Media and Youth Participation in Social and Political Activities: Development of a Survey Instrument and Its Critical Findings

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ABSTRACT

The importance of youth participation in the decision-making process in nation building should not be underestimated. Studies have shown that youth in marginalised communities lack opportunities for engagement in the democratic process. However, today's rapidly-advancing media technology provides an opportunity for the authorities to tackle this problem. This research investigates how participation of youth in marginalised communities can be increased through the use of media. The researchers developed an instrument to measure the participation of youth in the decision-making process via different media. This paper presents the instrumentation process and items used for such purpose. The tested instrument is called 'Measure of Media and Youth Participation in Social and Political Activities'. It consists of five sections, which are (a) Demography, (b) Media use, (c) Level of youth participation, (d) Domain of youth participation, and (e) Youth perception of media and participation.

INTRODUCTION

Studies have shown that the majority of youth do not enjoy full citizenship rights due to their inability to exercise their full rights as citizens to participate, voice opinions and

influence decisions on issues affecting the nation. Furthermore, studies have shown that the roles of media, in particular new media, have changed the way citizens exercise their rights and participate in civil society. As such, there is a need to study the important roles of media in empowering youth to engage more fully in nation building. Efforts have to be undertaken to ensure that various authorities and institutions support and engage youth, particularly those who come from marginalised communities, to utilise various types of media positively as tools to facilitate their participation.

To address these issues, this research was conducted to identify ways to increase the participation of youth in the nation's social and political agenda at national and regional levels through utilisation of media. Specifically, this project attempted to identify the current status of youth participation in the country and to determine the ideal roles of marginalised youth participation in social and political settings. In addition, the project aimed to reveal the existing and changing participation norms of marginalised youth, to implement strategies and programmes that promote marginalised youth participation in schools, communities and the government's transformation plan by utilising various media tools that are managed and produced by youths and to develop and propose specific policies and good practices in media use in support of youth participation. This paper describes the initial stage of this ongoing project. An instrument was developed to identify the current status of youth participation in the

country and to determine the ideal roles of marginalised youth participation in social and political settings.

Youth and Media Participation

Youth aged between 15 and 25 years make up half the world's population. Date released by the UN data in 2012 showed that this age group, particularly those who were marginalised were jobless, under-employed and excluded from social and economic opportunities. Their participation in nation building, the political process and civic engagement were considerably low; thus, many local youths do not enjoy full citizenship rights (UNDP, 2012; Golombek, 2002). This young generation is now demanding equality to exercise their full rights as citizens to participate, voice opinions and influence decisions on issues affecting the nation. They want more participation and consultation in the national agenda, particularly where educational, political and economic issues are concerned.

Youth participation has many benefits. In general, such participation should be encouraged as it promotes confidence and self-esteem in youth and it provides opportunities for youth to learn and practise their negotiation, planning, reporting and communication skills, which they will need in their future roles. The most important benefit would be that it offers young people the chance to develop their decision-making and problem-solving skills. This may ensure that more appropriate decisions are made.

Scholars have argued that in order for a civil society to function well, it needs to

be assisted by the media (Habermas, 1987). The current revolution in the media industry has created a new public sphere for public deliberation. The new media, in particular, have changed the way citizens exercise their rights and have strengthened civil movements to the extent of transforming public opinion. As such, efforts must be undertaken to ensure that the various authorities and institutions support and engage our youth in utilising the various types of media positively as tools to facilitate their participation.

Realising the importance of the role of media and their impact on youth participation, steps need to be taken to ensure that youth, in particular, the marginalised groups, are being consulted and represented and their voices are constantly being heard. This research attempted to answer several research questions: 1. What does youth participation mean in the context of the marginalised groups? and; 2. How can the various forms of media be utilised to enhance marginalised youth participation in the nation-building process?

Youth development, however, is facing challenges and contradictions. In one aspect, the youth are recognised as a national asset (Nadchatram, 2007) that will determine the future progress of the nation. In another context, the youth are labelled an immature group that constantly challenges the norms of society, which has led to their being denied their social responsibility. Welch, Price and Yankey (2002) and Minehbo and Eggermont (2007) argued that media portrayal of youth in a consistently negative fashion further accentuates this contradiction. Youths are pictured as problematic and frequently involved in negative acts without being given equal credit for their potential. According to Penuel (1995, p.1), "regardless of competence, youths are constructed in our society as immature and manipulatable for the purposes of development."

