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Facebook And Female Member of Parliaments in Malaysia: Where are We Going Now?

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ABSTRACT

Female participation in politics at the decision-making level is less than 25percent. One of the barriers faced by female MPs is the lack of access to equal coverage in traditional news media. As an alternative, social media such as Facebook is likely to break this barrier down as it can offer opportunities for them to engage with the citizens and connect with their constituencies. This is because social media has transformed the way politicians interact with citizens. It functions as a political equaliser to female decision makers by giving them the opportunities to communicatedirectly with their supporters and explain their positions, unfiltered. Hence,social media is expected to assist women achieve greater political parity. The objective of this paper is to understand how women in politics use Facebook sustain successful political careers as members of Parliament in Malaysia. Hence, this paper relies on a qualitative content analysis of the female members of the Parliament to find out the distribution pattern of Facebook usage by the MPs and the extent it is used to facilitate communication to address gender related issues. This study also seeks to find out the barriers to inactive use of Facebook in advocating the aforementioned issues. To answer these questions, the researcher relies on interview method. This study found that female MPs focus more on the interactive function of social media rather than its informative function. This means that female MPs, who are frequently at a disadvantage when competing for resources, have not been using Facebook to empower theirstatus and position. This study also found that although Facebook is used by many female MPs, Facebook does not guarantee an equalising platform for women to advocate for gender-related issues. The results show that a few MPs were reluctant to post and discuss said matters on their Facebook pages.

Keywords: social media, female MPs, Facebook, online participation,political engagement

INTRODUCTION

Women's issues are issues that are discussed worldwide where womenare usually mistreated due to gender discrimination. In Malaysia, similar issues are always debated either publicly or privately. It can be seen that the total number of female involvements in the sphere of politics, social, and economic is still far behind than men. Female progression in politics is increasing at a slow pace where men's domination and chauvinism are still very much present in the society. Gender discrimination can be seen from many aspects. For example, in the context of media practice, though they try to provide the same rights and benefits for both genders, it is still lacking in terms of voicing out women's rights. When their voice is unheard, women tend to use other alternatives to make sure their voice is more favorably allowed.

The distortion of representation in media coverage of women pertainingto visibility and accuracy of such media images are a common theme. Though the visibility of female MPs in media has become more visible interms of quantity of coverage than in the past, the framing of messages surrounding them still remain distorted (Patterson, 2016). Even though women are being allocated increased media attention, the debate surrounding female discriminatory coverage remained. Media treat female MPs as not an easy resolve (Banerjee, 2008). The ownership of media organization also plays a vital role which can affect the framing itself. Thisinvolves the type of coverage dedicated to female MPs, the use of positiveand negative vernacular about a politician, the amount of coverage they received, and the common trend amongst media practitioners of sensationalising political event and figures (Jo-Ann & Surin, 2012).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Firstly, it can be seen that there is a slightly higher number of women than men who use the Internet since this approach provides a better space for women to express themselves (Abraham, Morn & Vollman, 2010). Given the situation, the MPs need to make themselves visible and active when they engage with their voters and constituents. The Internet functions as an ideal platform for such activities on it.

Secondly, the low number of women in political participation is an issue globally; this also the same in Malaysia as the total number of women in parliament is less than 20% (Nadrawina, 2015). In politics, the media treats women and men candidates differently. This can be seen when the number of women MPs with Facebook are collected. However qualitative data is needed to identify the challenges faced by women MPs and also understand the way Facebook is being used by women MPs to promote the issues concerning women. Hence, this study seeks to address the limitations of women MPs when using Facebook.

Thirdly, this study also analyses the viewpoints of women MPs on their Facebook pages. It can be seen that, Internet regulation is more lax compared to mainstream media. Last but not least, the role of the Internet, Facebook in particular as a democratic platform for political participation still in discussion. A comparative study between women MPs from the ruling and the opposition parties be conducted.

Hence, this research focuses on how female MPs as a marginalised group utilises social media, particularly Facebook, in expressing gender issues. The research questions and objectives are as follows:

Research Questions:

1. What is the distribution pattern of Facebook use by female MPs based on their political party affiliation in Malaysia?
2. How does Facebook help female MPs address gender issues in Malaysia?
3. What are the factors that influence female MPs to use Facebook to promote issues in Malaysia?

Objectives:

1. To analyse the distribution patterns of the use of Facebook among female members of the Parliament based on their political affiliation in Malaysia.
2. To understand how Facebook is used by female MPs to address gender issues in Malaysia.

