

# UNDERSTANDING YOUTH POLITICAL DEMAND BASED ON DEMOGRAPHIC PATTERNS IN MALAYSIA: AN OVERVIEW OF PAROCHIALISM AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE SABAH STATE ELECTION, 2020

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## ABSTRACT

*Youths are also the largest group of voters in Malaysia and Sabah in particular. This demonstrates that the youth plays a vital role in determining the victory of a party. Therefore, understanding the needs of youth voters will give an advantage to a political party in the election situation. Therefore, this study seeks to identify the political demands of youth voters in Sabah from development and parochialism perspectives based on the zones and parliamentary boundaries. Furthermore, this research aims to determine the impact of youth voters' demographic backgrounds on their political demands. This study involved a total of 1,609 youth voters throughout Sabah. The raw data were then analyzed using the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) techniques presented in thematic maps using the Geography Informatics System (GIS) application. This study found that there are generally five primary political demands of youth voters in Sabah based on priorities: stability of the state, space for political involvement, anti-racist caliber leaders, territorial equality rights, and the provision of welfare assistance. However, priorities of political demands in every zone and parliaments in Sabah varied due to the diverse demographic background of the constituents.*

**Keywords:** Youth Voters, Political Demands, Development, Parochialism, Sabah State Election, Zone, Malaysia

## INTRODUCTION

The youths are an essential group that must not be set aside when discussing political demands in an area. The views of this group are critical to take into account because they are the backbone who will lead the country's political leadership in the future (Razali et al., 2016; Sudin et al., 2017). Aside from that, youths play an essential role in molding society's lifestyle and a country's current and future direction (Fahmy, 2006; Nizah & Sabri, 2020). Furthermore, this group becomes the primary agent of change in the country's economic development and technological innovation (Mohamed, 1997; Besar et al., 2012). The role of this group is not limited to Malaysia alone but also in the global context. The leaders of Commonwealth countries, for example, are aware of the need for the involvement of young people in the process of nation-building and democratization (Othman et al., 2016; Norris, 2017; Dollah et al., 2018).

An election is one form of the democratization process (Hutchinson, 2018). Solid support or a sense of dissatisfaction of voters to the ruling government can be translated in the form of protest votes. In this situation, the role of youth voters has a significant influence on the victory or defeat of a party or candidate (Manning & Truzzi, 1972; Martin, 2012; Hutchinson,

2018). In other words, the group of young voters is the central pillar in determining who will lead the country. At the same time, they also become a vital group responsible as an active agent for change in a country's political landscape. The vital role of these young people is due to the composition or size of their large population compared to other voters group (Vromen, 2007; Nizah & Sabri, 2020). For example, in African countries, most of its citizens consist of youths (Bincof, 2018), just like Malaysia (Suhaimi et al., 2016; Razali et al., 2016). Joko, et al., (2016); Dollah, et al., (2018) found that a group of young voters represents almost half of Malaysia's total registered voters. In Sabah alone, youth dominate nearly half of the total voters. Some districts such as Kinabatangan, Lahad Datu, Beluran, Ranau, Sandakan, Kota Kinabalu, Tawau and Penampang have a higher proportion of youth voters than the combined adult and old voters' groups (Dollah et al., 2018). This situation clearly shows that a fairly understanding of the needs of the group of youth voters will give a great advantage to a party, leader or government to win the hearts of this group.

Malaysia's history has shown that the youth may challenge the powerful position and overturn the government (Bahari, 1995; Joko et al., 2016). In addition to frequently opposing government policies (Dollah et al., 2018), the youth's representing the voice of public's discontent towards the governing elites (Joko et al., 2016). Apparently, youth is the most vulnerable and sensitive group to government policies (Dollah et al., 2018), failure to understand the wishes of the group of youth voters is at risk of triggering various problems, including the occurrence of protest activities, demonstrations, uprisings, overthrow of the government and so on. In South Korea, for example, protests among youths have influence government decisions in matters related to national policy (Lee, 1997). In the Malaysian context, Tasek Utara and the Baling protest incidents are good examples of an adverse reaction of youths against the government for failing to defend the rights and improve the living standards of rural Malays (Hed, 2015). All of these explain why the (Malaysian Youth Policy, 2015), under the Ministry of Youth and Sports, emphasizes and recognizes that youth power and voice have a significant impact in determining the direction of future Malaysia.

As we all know, the political needs of young voters in each constituency usually vary, especially in terms of development and parochialism. This is because the demographic background and issues faced by young people in a particular area or region are usually not the same. For example, Malaysia in general and the state of Sabah, in particular, has a population of various races with different religious and cultural backgrounds. In other words, the society in Malaysia, especially in the state of Sabah tends to be a plurality (Aini et al., 2014). This scenario indeed produces different demographic patterns by region.

Moreover, different demographic backgrounds of the population or voters can influence their level of literacy, ideology and political demands. Therefore, the high probability of diverse political demands among voters in Sabah was the product of its complex and different demographic background. In other words, it is not uncommon to assume that the political demands of voters are uniform or the same while the demographic background is different. Therefore, the political needs of young voters based on location are very significant in Sabah to be studies. Interestingly, using a quantitative inferential approach with mapping is essential to understand the political demands based on location. Therefore, this study is present to understand political phenomena using a quantitative inferential method integrated with spatial analysis through GIS applications.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

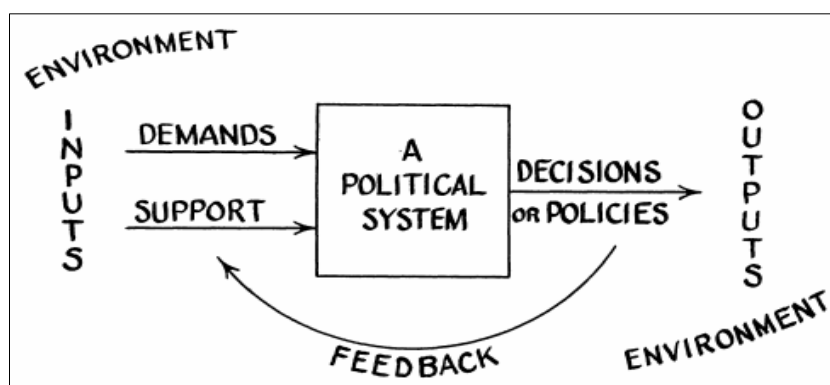
### Concept of Political Demand

Political demand is defined as a claim made concerning the political aspect. Demand is created from the nature of human personality and society, or in other words, human aspiration. A political system is also to fulfill the demand of humans or people (Easton, 1957). Therefore, political demand is an important term that needs to be highlighted when discussing the political

structure. Besides emphasizing the political system, political demand also has a coercive force called 'support' (Ahmad & Eijaz, 2011). In the political system structure, 'demand' and 'support' are necessary inputs intended to set a certain policy or selection process (refer to Figure 1). In other words, the selection process and policy determination are based on the inputs received in the form of demand and support. Inputs put pressure on the system, and this pressure can only be released after the right decisions have been made. The decision is connoted as output.

