects under APPGM-SDG.

Methodology

This research employs rigorous research methodologies, including monthly monitoring of project locations, on-site visits, and in-depth interviews. Solution projects under the APPGM-SDG provide sustainable and long-lasting solutions to ensure that recipients not only survive but prosper. Due to the various responsibilities that women have, projects are created with flexibility and creative solutions.

The solution project unit at the APPGM-SDG Secretariat conducts online monthly monitoring meetings with the SPs for 3 to 4 months via Zoom. During these meetings, the SPs would present their project and the beneficiaries' progress. After each meeting, the SPs will submit reports, which will be reviewed by the solution project officers. The reports include project impact evaluations based on the Meta Integral Framework which consists of 4-four domains: Deep Impact, Clear Impact, Wide Impact, and High Impact. These impact evaluations allow solution project officers to see the changes observed within the project and the beneficiaries.²²

22 Daud, Sity, and Rashila Ramli, 'Methodology and Analytical Framework' in Sity Daud and Rashila Ramli, *Sustainable Development Goals SDGs & Project Impact Evaluation in Malaysia* (Malaysian Social Science Association (PSSM), Bangi, Selangor, 2024), pp. 17-19.

The first impact, referred to as Deep Impact, includes the beneficiaries' emotional, esteem-related, motivating, satisfaction-related, and confidence-related changes in personal experiences. The second impact, Clear Impact, refers to improvements in beneficiaries' abilities and performance. The third feature, Wide Impact, looks at the relationships that beneficiaries have developed with many stakeholders, such as program participants, service providers, government agencies, and other civil society organizations. Finally, High Impact refers to the development of systems such as standard operating procedures (SOPs), workplace standards, organizational norms, or defined processes for carrying out certain duties.

The solution project officers conducted on-site visits once during the 4 months of project implementation, between October and December 2023. The author, who is a qualified developmental psychologist with expertise in conducting behavioral interventions and assessments, is part of the solution project team who visited the projects with the team. The firsthand experience gained during these on-site visits not only enhances understanding of project delivery, but also creates opportunities for comprehensive questioning and insightful responses from both solution providers and beneficiaries. By actively engaging with the beneficiaries, the author had the opportunity to listen to their challenges and success stories, including improvements in their mental well-being.

Following the on-site visits, the author proceeded with in-depth interviews with the beneficiaries to gain a better understanding of their mental well-being journey. This approach also allowed participants to articulate their journeys and learning experiences throughout the project. It serves as a platform for them to express any difficulties faced or empowerment achieved, as well as discuss the tangible outputs and outcomes resulting from their participation in the project. There are two questions being asked:

1. What are the emotional changes that you have experienced since joining APPGM-SDG?
2. Do you feel that your mental health is improving?

In this research, four beneficiaries were selected as interview participants. The inclusion criteria for the respondents are that they must be from the B40 category, be a woman entrepreneur, and have struggled to improve their mental well-being. Informed consent of all participants was obtained before the in-depth interviews, including audio recordings

of the interviews. The in-depth interviews were conducted in December 2023. The author used thematic analysis to examine the patterns or themes emerging from the in-depth interviews with the four chosen beneficiaries. This analysis assists in identifying and interpreting patterns or themes in a set of data, which can contribute to better knowledge and fresh insights into the issue statements for this study.²³

The project name, SP, and accompanying beneficiary are all denoted by a numerical label ranging from one to four in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Project name, solution provider (SP), and beneficiaries

| No. | Project Name | Solution Provider | Beneficiary |
|-----|---|--|---------------|
| 1 | Program Pemerkasaan Ekonomi Ibu Tinggal di Pasoh | ATO Enterprise | Beneficiary 1 |
| 2 | From Zero to Hero | Athanliz Innovations Sdn Bhd | Beneficiary 2 |
| 3 | KIWARA Youth Centre | Kelab Inspirasi Wanita Rahmah Kepala Batas Pulau Pinang (KIWARA) | Beneficiary 3 |
| 4 | SPARKLE “Skills Program for Advancing Resourceful Knowledge in Beauty for Low-income Entrepreneurs” | Paradise Beauty Parlour | Beneficiary 4 |

Impact analysis

Impact analysis is a systematic approach used to assess the effectiveness of programs and interventions, which helps to accurately assess the impact of solution projects and provide sound recommendations for future projects.²⁴ Drawing from the overall positive project outcomes shared by the Meta Integral Framework, the author discovered that the mental well-being of the beneficiaries improved. Three main themes emerged from thematic analysis which are positive social interaction,

23 Naeem, Muhammad, Wilson Ozuem, Silvia Ranfagni, and Silvia Ranfagni, ‘A Step-by-Step Process of Thematic Analysis to Develop a Conceptual Model in Qualitative Research’ (2023) 18 International Journal of Qualitative Methods.

24 Daud, Sity, and Rashila Ramli, Executive Summary (Malaysian Social Science Association (PSSM), Bangi, Selangor, 2024).

social support, and improved mental well-being. These are elaborated below with verbatim quotes from the beneficiaries.

The solution projects encourage and inspire the SP to create sustainable impacts with creative and empathetic thinking to uplift the beneficiaries from poverty and transform their future. The ongoing support and vigilant monitoring provided by the SP play a pivotal role in empowering beneficiaries to thrive in their businesses, thereby positively impacting the livelihoods of themselves and their families.

The APPGM-SDG solution projects have been identified as catalysts for enhancing positive social interaction among beneficiaries, thereby contributing significantly to the improvement of their mental well-being. This positive impact is evident in the experiences shared by Beneficiary 3 from the Kiwara Youth Center project, facilitated by SP, Kelab Inspirasi Wanita Rahmah Kepala Batas Pulau Pinang (KIWARA). During the entirety of the classes or modules within the project, Beneficiary 3 not only found comfort and pleasure but also identified these modules as effective coping mechanisms for managing daily stress.

... “Bila saya belajar tu dia..tumpuan tu dalam acara tu saja. Saya dah tak pikiaq. Hilanglah masalah-masalah. Dengan keluarga pun dah OK dan kurang stres.” ... – Beneficiary 3

Beneficiaries 1, 2, and 4 have experienced changes since joining the solution project. Within these projects, all of the beneficiaries play a crucial role as a social support group, creating a secure and welcoming environment for the beneficiaries to openly share not only life experiences but also to highlight recent business achievements among a group of like-minded peers. This demonstrates that the beneficiaries not only gained new insights and skills in entrepreneurship but also cultivated a newfound support system, a constant source of encouragement poised to elevate their self-motivation and bolster their confidence throughout their entrepreneurial expedition.

... “Alhamdulillah sejak saya sertai APPGM-SDG ni alhamdulillah saya ada rasa perubahan, saya dapat berkongsi suka duka, dapat berkongsi pendapatan, dapat menambah ilmu..dengan saya sertai ini saya dapat menambah pendapatan saya. Saya berterima kasih sangat-sangat kepada ATOA kepada APPGM yang banyak membantu mengurangkan beban saya.” ... – Beneficiary 1

... “Produk kita alhamdulillah kualiti OK cuma kita tak ada platform untuk kita marketkan. Jadi bila ada platform yang Dr Athifah offer kepada saya, saya rasa benda ni sangat bagus, sangat membantu untuk usahawan kecil macam saya lah.” ... – Beneficiary 2

... "I feel happy and proudly going to start my new journey of doing my mobile spa. This really will help me to earn extra income to look after my family. Being a single mother is really a hard time but SPARKLE program has shown me a future." ... – Beneficiary 4

One particularly interesting finding is that while the primary objective of these solution projects is to impart business-specific skills for income generation, the results indicate an additional and noteworthy benefit, a significant enhancement in the mental well-being of the beneficiaries. This positive outcome is vividly demonstrated in the interviews with Beneficiaries 2, 3, and 4, all of whom attested to marked improvements in their mental health since becoming participants in the projects under APPGM-SDG.

... "Kalau dari segi mental health saya memang banyak improve lah. Banyak improvement. Sebab dulu ah..sebab sakit..pastu bisnes slow..so memang down, memang stres. Ah..tapi sekarang alhamdulillah lah." ... – Beneficiary 2

... "Semasa saya sertai kelas ini..haa..depression saya semakin berkurangan..dah tak berapa stress. Saya dalam pergaulan rakan-rakan yang baik. Tempat..tempat pembelajaran tu pun..ok..bagus..pembelajaran semua pun bagus...cikgu pun OK." ... – Beneficiary 3

... "This is really a new adventure in my life to move forward and break all my struggles. SPARKLE program has shown me the brightness part. I have improved my mental health and my mindset. My confidence level has changed." ... – Beneficiary 4

Conclusion

Drawing from the experiences of APPGM-SDG, it is evident that numerous women express a keen interest in acquiring specialized business skills, including baking and pastries, agriculture, and sewing. The acquisition of these skills has empowered women to enhance their income and has served as a valuable contribution to household finances. As a result, the confidence of these women entrepreneurs has not only increased but has also improved their overall lifestyle and well-being. Based on the findings, alongside the crucial aspect of quality education, it becomes apparent that a solid support system is equally indispensable in the journey to foster successful women entrepreneurs. Hence, empowering women entrepreneurs should not be confined to the development of entrepreneurial skills alone; it should also embrace the provision of emotional support and innovative solutions geared towards attaining a sustainable work-life balance.

The development of a strong partnership and close working relationship between APPGM-SDG, beneficiaries, and solution providers is critical for building a harmonious working environment and empowering a community. This is a long process that takes time to develop trust. Building a lasting connection necessitates authenticity, integrity, and a proactive commitment to resolving concerns and flaws as they arise. Seeing each individual's cumulative efforts contribute to the ongoing building of a resilient community is a journey conducted with the utmost respect and decency. All the beneficiaries featured in this article are providing positive feedback and expressing a keen interest in continuing their journey with the SP. This emphasizes the crucial role of relationships founded on empathy, compassion, and sincerity in empowering the community. Such connections are crucial to the development of a resilient and vibrant community.

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Masyarakat Pribumi: Cabaran Masyarakat Orang Asli Peta dalam Mencapai Pembangunan Mampan di Taman Negara Endau-Rompin, Mersing, Johor

*Indigenous Communities: The Challenges of Peta Indigenous
Communities in Achieving Sustainable Development in
Endau-Rompin National Park, Mersing, Johor*

*Wan Suzita Wan Ibrahim**

Abstrak

Pihak kerajaan telah melaksanakan pelbagai projek pembangunan negara yang melibatkan banyak agensi kerajaan dan pihak swasta termasuk di kawasan perkampungan Orang Asli terutama, dalam mencapai matlamat 17 pembangunan mampan yang telah disarankan oleh pihak kerajaan sejak 2015. Namun begitu, penglibatan dan perubahan pembangunan di kawasan Orang Asli masih ketinggalan hingga kini dan wajar dipertimbangkan agar tidak mengganggu sosiobudaya asal mereka. Justeru, kajian ini telah dilakukan di perkampungan Orang Asli Peta (Taman Negara Endau-Rompin), Mersing, Johor untuk mengkaji cabaran masyarakat Orang Asli Peta, dalam mencapai pembangunan mampan. Metodologi, yang digunakan dalam kajian ini adalah secara kualitatif iaitu temu bual secara mendalam (*in-depth*). Manakala, teknik pengumpulan data di lapangan adalah perbincangan kumpulan berfokus (*Focus Group Discussion*) bersama Tok Batin dan 25 orang wakil penduduk kampung dari suku kaum Jakun. Mereka terdiri daripada golongan yang berpengalaman dan telah lama tinggal di kawasan tersebut. Manakala, analisis kualitatif dijalankan menerusi dokumen kerajaan dan analisis situasi (*situational analysis*). Kajian mendapati, cabaran dalam mencapai pembangunan mampan dalam kalangan masyarakat Orang Asli sukar dicapai. Implikasi perubahan yang dibawa oleh pihak kerajaan menunjukkan masyarakat tersebut menjadi semakin kompleks

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kerana kekurangan dalam aspek pembangunan kemudahan sosial, isu peluang pekerjaan, konflik budaya asal serta ekosistem, keperluan melindungi hak Orang Asli, kelemahan pentadbiran JAKOA dan bencana alam. Justeru itu, pembangunan sosial yang sedia ada di kawasan perkampungan Orang Asli harus dipertingkatkan agar dapat disesuaikan tanpa merosakan identiti masyarakat Orang Asli dalam melaksanakan pembangunan terancang oleh pihak kerajaan.

