

Examining political efficacy among Malaysian voters

The role of traditional and new media

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The technological advancement and political situations have dramatically impacted the way traditional and new media have played their role in society, especially in the political development of the country. Studying media use and credibility have been a major concern among scholars to understand audience perceptions and attitudes towards the media and their role in politics. This study investigated the level of media use and credibility among voters and their perception of political efficacy. Drawing on a nationwide quota sampling of 2030 respondents, the findings found voter perception on the media as credible, with the highest trust being on television, followed by newspapers and radio. Internet was found to be the least credible. A factor analysis performed on the political efficacy items extracted three dimensions: Voter Efficacy, Internal Efficacy and External Efficacy. The results of hierarchical regression suggested that traditional and new media use as well as media trust dimensions were significantly correlated with political efficacy but different media use and credibility contributed differently to the various efficacy dimensions. Implications and recommendations are further discussed.

Keywords: Political efficacy, Voters, Media use, Media credibility, Malaysia

1. Introduction

Transformations in the media landscape and technological advancement have impacted on people's exposure to the media, and media use in shaping their political behaviors. Political information and news about current issues obtained from different sources, influence political behaviors, such as political efficacy. As audience members are dependent on the media for information, media are expected to maintain a high level of credibility. As such, scholars are interested to examine

the patterns of media use and media believability among the audiences, denoting that the higher the media credibility, the higher the level of exposure for news and information and a higher level of political efficacy.

In the political domain and during election elections, voters are heavily dependent on the media (electronic, print or online) for their understanding and awareness about the elections. They obtain their information on political parties, election campaigns, candidates, voting information, polling centers, important issues raised during election campaigns. People also gather information through interpersonal communication, such as by talking and discussing with family members, friends, colleagues, and acquaintances, which shape their political attitude, voting intention, and political efficacy.

It is an interesting to examine the changing patterns in media credibility and the perception of voters influence on the political system of the country. The current study examines the relationship between media use and media credibility and political efficacy posting that trust in the media use leads to trust in the political system.

It has been found that the channels of communication affect greatly on how the voters understood the messages and formed their attitude towards the candidates (Kaid & Postelnicu, 2005). In addition, citizens obtained information from political advertisements made available through the media (particularly television), but those highly aware would use the advertisement as a substitute for other types of information, such as for seeking more information, and for shaping their attitude towards the political candidates (Valentino, Hutchings, & Williams, 2004). It is argued that higher level of political efficacy reflects the stability of a political system (Wu, 2003).

Thus, if there is higher of political efficacy then there is greater indication that people will likely vote and feel that they have an effect on the government. Meanwhile those with lower political efficacy are likely to support the reform parties or may not even vote as they feel that they may not have any impact on the government or political process.

The main objective of this study is to investigate the prediction of demographics, new and traditional media use and credibility indicators on the perceived political efficacy among the Malaysian voters. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Gauge the level of media use.
2. Explore level of credibility in the media.
3. Find whether Malaysian voters are politically efficacious.
4. To test the prediction of demographic variables, media use and credibility indicators on political efficacy.

The overall theoretical interest is to examine the role of media in affecting political efficacy among the voters; whether levels of media exposure and trust in the

media would determine levels of political efficacy. This study examines the different roles traditional media have on political efficacy over the role played by the social media and whether there are dimensions in political efficacy as an outcome of media exposure.

2. Literature review

2.1 Political efficacy

Scholars had examined the level of efficacy among the citizens and their capability in influencing the political system but had scarcely studied the concept with the influence of media exposure and use. Political efficacy as a concept was first defined by political scientists Campbell, Gurin, and Miller in their 1954 book "The Voter Decides." Their definition of political efficacy was: "the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact on the political process. It is the feeling that political and social change is probable, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change" (Cited in Caprara, Vecchione, Capanna, & Mebane, 2009, p.1002).

Two broad dimensions on political efficacy emerged from subsequent discussions, namely internal efficacy and external efficacy (Caprara et al., 2009). Internal efficacy was defined as "people's beliefs that the political system is amenable to change through individual and collective influence", whereas external political efficacy is defined as "personal beliefs regarding the ability to achieve desired results in the political domain through personal engagement and an efficient use of one's own capacities and resources" (Caprara et al., 2009, p.1003). In another study, political efficacy was found to have three dimensions: internal, external and epistemic political efficacy (Pingree, 2011). Based on social cognitive theory, Caprara et al. (2009) proposed another concept which was perceived political self-efficacy. All these different concepts examined the level of influence a citizen could have on the political system of a country.