In general, not much effort has been focussed on overcoming problems of youth-at-risk (Rahim, 2010). Most of the current youth developmental programmes target all levels of youth in society. Nothing has been created specifically for local youth-at-risk. By ignoring youth-at-risk, the nation loses out in terms of reaping hidden potential found in approximately one million of its youths between the ages of 15 and 24 years, who may be hugely beneficial to nation building. In general, the profile of at-risk youth in Malaysia (Rahim, 1995; Ismail, 2007) is coming from low-waged families who are not emotionally supportive and living in unsatisfactory conditions. In addition, they are not supervised properly by their parents on activities that they are involved in, deficient in social skills, without a suitable role model and have low aspiration, emotional control and self-esteem.

The above profile substantiates the findings that at-risk youth are marginalised i.e. from the low socio-economic group. Based on family socio-economic standings, there is a probability that this young generation may be deprived of realising its true potential. Contributing to this hindrance is the lack of resources in the families of

the youth owing to lacking affordability, low personal aspiration and self-esteem as well as the dire lack of youth development approaches that emphasise the importance of this minority marginalised group.

Instrument Development

The questionnaire survey is commonly used as a data collection method particularly for a social science discipline. It allows researchers to obtain various sets of information regarding knowledge, opinion, attitude, facts and behaviour (Robson, 2002). This study employed a questionnaire survey in order to identify the current status of youth participation in social and political processes through the use of media. The five steps of developing and testing questionnaires proposed by Radhakrisna (2007) were followed through. They are outlined below.

Step 1: Background. In this step, the purposes or goals of the questionnaire survey are determined. In the context of this study, the questionnaire was developed to identify the current status of marginalised youth participation in social and political processes through the use of media. Apart

from goals, the target population, timing and mode of the survey were also specified.

Step 2: Conceptualisation. This is the step where the statements and questions are generated to reflect the objective of the study. Measures used and variables involved are also determined in this step. The questionnaires in this study covered four main sections as follows:

a) Demographic information
This information is important to ensure that the respondents indeed belong to the target population. In this study, some commonly used demographic items in many studies (e.g. Kreutzer, 2009; Baboo, 2013; Hassan, Shiratuddin, Sakdan, Hashim & Sajat, 2009) were employed. They included age, gender, race, education, employment status, income level (personal and family), type of accommodation and neighbourhood location.

b) Media use
The items for this section were adapted from Baboo (2013), Kreutzer (2009) and Young (2012), which are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Basis for questionnaire items for media use

Researchers		Media use items
Baboo (2013)	a)	Media devices used – e.g. computer/laptop/notebook, tablet/iPAd, TV, mobile/smart phone, audio devices (ipod, MP3), DVD player, game console (PS. Xbox, Wii etc.), radio, others.
	b)	Media devices owned – e.g. computer/laptop/notebook, tablet/iPAd, TV, mobile/smart phone, audio devices (ipod, MP3), DVD player, game console (PS. Xbox, Wii etc.), radio, others.

Table 1
Basis for questionnaire items for media use (continue)

Researchers		Media use items
Kreutzer (2009)	a)	Media devices used (similar to the above)
	b)	Internet usage (frequency, technology used, for what purposes)
	c)	Usage of SM (what are SM uses and for what purposes)
	d)	How and where participants get news from
Cohen & Kahne (2012)	a)	Access to digital technology – i.e. at home, college/ university, cyber cafes, *Pusat Internet Desa*, others
	b)	Types of media used – i.e. conventional and/or Internet-based
	c)	Source of news – newspaper, TV/radio (broadcast or online), tweets, Facebook posts, blogs, YouTube posts
	d)	Types of participation – friendship-driven (Sharing links or forwarding information through Social Network Services like Twitter or Facebook, sending messages, sharing status updates or chatting online using Social Network Services like Twitter or Facebook) or interest-driven (Post an online comment, review or critique of someone else's media/post, link to or forward information related to your interests, give help, advice or suggestions to others related your interests, use the Internet to organise an online group, discussion or website, participate in a game community, guild, competition etc./participate in an online forum or group related to your interests)
Young (2012)	a)	Resources and capacity to use Internet and SM
	b)	Purpose of SM use
	c)	Types of content shared in SM
	d)	Satisfaction with SM

