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## EXAMINING THE FACTORS AFFECTING POLITICAL INFORMATION-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA AMONG YOUTHS IN MALAYSIA

### ESTUDIO DE LOS FACTORES QUE AFECTAN EL COMPORTAMIENTO DE BÚSQUEDA DE INFORMACIÓN POLÍTICA A TRAVÉS DE LAS REDES SOCIALES ENTRE JÓVENES EN MALASIA

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## ABSTRACT

The dynamic characteristics of social media provide a vast space for society to obtain useful information including political information. This advancement of information dissemination must be benefited by every layer of society, including the youth, to increase their participation in issues regarding national politics. Therefore, this research aims to examine the effects of efficacy, policy satisfaction, knowledge, motivation, and social media on political information-seeking behavior among students in Malaysian public Universities. The study employed a survey method in which a self-developed questionnaire was used as a data-gathering instrument. The questionnaire was administered to a multi-stage sample of 381 respondents from selected public Universities in Malaysia. The data were analyzed using structural equation modeling. The results showed that efficacy, knowledge, and usefulness of social media have significant effects on political information-seeking behavior among youth in Malaysia. Meanwhile, policy satisfaction and motivation do not affect political information-seeking behavior among the respondents. Thus, this study indicates the potential of efficacy, knowledge, and social media to influence Malaysian youths in terms of political-information seeking. This outcome can help policymakers to make informed decisions on the youth's contribution to the democratic process, particularly in the Malaysian context.

**Keywords:** Education, Efficacy, Information-seeking behavior, Motivation, Policy satisfaction, Social media, Youth.

## RESUMEN

Las características dinámicas de las redes sociales brindan un amplio espacio para que la sociedad obtenga información útil, incluida información política. Este avance en la difusión de información debe ser beneficiado por todos los estratos de la sociedad, incluidos los jóvenes, para aumentar su participación en los asuntos relacionados con la política nacional. Por lo tanto, esta investigación tiene como objetivo examinar los efectos de la eficacia, la satisfacción política, el conocimiento, la motivación y las redes sociales en el comportamiento de búsqueda de información política entre los estudiantes de las universidades públicas de Malasia. El estudio empleó un método de encuesta en el que se utilizó un cuestionario de desarrollo propio como instrumento de recopilación de datos. El cuestionario se administró a una muestra de múltiples etapas de 381 encuestados de universidades públicas seleccionadas en Malasia. Los datos se analizaron utilizando modelos de ecuaciones estructurales. Los resultados mostraron que la eficacia, el conocimiento y la utilidad de las redes sociales tienen efectos significativos en el comportamiento de búsqueda de información política entre los jóvenes de Malasia. Sin embargo, la satisfacción política y la motivación no afectan el comportamiento de búsqueda de información política entre los encuestados. Por lo tanto, este estudio indica el potencial de la eficacia, el conocimiento y las redes sociales para influir en los jóvenes de Malasia en términos de búsqueda de información política. Este resultado puede ayudar a los responsables políticos a tomar decisiones informadas sobre la contribución de los jóvenes al proceso democrático, particularmente en el contexto de Malasia.

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**Palabras clave:** Educación, Eficacia, Comportamiento de búsqueda de información, Motivación, Satisfacción política, Redes sociales, Juventud.

## **ESTUDO DE FATORES QUE AFETAM O COMPORTAMENTO DE PROCURA DE INFORMAÇÕES POLÍTICAS ATRAVÉS DE REDES SOCIAIS ENTRE JOVENS NA MALÁSIA**