Kata kunci: Pemegang Taruh, Orang Asli, Sosiobudaya dan Pembangunan Mampan

Abstract

The government has implemented various national development projects involving various agencies and the private sector, including in Orang Asli village areas, especially in achieving the 17 sustainable development goals that have been recommended by the government since 2015. However, the involvement and development changes in the Orang Asli areas are still being left behind and they should be considered so as not to disturb their original socio-culture. Therefore, this study was conducted in the Orang Asli Peta village (Endau Rompin National Park), Mersing, Johor to examine the challenges of the Orang Asli Peta community, in achieving sustainable development. The methodology used in this study is qualitative, which is an in-depth interview. Meanwhile, the data collection technique in the field is a group discussion (FGD) with Tok Batin and 25 village representatives from the Jakun tribe. They are experienced and have lived in the area for a long time. Meanwhile, the analysis is carried out through government documents and situational analysis. The study found that the challenge of achieving sustainable development among the Orang Asli community is difficult to overcome. The implications of the changes brought by the government show that the community has become increasingly complex due to the lack of development aspects of social facilities, culture, job opportunities, native culture, and ecosystem conflict, the need to protect the rights of the Orang Asli, weaknesses in JAKOA's administration and natural disasters. Therefore, the existing social development in the Orang Asli village area should be improved so that it can be adapted without damaging the identity of the Orang Asli community in the implementation of planned development by the government.

Keywords: Stakeholders, Orang Asli, Socio-cultural and Sustainable Development

Pengenalan

Seiring dengan perkembangan ekonomi dan pembangunan dunia, Malaysia juga tidak terlepas daripada mengalami proses modenisasi komuniti termasuk dalam membangunkan sosiobudaya dalam kalangan masyarakat orang asli. Cabaran terhadap pembangunan negara telah mula diketengahkan semenjak Rancangan Malaysia Ketujuh (RMKe-10)¹ dengan strategik pembangunan ke arah meningkatkan pembangunan seimbang di antara fizikal dengan sosioekonomi negara termasuk masyarakat Orang Asli. Namun begitu, golongan ini hanya mula mendapat perhatian khusus menerusi Rancangan Malaysia Keempat (RMKe-4)² yang dilancarkan pada tahun 1981 menerusi pelbagai program, antaranya Program Pengumpulan Semula (RPS), Pengambilan Balik Tanah dan Kerja Ukur dan Penyusunan Semula Kampung (PSK) (Jabatan Hal Ehwal Orang Asli Malaysia, 2004). Mereka berhak untuk mendapat pembaharuan dan pemodenan seperti masyarakat yang lain kerana mereka ialah peribumi yang terawal menetap di Malaysia (Nicholas, 2000)

Namun begitu, masyarakat Orang Asli masih ketinggalan berbanding masyarakat Malaysia yang lain. Pencerobohan tanpa kawalan ke atas kawasan yang didiami oleh masyarakat peribumi seringkali membawa kepada kemerosotan hidup masyarakat tersebut sedangkan mereka mempunyai akta 134 yang berfungsi menjaga kepentingan hak Orang Asli (Salleh, 1995; World Commission on Dam, 2000; Johansen, 2003; Green & Raygorodetsky, 2010; Aiken & Leigh, 2011; Feiring, 2013). Malah, masyarakat Orang Asli yang ditempatkan semula seringkali berhadapan dengan pelbagai cabaran arus pembangunan antaranya isu kehilangan hak ke atas tanah adat yang menjadi punca kepada kemerosotan sosioekonomi dan budaya asal mereka (Hess & Fenrich, 2017; Cooke 2017; Walker & Simmons, 2018). Contohnya apa yang berlaku ke atas puak Munduruku di Brazil (Hess & Fenrich, 2017; Gebara, 2018; Walker

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- 1 Rancangan Malaysia ke 10, 2011-2015 (RMKe-10) Kementerian Ekonomi Malaysia; Bab 3-Memperkukuhkan Inklusiviti ke arah Masyarakat Saksama 1-37, accessed 28 Oct 2024, <https://www.ekonomi.gov.my/sites/default/files/2020-02/Bab%203.pdf>.
 - 2 Rancangan Malaysia ke 4, 1982-1985 (RMK3-4); Kementerian Ekonomi Malaysia; Bab Rancangan Pengumpulan Semula (RPS) Masyarakat Orang Asli 193-392, accessed 28 Oct 2024, <https://www.ekonomi.gov.my/ms/pembangunanekonomi/rancanganpembangunan/rmk/rancangan-malaysia-keempat-rmke-4-1981-1985>.

& Simmons, 2018), etnik Brou di Laos (Manorom, Baird, & Shoemaker, 2018), komuniti Embera-Katio di Colombia (Egre & Senecal, 2003) dan Kenyah di Borneo (Abdullah, 2009).

Walaupun Akta 134 (Akta Orang Asli 1954) yang diisytiharkan bertujuan untuk melindungi hak orang asli, selepas hampir 60 tahun berkuat kuasa, pencerobohan hak orang asli masih berterusan (Mat Nor, 1996). Akta ini dilihat memberikan kawalan yang luas kepada pentadbir negeri yang boleh mengganggu kehidupan dan hak orang asli, walaupun akta ini seolah-olah menjaga hak orang asli sebagai orang yang dilindungi. Ramai yang mendakwa bahawa akta ini menjadi alat yang membataskan hak autonomi orang asli. Akta ini seakan-akan menempatkan komuniti ini dalam kedudukan yang lemah sedangkan kehidupan mereka perlu seiring dengan komuniti yang lain (Izzati Wook, 2015).³ Sehubungan itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji cabaran masyarakat Orang Asli Peta dalam mencapai pembangunan mampan di perkampungan Orang Asli Peta, Taman Negara Endau - Rompin, Mersing, Johor.

Tinjauan Literatur

Orang asli didefinisikan di bawah Perlembagaan Malaysia di bawah Perkara 160(2) sebagai Orang Asli Semenanjung Tanah Melayu adalah “mana-mana orang yang bapanya ialah anggota kumpulan etnik orang asli, yang bercakap bahasa orang asli dan lazimnya mengikut cara hidup orang asli dan adat dan kepercayaan orang asli, dan termasuk seorang keturunan’ (Akta Orang Asli 134, 1954; seksyen 3(a)⁴ (Siti Nor, 2006). Pada persepsi masyarakat umum kini, mereka dikatakan masyarakat Sakai yang tinggal di dalam hutan dan masih lagi meneruskan gaya hidup primitif. Mereka juga dikatakan tidak mempunyai agama yang khusus dan tiada peraturan hidup serta dianggap sebagai bodoh, tidak mahu menerima kemajuan, malah ada yang mengatakan bahawa masyarakat ini hidup liar dan ganas (Siti Nor, 2006). Kebanyakan mereka berkerja sendiri dan tumpuan aktiviti ekonomi utama mereka adalah pertanian mencari sumber hutan rotan, manakala kerja sampingan mendulang

3 Izawati Wook, Acknowledging Land Rights Of The Orang Asli: A Historical Perspective Of Laws In Peninsular Malaysia (2017) *Iium Law Journal* 93-120

4 Subseksyen 3(2) Akta 134; Seksyen 3 (a); Perkara 160 (2); Pesuruhjaya Penyemak Undang-Undang, Malaysia Di Bawah Kuasa Akta Penyemakan Undang-Undang 1968, accessed 29 Oktober 2023, [https://www.forestry.gov.my/images/stories/pdf/Akta/Akta Orang20 Asli.pdf](https://www.forestry.gov.my/images/stories/pdf/Akta/Akta%20Orang%20Asli.pdf).

emas, menoreh getah dan menyempit (Mohd Nur Syufaat & Seow Ta Wee, 2015)⁵

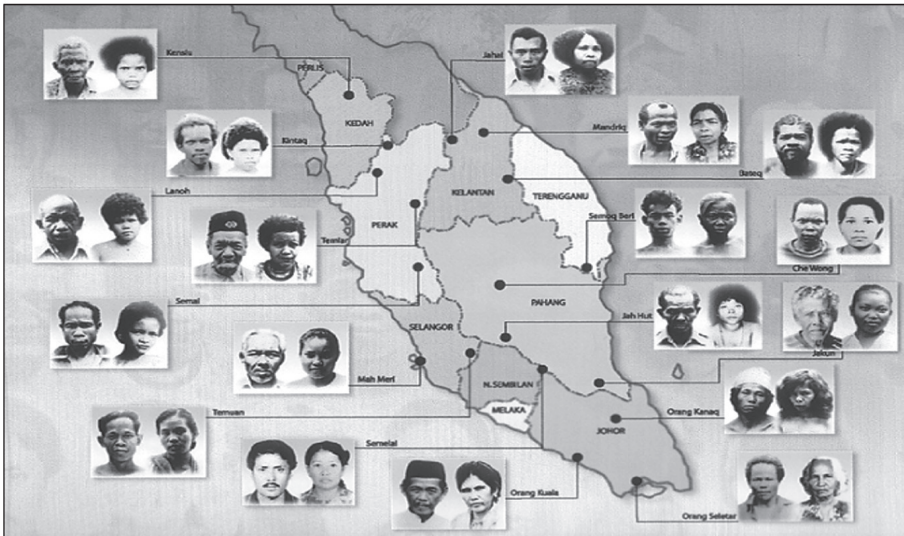
Di Malaysia, mereka merupakan kaum minoriti Semenanjung Malaysia dan mempunyai tiga suku kaum utama iaitu Negrito, Senoi dan Melayu-Proto (Rujuk Rajah 1). Pembahagian ini dibuat berdasarkan kepada perbezaan yang terdapat pada mereka dari segi ciri-ciri fizikal, bahasa dan adat yang diamalkan (Mat Nor, 1996). Setiap tiga suku kaum tersebut terdapat enam etnik suku kaum seperti Temuan, Semai, Jakun, Semelai, Lanoh, Kintak, Jahut dan sebagainya (Colin 2000). Berdasarkan jumlah keseluruhan penduduk, 70 peratus terdiri daripada suku Jahai dan 30 peratus adalah dari suku Temiar (Nota Taklimat, 1999). Manakala, jumlah penduduk Orang Asli adalah seramai 31,660,700 orang (2017) sehingga Disember 2022 ialah 178,179 orang (Jabatan kemajuan Orang Asli, Malaysia 2022).⁶

Perancangan pembangunan yang dilaksanakan sejak Rancangan Malaysia Ketujuh, pada tahun 1996-2000 bertujuan untuk merealisasikan pembangunan strategik yang menyeluruh kepada masyarakat, termasuk golongan Orang Asli. Justeru, program pembangunan yang dilaksanakan diharap memberi kesan menyeluruh kepada masyarakat sehingga membentuk satu transformasi sosial dan budaya yang memberi tumpuan terhadap keupayaan sesebuah masyarakat. Oleh hal yang demikian, adalah tidak keterlaluan jika dikatakan bahawa terdapat beberapa bahagian dalam komuniti Orang Asli yang telah mengubah cara hidup, budaya, anutan agama dan pendidikan, hasil daripada langkah-langkah pembangunan yang diperkenalkan oleh kerajaan. Walaupun mereka tidak lagi mengamalkan cara hidup tradisional, kumpulan etnik Orang Asli yang asal atau 1 Subseksyen 3(2) Akta 134 tradisional, namun warisan mereka tidak pernah terputus atau berakhir. Mereka hanya membuat pengubahsuaian cara hidup dalam arus pembangunan negara (Zurina Mohd Haslamizan, 2013). Namun begitu, pembangunan dari segi fizikal dan sosioekonomi dan budaya masih ketinggalan berbanding dengan masyarakat yang lain kerana penglibatan mereka dalam memberi padangan dan pendapat tidak dipertimbangkan oleh sesetengah pihak (Mohd Nur Syufaat & Seow Ta Wee 2015).

5 Mohd Nur Syufaat Bin Jamiran & Seow Ta Wee, "Pembangunan Sosioekonomi Komuniti Orang Asli Di Malaysia" (2015) Persidangan Kebangsaan Geografi & Alam Sekitar 755-761, accessed 28 April 2024, <http://ptsldigitalv2.ukm.my:8080/jspui/handle/123456789/394018>.

6 Jabatan Hal Ehwal Orang Asli, Kementerian Pembangunan Luar Bandar. Jabatan Kemajuan Orang Asli (2023) < <https://www.forestry.gov.my/images/stories/pdf/Akta/Akta%20Orang%20Asli.pdf>> accessed 29 Oktober 2023.