Khemani (2017) defines a decision as an action that can be translated in the form of arrangement, adoption or even acceptance of claims. If the decision (output) made is in line with the demand and complaints of the people (input), there will be positive changes in the political system. However, if the decision (output) taken is not able to overcome the needs and complaints of the people (input), then the system would possibly face damage or destruction (Ahmad & Eijaz, 2011). Khemani (2017) defines input territory as side-demand while output territory as side-supply. Both are dominated by different subjects, characters or actors. Side-supply is usually dominated or played by politicians, bureaucrats, or even influential organized groups. Meanwhile, side-demand is dominated by citizens, users, and voters. Similarly, Easton (1957) believes that demand generally can come from three primary resources: Society, elite groups, and the international environment. Therefore, a good political system should meet demand at the domestic level and be aware of international development. However, in this study, political demand is only based on demands at the domestic level, which refers to personal desires and levels of awareness of youth voters related to the political aspect. Understanding this is critical since the political system's stability can only be ensured if the input function is handled accordingly (Easton, 1957).

This study focuses on a specific type of political participation called political demand making, defined as individual or collective activities aimed at extracting certain types of benefits from the political system by influencing the decisions of incumbent government officials. Political demand making thus differs from political participation aimed at influencing government resource allocation by replacing or retaining the incumbent authorities (*i.e.*, electoral participation) or overthrowing or restructuring the political system itself (*e.g.*, through revolutionary violence). Therefore, political demands are defined as needs whose satisfaction is felt to depend upon governmental action. Individuals or groups assert these as specific claims upon the government (Cornelius, 1974).



**FIGURE 1**  
**STRUCTURE OF POLITICAL SYSTEM**

(Source: Easton, 1957; Ahmad & Eijaz, 2011).

### Concepts of Political Development and Parochialism

As discussed in the previous section, political demands or needs can be studied from various dimensions, internal and external factors, and involve multiple actors with different

characteristics. However, the political demand in this paper focuses on political development and parochialism. The terminology of political development has emerged in the 1950s by the American political scientist (Anyualatha, 2013). According to (Huntington, 1968), the concept of political development can be seen from various perspectives, including geography, functional, derivatives, and theologians. From a geographical standpoint, political development occurs when developing countries undergo a political transformation following the application of concepts and methods previously used by developed countries. While from a functional dimension, political development is defined as a process of change toward an ideal political system that produces in a single country. Derivatively, political development is seen as a consequence of the impacts of the overall process of change. These consequences include economic development, education, mass media, urbanization, and many more. Lastly is the theologian that is defined as the process of changing the political system for a specific purpose, including political stability, political integration, democracy, law enforcement, and so on.

Subakti (1992) defines political development as political change, covers aspects of development and modernization. As Loup, Naudet & Dial (2000) reported, indicators of development are seen as something that is planned, has clear goals, is done gradually, and the absence of violence. The goal is to expand the capacity of the existing political systems. On the other hand, modernization means the process of change to create a better situation for society to continue living in line with the revolution of the times. Political change occurs when there is a difference in the characteristics of a political system from a certain period or from one political system to another. Pye (1966) posits that political development is a development syndrome. This includes the prerequisites for economic development, political modernization, national operations, political characteristics of industrial societies, administrative and legal development, mobilization and community participation, democratic posture, orderly change and stability, mobilization and power, and multi-dimensional. Meanwhile, (Jali et al., 2012) classified development into physical development and human capital development. However, it is not enough to emphasize physical development and human capital development to achieve a prosperous country, such as improving the people's level of income and education, providing employment opportunities or business opportunities.

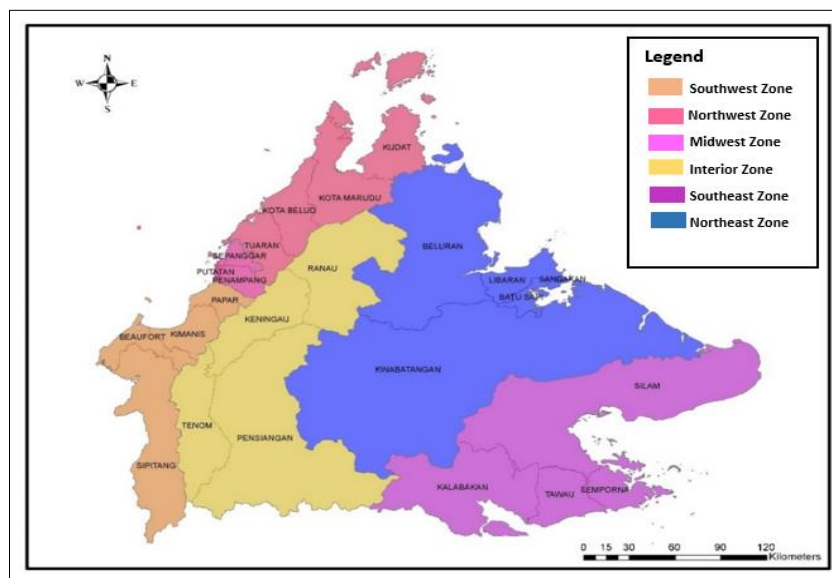
Just like political development, parochialism also has various meanings depending on who interprets it. Generally, the meaning of the term parochialism or parochial is narrow, shallow, and regional thinking (McGee, 1962; Ratnam, 1969). Bowles & Gintis (2004) define parochialism as an individual's desire to interact with other individuals in their community with cultural similarities and avoid contact with other groups from outside the community. Bean (1995) interprets it as ethnocentrism *i.e.*, the behavior of a person who tends to his country of origin. For Wildenthal (1988), parochialism can also be seen as an ideology that leads to protectionism. This situation is illustrated in the context of the United States' discriminatory attitude towards foreigners concerning cross-country migration. In a broader context, parochialism is generally synonymous with discrimination, protection, and the act of isolating oneself from the personal interests of a particular group by neglecting the rights of others (Lie, 1995).

On the other hand, (Zain et al., 2011) argue that society's unscrupulous attitude towards political affairs is a factor in parochialism. The characteristics of this group of people are more concerned with personal and family matters as well as assuming that political affairs only need to be managed by certain people. However, in the context of this study, parochialism is associated with matters related to territorial rights.

