

DISABLED MALAYSIANS AND THEIR POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS: A PRELIMINARY SURVEY

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Abstract: This paper discusses findings on political consciousness among disabled Malaysians before the Malaysian 14th General Election. We disseminate an online questionnaire through social media platforms. 98 respondents participated in the survey. The respondents consist of 60 male (61.2%) and 38 females (38.8%). A number of Malay respondents score the highest with 78 respondents (79.6%), following by Chinese with 11 respondents (11.2%), Indian with 7 respondents (7.1%) and Kadazan-Dusun with 2 respondents (2%). Our respondents comprise of individuals from each of impairment group recognized by the Malaysian government. 11 respondents (11.2%) report that they are not registered as a voter, 2 respondents (2%) report in the application process and 1 respondent (1%) reports being not eligible to register. We find that factors exhibit by individual candidates, such as their personality and contribution are the top voting orientation as well as the manifesto. Besides that, our respondents utilize social media and news as their information outlets in following local politics. Though our respondents show political consciousness in terms of voter registration and voting in the election, we find many of our respondents do not know that each political coalition includes issues on disabled persons in their manifesto. Our respondents are also not confident of each political coalition's ability to keep their promises related to disabled persons' issues in their manifesto. 72 respondents (73.5%) agree and strongly agree that disabled person runs as a candidate. Finally, 88 respondents (89.8%) agree and strongly agree that disabled persons' issues must be included as part of political manifesto. We conclude this paper by discussing further research and capacity building programs to increase the political participation of disabled persons in Malaysia.

Keywords: Political Consciousness, Disabled Malaysians, 14th General Election, Political Coalitions, Manifesto

Introduction

In a democratic nation, there are at least six dimensions of political participation for persons with impairment and/or chronic illness to get into. Those dimensions are executive body, legislative body, judicial body, election, political parties, and civil society organizations and civil society movements. The most visible and direct form of power for citizens, including for persons with impairment and/or chronic illness is through their votes during the election. However, a vote in the election begins with one's political consciousness.

Recently, we witness a shift in Malaysian politics during the 14th General Election when the previously opposition coalition namely Pakatan Harapan becomes the new government, defeating Barisan Nasional which had governed this developing nation for over 60 years. This monumental development in Malaysia's politics (as many brands it as the 'new Malaysia') is argued to be the impact of rising political consciousness among Malaysians. However, this paper is not going to discuss who wins or loses. Rather, we sought to study the political consciousness among persons with impairment and/or chronic illness towards local politics.

Previously, Article 119(1) of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia guarantees all citizens of Malaysia, including disabled Malaysians, aged 21 years old and above can register as a voter and fulfill their civic duty. However, both House of Representatives and House of Senates recently approved the amendment to Article 119(1) to decrease the minimum voting age to 18 years old. The news was obviously celebrated with joy and pride as it brings the new era for local political landscape as some politicians put it.

However, according to Article 119(3) of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia, those who have unsound mind are not eligible to register as voters. In theory, persons with a mental health problem (which may extend to persons with learning disabilities) cannot register as a voter. But, in reality, anyone who wants to register as a voter or run as a candidate is not required to disclose their medical and psychological condition during registration. Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities also explicitly mentions the right of disabled individuals to participate in political and public life.

In Malaysia, those who unable to mark the ballot paper on their own such as persons with visual impairment are allowed to bring any trusted individual to assist them either their family member, spouse, child or friend. The assistant must be 21 years old and above, Malaysian citizen and fill up Form 10 provided by the polling station. There are also instances where voters have to go to the second or third floor of the polling station. This proves to be difficult for those who use a wheelchair or crutches. For this particular group of voters, they are given special allowance to vote at the ground floor of the polling station.

This paper presents findings from our survey among the disabled community before May 9th, 2018. We want to investigate our respondents' attitude toward voting factors, political parties, and each political coalition's manifesto. This preliminary research aims to gather basic information on the political consciousness of the disabled community with regards to their participation in local politics and serve as a basis for a long-term study on the topic. In the next section, we review past research on a similar topic and theorize the political consciousness of persons with impairment and/or chronic illness. Following that, we explain the research methodology. We then continue with the discussion on the findings gathered from our research participants.