3.   To examine the factors that influence female MPs to promote gender issues in Malaysia.

JUSTIFICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study focuses on the works of Ray (2008), Ford (2012), Bode (2016) and Petterson (2016) on this topic but there are not many studies in the context of women Members of Parliament in Malaysia. The discussion of women issues on social media, such as Facebook, is chosen as the medium for analysis because it allows the representatives to talk directly to their constituents without being filtered unlike conventional media such as television, radio and newspaper. Furthermore, given the democratic potential of Facebook in politics, women candidates are likely to engage in social media to promote their interests.

The researcher intends to understand to what extent Facebook can be an ideal platform for women MPs to express gender issues. Hopefully, the findings may be used to raise the voices of the marginalised groups such as women and their political participation within the party and in the government. The study also provides an opportunity for the researcher to review the current patterns of the use of Facebook by women MPs in Malaysia.

Finally, the study focuses on the wide range of perspectives of women MPs in politics. This study is valuable because it provides a research-based assessment of how the Internet is utilised by women MPs to participate in the political arena. The scarcity of empirical studies conducted on the use of the Internet by women in the Malaysian Parliament based on social media, like Facebook, also justifies the need to undertake this study. Thus, by posting issues that are directly related to women, women MPs may increase the influence on the government to put priority on women's issues given the lower proportion of women in parliament.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

With this study, the researcher hopes that it will contribute to the understanding of the political participations by the women MPs through Facebook. In Malaysia, studies on the use the Internet by women MPs are very limited. This study is significant because less study have focused on the use of Facebook especially in Malaysia. This research focuses on the different variation use of online forms of communication by women. This study will enable us to understand how women elected representatives are expected to represent themselves as representatives with specific gender roles. This will add to the literature in gender politics. Then, this study will be evaluated the ways in which women elected representatives use new forms of online political communication to shape our understanding and expectations of women politicians.

Previous studies include the descriptive profile of women Members of Parliament such as Abraham (2010), Rajaratnam (2010), Ford (2011), Fleschenberg and Derichs (2012), Povey and Rostami-Povey (2012), Takhar (2013), Lim (2013), Nadrawina (2015), Bode (2016), Hirschman (2016) and Cordova and Rangel (2016). This study focuses on women in politics and the gender gap in general but not in the area of media use by women MPs. Hopefully, this study will bring new information from other perspectives. Therefore, this research will help to fill the gap in literature.

Conceptual framework: equalization perspective

In relations to political participation, the Internet has attracted scholarly attention in addressing the question whether it can change how politics is practiced. Given the extensive use of social media in political campaigns recently, the question has become important to whether the medium can provide a level playing field, making it easier for minority and marginalised political actors to obtain power. Another question is whether the Internet can provide political participation among the disengaged groups in politics (Patterson, 2016 and Jo-Ann & Surin, 2012). Among them are women, young people, and disabled groups. Two perspectives describe the effects of the Internet on politics in scholarly literature - the equalisation perspective and the normalisation perspective. As indicated by the equalisation perspective, the Internet

contains the following argument, "the advent of the Internet seen as initially as a democratic force,led to expectations that information and communication technologies(ICTs) might disproportionately benefit group of minor parties…the lack of editorial control and relative low cost of creating website meant minor political movements could establish a platform for the media, could reacha considerably larger audience. In short, the Internet could help level the electoral playing field" (Margolis, Resnick and Levy, 2003, p.58). Hence,social media comes to be known as a political equalizer as it changes the way politicians interact with citizens and their supporters.

In politics, female's politicians are always at a disadvantage as they donot have equal access to political resources. Therefore, social media with a low entry cost may facilitate communication between female legislators and their constituents. This is not a surprise as since female is a minority group in the Parliament, they would be allured to using social media frequently. A number of research suggests that social media is facilitating the work of female legislators and politicians in election. Research on the campaign websites for the candidates of Senate and House of Representatives in 2001 and 2002 found that 65% of them developed campaign websites (Dolan, 2005). Dolan's analysis also observed that the issues that are of primary concern to men are also of primary concern to women. Evan's research (2015) on the engagement of Twitter by US Housecandidates in 2012 elections found that female candidates were spending more time tweeting about female issues on Twitter than male candidates. A survey on female legislators by Women and Parliament's Global Forum(WIP) in 107 countries found that about 86% of the legislators of their respondents have used at least one form of social media in their work. Among the forms of social media, Facebook was the most widely used by them. In one question, a majority of the respondents rated social media as highly more effective than traditional news media (WIP, 2015). This is nota surprise as female leaders or politicians have always been portrayed in a negative light. Karen (1995) identified that women MPs sufferedsystematically biased media coverage during election campaigns.