Political efficacy was correlated with several political attitudes and demographic characteristics. A higher level of political engagement and political trust were positively correlated with a higher level of political efficacy among the voters (Wu, 2003). Kaid, McKinney and Tadesco (2007) found that political information efficacy, which was similar to internal political efficacy, was positively correlated with political interest. The concept was also correlated with political interest, political knowledge, political cynicism, political awareness and voting likelihood among others (i.e., Kaid, Postelnicu, Landreville, Yun, & LeGrange, 2007; Karaman, 2004; Sweetser & Kaid, 2008).

Demographic profile was also found to contribute to political efficacy. Gender was found to have significant influence on political information efficacy and perceived political self-efficacy (Caprara et al., 2009; Kaid et al., 2007). It meant that males were more politically efficacious than females. Level of education was also impacting political efficacy (Allen, 1991). Those with a higher level of education had a higher level of political efficacy. With the above literature discussed, the following hypotheses were developed:

H1: Malaysian voters would be more likely to perceive themselves as politically efficacious.

H2: Education level and gender would have significant effect on political efficacy.

2.2 Media use and credibility

People use the media to fulfill certain needs such as cognitive, social, and personal needs (Blumler & Katz, 1974; Katz, Gurevitch, & Haas, 1973). Majority of studies on media uses and gratifications reported that people are driven by three major motives: entertainment, social and information-seeking (Ancu & Cozma, 2009; Jamal & Melkote, 2008; P. Johnson & Yang, 2009; Kaye & Johnson, 2002; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010).

Patterns of media or news consumption were research areas for several decades among the scholars. Scholars were interested to examine the motives for media use and whether their needs were satisfied. News consumption patterns and information seeking and sharing activities among the Malaysian youth were examined (Freeman, 2013; Saodah Wok, Idid, & Norealyna Misman, 2012; Saodah Wok, Tamam, Bolong, & Ahmad, 2011). These studies revealed that Malaysian youth were exposed to television, followed by newspaper and Internet. It is also found that youth often discussed the news obtained from the media with friends more than the family members. This is in line with a recent study (Dhaha, 2014) which found that television use among Malaysian voters was higher than their use of other media such as newspaper, radio and Internet to obtain their political information. The level of interpersonal discussion was higher for friends than for family members. In contrast to this, Freeman (2013) found that young Malaysians preferred to obtain their news online than the mainstream media. With these contradicting results, the following hypothesis was put forward:

H3: Television exposure is higher than the exposure to newspapers, radio and internet

However, studies are concerned about media consumption, and also on perceptions of media credibility among the audiences. Scholars have examined the source

credibility in several decades. Media credibility is still a popular topic among mass communication scholars during the last two decades. Studies on media credibility have increased, in parallel with the growing media audiences and their convergence of several outlets of communication to keep in track with the latest news and political current issues. Therefore, with availability and accessibility of television and radio devices, newspapers, and the Internet, media have become a companion for all household members.

There are several reasons for the major concerns about the media credibility among the scholars (Idid & Saodah, 2005). First, people depend on media for their information and news on politics and elections in order to make decisions. Second, people will depend heavily on media during the crisis in order to seek latest news on the issues important to them and their community members. Third, people's dependence on the media is controlled by other factors especially how they perceive it as credible. A medium perceived as less credible would cause people to switch to other forms of media.

Research on media credibility has two main broad areas: source credibility (Golan, 2010; K. a. Johnson & Wiedenbeck, 2009; T. J. Johnson & Kaye, 2010) and medium credibility (Idid & Saodah, 2005, 2006; Jakob, 2010; T. J. Johnson & Fahmy, 2008). The current study is falls on the second category.

