

The Influence of Social Media, Social Engagement and Volunteerism Towards University's Youth Leadership Participation in East Coast, Malaysia: A Conceptual Paper

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Abstract: Youth leadership is teens practicing themselves on how to be a leader and how they can use their authority or power to influence other people. Youth has the potential in which they can easily gain skills and knowledge necessary to lead civic engagement, education reform, community organizing activities and others. However, through careful observation, we can see that Malaysian youth does not actively participate in leadership activities. They behave like that because they have less trust and support to be a leader from the people around them. This conceptual study aims to analyze the influence of social media, social engagement and volunteerism towards university's youth leadership participation in East Coast, Malaysia. This study intends to adopt a quantitative survey by use of questionnaires and a cluster sampling method to collect data. University students age 18-25 year are the target population for the present study. The result of this study will help communities and government in handling issues regarding the youth generation in Malaysia.

Key words: Participation, leadership, youth, social media, social engagement, volunteerism

INTRODUCTION

Youth leadership is teens practising themselves on how to be a leader and how they can use their authority or power to influence other people. They can influence others and create strong and healthy communities (Wheeler and Roach, 2005). Youth has the potential in which they can easily gain skills and knowledge necessary to lead civic engagement, education reform, community organizing activities and others.

Besides that, youth themselves is unique and they always have creative solutions to every problems and discussion. They can creatively respond to the needs and demands of society and also to the global trends of human development (Aymoldanovna *et al.*, 2015). Other than that, participation in leadership activities can strengthen the social development of young people and prepare them in a democratic society (Checkoway and Schuster, 2003).

However, through careful observation, we can see that Malaysian youth does not actively participate in leadership activities such as election campaign in the campus and they also do not volunteer themselves to be a class representative. They prefer to do their own work rather than go to the voting place. Why this type of problem occurs? They behave like that because they have

less trust and support to be a leader from the people around them such as teachers, government, parents and their own best friend or classmates. Wheeler and Roach (2005) stated that barring young people from community engagement disregards the gifts and assets they bring to the society.

Leadership skills should be nurtured from a young age. Parents and teachers play a big role in this situation to create awareness to youth about the importance of leadership for the future. Therefore, to build their leadership spirit, community and also government need to collaborate with young people to realize them about how important they are to the society and country (Wheeler and Roach, 2005).

In addition, leadership awareness also can be created through social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Wechat instagram and Twitter. Youth usually spent mostly their free time with social networking activities (Hamat *et al.*, 2012). Through the web survey done by Park *et al.* (2009). show that youth usually use social media for socializing, entertainment, self-status seeking and to search the information. So, the government can use this method to approach young people to gain their vote or anything else. According to Muniandy and Muniandy, (2013), Malaysian have the highest average number of friends on the social network in the world. Even though

youth actively participate online, they may lack communication skills and ethics due to less involve in society activities. Malaysian spending half of their day on online activities and they are more prefer to communicate with their cyberspace friends and ignored people around them. They attempt to substitute the real world relationship with cyberspace relationship.

Statement of problem: According to Safurah Abd Jalil social media influenced youth in communication, entertainment, language and learning. They spent more time on social networking sites than their academic (Fardoun *et al.*, 2012). On the other hand, exciting with the electronic gadget and instant communication increase the number of obesity in Malaysia (Cheng, 2013). Do you think youth will participate with leadership with that body? They will feel tired although with limited movement. To be a good leader and influence people, youth should care about their health first. Social media limit the physical activities among youth. Some studies have suggested that modern information and communication technologies have made it easier for individuals to become socially engaged in more distant or virtual communities and thus have decreased their involvement in local communities.

