

## YOUTH AWARENESS TOWARDS THE MALAYSIAN PUBLIC POLICIES UNDER THE GOVERNMENT OF PAKATAN HARAPAN

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**Abstract.** *Public awareness is a drive for social change through the knowledge of social and political problems and the development of patterns for expression. Nevertheless, the degree of awareness varies from individual to another, particularly concerning public services, where not all people are aware of public policies formulated by the government. Currently, awareness of policies are still very minimal; thus, they only know the basics of right and wrong without understanding the full implications of it. There is a need to have a stronger emphasis on creating awareness on this vital issue. Thus, this study attempts to examine youth awareness on the public policies under the reign of Pakatan Harapan government. This descriptive study was conducted among youth in UiTM Cawangan Pahang Kampus Raub whereby 1121 respondents had participated in answering the questionnaires. The findings revealed that the majority of the respondents are aware of several public policies. However, among 11 public policies listed in the survey, four of them are still unknown to the youth. Therefore in this study, Rogers' Diffusion Theory and the Public Participation theory were employed to underpin the core issues, and several recommendations are offered at the end of the paper.*

**Keywords:** Youth awareness, Public Policy, Pakatan Harapan, Rogers Diffusion Theory, People Participation, Internet usage among youth.

**Raktažodžiai:** Jaunimo sąmoningumas, viešojo politika, Pakatan Harapan, Rogerso difuzijos teorija, žmonių dalyvavimas, interneto naudojimas jaunimo tarpe.

## Introduction

Malaysian Science and Technology Information Center (2019) defines awareness as to a person's state of knowledge about an issue as a result of his or her either having heard about it, read about it, seen it, or felt its existence. According to Knapp and Ferrante (2012), awareness is a general state of employee knowingness or mindfulness about specific issues. Awareness represents a user's raised consciousness and understanding of security issues and strategies of how to deal with them (Dinev & Hu, 2007).

Almarshad (2015) contends that the people's awareness on the government's activities could elevate their interest and trust towards the government, hold government officials accountable for their decisions, and at the same time can improve government's service delivery. However, public awareness of government policies are still very minimal (Abdul Latif et al. , 2012). Besides, Adu-Gyamfi (2014) argued that one of the reasons why youth have a lack of awareness of public policy is because the government has not created enough awareness about the policy among them. The government needs to bring more young people on board, by moving from community to community to talk to young people about the policy. Thus, this study attempts to examine youth's awareness on the public policies under the reign of the Pakatan Harapan government.

## Literature review

### *Theories Underpinning The Study Diffusion Theory*

Rogers defines diffusion as 'the process in which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time, among the members of a social system' (p 5). 'An innovation is an idea, practice, or project that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption' (Rogers, 2003, p 12). Mass media and interpersonal communication are two communication channels. While mass media channels include a mass medium such as TV, radio, or newspaper, interpersonal channels consist of two-way communication between two or more individuals. On the other hand, 'diffusion is a very social process that involves interpersonal communication relationships' (Rogers, 2003, p 19). Thus, interpersonal channels are more powerful in creating or changing the sturdy attitudes held by an individual. Rogers (2003) defined complexity as 'the degree to which an innovation is perceived as relatively difficult to understand and use' (p 15). As Rogers stated, opposite to the other attributes, complexity correlated negatively with the rate of adoption. Thus, the excessive complexity of innovation is an essential obstacle in its adoption.

Rogers (2003) has outlined the key components of diffusion theory. The attributes of the potential adopter perceptions of innovation include relative advantage (effectiveness and cost efficiency relative to alternatives), complexity (how simple the innovation is to understand), compatibility (the fit of the innovation to establish ways of accomplishing the same goal), observability (the extent of outcomes visibility), and trialability (the extent to which the adopter must commit to full adoption). Besides that, the different

adopter segments have different needs and will adopt an innovation at different points in time. Such an approach might be appropriate to public policy makers (whether government or industry) if it is desirable that the diffusion of a product or idea is to be slow (Owen, Ntoko, Zhang and Dong, 2002).