Studies examining the changing patterns of credibility make comparisons between television and newspaper use and between established traditional media and new media. Mixed results were reported regarding the credibility of television compared to newspapers, with some studies suggesting that television was more credible than newspapers (Idid & Saodah, 2005, 2006; Saodah et al., 2011; Zhang, Zhou, & Shen, 2014). Recent studies (i.e, Miller & Kurpius, 2010) focused on categorizing news media into hard news and soft news. Their respondents perceived hard news as more credible than soft news.

Moreover, studies also made comparisons between Internet and traditional media credibility. Generally online media was perceived to be more credible than its traditional counterpart (T. J. Johnson & Kaye, 2010; T. Johnson & Kaye, 1998; Melican & Dixon, 2008). College youth perceived Internet sources associated with non-traditional media as less credible as compared to their counterparts (Melican & Dixon, 2008). Online media is perceived as more credible than traditional media (T. Johnson & Kaye, 1998). They compared between exposure to online media (online newspapers, online news magazines) and their traditional counterparts. T. J. Johnson & Kaye, (2010) found three out of seven online sources (broadcast television, and cable television, and candidate literature) were rated as more credible than their traditional counterparts.

Idid and Saodah (2006) conducted a longitudinal study on media credibility in Malaysia with special reference to the relationship of television, newspaper,

and Internet use with popular votes obtained by Barisan National (BN), the current ruling coalition, during four elections. They found that credibility ratings for television and newspapers slightly increased particularly in 1990 and 1995. Their study also suggested a correlation between media credibility and popular voter obtained by BN. Regarding Internet credibility, Malaysians were found to be doubtful about the information available online (Dhaha, 2014; Idid & Saodah Wok, 2006).

Based on the above discussion, this hypothesis is postulated:

H4: Television would be rated as more credible than the newspapers, radio, and Internet.

Media use is often correlated with several political behaviors. Kaid et al. (2007) found that television use was positively related to political efficacy and political participation. Similarly, Allen (1991) found a correlation between television use and newspaper use with political efficacy. In other studies, the Internet use was found to have a significant impact on internal political efficacy (Kenski & Stroud, 2006; Sweetser & Kaid, 2008). With these discussions, the following hypothesis is posited:

H5: A higher level of Media use (television, newspaper, radio, and Internet) would have significant prediction on political efficacy.

Kaid et al. (2007) found that young voters' exposure to mainstream media such as television had an impact on their confidence in participating in political activities such as voting. This denotes the perception of the young about their effectiveness in influencing the political system. This is likely to be shaped by the media and the voters' credibility perceptions. Little is known about the media credibility explanations of political efficacy. It is argued in this study that since the exposure to media influenced the way people perceived efficacy in politics, it is also likely that perceptions of trust and believability in the media will predict the political efficacy. As such, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H6: Attributes of media credibility would have significant prediction on political efficacy.

H7: Media systems credibility would have significant prediction on political efficacy.

H8: Trust in political reporting would have significant prediction on political efficacy.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design and sample size

This study employed a quota sampling procedure in gathering data from the respondents. This technique of sampling is most appropriate when it is needed to represent each proportion of the population in the sample (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011; Wolfer, 2007). In a multicultural, multiethnic country like Malaysia, the quota sampling is appropriate in order to represent the different ethnicities according to their proportion.

The population of this study who were Malaysian registered voters aged over 21 years were selected from two parliamentary constituencies in each state, except Perlis, where only one parliamentary constituency was selected. A face-to-face interview was conducted lasting about 45 minutes.

3.2 Measurements

Several variables were used to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. The respondents were asked how frequent they watched television, listened to the radio, read the newspapers, and surfed the Internet per week on a seven-point scale ranging from 0 day to 7 days a week.

Political efficacy was measured with fourteen (14) items covering the most predominant dimensions in the literature: internal and external political (Caprara et al., 2009; Kenski & Stroud, 2006; Sweetser & Kaid, 2008). An example item includes "my voice is important to decide the country's future". All those items were measured on four-point scale of (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) agree, and (4) strongly agree.

Media systems credibility was measured with four indicators: television, newspaper, radio, and Internet credibility (Idid & Saodah Wok, 2005, 2006). Respondents were asked to rate their level of credibility with the above indicators using four-point scale where 1 denotes highly not credible and 4 indicate highly credible. Trust in political reporting was measured with four indicators: Trust on political report in television, trust on political report in newspaper, trust on political report in radio, and trust on political report in Internet, using four-point scale. Finally, attributes of media credibility was measured with 6 items, using a five-point scale of (1) totally disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) A little Agree, (4) Agree, (5) totally agree.