It denied that social media give benefit to youth such as information and sometimes give useful resources. Social media make our daily life easier but it also creates problems when we do not handle it well. Social media make human relationship become further and further when they only care about their cyberspace friends compare with their real friends (Muniandy and Muniandy, 2013). Youth always busy with their smartphones or tablet and ignoring their parents. Youth also prefers to use their social account like WhatsApp and Wechat rather than face-to-face communication (Lim *et al.*, 2013). This issue creates a problem when youth elope with their new cyberspace's friends and become worse when they are invited to join a bad group like IS and others. In class, they are busy tapping and tapping their smartphone and do not focus on what the teachers or lecturers teach or explain.

Therefore, this study examined the possible effect of social media, social engagement and volunteerism on youth leader's participation because nowadays youth more easily influenced by their daily activities. Most youth prefer to spend their time with social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp and many more but only some of them prefer to engage with communities and volunteer in charity programs or others. The closest study is by

Udensi *et al.* (2013) which examined youth participation in community development programmes in Cross River State in Nigeria, Muniandy and Muniandy (2013) which analyse the impact of social media in social and political aspects in Malaysia, Allam *et al.* (2012) which examined news media exposure and political participation among youth in Malaysia and Skoric (2011) which examined the influence of Facebook and video games towards youth political participation in Singapore.

Also, this study examined mediating effect of intention to be a leader on the relationship between social media, social engagement, volunteerism and participation. The mediator is introduced because intentions are assumed to capture the motivational factors that influence a behavior; they are indications of how hard people are willing to try or how much of an effort they are planning to exert in order to perform the behavior. As a general rule, the stronger the intention to engage in behavior, the more likely should be its performance (Ajzen, 1991).

Research questions: In order to examine the relationship between social media, social engagement, volunteerism and youth's leadership participation in Malaysia, this study tried to answer the following questions:

- Does social media influences youth's leadership participation?
- Does social engagement influences youth's leadership participation?
- Does volunteerism influences youth's leadership participation?
- Does intention to be a leader influence youth's leadership participation?
- Do social media, social engagement and volunteerism influences youth's intention to be a leader?
- Does intention to be a leader positively mediate the relationship between social media, social engagement and volunteerism with youth's leadership participation?

Research objectives: The specific objectives of this study, derived from the identified research gap in the literature were stated as follows:

- To examine the relationship between social media, social engagement, volunteerism and youth's participation
- To examine the relationship between social media, social engagement, volunteerism and youth's intention to be a leader

- To investigate the relationship between intention to be a leader and youth's participation
- To determine whether intention to be a leader mediate the relationship between social media, social engagement, volunteerism and youth's leadership participation

Scope of study: This study focuses on all university students (age 18-25 year) in East Coast, Malaysia. This would cover all youth groups in Malaysia. Yunus consider youth's employability in Malaysia within age 18-25, Colby consider young adults in community decision-making within 18-24 age range in Lincoln, consider young people between age 15-24 year in Canada also consider youth age between 15-24 in Nigeria.

Literature review

Introduction: In order to understand the youth's leadership participation, the previous researchers have relied on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB); Hamzah *et al.* (2015), leadership theory (Azam *et al.*, 2012). Although, this study only focused on intention behaviour not to actual behaviour but these theories also are very useful for the researcher to conduct this study.

Theory of planned behaviour: TPB created by Ajzen is an expansion of the Theory Reasoned Action (TRA) 1980. These theory use basic assumptions that human behave with knowing the way and consider all information that is available. In TRA, Ajzen (1991) stated that a person can do or not to do something depend on intention by that person. Intention influenced by the attitude towards behavior and subjective norms.

In TPB, Ajzen put in perceived behavioral control. This construct taken in to understand the barrier by individual to carry out particular behavior. In other words, things that carried out not just depend on attitude towards behavior and subjective norms only but also individual's perceptions towards control and their confidence towards that control (control beliefs). In easy words, Ajzen adds an individual background factor into perceived behavioral control.