### ***Theory of Public Participation***

By the early 2000s, public participation had become a routine and expected feature of public policy-making (Bingham et al., 2005). Public participation in the policy process is considered to be a significant pillar of good governance (Kpessa, 2011). Public participation in governance involves the direct or indirect involvement of stakeholders in decision-making about policies, plans or programs in which they have an interest (Quick and Bryson, 2016). Through public participation, stakeholders may interact with government agencies, political leaders, nonprofit organizations and business organizations that create or implement public policies and programs. While participation may be limited to discrete acts (e.g., a town hall meeting or citizen survey) or described by a set of practices (e.g., convening public hearings or other types of consultation processes), participation more generally is the process of engagement in governance.

### **Research Methodology**

This study utilized the quantitative research approach whereby the questionnaires were distributed to the students in UiTM Cawangan Pahang Kampus Raub. The sample size of the study is 1121 UiTM Kampus Raub students from three faculties, which includes the Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies, Faculty of Business and Management, and the Faculty of Computer Science.

This study utilizes a descriptive approach to examine the level of youth awareness towards public policies under the Pakatan Harapan government. The results from the descriptive analysis allows the researcher to make an analysis and answer the objectives of this study based on the data collected. The respondents were asked about the level of their awareness regarding the public policies introduced by the Pakatan Harapan's government. The scales 'aware' and 'unaware' were adopted from a study carried out by Atomatofa (2013). SPSS version 20 was used to generate the findings of the study.

### **Findings**

Table 1.1 depicts the profile of the respondents who participated in the survey. This study was comprised of 1121 students in UiTM Cawangan Pahang Kampus Raub. Prior to the data collection, the respondents were informed and explained to, the purposes and the contributions of the study towards the community. Descriptive statistics indicated that the majority of respondents are female (76.2 %), with the male making up the remaining 23.8 per cent. The largest age group represented by the 18–24 years old range (96.3%).

The majority of them are heavy users of the internet (60.3%). Concerning the discipline of studies, the majority of the respondents are from the Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies (FSPPP) (47%), followed by the Faculty of Business and Management (FPP) (33.7%) and the remaining 19.3 per cent from the Faculty of Computer and Mathematical Sciences (FSKM).

*Table 1.1: Profile of Respondents (N =1121)*

Demographic Profiles	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender:</b>		
Male	267	23.8
Female	854	76.2
<b>Age:</b>		
17 Years old and below	41	3.7
18-24 years old	1080	96.3
<b>Frequency of Internet Usage</b>		
Sometimes	32	2.9
Often	413	36.8
Very Often	676	60.3
<b>Faculty:</b>		
FSPPP	527	47
FSKM	216	19.3
FPP	378	33.7

Table 1.2 illustrates youth awareness towards the Malaysian Public Policies introduced by the government of Pakatan Harapan. Among 11 public policies listed in the survey, there are four public policies which are still unknown to the youth, which are the National Housing Policy (2018–2025), National Space Policy (2030), National Cleanliness Policy, and National Policy on Industry 4.0. Although the majority of the respondents have an awareness of the Malaysian public policies, however, the percentage of the respondents who do not know or are unaware about the policy remains high. Except for the educational policy — Black Shoes Wearing, most of the youth lack awareness about the current public policies as the rate of ‘not aware’ for each public policy is more than 25 per cent. It is interesting to note that almost all respondents have a sense of awareness on the matter concerning educational policy which is black shoes wearing among the pupils. In brief, it is worth mentioning that the majority of the respondents are aware of several public policies introduced by the Pakatan Harapan government. These well known public policies include the Affordable Housing Policy, National Anti-Corruption Plan (2019–2023), National Community Policy, I-Suri, National Entrepreneurship Policy, Minimum Wages, and Educational Policy – Black Shoes Wearing.

Table 1.2: Youth Awareness Towards the Malaysian Public Policies

Public Policies	Aware	Not Aware
National Housing Policy (2018-2025)	44.3%	55.7%
Affordable Housing Policy	68.6%	31.4%
National Space Policy (2030)	22.1%	77.9%
National Anti-Corruption Plan (2019-2023)	60.8%	39.2%
National Cleanliness Policy	45.7%	54.3%
National Community Policy	50.7%	49.3%
I-Suri	57.1%	42.9%
National Policy on Industry 4.0	46.1%	53.9%
National Entrepreneurship Policy	62%	38%
Minimum Wages	73.6%	26.4%
Educational Policy- Black Shoes Wearing	90.7%	9.3%

Table 1.3 portrays sources of information about public policy. The majority of the respondents generally lack opportunity to access the information related to public policies. Most of them (80.4%) believed that they had not received any pamphlets or reading materials from the government. However, the more significant part of them (79.4%) have the opportunity to obtain information related to public policy through other media such as social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) and internet. Besides that, it is worth to mention that most of the respondents (85.1%) never been to any public policy workshop/campaign organized by the government.