## LOCATION AND METHODS

This study was conducted in the state of Sabah, Malaysia. The state of Sabah can generally be divided into six zones, including the Northwest, Southwest, Interior, Northeast, Southeast, and Midwest, with a total area of about 75,250.46 km<sup>2</sup>. The largest area is the Northeast Zone (27,365.45 km<sup>2</sup>), formed by five parliaments: Beluran, Kinabatangan, Libaran,

Sandakan, and Batu Sapi. The Central West Zone comprises four parliamentary seats, namely Sepanggar, Kota Kinabalu, Putatan, and Penampang, representing the smallest area, about 901.01 km<sup>2</sup>. The Southwest and Northwest Zones have approximately 7,176.32 km<sup>2</sup> and 6,243.66 km<sup>2</sup>, respectively, and comprise four parliamentary seats. Meanwhile, the interior Zone with total area of about 1,7742.22 km<sup>2</sup> consists of four parliamentary seats, namely Ranau, Keningau, Tenom, and Pensiangan. Finally, the Southeast Zone representing the parliaments of Silam, Kalabakan, Tawau and Semporna with an area of 15,821.8 km<sup>2</sup>. The total number of parliaments in Sabah is 25 parliamentary seats (refer to Figure 2).



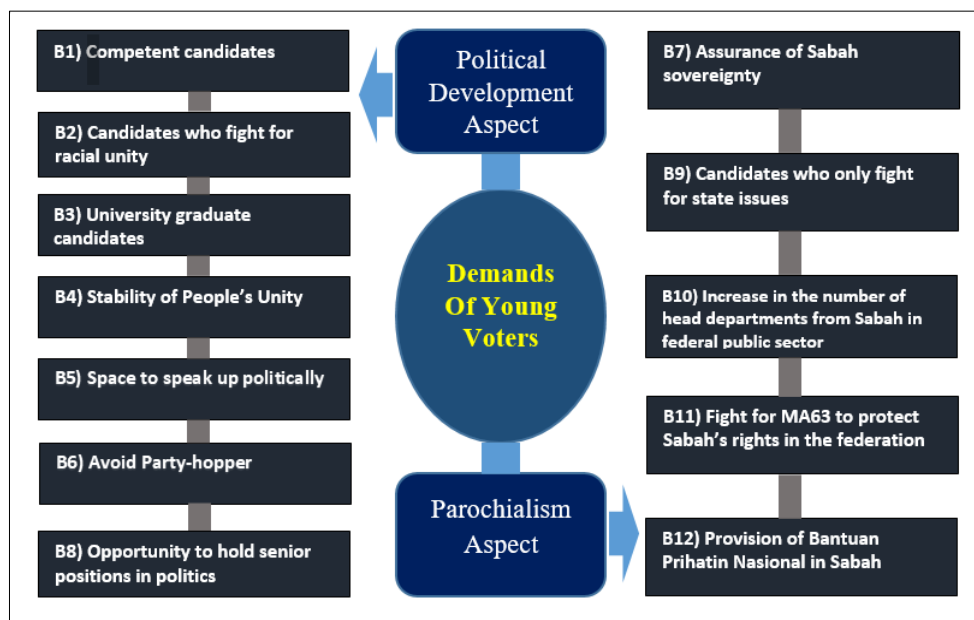
**FIGURE 2**  
**ZONES AND PARLIAMENT IN THE STATE OF SABAH**

Source: Modified from Borneo Today, 2018

This study utilized a quantitative approach in which the use of questionnaire instruments to collect data is essential. The study sample was obtained using a purposive sampling technique. According to (Ang, 2016), the prerequisite for using a purposeful sampling technique is that only subjects with specific characteristics are selected to be sampled. There are three main groups of voters in Malaysia, namely the young or youth, adults, and the elderly (Jali & Besar, 2012; Mahmood, 2017; Dollah et al., 2018). However, in this study, only youth or young voters were used as a sample. Several definitions have been given to determine the age classification of young or youth. The United Nations (UN), for example, defines youth as individuals aged between 15 to 24 years and 15 to 29 years for the Commonwealth States (Fang et al., 2017). In Malaysia, youth or younger voters are interpreted as individuals aged between 15 to 40 years (Abdullah et al., 2017; Saleh et al., 2020). Therefore, respondents in the study are Sabah voters aged between 21 to 40-year-old.

A total of 1,609 young voters in Sabah were sampled in this study. Determination of sample size was based on the formula proposed by Yamane (1967). Based on the formula, a minimum of 400 young voters in Sabah should be used as a study sample to represent the total population of young voters in the state, which is 491,637 people. The total population of young voters is about 43.74 percent of the total number of voters in Sabah in 2020, which is 1.124 million (Hasnan, 2020). Therefore, the total sample of 1,609 respondents used in this study was assumed to be sufficient and exceeds the minimum requirements to represent the population. The sample used in this study represents all of Sabah's zones, including the Northwest Zone (16%), Southwest Zone (15%), Interior Zone (19%), Northeast Zone (15%), Southeast Zone (19%), and Central West Zone (19%) (16 percent).

The raw data were analyzed using the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) technique presented in thematic maps using the Geographic Information System (GIS) application. PCA is a multivariate analysis technique that extracts several variables correlated into a set of mutually independent variables (orthogonal) (Ilmaniati & Putro, 2019). PCA analysis aims to extract or summarize data from large data variables into smaller ones (Santosa, 2007). A total of 12 variables were retrieved utilizing the analysis technique to form a component and explain the political demands of youth in Sabah. Half of the total variables used are related to the development aspect, while the other is related to parochialism. Figure 3 below demonstrates the variables used to assess the political needs of Young voters in Sabah.



**FIGURE 3**  
**VARIABLES USED TO ASSESS THE POLITICAL DEMAND OF YOUNG VOTERS IN SABAH**

According to Ilmaniati & Putro (2019), several processes or procedures must be completed before calculating the principal component that tests the value of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO), Bartlett's of Sphericity, and total variance. In this study, the KMO value was 0.688. Therefore, this means that the overall total sample in this study is sufficient because it has a KMO value greater than 0.6 (Hussin et al., 2014). The significant value of Bartlett's of Sphericity test results is ( $p=0.000$ ). This explains the correlation between the variables used because the significant value is less or smaller than 0.5 (Saepurohman & Bramantiyo, 2019). Based on Table 1, a total of five new components are produced that have more than one eigenvalues (Hussin et al., 2014). When the variance of the five additional components is summed up, the total value is 62.65% (refer to Table 1). This means that 62.65 percent of the political needs of youth voters are influenced by the five main components that result from the findings. Meanwhile the rest are influenced by other factors (Nasution, 2019). In the humanities, the explained variance was commonly as low as 50-60 percent (William et al., 2010). Therefore, the total variance percentage recorded in this analysis is considered acceptable.