Literature Review

There are a couple of international human rights instruments that can be applied to safeguard the right to political and public life among persons with impairment and/or chronic illness. Those are the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which was adopted in 1966 and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which was adopted in 2006. Besides these international human rights instruments, there are also few regional strategies which aim at the advancement of disabled people's rights. Among those rights is the right to political participation and in the decision-making process.

In the third Asia Pacific Decade for Persons with Disabilities 2013-2022, which is also known as the Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, several targets, core indicators, and supplementary indicators have been underlined with regards to disabled persons' participation in political system and in decision making process (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2012, pp. 21-22). Recently, ASEAN adopted the ASEAN Enabling Masterplan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In this regional plan, several target programs are underlined under the ASEAN Political-Security Community (<https://asean.org/storage/2018/11/ASEAN-Enabling-Masterplan-2025-Mainstreaming-the-Rights-of-Persons-with-Disabilities.pdf>):

APSC 1: Encourage taking all appropriate legislative and administrative measures to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities to fully and meaningfully participate in public and political life to vote, to be elected and to access to justice on an equal basis with those without disabilities;

APSC 2: Encourage access to information from public and private sector websites on reasonable accommodation for court services, elections, accessible election and universal design polling stations, and other political processes by developing a disability-inclusive system with the use of new technologies and alternative formats such as braille, audio, closed-captioned and/or audio-described videos, and universally designed electronic formats, making available subtitles in the videos and television, assistance of professional sign language interpreters, and cartoon materials for persons with learning disabilities; and,

APSC 5: Raise awareness within the judiciary, political bodies, and election commissions on the rights of persons with disabilities and disability inclusion through the celebration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) and other relevant events, such as arts and sports events as well as various communication and informative media.

However, without political will from the governments to achieve the above-mentioned targets and indicators, there will never be a meaningful change in the disabled people's lives. To make an issue or a service becomes politically relevant, Oliver (1990, p. 101) supposes two possible strategies; through the ballot box during the election and through pressure groups' activities. In the context of British disabled people's movement history, several factors such as the coming together of disabled people to form different groups, the realization of broader scope of disablement, external circumstances, and the contentious debate between income and oppression approach planted the seeds for disabled people's participation in the political process (Campbell & Oliver, 1996).

The participation of persons with impairment and/or chronic illness in the election is viewed as both a tool and the goal to minimize marginalization and to mainstream disability issues in the overall national agenda (Oluchina, 2015, p. 312). Despite international recognition of the right of persons with impairment and/or chronic illness in the political and public life, many countries in different regions still impose discriminatory elements in their laws which prohibit some persons with impairment to vote and to be elected (Oluchina, 2015) as well as other infrastructural, cultural, resource and socio-demographical barriers (Sackey, 2015).

In New Zealand, barriers to political participation among disabled persons concern with access to information which include limited alternative to accessible formats and voting options for those who have reading, writing and literacy difficulties, as well barriers in built environment and lack of accessible transportation to voting centers (New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2012). In the United States, disabled persons face barriers in terms of voter registration, transportation, difficulty to get an absentee ballot for those who unable to leave their houses and lack of access to convenient voting (Hall & Alvarez, 2012).

In another research by Schur and Adya (2012), they find that disabled citizens in the United States remain to be less likely to take part in the election process, tend to support the government role in creating jobs and providing health services, but they also give a lower rating on government responsiveness and trustworthiness. In the recent report by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (2018), disabled people still face extreme underrepresentation in all political structures and only 0.4% of national parliamentarian in the region is disabled individuals.

Research or data on political participation among disabled Malaysians are very limited, if not next to nothing. So far, the political representation of persons with impairment and/or chronic illness can only be seen through the appointment of a senator in the upper house of the parliament. The first senator representing this group was the late Professor Datuk Dr. Ismail Salleh, who is blind starting in 2007. But his term was cut short due to his sudden death in 2009 caused by a heart attack. Then, the community of Malaysians with impairment and/or chronic illness has to wait almost four years before the second senator was appointed in 2013. The current serving senator is Ms. Bathmavathy Krishnan, who has a mobility impairment. Her term is expected to finish at the end of 2019.

In addition, no one from the disabled community has been appointed to hold high-level public office. With regards to participation in the decision-making process, a number of persons with an impairment have been appointed and currently serve in the National Council for Persons with Disabilities under the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development. Except for the appointment of Professor Dr. Ruzita Amin who has a mobility impairment to the National Education Advisory Council under the Ministry of Education, no other persons with impairment and/or chronic illness are involved in other national-level councils under different ministries.