METHOD

Research design

In this study, the researcher used qualitative method since the researcher is focused on the interpretation of the descriptive data. According to Bryman (2012), this method of analysis is appropriate because of "abductive reasoning, description and emphasis on the context,emphasis on the process, flexibility and limited structure, and last but not least concepts and theory grounded in data" (p. 403). This is because the researcher is focused on interpreting the information on the use of Facebook by female MPs in Malaysia.

Time frame

Since content analysis method was used by the researcher, the time frame for the data collection was 38 days. According to Mcmillan (2000),the best time to collect information for content analysis is one month and more as this will ensure reliable results. After 38 days, the information published on the chosen participants' Facebook pages were not analysed. For this study, the time frame of October 16 to November 23, 2017 was selected. This is because during this time period, a general assembly was held by the parliament in order to propose legislation through a draft known as 'bill'.

Unit of Analysis

For this study, the researcher focuses on all female MPs in Malaysia including 14 female MPs from the ruling party (Barisan National) and tenfrom the opposition parties (Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party, People's Justice Party and the Democratic Action Party)

Data Collection Primary Sources

1. The posts of female MP's account: Coding

For this part, the researcher used content analysis method. According to Nachmias and Nachmias (1976), content analysis is a method "where the content of the message forms the basis for drawing

inferences and conclusion about the content like observation and document analysis" (p.45). Kelinger (1973) defined content analysis as an observation methodof communication that people have to produce and ask questions about communication while Elo and Kyngas (2007) stated that content analysis is a method that can be applied with qualitative or quantitative data be it in an inductive or deductive way. In order to interpret the post, the researcherused thematic analysis. According to Krippendorf (1989), content analysisis unobtrusive - it accepts unstructured material, sensitive contents, and isable to process symbolic forms and cope with larger number of data and information.

2. Interview

Interview generally uses smaller samples as it describes data regardingthe respondents' opinions, values, motivations, recollections, experiences,and feelings (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011, p. 139). This approach often generates a great deal of information and unexpected answers for each interviewee. The respondents had been selected by ways of purposive sampling of the non-probability method. According to Teddlie and Yu (2007), this sampling focuses on "selecting the unit of an individual, group,and institution based on the selected purposes associated with answering aresearch study's question" (p.122)

Data Analysis

1. Content Analysis: Analysis of the Facebook post of MPs

For the online media, the information had been collected according to selective method. There are 24 female MPs in Malaysia but there are only 23 Facebook accounts that had been identified and analysed by the researcher. After collecting the list of female members of Parliament in Malaysia, the researcher searched each person whether they have a Facebook account or not.

Thematic analysis is one of the most commonly used methods of qualitative analysis. In thematic analysis, the task of the researcher is to identify a limited number of themes which are reflected in the data. Macnamara (2006) states that media content analysis is a specialised sub-set of content analysis and a well-established research methodology.Neuendorf (2002) describes content analysis as "the primary message centered methodology" (p. 9). The thematic analysis of this research was based on the themes of contents of the female MPs' Facebook pages such as women's issues.

2. Analysing Interviews

From the total of 24 MPs, the researcher managed to interview four respondents. All four interviews have been transcribed by the researcher in order to interpret the answers and responses of the interviewees. The interviewees were female members of the Parliament consisted of the opposition parties from the The People's Justice Party (PKR) and the Democratic Action Party(DAP). They were chosen as they are relevant to the findings of this research. The respondents are as stated on the table below:

No.	Name of the Respondent	Party affiliation	Constituency
1	YB Teresa Kok	DAP	Seputeh
2	YB Fuziah Salleh	PKR	Kuantan
3	YB Alice Lau	DAP	Sibu
4	YB Nurul Izzah Anwar	PKR	Lembah Pantai

Table 1: The Total Number of the Respondent

To simplify the study, the researcher has placed the interview's questions and answers. Even though all of the participants were interviewed during different sessions, some of the answers are similar so they are combined together. All of the interviews have been transcribed by the researcher.

FINDINGS

Number of female MPs in Malaysian House of Representative

For the background of female MPs in Malaysia, the information was collected from the official website of Malaysian Parliament at http://www.parlimen.gov.my. The total number of female MPs is 24. The information is gathered based on the party affiliations of the female MPs -UMNO, PBS, PBB, PKR, DAP, PAS, and AMANAH.