3.3 Data analysis

The data, collected in July 2012, were analyzed using statistical package for social science program (SPSS for windows, version 17.0). The data were keyed-in the software and descriptive and inferential statistics were reported to answer research questions and objectives, as well as to test the hypotheses of the research.

The descriptive statistics such frequencies, means, and standard deviation were used to explain the demographic profiles of the respondents. Exploratory factor analysis was conducted for the fourteen items of political efficacy, while Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of the study's scales.

One-sample t-test was conducted to test the first hypothesis, whereas paired sample t-test was used to test the third and fourth hypotheses. Finally, hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the rest of the hypotheses of the study.

4. Findings

4.1 Demographic profile

This section displays description of the respondents' demographic background. The survey gathered information related to gender, age, race, income, religion, and educational achievement, see (Table 1).

As shown in table 1, equal number of males and females responded to this study. About two-thirds (61%) of the participants were Malays, followed by Chinese (27%), Indians (10%) and others (2%). About half of the respondents were between 21–40 years; few of them were between 40–45 years and between 46–50 years. Slightly more than half of the respondents (51%) obtained less than 11 years of education, followed by those who obtained below diploma (29%), and degree or higher degrees (18%). In terms of family income, about fifty percent of the participants earned an income of less than RM2000, followed by those who earned between RM2001-RM4000 (43%). Very few earned more than RM4000 per month of household income.

Table 1. Demographic profile of the respondents

Demographics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	1019	50
Female	1011	50
Total	2030	100.00
Race		
Malay	1245	61
Chinese	547	27
Indian	197	10
Others	41	2
Total	2030	100.00
Religion		
Islam	1257	62
Hindu	185	9
Christian	168	8
Taoist	20	1
Confucius	28	1
Others	8	1
Total	2030	100.00
Age		
21–25 years old	311	10
26–30 years old	209	15
31–35 years old	278	14
36–40 years old	212	10
41–45 years old	263	13
46–50 years old	198	10
51–55 years old	295	15
56–60 years old	208	10
61–65 years old	55	3
Total	2029	100.00
Education		
No formal education	24	2
Primary school	94	5
Form 1–3	213	11
Form 4–5	711	35

Table 1. (continued)

Demographics	Frequency	Percentage
Form 6/certificate/diploma	575	29
Degree or higher	367	18
Total	2030	100.00
Family income		
Less than RM1000	202	10
RM1000–1500	213	16
RM1501–2000	332	17
RM2001–2500	194	10
RM2501–3000	282	14
RM3001–3500	225	11
RM3501–4000	144	7
RM4001–4500	124	6
RM4501–5000	97	5
RM5001–5500	22	1
RM5501–6000	30	2
More than RM6001	25	1
Total	1990	100.00

4.2 Media use and its credibility

Table 2 shows the use of new and traditional media channels among the respondents. The results showed that television ($M = 5.42$, $SD = 1.734$) was the first choice for the respondents to keep them updated about political issues and currents news, followed by newspapers ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 2.092$), and radio use ($M = 3.968$, $SD = 2.277$). However, the Internet ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 2.560$) was the least preferred to obtain political news and information among the respondents.

The results also showed that a higher percentage (42%) of the respondents were exposed to television everyday compared to use of newspaper (31%) and 18% each for radio use and Internet use. A total of 24% never used the Internet, whereas 12% did not listen to the radio as compared only to 4% and 1% who were not exposed to newspapers and television respectively.