Theoretical framework: The focus of this study is to examine the relationship between social media, social engagement, volunteerism and participation, mediated by intention to leadership. The study developed a theoretical framework which is mostly linked to Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Variables in TPB that will be adapting as factors in this study are attitude toward the

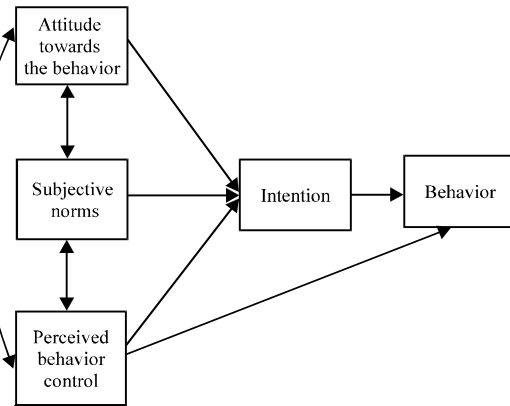


Fig. 1: Theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991)

behaviour substitute with social media, subjective norms replaced with social engagement and perceived behavioural control replaced with volunteerism. Attitude towards behaviour is assessment towards something whether it is positive or negative. Subjective norms are individual external factor (Fig. 1).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research design: This study developed a theoretical model in an attempt to study the mediating influence of intention to be a leader on the relationship between social media, social engagement and volunteerism with leadership participation among university students in East Coast, Malaysia. It is also a descriptive study because sample respondents from the youths would be studied at a given point in time and the results analyzed statistically. As such, sample surveys would be adopted in an attempt to describe the population's characteristics as shown in the research questions, research objectives and hypotheses.

For this study, the independent variables were selected based on Ajzen (1991) theory of planned behaviour. These independent variables had been used by previous studies (Al-Rahmi and Othman, 2013; Mergner, 2009; Pandian, 2014) according to their research objectives while the dependent variable was selected in line with the model and previous studies (Farland and Thomas, 2006; Mergner, 2009) and the mediator in line with (Ajzen, 1991).

Population and sample: The population for this study would be all university's students (age 18-25) from Public Universities in East Coast, Malaysia. Therefore, the study would adopt a cluster sampling method. Then, simple random sampling would be applied on each institution's sample members to select the sample elements (student's, age 18-25).

Data collection: This study intends to adopt a quantitative survey by use of the questionnaires. Therefore, university's students (age 18-25) are the target population for the present study. The researcher will spend three weeks to collect the data and if the data is not in expectation the researcher will back up the data by creating the online questionnaires using Google form. The researcher will extend the duration time in one more week.

The respondents are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time in the middle of the study without any adverse effect. No incentive will be given to respondents and thus all respondents are volunteers. The questionnaire would be framed in bilingual which are simple English language and Malay language.

Analysis of data: The data would be processed using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) 22.0 and SmartPLS 3.0. The SPSS 22.0 will be used to code and save the data and the SmartPLS Software will be used to analyze the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Social media: Social media is a term used to characterize an assortment of arranged devices or advancements that underscore the social parts of the internet as a channel for correspondence, content-sharing and coordinated effort, and inventive expression and is frequently compatible with the terms Web 2.0 and social programming.

Perception by other people whether they are agreed or not by something that he or she carried out). Perceived behavioural control is confidence on factors that facilitate or prevent to do something.

Relating these theories to this present study, theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) stipulated that a person can act upon intention only if he having control towards behaviour. Volunteerism factor in the theoretical framework of this study also linked to theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Therefore, the mediator (Intention to be a leader) is well linked to the Theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) (Fig. 2).