Rajah 1: Taburan Masyarakat Orang Asli di Semanjung Malaysia



Sumber: Jabatan kemajuan Orang Asli, Malaysia 2019

Oleh itu, tidak hairanlah jika terdapat isu masyarakat Orang Asli kurang diberi peluang untuk bersuara kerana mereka adalah pihak yang akan menerima perubahan secara langsung khususnya di Perkampungan Orang Asli, Peta, Taman Endau- Rompin (Hamimah, 2011)

Menurut kajian, Suraya Sinlang (2013) cabaran masyarakat Orang Asli adalah menyesuaikan diri akibat daripada pembangunan terancang yang dijalankan oleh pihak kerajaan. Implikasi perubahan yang dibawa oleh pihak kerajaan menunjukkan masyarakat Orang Asli menjadi semakin kompleks kerana faktor-faktor seperti budaya, adaptasi kepada ekosistem, dan kesan kemasukan budaya asing yang menyumbang dalam pelbagai bentuk contoh perkahwinan campur antara kaum Cina dan Orang Asli (Ramlee Abdullah 2014). Senario ini turut berlaku di negara Barat yang mempunyai komuniti pribumi contohnya masyarakat pribumi mengalami diskriminasi di Australia (Hunter, 2005) dan budaya asal pribumi yang masih dikekalkan di Kanada walaupun pembangunan fizikal dan perubahan sosial telah mengalami berlaku (C. Lorenzo, 2013).

Keadaan yang sama turut berlaku di Malaysia, walaupun banyak pembangunan telah dilaksanakan. Namun pihak kerajaan masih lagi menghadapi cabaran dalam memenuhi pembangunan terhadap komuniti secara menyeluruh terutama masyarakat Orang Asli yang sukar untuk menerima perubahan kerana mereka kurang terlibat dalam perancangan pembangunan di kawasan mereka (A. G. Gomes, 2004;

C. Nicholas, 2000).⁷ Oleh itu, keadaan tersebut tidak banyak dilakukan sehingga kini termasuk di Perkampungan Orang Asli Peta di Taman Endau Rompin, Mersing.

Metodologi dan kawasan kajian

Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah penyelidikan secara kualitatif menerusi analisis situasi (*transcribe* Orang Asli) dan analisis kandungan dokumen kerajaan berdasarkan profil perkampungan (JAKOA 2022). Manakala, teknik kajian adalah menerusi pemerhatian dan temu bual secara mendalam (*in-depth*) bersama komuniti Orang Asli suku kaum Jakun di Perkampungan Orang Asli, Peta, (Taman Negara Endau-Rompin), Mersing, Johor. Tujuan teknik ini digunakan untuk mendapat maklumat lebih terperinci tentang komuniti tersebut berdasarkan pengalaman, berpengetahuan, reaksi dan idea pemikiran daripada responden secara eksplisit dan berterusan (Z. Emby, M. Redzuan, G. Basri, & A. H. Hamid, 1996).⁸ Responden terdiri daripada komuniti asal Orang Asli, Tok Batin dan Ahli Jawatankuasa Kemajuan dan Keselamatan Kampung (JKKK) di kampung tersebut.

Pemilihan responden terdiri daripada golongan yang mempunyai pengalaman hidup, sosiobudaya di penempatan tersebut (Newman et al., 2006). Kaedah pengumpulan data adalah dengan menggunakan kaedah perbincangan kumpulan berfokus (*Focus Group Discussion*) yang berumur 35-65 tahun ke atas. Teknik ini bersifat fleksibel dan membolehkan pengkaji menghuraikan perkara yang difikirkan oleh responden (Merriem 1998).

Analisis kajian

Hasil kajian mendapati, beberapa perkara dibincangkan untuk mengkaji cabaran masyarakat Orang Asli Jahai, di perkampungan Orang Asli Peta, Taman Negara Endau - Rompin, Mersing, Johor, antaranya kekurangan dalam aspek pembangunan kemudahan sosial, budaya, perbezaan ekosistem, isu peluang pekerjaan, keperluan melindungi hak Orang Asli, kelemahan pentadbiran JAKOA dan pengaruh luar.

7 C. Nicholas, The orang Asli and the contest for resources indigenous politics, development and identity in Peninsular Malaysia (Copenhagen, International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs 2000) [https://www.iwgia.org/image/publication/0133_95_The Orang Asli and the contest for resources.pdf](https://www.iwgia.org/image/publication/0133_95_The%20Orang%20Asli%20and%20the%20contest%20for%20resources.pdf) accessed 28 April 2024.

8 Z. Emby, M. Redzuan, G. Basri, & A. H. Hamid, Rancangan Pengumpulan Semula: Kesannya ke atas masyarakat dan budaya Orang Asli di Perak Selangor, Malaysia (Penerbit Universiti Putra Malaysia, 1996) 121.

Profil perkampungan

Kampung Peta merupakan perkampungan orang asli yang terdiri daripada kaum Jakun dan terletak paling hujung serta hampir dengan pintu masuk sebelah timur Taman Negara Endau-Rompin. Perkampungan Orang Asli Peta, mempunyai jumlah penduduk sebanyak 306 orang dengan 53.9 % adalah lelaki dan 46.1% ialah perempuan (Data Demografi, Jabatan Jabatan Kemajuan Orang Asli (JAKOA) 2023).⁹ Manakala, laluan masuk ke kampung dengan melalui jalan darat kira-kira 56 kilometer dari simpang jalan Kahang-Mersing.

Sebahagian daripadanya adalah laluan ladang yang berbatu dan berdebu serta hutan yang mencabar. Selain daripada laluan darat, penggunaan sungai juga dijadikan pengangkutan utama sehingga ke Kuala Endau. Budaya lama orang Asli lebih bercorakkan sistem hidup berpindah randah khususnya bagi mencari tanah yang lebih subur atau meninggalkan tempat lama yang dianggap tidak sesuai untuk didiami. Terdapat beberapa sebab kenapa sesuatu tempat yang didiami ditinggalkan termasuklah disebabkan oleh bencana alam, penyakit atau kepercayaan masyarakat bahawa tempat tersebut mempunyai sial dan bala. Hutan Endau-Rompin yang begitu luas menjadikan daerah orang asli berpindah randah juga amat luas dan banyak. Kampung Peta merupakan kawasan keempat penempatan kekal yang dihuni oleh penduduk kampung hingga kini.

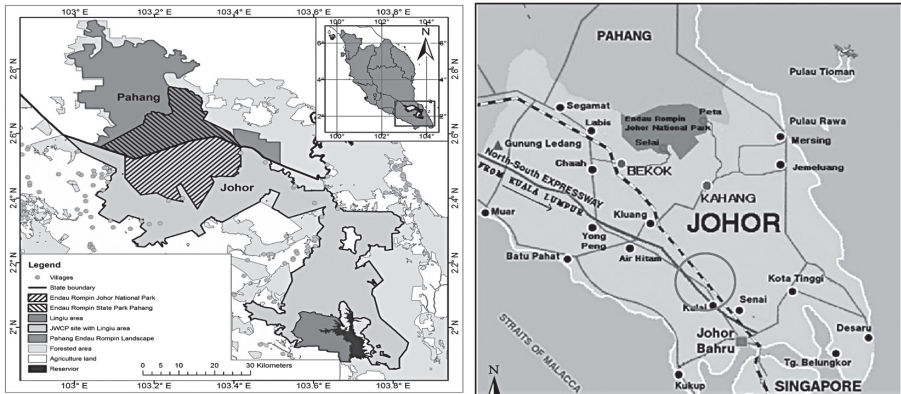
Kedudukan kampung pada lokasi pintu masuk Taman Negara menggambarkan kepentingannya sebagai benteng terakhir kepada usaha pemeliharaan dan pemuliharaan Taman Negara Endau-Rompin. Kampung ini juga berpotensi menjadi daya tarikan pelengkap kepada Taman Negara Endau-Rompin khususnya jika dibangunkan dengan satu model kampung ekopelancongan yang lengkap. Pertambahan penduduk bertambah setelah Taman Negara Endau-Rompin ditubuhkan pada tahun 2012.

Sumber ekonomi utama ialah aktiviti sara diri, mencari sumber hutan dan aktiviti ekopelancongan yang menawarkan produk alam semulajadi dan cara hidup masyarakat kepada para pelancong. Walau bagaimanapun konflik ini, bermula pada 17 Januari 2012 hingga kini oleh Pentadbir Tanah Daerah Mersing bagi pihak Perbadanan Taman Negara

9 Data Demografi, Jabatan Jabatan Kemajuan Orang Asli (JAKOA), Kementerian Pembangunan Luar Bandar 2023, accessed 29 Oktober 2023, <https://www.jakoa.gov.my/orang-asli/taburan-etnik-orang-asli-mengikut-etnik-sub-etnik-mengikut-negeri/>; <https://www.jakoa.gov.my/umum/data-terbuka-sektor-awam/>.

Johor mengeluarkan notis arahan kepada penduduk kampung untuk mengosongkan tempat tersebut namun gagal (Zainal Abidin 2006).¹⁰ Konflik dan masalah yang timbul berkaitan hak Orang Asli menjadi antara salah satu isu yang tidak berkesudahan dan sering digunakan oleh pihak-pihak tertentu untuk kepentingan mereka.

Rajah 2: Kedudukan perkampungan Orang Asli, Peta Taman Endau – Rompin



Sumber: Perbadanan Taman Negara Johor 2019

Pembangunan kemudahan sosial

Dalam pembangunan kemudahan masih terdapat kekurangan kemudahan asas seperti jalan raya, keperluan sistem perkhidmatan klinik, bekalan air bersih dan dewan masyarakat Orang Asli. Keadaan ini berlaku kerana kedudukan perkampungan ini yang agak jauh di kawasan pedalaman yang dinyatakan seperti berikut:

..... Balik dari balai kami semua jalan kaki. Tu yang kita minta masuk. Kalau jadi apa-apa hal senang. Selenggara bangunan, kita kalau boleh nak guna bangunan tu. Bila lawatan je kat sini. Kipas tak ada.....(FGD... Perkampungan Orang Asli, Peta, 16 April 2023)

.... Banyaklah isu, ni dah lebih 10 tahun bangkit untuk baik pulih dewan ni, ni NGO bagi tau. Kenapa kerajaan tak nak ambil alih, repair saja pun tak ada duit....(FGD...Perkampungan Orang Asli, Peta, 16 April 2023)

10 Zainal Abidin, Impak Pewartaan Taman Negara Endau Rompin Dan Penswastaan Rancangan Pengumpulan Semula Terhadap Masyarakat Jakun Di Bekok, Johor (Bangi. Penerbit UKM, 2006), <http://ir.upm.edu.my/find/Record/b13966339>, accessed 29 Oktober 2023.

