

YOUTH POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION: CAMPUS POLITICAL LEADER

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Malaysian had experienced campus political phenomenon with the involvement of student's demonstration, riot, political campaign, street demonstration and involvement in opposition party as started in 1960' and early 1970'. Such phenomenon created political changes in many countries not only in Malaysia. At the same time, it also influenced students to contribute to the stability and diversity of the current political landscape. These factors have led to the youth political socialization as a process of acculturation among university students. Furthermore the political participation of the young generation will act as a role in modelling the political culture of the country in the future. The article attempts to discuss on the political socialization of youth by focusing on campus political phenomenon. In addition, the experiences of campus political phenomenon among Malaysian university students resulted from the introduction of University and University College Act 1971 (AUKU 1971) will be analysed. To achieve the objectives, author will apply a library based research in the legal research methodology by highlighting and analysing the existence of literatures in political socialization among youth and their participation in the campus political phenomenon in Malaysia in line with AUKU 1971. Based on the discussion, it is to be highlighted that throughout the process of socialization, a leader is to be born from the good political environment and attitudes which will bring changes to future generation.

Keywords: youth, University students, political socialization, AUKU 1971.

I. INTRODUCTION

University is a place of higher education. Thus, students in the university are an exclusive group of people getting higher education to be an educated person and trained as future leader. They are groomed to be innovative and progressive future leaders. Thus, at the university level, students are exposed to various issues, ideas and thoughts from different political parties either in the university or outside the university. As student, they will be exposed to different mind-set. In recent years, political issues involving the students sparked a phenomenon that can be quite alarming. The arrest of several students who were involved in certain political parties to hold protests, strikes, student's demonstration, riot, political campaign, street demonstration and involvement in opposition party have sparked widespread publicity among the Malaysian society. In fact, this phenomenon has led to positive construction of youth political scenario as a leader in the future. Such phenomenon created a political change to current Malaysian political landscape.

Based on the general age of youth, a group of teen-youth around 15 to 24 are among the majority people in Malaysia (Ismail, *et al*, 2016 & United Nations). Although there a conflicts to conclude the definite age of youth in which some of

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the scholars categorized it at the age of 15-30 (Tuan Pah Rokiah, 2016 & Ministry of Youth and Sports), not less than 15 and not more than 40 years old (Section 2 of Youth Societies and Youth Development Act 2007 & National Youth Development Policy), the percentage of youth among Malaysian population carries the largest number of population in Malaysia amounts to 18 million (Ahmad, *et al*, 2015). This group should be given an attention and developed holistically for the future of the country, particularly in the national politics agenda.

II. YOUTH POLITICAL SOCIALIZATIONS

The fact of youth involvement in politics is dominant if it is associated with the process of acculturation gained throughout their lives. The acculturation is a process of forming the political orientation to encourage their involvement in politics. However, the level of involvement and perceptions of young generations in politics may be different based on their political influences and political socializations.

According to David F. Aberle (1961) in his book 'Culture and Socialization', political socialization is clearly defined as 'the patterns of social action or aspects of human behavior and skills which is instilled in each individuals (including knowledge), motivations and attitudes that needs to demonstrates the human characters that are now anticipated (and continues) throughout the standard human life, as far as the new roles still need to be learned '. In addition, Gabriel A. Almond (1963) also suggests that political socialization is a process wherein political attitudes and patterns of political behavior acquired or formed, and also a demand for a generation to deliver features and beliefs of politics for the next young generation. This situation is reflected as a period of developing attitudes and political orientation based on the political phenomenon being experienced in a country (Carey, 2016). While Mohd Mahadee *et al* (2016) took the view that political socialization is a process of learning experiences of youth life. In the process, they will learn indirectly about the culture, customs, values and behavior from an individual or group of people in relation to the political affairs as well as their own experiences and journey in life (Judith Moeller & Claes de Vreese, 2013 & Bender, 1967).