The study was interested how the voters perceived new and traditional media channels. Table 3 presents the results of descriptive statistics. The results suggested that people were still holding trust in the mainstream media. Among those who were exposed to television, 54% of them said television was credible, about

Table 2. Media and use among the voters

No.	Statements/items	Level of use: days per week							Mean	SD*	
		None	Once a week	2 days a week	3 days a week	4 days a week	5 days a week	6 days a week			ev- ery- day
1.	Television use	1%	1%	5%	12%	10%	15%	15%	42%	5.415	1.734
2.	Newspaper use	4%	4%	8%	17%	14%	13%	9%	31%	4.618	2.092
3.	Radio use	12%	4%	11%	13%	15%	13%	13%	18%	3.968	2.277
4.	Internet use	24%	6%	9%	10%	14%	10%	10%	18%	3.400	2.560

Note. *Standard deviation

one-third of them said it was highly credible, whereas only 15% said it cannot be credible. Overall, 85% of the voters were credible of television. As for newspapers, 78% of the voters trusted or highly trusted the newspapers, and 22% of them distrusted it. Majority termed radio (75%) as credible, while about one quarter (26%) said it was not. Among those who used the Internet perceived as a credible source (63%) compared to 37% who did not trust it at all.

It is noteworthy that television as a credible source ($M = 3.14$, $SD = .7059$) was rated highest than the other media systems. People were still holding credible in what the television reported on politics and current affairs. Newspapers ($M = 2.93$, $SD = .7313$) and radio ($M = 2.85$, $SD = .7613$) were also rated higher in terms of their credibility. However, the Internet ($M = 2.65$, $SD = .8857$) was the least credible source among the respondents.

Table 3. Media systems credibility among the voters

No.	Variables	Media systems credibility				Mean	SD
		Highly untrusted	Untrusted	Trusted	Highly trusted		
1.	Television believability	2%	13%	54%	31%	3.142	.7059
2.	Newspaper believability	5%	17%	60%	18%	2.926	.7313
3.	Radio believability	6%	20%	58%	17%	2.846	.7613
4.	Internet believability	13%	24%	48%	15%	2.650	.8857

4.3 Exploratory factor analysis

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted for political efficacy, using principal components with Varimax rotation (Table 4). Before interpreting the rotation results, the assumptions of EFA were checked. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)

measure was checked to evaluate the appropriateness of running EFA. The KMO value was .824 with the significance of Bartlett's test of Sphericity with $X^2(78, N = 2,030) = 5779.91, p < .001$. This suggested that the data were suitable in conducting EFA. Table 4 shows the results of the EFA.

As shown in Table 4, three factors with a total of 13 items were extracted with Eigen value greater than 1. The factor loadings of all items were above the threshold of .50 as suggested by Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson (2010). Factors loadings ranged from .555 to .783.

The first factor labeled as "voter efficacy" consisted of five items. An example item includes "The voting is one way for me to express my opinion towards government". The second factor, external efficacy, consisted of five items, whereas the third factor (internal efficacy) consisted of three items. The three factors managed to explain about 51% of variance. All the three factors obtained an acceptable Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .746, .654 and .652 respectively. The extracted factors were used in subsequent analysis.

Table 4. Exploratory Factor analysis for Political efficacy

FACTORS	Item Label	ITEMS	F1	F2	F3	Eigen Value	Alpha (α)
<i>F1: Voter efficacy</i>	EFFIC5.	My vote is important to decide the country's future	.749			2.491	.746
	EFFIC11.	The Malaysian government is determined through election	.740				
	EFFIC4.	The voting is one way for me to express my opinion towards government	.730				
	EFFIC10.	Voters in Malaysia are free to go out to vote	.610				
	EFFIC12.	Parliament has the power to enact law	.555				

Table 4. (continued)

FACTORS	Item Label	ITEMS	F1	F2	F3	Eigen Value	Alpha (α)
<i>F2: External efficacy</i>	EFFIC14.	Federal government can still govern although lacking two thirds seats in parliament		.665		2.131	.654
	EFFIC7.	The government cares about the peoples' welfare		.605			
	EFFIC9.	Election (GE & By elections) in Malaysia is handled fairly		.604			
	EFFIC6.	The government officers care about my concerns		.581			
	EFFIC13.	I do not mind who becomes Prime Minister as long as he eligible, regardless of race		.578			
<i>F3: Internal efficacy</i>	EFFIC1.	I understand sufficiently the country's political issues			.783	2.013	.652
	EFFIC2.	I am confident when I talk about politics and administrative issues			.730		
	EFFIC3.	I am free to voice my concern on government politics			.650		
		% variance explained for each	19.163	16.414	15.482		
		Overall % variance explained		51.055			
		Overall Alpha		.790			