....Polis, balai polis ada, tapi dia tak ada boat. Kat balai polis tu kita boleh report barang apa rosak ke, senang, contact dengan diorang. Dia ada balai, tapi tak boleh buat report, sedangkan balai report. Kita jauh Tuan. Tahun ni lah, bila banjir, jalan putus semua. Balik dari balai kami jalan kaki....(FGD...Perkampungan Orang Asli,Peta, 16 April 2023)

Isu peluang pekerjaan

Sukar mendapat peluang pekerjaan adalah antara isu dalam kalangan masyarakat Orang Asli, walaupun mereka mempunyai anak-anak yang berkelulusan tinggi di peringkat ijazah, diploma, mahupun sijil kemahiran. Ada juga antara mereka yang tidak menjual hasil hutan untuk dijadikan sumber pendapatan seperti yang dinyatakan:

.... Ramai (belia), cuma masalah dia tak ada peluang pekerjaan. Peluang pekerjaan tu terhad lah (FGD ... Perkampungan Orang Asli, Peta, 16 April 2023)

... Bagi pelepasan ekonomi pada orang kampung ni. Isu bekerja dalam taman negara tu, ada lebih kurang 8 kerja sambilan harian, masih lagi basic gaji RM731. Sambilan. Kalau tak menepati 23 hari, tak sampai seribu. Pendapatan lebih kurang 900 lebih...(FGD... Perkampungan Orang Asli, Peta, 16 April 2023)

.... Ramai sumber pendapatan diorang ada kraft tangan, ada buat ubat-ubat traditional, ada jugak hasil madu kelulut. Ada kraft tangan ni macam, dia tak cukup lah nak jual pada orang luar (FGD ... Perkampungan Orang Asli, Peta, 16 April 2023)

Konflik budaya asal dan ekosistem

Disebabkan kawasan mereka berada di dalam kawasan Taman Negara, banyak aktiviti ekonomi asal mereka tidak boleh dijalankan kerana dihalang dan dikenakan peraturan oleh pihak Taman Negara atas faktor untuk menjaga keunikan dan keindahan alam sekitar. Namun bagi mereka, adalah terlalu berat untuk menerima peraturan tersebut kerana hutan adalah punca kehidupan mereka malah tanah adat yang diwarisi sejak lapan generasi seperti yang dinyatakan iaitu:

.... Senang cakap orang asli ni tak boleh masuk kawasan Taman Negara. Sebab sekarang ni kita orang betul-betul fokus kepada ekosistem macam dalam kawasanya tanah adat. Kalau tanah adat pun dalam kawasan taman negara. Kalau dapat kita nak minta Taman Negara ni bagi kelonggaran lah...(FGD... Perkampungan Orang Asli,Peta, 16hb April 2023)

Keperluan melindungi hak Orang Asli

Isu tanah masih berterusan hingga kini kerana mereka masih belum memiliki tanah secara sah dan sering mendapat perhatian daripada pihak NGO dan bantuan JAKOA. Namun masih belum mendapat maklum balas daripada pihak kerajaan dan Jabatan keamjuan Orang Asli (JAKOA) berhubung perkara ini dinyatakan seperti di bawah:

....Tanah sekarang macam menang kalah sama, menang-menang sama. Dia tak da macam kata putus dua pihak melibatkan pihak negeri Johor. Bila sampai pada kerajaan negeri, dia guna kuasa kerajaan negeri. Tu yang jadi menang-menang. kalah tak kalah. Contohnya, orang kampung nak buat apa-apa, kene tanya jugak dengan tok dia semua, kalau semua setuju, setuju, kalau tak setuju, tak buat lah...(FGD... Perkampungan Orang Asli,Peta, 16b April 2023)

.... Kita orang tak ada hak sebenarnya, kerajaan bagi pun, jadi tu yang kita keliru. Sedangkan orang asli ni orang asal Malaysia. Kita lawan susah, tak lawan susah. Nak lawan pulak kita nak pergi ke mahkamah,...(FGD... Perkampungan Orang Asli, Peta, 16 April 2023)

Kelemahan pentadbiran JAKOA

Tidak ada sebarang bentuk keadilan yang mereka peroleh yang sama dalam kalangan masyarakat Orang Asli. Justeru, adalah disarankan agar masyarakat setempat khususnya Orang Asli wajar diberi peluang dan ruang untuk meningkatkan keupayaan hidup yang lebih baik

.... Saya tanya pegawai tu, macam mana kat Pahang ada sekian macam ni, kenapa kat Johor tak ada. Saya suka bertanya. perbezaan tak adil. Kita pun nak adillah, cara, management. Macam mana orang asli nak maju (FGD ... Perkampungan Orang Asli,Peta, 16 April 2023)

..... Saya boleh compare lah sebab management Jakoa Johor dengan Pahang, saya tengok Pahang lebih better dari Johor, dia punya pendidikan orang asli. Saya, bini saya orang Pahang, saudara mara sebelah bini saya dia banyak belajar, cara diorang care hutan orang asli. Bukan kita nak condemn, tapi memang betul, realiti. Cara management. Lain lah, cara diorang urus bantuan (FGD ... Perkampungan Orang Asli, Peta, 16 April 2022)

Bencana alam

Masyarakat Orang Asli Peta sering mengalami masalah banjir 2-3 kali setahun kerana kawasan mereka berhampiran dengan kawasan sungai Pahang Endau-Rompin. Masalah banjir menyebabkan banyak rumah

yang musnah, kehilangan harta benda, infrastuktur rosak dan bantuan sukar diperoleh dengan segera kerana jarak 76 kilometer dari jalan utama yang agak jauh seperti yang dinyatakan:

.... Setiap tahun banjir. Dia musim banjir ni kan, kalau dulu 30 tahun sekali, tapi sekarang tak menentu. sebab pembalakan macam-macam, syarikat apa-apa. Macam Peta ni tak selamat di duduk. Sebab kampung Peta selalu dilanda banjir. Sejak bulan 12, bulan 1-3. Musim hujan tak ada pendapatan, ekopelancongan memang tutup lah (FGD ... Perkampungan Orang Asli, Peta, 16 April 2022)

.... Satu lagi masalah, kita orang punya bantuan daripada kerajaan, hari ni minta bantuan, esok petang baru dapat. peralatan lah, dewan lah. Maksudnya bekalan makanan tu kena tambah lagi. Bekalan awal banjir. Kita dah kasi, cuma tak cukup. Kena tambah lagi. Kita pernah telefon pejabat orang asli, minta bantuan, bantuan makanan dalam hutan. Dia kata "tak boleh tok sebab keadaan cuaca tak boleh" ... susah bagi kam i.... (FGD ... Perkampungan Orang Asli, Peta, 16 April 2022)

Kesimpulan

Walaupun pelbagai pembangunan dilaksanakan di kawasan Taman Negara Endau-Rompin Hutan menjadi pemangkin kepada pembangunan industri pelancongan negara, keadaan hidup komuniti Orang Asli Peta tidak banyak berubah. Sehubungan itu, walaupun konsep 17 matlamat pembangunan kelestarian telah diperkenalkan pada tahun 2015, namun mereka masih hidup dalam keadaan daif tanpa adanya jaminan sumber pendapatan yang tetap. Kesukaran mereka untuk mendapat pekerjaan yang stabil turut dipengaruhi oleh tahap pendidikan yang masih rendah dan lokasi penempatan yang jauh dari bandar utama iaitu Mersing. Tambahan pula, sumber persekitaran yang semakin merosot akibat daripada perubahan yang berlaku ke atas persekitaran alam fizikal turut menyukarkan lagi kehidupan mereka pada masa kini. Usaha dan langkah-langkah yang dilaksanakan oleh pihak kerajaan untuk membawa mereka keluar daripada belenggu kemiskinan seiring dengan arus pembangunan perdana pula didapati kurang berkesan.

Sebaliknya, perkembangan yang pesat dalam arus pembangunan telah menyebabkan mereka masih jauh ketinggalan di belakang berbanding masyarakat bukan peribumi dalam mencapai pembangunan mampan. Akibatnya wujud jurang sosioekonomi yang luas dan nyata antara Orang Asli Jahai dengan penduduk bukan peribumi di kawasan tersebut. Justeru, usaha daripada semua pihak yang terutamanya pihak JAKOA

dan badan-badan yang berkaitan didapati amat perlu bagi memperbaiki keadaan kehidupan Orang Asli di Peta agar dapat disesuaikan dengan budaya asal mereka. Oleh yang demikian, program pembangunan tanah perlu dilaksanakan semula dengan perancangan yang lebih teliti dan agresif.

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Cultivating Sustainable Futures: Community-Led Farming Initiatives in Malaysia by APPGM-SDG

*Dana Claudia Undan Dumpangol**

Abstract

Malaysia grapples with pressing food security challenges, marked by uneven resource access, fluctuating agricultural yields, and vulnerability to external factors. Recognizing the urgency of these issues, APPGM-SDG has directed its efforts towards fostering both food security and food safety. With 198 ongoing projects this year and 53 successfully completed projects in the previous year, this journal article explores APPGM-SDG's initiatives in localizing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Malaysia, with a specific focus on community farming projects. The article aims to offer a holistic overview of these projects, delving into their multifaceted impacts and thoroughly examining their farming practices, socio-economic and community dimensions. The methodology involves the promotion of the food security initiative through grant allocation and selection processes for identifying and supporting solution providers. Additionally, insights from the database of the 198 ongoing projects, coupled with two case studies from completed projects, highlight the scale and reach of APPGM-SDG's endeavors, providing both quantitative and qualitative insights into the tangible outcomes and positive impacts realized within the grassroots communities.

Keywords: food security, community farming, income generation, community resilience, sustainability

Introduction

The landscape of food security, safety, and sovereignty in Malaysia is marked by complex challenges, as illuminated by various scholarly works and global indices. Highlighting the multifaceted nature of

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food security, the 1996 World Food Summit defined food security as the situation where everyone has physical and economic access to adequate, safe, and nutritious foods¹. This definition, later refined by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO 2008), encompasses four major dimensions: availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability.² This framework provides a lens through which to examine Malaysia's performance in the Global Food Security Index (GFSI), where fluctuating rankings over recent years reveal a dynamic scenario. In 2020, Malaysia ranked 43rd among 113 countries, experienced an increase in score to 39th rank and then a notable decrease in 2022, signifying challenges, particularly in affordability, availability, quality, safety, sustainability, and adaptation.³

The APPGM-SDG, through issue mapping exercises across selected constituencies in Malaysia, identified poverty and poor socio-economic conditions as crucial issues in the agricultural sector. Moreover, a web of concerns that includes farming input prices, physical threats to paddy crops, infrastructure, marketability of local produce, and land tenure are the five key themes.⁴ The link between food safety, nutrition, and food security underscores the urgency of addressing these challenges. Furthermore, championed by La Via Campesina (1996)⁵ a global movement of farmers, asserts that food sovereignty advocates for "*the right of people to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems*". In essence, it acknowledges food as both a fundamental right and a public good, not just as a valuable commodity, placing producers and democracy at the heart of our food systems. In the Malaysian context, it is crucial to adopt this, with an emphasis on inclusive policies that incorporate diverse inputs and ensure fair access to resources.

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- 1 Engler-Stringer, R. (2014) 'Food Security', Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research, p. 2326.
 - 2 Hassan, N., & Jia-Yi Kam, A. (2022) 'Can Malaysia Feed Itself? Food Security Issues in Malaysia', Journal of Strategic Studies & International Affairs, 2.
 - 3 KPKM, '2022' (<https://www.kpk.gov.my/en/gfsi-2022>) [accessed 23 December 2023].
 - 4 Dr Lin Mui Kiang, 'Chapter 2: Farmers' in Teo Sue Ann (ed), Localising SDGs & Grassroots Concerns of Six Vulnerable Groups in Malaysia (Persatuan Promosi Matlamat Pembangunan Lestari, 2023).
 - 5 Claeys, P. (2018) 'Food Sovereignty and the Recognition of New Rights for Peasants at the UN: A Critical Overview of La Via Campesina's Rights Claims over the Last 20 Years', The Politics of Food Sovereignty, p. 32.

This article delves into APPGM-SDG's transformative initiative in community farming as an alternative solution to food security. The objective is to establish and scale up community farm projects, fostering sustainable food production, income generation, and the development of a strong business network to meet local market demand. Simultaneously, the initiative aims to empower and build the capacity of local farmers. The following sections will explore APPGM-SDG's agenda for localizing SDGs, particularly with a focus on community farming projects through grant allocation. Specific case studies from completed and ongoing projects will be examined, covering diverse impact dimensions such as socio-economic transformations, best farming practices, and community empowerment.

Methodology

Recognizing the critical need to build resilient communities with a commitment to empower individuals, APPGM-SDG's agenda is deeply grounded in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. The overarching objective is the localization of SDGs in Malaysia, with a focus on uplifting grassroots communities. APPGM-SDG exercises comprehensive issue mapping across constituencies where target communities are given a space to express their experiences, challenges, concerns, and ideas, ultimately enabling the identification of issues in economic, social, and environmental aspects. The resulting reports from the mapping exercise act as a catalyst for strategic action, with the identified issues facilitating policy discussions and directing grants to the right solution providers. From 2020 to 2022, APPGM-SDG collaborated with 132 Solution Providers nationwide, implementing 296 projects. Notably, 53 projects were dedicated to addressing food security and food safety.⁶ With additional allocation from the Ministry of Finance in 2023, a Community Farming Initiative was specially introduced. The community farming grant opportunity, open to new and existing projects, garnered an overwhelming response, with 253 proposals received in just under five months. The rigorous selection process involving internal officers and external review experts led to the identification and approval of 198 projects to be implemented in 2023/2024. In terms of its project capacity, each project is allocated a fixed budget of RM40,000, with

6 James Ryan Raj and Nur Balqis Osman, 'Case Studies of Community Gardens: Innovations From The Ground' (2023)

10-15 participants recruited for each project. Each project mandates a minimum of 12 training sessions aimed at equipping participants with essential skills and knowledge in farming activities. These training sessions are tailored to the specific farming practices of each project, providing that participants become proficient in the management of crops and livestock, modern farming innovations and technologies, and cultivation techniques such as seedling transfer, crop rotation, soil preparation, and so on. Beyond just cultivation, the initiative seeks to encourage local communities at the grassroots level to produce their own food while generating income through the sale of their produce; therefore, through the training session, the participants are guided in the process of selling and downstreaming products, thereby diversifying their income streams.