Table 1 THE EIGEN VALUES AND VARIANTS OF NEW COMPONENTS PRODUCED			
Component	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	% Variant	% Cumulative
1	2.843	23.689	23.689

2	1.338	11.151	34.84
3	1.207	10.059	44.898
4	1.096	9.135	54.033
5	1.034	8.613	62.646
6	0.905	7.546	70.191
07-Dec	-	-	77.509-100

The following procedure was to determine the value of the loading factor variable used. Variables with a loading factor value exceeding 0.5 significant are classified in the new component (Fauzi et al., 2014). The loading factor value of each variable was referenced using a rotated component matrix diagram. Based on Table 2, a variable (B6) has a loading factor value of less than 0.5. As a result, such variables should be ignored because they have no bearing on any newly generated components. Overall, almost all of the newly formed components were produced through a combination of two variables. Only Component 3 was formed by combining three variables, namely B1, B2 and B7 (refer to Table 2).

<b>Table 2</b>					
<b>ROTATED COMPONENT MATRIX</b>					
	<b>Key Component</b>				
<b>Code</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
B1	0.177	0.041	0.626	-0.101	-0.077
B2	0	-0.041	0.664	0.092	0.145
B3	-0.082	0.211	0.408	0.028	0.58
B4	0.829	0.221	0.154	0.095	0.048
B5	0.269	0.818	0.07	0.071	0.017
B6	0.349	-0.129	-0.026	-0.285	0.462
B7	0.825	0.144	0.157	0.083	0.07
B8	0.061	0.86	0.113	0.024	0.05
B9	0.173	0.281	-0.659	0.128	0.007
B10	-0.065	0.031	-0.016	0.841	0.151
B11	0.257	0.055	0.108	0.712	-0.14
B12	0.066	0.017	-0.046	0.089	0.823

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

## RESULTS

### The Demands of Youth Voters in Sabah from the Development and Parochialism Domain

Based on the data extraction process, it is found that there are five main aspirations of youth voters in Sabah regarding development and parochialism (refer to Table 3). The first component is 'state stability'. The theme of this component is formed based on two variables, namely B4 and B7. The variables classified in this theme generally reflect that the youths are aware of people's stability and the Sabah State rights. The second component is interpreted as 'a space for the political involvement of young people'. The theme of this component is also formed from a combination of two variables, namely B5 and B8. Both variables explained that the youths should be given space to speak and hold senior political positions. The third component is formed by three combinations of variables (B1, B2 & B9). The theme of this component is interpreted as 'caliber and anti-racist leaders'. The variables belong to this

component generally reflect the personality of caliber leaders who fight for racial unity and cross-regional development. The fourth theme component is ‘territorial equality rights’ formed by two variables, namely B10 and B11. Finally, the fifth component is formed through the combination of variables B3 and B12. The theme of this component is ‘charity assistance provision’.

<b>Table 3</b>			
<b>OUTPUT ANALYSIS RESULTS OF KEY COMPONENTS</b>			
<b>Component</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Variables</b>	<b>Theme</b>
1	B4	Stability of People’s Unity	State
	B7	Assurance of Sabah rights	Stability
2	B5	Space to speak up politically	Space for Politics Involvement
	B8	Opportunity to hold senior positions in politics	
3	B1	Competent candidates	Caliber and anti-racist leaders
	B2	Candidates who fight for racial unity	
	B9	Candidates who not only fight for state issues	
4	B10	Increase in the number of head departments from Sabah in the federal public sector	Territorial equality rights
	B11	Fight for MA63 to protect Sabah’s rights in the federation	
5	B3	University graduate candidates	Welfare assistance
	B12	Provision of Bantuan Prihatin Nasional in Sabah	

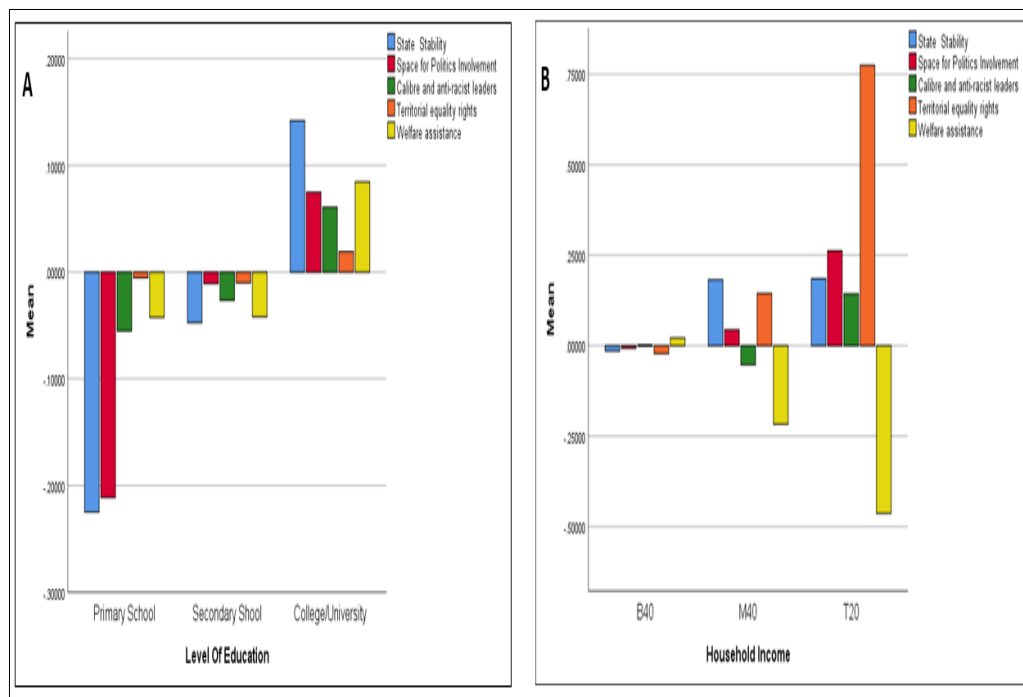
### **The Influence of Demographic Background on the Demands of Youth Voters in Sabah**

Figure 4(A) depicts the impact of education on the preferences of Sabah's youth voters. This study found that, the higher the level of education of Sabah's youth voters, the more conscious or sensitive they are to political demands. For example, in terms of state stability, the average youth voters with university graduate status are more concerned about the issue than youth voters with a primary and secondary education background. For youth voters with primary and secondary education, issues such as room for youth political activity, social aid, territorial equality rights, and anti-racist caliber leaders are more vital to focus on for youth voters with primary and secondary education state stability. The study also discovered that university graduates prioritize welfare assistance and political space for youngsters over the need for anti-racist leaders and territorial equality rights. The situation is different for youth voters with an elementary or secondary education who choose territorial equality as their top (first) priority.