Note. The scale used for these items rang from totally disagree to totally agree (4-point likert scale)

Table 5. Cronbach's alpha for Variable Constructs

Constructs	No. of items	Cronbach's alpha
Voter efficacy	5	.746
External efficacy	5	.654
Internal efficacy	3	.652
Political reporting trust	4	.706
Attributes of media credibility	5	.846
Media systems credibility	4	.679
Media use	4	.614

4.4 Reliability test

The reliability test, conducted prior doing further analysis, examined the internal consistency and coherence among the items under investigation. The Cronbach's alpha was used to test the internal consistency of the constructs. Table 5 displayed the results of the Cronbach's alpha coefficients.

As shown in Table 5, all constructs had internal consistency, since the Cronbach's alpha coefficients were higher than the cut-point of .60 and above (Hair et al., 2010). The values of reliability ranged from .614 to .846. The highest coefficient alpha was recorded to attributes of media credibility ($\alpha = .846$), followed by voter efficacy ($\alpha = .706$), and political reporting trust ($\alpha = .706$). The lowest Cronbach's alpha obtained by media use ($\alpha = .614$). Other constructs such as external efficacy, internal efficacy, and media systems credibility obtained an acceptable reliability values ($\alpha = .654, .652, \& .679$ respectively).

4.5 Hypotheses testing

The first hypothesis suggested that Malaysian voters felt they were politically efficacious. To test this hypothesis, a one-sample t-test analysis was conducted for the three dimensions of political efficacy. As shown in Table 6, the results supported this hypothesis. Malaysian voters felt they had voting political efficacy ($t = 103.365, p = .000$), external political efficacy ($t = 57.935, p = .000$) and internal efficacy ($t = .72.045, p = .000$). Among the three dimensions, Malaysian voters were found to have a higher voting efficacy, meaning that they felt they had influence on the political system in the country through individual and collective levels.

Table 6. One-sample t-test showing political efficacy dimensions

No.	Dimensions	Mean	SD	t	df	p
1.	Voter efficacy	3.0705	.46629	103.365	2026	.000
2.	External efficacy	2.7380	.57279	57.935	2021	.000
3.	Internal efficacy	2.8718	.54427	72.045	2022	.000

In order to test the third and fourth hypotheses, a paired sample t-test was conducted. The results are presented in Tables 7 and 8 respectively. The third hypothesis postulated that television use would be rated higher than other media outlets such as newspaper, radio, and Internet. The results revealed a significant difference between television use and newspaper use ($t = 17.040, p = .000$); between television use and radio use ($t = 27.102, p = .000$); and between television use and Internet use ($t = 31.969, p = .000$). Malaysians depended on television ($M = 5.42, SD = 1.74$) more than the newspapers ($M = 4.62, SD = 2.09$), radio ($M = 3.97, SD = 2.28$) and

Internet ($M = 3.40, SD = 2.56$). This fully supports the third hypothesis. Furthermore, the results suggested a significant positive correlation between television use and newspaper use ($r = .403, p = .000$), between television use and radio use ($r = .309, p = .000$), and between television use and Internet use ($r = .171, p = .000$).

Table 7. Paired Sample t-test between television with other media

No.	Variables	Mean	SD	r	p	t	df	p
Pair 1	Television use	5.4167	1.73517	.403	.000	17.040	2027	.000
	Newspaper use	4.6179	2.09150					
Pair 2	Television use	5.4167	1.73517	.309	.000	27.102	2025	.000
	Radio use	3.9679	2.27742					
Pair 3	Television use	5.4167	1.73517	.171	.000	31.969	2027	.000
	Internet use	3.40	2.560					

On the other hand, the results of Paired Sample t-test also supported the fourth hypothesis (H4). Significant differences were found between television credibility and newspaper credibility ($t = 14.386, p = .000$), between credibility in television and radio ($t = 17.653, p = .000$), and between television and Internet credibility ($t = 20.914, p = .000$). The television was the most trusted source among the Malaysians ($M = 3.14, SD = .706$) followed by newspapers ($M = 2.93, SD = .731$) and radio ($M = 2.85, SD = .759$). The Internet was the least credible media among the respondents ($M = 2.65, SD = .886$). In addition, a strong positive relationship was found between television and newspaper trust ($r = .561, p = .000$); a moderate positive relationship between television and radio trust ($r = .476, p = .000$); a weak positive relationship between television and Internet trust ($r = .138, p = .000$).