Political socialization process gives an impression as when someone has been introduced to a political system exists in this world as well as their response to it. Such processes start at the early stages of youth during childhood. Children at the early stage are introduced to the values and attitudes which are practiced by people surrounding them and at the same time, their influences will strongly impact and affect their understanding of the political system (Healy, A., & Malhotra, N. (2013). At this stage, youth have gone through a process known as 'cultural transformation' where a lot of changes occur in life from time to time. It starts from the childhood turns into an adult. Usually, children get the first-hand experience on the political issues typically from parents and siblings, the closest person in their life. Children's

understanding on the political influences is said to shape their understanding on the political issues (Ellen Quintelier, *et al*, 2007). Children are more likely to adopt their family's political views especially when politics is significant to the parents, and the children of politically engaged parents are potentially becoming politically engaged adults (Dinas, 2014).

However, Ellen Quintelier, *et al* (2007) also suggests that there are also other factors which affect children's political influences (Wasburn & Covert, 2017) such as education in schools, peer groups, the influence of external social and mass media than the parents (Judith Moeller & Claes de Vreese, 2013, Nam Jin Lee *et al*, 2012, Ron Warren and Robert H. Wicks, 2011, Vesa Koskimaa & Lauri Rapeli, 2015, Mohd Fauzi, 2015). During childhood, most of the children's times are spent in school together with the peers and teachers. At the stage, children will learn a lot of experiences in life. It is a process of transmission from childhood to adulthood (Constance Flanagan and Peter Levine, 2010), Amnå, E., Ekström, *et al*, 2009).

In fact, the process in political socialization offers the hope that the younger generation will actively participate in political engagements from the day they were born. Thus, the socializing agents which normally involve in youth political socializations such as parental influences, media, education with peer influencing factors that will lead future thinking and attitudes among youth to involve in politics.

(A) Parental influences

Parental influence on political issues to children is very strong in which the political stands and views of the parents on any political issues will grow into their children's option too (Sydney Verba *et al*, 2003 and Sihabuddin Zuhri, 2010). Children are first socialized at home with their family with parents in such a view influencing the choice of the children's' political view (MA, O., & ADT, T., 1969). In fact, parent's relationships with the children involve long term inter-personal influence. In such a situation, parents will automatically applying their dominant position as parent to the children also known as 'social construction of reality' (Acock, & Bengtson, 1980). According to Ellen Quintelier, *et al* (2007), parental influences give major impacts to the children's understanding and attitudes on the political perception. They start everything from a very early stage in which parents can be considered as socializing agents as youth inspiration and motivation in engaging and understanding into the politics agenda.

(B) Media

Media has also been identified as key changes in political phenomenon in which it plays an important role engaging a political socialization among younger generation (Östman, 2014, Amirfarhangi *et al*, 2016). According to Montgomery (2004) and Zukin, C. (2006) media is one of the main agents other than the influence of parents, school and peer movement (Steven H. Chaffee *et al*, 1970, Eveland, W., *et al*,

(1998) which became the cause among the younger generation to express their tendency in politics because the media into a channel that is closest and pleasure achieved by the young when-when the time and everywhere. According the Jay G. Blumler & Dennis Kavanagh (1999), in the third age of political communication, media is considered as one of the influence and features of an approachable method of political communication system. Furthermore, the changing of a new media environment has led to evolution of digital communication by the introduction of instant messages, blogging and social networking (Lee *et al*, 2013).

It is undeniable not to refuse the importance of the sophisticated technologies of current us of media environment. Thus, it is a need for the recent practice to cope on how to communicate with the young generation related to their political socialization as it shows the strong relation between the use of social media and the young political influences (Xenos, *et al*, 2014[30], Judith Moeller & Claes de Vreese, 2013). According to Judith Moeller, *et al* (2014), youth are applying the social media as their direct interactivity among them in sharing and distributing news. By doing so, they are directly and actively participating in the communication process of political information. In addition, these are the group, who are having a skill or searching, reading, interacting, creating and distributing political messages. Internet has become the main channel of information compared to the usual mainstream primary media such as news, newspaper and academic articles.

According to Noor Azma (2014), social channels are increasing and became the highest rating among the younger generation. The emergence of social network's such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp have become their daily meal especially the young students. Their tendency in receiving the latest information relating to the phenomenon of contemporary issues in politics, conflicts are at their fingertips. The truth as to the fact is to be assumed without doubt. In fact, internet *also* can be the greatest medium to take part with the younger generation especially to pinpoint their political concern (Allam, 2010).