### **RESUMO**

As características dinâmicas das redes sociais proporcionam amplo espaço para a sociedade obter informações úteis, inclusive informações políticas. Esse avanço na disseminação de informações deve ser beneficiado por todas as camadas da sociedade, inclusive os jovens, para aumentar sua participação nos assuntos relacionados à política nacional. Portanto, esta pesquisa visa examinar os efeitos da eficácia, satisfação política, conhecimento, motivação e redes sociais no comportamento de procura de informações políticas entre estudantes de universidades públicas da Malásia. O estudo empregou um método de pesquisa em que um questionário auto desenvolvido foi utilizado como instrumento de coleta de dados. O questionário foi administrado a uma amostra de vários estágios de 381 entrevistados de universidades públicas selecionadas na Malásia. Os dados foram analisados por meio de modelagem de equações estruturais. Os resultados mostraram que a eficácia, o conhecimento e a utilidade das mídias sociais têm efeitos significativos no comportamento de procura de informações políticas entre os jovens da Malásia. No entanto, a satisfação e motivação política não afetam o comportamento de procura de informações políticas entre os entrevistados. Portanto, este estudo indica o potencial da eficácia, conhecimento e redes sociais para influenciar a juventude malaia em termos de busca de informações políticas. Esse resultado pode ajudar os formuladores de políticas a tomar decisões informadas sobre a contribuição dos jovens para o processo democrático, particularmente no contexto da Malásia.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação; Eficácia; Comportamento de procura de informação; Motivação; satisfação política; Redes sociais; Juventude.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Media and technology are seen as critical tools for communication and educating the public about current political, social, and economic issues. Since the early 1980s, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has served as a key platform for many people to access information and accomplish other activities that are influenced by technological advancements, particularly from their homes, schools, workplaces. As a result, a wide range of ICTs, such as radio and television, as well as the most up-to-date digital technologies, such as computers and the Internet, have emerged as high-potential support instruments in political activities. Today's youths are becoming more receptive to new media for political reasons. For example, YouTube, an online video platform, has gained popularity as a platform for personal video sharing and has been used to download and publish footage of political speeches and activities (Eady et al., 2020; Lingam and Aripin, 2017). Other social

networking sites, including Facebook and Twitter, as well as instant messaging apps such as WhatsApp, play an important role in the political context as a source of information and participation. This circumstance shows why and how online political information retrieval activities might be viewed as an alternative to offline ways of communicating with friends, discussing, asking questions, or sharing beliefs or information in topics connected to political concerns in particular.

In general, research has revealed the importance of social media for political information (Abdullah et al., 2021; Salman and Salleh, 2020). However, studies on the search for political information specifically involving youths have not been substantially examined in the Malaysian local context. Youths are the demographic that dominates the use of social media for varied purposes (MCMC, 2019). As a demographic that is adamant about using social media, it may be quite unfavorable if the youths do not take advantage of social media. According to a study conducted by Razali and Ilham (2021), the most common activity undertaken by youths on social media is searching for political news. The social media platform has made it easier for users to obtain political information. Salman and Salleh (2020) also suggested that internet political activities among youths be researched further. Past studies on youths and online political participation through social media have clearly shown significant promise (Abdullah et al., 2021; Razali and Ilham, 2021).

Whereas, a systematic analysis conducted by Kaye and Johnson (2004) found that further research on the use of social media in the context of information seeking behavior is necessary to address issues such as the motivation behind the youth attitudes toward social media, quality information, as well as the reliability of information. Using a survey method, this study seeks to examine the effects of efficacy, policy satisfaction, knowledge, motivation, and social media on political information-seeking behavior among students in Malaysian public Universities. As such, the following hypotheses were developed.

H1: Efficacy has significant effects on political information-seeking behavior

H2: Policy Satisfaction has significant effects on political information-seeking behavior

H3: Knowledge has significant effects on political information-seeking behavior

H4: Motivation has significant effects on political information-seeking behavior

H5: Usefulness of social media has significant

## **1.2. Literature Review**

Political information can be obtained from a variety of sources, including political analysts, family, friends, community, mass media such as television and radio, and the Internet, which now includes a variety of new apps with more engaging features, such as social media. All of these channels and sources of information, according to Rains (2008), have unique features that entice a person to pick and use them as a

medium of information retrieval. Efficacy is one of the elements that is expected to impact political information-seeking behavior. Many academics examined efficacy among youths (Austin et al., 2008; Moffett and Rice, 2018; Muralidharan and Sung, 2016; Tedesco, 2007). Moffett and Rice (2018), for example, undertook a pre-election 2016 research of college students to better understand the link between political efficacy and youth political participation. According to the findings of the study, students who spent more time on social media platforms and shared political news were more likely to create political postings and persuade others to vote for a candidate in an election. In other words, students who spend more time online looking for political information, more likely to express their own political beliefs or efficacy than those who use social media less.