Hence, we feel there is a need to assess the situation of political participation among Malaysians with impairment and/or chronic illness. That is the reason we initiate this preliminary survey on political consciousness among these group members. In so doing, we hope we can facilitate more research on the relations of disabled people to the local political system, the local political paradigm for disability management, and the governance philosophy of disabled people's inclusion.

Theorizing Political Consciousness Among Disabled Persons

In this section, we will review related theories and models with respect to political consciousness and political power. From there, we will try to contextualize political consciousness in disabled people's political participation. Though we discuss political consciousness, this part draws from various fields such as political psychology, political theories, special education, and disability studies. Through interdisciplinary discourse, we can better conceptualize a model of political consciousness in the disabled people's context.

Shokri (2017a) poses the concept of political consciousness as the manifestation of an integrated concept of power, which composes of political power (power to rule) and political rights (moral construction and obligation towards power). On the other end of the spectrum, there is a negative political consciousness when those in power prey on their citizens' belief in the divinely-drawn power of those with authority or when they use religion claims to strengthen their control over the citizens (Shokri, 2017b).

Although we are not going to comment on religious politics and its relations to the formation of negative political consciousness in this paper, we can see the same negative political consciousness to develop in other socio-cultural contexts. The similar ideological fanaticism, be it from naturally-claimed or human source, can harm the basic values of human rights (dignity, autonomy, equality, and solidarity) which directly attack the heart of a democratic nation. Negative political consciousness occurs when there are imbalance and unaccountable relationships between power and human rights. If we take a closer look, the root is false episteme, which we will elaborate further when we discuss the relations of political consciousness and the disabled persons' political participation.

Political consciousness also dictates one's political actions. Krampen (1991) discusses the application of an action-theory model of personality to political participation. In his paper, he discusses that political participation is caused by the intersection of one's personality and the situation and action-specific expectancies. Krampen's paper demonstrates the link between one's personality traits and one's expectation of external circumstances in predicting political behavior. As we read Krampen's work, we also interested to see from a self-determination approach to this topic.

When we discuss individual factors and one's action, we feel there is a possibility to link this discussion to the self-determination model. In fact, self-determination is recognized as part of human rights as enshrined under Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (United Nations, 1966) as follows:

1. All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.
2. All peoples may, for their own ends, freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources without prejudice to any obligations arising out of international economic co-operation, based upon the principle of mutual benefit, and international law. In no case may a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence.
3. The States Parties to the present Covenant, including those having responsibility for the administration of Non-Self-Governing and Trust Territories, shall promote the realization of the right of self-determination, and shall respect that right, in conformity with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

Theoretical discussion of self-determination concept and its application are mostly present in the fields such as special education and positive psychology (Shogren, Wehmeyer, Palmer, & Forber-Pratt, 2015; Walter, Johnson, & Schomberg, 2009). One particular model catches our attention; causal agency theory. Wehmeyer (2004, p. 352) defines a causal agency as:

“... implies more, however, than just causing action; it implies that the individual who makes or causes things to happen in his or her life does so with an eye toward causing an effect to accomplish a specific end or to cause or create change. Causal agency ...implies that action was purposeful or performed to achieve an end.”

Wehmeyer (2004, pp. 353-355) also offers three operators as building blocks for a causal agent. The first operator is the “capability to perform causal actions and behaviors” which he divides into “causal capability” and “agentic capability”. The second operator is the two classes of challenges, which are opportunities and threats that influence one’s causal action and behavior. The final operator is “causal affects” which refer to emotional and other forms of psychological components that regulate one’s action and behavior.

We now turn to the discussion on political consciousness among persons with impairment and/or chronic illness. As we pointed above, though we agree political consciousness is built on political power and political rights, its fundamental root is episteme. Our argument here is based on the neo-biopsychosocial model of disability (Nasir & Efendi, 2018). Episteme produces and dictates the relationships between oneself and his or her society and the environment, which includes one’s political functioning. As we argued elsewhere (Nasir & Efendi, 2019), the domain of self consists of a parallel of body planes. One of these body planes is the political body plane which reflects one’s political functioning.