Table 8. Paired t-test between television credibility with other media

No.	Variables	Mean	SD	r	p	t	df	p
Pair 1	Television believability	3.1424	.70641	.561	.000	14.386	2022	.000
	Newspaper believability	2.9268	.73123					
Pair 2	Television believability	3.1424	.70641	.476	.000	17.653	2025	.000
	Radio believability	2.8475	.75943					
Pair 3	Television believability	3.1424	.70641	.138	.000	20.914	2014	.000
	Internet believability	2.6496	.88590					

For the rest of the hypotheses, hierarchical regression analysis (HRA) was conducted. HRA is used when there were several independent variables predicting a dependent variable as well as the researcher intended to gauge the individual

effects of variables or a group of variables. Three separate HRA analyses were conducted for the three dependent variables; namely internal efficacy, external efficacy, and voter efficacy. Prior to interpreting the results, regression assumptions were checked. The dependent variables were linearly distributed on the independent variables; outliers and multicollinearity were also checked. Fewer respondents were detected as outliers and removed accordingly. Dummy score was conducted for gender (0 = female, 1 = male) and education (0 = less educated “form 4–5 and below”; 1 = highly educated “form 6 and above”). The demographics were entered into the first block, media use into the second block, while the trust variables were interred into the last block.

As shown in table 9, demographics (gender and education level), media use indicators and trust variables were regressed on political efficacy dimensions: voter

Table 9. Results of the hierarchical regression analysis

Predictors	Dependent variables		
	Voter efficacy	External efficacy	Internal efficacy
Demographics			
Gender	-.009	.029	.067*
education	.025	-.024	.050*
R Square	.005 (1%)	.001 (0%)	.017 (2%)
F-change (sig.)	4.690 (Sig = .009)	1.218(Sig = .296)	17.741 (Sig = .000)
Media use:			
Television use	-.096**	.008	-.003
Newspaper use	.165**	.062*	.091**
Radio use	-.059*	.021	-.019
Internet use	-.025	.042	.047*
R² change	.035(4%)	.015 (2%)	.014 (2%)
F-change (sig.)	18.384 (Sig = .000)	7.754 (Sig = .000)	7.499 (Sig = .000)
Trust variables:			
Attributes of media credibility	.289**	.367**	.362**
Media systems credibility	.142**	.033	.050
Trust in political reporting	.023	.070*	.036
R² change	.143 (15%)	.172 (17%)	.160 (16%)
F-change (sig.)	117.631 (Sig = .000)	142.650 (Sig = .000)	133.477 (Sig = .000)
R² total	.182 (18%)	.188 (19%)	.192 (19%)

Note. * $p < .05$, values are standardized beta coefficients; ** $p < .001$

efficacy, internal efficacy and external efficacy. Demographic variables did not contribute to voter efficacy and external efficacy. However, they were predictors of internal efficacy with gender ($\beta = .067, p < .05$) and education level ($\beta = .050, p < .05$). It meant that males and highly educated voters had more internal political efficacy than females and less educated ones.

The results also suggested that television use ($\beta = -.096, p < .001$) and radio use ($\beta = .059, p < .05$) negatively contributed to voter efficacy meaning that the higher the television and radio use, the less their voting efficacy. In addition, Internet use ($\beta = .047, p < .05$) positively predicted internal efficacy, while newspaper use positively predicted all political efficacy dimensions, namely voter efficacy ($\beta = .165, p < .001$), external efficacy ($\beta = .062, p < .05$) and internal efficacy ($\beta = .091, p < .001$). All the media use indicators collectively explained about 4%, 2% and 2% of variance in voter efficacy, external efficacy, and internal efficacy respectively, while demographic variables contributed a minimal variance.

On the other hand, credibility variables explained a higher percentage as compared to demographic variables and media use indicators, with variance of 15%, 17%, and 16% in voter efficacy, external efficacy, and internal efficacy respectively. The results revealed that attributes of media credibility significantly and positively predicted voter efficacy ($\beta = .289, p < .001$), external efficacy ($\beta = .367, p < .001$) and internal efficacy ($\beta = .362, p < .001$). Media systems credibility only positively predicted voter efficacy ($\beta = .142, p < .001$), while trust in political reporting only explained external efficacy ($\beta = .070, p < .05$).