Table 1.3: Sources of information about Public Policy

Questions	Yes	No
Have you received any pamphlets/materials regarding new public policies?	20.3%	80.4%
Did you hear of the new public policies through the media?	79.4%	21.7%
Have you been to any public policy workshop/campaign organized by the government on the new public policies?	14.9%	85.1%

## Discussions

As mentioned earlier, generally, it is believed that the respondents have an awareness of certain public policies only. Although the majority of the respondents have an awareness of some current public policies, however, the percentage of the respondents who do not know or are unaware about other public policies (National Housing Policy, National Space Policy, National Cleanliness Policy, National Community Policy, I-Suri, and National Policy on Industry 4.0) is high.

The finding of the present study is in line with a study carried out by Muhammad Adnan and Siti Zobidah (2019). Their study examined the level of awareness among young people towards the existence of cyber laws. The results showed that the respondents were not aware of the existence of the law because they either felt that it is not important to them, they were being ignorant, or they take the matter complacently. Muhammad Adnan and Siti Zobidah (2019) also found that the main reason the respondents are not aware of the existence of cyber law is due to their attitude.

In the context of the present study, some of the young people are less aware of the public policies because they might feel that the policies are not important to them. Therefore, they take the matter complacently. According to Henn, Weinstein and Sarah (2005), young people are chronically politically apathetic as a consequence of their lifestyles and of various problems that confront them. Allegedly, some of the young people do not take an interest in what is going on in the country. They are skeptical of mass media and do not read the news regularly (The Star, 2019).

Sometimes, the complexity of public policy and law also become a barrier for young people to have an interest in it. Rogers' diffusion theory has outlined how innovation can be spread to potential adopters (citizens). The excessive complexity of an innovation is an important obstacle in its adoption. In other words, if the content of the public policy is too complicated to be understood, it will hinder the citizen from having the interest to know about the policy. As previously mentioned, the majority of the respondents (90.7%) are aware of the Educational Policy – Black Shoes Wearing, and only 9.3% were not aware of it. It is also believed that this policy is relatively easier to be understood as compared to other public policies. Hence, there is a need for the government to simplify the content of the public policy to increase the citizens' awareness about public policy. Muhammad Adnan and Siti Zobidah (2019) recommended that laws and public policies need to be explained clearly, easily, and systematically through existing campaigns.

As discussed previously, people participation is very crucial, especially in the process of formulating and implementing public policy. Theory of public participation explained that awareness of the people towards the public policy could be enhanced when they are invited to participate in the public policymaking process. However, the majority of the respondents (85.1%) have never been to any public policy campaign organized by the government. This situation may be due to a lack of interest to join as they believed that they are less empowered to influence the government in the decision-making process. According to The Asia Foundation (2012), in 2012, only 36% of the young people believed that they could make some difference in the community. In terms of their perceived influence on the government, only 41% of youth today said they could influence how the government works (The Asia Foundation, 2012). Hence, there is a need for the government to invite young people into the public policymaking process, listen to them, and consider their opinion. When involved in the public policymaking process, it will automatically make them aware of the public policy.

Other than serving as a means of educating people and enhancing their awareness, public participation is also vital in preparing an efficiently better planning framework as a result of a better understanding of the stakeholders' demands and needs which thus

leads to effective resource planning and management (Azizan, 2015). Public participation could also lead to better policy and implementation decisions and can thus be associated with greater attainment of public programs' goals (Fagotto & Fung, 2009). The public participation process should adopt a more effective public participation concept.

The finding of the present study also found that the majority of the respondents are aware of the public policies such as Affordable Housing Policy, National Anti-Corruption Plan (2019–2023), National Community Policy, I-Suri, National Entrepreneurship Policy, Minimum Wages, and Educational Policy- Black Shoes Wearing. As depicted in table 1.3, the majority of the respondents retrieved the information about the public policy through media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and the internet. According to Ali Salman (2018), the young generation and the cyber world are inseparable because young people in Malaysia are more likely to use social media in obtaining information. Ipsos (2004) and Leiserowitz et al. (2014) stated that the internet is the catalyst for young people to access information. Young people have extensive access to current information and are not limited to the mainstream media. The development of modern communication and information technologies such as the use of the internet and mobile phones has encouraged the dissemination of information without restriction (Junaidi Awang et al., 2012).