c) Engagement in social and political processes
The items were aimed at gathering information about youth involvement in social and political activities through the use of media. Items developed by Cohen and Kahne (2012) and Hassan et al. (2009) were adapted due to their suitability to the context of this study. These are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Basis for questionnaire items for engagement in social and political process

Researchers		Items for youth engagement in social and political activities
Cohen & Kahne (2012)		Engagement in social and political activities: Online and/or offline activities Participatory activities:
	a)	Exercised voting rights in general election/election at academic institution, local communities, societies and clubs)
	b)	Started or joined a political group on a social network site (like MySpace or Facebook)

Table 2

Basis for questionnaire items for engagement in social and political process (continue)

Researchers		Items for youth engagement in social and political activities
	c)	Forwarded or posted someone else's political commentary or news related to a political campaign, candidate or issue
	d)	Contributed own article, opinion piece, picture or video about a political campaign, candidate or issue to an online news site
	e)	Forwarded or circulated funny videos or cartoons or circulated something artistic that related to a political candidate, campaign or political issues
	f)	Commented on a news story or blog about a political campaign, candidate or issue
	g)	Wrote an e-mail or blog about a political campaign, candidate or issue
	h)	Took part in a protest, demonstration or sit-in
	i)	Participated in a boycott or signed petitions
	j)	Participated in an event where young people expressed their political views (such as a poetry slam, musical event etc.)
	k)	Was active in or joined a group that worked to address social or political issues
Hassan et al. (2009)		Role of participants while using media (follower/contributor/observer/others)

d) Perception of the role and impact of social media on youth engagement in social and political processes

These items were intended to gather information on the perception of respondents regarding the role and impact of social media on youth engagement in social and political processes. This issue is equally important as the rest and should not be underestimated as evidenced by several studies such as Hassan et al. (2009). Three items used in this section are listed below:

i. Whether respondents can use social media to enable sharing of ideas with their friends and families regarding social and political issues

ii. Whether respondents can share or exchange interesting pictures/video clips of political leaders

iii. Whether social media allow respondents to voice out their grievances regarding social and political issues

Conceptualisation of youth perception was completed through three focus group sessions, in which 18 youths of different races and backgrounds were involved. The objectives of the focus group sessions were:

i. To understand how youth conceptualise 'participation'

ii. To identify their participation domain (the specific political and social aspects)

iii. To understand how they get involved (participate) in their roles

iv. To explore what the media push factors and restrictions are in exercising their political and social participation

Table 3 lists the main findings of the analysis.

Table 3
Basis for youth perception items

Objectives of focus groups	Youth feedback
Cohen & Kahne (2012)	Focus Group 1:
Understand how youth conceptualise 'participation'	a) Concern about issues related to own community
	b) Gather information and news on things that affect own lives
	c) Sharing information on things in the interest of peers and family members
	d) Discuss government policies that affect them directly
	Focus Group 2
	a) Individual role, as students strive towards academic achievement; through the achievement, they may contribute to national development in their area of expertise
	b) Making the idea of *modal insan* (human capital) a successful agendum
	c) Discuss national issues among peers
	d) Help to distribute flyers, pamphlets or leaflets regarding issues that are in the public interest
	e) Fight for minorities
	Focus Group 3
	a) Get to know community issues
	b) Gather information from the Internet and social media
	c) Express one's rights
	d) Express one's thoughts, opinion and ideas
	e) Freedom of expression with limitations
	f) Criticise or provide feedback to the authorities
Identify their participation domain (the specific political, social & economic aspects)	Focus Group 1
	a) Graduate employment
	b) Rising cost of living
	c) Education system
	d) GST
	e) Racial unity
	f) Political democracy
	g) Good governance of authorising agencies
	Focus Group 2
	a) The rights of minorities in Sabah and Sarawak
	b) Religious, moral, values – social illness
	c) GST

