Political Socialization of Malaysian Youth:
The Present State and the Way Forward

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Introduction

Youths are partners in nation building. Politics and nation building are like the two sides of a coin. Thus, matured political socialization among citizen including youth may contribute to the well being and stability of a nation, politically, economically and socially. Political socialization of youth involved looking into the influence of youths' political literacy, maturity, leadership experiences and their surrounding political landscape. In looking at the future wellbeing of Malaysia, the 2015-2035 National Youth Policy outlines five challenges and strategies to address youth political socialization which include zooming into their political literacy, political maturity, involvement in community and organization leadership, ability to think globally and readiness to actively participate as leaders of the ASEAN and international communities.This paper is aimed at exploring the present state Malaysian youths' political socialization, factors related to the political socialization and analysed on how their political socialization can impact on community, organization leadership and nation building.

Research Questions
The following are the research questions addressed in this paper:

1. What is the present state of Malaysian youths' political socialization?
2. What are the related factors that contribute to Malaysian youths' political socialization?
3. How Malaysian youths' political socialization can impact on community, organization leadership and nation building?

Methods
This conceptual paper is based on a qualitative content analysis approach. We analyzed the present state of Malaysian youths' political socialization, factors related to the political socialization and how their political socialization can impact on community, organization leadership and nation building. Content analysis of secondary sources comprising the 2015 Malaysian Youth Index findings, the 2015-2035 Malaysian Youth Policy and related literature on Malaysian youths' engagement in politic as well as community and organization leadership were conducted.

Findings and argument

What is the present state of Malaysian youths' political socialization?

Analysis provide possible explanations for the state of Malaysian youths' political socialization. In the initial series of Malaysian Youth Index, political socialization, which is defined as one's

acceptance of the political norms, values and experiences in one's daily life (Samsudin, 2007) was initially measured as part of the identity of a youth. However in 2015 Index, political socialization was upgraded from being a sub-domain to one of the main domains that make up the overall score of the index. The sub domains for political socialization in the index are defined in the form of how youths are involved in discussion on political issues, their following on the political development and their participation in political activities which also includes one's inclination towards certain political party. Findings from previous Malaysian Youth Index to the 2015 edition indicated that the level of Malaysian youth political socialization is decreasing significantly. The present state of Malaysian youth political socialization, in the 2015 Malaysian Youth Index, is recorded at 45.82 as being at the unsatisfactory level (scale of 40 to 49) (IYRES 2015). It is evident that a majority of Malaysian youths are not active participants, as far as political socialization is concerned.

What are the related factors that contribute to Malaysian youths' political socialization?

The following are the related factors identified which contribute to the present state of Malaysian youths' political socialization.

Political Literacy
Improved political literacy among youths will help them to become responsible citizen who will decide and support able community, organization, state and national leaders (Malaysian Youth Policy, 2015). Findings from the 2010 Malaysian Election Commission survey recorded that 4.3 million Malaysian who have reached the age of 21 and eligible to vote have yet to register themselves as voters. The number is increasing at almost 200,000 each year (Wan Ahmad 2010). Interestingly, statistics showed that a majority of Malay youths in Malaysia have not registered as voters. The 1:40 ratio between Malay to Non Malay voters painted a picture that Malay youths are keeping aloof of their responsibility as voters and decision makers of the current and future national political landscape (Haslinda *et al.,* 2012). This phenomenon worries the Minister of Youth and Sports, Mr Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar who cited that youths should be actively involved in the national political process so that better government policy can be formulated, debated and passed (The Malaysian Insider, 2016). Wan Ahmad (2010) highlighted some reasons given by Malaysian youths who did not register as voters. Among them are Malaysian youths have shown surpring apathy towards being a registered voter. Reasons given for not taking this role seriously include busy with daily work, time constraint, not important, not beneficial and not being aware. They also cited that the counter based registration model are outdated and everything should be done online, considering the advent of technology that Malaysia has embraced in other kind of services.