The political body plane constitutes of one’s civic and political embodiment. This includes one’s political consciousness, moral and human rights affiliations. As a political being, persons with impairment and/or chronic illness act in a dual state, both as an exhibitor and receiver. The state of dual character among persons with impairment and/or chronic illness proceeds in a continuum, resulting in active, passive, and semi-active positions. Hence, there are nine positions in the dual character spectrum as follows:

- (a) Active exhibitor and active receiver;
- (b) Active exhibitor and semi-active receiver;
- (c) Active exhibitor and passive receiver;
- (d) Semi-active exhibitor and active receiver;
- (e) Semi-active exhibitor and semi-active receiver;
- (f) Semi-active exhibitor and passive receiver;
- (g) Passive exhibitor and active receiver;
- (h) Passive exhibitor and semi-active receiver; and,

(i) Passive exhibitor and passive receiver.

As exhibitors, persons with impairment and/or chronic illness will make their political consciousness visible, either making a statement about an issue (e.g. writing an opinion piece or voting during the election) or to influence others. As receivers, persons with impairment and/or chronic illness receive politically-conscious input from other people which then enable them to construct their decisions or take actions (i.e. rejecting, accepting, or adapting to the input).

These dual character positions (passive, active, and semi-active) are the result of one's constructions of his or her political functioning, their perception of the costs and benefits of political actions as well as the interaction with external factors. When a person perceives his or her impairment as a deficit to a politically-active agent (usually the result of persisting stigmatization in the society and self-stigmatization), that person will feel his or her vote is worthless and there is no need for him or her to take any political action. This example illustrates the state of passive exhibitor and active receiver. This person becomes passive exhibitor due to his or her decision of not taking any politically-conscious action, while at the same time becomes active receiver because of his or her acceptability to society's negative construction of his or her political functioning.

Negative political consciousness also affects other body planes; social, cultural, economic, and emotions. In the domain of self, different body planes interact and seek to dominate. Dominant negative political functioning in oneself will also influence one's perception of his or her other functioning; social functioning, cultural functioning, and economic functioning. The same goes to the society. When the political institution imposes and embrace negative attitude and utilize disabling tools to regulate persons with impairment and/or chronic illness, the fallout will spread to other institutions (e.g. labor market, education sector, social protection industry, and healthcare sector).

As the focal point that regulates most of the citizens' behaviors through laws enacted in different sectors, the widespread is inevitable, hence producing collective negative political consciousness and enculture inaccurate episteme. This is why episteme has a very significant role in the formation of political consciousness. Episteme does not only exist at the individual level but also exist at the societal level. Inaccurate episteme can produce negative political body plane, negative attitudes among members of the society, and disabling political environment.

Beyond the dual character of the individual political consciousness, we argue that enough attraction between active dual character actors (which refers to persons who are active exhibitors and active receivers) can develop collective political consciousness. This will then produce "the active exposition/admission force". This suggests the basis of exploration to disabled people's movement, both at the domestic and the international level. Despite the possible existence of "the active exposition/admission force", we also acknowledge that the formation of political body plane among members of the disabled community is varied. We suppose there may be at least two or three dominant dual character positions among the community of persons with impairment and/or chronic illness. This complex variation though may not produce negative political functioning among the group members, certainly will cause "the dual character friction".

This dual character model of political consciousness may offer us a plentiful potential area of research. We believe this theoretical framework can initiate and facilitate the research on local disabled people's movements, their relations to other political actors, and the possibility of an inclusionary politics. The final question would be how to develop a positive political body plane? One proposal is through education. Looking at the context of workers' education, Sauviat (2015) discusses three main criteria of political consciousness. Those three criteria are counter-hegemony towards capitalism, class consciousness, and being generally politically active.

Although the oppression faced by persons with impairment and/or chronic illness can be linked to the capitalistic culture and system (Oliver, 1990, 1999; Pass, 2014; Thomas, 2003), we assert the oppressive political climate reveals more than just capitalistic norms which are rooted and deeply embedded in the society's ontology, culture, history, and interpersonal relationships. We propose the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities can be used as the educational and empowerment instrument to cultivate positive political consciousness. The convention not only educates and empowers persons with impairment and/or chronic illness but also nurtures inclusive political paradigm among the governments and other non-state actors.