Meanwhile, Figure 4(B) shows the influence of household income on the political needs of youth voters in Sabah. In general, the higher the income level of the household of youth voters, the more conscious or sensitive they are to political needs, except for providing welfare assistance. The proof is that young people in the T20 income group place a higher value on territorial equality rights than those in the M40 and B40 income groups. It is also similar to the aspect of political involvement of youth. The T20 income group of youth voters was shown to have a substantially higher demand for open space for youths participating in politics than the other two income groups (B40 and M40). In addition, compared to the other two income groups, this group emphasizes having the caliber and anti-racist leaders. For young voters in the M40 income, group emphasizes the state's stability as their paramount need. This group emphasizes



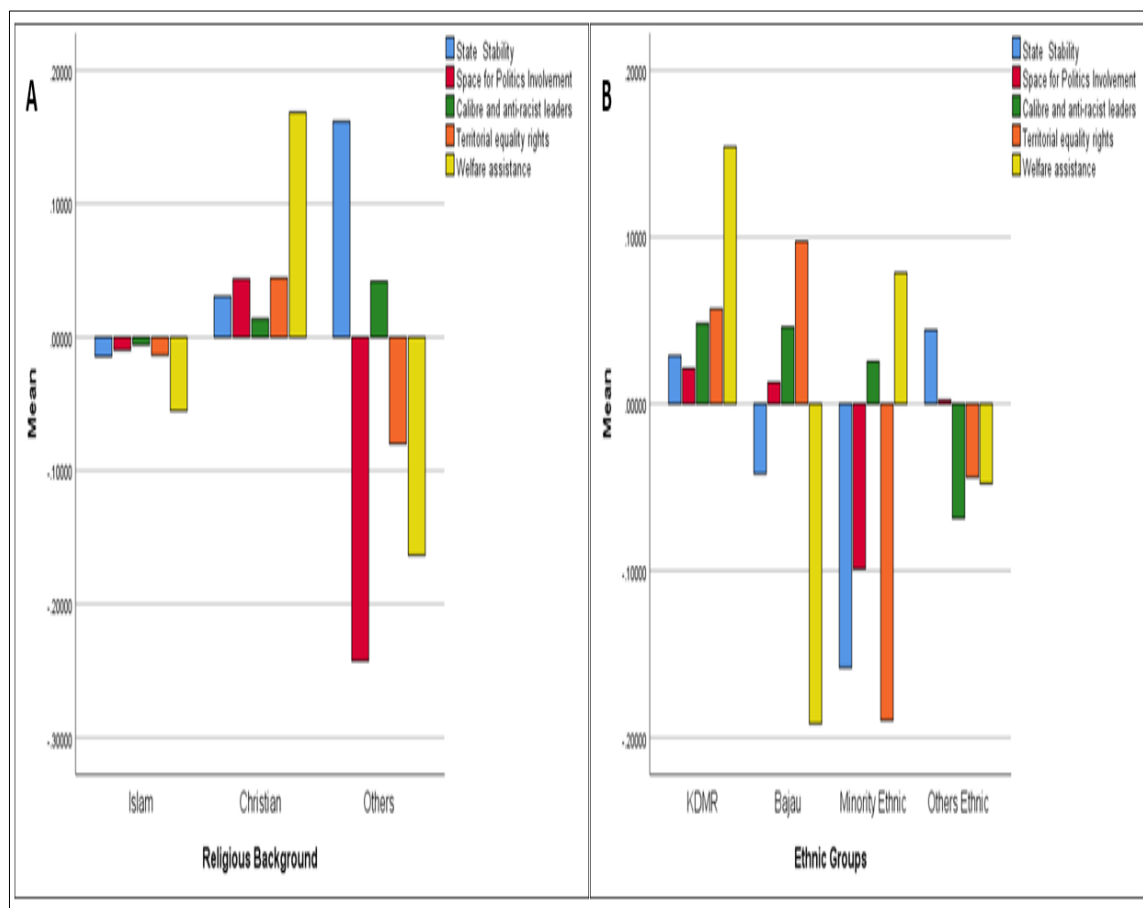
regional equality and the possibility for youth political participation as their key concern far beyond the issue of providing welfare assistance.



**FIGURE 4**  
**THE INFLUENCE OF EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND TOTAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME ON POLITICAL DEMANDS OF YOUTH IN SABAH**

Figure 5(A) clearly shows that religious background also plays a significant role in influencing the political demands of youth voters in Sabah. Generally, Christian youth voters in Sabah are more aware of political demands than individuals of two other religions (Islam and others). For Christian voters, their (first) main need is related to welfare assistance, territorial equality, and the space for political involvement for young people. For this group, the involvement of anti-racist caliber leaders in the political arena in Sabah is not a big issue compared to the other four issues. The analysis of this study also found that young voters who practice Buddhism and Atheism (others) prioritize aspects of state stability far more than the needs of believers of two other religions (Islam and Christianity). The aspirations of young voters who practice Buddhism and Atheism are also more oriented towards the need to have caliber and anti-racism leaders. This group is seen to ignore issues related to welfare assistance and the political involvement space for youth. The analysis of the study also found that Muslim youth voters are more likely to emphasize the need to have an anti-racist caliber leader compared to the other four aspects.

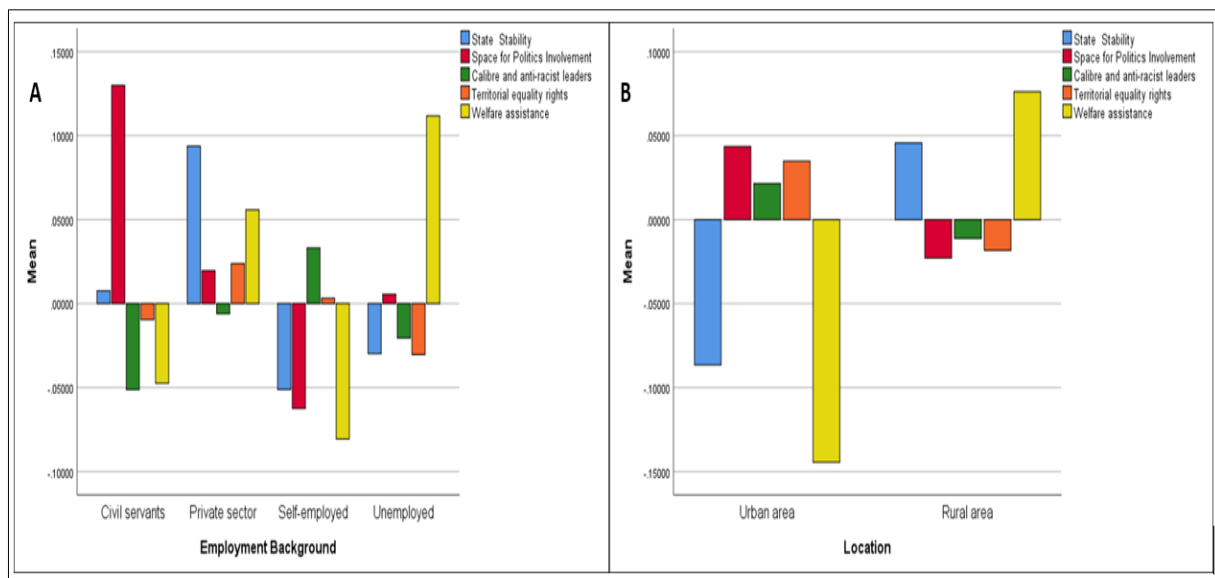
Meanwhile, Figure 5(B) demonstrates the ethnic influence on the political demands of youth voters in Sabah. Among the four ethnic groups, the Kadazan-Dusun-Murut-Rungus (KDMR) youth voters are the most dominant group fighting for political demands compared to the other three ethnic groups. Provision of welfare assistance is the main issue that KDMR ethnic groups are fighting for, just like the needs of minority ethnic groups. In contrast, the Bajau and other ethnic groups are not very keen on the issue. The Bajau ethnic group is more concerned with issues related to the rights of regional equality, space for young political involvement, and the need to have anti-racist caliber leaders. For minority ethnic groups and others, issues related to territorial equality, political space for young people, and the need to have anti-racist caliber leaders are not their top priorities. The analysis of this study also found that other ethnic groups prioritized state stability far more than the other four issues.