Table 3
Basis for youth perception items (continue)

Objectives of focus groups	Youth feedback
	d) Housing for young people
	e) Rising cost of living
	f) Crime
	g) Corruption among enforcement agencies
	h) Political democracy
	i) Media and information freedom
	j) Education policies and system
	k) Racial unity
	Focus Group 3
	a) GST
	b) Economy
	c) Cost of living
	d) Good governance
	e) Effective government
	f) Religious, moral, values
	g) Culture
	h) Politics – democracy
	i) Employability/Employment
	j) Security
	k) Social illness
	l) Education system
Understand how they get involved (participate) in their roles	Focus Group 1
	a) Using the Internet to get information about current issues
	b) Reading news (digital) and info from social media (Facebook)
	c) Gather information from mass media (radio, television, newspapers, magazine)
	d) Sharing info from social media with friends via social network
	e) Sharing info from social media via interpersonal communication
	f) Graduate services activities
	g) University community programme
	h) Academic (class project/assignment) activity at community level
	Focus Group 2
	a) Involved in community-based activities
	b) Gather information from social media
	c) Share posting/information via social media
	d) Like Facebook posting
	e) Create posting via social media
	f) Follow public opinion on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram
	g) Retweet in Twitter

Table 3
Basis for youth perception items (continue)

Objectives of focus groups	Youth feedback	
	h)	Watching TV news
	i)	Reading newspapers
	j)	Co-organise community programmes with organisations
	k)	Plan to establish organisations to resolve racial issues
	l)	Practise non-biased political thinking/perception
	Focus Group 3	
	a)	Generally keep up with the news
	b)	Gather interested issues/information from the Internet and social media
	c)	Share posting/information via social media
	d)	Like Facebook posting
	e)	Share Facebook posting/Retweet
	f)	Utilise knowledge as student to get better understanding on area of interest
	g)	Run a social media-based project on sexual security
	h)	Do posting on topics of interest
	i)	Involved in student society activities to promote law awareness
	j)	Become volunteers in breast cancer campaign
	k)	Involved in charity activities
	l)	Using YouTube to boost charity activities
	m)	Volunteer in educational non-profit organisation
Explore what media push factors and restrictions are in exercising their political, social and economic participation	Focus Group 1	
	a)	Information from mass media is not really objective
	b)	Using the Internet to gather information
	c)	Smart phone is the best medium for youngsters to get and share information
	d)	Prefer media that are trendy and mobile for communication
	e)	Social media are the best media they make sharing easier
	f)	Using new media will make political participation more comfortable (without needing to physically participate in events such as *ceramah* (talks), rallies or gatherings)
	Focus Group 2	
	a)	Who are we to get attention from mass media?
	b)	We can use new media to voice our opinion or to make people aware about something
	c)	Mass media are controlled by certain people/groups
	d)	Mass media information is more trusted
	e)	Social media are trendy to youngsters
	f)	Smart phones provide the best platform for many kinds of channel (website, social networking, TV, radio, newspaper)
	Focus Group 3	
	a)	Malaysia has placed some restriction on freedom of speech laws/policy

Table 3

Basis for youth perception items (continue)

Objectives of focus groups		Youth feedback
	b)	There are limits/boundaries to certain aspects when dealing with race, religion and politics
	c)	New media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, blogs) is an ideal platform for participation
	d)	Social media is trendy to youngsters as a participation mechanism
	e)	Smart phones provide the best platform for many kinds of channels (website, social networking, TV, radio, newspaper)
	f)	Smart-phone subsidies for youth can become a catalyst of youth involvement
	g)	A stop to smart-phone subsidies could hinder youth participation
	h)	The government should have more platforms to promote youth involvement
	i)	Any policy should get involvement and feedback from youth

Step 3: Formatting and Data Analysis. Step 3 focussed mainly on phrasing the questions, selecting scales of measurement, layout and format, grouping and ordering questions, formatting, writing a cover letter and identifying the proposed data analysis procedure.