Additionally, policy satisfaction is seen as a predictor of political information-seeking behavior. Policy satisfaction is defined as a policy that incorporates policy-making procedures and outcomes (Whiteley et al., 2013). As such, it becomes clear that an increasing number of people participate in policymaking, particularly with the aid of technology such as social media, resulting in a more equitable process and people's satisfaction with the outcomes. This remark backs up the claim that searching for information aids in the dissemination of information about policy processes and outcomes to citizens (Whiteley et al., 2016). A question arises as to whether individual participation in society can impact policy outcomes or policy outcomes can impact political participation. In this sense, research indicates the youths' hope for political views to be heard, understood, and scrutinized by the government, which may then be used as a guide in decision-making or national policy (Awang et al., 2012). This, in turn, may lead to youths being more involved in politics, such as through the search for political information on social media platforms.

Moreover, many previous studies have shown that people's political knowledge and participation are critical in the democratic process (Charles, 2010; De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006; Rahmawati and Dhewanto, 2014). The lower the people's political knowledge is, the lower their participation in politics and access to or search for political information (O'Neill, 2006). Accordingly, social media can help people learn more about politics (Kaye and Johnson, 2004; Raouf et al., 2013). Well-informed citizens, on the other hand, are more likely to participate in politics. Individuals with knowledge of a political party, for example, can get information, form an opinion on an issue, and then effectively choose a party (O'Neill, 2006). This view shows that knowledge and political engagement activities, as well as the search for political information, have a positive connection (De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006).

Furthermore, one of the characteristics that have been extensively explored is political motivation and its relationship with youth participation in seeking political

information. Political engagement, according to Verba (1996), is the most essential indication of political interest since it drives citizens to vote. In their study, Kaye and Johnson (2002) concluded that social media has a role in generating political interest and motivation among youths in their search for political information and news. Abdullah et al. (2021) also discovered that Malaysia's younger generation has a strong interest in politics, with 60% of respondents discussing politics with friends, 52% with family members, and 32% with political activists.

Generally, online social media applications are designed to facilitate the exchange of information, disseminate knowledge, and express thoughts easier (Chan-Olmsted, et al., 2013; Hassan et al., 2020; Nasidi et al., 2021). This capability illustrates the role of social media as a channel or intermediary between people from various backgrounds in terms of information-seeking behavior in a range of situations. In this regard, Lee and Lim (2016) found that users accept the usability of social media that is judged to have strong interaction capabilities. According to the findings of Abdullah et al. (2021), the use of new media as a source of political information retrieval has increased recently. The authors believe that social media serves as an effective information intermediary. As a result of the interactions that take place, social media serves as a means for forming strong social relationships. The message conveyed and shared on social media, according to Lee and Lim (2016), is a positive social reinforcement among users.