Community farming projects: a holistic overview

With an overarching objective to localize Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Malaysia, APPGM-SDG's community farming projects serve as a dedicated effort to address food security, especially in producing their own food for consumption, while empowering communities by fostering income generation. In 2023, the Community Farming Initiative marked a significant milestone, promoted through roadshows and briefings, followed by community farming projects being identified. These projects, building on the foundation of 5 projects in 2020, 17 projects in 2021, and 31 projects in 2022, amount to an overall total of 251 community farming projects overseen by APPGM-SDG, with 198 projects ongoing as of 2023 (Table 1).

Table 1. Community farming projects from 2020 until 2023

| Year | Number of Projects |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 2020 | 5 |
| 2021 | 17 |
| 2022 | 31 |
| 2023 | 198 |
| <i>Total Projects</i> | 251 |

Geographically, these projects span 107 parliamentary constituencies in Malaysia, showcasing diversity across regions. As provided in

Table 2 and Appendix 1, the Central Region, inclusive of Kuala Lumpur and Selangor, has 31 projects. The East region boasts 56 projects from Kelantan, Pahang, and Terengganu. The North region features 45 projects from Perak, Perlis, Pulau Pinang, and Kedah. The South region accounts for 43 projects, including Johor, Negeri Sembilan, and Melaka. Sabah has 48 projects, and Sarawak has 25 projects.

Table 2. Community farming projects by region, from 2020 to 2023

| Region | 2020 - 2022 | 2023 |
|------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Central | 6 | 25 |
| East | 16 | 40 |
| North | 10 | 35 |
| South | 3 | 40 |
| Sabah | 8 | 40 |
| Sarawak | 7 | 18 |
| <i>Total Projects</i> | 53 | 198 |

Diversity characterizes these projects, encompassing various farming and livestock activities. As provided in Table 3, the predominant category, encompassing 106 projects, is modern farming, followed by 38 projects in animal breeding. Additionally, there are 28 projects focused on organic farming, 25 projects on mushroom farming, and 22 projects on conventional farming. Complementing these, 7 projects are dedicated to integrated farming, while an additional 5 projects are oriented towards agromarketing. Furthermore, specialized categories with fewer projects each contribute to the overall diversity of the initiative. Each farming method exhibits its own focus and cultivation practices, with Table 3 offering these specifics.

In terms of scale, the 251 projects involve a total of 3,243 participants (Appendix 1). Considering an average household size of 3.8 in Malaysia,⁷ these community farming projects are anticipated to benefit approximately 12,323 individuals, fostering a positive impact on their families.

7 Statista Research Department, & 1 N, 'Malaysia: Number of Households 2022' (Statista, 1 November 2023) (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/728240/number-of-households-malaysia/>) [accessed 23 December 2023].

Table 3 Displays the number of projects that follow specific farming methods, along with a detailed focus and set of practices

| Type of Farming | Number of projects | |
|--|--------------------|-----------|
| | 2023 | 2020-2022 |
| Modern Farming <i>Focus and practices: Reducing reliance on traditional soil-based methods such as Fertigation, Hydroponics, Aquaponics, Vertical Farming</i> | 84 | 22 |
| Agro Marketing <i>Focus and practices: Marketing and selling agricultural products to boost economic returns⁸</i> | - | 5 |
| Food processing <i>Focus and practices: Food product making to generate income by making products from crops⁹</i> | - | 3 |
| Animal Breeding <i>Focus and practices: Breeding and raising animals for various purposes, including meat, milk, and other products</i> | 32 | 6 |
| Mushroom Farming <i>Focus and practices: Cultivation of various mushroom varieties</i> | 18 | 7 |
| Organic Farming <i>Focus and practices: Cultivating crops without synthetic pesticides or fertilizers</i> | 25 | 3 |
| Food Forest <i>Focus and practices: Creating a self-sustaining, multi-layered ecosystem that mimics a natural forest, with a focus on edible plants¹⁰</i> | 2 | - |
| Conventional Farming <i>Focus and practices: Traditional soil-based farming methods</i> | 19 | 3 |
| Rice Cultivation <i>Focus and practices: Enhancing local rice production and preserving cultural practices</i> | 2 | 2 |

8

9 James Ryan Raj and Nur Balqis Osman (2023) rep

10 Albrecht, S., & Wiek, A. (2021) 'Food Forests: Their Services and Sustainability', Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development, 1.

| Type of Farming | Number of projects | |
|--|--------------------|-----------|
| | 2023 | 2020-2022 |
| Herbal Farming <i>Focus and practices: Cultivating medicinal and aromatic herbs</i> | 4 | - |
| Animal Feed <i>Focus and practices: Producing locally sourced supply of animal feed such as Napier Farming</i> | 2 | - |
| Integrated Farming <i>Focus and practices: Combining different agricultural activities within a single farming system.</i> | 6 | 1 |
| Compost Production <i>Focus and practices: Recycling organic waste to produce nutrient-rich compost</i> | 3 | 1 |
| Total | 198 | 53 |

Case Study 1: Best farming practices in the urban landscape

In response to the challenges brought about by the Movement Control Order (MCO) during the COVID-19 pandemic, the popularity of urban farming gained as a consequence of food supply issues due to the restrictions on movement, where fresh food supplies such as vegetables had difficulty reaching local consumers. Integrated into urban ecosystems, urban farming serves as a local solution to economic challenges where its initiative contributes to household income, ensures food resource availability, creates employment, and opens up market opportunities while reducing transportation and energy costs.¹¹ Urban farming, however, is not without its challenges, notably in highly populated and polluted environments. Moreover, access to essential inputs such as fertilizers and water is limited, posing a threat to the quality of produce. For example, the use of pesticides within city limits can lead to air pollution, particularly in densely populated areas, impacting individuals with respiratory issues. Additionally, fertilizers and pesticides employed in urban farming may contribute to water supply contamination.

In the urban landscape of Jalan PJS1/25 PJ, Kebun Komuniti PJS1 is an exemplary model of sustainable urban farming, distinguishing

11 Muhammad, R. M., et al. (2020) 'Impact of Urban Farming Technology on Urban Community in Malaysia', *Economic and Technology Management Review*, 15.

itself through a commitment to best farming practices and embodying sustainable and organic principles. Incorporating these best practices not only ensures the production of high-quality, chemical-free food but also contributes to the overall well-being of the environment and community. The farm is a community-driven initiative that has embraced a diverse array of sustainable practices, including organic farming, fruit orchards, herbal cultivation, composting, mushroom farming, and aquaponics, over the recent years within an urban setting in Petaling Jaya, Selangor.

Kebun Komuniti PJS1's cultivation methods, particularly their emphasis on organic farming, align with the World Health Organization's (WHO) call to action in adopting key practices to minimize microbial contamination and enhance food safety in the cultivation of fresh produce.¹² Kebun Komuniti PJS1 resonates these safe practices as affirmed by project coordinator, Mr. Ishak and participant Mr. Azman, detailing their best farming practices: "*Tanaman batas dan aquaponik menggunakan baja kompos, dibuat sendiri dan kitosan, penghalau serangga menggunakan bahan organik....cuka kayu, serai wangi & bawang putih*". Their approach reflects their dedication to addressing food security, food safety, and environmental well-being within the local community, implementing innovative solutions like aquaponics in an agro-box-based system where fish waste provides nutrient-rich water for plants, creating a sustainable closed-loop system. This mutually beneficial relationship between aquaculture and hydroponics not only makes resource use more efficient but also ensures the production of high-quality, organic leafy vegetables.

The community farm secured a grant from the APPGM-SDG in 2023, marking another milestone with the project, '*Penanaman Golden Rock Melon Menggunakan Kaedah Organik Bagi Menghasilkan Buah Organik*'. The objective of the project is the transfer of knowledge to 11 participants in the production of safe and nutritious organic golden melons for consumption as well as the sale of the harvest to ensure the long-term sustainability of the organic farming project. The project engages a diverse group of participants, comprising seven females and four males. Of the participants, nine individuals are between the ages of 61 and 71, with seven of them being retirees. Additionally, two youths are actively

12 'Five Keys to Growing Safer Fruits and Vegetables' (World Health Organization) (<https://www.who.int/publications-detail-redirect/9789241504003>) [accessed 21 December 2023].

involved in the project. The project encompasses various components, including an automatic drip irrigation system, organic compost production, an organic booster from fish by-products, composting with weeds and animal manure, and organic fertilization and pest control. These initiatives not only reflect a holistic approach to farming but also demonstrate the farm's commitment to sustainable, chemical-free agricultural practices. Furthermore, organic farming practices provide advantages such as developing natural resources, repurposing waste, sustaining nutrient cycles, fortifying communities, and enhancing human capabilities.¹³ Participant Mr. Azman notes the positive impact of doing organic farming on soil health and harvest yield, "*Sangat positif. Sayuran daun atau buah lebih cantik dan lebih yakin untuk di makan..... Penggunaan kompos menambah kesuburan tanah & lebih mudah digembur*" and Mr. Ishak further added, "*kawalan dan penjagaan kesuburan tanah lebih mudah melalui alat ujikaji seperti tahap nutrition tanah tinggi*".

Table 4. Overview of the projected rock melon harvest and projected income generation for participants in one cycle with its minimum revenue according to its market price

| <i>Parameters for Rock Melon Harvest</i> | <i>Result</i> |
|--|----------------|
| Plant Count | 101 |
| Units per plant | 2 |
| <i>Calculations:</i> | |
| <i>101 plants x 2 units</i> | |
| <i>Deduct 10% of 202 (rounded to 20)</i> | |
| Total expected units | 182 |
| Average weight (kg) / unit | 1.2 / unit |
| <i>Calculations:</i> | |
| <i>1.2 kg x 182 units</i> | |
| Total weight (kg) | 218.4 |
| Selling price (RM) / kg | 14.00 / kg |
| <i>Calculations:</i> | |
| <i>1.2 kg x 182 units</i> | |
| Seasonal Revenue (RM) | 3057.60 |

13 Lorenz, K. (2015) 'Organic Urban Agriculture', Soil Science, 180, p. 146.

Additionally, the project involves 101 polybags and is soon approaching its fourth month in the active phase, having started in September. As provided in Table 4, the project envisions a harvest from 101 rock melon plants, each expected to yield two rock melon fruits. Considering potential losses (10%), the anticipated net total units of fruit stand at 182. With an estimated average weight per unit of 1.2 kg, the total weight of the projected harvest is calculated to be 218.4 kg. Leveraging a selling price of RM 14.00 per kilogram, the projected revenue for the project is RM 3057.60 (Table 4). The urban farm is already accumulating specific annual revenues from various cultivation areas, such as RM1,400 from vegetables, RM1,800 from aquaponics, RM1,260 from tilapia, and RM1,680 from catfish. Despite the complexities of urban agriculture, Kebun Komuniti PSJ1 serves as a small-scale but strong representation of a holistic approach to organic farming and community engagement, not only ensuring food safety by producing high-quality, chemical-free food but also contributing to local food security and income generation, creating a resilient and sustainable urban farming model. Furthermore, the farm has obtained myGAP certification (Malaysia Good Agricultural Practices), a recognition program initiated by the Department of Agriculture in 2002. This certification acknowledges farms embracing environmentally friendly practices, ensuring the well-being and safety of workers while adhering to the concept of Agriculture Best Practices (APB) to deliver high-quality, safe, and consumable products.

Outside of the farm gates, Kebun Komuniti PJS1 actively engages the community through educational initiatives, including providing briefings to visitors on the benefits of organic plants, offering briefings and site visits to association members, visitors from other community gardens, and school students, as well as hosting visits and studies for university students. Looking ahead, Kebun Komuniti PJS1 can be seen as a potential tourism product, with multi-tiered farming innovations, a city farm exhibit for visitors, and space for higher education students to do research. In the hands of the team running the project alongside participants, as well as with collaborative efforts from relevant agencies and parties, this urban farm goes beyond harvesting produce. With the adoption of best farming practices, the farm contributes to the environmental well-being of an urban space, filling it with greenery as well as showcasing the transformation of a practice into a dynamic force that shapes a sustainable and resilient community.