**FIGURES 5**  
**THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS ON THE POLITICAL DEMANDS OF YOUTH IN SABAH**

The findings of this study also demonstrate that the employment background of youth voters in Sabah greatly influences the political demands of these groups. Youth voters who work as civil servants emphasize the political involvement of young people. This view is very different from unemployed youth voters who prioritize welfare assistance over other issues. Youth voters who work in private sectors or are self-employed are more aware of state stability and the need to have anti-racist caliber leaders. Apart from issues related to state stability, youth voters working in private sectors emphasize welfare assistance. Most youth voters do not consider territorial equality to be their priority. However, based on their employment background, youth voters in the private sector are more influential in combating the issue than those in other employment groups. This study also revealed that youth voters, especially those who are either jobless or work as civil servants, are less concerned about territorial equality (refer to Figure 6(A)).

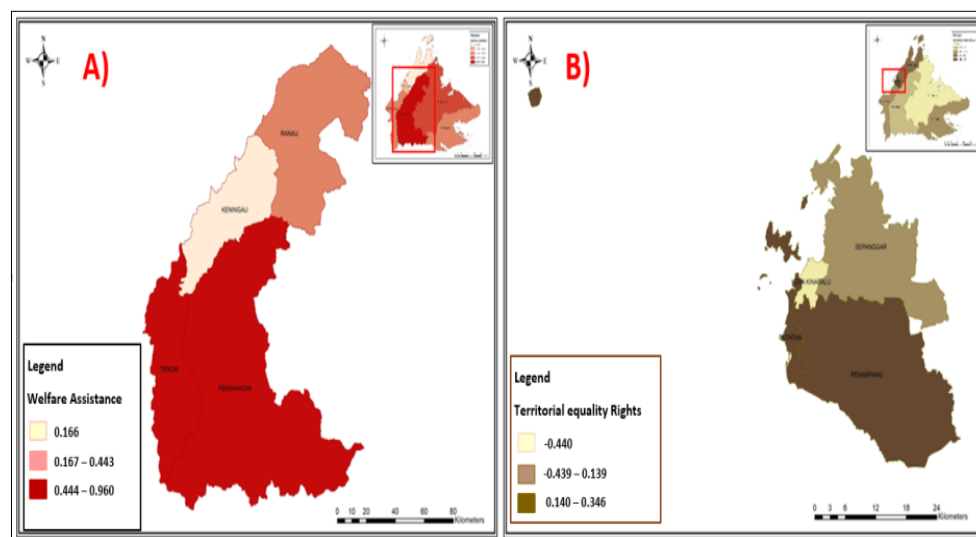
The study also discovered a link between the location of young voters in Sabah and their political desires. Youth voters living in rural areas are more likely to prioritize the provision of welfare assistance and state stability. In contrast, youth voters in urban areas view that the provision of welfare assistance and the issue of state stability are not a priority to be emphasized compared to the other three aspects. Their main goal is to provide a larger space for youth political participation and fight for territorial equality. The need to have a capable and anti-racist leader is also a key concern among young voters in urban areas. The study also discovered that, compared to other factors, young voters in rural areas are less aware of the importance of youth political involvement. At the same time, they also did not prioritize the right for territorial equality compared to the need to have caliber anti-racist leaders, state stability, and provision of welfare assistance (refer to Figure 6(B)).



**FIGURE 6**  
**THE IMPACT OF YOUTH POLITICAL DEMANDS IN SABAH ON THEIR**  
**EMPLOYMENT BACKGROUND AND LOCATION**

### The Political Demands of Youth Voters in Sabah based on Zone and Parliamentary Boundaries

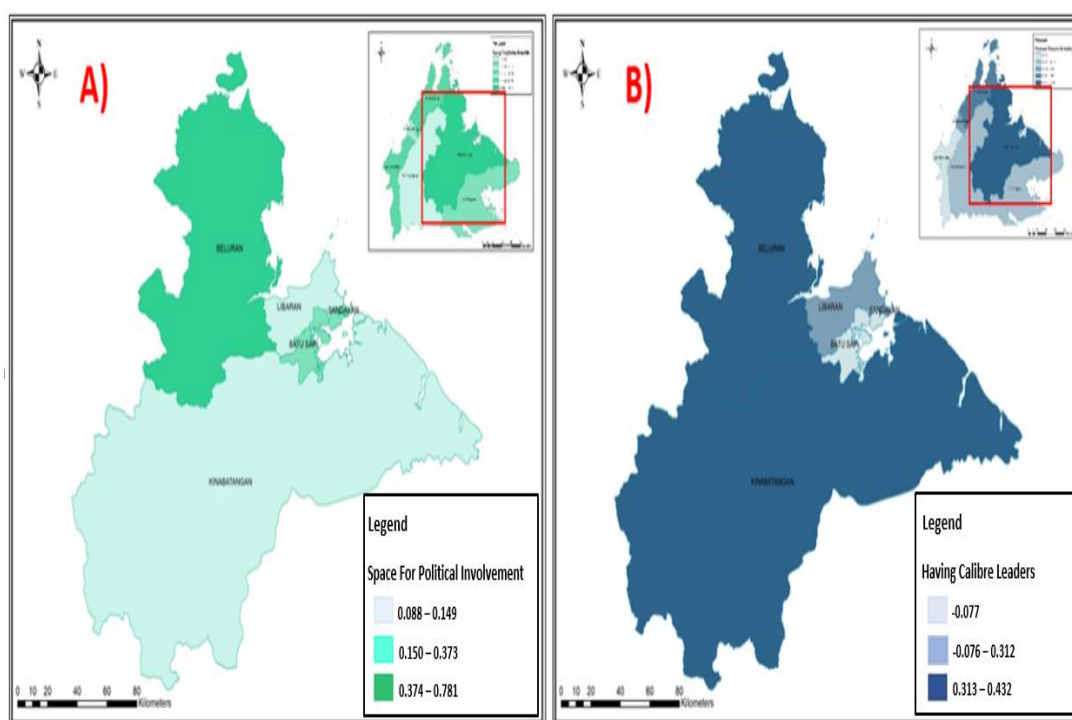
One of the key demands of youth, particularly those residing in the Interior Zone, is the provision of welfare assistance. Two of the four parliaments that make up the zone, the Tenom and the Pensiangan Parliaments, are particularly interested in problems relating to welfare assistance. However, youth living in the Keningau Parliament are not aware of this issue compared to the other three parliaments (refer to Figure 7(A)). For the Central West Zone, the priority of young voters is more on the issue of fighting for the right of territorial equality. In addition to the Midwest Zone, the youth voters in the Northeast Zone are also more familiar with territorial equality than the other four zones. The Northeast Zone youth voters have little concern about the issue of equality in their dominant zone. When parliamentary boundaries are examined, it is discovered that the young voters in the Penampang and the Putatan parliamentary seats, both located in the Midwest Zone, are more cognizant of territorial equality than other parliaments in Sabah (refer to Figure 7(B)).