Interestingly, university students' active involvement in campus politics should have impacted on Malaysian youths' political literacy. 90% of undergraduates voted in university campus election from 2007 to 2011 (Nur Fadilah, 2012). Involvement in campus election provides an exposure to political activism among youths to eventually become politically literate voters at the national general election (Mohd Fuad *et al.,* 2009; Ramírez *et al.,* 2010; Ruitenberg, 2010). However, the reality is the two does not correlate significantly. Is it because the campus politics only interest the college students and not the mass youth? A study on the political literacy among the mass Malaysian youths and factors contributing to it warrant further research. In the United States,

youths are more politically liberal because they are more subjective and rational in valuing certain political issues as compared to the American adults (Frank *et al.,* 2007; Dunsmore & Lagos, 2008). A democratic system will become meaningful when it is backed by politically educated citizen and a fair social justice (Portelli & Solomon, 2001). Political illiteracy is the cause of youths' apathy with their country's political development (Lister, 2001; Fraser, 2000; Jowell and Park, 1998). Hence, low political literacy contribute to low political socialization among Malaysian youths.

Political Maturity
Political maturity is the second factor that contributes to the state of political socialization among Malaysian youths. At present, with a score of 48.29 for discussions on political issues, 46.41 for following political developments and 42.75 for participation in political activities indicated that Malaysian youths do have a slight interest in politics but most of them are not really interested to be involved in analysing and scrutinizing the local and national political development and what more to exercise their political practices within their daily professional and personal lives (Malaysian Youth Index, 2015). Having high political maturity enables youths to be rational and highly principled in their political decision and action. It is undeniable that political maturity is related to political literacy (Noor Sulastry Yurni, 2015). One's political attitude and political behaviour (Krampen 2000) is not merely a byproduct of one's academic training but involves one's wisdom, statesmanship, altruism and good governance.

Political Landscape
Political leaders led by example and their decision and action affect on the youths who view them in real lives and through various media. Interestingly, the political maturity of the youths are influenced by the maturity demonstrated by their political role models and icons who happen to be the politician themselves. By agreeing to disagree on certain issues and agree to agree on other issues rationally as well as putting a stop to politics of hatred and moving to politics of conscience, politicians are able to demonstrate their political maturity to the *rakyat* including youths. This political wisdom will eventually educate youths what political maturity is. The lack of political maturity among youths is a reflection of the example set by the leaders. The emphasis on baseless rhetorical conjectures, personal attacks and character assassination instead of debating on differing views rationally keeps youths away from politics and deprive them from the good side of what politics can do to nation building. With the establishment of Youth Parliament in Malaysia, it is hope that the elder statesman will educate our youth parliamentarian on how to demonstrate their political maturity and not continue to practice politics of hatred and disobedience. Healthy politics is not only about power but also about nation building. The goal is not to churn more power greed political leaders but to develop wiser and rational statesman who will ensure peace, prosperity and stability in one's state and country as well as bringing Malaysia to the next level.

How Malaysian youths' political socialization can impact on community, organization leadership and nation building?
An increase in Malaysian youths' political socialization will ensure that our country will be able to develop them as our potential community, organization and national leaders. One of the rationales to set 15 to 30 age group as a definition for youth in the 2015-2035 Malaysian Youth Policy is to develop them as leaders by the age of 30. It is hoped that by reaching 30, they must have already practiced their leadership as youth leaders and are ready to take up bigger challenges

as community, organization and national leaders, i.e as district council members, senators, members of parliament, CEOs and so forth. They are the leaders of today and tomorrow and the leadership training and succession planning should begin as early as possible. The establishment of School of Politics by Parti Keadilan Rakyat and Akademi Kepimpinan Kapten Hussein by UMNO are examples of how political socialization should not be a product of by chance but through a proper and systematic process.Through active political socialization, Malaysian youths will develop their awareness on issues affecting the country and beyond. They may become global thinkers and are able to discuss, recommend and act on issues affecting the politics of a country and also other socioeconomic issues like education, health, finance, poverty, food, communication, innovation, technology and so forth. Post modernism provides benefits and threats to the global citizens and youths should be ready to tackle these issues politically and rationally through local empowerment and the sense of community (Ziauddin,1995; Baudrillard, 1996; Foucalt, 1994; Habermas, 2002; Beck, 2010; Castells, 1998; Giddens, 1990).

Conclusion and recommendation
The following are recommendations to empower and escalate Malaysian youths' socialization and contribution in community and organization leadership:
1) The provision of a healthy, mature and fair political landscape and surrounding
2) A systematic and responsible education and training program on politics for youths by related stakeholders
3) Empowering Youth Parliament not only at the national but also state and district levels to enhance youths' active participation in community, organization and nation building
4) The appointment of more young able political leaders as senators and members of parliament to represent the *rakyat* and perform their roles as statesman. The need for these young political leaders will escalate Malaysian youths to be politically socialized at a young age, not solely for power, but to play their roles as partners in nation building.

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