



General Election 15th: Analysis the Tendency of Voters at Peninsular Malaysia

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Full Paper

Article history

Received

24 July 2023

Received in revised form

24 July 2023

Accepted

11 August 2023

Published online

30 September 2023

Abstract

This research purposely has been done to determine the tendency of voters of the 15th General Election at Peninsular Malaysia. The characteristics of voters analyze in this research included the early voters, voters aged 18-20 years old, the total number of voters at each parliamentary seats, races and average gross income of the voters. However, this research has only taken into consideration the parliamentary seats won by Perikatan Nasional (PN) and Pakatan Harapan (PH) as the biggest coalition won the seats at Peninsular Malaysia. The analysis is dependent to the data from government agencies' website which are Suruhanjaya Pilihan Raya Malaysia (SPR) and Department of Statistics Malaysia Committee (DOSM). The data has been analyze using SPSS Statistical Software (SPSS) by computing the significance level and the relationship between the chosen Member of Parliaments and the characteristics of the voters. From this research, the parliamentary seats won by each coalition is significantly influenced by all characteristics mentioned above except the percentage of early voters. This research is important as the 15th General Election shows an unexpected political situation which no coalition can simply form a government. It then led to the unstable political environment which also impact the performance of the country. Hence, the analysis of the voters' characteristics is important to discover what is the reason led to the result of the election.

Keywords: 15th General election, Perikatan Nasional, Pakatan Harapan, Peninsular Malaysia

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1. Introduction

Since the inauguration of the Federation of Malaysia in 16th September 1963, the unique multiracial country had witnessed over fifteen general elections in six decades. Malaysia is a constitutional monarchy practicing a Westminster-style parliamentary system comprising thirteen states and three federal territories. It has a bicameral legislature consisting of 70 members of the Upper House Representatives or Senate (Dewan Negara) called as senator and 222 members of the Lower House Representatives (Dewan Rakyat) called as member of parliament (MP). All senators are appointed for a term of three years and renewable at once. 26 of them were elected by their respective thirteen State Legislative Assemblies (Dewan Undangan Negeri), 4 were appointed representing three Federal Territories (2 for Kuala

Lumpur and one each for Labuan and Putrajaya), while the remaining 40 were appointed by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong on the advice of the Prime Minister. Any dissolution of the Parliament does not affect the senators and Dewan Negara.

In terms of Dewan Rakyat, the total number of 222 members of parliament representing each constituency in contrast, are not going through direct appointment but shall be elected in the contested General Election (Pilihanraya Umum).

The state of Sarawak composes the largest number of parliamentary seats of 31 seats whereas the state of Perlis composes the least number of seats of only 3. The Federal Constitution 1957, as the supreme law of the land requires a general election to be conducted every five years to enable the people to exercise their rights of voting with the Suruhanjaya Pilihanraya (SPR) acted as

the governing authority. Any vacancy of a member of parliament's seat due to the death, resignation or disqualification of the incumbent member requires an immediate by-election to be held. However, if such tenure is remaining less than two years and will not affect the ruling party or coalition, the seat will be left vacant until the next general election.

In general, there are various factors which may affect the outcome of a general election. Among the factors are the influence of the social media Sani & Azizuddin (2014), the malappropriation of electoral districts favoring the ruling party Ostwald (2013), the role of credible personalities in regime transitions Abdullah (2018), the reform agenda of a new government, the primacy of identity politics, the continuity of many policies that address ethnic relations, the voters' turnout rate, the demography and rate of predominant ethnic voters in a constituency. Besides, according to Chin (2018), the local factors and state nationalism are also one of the main factors influencing a general election.

The 15th General Election was arguably the most dynamic, unanticipated and competitive election in Malaysian history with no political coalition succeed to prove a resounding simple and clear majority for the first time ever. With the previous mandate expired on 10th October 2022 following the dissolution of the parliament by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Abdullah of Pahang upon the requisition of the Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob, the 15th general election was held on Saturday, 19th November 2022. It was highly hoped to end the prolonged political instability over the past two and half years with the changes of the ruling coalition party and the sworn-in of two Prime Ministers. According to the Suruhanjaya Pilihanraya, the 15th General Election recorded voters' turnout rate at 73.89%. In Peninsular Malaysia, the 15th General Election was widely contested by three dominant political coalitions of Pakatan Harapan led by Anwar Ibrahim, Perikatan Nasional led by Muhyiddin Yassin and Barisan Nasional led by Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