Table 2: The Total Number of Female MPs in Malaysia

Party/Female MPs	Number of female MPs	Active	Inactive
Ruling party			
1- YB Datuk Mas Ermieyatibinti Samsudin (UMNO)		✓	
2- YB Dato' Dr Noraini bintiAhmad (UMNO)		✓	
3- YB Datin Mastura binti Tan Sri Dato' Mohd Yazid(UMNO)		✓	
4- YB Datuk Halimah bintiMohd Sadique (UMNO)			✓
5- YB Dato' Hajah Normalabinti Abdul Samad (UMNO)		✓	
6- YB Dato' Sri Azalina binti Dato' Othman Said(UMNO)	14	✓	
7- YB Datuk Rosnah binti HajiAbdul Rashid Shirlin ((UMNO)		✓	
8- YB Datuk Hajah Azizah binti Datuk Seri Panglima Mohd Dun (UMNO)		✓	
9- YB Datuk Linda Tsen Thau Lin (PBS)		✓	
10- YB Datuk Dr Yap KainChing @ Mary Yap Ken Jin(PBS)		✓	
11- YB Puan Rubiah binti HajiWang (PBB)			✓

12- YB Dato' Sri Hajah Nancy binti Shukri (PBB)		✓	
13- YB Dato'Sri Hajah Rohani binti Haji Abdul Karim (PBB)		✓	
14- YB Datuk Hajah Norah bintiAbd Rahman (PBB)			✓

Opposition Party			
1- YB Nurul Izzah binti Anwar(PKR)		✓	
2- YB Dato' Seri Dr Wan Azizah binti Wan Ismail(PKR)		✓	
3- YB Puan Hajah Fuziah bintiSalleh (PKR)		✓	
4- YB Puan Zuraida bintiKamaruddin (PKR)		✓	
5- YB Puan Hajah Siti Mariahbinti Mahmud (AMANAH)	10		✓
6- YB Puan Hajah Siti Zailahbinti Mohd Yusoff (PAS)		✓	
7- YB Puan Teresa Kok SuhSim (DAP)		✓	
8- YB Puan Neo Nie Ching(DAP)		✓	
9- YB Alice Lau Kiong Yieng(DAP)		✓	
10- YB Kasthuriaani D/o Patto(DAP)		✓	
TOTAL	24	20	4

Source: The Official Portal of Parliament of Malaysia last updated on 25/4/2018

From the information provided, it can be seen that out of 222 seats in Malaysia Parliament, only 24 seats are managed by female MPs from boththe ruling and opposition parties for this five-year tenure (2012-2018). The number of female MPs from the ruling and opposition parties are of little difference with the ruling party occupying four seats more than the opposition. Even though the ruling party has more seats in the parliament,the overall number of female members in parliament is still low.

For the Facebook post, the researcher identified the entire Facebookpages that belong to the female MPs in Malaysia from the ruling andopposition parties. There are fourteen female MPs from the National Frontand ten female MPs from the opposition, four of which are from thePeople's Justice Party, four from the Democratic action Party, one from the PAN Malaysian Islamic Party, and one from the National Trust Party. Based on the data that has been collected, most of the female MPs from the ruling and opposition parties in Malaysia have a Facebook account andcan be easily accessed by voters and online viewers. There are 13 female MPs from the ruling party who have a Facebook account but only 10 outof the 13 MPs are active on their Facebook, consistently updating their Facebook posts or status during the research's time frame of collecting dataand information. Whereas for the opposition, there are nine female MPs who have a Facebook account with one of them rarely updating her Facebook page.

Even though there are some female MPs who use Facebook for their own personal purposes, most of them use Facebook for public purposes. They themselves and their administrators can update on certain issues directly to the people through Facebook.

Active users can be defined by the regular update of the female MPs' Facebook pages during the time frame the researcher collects data and information from said Facebook pages while inactive users can be understood to refer to female MPs who rarely post on their Facebook pagesduring this research's time frame. Some female MPs can be seen using Facebook for personal purposes. Some of them prefer to utilise other socialmedia instead of Facebook while others do not even have time to post theiractivities online due to lack of resources since their constitution's area doesnot have much access to social media. Most of the female MPs from the ruling party which are 10 out of 14 have their own administrator who is incharge of updating their Facebook page while less than half of the femaleMPs from the opposition parties have an assistant to do so.