Step 4: Establish Validity. Once steps 1 to 3 were completed, the questionnaire should be evaluated for validity by a panel of experts. Validity refers to the amount of systematic or built-in error in measurement (Norlan, 1990). For this purpose, three experts were selected to vet the questionnaires in terms of construct and face validity. A preliminary data collection was also conducted to establish whether responses to the items were applicable to the potential respondents. For this, data were collected from 80 youths. Next, a number of changes were made prior to developing the final version of the instrument.

Step 5: Establish Reliability. Reliability relates to the accuracy of the measuring instrument (Norlan, 1990). In this final step, a pilot test is carried out to measure the reliability. A group of youth participated in this pilot test. The tested instrument is called 'Measure of Media and Youth Participation in Social and Political Activities'. It consists of five sections, which are, (a) Demography, (b) Media use, (c) Level of youth participation, (d) Domain of youth participation, and (e) Youth perception of media and participation.

Establishing Instrument Reliability

The pilot instrument was administered to 100 youths. However, only the responses of 90 were usable and these were utilised to calculate the reliability measures. The respondents represented all age groups of youth (15 to 25 years old). Part A, 'Demography', consisted of 11 items.

Firstly, for types of neighbourhood, it was found that the majority of the respondents' homes were located within traditional villages (27.0%) and land planning areas (31.0%). Others lived in flats (22%), Chinese new villages (10%), low-cost housing areas (8%), estate (1%) and squatters (1%). Most of the respondents were between 19 and 20 years of age (28.0%), while the others were between 21 and 22 years old (27.0%). The group was divided equally in terms of gender (50% male, 50% female). As for the respondents' ethnicity, most were Malay (87.0%) followed by Chinese (4.0%), Indian (7.0%) and Iban (2.0%). In terms of religion, the majority of the respondents were Muslim (88.0%), followed by Christian (2.0%), Buddhist (4.0%) and Hindu (6.0%). The respondents also came from different educational backgrounds. The majority of the respondents had achieved either the level of SPM (47.0%) or a Bachelor's degree (44.0%). Most of the respondents were from families that comprised four to six members (48.0%). Additionally, 83% of the respondents were living in a household that consisted of only one family. Note however that the remaining respondents (13%) were living together in a household with two families. Next, employment status and household income level of the respondents were assessed. It can be seen clearly that most of the respondents (72.0%) were still receiving formal education at either secondary school or institutes of higher education. Nonetheless, 10.0% of the respondents were currently employed.

In terms of household income status, the majority of the respondents earned between RM 1,001 and RM 1,500 (30.0%), while 28.0% belonged to the income group of RM 1,501-RM 2,000 and only 10.0% of the respondents earned more than RM 3,501. The results also showed that the respondents lived in houses owned by their parents (66.0%), while the rest (34.0%) lived in rented houses.

In Part B of the questionnaire on Media use, for 'Type and frequency of media used', the results showed that most respondents used mobile phones (54.4%) and computers (33.3%) frequently. The result also showed that the importance of conventional media such as TV, newspapers and radio should not be underestimated as a substantial number of the respondents still used them frequently or occasionally. Details are presented in Table 4. Further, the results showed that the respondents used multiple methods to get access to the Internet. Unsurprisingly, the top three methods used by respondents were via the use of computer at home (61.0%), mobile/smart phones/portable wifi/broadband (61.0%) and computer at the work place or place of study (47.0%). For 'Role when using social media', the results revealed that the respondents played different roles when using social media. Most of the time, the respondents played the role of either observer (80.0%) or follower (62.0%). Not many of them were willing to become contributors (27.0%) or entrepreneurs (12.0%).