This paper reviews and analyses several characteristics of voters in the 15th general election recently commenced particularly in Peninsular Malaysia. The comparison between the coalition of Pakatan Harapan dan Perikatan Nasional was made by the researchers as the two had secured the highest number of 142 winning seats with 71 seats each. This amounted to 63.9% of the total number of seats nationwide. The objective of this study is to highlight several factors influencing the outcome of the 15th General Election result in term of early voters, 18-20 years old group of voters, number of voters in a constituent, number of Chinese voters, number of Indian voters, number of Bumiputera voters and voter's average gross income. Throughout this highlight, it was hoped that readers will be able to acknowledge and consider the relevant factors affecting the 15th General Election result.

2. Literature Review

The Pakatan Harapan (PH) is a political coalition formed in 2015 to succeed the previous Pakatan Rakyat (PR). The coalition initially consist of Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR), Parti Tindakan Demokratik (DAP), Parti Peribumi Bersatu Malaysia (BERSATU), Parti Amanah Negara (AMANAH) and several other parties. Since winning the landslide and unprecedented result in the 14th General Election by ending the six-decades reign of Barisan Nasional (BN), the coalition had lost its' power and majority at the federal level following the sudden resignation of the then Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad.

It is then led to the departure of the Parti Peribumi Bersatu Malaysia (BERSATU) and 11 members of parliament from Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) from the coalition in February 2020

The Perikatan Nasional (PN) is a political coalition formed in early 2020 comprising the Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (BERSATU), Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS) and Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (GERAKAN) with the intention of replacing the ruling coalition of Pakatan Harapan.

Since it is not mandatory for everyone to exercise and cast their vote in a general election, the voter's turnout rates are indeed playing a major and significant influence on the electoral outcome. The 13th General Election has recorded the highest voters' turnout rate in Malaysian history with the rate of 84.8%. The rate however is considered relatively low after being compared with the voting age, total of population and the number of eligible voters according to Hua et al., (2021). There are various factors affecting a general election. According to William (2014), the candidates' personal attributes, the state of economy and finance of country and the evaluation of the performance of the political leader may influence the way an individual vote at the ballot box. Apart from that, the factors may also include the voter's background and identification with the candidates, party identification and view of the incumbent's previous performance based on Ashley (2014), findings.

In Malaysia, the racial and ethnic based politics are well alive and widely significant to the outcome of the general election. In the 13th General Election, the results aggravated the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) as the coalition had unprecedentedly lost its popular votes to Pakatan Harapan's forerunner, Pakatan Rakyat. Pakatan Rakyat who secured 51 percent of total federal votes and denied Barisan Nasional of two-third majority of the federal seats however only managed to gain 40 percent of parliamentary representation due to the excessive gerrymandering and malapportionment of constituencies. Out of 222 of the Dewan Rakyat seats, Barisan Nasional had a comfortable majority of 133 seats, a reduction of only 5 seats from the previous election. Despite of this, the Prime Minister Najib Razak blamed the "Chinese Tsunami" by citing the racial politics and opposition by the Chinese ethnic as the reason for the election's

unconvincing victory (The Edge, 2013).

However, this is not the sole factor influencing such performance. According to Ng et al., (2015), urbanisation was the other factor influencing the 13th General Election outcome as the Pakatan Rakyat secured strong support in urban constituencies whereas the Barisan Nasional always managed to secure majority votes in rural constituencies. Further study by Ng et al. (2020) suggests that both ethnicity and urban development affect the electoral outcomes with the former being the more dominant factor. The Encyclopedia Britannica defines urbanisation as the process by which large numbers of people become permanently concentrated in relatively small areas, forming cities.

According to DOSM, the national urbanisation rate has tripled over five decades from 28.4% in 1970 to 75.1% in 2020. This supported by the analysis of O'Neill (2023) which found that the rate of urbanisation in Malaysia gradually increase every year from 71.61 percent in 2011 to 77.7 percent in 2021 and the growth are expected to continue from time to time.