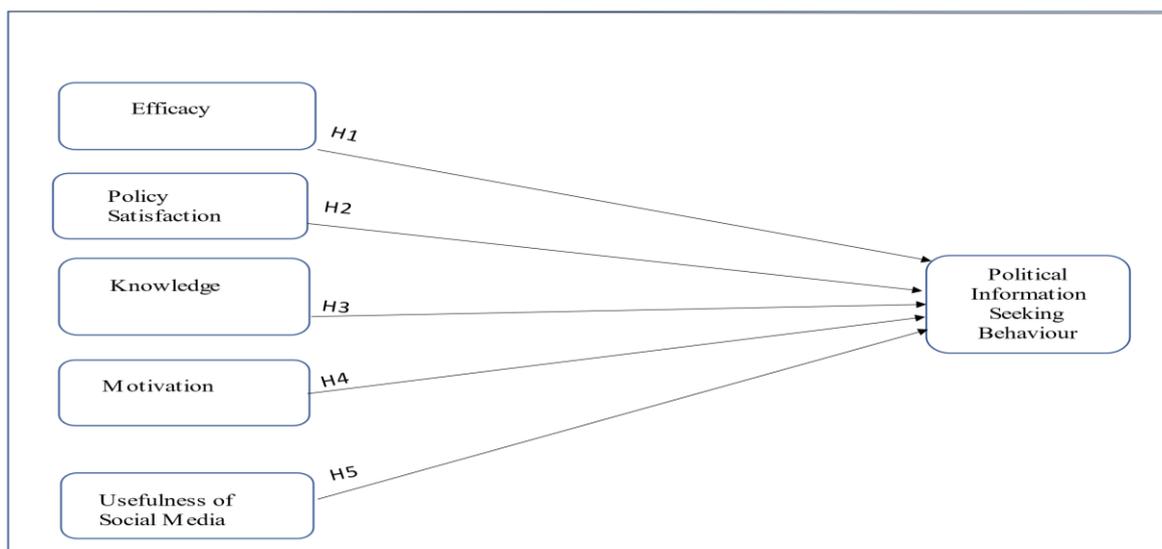
## **2. Methodology**

This research employed a quantitative approach in which a self-developed questionnaire was used as a data-gathering instrument. The questionnaire was constructed using a 7-point Likert scale as follows: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) somewhat disagree, (4) no sure, (5) somewhat agree, (6) agree, and (7) strongly agree. The respondents consist of undergraduates (aged 19-25) in selected Malaysian public Universities. This age group was chosen because youths represent a large percentage of social media users. According to Abdullah et al. (2021), youths constitute the highest percentage of social media users, such as Facebook and Twitter, and most of them are university and college students. The respondents were selected using multistage sampling, which is appropriate for the context of this research consisting of respondents with a variety of characteristics and environments. This multi-stage sampling divides a large population into several stages to make the sampling process more practical. A total of 381 respondents were selected based on the sample size determination table by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). According to Chua (2006), estimation of sampling size measurements using Krejcie and Morgan's formula is a commonly used and adopted technique by many researchers.

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics using SPSS Version 21. Subsequently, a two-step approach of structural equation modeling was employed to further analyze the data using Analysis of Moment Structure (AMOS 22.0). First, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was executed to estimate the reliability and validity of the measurement model, and secondly, Structural Equation Model (SEM) was carried out to determine the effects of efficacy, policy satisfaction, knowledge, motivation, and social media on political information-seeking behavior. This analysis includes the  $X^2$  statistics, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Composite Fit Index (CFI), Normative Fit Index (NFI), and  $X^2$ / degree of freedom ratio. SEM was used to examine the proposed hypotheses, and the research framework is shown in Figure 1 as follows.

**Figure 1**

*Conceptual Model*



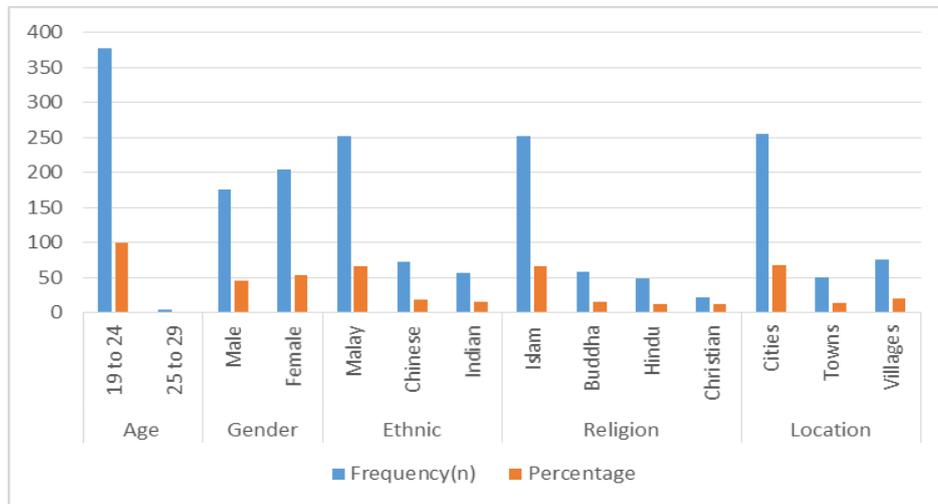
### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1. Participants' Demography

As shown in Figure 1, female students constitute 54% of the survey respondents, while male students represent the rest (46%). The average age of respondents is 20 years, with about 99 % being between the ages of 19 and 24 and 1% being between the ages of 25 and 29. Malays make up the bulk of respondents (66.1%), with Chinese (18.9%) and Indians making up the rest (15%). The majority of respondents (66.1%) were Muslims, followed by Buddhism (15.5%), Hinduism (12.6%), and Christianity (12.6%) respectively. In terms of location, most of the respondents (67%) live in cities, while the rest live in towns (13%) and villages (20%).