Table 4
Type and frequency of media used

Type of media	Frequency of use				
	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Highly Frequently
Computer/notebook/laptop	6	11	28	15	30
Tablet/iPad/iPod	20	25	17	14	14
Mobile/Smart Phones	7	4	15	15	49
TV	8	9	34	26	13
Radio	13	26	32	14	5
Newspapers	15	34	27	11	3
Magazines	17	31	29	7	6

The respondents also provided feedback regarding the most popular social media tools they used and their frequency of using them. The results showed that there were at least seven major social media tools used by the respondents, which are Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, WeChat, Google+ and Twitter. Among these, Facebook and WhatsApp were the most popular tools, with more than 50% of the respondents using them highly frequently. For 'Purposes of using new media/social media', the respondents gave various reasons and purposes (see Table 5). The top five purposes as identified in this pilot study were to get in touch with friends and families, to share knowledge and expertise with others, to get information and latest

Table 5
Purposes of using new media/social media

	Purposes	Yes	No
1.	To document and share personal experience with others	40	50
2.	To get in touch with friends and family	67	23
3.	To share knowledge and expertise with others	53	36
4.	To encourage people to take action on certain issues	31	59
5.	To influence the way people think	19	71
6.	To build a network and meet new friends	44	46
7.	To generate income via business	14	76
8.	To get recognition and increase reputation	14	76
9.	To explore and build confidence and self-belief	25	65
10.	To act as a platform for mind development (including learning and revision)	35	55
11.	To enhance creativity	26	64
12.	To get feedback about products or services	31	59
13.	To get information and latest news	50	40
14.	To act as a hobby during free time	49	41
15.	Others	5	83

news, to act as a hobby during free time and to build networks and meet new friends. Despite slight variations in the results, the findings highlight the potential role of social media as a tool for youth to engage in the decision-making process concerning social affairs, politics and the economy.

In Part C, 'Level of youth participation', the respondents were asked about their involvement in social, political and economic activities. There were 14 items in this section (refer to Table 6) using a 5-point Likert scale for responses i.e. never (1), rarely (2), occasionally (3), frequently (4) and highly frequently (5). The results showed that the respondents were not actively involved in all 10 activities where the mean scores for all these items were below 3.0. The activities which received the highest mean scores for respondent activities included accessing social media to learn about social/political/economic issues (mean=3.04) and sharing issues with others (mean=3.03). These findings could be an eye opener to the government and relevant agencies because of the low level of respondent involvement in social and political activities. Intervention and awareness programmes should be introduced to increase youth engagement in these activities.

Table 6
Social and political activities among youth

	Activities	Mean	SD
1.	Share current news/information/opinions via social media with family/friends on social/political/economic issues	3.02	1.32
2.	Obtain information about social/politics/economic issues	3.02	1.06
3.	Organise activities that help local society	2.38	1.09
4.	Follow social activities while at school/college/university/working place	2.90	1.09
5.	Spread messages/comments/articles on social/politics/economic issues	2.66	1.19
6.	Follow news of current issues in and outside country	3.02	1.02
7.	Volunteer to help society	2.66	1.10
8.	Contribute energy, ideas and money in empowering youth activities	2.53	1.27
9.	Get involved in community activities organised by other parties/government/NGO	2.50	1.26
10.	Write own blog about social/political/economic issues	2.14	1.16
11.	Share the latest issues with others	3.03	1.20
12.	Access social media to know about social/political/economic issues	3.04	1.15
13.	Disseminate information about social event/programmes such as political/religious talks/sports/communal work	2.72	1.20
14.	Participate in event/programme where I can express opinion on social/political/economic issues	2.62	1.30

In Part D, 'Domain of youth participation', the respondents were required to indicate their responses. The responses were based on a 5-point Likert

scale i.e. never (1) rarely (2), occasionally (3), frequently (4) and very frequently (5). The results, presented in Table 7, showed that most respondents were interested in information about social problems (such as abandoned babies and drugs) with a mean of 3.19. The other domains that interest the youth most are the national education system, racial unity, freedom of the press and career and employment, in that order.

Table 7
Domain of youth participation

	Activities	Mean	SD
1.	Career/employment	2.92	1.38
2.	National security	2.50	1.16
3.	Corruption/abuse of power authority	2.40	1.23
4.	Freedom of speech	2.66	1.24
5.	Racial unity in Malaysia	2.97	1.08
6.	Efficient administration and accountable government	2.69	1.19
7.	The increase in cost of living	2.79	1.20
8.	National education system	3.09	1.13
9.	Social problems (such as abandoned babies, illegal street racing, drugs)	3.19	1.32
10.	Freedom of the press	2.97	1.19
11.	The issue of crime (such as robbery, theft, rape, murder)	2.92	1.19
12.	Rights/interests of certain	2.87	1.15
13.	Cost/price of buying a home	2.64	1.25

Part E, 'Youth perception of media and participation', presented the results of the respondents' perception of the role of new media and social media. Fifteen items were included in this section and responses were based on a 5-point Likert scale i.e. strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), slightly disagree (3), agree (4) and strongly agree (5).