(C) Education

According to Stuart B. Palonsky (1987), school is considered as one of the recent conceptions of political socialization where a view of political learning has been developed in the school. Children at school accept the political phenomenon as it is. However, based on the influential factors, they are trying to react by not only accepting it directly, to reconstruct it or to remake it with their own aim and target. Thus, the students are creating while developing their own perception and understanding on the political perspectives by experiencing it through the process of learning and teaching. There was a view regarding the needs of education as one of the components that produce a good young generations to participate in politics. In fact, person with higher education has more influences of partaking in the political sectors as compared to the lower level of education (Heather K. Evans, 2009).

The higher level of education is evidence that the individual is getting involved in politics. In fact, the level of groups in which youth who attend colleges and youth who are not attending colleges will experience reflect a different advantages and opportunities (Constance Flanagan, 2010). He also agreed that an education institution is a central for political engagement of younger generations. Furthermore, this group of person will realize the political influenced to their life as they are able to compute all the information of political processes, the competency of the political actors and the rule of political game which are written anywhere (Sihabuddin Zuhri. 2010). In the realm of education, teaching and learning system can be observed through the syllabus and contents of the courses. The level of education of a person is able to influence the student youth involvement in political socialization (Mohd. Fauzi, 2015; Worran *et al*, 2008).

III. POLITICS IN CAMPUS: THE EMERGENCE OF AUKU 1971

Minority of the youth are likely to be directly involved to engage in politics by becoming a leader at the university level, while some other may only indirectly participated as supporters to the existing leadership. Marshelayanti, *et al* (1985) suggests that there are two forms of political participation, namely conventional and unconventional. If the engagement includes regular activities such as voters respond to campaign or a member of any political party is regarded as a form of participation in a conventional form. As for example, there are some universities require the involvement of the students' campus politics that oblige them to vote (Mohd. Fauzi, 2015). Failure to do so, no marks will be given to them (Junaidi Awang Besar *et al*, 2015) and at the same time, the penalty is banning them and prohibited them to be enrolled for the next semester (Mohd. Fauzi, 2015).

For example, a group of youth fails to observe their voting right in electing the country's leaders (Harbans S. Gill *et al*, 2012) based on the presumption that their participation is not required. In fact, by participating in the election as voters show their political phenomenon in which youth has right to elect their choice of leader as gazetted in the Election Act 1958 whereby every citizen at the age of 21 years old, registered as a voter had enabled them to participate in elections as voters. The goal of youth involvement at the university level is to introduce and familiarize them in community to participate in politics (Joseph Chinyong Liow, 2011 and Mamat, *et al*, 2015). In 1960's to 1970', there was no specific law which prohibits political involvement of youth as long as it should be consistent with the University and University Colleges Act 1971 (AUKU) which was introduced by the government to control the political scenarios among university students to the extent under the permission by the university (Junaidi Awang Besar *et al*, 2015).

Based on the article written by Ngai, J. L. H., *et al*, (2010), AUKU was introduced in 1971 and enacted with the consent of Yang Di Pertuan Agong 27th April 1971 under the purview of the Ministry of Higher Education. As accordance

to the introduction of AUKU 1971, student organizations, student's activities and movement based on the slogan '*no student and no organization, body or group shall organize, conduct or participate in any off-campus activities...*' has been made clearly to all University and University College as a restriction and prohibition to the students from participating in off-campus political activities (Mohd. Fauzi, & Ku Hasnita, 2015). In contrast, there was disagreement among the youth in the campuses itself whereby the policies imposed to them are too strict and constrained the freedom of leadership training and skill and their right to involve in politics especially at the age of 21 years old (Berita Harian, 2008). In fact, AUKU 1971 was introduced during the Tun Mahathir's period as a Minister of Higher Education. According to him, the introduction was based on the justification to prevent students from actively participating in the political involvement that will cause them to neglect their studies. Furthermore, he further added that majority who involved in the politics at the time was among the Malay and thus had caused them to neglect their study. However, AUKU 1971 was then amended in 1975. The amendment has provided better flexibility rather than too much restriction as to the political participation among university students. Based on the said amendment, one of Malaysian public university, Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) always encourages their students to voice out their political views and they will not be banned from the university as long as applying it through the legal channels. Students were allowed to indulge in politics in a legal way as long as it is within the authorization of the university for example by participating in peaceful demonstration (Daily Express, 2014).