Issues Discuss by Female MPs from the Ruling Party in Their Facebook

Table 3: Type of issues in MPs Facebook

Number of Female MPs	Type of Issues			
	Economic	Politics	Social	Gender Issue
1	7	1	54	3
2	0	0	16	0
3	3	2	49	0
4	0	0	168	0
5	4	2	75	14
6	12	4	96	5
7	5	3	47	3
8	17	29	40	1

9	2	8	22	0
10	0	0	1	0
11	6	3	22	0
12	19	4	62	5
TOTAL	75 (9.42%)	56 (7.03%)	635 (79.67%)	31 (3.9%)

The table above shows the total number of issues that had been posted on the female MPs' Facebook from the ruling party. It can be seen from the chart that social issues (79.67%) hold the highest position among all of the respondents' posts on Facebook, followed by economics (9.42%), politics (7.03%), and gender issues (3.9%). Social issues that were highlighted can be seen focusing on welfare, road, agriculture, environment, pollution issues, education, technology, creative and media, and sport. The political issues were in regard to critiquing the opposition parties, what their own party has done so far for the community, and the political crisis that occurs due to the 1MDB issue.

As for the economic issues, they were largely about the Goods and Services Tax (GST), increase standard of living, and price of oil and gas in Malaysia. Gender issues like worldwide discussion of gender equality and the issue of hotel front desk clerks should not be hijabi women were highlighted for quite a while. Some of the MPs preferred to upload videos of discussions that had been conducted in parliament while some used their Facebook for personal purposes by posting about gardening and cooking. Even though there are 14 female MPs from the ruling party, only 12 of them were actively updating their Facebook posts during the research's time frame for collecting data.

Issues Discussed by Female MPs from the Opposition Parties

Number of Female MPs	Type of Issues			
	Economic	Politics	Social	Gender Issue
1	26	28	45	3
2	10	48	80	0
3	12	24	41	0
4	5	36	35	4
5	3	12	24	4
6	9	33	48	2
7	32	43	95	5
8	13	15	27	0
TOTAL	110 (14.43%)	239 (31.36%)	395 (51.84%)	18 (2.36%)

Table 4: The Total Number of Facebook Posts Collected from October 16 until November 23, 2017

The table shows the total number of issues that had been posted on the female MPs' Facebook from the opposition parties from the 16th of October until the 23rd of November 2017. From the information that has been collected, even though all female MPs from the opposition have their own Facebook account, two of them rarely update their Facebook status during the time frame selected by the researcher. Hence, the data can be seen consisted of eight respondents only.

All in all, social issues (51.84%) are the most important issues that were highlighted by each MP herself. This is followed by political, economic, and gender issues with 395 (51.84%), 239 (31.36%), 110 (14.43%), and 18 posts (2.36%) respectively. Social issues that were discussed by them can be seen regarding the welfare of their own constituency, flood, education, and races. For the political aspects, most of them posted about their political party and campaigns, the misconduct of the current government, and the ruling party, openly criticising and condemning it. As for economics, the issues highlighted by them were the increase the level standard of living since the implementation of Goods and Services Tax (GST), the unreasonable amount of the money problem by 1MDB Corporation, oil and gas issues, and the increasing number of foreign labor force. Women's issues were also discussed such as the equality and fairness of female MPs in parliament, mistreatment of women in the workplace, and discrimination in not hiring hijabi women for the position of hotel front desk clerk.

Type of Communication Used by Female MPs in Their Facebook with their Online Audience
Table 5: Communication Approach

Party affiliation	Informative	Interactive
Ruling Party	790	7
Opposition Party	723	39

The table above shows the communication style that has been used by female MPs from the ruling party through the online media of Facebook with their online viewers and readers. Based on the data that has been collected, most of the female MPs tend to publish informative posts rather than interact with their viewers online. It can be seen that 790 of the total posts by the ruling party are informative while only seven posts are interactive where the female MPs respond and interact with the people. Thus, female MPs from the ruling party tend to use Facebook as a platform for disseminating information rather than to interact and communicate.

The table also shows the communication approach used by the female MPs from the opposition parties in their Facebook posts. From the data that has been collected, it can be seen that a total of 723 Facebook posts are informative posts while only 39 posts are interactive. Even though the total number of female representatives from the opposition is only ten, they posted a lot of information on their Facebook pages. This can be considered a lot actually.

DISCUSSION
The use of Facebook by female MPs

Based on the information that has been collected by the researcher, female MPs from the ruling and opposition parties have their own Facebook account. This is because mainstream media like television, radio, and newspaper provide limited access to female MPs to address their issue publicly. According to Munir, Shehzad, and Sahi (2014), offline media tends to target female MPs with the aim to "sensationalise and scandalize them" which make women become voiceless through this medium. Gender bias can be seen when traditional media portrays women based on the look and domestic lives of the women themselves (Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991).