From the results presented in Table 8, most respondents agreed to the statement that youth in Malaysia prefer to use new media compared to conventional media (mean=3.90, SD=1.13). Findings also showed that smart phones gave them convenience (mean=3.78, SD=1.12) and sharing of information became easier and more attractive with social/new media (mean=3.58, SD=1.00); however, information through conventional media was still believed to be more reliable than that from new/social media (mean=3.36, SD=1.00). Interestingly, many believed the information through new/social media was dubious. The youth did not agree that currently new/social media provided space for one to express dissatisfaction about current issues on governmental or non-governmental entities (mean=2.97, SD=1.12). Therefore, they believed that they required special space and programmes through new/social media to enable them to participate and give opinions on the

Table 8
Perception of the role of new media and social media

	Activities	Mean	SD
1.	New media is the choice of youth today	3.90	1.13
2.	The use of new media and social media has potential to contribute to the sensitive issues related to religion, culture and race	3.46	1.00
3.	I am more convinced of the truth of information through conventional media	3.18	0.91
4.	The use of smart phones provides convenience in doing work, in getting information and in communicating	3.78	1.12
5.	Conventional media pay less attention to youth	3.04	1.09
6.	Sharing of information becomes easier/more comfortable/more attractive through new media/social	3.58	1.00
7.	Conventional media content is controlled and censored more	3.21	1.00
8.	Much of the information through new/social media is dubious	3.32	1.07
9.	Information through conventional media is more reliable than new/social media	3.36	1.00
10.	Space for youth to voice and provide views through conventional media is limited	3.29	1.03
11.	The cost of using new media is a burden	2.93	1.00
12.	New/social media provide a space for me to express dissatisfaction about current issues to the government or non-government entities	2.97	1.12
13.	I have used new media such as news portals, TV streams (e.g. KiniTV, SelangorTV) and radio streams (e.g. hitz.fm, ikim.fm) to give opinion or receive information	2.69	1.00
14.	Youth in Malaysia require special space and programmes through new/social media to enable them to participate and give opinion on the development of the country	3.26	1.15
15.	Views from youth through new/social media should be recorded and considered before the government/administration makes any decision in developing the country	3.43	1.15

development of the country (mean=3.26, SD=1.15). Their views through new/social media should be recorded and considered before the government/administration makes any decisions on the development of the country (mean=3.43, SD=1.15).

Reliability tests were performed on the three most relevant dimensions on measuring media and participation. The Cronbach Alpha values were all more than 0.8, indicating that the internal consistency or average correlation of items in the survey instrument was high. Table 9 lists all the values.

Table 9
Cronbach Alpha values

Dimension	No of items	Cronbach Alpha
Level of youth participation	14	0.856
Domain of youth participation	13	0.930
Youth perception of media and participation	15	0.834

Shiratuddin, N., Hassan, S., Mohd Sani, M. A., Ahmad, M. K.1, Khalid, K. A., Abdull Rahman, N. L., Abd Rahman, Z. S. and Ahmad, N. S. Y.

Implementation of Instrument and Its Critical Findings

A survey using the developed instrument was conducted in 2015. It involved 1,029 youths from different races, religions and backgrounds from all states in Malaysia. The respondents of the survey represented all age groups of youth as defined in this research, with males numbering 464 and females, 565. As for the respondents' race, most of them were Malay (69.4%) followed by Dusun (6.2%) and Iban (5.6%). As for religion, most were Muslim (81.0%), followed by Christian (12.1%), Buddhist (4.2%) and Hindu (2.5%). The respondents also came from different educational backgrounds, with the majority being in secondary school (41.0%) and university (27.2%). Most of the respondents had four to six family members (52.1%).