### FIGURE 7

#### YOUTHS' POLITICAL DEMANDS FOR WELFARE ASSISTANCE AND RIGHTS TO TERRITORIAL EQUALITY BASED ON ZONE AND PARLIAMENTARY BOUNDARIES

This study also found that, compared to the other five zones in Sabah, young voters in the Northeast Zone placed a greater priority on the element of space for youths' political involvement. It is then followed by the Northwest and Southwest zones which ranked second and third respectively. Similarly, the issue is not their top priority for youth living in the Middle West and Southeast Zone. Based on the boundaries of parliament, it appears that young voters in the Northeast Zone who are aware of this issue are mostly from Beluran and Batu Sapi parliaments. In other words, young voters of these two parliaments are most aware of this issue than 23 other parliaments (refer to Figure 8(A)). In terms of political involvement by youths, young voters in the Northeast Zone are more conscious of the need for caliber and anti-racist leaders than those in other zones. The difference is that young people with a higher level of awareness of the need to have caliber and anti-racism leaders are mainly voters in the Kinabatangan and Beluran parliaments. The obvious distinction is that in the Kinabatangan and Beluran parliaments, youth are more aware of the importance of having caliber and anti-racism leaders. Young voters in the Sandakan and Batu Sapi parliaments are the most aware of this topic among the five parliaments in the Northeast Zone region (refer to Figure 8(B)).

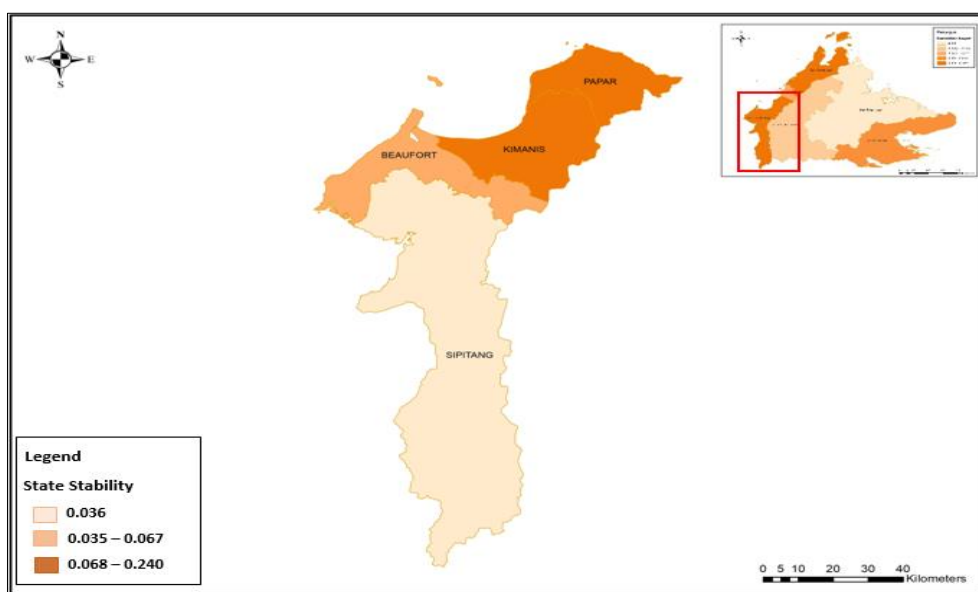


### FIGURE 8

#### YOUTHS' DEMANDS FOR POLITICAL SPACE AND THE APPOINTMENT OF CALIBER AND ANTI-RACIST LEADERS BASED ON ZONE AND PARLIAMENTARY BOUNDARIES

Figure 9 depicts the political needs of Sabah's youthful voters in terms of state stability. When broken down by zone, it becomes clear that the greatest demands of Sabah's youth voters in terms of state stability are concentrated in the Southwest Zone, followed by the Northwest Zone and Southeast Zone, respectively. The Northeast and Midwest Zones have the most youth voters who are least aware of the issue of state stability. Young voters in the Southwest Zone

who are aware of the subject of state stability tend to vote in the Papar and Kimanis parliaments, according to the study. In other words, out of the 25 parliaments in Sabah, the issue of state stability is a key concern among youth voters in the Papar and the Kimanis parliaments.



**FIGURE 9**  
**YOUTH DEMANDS ON STATE STABILITY BASED ON ZONE AND**  
**PARLIAMENTARY BOUNDARIES**

## DISCUSSION

Generally, the political demands of youth voters in Sabah are balanced between development and parochialism. Issue related to territorial equality represents the aspect of parochialism, while the issue related to space for youth's political participation represents the aspect of development (refer to Figure 3 & Table 3). The argument is that youth voters who are pushing for territorial equality rights and space for youth political participation are coming from a group of voters with a similar demographic background. The most knowledgeable group on these two topics comes from highly educated Christian youth voters with a stable family economic condition who live in the city and are mostly from the KDMR ethnic groups (refer to Figures 4(A), 4(B), 5(A), 5(B) & 6(B)). The only thing that differentiates them is from the aspect of what they do for a living. In contrast to those who work as civil servants, youth voters in this group who work in the private sector pay more attention to problems connected to territorial equality (refer to Figure 6(A)).