Research Methodology

We use quantitative research design for this study to get a general pattern on perception and attitude among disabled Malaysians toward local politics before the 14th General Election. We develop an online questionnaire using a Google Form application. The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part collects general demographic information of our respondents, whereas the second part asks a number of questions regarding voting factors, knowledge about the political manifesto and so on. The questionnaire uses both the Malay language and English to assist better understanding among respondents with different language preferences.

We disseminate the online survey via social media platforms, namely, Facebook and WhatsApp. 98 respondents take part in the survey. The respondents consist of 60 male (61.2%) and 38 females (38.8%). We receive the highest number of responses from Malay community which are 78 respondents (79.6%), following by Chinese with 11 respondents (11.2%), Indian with 7 respondents (7.1%) and Kadazan-Dusun with 2 respondents (2%).

The age range of our respondents is between 21-60 years old. From the total number of our respondents, there are 31 respondents (31.6%) have a visual impairment, 49 respondents (50%) have a physical impairment, 8 respondents (8.2%) have a hearing impairment and 1 respondent (1%) has a speech impairment. Besides that, our dataset also consists of response from 2 respondents (2%) with learning disabilities, 2 respondents (2%) with a mental health problem and 5 respondents (5.1%) with multiple impairments.

At the time of data collection was conducted, 11 respondents (11.2%) report that they are not registered as voter, 2 respondents (2%) report being in the application process and 1 respondent (1%) claims to be ineligible to register as a voter. The remaining 84 respondents (82.3%) are registered as voters. Of these 98 respondents, 24 of them (23.5%) voted once, 12 respondents (12.2%) have voted twice before and 17 of them (17.3%) have the opportunity to vote more than twice.

We conduct our analysis process using Microsoft Excel software. We interpret our findings using descriptive analysis and simple percentage. Due to its small sample size, we strongly

prohibit the generalization from this study. Nonetheless, we hope this research can nurture critical discussion and further investigation in the local sphere. The section below discusses the survey findings gathered from our respondents.

Discussion

Let us begin with what motivates our respondents in voting for a candidate. Candidate's personality scores the highest number with 57 respondents (55.9%). Factors such as manifesto and candidate's past contributions share second place with 47 respondents (46.1%). Furthermore, the candidate's previous achievements seem to be the third factor. From these findings, it shows that most of our respondents are more likely to be concerned with individual-based indicators such as candidates' characteristics and their previous actions as well as the issues and solutions they bring up in their manifesto.

Table 1: Respondents' Voting Orientations

Orientations	Number of respondents
Political party	43
Candidate's personality	57
Manifesto	47
Previous achievement	44
Candidate's contribution	47

Characteristics such as competent (Aziz, Noh, & Amin, 2016), can project a positive image which then influences voters' perception and voting orientation. Besides that, the candidate's past contribution factor echoes previous case study conducted by Mahadi, Jali, and Besar (2016) in Kuala Krau Parliament. The previous contribution by a candidate or political parties can be a tool to nurture confidence amongst voters, hence resulting in candidate or political party to maintain their majority or even loose to their opponent. Though political party receives the least score, it seems this factor is still quite important where 43 respondents (42.1%) put political party as their voting orientation.

Like other citizens, our respondents also rely heavily on social media and news to inform their voting decision. 45 respondents (44.1%) also claim to keep tabs on local politics through information sharing between their family members and friends.

Table 2: Respondents' Sources For Political Information

Sources	Number of respondents
News	82
Social media	88
Political campaign	35
Public events	29
Family and friends	45

From Table 2 above, we can see that our respondents receive the least benefits from political campaigns and public events as their sources for information. This may link to physical inaccessibility and limited information dissemination. To develop political consciousness among society particularly persons with impairment and/or chronic illness, we firmly believe there must be a variety of channels for political education that available and accessible for all.

Many of our respondents, although varying in number for each political coalition, report that they do not know that each political coalition includes issues on disabled persons in their

manifesto. Table 3 below presents the number of respondents who do not aware of such information.

Table 3: Respondents' Knowledge Of Manifesto Pledges Relating To The Disabled Community

Political coalition	No knowledge	Have heard	Have read
Barisan Nasional	38	34	26
Gagasan Sejahtera	59	20	19
Pakatan Harapan	48	26	24

Although we can see most of our respondents are conscious in terms of voter registration and their role in casting ballot paper during election day, it seems many of them do not pay much attention to the content of manifesto presented by any political coalitions. This can happen due to a few reasons. First, most of them may feel more concern with bigger issues which also affect the disabled community such as cost of living, burdening taxes and so forth. Second, the political parties fail to effectively disseminate their manifesto via accessible platforms in accessible formats for disabled voters.