Most of the respondents (73.1%) were still receiving formal education at either secondary school or institutes of higher education, while 17.4% of the respondents were already employed. Besides that, the majority of their parents received income between RM 501 and RM 1,000 (21.5%) and income more than RM 4,001 (10.8%). The majority of the respondents (40.9%) lived in low-cost housing areas. The others mostly lived in villages (30.4%).

The findings indicated that most respondents used mobile phones (567) and computers (239) frequently. The result also showed that the importance of conventional media such as TV, newspapers and radio should not be underestimated as a substantial number of the respondents still used them frequently or occasionally.

The respondents also provided feedback regarding the most popular social media they used and their frequency of using them. The results revealed that there were at least seven major social media tools used by the respondents which were Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, WeChat, Google+, and Twitter. Among these, Facebook and WhatsApp were the most popular tools used by respondents, with more than 50% respondents using them frequently.

The respondents use social media for various reasons and purposes. The top five purposes identified were to get in touch with friends and families, to share knowledge and expertise with others, to get information and latest news, to act as a hobby during free time and to build network and meet new friends. Despite slight variations in the results, this finding highlighted the potential role of social media as a tool for the youth to engage in the decision-making process involving social issues, politics and the economy. Two activities received the highest mean scores i.e. sharing current news/information/opinions via social media with family/friends on social/political/economic issues and obtaining information about social/political/economic issues.

All the domains and issues voiced out by the youths sampled in this study were closely related to the national agenda. Economic, political and social issues dominated the outcomes. Under economic issues, youth were concerned about their

quality of life and employment/how to earn a living. Corruption, racial issues and political stability were considered important matters for the government to handle. Drug abuse and health issues were the main concerns discussed by youth.

It could be concluded from the survey findings that the level of participation among the youth in the marginalised communities was low. Figure 1 clearly indicates this (all items are below the occasional level). New media as a means to participation is most welcomed by the youth. The survey respondents agreed that they required a special space and programmes through new/social media to enable them to participate and give their opinion on the development of the country. They also wished that their views through new/social media be recorded and considered by the government/administration in the decision-making process involving the development of the country.
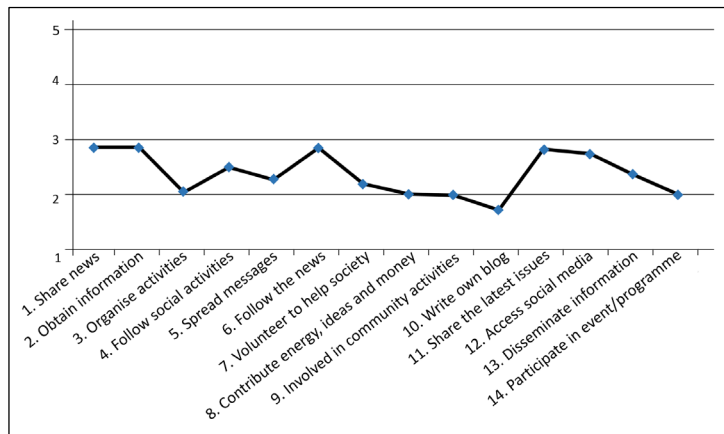

Figure 1. Level of participation

When asked about their web-based skills, the youth listed the following skills, which to them allowed them to voice their opinions:

- use web radio to listen to radio online
- able to download and upload video clips
- know how to share videos
- use Web TV
- post comments and feedback

CONCLUSION

This study attempted to investigate how youth, in particular those who live in the marginalised communities in Malaysia, could contribute more to the decision-making process in nation building. An instrument consisting of three main dimensions was developed and tested. Based on the findings, it is proposed that in measuring media and participation among youth in social and political activities, level of participation, domain of participation and

youth perception of media and participation should be included.

Youth in Malaysia have been showing a tendency for their voice to be heard through the increase in youth participation in new media. In providing a specific platform for youth to participate, a platform for youth, called 'Y4M: Youth for Malaysia' (www.youth4malaysia.com.), was developed. This platform is dedicated to Malaysian youth for the sharing of issues affecting them in order to learn from one another. In other words, they have a platform that is able to relay their opinions regarding issues affecting them. Their views can be published in three web broadcasting features: web TV, web radio and web journalism.

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