The number of Bumiputera voters is the next significant characteristic influencing the electoral outcomes. Bumiputera in Malaysia amounted to 21.13 million in 2022 according to the Statistics Department of Malaysia (DOSM) and contributed to the highest percentage of voters. In the past elections, the ability of the Barisan Nasional in securing majority votes of Bumiputera especially in the rural constituencies has proven benefited and instrumental to their uninterrupted six decades tenure as the ruling government. However, in the 15th General Election, the newly formed Perikatan Nasional (PN) coalition succeeded in securing the Bumiputera swing votes of 31.2 percent in Perlis, 28.8 percent in Putrajaya, 23.4 percent in Kedah and 22.26 percent in Melaka. It was a huge blow to the the Barisan Nasional indicating a clear signal of rejection of the Malay voters. The 73 seats won by the Perikatan Nasional are also inclusive of 22 seats clean swept in the predominant Malay state of Terengganu and Kelantan.

According to the Suruhanjaya Pilihanraya (2018), the amendments to Federal Constitution 1957 lowering the voting age and minimum running age from 21 years old to 18 years old has resulted in the young voters expected to be the majority voters in the future. Such amendments also enable automatic voter registration for those who turned 18 years old.

Prior to the amendment, 86% of countries in the world already had 18 years as the threshold voting age. In term of the readiness of the young voters (Gen Z) to vote at the age of 18 years old, Shahimi et al., (2020), indicates that family factors and the attitude of respondents had negative significant relationship and the social media, knowledge and peer factors cannot be the factors influencing the Gen Z to vote. The impacts of the 18 years old voting age amendment according to Lee (2020), will increase the total number of new voters by close to 16 percent and increase the share of Bumiputera voters that will likely benefit Barisan Nasional (BN) and Parti

Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS) even though a lower voter turnout could benefit the incumbent Pakatan Harapan (PH).

In analysing several characteristics and tendency influence the outcome of the 15th General Election result, the researchers come out with the following hypothesis:

H1: Higher the number of early voters will lead to the win of PN as a member of caretaker's government.

H2: Higher the number of 18-20 years old group of voters is highly lead to the win of PN.

H3: Higher number of voters will lead to the win of PH.

H4: Higher number of Chinese voters leads to the winning of PH.

H5: Higher number of Indian voters leads to the winning of PH.

H6: Higher number of Bumiputera voters leads to the winning of PN.

H7: Higher voter's average gross income leads to the winning of PH.

Varpio et al., (2020), stated that a theoretical framework is a set of principles that are interrelated in explaining a systematic situation. This type of framework can explain the phenomenon by identifying the relationship and correlation between the appropriate variables.

Fig. 1 shown is a summary of the theoretical framework depicting the independent variables of early voters, 18-20 years old group of voters, number of voters in a constituent, number of Chinese voters, number of Indian voters, number of Bumiputera voters and voter's average gross income. The dependent variable refers to the characteristics influencing the outcome of the 15th General Election. It can be concluded based on the above theoretical framework that there are seven characteristics that have a relationship with the outcome of the 15th General Election.

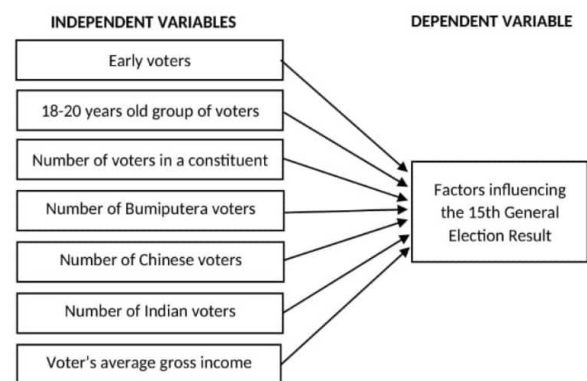


Fig. 1. Theoretical framework

3. Methodology

There are various methods that can be used for the collection of research data. For this study, researcher using the information as reported by the government agencies which are Suruhanjaya Pilihan Raya Malaysia (SPR) and Jawatankuasa Pemandu Banci, Jabatan

Perangkaan Malaysia (DOSM). For the information related to the General Election's result, the numbers of voters and classification of voters has been collected from the SPR's report on General Election 15th. For the population and average gross income data has been accumulated from the latest DOSM's official report. All the data used in this study is reliable and valid as all the information used is fully gathered from government official websites and publicly available report. This is supported by James et al., (2018), that the data from the government is credible especially for the non-performance data.

From the data collected, researcher has classified the parliamentary seats wins by PN and PH based on Table 1. The parliamentary seats win by both coalitions is the same with both have 71 parliamentary seats in Peninsular Malaysia. Researchers did not apply sampling method in this study. 100% populations of 142 parliamentary seats have been selected for this study. The data has been analysed using SPSS Statistical Software (SPSS) by computing the significance level and the relationship between the chosen Member of Parliaments and the characteristics of the voters.