Case Study 2: Socio-economic transformation through modern farming in the rural landscape

In the face of the ongoing challenges posed by COVID-19, the prospect of increased unemployment rates in Sabah, particularly in Pensiangan, underscores the need for a comprehensive economic development plan. Recognizing the significance of non-formal education, skill enhancement, and practical training, a transformative initiative led by Mr. Amran Jining with the project *“Pembangunan Ekonomi melalui Tanaman Hidroponik”* was initiated. Unlike Kebun Komuniti PSJ1, the project completed its active phase in 2022, falling under one of APPGM-SDG’s 53 community farming projects. The project focuses on hydroponic farming—a ‘green’ agricultural technology. Hydroponics, a method of cultivating plants without soil, holds the promise of integrating innovative agricultural practices for sustainable and productive outcomes.¹⁴ Notably, hydroponic farming represents a new modern concept of farming as opposed to the traditional farming methods that are widely practiced in Pensiangan. Mr. Amran emphasizes the importance of understanding modern agricultural technology, stating, *“Mengenalkan peserta pada teknologi pertanian modern yang dapat meningkatkan hasil tanaman tanpa ketergantungan pada tanah”*. Furthermore, the project aimed to enhance productivity, reduce pesticide usage, embrace the efficient use of water, and reduce land requirements.

The project is based in the rural landscape of Kampung Sinaron, Pensiangan, involving 10 participants, predominantly from indigenous groups such as Dusun, Murut, and Rungus communities, comprising seven females and three males. The project involves three youths and seven others between the ages of 41 and 58. Greenhouses were set up for each participant, equipped with UV plastic to control the internal temperature. The hydroponic sets were installed with five pieces of PVC and a total of 140 plants, enabling participants to start their cultivation without incurring any additional costs. Participants engaged in hydroponic farming using readily available and modern agricultural materials such as plastic bottles, strings, and seedlings. Most of the participants expressed their interest in the project as a means to improve family economics, seize opportunities for personal and experiential growth, and elevate their quality of life.

14 Dubey, N., & Nain, V. (2020) ‘Hydroponic— the Future of Farming’, *International Journal of Environment, Agriculture and Biotechnology*, 4, p. 857.

“Saya ingin mencuba sesuatu yang baru disamping ingin menjana pendapatan melalui tanaman hidroponik sebagai seorang suri rumah.” – Elviana, participant

“Kerana dapat membantu menjana pendapatan serta memenuhi keperluan harian kami.” – Iska, participant

“Untuk mengubah kehidupan untuk meningkatkan taraf kehidupan.” – Nooni & Milah, participants

The outcomes of the Phase 1 hydroponic farming project are significant, with monthly income generated from the project varying, with two participants earning under RM100, five participants earning between RM100 and RM200, and three participants earning between RM200 and RM300. Testimonies from participants highlighted reduced daily expenses, enhanced family nutrition, and the establishment of hydroponic farming as a sustainable second income. Participant Linus asserted, *“Tanaman pertama memberikan impak yang besar.... mengurangkan kos perbelanjaan harian, terutama sekali pembelian sayur dari luar”*, while participant Adirah and Iska mentioned how the project has impacted their families, respectively, *“projek ini memberikan impak positif kerana saya mampu menyediakan sumber makanan yang berkhasiat dan selamat untuk keluarga saya”* and *“sebelum saya menyertai hidroponik ini anak-anak tidak suka makan sayur apabila saya menyertai hidroponik anak-anak minat makan sayur”*. Even after the completion of the active phase and training, the project continues to thrive, resulting in a total income ranging from RM200 to RM3000. The amount varies as the participants conduct their sales differently, marketed through both offline and online sale platforms. The project has witnessed transformative impacts on participants' lives. Participant Miah, for instance, has successfully turned hydroponic farming into a secondary source of income, supporting the education expenses of her children at secondary school. With a greenhouse spanning 10'x 20', Miah's journey exemplifies not only economic empowerment but also the cultivation of a sustainable livelihood. Additionally, the participants have expressed the efficiency and easy cultivation of hydroponic farming; as participant Rozieh noted, *“melalui tanaman hidroponik ini, hasil tanaman yang diperolehi lebih pantas, mudah ditanam dan tidak memakan ruang/kawasan penanaman yang terlalu luas”*.

Table 5. Comparison of Hydroponic farming harvest projections per participant between Phase 1 (2022) and Phase 2 (2023)

| Year / Phase | PVC Pipes per participant | Total plants per participant | Projected quantity per month (kg) |
|--|---------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2022 / Phase 1 | 5 | 140 | 35 - 40 |
| 2023 / Phase 2 | 10 | 280 | 80 – 100 |
| <i>Percentage increase (%) from 2022 to 2023</i> | | | <i>128 – 150</i> |

Following the successful completion of Phase 1, the project secured a grant for its second phase in 2023, this time under the Community Farming Initiative. Unlike the initial phase, which focused on establishing new farms, Phase 2 aims to facilitate the scaling up of existing operations. In 2022, the estimated sales per participant ranged from 35 to 40 kg per month with 8 harvest cycles, utilizing 5 PVC pipes with a total of 140 plants. With Phase 2, the number of plants for each participant has increased to 10 PVC pipes, totaling 280 potted plants. The projected quantity is expected to rise to 80-100 kg per month per participant, with a percentage increase of 128-150 percent – 2.5 times more than the range in 2022 (Table 5), reflecting the project’s commitment to continuous growth and sustainability.

The case study illustrates the transformative impacts of hydroponic farming, where the initiative goes beyond economic benefits, drawing in social and environmental benefits. The participants’ improved income, and improved quality of life are clear indicators of a socioeconomic transition. Furthermore, by encouraging local production of nutritious and safe food and lowering dependency on external sources, the project is crucial for preserving food security. Despite challenges such as inappropriate humidity levels, differing nutrient rations, and root diseases, the project persevered through continuous monitoring, nutritional shifts, and preventative measures. Lastly, in addition to empowering individuals, innovation and community involvement have created a sustainable model for future farming undertakings in the area.

Conclusion and recommendations

Based on APPGM-SDG’s findings and key observations whilst engaging with grassroots communities and local farm operators, as well as during the monitoring of projects, certain key challenges were similarly occurring across the community farming projects, such as limited access to markets, limited land access, weather constraints, the requirement

of start-up capital, a lack of agricultural expertise, a lack of access to infrastructure resources such as water and electricity supply, as well as social dynamics within communities. Overcoming such challenges demands concentrated effort. The observed keen interest of local communities underscores the need for policies facilitating capacity building and education on innovative farming methods and agricultural technologies. Sustainable farming practices, building long-term capacity for safe and quality food security, environmental conservation and protection, and increasing community wellbeing should be integrated into national agricultural policies. Furthermore, policies should also emphasize connecting grassroots farm operators with local or commercial markets to address the challenge of market accessibility. Coordinated efforts involving agencies like MARDI, FAMA, and the private sector are crucial for fair distribution of sales and ensuring a steady supply of locally grown produce.¹⁵ Furthermore, there needs to be an emphasis on the importance of shifting to or adopting climate resilience or climate adaptation strategies. These include increased resilience to extreme weather events, improved crop yields and livestock health, reduced dependency on synthetic inputs, enhanced soil fertility and biodiversity, and long-term farming operation sustainability.

In conclusion, APPGM-SDG's community farming projects have shown a transformative impact on local communities, addressing issues related to food security, economic development, and sustainable agriculture. By integrating findings into the national SDG framework, encouraging collaborations and partnerships with government and stakeholders, and addressing identified issues through focused policies, Malaysia can enhance the impact of community farming initiatives while building communities and contributing significantly to localizing Sustainable Development Goals.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Number of projects and participants by parliament

| State | Parliament | Number of Projects | Number of Participants |
|----------|--|--------------------|------------------------|
| Sarawak | Selangau Batang Lupar Batang Sadong Petra Jaya Baram Julau Kapit Kota Samarahan Kuching Miri Mukah Puncak Borneo Sadong Jaya Stampin | 25 | 505 |
| Sabah | Papar Pensiangan Tenom Keningau Kota Belud Beluran Beaufort Kota Marudu Kudat Libaran Penampang Ranau Sepanggar Silam Sipitang Tuaran | 47 | 422 |
| Kelantan | Jeli Tumpat Gua Musang Kuala Krai Pasir Mas | 14 | 281 |

| State | Parliament | Number of Projects | Number of Participants |
|--------------|---|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Pahang | Bentong Temerloh Kuantan Cameron Highlands Jerantut Pekan Temerloh | 27 | 320 |
| Terengganu | Setiu Besut Dungun Hulu Terengganu Kuala Nerus Kuala Terengganu Marang | 15 | 170 |
| Selangor | Kuala Selangor Selayang Bangi Batang Kali Gombak Hulu Langat Hulu Selangor Kuala Langat Kuala Selangor Petaling Jaya Puchong Sepang Shah Alam Sungai Besar Sungai Buloh | 25 | 303 |
| Kuala Lumpur | Lembah Pantai Cheras Batu Kepong Segambut | 6 | 100 |
| Pulau Pinang | Permatang Pauh Bayan Baru Bukit Gelugor Jelutong Nibong Tebal | 13 | 180 |

| State | Parliament | Number of Projects | Number of Participants |
|-----------------|--|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Kedah | Baling Sik Merbok Pendang Jerlun Kepala Batas Padang Serai Sungai Petani | 11 | 178 |
| Perak | Ipoh Barat Parit Buntar Batu Gajah Gopeng Ipoh Timur Kuala Kangsar Larut Parit Pasir Salak Sungai Siput Tambun Tanjung Malim Teluk Intan | 20 | 280 |
| Negeri Sembilan | Tampin Jelebu Rembau Seremban | 13 | 150 |
| Melaka | Tangga Batu Masjid Tanah Alor Gajah Jasin | 7 | 70 |
| Johor | Iskandar Puteri Johor Bahru Kota Tinggi Ledang Muar Pontian Pulai Segamat Sri Gading Semborong Tanjung Piai Tebrau Simpang Renggam | 26 | 264 |

| State | Parliament | Number of Projects | Number of Participants |
|--------------|------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Perlis | Padang Besar Kangar | 2 | 20 |
| Sum | 107 constituencies | 251 | 3243 |

SDG Innovations & Impact: Relational Approach in Enabling Innovative Solutions and Impact Creation at the Grassroots

*Paniirselvam Jayaraman**

Abstract

SDG localisation is a primary goal of APPGM-SDG, and solution projects are the key component of this effort. Formed in 2019, mirroring the UK Parliament setup, the APPGM-SDG Malaysia has been the forefront organisation in localising SDGs in parliamentary constituencies. Despite Covid-19 and other practical challenges. The grounded research approach undertaken by APPGM-SDG paved the way for innovative grassroots solutions designed and undertaken by local organisations targeting vulnerable communities in their own localities. From 2020 to November 2023, APPGM-SDG has undertaken targeted solution projects at an unprecedented level, with 664 SDGs solution projects in 4 years and 364 solution providers around the country. These innovative solutions are developed through a unique relational approach between multiple stakeholders and engagements in multiple processes in the making. This approach has been the key framework in designing solution projects that have proven to have a much greater impact towards the community as a whole and personally on the livelihoods of the participants involved. This is also evident in our recent publication, *SDG Solution Projects: Best Practices Impacting the Grassroots*, which carries 35 best practices for solution projects and innovative stories from the ground that can be examples of model solutions for vulnerable communities. This paper will discuss the relational approach that brings out SDG innovations in finding solutions between the partners involved, the empowerment and participatory models in place, and the processes involved in curating suitable solutions. The lessons learnt from 2020 until now in crafting

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fine-tuned solutions will also be included in this paper, together with real-life case studies of SDG innovative solutions that have a greater relational approach between stakeholders.

Keywords: SDG innovation, Relational approach, APPGM-SDG, solution projects

Introduction

The All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on Sustainable Development Goals (APPGM-SDG) was approved on 17 October 2019 and registered with the Secretary of Parliament. There are few APPGMs that were formed under the 14th Parliament Reform Agenda, and the idea originated from the UK Parliament APPGs, which consist of Members of both Houses of Parliament, academics, civil society members, professionals, and specialists coming together to share expertise and ideas as well as giving recommendations and inputs to the government on many disciplines.¹ The APPGM-SDG's noble intention and acceptability have survived a few government administration changes, and after GE15, it was reinstated in Parliament by the Speaker of Dewan Rakyat.