The explosion of social media like Facebook has provided a powerful vehicle for female MPs to speak on their views and opinions to the attention of wider public. This can be seen when female

MPs in Malaysiause this opportunity to post and highlight on many issues to ensure that people are aware of them. Even though there is one female MP that does not have a Facebook account, it is not an issue as there are female MPs from both the ruling and opposition parties who have a Facebook account but rarely post anything on their Facebook page. One reason that can be identified for the aforementioned occurrence is due to political factors in which major party has more advantages in terms of bigger visibility and resources. Even though social media reduces the gap between parties, in terms of resources, they are still limited. Female MPs of the opposition parties do not have enough resources to hire assistants for monitoring andupdating their Facebook while this is not the case for the ruling party. They can market and promote their image in public better than female MPs from the opposition parties.

Secondly, possibly because of their constituency area, the people themselves did not utilise social media. That is why the female MPs did not use Facebook as a medium to communicate with the people. This has also been supported by Respondent 2 and Respondent 4 during the interview that has been conducted. From the interview, Respondent 2 mentioned,

> *"People in my constituency are mostly fishermen, small entrepreneurs, and some of them are civil servant. All educated people mostly move to live in the city. These people mostly are not into social media so I did not use my Facebook to target my people but to communicate with people outside in order to update the issues related to my areas."*

Respondent 4 said,

"I use Facebook more for my personal use. My peopledo not know much about Facebook. If they have any problems, they prefer to come and see me face to face. And I also prefer this kind of approach because it suits me and my society".

According to Patterson (2016), the MPs' constituency place might alsoaffect the usage of social media. For example, urban areas are more activeand have more incentive to make use of social media.

Thirdly, the reason might be that young female MPs tend to use Facebook more compared to the older ones. They are more active in updating their Facebook page. Most of the female MPs in Malaysian Parliament are young female representatives and they update their page atleast four posts per day while older female representatives tend to post at least once a day during the time frame of the research.

Aside from that, it can be seen that the ruling members tend to consume Facebook better than the opposition. This is because they have greater access on this platform and are able to post regularly since they have at least one assistant that monitors their account. As for the opposition, though they do make use of social media to reach and communicate with the voters and their online audience, it is still limiting to them as their constituencies are of undeveloped areas such as Lanang, Rantau Panjang,Kulai, Kota Raja, and Kuantan which do not favour much use of the social media. Even though there are female MPs from the ruling party who are representatives of the rural areas like Papar, Beaufort, Tawau, Kota Samarahan, Batang Sadong, Batang Lupar, and Tanjung Manis, they have better access, opportunity, and advantages for being from the ruling party.Jo-Ann and Surin (2012) emphasize that the media are owned and controlled by the current government and its political coalition. That is why the ruling party is portrayed in a positive light by the public media and has better access to internet technology.

However, the government cannot control and restrict access to online media since this approach contributes powerful effect to greater and unlimited number of audience. That is why the opposition also get the opportunity to utilize it. The researcher has collected all the posts in the library MPs' posts andhas analysed according to four main issues which are economics, politics,social, and gender. The most popular issues highlighted by the female MPsfrom 16 October until 23 November were social issues which can be interpreted consisting of volunteering activities, community service, environment, transportation, education, health, sports, and lifestyle. This kind of pattern can be seen in posts from female MPs from both the rulingand opposition parties. For the females from the ruling party, they were

mostly focused on social issues in the context of education, sports, lifestyles, environment, roads, and technology. After analysing their Facebook posts, the reasons for their focus on those particular issues are understandable as they are responsible for them - the female MPs for the ruling party are made up of the Deputy Minister of Higher Education, theDeputy Minister for Urban Wellbeing, Housing, and Local Government and Chairman of Koperasi Seri Cempaka Pasir Gudang Bhd.

As for the female MPs from the opposition parties, their issues are more on roads, bauxite, agriculture, welfare, education, drainage, and private property. Their priority is to settle local issues as that is their main responsibility. Brahim (2017) identified the role of 'elected representatives' in Malaysia as a scrutinizer for the government where theyare the representatives elected by the people from their constituent. They are to meet the people in their constituency through regular meetings and get involved in activities with high commitments. If they fail to approach,hear, and solve the people's problems properly, even with sufficient commitment from the party cannot guarantee a return to parliament at thenext election. Secondly, what most people see as the core responsibility ofthe elected representatives is closer to that of a legislator or a law-maker, to pass the legislation in parliament (p. 55).