Table 1. Parliamentary seats by states

States	PN	PH
Johor	2	15
Kedah	14	1
Kelantan	14	-
Melaka	3	3
Negeri Sembilan	-	3
Pahang	7	2
Pulau Pinang	3	10
Perak	10	11
Perlis	3	-
Selangor	6	16
Terengganu	8	-
Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur dan Putrajaya	1	10
	71	71

4. Result and Discussion

The findings of this study are solely based on the secondary sources which is the official report issued by SPR and DOSM. Researcher has classified PN as "1" and PH as "2" for the parliament seats items to run the result using SPSS. The descriptive analysis of the parliamentary seats is as Table 1.

Table 2. Descriptive analysis

Items	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Parliament seats	142	1	2	1.500	.5017
Early voters (%)	142	-	0.13	0.123	.0201
18 – 20 years old voters (%)	142	0.02	0.10	0.633	.0133
Total numbers of voters	142	38,686	303,430	111,741	45963
Bumiputra (%)	142	16.90	99.60	69.60	22.62
Chinese (%)	142	0.20	72.90	22.75	18.87
Indian (%)	142	-	26.00	6.93	5.859
Average gross income (RM)	142	3,579	20,521	7,342	2,790

Referring to Table 2, all the output collected is for 142 seats of parliaments at Peninsular Malaysia. There are at least one parliamentary seat wins by both coalitions based on the minimum number shown in the statistics. For the early and 18-20 years old voters, the population has been computed using the percentage of the respective voters to the total number of voters in each parliament. There are a very minimum number of both early and 18-20 years old voters as the maximum percentage of population is within the range of 0.10% to 0.13%.

There is also at least one parliament that do not have any early voters. For the total of voters, the range of voters for all 142 seats is between 38,686 to 303,430 numbers of voters. From all population of voters in Peninsular Malaysia, majority race is Bumiputra, followed by Chinese and the least population is Indian. There is also at least one parliamentary seat that has no Indian voters. For the average gross income, the gross income of the voters for all parliamentary seats is within the range of RM 3,579 to RM 20,521.

From the descriptive analysis in Table 2, researcher has run a Pearson Correlations analysis to determine the relationship between the parliamentary seats wins by the coalition with the five factors examine by this study which are percentage of early voters, percentage of 18-20 years old voters, numbers of voters, race and average gross income. According to Taylor (1990), the r_s value is used to determine the strength of the correlation coefficient for each factor. The level of correlation coefficient can be simplified as in Table 3.

Table 3. Interpretation method of mean score

Pearson Correlation (r_s)	Level
< .35	Weak
.36 to .67	Moderate
.68 - .90	High
.90 – 1.0	Very High

There is a positive and negative correlation. Positive correlation shows a linear impact while negative correlation shows an inverse impact between the factors and the variable tested. Correlation which is the value near to 1.0 is considered high while no relationship shows. But, before analyse the relationship level, researcher has to analyse the level of significance (p) for each factor with the parliaments seats wins by the coalition.

Based on Table 4, researcher has found that all factors have a significant relationship with the parliamentary seats wins by the coalition except for the percentage of early voters. The percentage of early voters which the p -value that above 0.05 is consider insignificant factors for this study.

Table 4: Pearson correlations for factors studies and parliaments seats win

Factors	Significant Value (p)	Pearson Correlation (r_s)
Early voters (%)	.740	.037
18 – 20 years old voters (%)	.009	-.217
Total numbers of voters	.000	.412
Bumiputra (%)	.000	-.805
Chinese (%)	.000	.770
Indian (%)	.000	.642
Average gross income (RM)	.000	.562

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

As it is not significant, the correlation level for this factor will be excluded in the findings. Hence, the result shows that the H1 below is not valid:

H1: Higher the number of early voters will lead to the win of PN as a member of caretaker's government.

For the 18-20 years old voters, it shows a negative relationship with the seats won by the coalition. Higher the number of this group of voters is highly lead to the win of PN. This result shows that H2 is accepted. Even though the level of impact is .217 classified as weak, the results show that there is an impact due to the implementation of the voters below 21 years old. This is in-line with the study done by Zhang et al., (2022) that shows a positive little impact of the youth voters towards the Perikatan Nasional.