**Figure 2**

*Demographic profile of respondents (n=381)*



### 3.2. Measurement Model

CFA was conducted to test measurement reliability and validity. CFA results indicated an acceptable model fit, including  $\chi^2/df=1.038$ ,  $CFI=0.996$  or  $TLI=0.995$  and  $RMSEA=0.011$ . The results of assessing the structural model fit for the direct model indicated that the model fit the data with; The Goodness-of-fit indices of the structural model showing that the GFI, CFI, NFI, TLI, and IFI significantly close or pass its cut off value (0.9). In addition, the RMSEA was .011, which fall between the recommended range of acceptability (between .03 and .08). As shown in Table 2, the factor loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composites Reliability indices of all factors are with high value. The composite reliability values all above 0.70 show that the measurement of the constructs is all reliable. The AVE values indicate efficacy variables with AVE values, .575 and CR, .871, knowledge variables with AVE values, .593 and CR, .879, Policy Satisfaction variables with AVE values, .600 and CR, .882, Motivation variables with AVE values, .592 and CR, .879, Usefulness of Social Media variables with AVE values, .592 and CR, .921 and Information seeking behavior variables with AVE, .590 and CR values, .920.

**Table 1**

*Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis*

| Variables                  | Composites Reliability (CR ≥ .6) | Average Variance Extracted (AVE ≥ .5) |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Behaviour                  | 0.920                            | 0.590                                 |
| Efficacy                   | 0.871                            | 0.575                                 |
| Knowledge                  | 0.879                            | 0.593                                 |
| Policy Satisfaction        | 0.882                            | 0.600                                 |
| Motivation                 | 0.879                            | 0.592                                 |
| Usefulness of Social Media | 0.921                            | 0.592                                 |

Table 2 shows the correlation of the constructs. To achieve discriminant validity, the coefficient for a correlation between a pair of constructs should be lower than the square root of the AVE of each construct. All constructs in the model achieved this requirement, indicating adequate discriminant validity.

**Table 2**

*Correlation table*

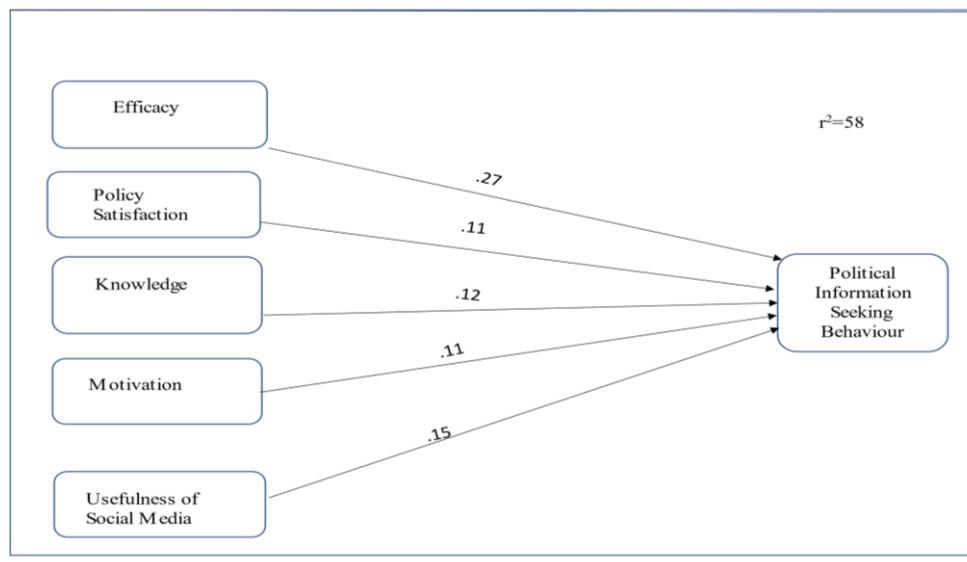
| Variables                  | Behavior | Efficacy | Knowledge | Policy Satisfaction | Motivation | Usefulness of Social Media |
|----------------------------|----------|----------|-----------|---------------------|------------|----------------------------|
| Behavior                   | 0.768    |          |           |                     |            |                            |
| Efficacy                   | 0.607    | 0.758    |           |                     |            |                            |
| Knowledge                  | 0.522    | 0.514    | 0.770     |                     |            |                            |
| Policy Satisfaction        | 0.531    | 0.556    | 0.515     | 0.775               |            |                            |
| Motivation                 | 0.537    | 0.563    | 0.511     | 0.543               | 0.769      |                            |
| Usefulness of Social Media | 0.564    | 0.594    | 0.545     | 0.522               | 0.564      | 0.769                      |