5. Discussion and conclusion

This study sought to examine the influential predictors of political efficacy among Malaysian voters drawing from demographic variables; media use measures, and media credibility measures. The study collected the responses regarding the study from 2030 Malaysian registered voters who were selected using quota sampling from all parliamentary constituencies in the country.

The results suggested that television was the most preferable media among the respondents followed by newspapers and radio. The Internet was found to be the least important to the respondents for seeking information and news. This is in line with previous studies (Dhaha, 2014; Saodah et al., 2011), which found that Malaysians preferred television over other media outlets, but in contrast to Freeman's (2013) study which suggested youth's online media preference for seeking news. Television use was also correlated with other media use. It meant that those who were exposed to television were also exposed to other media such newspapers, radio and Internet, albeit in varying degrees.

Furthermore, the results showed some trust in the media particularly the mainstream media. Television was found to be the most credible among the respondents of this study, which supported findings from previous studies (Idid & Saodah, 2005, 2006; Saodah et al., 2011). In their longitudinal study, Idid and Saodah (2006) found that there was a rise and decline in the credibility perceptions of the media among voters in four elections. Television and newspaper was perceived as credible in 1990 and 1995 election but their credibility scores declined in 1999 and 2004. However, it seems that this study contributed to this area by identifying a rise in television and newspaper credibility in the last general election (GE 2013).

This study also found significant relationship of television trust with other media trust with varying degrees. Those who perceive television as trustworthy held some trust towards the other media outlets.

Malaysian voters were found to be politically efficacious. They were confident of their participation in the political system, through voting. It has been suggested that if the citizens perceived efficacious in the political domain, it reflected the stability of the political system and in practicing democracy (Wu, 2003). This study found three dimensions of political efficacy: voter, external and internal efficacy. Voter political efficacy was higher than the other two dimensions, which reflects a confidence among Malaysian voters in influencing the political system through the power of their voting. Previous studies (Caprara et al., 2009; Pingree, 2011) suggested two and three dimensions for political efficacy: internal, external, and epistemic efficacy.

Political efficacy dimensions in this study were found to be predicted by several dimensions including demographic variables, media use and credibility measures. Gender and education level managed to contribute only to internal efficacy, which indicated that males and highly educated voters perceived themselves as politically efficacious. This is in line with the findings of Allen (1991) in the context of Venezuela. . In the context of United States, Males and highly educated people were found to have higher political information efficacy and political self-efficacy (Caprara et al., 2009; Kaid et al., 2007).

Media uses, such as television, newspapers, radio, and the Internet, were correlated with political efficacy dimensions. Television use and radio use were negative predictors of voter political efficacy. This supports partially the findings of Allen (1991) which found that television is negatively correlated with political efficacy. Newspaper use was positively correlated with all dimensions of political efficacy. Internet use was found to have significant impact only on internal efficacy and supports previous studies (Kenski & Stroud, 2006; Sweetser & Kaid, 2008).

Media credibility measures had the highest contribution towards political efficacy and managed to explain about twenty percent in the variance for the three

political efficacy dimensions. Among the media credibility measures, attributes of media credibility contributed higher percentages compared to media systems credibility and trust in political reporting. The result also indicates that the way people perceive the media is partially shaping their self-perceptions of efficacy in participating political system.

The current study contributed to the body of knowledge by identifying the level of political efficacy among Malaysian voters, their level of media use, and their perceptions of media credibility, as well the factors that affect political efficacy.

This study found that media use measures differently predicted for efficacy. Although the study found a higher use level and credibility of the television contributed negatively to their political efficacy. Future studies should look into other factors that contribute to this phenomenon other than media use measures. It will also be useful to differentiate between entertainment (soft news) and politics (hard news). This may give better understanding about this issue.

It is also suggested to look into other political variables such as political interest, interest in political news, political knowledge, civic and political engagement to explain for political efficacy. This can provide further insights about which factors contribute much to the Malaysian level of political efficacy.

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