The number of voters represented the H3 which stated that higher number of voters will lead to the win of PH. This hypothesis is accepted as proven by the result that shows moderate correlation of .412 between the numbers of voters and the parliamentary seats win by the coalition. The chances of the parliamentary seat winning by PH is higher when the number of voters is higher. The geography factor which shows that the urban area has higher population than the rural area (Masron, Yaakob, Ayob, & Mokhtar, 2012) is one of the keys for the winning of PH. Other than that, Jan (2018), has mentioned that the relatively higher mixing of the races and in urban seats is also one of the factors of the wins of PH. Even some of the urban seats have a collectively higher percentage of non-Bumiputra.

This is supported by this study that also shown that the higher number of Chinese and Indian voters leads to the winning of PH with r_s value of .770 and .642 which is consider as a high impact. Hence, the hypothesis H4 and H5 are accepted. This is also the same impact due to urbanization which led to the mixing of the races. Based on the list of the cities issued by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government in 2022, out of 32 local government which is classified as city, only 4 cities win by PN which represented only 12.5%. However, this trend is expected by analyzing the result of the past two General Elections held on 2008 and 2013. However, Govindasamy et al., (2018), stated that this is not only because of the mixing races, but the urban voters are also concerned on the personality of the candidates.

Aside to that, the Bumiputra is still represents the highest number of voters in Malaysia. Based on the analysis done by the researcher, there are only 26 parliamentary seats that has a minority percentage of Bumiputra which represented 18.3% of the 142 seats wins by PN and PH in Peninsular Malaysia. In addition, none of the 26 seats were won by PN. However, for the states that has a percentage of Bumiputra more than 80% which are Kedah, Kelantan, Pahang, Perlis, and Terengganu, PN has wins 93.8% parliamentary seats in General Election 15. This is in line with the H4 that stated the higher number of Bumiputra voters will lead to wins for PN. And this study shows that the correlation is high with a r_s value of .805. Mohamed et al., (2017), stated that emotion and anxiety is one of the factors that impact the choices of the voters. While non-Bumiputra voters tend to vote for PH due to the reform of racial hierarchy promised by the leader of PH, Bumiputra is tend to vote PN for the status-quo of Bumiputra (Ostwald, & Oliver, 2019).

This is because PH is always being relate to the largely Chinese party, DAP which was seemed to control the agenda and the policies of the government after GE-14 (Dettman, 2020). Study done by Saat (2019) shows that PH is losing their way to communicates with the Bumiputra voters while PN-PAS struggling to obtain votes from the highly multiracial seats.

The average gross income is highly related to the stratum of the demographic of the parliaments. Report issued by Economic Planning Unit of Malaysia in 2022 shows that the monthly average gross income in Malaysia from 1970 until 2019 proved the urban's income is always higher than rural's income. Then, the correlation of average gross income of .562 which is considered moderate is also influenced by the population of races in each urban and rural seat. From the findings above, all hypothesis as per below is accepted:

H2: Higher the number of 18-20 years old group of voters is highly lead to the win of PN

H3: Higher number of voters will lead to the win of PH

H4: Higher number of Chinese voters leads to the winning of PH

H5: Higher number of Indian voters leads to the winning of PH

H6: Higher number of Bumiputra voters leads to the winning of PN

H7: Higher voter's average gross income leads to the winning of PH

5. Conclusion

Based on this study, out of 7 characteristics that has been examined, 6 of it have a significant impact on the result of the General Election 15. While 18-20 years old and bumiputra voters leads to the win of PN, other factors have led to the win of PH. As the result of latest general election shown a balance seat of both coalitions at Peninsular Malaysia, the seats from Sabah and Sarawak will be the decider seat for any coalition to form a government. Hence, future research may analyse the characteristics of voters in Borneo. Other than that, this study proved that each main race in Peninsular Malaysia have the tendency to vote for the coalition that they believe will give benefits to their race. If this trend of voters keeps to continue for a long term, it will lead to the division of races in Peninsular Malaysia. It is not in-line with the aspiration of Malaysia.

In addition, all coalition should reform their approach to ensure that they can be accepted by all races without compromised their principles. As a limitation, this study using a latest official report of the government which may not considering other subjective factors on the ground.

Acknowledgement

This research is fully supported by Politeknik Mukah especially the top management and head of department. The research results are hoped to help the public, political parties, or activist to understand the current political situation in Malaysia. This is important as the formation of the government is based on the achievement of all coalitions in the election.

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