### 3.2. Measurement Model

SEM was used to determine the direct contribution of each construct of the independent variables entered in the equation concerning the dependent variable. The results are presented in Table 3. Additionally, Figure 3 summarizes the results for the proposed hypotheses as follows.

**Figure 3**

*Structural Model*



**Table 3**

*Results of the hypothesized paths*

| Paths                           | Estimate | S.E  | C.R   | p    | Hypothesis                   |
|---------------------------------|----------|------|-------|------|------------------------------|
| Efficacy → Behaviour            | .185     | .050 | 3.693 | ***  | Supported                    |
| Policy Satisfaction → Behaviour | .067     | .038 | 1.757 | .079 | Not Supported                |
| Knowledge → Behaviour           | .079     | .040 | 1.982 | .047 | Supported                    |
| Motivation → Behaviour          | .076     | .044 | 1.743 | .081 | Not Supported                |
| Scoail media → Behaviour        | .097     | .042 | 2.307 | .021 | Significance of Social Media |

The results of assessing the structural model fits for direct model indicated that the model fit the data with; ( $\chi^2/DF = 1.074$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $CFI = .991$ ,  $IFI = .991$ ,  $TLI = .991$ ,  $RMSEA = .015$ ). The Goodness-of-fit indices of the structure model showed that the CFI, IFI, and TLI, significantly pass its cut-off value (0.9). In addition, the RMSEA was .015, which fall between the recommended range of acceptability (between .03 and .08). The value of the coefficient of determination  $R^2$  is .58. Fig. 2 indicates the contribution of efficacy, policy satisfaction, knowledge, motivation, and usefulness of social media in estimating political information-seeking behavior is 58%. As depicted in Table 3, the result shows that there is a significant effect of efficacy ( $\beta=.185$ ,  $CR=3.693$ ,  $p<***$ ), knowledge ( $\beta=.079$ ,  $CR=1.982$ ,  $p=.047$ ) and usefulness of social media ( $\beta=.097$ ,  $CR=2.307$ ,  $p=.021$ ) on political information-seeking behavior, supporting H1, H3, and H5. Furthermore, the result of the structural model, according to Table 3, indicated that the policy satisfaction and motivation ( $\beta=.067$ ,  $CR=1.757$ ,  $p=.079$   $\beta=.076$ ,  $CR=1.743$ ,  $p=.081$ ) had no significant effect on political information-seeking behavior. Thus, H2 and H4 are rejected.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This research examined the factors affecting political information-seeking behavior among youths in Malaysia. The results demonstrated that efficacy, knowledge, and usefulness of social media have significant effects on political information-seeking behavior among students in Malaysian public Universities. Whereas, policy satisfaction and motivation do not affect political information-seeking behavior among the respondents. Interestingly, increased exposure to social media interactivity significantly enhances political information-seeking behavior. The contribution of this research lies in its provision of useful information on the important determinants of political information-seeking behavior and activities among youths, particularly in Malaysia, which can help policymakers to make informed decisions on the youth's contribution to the democratic process in the country. However, this research is limited to quantitative analysis, and thus, there is a need

for qualitative research to explore more factors affecting political information-seeking behavior among youth in Malaysia.

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