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Boulianne (2015) used a meta-analysis of current research on the effect of social media use towards participation in civic and political life. He examined 36 studies and the results showed that social media has a

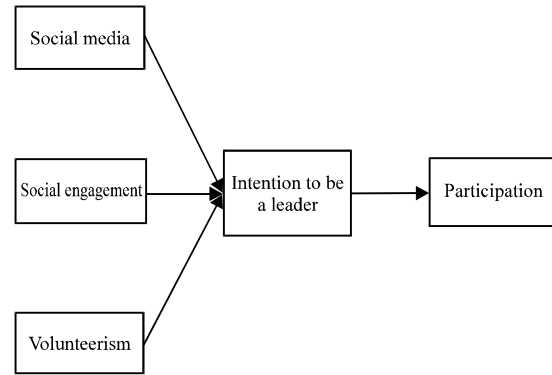


Fig. 2: Theoretical framework (adapted from theory of planned behavior) (Ajzen, 1991)

minimal impact on participation in an election campaign. Means that the increase in the use of social media did not affect people's possibility of voting and participating in the campaign. This is because social media such as Facebook have limited effect and low-quality content towards political knowledge and participation.

Social media have various of benefit and also negative side depends on the way we use it. Government can use social media as a platform to influence youth to participate in leadership activities such as campaign and others but we cannot ensure that this method is useful without the support from communities. This is because, youth usually depends on their parent's permission to join such activities. They also totally influenced by their peers to join almost all activities together.

Social engagement: Social engagement is identified with support in collective exercises which fortifies social capital and social norms. Key elements of social engagement incorporate movement (accomplishing something), connection (no less than two individuals should be included in this action), social trade (the action includes giving or accepting something from others) and lack of compulsion (there is no outside force forcing a person to participate in the action).

Anderson and Kim (2009) used questionnaire to solicit responses from 284 students from the Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences on the perceptions of and preferences for leadership development by students enrolled in a comprehensive urban agriculture program. Study showed that the average respondent was involved in a limited number of school associations and no group associations and got the chance to learn and practice leadership skills most as often as possible through sports, work and others. They preferred training to occur within their school, through national workshops or by international experiences.

As mention before, youth will not participate in leadership activities without support from their family, friends and communities but they themselves should have interest to join that program. They need to do first step to joining social activities such as volunteer in helping flood victims and much more.

Volunteerism: Volunteerism is the standard of giving time and energy for the advantage of other people in the group as a social obligation instead of for any money related prize. Volunteering should not be exploitative or be utilized to supplant paid job (Hart *et al.*, 2007).

Using a purposive sample of 5-12th grade students at 14 different sites in one midwestern state in the United States, Morrissey and Wilson (2005) found a positive relationship between out-of-school activities and positive youth development. Participate in volunteer activities will increased respect for others increased sympathy, improvement of leadership skills and a better understanding of citizenship. These behaviours appear to carry over into adulthood.

When youth already participate in volunteerism programs, they also have the highest chance to participate in leadership program. This is because they will have the intention to join such program in order to achieve their own goal and others. This type of youth have a motivation to help people in needs.

Intention to be a leader: Intention is states of mind that direct attention, experience and action toward something and we determined to get it no matter what happen (Bird, 1988). Intention is an important element in several actions which showed someone's thoughts condition ordered to act that can actually or could not be accomplished and ordered whether to act now or in the future (Ajzen, 1991).

Intention therefore appears to be a better factor of predictability of the behaviour than attitudes, belief and other psychological or sociological variables (Krueger and Carsrud, 1993). It means that attitudes and beliefs predict intention than in turn predicts behaviour. There are three well known intention model which are Bird's intention-based model, Shapero's Model and Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour.

Intention is the most important factor in this study because without an intention, youth will not make their first move in joining the leadership activities.

Participation: Participation is a person's involvement in a life situation. Elsewhere, further clarification shows that the definition of participation includes the concept of involvement which may further be defined as taking part,

being included or engaged in an area of life, being acknowledged or having admittance to required assets (Coster and Khetani, 2008).

In this study, researcher want to know about the influence of social media, social engagement and volunteerism towards youth leadership participation. Youth will not participate in leadership without the influence of social media such as Facebook instagram and Twitter; social engagement by their parents, friends, teachers and communities; their own awareness to volunteer in social activities and youth's intention to participate in leadership activities.

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