Again, in 2009 an amendment was made to permit the university students to participate in outside campus activities in relation to Non-Government Organization (NGO). In 2012, the latest amendment was again made to AUKU. Based on the amendments, sections 15 (1), (2) and (3) had been amended in which allows students to participate freely in out campus politics in contrary with the prior to section 15 (before amendment in 2012) which totally banned student to direct or indirectly involve with outside organization (Mohd. Fauzi, & Ku Hasnita, 2015). According to the heading of Section 15, an amendment was made by substituting the previous section 15 the following section: "Activities of students or students' society, organization, body or group. Section 15 (1) Subject to subsection (2), a student of the University may become a member of any society, organization, body or group of persons, whether in or outside Malaysia, including any political party. A student of the University shall not (a) become a member of any unlawful society, organization, body or group of persons, whether in or outside Malaysia; (b) become a member of any society, organization, body or group of persons, not being a political party, which the Board determines to be unsuitable to the interests and well-being of the students or the University; (c) stand for election to or hold any post in any society, organization, body or group of students in the Campus if the

student holds any post in a political party; or (d) be involved in political party activities within the Campus (AUKU 2017 (Amendment 2012)).

IV. CAMPUS POLITICAL LEADERS BASED ON YOUTH POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

Student only has three or four years depending on their period of study in the university. The period is not a long term period as student. Political socialization is an ongoing process begins from child to adult. The teaching and learning process at the university level indicate key factors to influence and give impact to their political attitudes. During the period, student has the opportunity to engage in activities such as to involve in any kind of association, movement, engage with communities and so on. In the meantime, student has limited time to focus on their study and examination as their major concern as student. Thus, during the period as student should be granted as their freedom to participate in the political activities as provided under the amendment of Section 15 (5) of AUKU 1971 (Amendment 2012) in which it states that the University shall regulate the activities of students and a society, an organization, a body or group of students of the University within the Campus. It shows that students are allowed to participate themselves in politics while in campus without any hesitation within the control from the university.

In fact, there was a claim that youth political participation in campuses cannot be considered as a major motivation for their real involvement in formal political life. In the contrary, it seems to be agreed that such an earlier participation while studying will advantage them to build up their level of confidence, their earlier exposure with the reality of life, fearless, public speaking and other leadership skills. This earlier stage is very important to act as a training session to be a future leader. The political socialization will determine their political perception in influencing their reaction towards the reality of political phenomenon. In political socialization, it is a method to be applied in which the community will channel the political culture adopted by one party to another party. At this stage, it is more towards a process of learning. Based on the above discussion, the political socialization is also a stereotype of political influence. In such a case, all surrounding people, perceptions, upbringing, thinking, technologies and knowledge are considered factors that socialized the youth political participation. What they acknowledged from one party to the other party, from generation to another generation and from one individual to another individual. Factors that contributed to the civilizing influence in political socialization processes involve several parties especially their childhood life with family and parental influences, education and mass media. It is a habit from home and lesson to be learnt from school. Thus, the socializing agents act in a different way to reach the same target in producing a good leader to be born.

At the university level, it has been a practice in Malaysian universities to elect student leaders through a voting process. Indirectly, as mentioned above, it is a conventional form of political involvement in campus either as candidates or as voters. In such situation, they are been exposed at an early stage. It is agreeable view to be supported that youth political involvement in campus is a strategic educational process. In contrast, with real political scenario, the leaders have to focus on the administrative levels from various aspects including social, economy and power management. Thus, the situation shows how the political socialization comes into picture and the importance of such socialization toward the development of the Malaysian political culture. Furthermore, a good leader is characterized by their upbringing of political influences and socialization throughout their life.

V. CONCLUSION

Youth political involvement and understanding towards the political participation will bring changes to the country's participation in the general elections and it must be seriously taken by the youth. Thus, it is very important to allow youth political involvement while in campus life. There should not be there any limitations or restrictions to youth political participation while they are in campus life. Thus, university has to act in fairly by allowing students to engage in political matters either internal or external, in campus or outside campus. However, the permission granted cannot be underestimated by youth in which the university still has discretionary power to take actions if it is seems fit to do so in such a case where the youth political participation has gone beyond the control as mandated by the amendment of Section 15 of AUKU. University will act in fairly to allow youth political participation in such a sense it will give more benefits and advantages to the university and at the same time to the students. University is a place where leader is to be born.

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