Rogers (2003) introduced diffusion theory in explaining how the information can be disseminated to other people or citizens. In the context of this study, innovation refers to new public policies formulated and introduced by Pakatan Harapan government. Hence, the new public policies need to be communicated to the citizens wisely by using several channels. According to Rogers (2003), there are two main channels which are mass media and interpersonal communication. In the context of this study, it is suggested that the government and the university also need to enhance and utilise interpersonal communication relationships. It may lead to equal dissemination of information about the public policy to all students in the university.

The notion of awareness is often interchangeably used with training and education (Bulgurcu, Cavusoglu, & Benbasat, 2010; D'Arcy, Hovav, & Galletta, 2009). Knapp and Ferrante (2012) contend that the goal of awareness and training programs is to enhance knowledge. Education is a significant method of providing knowledge and awareness to youth (Suhana, Tuan Fazliyanna, Abd Hair, 2018). Furthermore, the role of family members is also important in raising the awareness of young people towards public policy. Ipsos (2004), Shahadu (2012) and Taylor et al. (2014) highlighted that true values need to be nurtured and applied from home so that behaviour and culture can be developed from childhood.

## **Conclusions**

1. Basically, the respondents have an awareness of certain public policies only. Although the majority of the respondents have awareness on some current public policies, the percentage of respondents who do not know or are unaware about other public policies (National Housing Policy, National Space Policy, National

Cleanliness Policy, National Community Policy, I-Suri, and National Policy on Industry 4.0) is high.

2. Some of the young people are less aware of the public policies because they might feel that the policies are not important to them.
3. Sometimes, the complexity of public policy and law also becomes a barrier for young people to have an interest in it. In other words, if the content of the public policy is too complicated to be understood, it will hinder the citizen from having the interest to know about the policy.
4. The majority of the respondents have never been to any public policy campaign organized by the government. This situation may be due to a lack of interest to join as they believed that they are less empowered to influence the government in the decision-making process.
5. The majority of the respondents retrieved the information about the public policy through media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and the internet.
6. Education is a significant method of providing knowledge and awareness to youth (Suhana, Tuan Fazliyanna, Abd Hair, 2018). Furthermore, the role of the family members is also important in raising the awareness of young people towards the public policy. Ipsos (2004), Shahadu (2012) and Taylor et al. (2014) highlighted that true values need to be nurtured and applied from home so that behaviour and culture can be developed from childhood.

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## **Patakan Harapan (Vilties aljanso) vyriausybės vykdoma Malaizijos viešoji politika jaunimo supratimu**

### Anotacija

*Visuomenės sąmoningumas – socialinių pokyčių per socialinių ir politinių problemų žinojimą ir raiškos modelių kūrimą variklis. Nepaisant to, sąmoningumo lygis skiriasi, ypatingai kalbant apie viešąsias paslaugas, kur ne visi žmonės susipažinę su vyriausybės suformuota viešąja politika. Šiuo metu politikos supratimas vis dar yra labia menkas; taigi jie žino tik pagrindines teises nesuvokdami visų iš to išplaukiančių pasekmių. Todėl yra poreikis stipriau pabrėžti sąmoningumo formavimą šiuo gyvybiškai svarbiu klausimu. Taigi šiuo tyrime siekiama iširti jaunimo supratimą, susijusį su viešąja politika valdant Pakatan Harapan (Vilties aljanso) vyriausybei. Šis aprašomojo pobūdžio tyrimas atliktas dalyvaujant UiTM Cawangan Pahang Kampus Raub jaunimui, iš kurių 1121 respondentai pateikė atsakymus į klausimynų klausimus. Tyrimo rezultatai atskleidė, kad dauguma respondentų susipažinę su keletu viešosios politikos krypčių. Tačiau tarp 11 klausyminuose išvardytų viešosios politikos krypčių keturios jaunimo liko nepastebėtos. Todėl šiame tyrime pagrindinėms problemoms pagrįsti buvo pasitelktos Rogerso difuzijos teorija ir Visuomenės dalyvavimo teorija, o darbo pabaigoje pateikiamos kelios rekomendacijos.*

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