

# From Social Institution to Political Reality: Rethinking Youth Political Socialization in Malaysia

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## **Abstract**

Youth political participation in Malaysia has been understood through classical political socialization agents such as family, school, religion, and political parties. However, recent political developments that signified political instability, party fractions, ethnic fragmentation, and unprecedented electoral volatility, have disrupted these conventional patterns. This study argues that the current political environment itself has emerged as the most dominant effect to youth political socialization, reshaping their political attitudes, identifications, and participation. Using qualitative in-depth interviews with youth leaders, politically active and inactive, this study demonstrates how lived political realities rather than formal social institutions played a central role in shaping political consciousness. The findings reveal a shift from passive institutional learning to experiential political socialization driven by political crises, perceived injustice, elite inconsistency, and digital political exposure. This paper contributes theoretically by proposing a context-driven political socialization framework, challenging classical linear models and offering a more dynamic understanding of youth political formation in transitional democracies.

**Keywords:** Malaysia Election; Political Socialization; Youth; Tik Tok; Lived Political Realities