After the formation in 2019, grounded research and localising SDG work started in 2020 with government-provided funding. From 2020 to 2023, about 87 parliamentary constituencies were visited, and grounded research as well as localisation work was conducted. The process begins with research into local needs through focus group discussions with various groups of people. This is followed by the execution of solution projects to address the micro issues. Macro issues, on the other hand, will be highlighted to government agencies, and policy-related issues will be dealt with at policy-level discussions. The primary objective of micro-projects, known as solution projects, is to present the most effective solution and explore its potential for scaling up by agencies and other funders.

Apart from that, solution projects also serve as a tool to identify local champions to participate in national efforts and to build trust among communities at the grassroots. As of December 2023, a total of 664

1 Danial Mohd Yusof and Zainal Abidin Sanusi, 'The APPGM-SDG (All Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on Sustainable Development Goals): Towards Mainstreaming SDG in Issues and Solution of Parliamentary Constituencies' (2021) *Journal of the Malaysian Parliament* I, 228-242 <https://journalmp.parlimen.gov.my/jurnal/index.php/jmp/article/view/39/23>.

solution projects were undertaken based on localising SDGs agenda targeting vulnerable communities around Malaysia. These projects target communities that need support and are conducted with proper follow-up and continuation to ensure sustainability. The delivery of the solution projects is the responsibility of the solution partners. APPGM-SDG solution partners are registered organisations, from the identified locality and are passionate about bringing sustainable change to community members. To date, we have 364 active partners championing the sustainability agenda.

Innovative solutions

Solutions are the key to enabling communities to progress on a sustainable pathway. Crafting such solutions requires innovative methods as enablers. Innovative solutions have three major segments, namely local people & organisations, the solution partners, and the empowerment models.

Local people and organisations

The empowerment of local people and organisations is the key to moving the community towards sustainable, innovative solutions. The people we refer to here are the local leaders and organisations. Local leaders play a major role in mobilising the community towards sustainable solutions. Empowering them through capacity building² in various disciplines such as SDGs, inclusive communities, Social Solidarity Economy (SSE), gender mainstreaming, and more will enhance their capacity to effectively bring solutions to a community. We also must accept the fact that there are many dynamics in this process, as in many places, informal local leaders will also play a key role in community organising. Apart from that, multiple organisations in the locality, such as KRT and JPCK, also play a role in community leadership, apart from the appointed village head or the head of a resident association. These are the people who guarantee community participation in solution activities for the long term. Investing and empowering local people and organisations is the first component of innovative solutions.

2 Nur Balqis Osman, 'Building Inclusive Community with High Impact Solution Providers' in Zoel Ng (ed), Volume 1 Local Communities Building Inclusive Communities: Proceedings from MySDG Conference (Persatuan Promosi Matlamat Pembangunan Lestari, Petaling Jaya, Selangor, 2024) 145-147.

Then come the solution partners, who are local organisations that deliver empowerment programmes with the collaboration of experts and become reliable partners for the community in their growth. The role of solution partners in innovative solution delivery is explained below.

Trust building and local solution partners

The solution partners we are engaging consist of local organisations within the constituency we have visited. They are the changemakers and catalysts for bringing local solutions to local communities, especially the marginalised. The method is to identify local organisations that are passionate about bringing change in society and empower them as partners in our projects. The advantage of local partners is that they will have greater ground outreach and have built trust among the local people. Trust building is a key component of a successful project, and to build long-term trust, one must be from the locality, be a day-to-day person and understand the needs of the people and the right solution to undertake in addressing those needs. The people's acceptance is very strong towards local organisations, and delivery of the project can be achieved in line with the identified needs. With such high confidence developed among local community members, local solution providers are our vital segment in innovative solutions made for local communities. *Table 1* below illustrates the type of solution partners APPGM-SDG is engaging.

Table 1: Types of solution partners

| No. | Type of Organisation | No. |
|-----|--|------------|
| 1 | NGOs registered with ROS | 160 |
| 2 | Companies and Social Enterprises registered with SSM | 121 |
| 3 | Universities | 17 |
| 4 | Youth organisations registered with ROY | 26 |
| 5 | JPKK / KRT / Resident Associations | 15 |
| 6 | Cooperatives | 14 |
| 7 | Foundations | 5 |
| 8 | Pusat Pemulihan Dalam Komuniti (PDKs) | 4 |
| 9 | MP / ADUN offices | 2 |
| 10 | TOTAL | 364 |

Source: APPGM-SDG (28 Dec 2023)

These partners are the backbone of the community solutions that APPGM-SDG is delivering. NGOs are the biggest group, followed by companies and social enterprises. These companies have strong social motives that surplus their profits, enabling them to share their expertise to their project participants. Universities are partnering with us to exchange their expertise, technologies, and knowledge with the local communities. All the groups have a very strong sustainability element in their project delivery, and this is made possible by our relational approach.

Together, both the local leaders and organisations and the solution partners play a unique relational role in creating innovative solutions for the local community. This collaborative, innovative solution helps the community sustain long-term projects and programs. Based on our lessons on grassroots mobilisation, organising local communities, capacity building, long-term relationship and trust building, and empowerment of solution partners as catalysts of change, these are proven to be key enablers to bring about local solutions in the local communities.³

The layers of empowerment in building the relational approach in delivering innovative solutions

The third component of APPGM-SDG's innovative solution for local communities is the community development models that we have adopted. The very first layer of empowerment in championing the relational approach to community development is solution partner empowerment. Our 4 years of experience gave us many practical lessons and way-forward innovative ideas, and one of them was the role of solution partners as catalysts and enablers of localising sustainable development. They are the first layer that APPGM-SDG built as a changemaker in the community. This is done through continuous empowerment and hand-holding. To do this, APPGM-SDG adopted the three-tier empowerment model. This model was developed as innovations from lessons and as a journey of solution partners, which they will undergo while undertaking projects with us. Diagram 1 below refers to the 3-tier empowerment model.

3 James Ryan Raj, 'Collaborative Approaches in Creating Community-Based Solutions in Localising SDGs' in Md. Habibur Rahman (ed), *Community Social Work Practice and Development Journal* Vol. 02, No. 01&02, January-December 2023 (Community Social Work Practice and Development (CSWPD) Foundation, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2024) 107-124.

Diagram 1: Solution partners empowerment model



Source: APPGM-SDG

Grant recipients

The empowerment journey starts with organisations coming into our ecosystem as grant recipients and conducting solution projects. In this stage, they will undergo constant training and upgrading from various experts and at various events. This empowerment process starts with the application for the project itself. The solution partner proposal for solutions will be vetted and reviewed by an external expert panel, which will review the method, output and outcome, budgeting, SDG-based implementation, and sustainability elements after the project is complete. The applicant is required to upgrade his or her proposal based on the reviews and execute only the upgraded proposals. Apart from this, the partners will also be empowered while they work on the project. They are required to send in a monthly narrative and financial report based on the template and present it to us via slides on the solution project progress. These monthly presentations will be attended by all the solution partners, and they will be the best avenue for peer learning on the best practices from each other. In addition to all this, the partners will have to attend frequent capacity-building programmes throughout the year and learn from experts who came to share their expertise in various related fields. One of the main topics in this capacity is building social entrepreneurship, which empowers the solution partners to be self-sustaining via income-earning initiatives. Cooperative and AIM (Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia) models are also included in the capacity-building programme. All this process will transform the solution partner into a reliable and trustworthy delivery partner who works towards empowering the beneficiaries with innovative solutions.

Solution partners

The empowerment journey is continuous for the local organisations. Through their survival in the first ‘grant recipient’ stage, they will now be elevated to the solution partners stage. The main capacity building that will be undertaken here is to expose the partner to various co-funded and collaborative initiatives, in addition to the solution project

that they are undertaking with beneficiaries. They will be given the responsibility to conduct three major programmes for the community they are serving: a youth camp, a building inclusive communities (BIC) capacity-building programme and a neighbourhood programme. These programmes are an additional commitment to the solution partners and their ability to mobilise local communities at different segments, such as youth, community leaders, and women. The effort will strengthen their ability to make the community champion of innovative solutions for their problems. The community, on the other hand, will develop leadership qualities through these programmes, and one day, the solution partner might exit the community and allow them to independently manage their solutions.

Apart from additional projects, the solution partners will also be exposed to responsibilities related to APPGM-SDG. Tasks such as a panel for proposal review, training for SDG workshops and BIC programmes, becoming regional coordinators to monitor regional projects, and co-researchers for issue mapping exercises undertaken by APPGM-SDG will be passed on to the solution partners to increase their resilience in social work with communities. At this stage, the partner is not only a local organisation but a solution partner to a parliamentary body, and this will increase their visibility for other local, state, and national opportunities.

SDG project owners

The third stage is the SDG project owner, which is the platform where our partners have fully empowered themselves and are now undertaking projects and receiving grants from other organisations such as Yayasan Hasanah, Yayasan MySDG, and the UN SDG Fund. They are also empowered to take up bigger funding and long-term projects and become reliable partners in terms of nation-building for many funders.⁴ Apart from funding, partners at this stage are high in resilience and project ownership, which enables them to become guides for the new grant recipients entering the ecosystem. Apart from that, they will also involve self-sustaining models to slowly move away from grant-receiving to forming social enterprises (SE) that will sustain income. Apart from the SE model, the cooperative model will also be adopted by

4 James Ryan Raj and Paniirselvam (eds), *SDG Solution Projects: Best Practices Impacting the Grassroots* (Persatuan Promosi Matlamat Pembangunan Lestari, Petaling Jaya, 2023).

partners and beneficiaries to enable equity building among them. The cooperative model will be championed through the SSE Asia network with best practices from other countries based on the 5 principles of SSE: voluntary cooperation, mutual aid, democratic and participatory governance, autonomy and independence, primacy of people, and social purpose over capital.⁵

This long-term empowerment journey is all about communication, which is taking place between the APPGM-SDG ecosystem handlers consisting of staff, resource persons, and external experts towards solution partners. This relationship, which is being built gradually between the two, opens a doorway for empowerment, peer learning, SDG innovative solutions, and many other opportunities. This is fundamental to the relational approach adopted by APPGM-SDG, which champions solutions at the grassroots.

We strongly believe that this first layer of trust, trust-building, and empowerment is the baseline for the relational approach. It fosters the development of strong local champions in our project locations. Empowered solution partners will be able to deliver better projects and sustainable impacts are being created for the project beneficiaries. Our maiden book, *SDG Solution Projects: Best Practices Impacting the Grassroots*, provides a thorough explanation of this empowerment process. The book also records 35 impact stories from our solution projects that bring sustainable positive impact to the beneficiaries and the community around the project location. The book also stands as a testament to the empowerment, trust-building, and relational approach undertaken by APPGM-SDG.

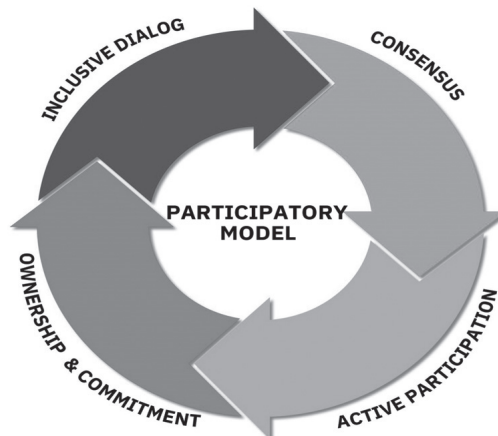
The participatory model, the second layer of the relational approach

The journey of grassroots community empowerment, which begins with the empowerment of solution partners, has evolved in four years towards betterment and innovations, and APPGM-SDG was able to create many empowered neighbourhoods in all 85 parliamentary constituencies. This first layer opens the doorway for the second empowerment journey, which targets the project beneficiaries and the community leaders in the neighbourhood. This approach has been the desired destination for our localising SDG work, in which the “rakyat” on the ground understands

5 International Labor Organization (ILO), ‘Resolution concerning decent work and the social’ (International Labor Organization (ILO), 10 June 2022) file:///C:/Users/meeting1/Downloads/wcms_848633.pdf accessed 29 April 2024.

theSDG concept, approach, innovative solutions, and sustainable living. The model we develop and adopt to achieve this at the neighbourhood level of relationship building is the participatory model. This model was designed based on learning and innovation from our own 664 project experience and developed by James Ryan Raj, Director of the Constituency Coordination Department in the APPGM-SDG. The model aims to help secure the community's ownership and commitment to the projects. The model also helps us and the solution partners move further to empower the community as a whole after successful penetration and relational building with the beneficiaries through the project. The participatory model is illustrated in *Diagram 2* below.