According to an article published by European Parliament in 2013 on *Women in Decision Making: The Role of New Media Increased Political Participation*, female MPs tend to be more involved in social works and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) compared to men. Worldwide analysis found that most of the social and welfare jobs will be given to female MPs. As can be seen from the Facebook posts dated 5th of November, many of the MPs went down to Penang on that day to help the people there as Penang was hit by heavy floods. That is why many female MPs posted about their community service there during that time. The issue was then followed with politics, economics, and gender respectivelyfor the female from the opposition parties while the ruling MPs focused more on the economics, politics, and gender as the less issues had been discussed. Based on the conducted interviews, all four respondents stated that they are more involved in the discussion of the aforementioned issuescompared to women's issues on their Facebook page. Examples,

Respondent 1 mentioned,

"I used to post on issues related to religions and races so that people are aware of them,"

Respondent 2 said,

"If you look at my interests, you can see that I fight formy constituency on the issues of bauxite and private property. Those are my greatest concerns so far,"

Respondent 3 mentioned that,

"My focus for my community are regarding road and drainage. It does not involved huge issues."

While the last respondent, Respondent 4 claimed,

"I work hard to ensure my people receive the treatment that they are supposed to get even thoughthe government already rejected my proposal on it."

Interestingly, from November 11 until 17, most of the Facebook posts on female MPs' wall focus on the issue of "policy of prohibiting their frontline staff from wearing the hijab" by Malaysian Association Hotel (MAH). The issue was discussed publicly and most female MPs fought onthis issue including female MPs in the Prime Minister's Department. Opposition representative from Lembah Pantai actively posts on this matter.

The researcher recognises that all of these issues are equally important. Social issues had been highlighted by the female MPs since they were elected by their people and people chose them to represent the social issues that were promised will be addressed in their manifesto. Female MPs are seen to publish more on social issues in order to create awareness and clear understanding of the problems so that people are notified on these issues and that is what a representative need to do for their people. Based on this, the researcher acknowledges that the female MPs did not discuss much on women's issues on their social media since they have their own focus and interests to fulfill. It is such a waste since female MPs in the parliament are small in term of number though they did use Facebook as a platform to tackle on female issues publicly.

Respondent 1 stated that,

> *"...I am not much on women's issues. I am more on the crucial, controversial, and sensitive issues like 355 Act, Kapit issues, mosques, and so on..."*

Respondent 2,

> *"For me childcare is not women's issue but it is gender issue. The society thinks that childcare is women's issue but it is actually parenting issue."*

Respondent 3,

> *"It is not women's issues but everybody's issues. It is an ideal platform because sometimes women need information they will google but not the safe platform that not the only platform..."*

> After conducting the study, the researcher found that female MPs tend to provide informative way of communication instead of interactive. When female MPs posted on some issues on their Facebook, majority of them did not reply to the comments of their online viewers. Out of the 757 Facebook posts from the ruling party, only seven posts had received replies or comments by the female MPs while for the opposition parties, 39 out of 80 posts received replies or were commented by the female MPs from the opposition. All four respondents stated that they will reply according to situations and they will reply directly to the individual rather than posted it on their Facebook wall. Davis (1999) found that there are non- representatives that use online media for public discussions with people or "foster public discussion among citizens" (p. 115). Stromer-Galley also stated that "internet has come to be utilized by political candidate by creating an appearance of interaction and limits the possibilities for people to engage them in human-human discussion" (2000, p.117).

In regards to this issue, it can be seen that the female MPs did not utilize much the interactive communication with the online audience. A direct kind of communication allows people to engage with the MPs but it is not encouraged by the MPs themselves.

> Respondent 1, *"...sometimes I do. When it is regarding something sensitive, I do..."*

> Respondent 2, *"...I look at the response first. Sometimes I respond a little bit and then I will let other commenter to answer. It cannot be ignored because if you understand the theory of life, if she/he wrote something incorrect, people will believe it, so I must reply.."*

> Respondent 3, *"...Yes but not all the time. I actually deleted some of the comments that are not related to my post - if I do not reply directly, I will personally do that…"*

Respondent 4, *"...Sometimes. Not all the time. We need to choose the timebut it depends on the complaint, it depends on the urgency - for the casual butgetting to know commentary we prioritize urgent request for help - assistant so on and so forth and we try.."*

After analyzing all the information that has been collected, most of the female MPs tend to use informative way of communication when they engage with their online audience and voters. For the ruling party, the female MPs seem to interact less with their people online probably due tolack of time as they hold ministry position hence they have lots of other things to do than replying to comments. As for the members of theopposition, they also did not utilise much on the use of Facebook probablybecause they have other more important issues to settle as well as due to limited access over their constituent which make them divert their focus and attention to other things. However, they do reply to the online comments when it is needed compared to the female MPs from the rulingparty as they know online media is the only approach they have to communicate with the people since mainstream media is under total control by the government. When this happened, the researcher cannot identify whether the female MPs read the critiques and comments posted by their online audience for further improvement.