Previously, territorial equality rights and the space for youth political participation were not frequently highlighted by political parties in Sabah. However, only after the founding of the Sabah Heritage Party (WARISAN) and the Pakatan Harapan coalition was the problem treated seriously. When each of these components is explored in greater detail, they share a new issue frequently mentioned in the manifestos of various political parties in Sabah. This is evidenced by the manifesto of Parti WARISAN and Pakatan Harapan, which highlights issues related to Sabah's Territorial Rights in the 1963 Malaysia agreement (MA63) as the party's main claim to the Federal Government (Borneo, 2018; Sarawak Voice, 2020). Compared to other parties, the Pakatan Harapan alliance has more transparency regarding youth involvement in politics. As proof, the Pakatan Harapan manifesto includes a motion to reduce the voting age limit from 21 to 18 years. For Pakatan Harapan, the voice of the youth group is vital to be taken into account because it represents the views of the people (BERNAMA, 2019).

With that in mind, it's no surprise that WARISAN Plus won easily in the Penampang Parliament in Sabah's 2020 State Election (PRN). According to the election results, 77.4 percent

of all voters in the Kapayan Constituency chose WARISAN Plus candidate Jannie Lasimbang as their representative. Meanwhile, Darell Leiking, a WARISAN Plus candidate in the Moyog Constituency, received more than half of the vote (62.8 percent) in his constituency (EC, 2020). WARISAN Plus's success in the Penampang Parliamentary seat is not surprising, as the party's manifesto was in line with the political aspirations of the youth in the area (refer to Figure 7B). This is due to the demographic characteristics of youth voters who are aware of a territorial equality rights issue and the space for youth political participation discussed earlier in this paragraph, which dominates the demographic background of the youth voters in the Penampang Parliament.

Young voters with a highly educated demographic background, in the B40 group, unemployed, Christian, of the KDMR tribe, and living in rural areas are more likely to address issues linked to the provision of welfare assistance (refer to Figure 4(A), 4(B), 5(A), 5(B), 6(A) & 6(B)). Welfare assistance, including subsistence, is essential for the rural population, especially for the low-income group (Sarawak Voice, 2020). Ironically, the Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition, particularly under Najib Razak's leadership, has frequently promised welfare aid to help low-income Malaysians better their living standards (Adnan & Sity, 2018). This scenario can be seen from implementing several programs, such as the E-Kasih and Bantuan Rakyat 1Malaysia (BR1M) initiative. It is not surprising when the Perikatan Nasional Government under Muhyiddin Yassin also launched the Bantuan Prihatin Nasional (BPN) 2.0 to ease the burden of the people due to the COVID-19 pandemic (LHDN Malaysia, 2020). Therefore, this also explains why Perikatan Nasional (PN) in the PRN 2020 in Sabah successfully won all the state assembly seats contested in the Pensiangan Parliament, namely the Tulid, Sook and Nabawan state assemblies (EC, 2020). This is due to the fact that the PN concept aligns with the political aspirations of young people in the Pensiangan Parliament, which is located in the Sabah Interior Zone (refer Figure 7(A)).

Issues of state stability are also a major battleground for Sabah's youth voters (see Table 3), particularly in the Southwest Zone and, more specifically, in the Kimanis and Papar legislatures (refer to Figure 9). The issues are related to the demands of the bridge construction project in Labuan, road repairs, the Pan-Borneo highway completion process, ports, infrastructure, and tourism issues, among others (Rahimah, 2020). Sulaiman (2020) discovered that the people of Sabah, particularly voters in the Kimanis 2020 by-election, generally thought that the state's economic situation was unacceptable. This study is consistent with (Rahimah's, 2020) assertion that economic stability, which is one of the elements for achieving state stability (see Table 3), is one of the most pressing issues in Sabah.

Apart from that, state stability issue is also related to the guarantee of Sabah's sovereignty (refer to Table 3). The sovereignty of the Sabah state is seen as quite worrying because of the constant external threats, such as piracy, territorial expansion, the Philippines' claim to Sabah, and illegal immigrants (Dollah & Zainus, 2017; Dollah & Abdullah, 2018). The Sabah voters, particularly during the (Kimanis, 2020) by-election, were mostly against the implementation of the Sabah Temporary Pass (PSS) (Wan Mat Sulaiman, 2020), proposed by the WARISAN-led State Government because PSS is alleged to threaten Sabah's security. This scenario has influenced voters' not to choose a party that is likely to trigger state security issues (Yahaya, 2020). As a result, the WARISAN Party failed to win the P176 Kimanis seat in the Sabah 2020 by-election (Chie, 2020). When the demographics of youth voters are examined further, several key factors emerge: they are highly educated, they come from various religions and are mostly Christians, total household income fall under the T20 and M40 groups, work in the private sector, mostly KDMR and other races, and they live in rural areas (refer to Figures 4A, 4B, 5A, 5B, 6A & 6B).

At the same time, Sabah's youth voters, particularly in the Northeast Zone, want political leaders with caliber personalities who are anti-racist during their administration or governance (refer to 8(B)). Ethnocentrism and territorialism are two anti-racist features (refer to Table 3). Several features of young voters' demographic backgrounds can be discovered, emphasizing the importance of having quality and anti-racist leaders. They are well educated, have stable

economic circumstances, are self-employed or own enterprises, practice Buddhism or Atheism, and live in urban areas, among other things (refer to Figure 4(A), 4(B), 5(A), 5(B), 6(A) & 6(B)). Sabah is a state in Malaysia with a diverse population of different races, religions, and cultural background (Aini et al., 2014). This plurality is the main challenge in achieving harmony and unity. When not handled properly, it can lead to conflicts, fights, violence, and quarrels, all of which can wreak havoc on inter-racial and inter-religious harmony (Dollah et al., 2019).

In keeping with (Talib & Rachel's, 2018) observations, there are still restrictions of "stable tensions" in Malaysia that might turn a tranquil mood into a dispute. Moreover, the struggle between races and religions will have an indirect consequence, posing a threat to political stability, national security, and economic stability. Disruption to national security and economic stability severely impacts other groups, particularly those predominantly religious. As a result, it's understandable that this group recognizes the importance of having caliber and anti-racist leaders.

## CONCLUSION

In short, Sabah's youth voters have a wide range of political demands, particularly in the areas of development and parochialism. In general, it can be grouped into the top five according to priority (ranking) namely; the aspiration to have a stable state, space for political involvement of young people, the need to have caliber and anti-racist leaders, demands for territorial equality, and the provision of welfare assistance. However, when it comes to these five factors, the priority of youth voters is dependent on their demographic background and location. This scenario demonstrates how understanding the political demands of youth voter groups in one area gives each party, leader, or government a significant advantage in winning the hearts of these people. The victory of various parties in several constituencies in the Sabah State Election 2020 in Sabah is evidence of this, with their manifestos aligned with the political requirements of the youth voter group in their opponent constituencies. This circumstance can be utilized as a reference for authorities or stakeholders to be more conscious of the political needs of young voters in their respective constituencies, among others. Understanding the youth needs will assist all parties at the municipal, state, and even national levels in planning and implementing various initiatives to benefit youth and the nation as a whole.

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