Diagram 2: Participatory model



Source: APPGM-SDG (28 Dec 2023)

The model shows the process details involved in relationship building to penetrate the community and implement better solutions. It consists of four stages of participation and the required commitment by both solution enablers and the community.

Consensus stage

Consensus is the first and most important stage of the journey. In the trust-building process, especially with grassroots communities, this first introduction and impression are very important. It will determine the cooperation for the follow-up processes and the way forward. Most of the communities on the ground, especially the B40 to B10 communities, are not so welcoming of new initiatives by new organisations. This situation

necessitates the involvement of established partners who already hold significant value within the community. The resistance to the new idea can be communicated to get consensus and can be easily moderated and facilitated. Getting a consensus with the community is like signing an agreement with them, and we must keep the values up and adhere to the agreed terms of engagement. Breaking this consensus means, we would not be able to build back the confidence and have a high chance of losing the community.

In this stage, one will be meeting the formal and informal leaders of a particular community, and it is vital to maintain trustworthiness with both leaders. Ground communities are always in this leadership divide, and we as incoming organisations must be able to understand the dynamic and work with both for the successful delivery of a project.

Another good practice at this stage is getting women wing leaders involved in the meetings. Women wing leaders have good coordination in neighbourhoods and getting them involved will have a positive impact on the initiative. Men's outside work prevents them from fully committing to the initiative, but women leaders can make up for this by coordinating and managing it. Our lesson also proves that mobilising women for poverty elevation is an important part of project delivery, as they are committed to their success and have high resilience in achieving betterment.

Active participation

Upon reaching a consensus, the first layer of relationship building is complete, and the other four processes are to strengthen the relationship. Active participation is the immediate next process and this can be enabled by involving the local community in the project management. For example, in one of our Orang Asli projects on chilli fertigation training, our solution partner, Arunan Giri from *Beringin Natural Farm*, who is our resource person and already at the project owner stage with 3 years of project experience with APPGM-SDG, appointed one of the women participants as a leader with the task of making sure all participants attended all the training classes. For this commitment, she gets some allowance and ensures participants turn up for the training sessions. This approach is one example of the active participation and involvement of the community in project management. Apart from that, our solution partner also requested another male participant, who is also an informal leader of the community, to lead the setup of individual

farms at the Orang Asli village with the help of other participants. He was able to get participants to help each other set up their farms, and through this exercise, unity among them was achieved.⁶

Active participation also involves giving the community members who are involved in the initiative some commitments to fulfil, such as the programme hall, which can be the *Persatuan Penduduk Hall* and is utilised with a rental fee; the food catering services for the programme can be given to local community members; and also other services that they can fulfil, which will open some opportunity for the community or the association to earn. Apart from that, such practices also increase their confidence and leadership level when undertaking bigger projects later on. We also have such stories recorded, for example, in Kampung Song-Song, Kota Belud Sabah, where our project partner, Nadhirah, from *Reef Check Malaysia*, developed a community learning centre in this isolated village and formed a women's association to manage the centre. The members of the association were given training for the past 2 years on organisational leadership and community building, and now they can take up solution projects directly with APPGM-SDG.

Active participation is vital in creating resilient and dynamic community leaders who can independently contribute to nation-building via empowerment programmes soon.

Ownership and commitment

Ownership and commitment are the ultimate results of the relational approach, which uses both the solution provider empowerment model and the participatory model. It is also an affirmation that the community is ready to accept challenges, be involved in continuous empowerment programmes and be ready to reshape towards betterment. Ownership can be created when the right people come together with the right intention and work towards collective goals. The active participation section above explains some of the many methods to achieve ownership and commitment.

Apart from that, ownership can be created through the creation of leadership attributes among local leaders and participants as well as acceptance of the social solidarity economy (SSE) agenda. SSE advocates for shared values and collective empowerment, mainly economic

6 Paniirselvam Jayaraman, Facebook post (20 November 2023) <https://www.facebook.com/share/gN9DZU3nCEKHPVpV/?mibextid=WC7FNe> accessed 29 April 2024.

empowerment. In Malaysia, the concept of SSE refers to the formation of cooperatives that enable community members to exercise their leadership qualities and gain the ability to participate in many initiatives. Cooperatives serve as playgrounds for local communities to come together and prosper through collective initiatives. Such development, like the Kampung Song-Song Women Association initiative, can bring better community ownership to any initiative, collective economic returns, and instil resilient leadership among them.

Inclusive dialogue

The ultimate fruit of the empowerment-based relational approach is the acceptance of the inclusive ideology by the community members. As mentioned before, grassroots communities are very fragile when it comes to unity, and building them requires highly noble relationship-building. Collective ideas such as cooperatives and their confidence in the ideas form a more inclusive and resilient community, which deters disunity approaches by some quarters. Such inclusive communities are already being created through our solution projects.

The community, which is reached by the APPGM-SDG with the phase 1 project by our solution partner, will move into phase 2 in the second year and into phase 3 projects in the third year. The continuous empowerment method will eventually build a resilient community. Such continuous empowerment work will also foster greater local leadership among the community members, and they tend to have their own organisations and can organise themselves with little guidance from solution partners. Apart from that, with additional funding support from APPGM-SDG for programmes such as neighbourhood building projects, youth resilience camps, and community learning centre projects, the community moves further towards being better organised and inclusive of all the community members. Other funders with common goals will be able to penetrate the community through the existing leaders and conduct empowerment programmes.

What started with grant recipients and consensus has moved way into local leadership development and can lead to many more agencies coming together and collaborating. All these are possible because of the empowerment-based relational approach that is undertaken by APPGM-SDG in its journey towards building resilient and inclusive communities around Malaysia.

Case Study 1

Community empowerment journey: From beneficiaries to local champions in PKNS Flats, Petaling Jaya Selangor

Flat PKNS, Taman Dato Harun, Petaling Jaya, is in the heart of Petaling Jaya and surrounded by packed housing. Residents here are mainly urban poor, and it is a mixed community consisting of multi-ethnic groups. The mosque in Taman Dato Harun, located a 2-minute drive from the flat, was involved in an incident in 2010. A pig head was thrown at the gate of the mosque, creating huge disunity among the multi-ethnic communities living there.⁷ The government has been actively engaged in community rebuilding effort ever since. APPGM-SDG started our income generation programme in Flat PKNS in 2022. Our partner, Impactlution Sdn Bhd, a social enterprise, was conducting a recycled glass craft programme in the locality, with women from needy households participating as beneficiaries.

The project was ongoing for a year, and one performing participant, Farah, was appointed by Impactlution as their staff member to manage their outlet in PJ Eco Plaza. This appointment significantly impacted the project's progress. Previously, Farah was responsible for creating glass craft products and promoting them through booth sales. Her move motivated other participants to be actively involved in the project, and this year, Farah is identified as one of the principal trainers of Impactlution. She conducts training for school students and adults on upcycling and other environmental-related programmes under Impactlution. The beneficiaries at Flat PKNS formed their own women's association and produced glass craft products for corporate orders, mainly from the PJ municipal council and huge orders from the Member of Parliament himself.⁸

The empowerment journey started with the grant, which builds better resilience and leadership among the local community and brings in more opportunities from additional partners. Not stopping with that, the women's group, our beneficiaries, have now been involved in independently organising one of our signature neighbourhood-building programme and they were chosen as the first community to conduct such

7 Malaysiakini, 'Kepala Babi dilontar dalam Perkarangan Dua Masjid' (27 January 2010) <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/122975> accessed 29 April 2024.

8 Lee Chean Chung, Facebook post (30 October 2023) <https://www.facebook.com/share/ARQ9HA9pFdCZUqLL/?mibextid=WC7FNe> accessed 29 April 2024.

a programme in Petaling Jaya. In the meeting, they were confident that they could independently deliver the programme with initial guidance from our solution partner. They stand proud that they, the beneficiaries, are now the local champions of Flat PKNS Taman Dato Harun.

This case study is a testament to the relational approach that APPGM-SDG has been pursuing through the two models above.

Case Study 2

Studio Jahitan Ana, from sewing shop to women's one-stop support centre, in Baling Kedah

Studio Jahitan Ana is owned by Norfarhana Ismail and is located in Kampung Charuk Bemban, Baling Kedah. Baling is located far north and consists of hardcore poor communities, especially women, who are mostly housewives. APPGM-SDG started a sewing project with Studio Jahitan Ana in 2021. The first batch of beneficiaries are hardcore poor housewives who have no experience being tailors. They undergo months-long training with Norfarhana, known as Ana, and can gain the skills. Ana put in effort to get sewing corporate orders for beneficiaries to earn, and Ana also allowed them to use her sewing machines to do their sewing. They were also using her machines to complete their own sewing orders. While they were undergoing training, they used to bring their children to Studio Jahitan Ana. Housewives bring along their children for training since there is no one in the house to take care of them. So, Ana created a study and play area for the children in her shop. She put in effort to accommodate their additional needs, and they were able to perform well in their skill development. In 2022, Ana got funding to train a second batch of tailors, and the first batch became trainers for this new project. Both batches were able to earn through corporate sewing orders, and during Hari Raya season, each of them was earning nearly RM10,000 through *baju raya* sewing. Some of them are even buying gold jewellery for the first time.⁹

It is unbelievable that someone from Baling, Kedah, who had undergone sewing training, and with continuous support from the solution partner, was able to earn up to RM10,000 a month. Apart from economic development, the place also becomes a “hangout place” for

9 K. Eruthaiaraj, ‘Solution Providers as Grassroots Mobilisers in Localising SDGs’ in Teo Lee Ken & Debbie Loh (eds), *SDG Policies and Practices in Malaysia* (Persatuan Promosi Matlamat Pembangunan Lestari, Petaling Jaya, 2023), pp. 383-385.

women to come and share their problems and talk things out among themselves. *Studio Jahitan Ana*, from being the skills development and earning centre, has become a one-stop psychosocial support centre for the women in Baling. The solution partner, Ana, has won the 2022 National SDG Icon Awards for her inspiring work.

In 2023, APPGM-SDG will take Ana further as an external expert person to review our project proposals. Ana is also involved in our building inclusive communities' programme as a trainer and conducting the inclusive modules in training. She was also awarded the APPGM-SDG Special Grant, which serves as an elevation capacity building for Ana, and she will be conducting the "Mesin Jahit Bergerak" mobile sewing machine programme to bring sewing skills into needy villages in Baling. This year, she was also given the challenge to conduct a sewing programme for the Siamese community in Baling, and with language and cultural barriers, she was able to complete the project, and the participants are conducting online marketing to attract sales. With a few batches of women in her training, she is now en-route to form a cooperative, Koperasi Wanita Berjaya Baling, to build a fully resilient and collectively earning community in her far-reaching locality.

Nor Farhana @ Ana stands as a testament that developing local leadership will have a snowball impact on the effort, and fitting her story into both our models, she is one of the best examples APPGM-SDG can share as a testament to the relational approach undertaken in building resilient and empowered local communities with innovative solutions. Her story was also featured in our best practices book.¹⁰

Conclusion

The relational approach to delivering innovative solutions is a journey that APPGM-SDG undertakes together with its solution partners and programme beneficiaries. The approach was supported by two main models: the solution partner empowerment model and the participatory model, which spell out steps in the approach. The case studies and the published book of best practices serve as success stories for the approach we have undertaken since 2020. The journey has also taught many lessons to all the stakeholders involved and opened a doorway

10 James Ryan Raj & Paniirselvam (eds), *SDG Solution Projects: Best Practices Impacting the Grassroots* (Persatuan Promosi Matlamat Pembangunan Lestari, Petaling Jaya, 2023), 'Sewing Skills Training: A Gateway to Alleviate Poverty among Baling's Poor Communities', pp. 73-77.

for many innovations in designing solutions for future programs. Many success stories and impacts were created through these innovations, which upgraded all the stakeholders, especially the solution partners and beneficiaries. Positive relationships formed with noble intentions by enthusiastic stakeholders working together for the common good are the best combination for producing highly effective and resilient communities with strong autonomous leadership characteristics.

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