Factors motivates female MPs

Based on the result that has been collected by the researcher, gender isthe least issue that had been discussed by the female MPs be it in the parliament or on social media. There are female MPs that talk on this issuebut it is not much as compared to social issues. Aside from the Minister and Deputy Minister of Women, Family, and Community Development, only a few numbers of female representatives from the ruling and opposition parties posted regarding female issues. Munir, Shehzad and Sahi (2014) identified that female MPs need to discuss female issues in order to create awareness to the society since the "society fail to understandthe role of female politicians and there is a need to create awareness on more political participation by the female in the country as they form almost half of the population" (p.1). This sentiment is also supported by Respondent 2 and 4 where:

Respondent 2

"Sometimes women's issues are specific, for instance the issue of breastfeed. Young MPs who are with a baby will be more passionate on this issue. Let them champion and we just support her. So we support the initiatives, for example placing the nursing room to be beside the toilets in the parliament, that one I am all for it. Before this, they make it far behind so I fight for it. So everything needs to be synthetize. For me childcare is not women's issue but gender issue. Society thinks that childcare is women's issue but it is actually parenting issue - the perception"

Respondent 4

"....our country does not prioritize women and family issues sufficiently and when I say family it doesn't mean it belongs to domain of the women,it belongs jointly, men and women. This should be a national issue because the measure of how great a society is, is how we protect and how we preserve the integrity of children, our impoverish one- yes for me mainstream media I don't think have sufficient awareness to take the account of the issue bullying- this not just the shock factor-it is about the repertory step we take to reduce the incident of bullying and the overall of the education that we have to the society to ensure they realize the impact to the society and negativity and the sheer depravity that come allowing the bully to take place. For me if I can use Facebook, yes it would definitely will be some sort that I would utilize"

In addition, Mohd Yusof (2012) stated that it is the right and duty of every individual to speak for and defend the rights of others and the community when being threatened or violated. Thus, the researcher identified that media should not divide men and women agenda separately.Everyone has rights that need to be protected and social media has provenpotential for mobilising attention and accountability to women's rights andchallenging discrimination and stereotypes. Female MPs are

expected to talk about these issues since the Internet isnot filtered and not fully regulated but it seems that these issues are not being discussed much by the female MPs.

CONCLUSION

In short, it can be seen that equalization perspective does not work entirely for this study. Even though Facebook can be seen as an efficient tool for female MPs, they did not utilize it much when it comes to voicing out women's issues publicly. Female MPs from both the ruling and opposition parties do utilize the use of Facebook so that they can reach and communicate with their online audience actively but not in an interactive way. They prefer the informative way of communication instead of the interactive way.From the study that has been conducted, the researcher found that women MPs tend to utilise the use of online media, specifically Facebook, instead of offline media since this medium provides better opportunities for them as a marginalized group in the parliament. Even though in this study the researcher would like to identify women issues, based on the results collected, it can be seen that the main focus of women MPs on their Facebook is social issues instead of women issues. They focus more on their constitutional problems so that they can be responsible MPs to their society and voters. For them, women issues are not an issue that should be focused by women MPs alone, but by partnership of both genders. However, women issues are not highlighted much by them. It is such a waste because they have the opportunity and access to do so as MPs but they divert their attention and focus to other issues. Both ruling and opposition parties use Facebook to focus on social issues. Therefore, the main findings of this study is that Facebook does not fully serve the outline of the equalisation perspective. However, in terms of gender, it is similar with what was proposed by the equalisation perspective where the women MPs actively share news and information on Facebook.

The limitations of this research can be seen in terms of time constraint. Since the researcher conducted this research within a limited time frame, the appointment for the interview sessions took a longer time to be approved by the women MPs which led the researcher to proceed with the study with four representatives from the opposition only. In addition, the researcher was also limited in time to conduct the study. Since the researcher focuses only on women MPs, hence the result of this study is only applicable for selected group; the outcome is not universal.

For future researchers, it is better to conduct in depth study on this topic. Further research should be done to understand why women MPs tend to focus more on social issues instead of other issues at different time constraints. Secondly, future researchers can try to adopt other approaches like study on the use of Facebook by MPs according to age, gender, and political affiliations of both genders. Thirdly is to compare all the social media used by MPs and why they prefer to use it. Fourthly, future researchers can also study on the political participation through the use of social media by women representatives from Upper and Lower House. Fifthly, it is also encouraged for future researchers to study on the issues focused by women MPs on social media during the General Election (GE).

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