In addition, many of our respondents, although varying in number for each political coalition, are not sure whether each political coalition is capable to keep their promises related to disabled persons' issues in their manifesto. Table 4 below shows the respondents' confidence in political coalitions' deliverability of their pledges relating to the disabled people's issues.

Table 4: Respondents' Confidence In Political Coalitions' Deliverability

Political coalition	No	Yes	Not sure
Pakatan Harapan	16	30	52
Barisan Nasional	28	20	50
Gagasan Sejahtera	20	17	61

It is understandable for our respondents to feel unsure with the ability of Pakatan Harapan and Gagasan Sejahtera to fulfill their promises relating to disabled people's issues in their manifesto since they never govern the country. However, 51% of the total number of our respondents share the same feeling towards Barisan Nasional. This may foreshadow their skepticism and frustration toward the previous ruling party in terms of their role in governing the welfare of disabled citizens. This may also reflect the persisting negative relationships between politicians and the disabled community, which also, in turn, affect disabled people's participation in national governance at a different level of government. This certainly calls for deeper exploration of these subtopics.

72 respondents (73.5%) agree and strongly agree that disabled person runs as a candidate in the election. This gives a good sign which our respondents want to see at least a representative from their group to run as a candidate. Despite that, we question whether, first we have a capable individual from the disabled community to run as a candidate, and secondly, do political parties feel interested to put a disabled candidate in the election. The latter definitely relates to access of disabled individuals to become a member of political parties. Disabled individuals have the option to run as an independent candidate. However, they must possess a strong financial capacity as well as a good team to run his or her campaign in order to compete with candidates affiliated with political parties.

Finally, 88 respondents (89.8%) agree and strongly agree that disabled persons' issues must be included as part of political manifesto. This may reflect our respondents' aspiration to see disabled people issues become mainstream in local politics. In the 14th General Election, all three political coalitions do insert promises relating to the disabled community's welfare and development. But it makes us wonder, first who do they consult with when they develop the section on their manifesto about disabled people's issues. Second, does disabled community aware of any monitoring measures for such promises? All of these issues come back to the level of political consciousness among disabled individuals themselves.

From the discussion above, we find that our respondents show some degree of political consciousness before the 14th General Election, especially with regards to voter registration and the inclusion of disabled people in the election process. At the same time, we can see our respondents are lacking in terms of knowledge about the manifesto content, especially relating to their own issues.

Conclusion and Recommendations

On one part, we can see the respondents are politically conscious if we look at the percentage of respondents register as voters and their attitude towards the inclusion of disabled individuals as candidates. However, on another part, particularly with regards to awareness and knowledge on manifesto seem to be lacking. With regards to voting factors, our respondents share the same tendencies as other citizens. It is also not surprising that most of our respondents are feeling unsure of each political coalition's capabilities to fulfill their promises on disabled community issues.

As underlined in the Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, Malaysian government through collaboration with the Election Commission and Disabled People's Organizations must develop and implement capacity building programs, both for the disabled community and the electoral officers. For the disabled community, there is a need for a continuous effort to nurture political consciousness among them so they can make a well-informed decision and be actively participate in the political discourse such as debates, campaigns, and discussion. Training must also be conducted for electoral officers to prepare them in terms of the proper way to assist and interact with disabled voters from diverse impairment group.

We are fully aware of the limitations of this study. Due to its small number of respondents, we cannot generalize the findings. Nevertheless, we hope to shed some light on the situation of political participation among disabled Malaysians. Having said that, there is an urgent need for further research on this topic. Our next steps are to investigate the definition of political participation from the disabled community viewpoint, their experience during election day and the development of disabled people's movements in the local arena. We too are eager to investigate the attitude among politicians toward the politicization of disability issues, both from the opposition and ruling parties.

This paper also proposes the dual character model of political consciousness among persons with impairment and/or chronic illness. We welcome fellow scholars and students to probe into this topic and further scrutinize our theoretical proposal. We hope this paper encourages local political scientists to research the political participation of persons with impairment and/or chronic illness which eventually enrich local literature on this subject matter.

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