

On May 9, 2018, the 14th Malaysian general election saw 12,995,514 voters participate, representing 82.32% of the Malaysian population. As shown in Table 1, the Pakatan Harapan (PH) coalition, previously the federal opposition, won a majority with 122 seats. In a historic shift, the long-standing Barisan Nasional (BN) party was ousted from power. On May 10, 2018, The Honourable Tun Dr. Mahathir Bin Mohamad, who had served as Malaysia's Prime Minister from 1981 to 2003, was sworn in for a second term. The BN, led by The Honourable Dato' Sri Haji Najib Razak, secured 79 seats, becoming the new federal opposition. Additionally, the Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS) won 18 seats, and three seats were secured by independent parties.

Table 1. GE14 results for parliament seats

Party	Seats Won
Barisan Nasional (BN)	79
Pakatan Harapan (PH)	122
Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS)	18
Others (Independent)	3

Although the 14th Parliament was originally set to conclude on July 16, 2023, former Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob requested an early dissolution on October 10, 2022, which was approved by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong (King of Malaysia). The highly anticipated 15th General Election (GE15) took place on November 19, 2022, aiming to resolve the country's two-and-a-half-year-long political instability. Following a constitutional amendment lowering the voting age from 21 to 18, these elections were the first to include voters aged 18 to 20. The "Undi18" amendment led to a significant increase in eligible voters, with automatic voter registration boosting the electorate by 31%, adding approximately six million new voters compared to the GE14, which had 14.9 million voters.

Table 2 shows that in GE15, the Pakatan Harapan (PH) coalition won 82 seats in the Dewan Rakyat (Parliament), falling short of the 112 needed for a simple majority. The historically dominant Barisan Nasional (BN) slipped to third place with 30 seats, losing most of its seats to Perikatan Nasional (PN). Gabungan Parti Sarawak (GPS) secured 23 seats, and Gabungan Rakyat Sabah (GRS) won six. To achieve the necessary total parliamentary seats for a majority government, the various coalitions, Pakatan Harapan (PH), Perikatan Nasional (PN), Barisan Nasional (BN), along with their East Malaysian counterparts, Gabungan Parti Sarawak (GPS), and Gabungan Rakyat Sabah (GRS) engaged in extensive negotiations. The situation remained unresolved until the King of Malaysia intervened, advocating for a unity government. Ultimately, the Pakatan Harapan (PH), Barisan Nasional (BN), and Gabungan Parti Sarawak (GPS) coalitions formed a federal government, and Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim was appointed Malaysia's tenth prime minister on November 24.

Table 2. GE15 results for parliament seats

Party	Seats Won
Barisan Nasional (BN)	30
Perikatan Nasional (PN)	74
Pakatan Harapan (PH)	82
Gabungan Parti Sarawak (GPS)	23
Gabungan Rakyat Sabah (GRS)	6
Others (Independent)	7

Between GE14 and GE15, Malaysia experienced the changes of two governments and two Prime Ministers. This shift indicates that major parties like BN no longer hold exclusive trust in governing the country. Events such as the 1MDB scandal, the COVID-19 pandemic, declarations of national emergencies, and protests against these declarations have significantly altered the political trust of Malaysian citizens. Changes in Malaysia's political dynamics are rooted in the trust placed in political parties. Political trust refers to the extent to which citizens believe the government can meet their expectations, and it significantly influences the success of political parties. It is recognized as a primary factor shaping political movements (Kamonwan Boonrat, 2020).

Factors such as competence, image, quality, trustworthiness, and attractiveness form the foundation of voters' preferences regarding political trust (Arkorful et al., 2021). A political party's image is a crucial marketing technique, providing a competitive edge and fostering political trust. The images projected

by political parties can capture voters' attention, especially new voters who often rely heavily on the reputation of a specific party (Dubrow, 2012). Voters perceive each political party as having a unique brand, which influences their decisions at the ballot box. The political image, similar to a brand image, is a decisive factor contributing to the success of certain political parties over others (Maryani, 2020). Considering Malaysia's predominantly Malay population, young voters find the narrative of a party image that addresses sensitive issues like religion and ethnicity to be a compelling factor in influencing trust among first-time voters.

Instead of trying to change people's perspectives, party services aim to meet the needs of their citizens. Political parties use market intelligence to identify voter demands and then tailor their policies accordingly (Julinaa et al., 2015). Parties focused on political service make continuous efforts to deliver on their promises. Failure to do so can lead to dissatisfied voters, posing a long-term risk of losing their support in future elections. During elections, the reputation of political parties and their leaders significantly influences voting outcomes (Davies & Mian., 2010). The reputation of a party and its leaders heavily impacts voter choices. Like in business, the reputation of an organization and its leader are closely linked, highlighting that managing a leader's image is a valid strategy for maintaining the organization's reputation (Davies & Mian., 2010).

While much research has been conducted on voting and general elections, further studies are needed to explore the involvement of first-time voters. Many people are unaware of the significant impact first-time voters can have on election outcomes, especially with Malaysia now allowing 18-year-olds to vote. According to electoral roll age statistics as of October 9, 2022, a total of 1,393,549 voters aged 18 to 20 cast their votes for the first time in GE15, making up 16% of the 6.9 million new voters automatically registered with the implementation of Undi18. However, first-time voters may have limited knowledge about general elections (Mary et al., 2022).

Therefore, this study aims to identify the influence of party images, party services, and party reputation with political trust among first-time voters. It also seeks to identify significant differences in political trust between male and female first-time voters. Gender plays a role in voter decision-making (McDonough, 2022). This research is expected to benefit political parties in Malaysia by identifying key factors in developing trust among citizens, enabling them to formulate effective strategies for the next general election (GE16). The study's findings will also provide insights into the importance of party trust among first-time voters, potentially contributing to successful strategies in winning general elections.

METHOD AND MATERIALS

Study Design, Sample and Instrumentation

The study framework is depicted in Figure 1. This research uses a cross-sectional design and a quantitative approach to evaluate how independent variables such as party images, party services, and party reputations influence the dependent variable, political trust. In this context, political trust refers to individuals' belief and confidence in their elected party to act in the public's best interest and to honor its commitments and responsibilities. Party images encompass the public and voters' perceptions of a political party, including its values, principles, policies, leaders, and members. Party services involve the various types of support and resources provided by a political party to its citizens, members, candidates, and elected officials. Party reputation includes public and political actors' perceptions of a party, reflecting its history, policies, leadership, and electoral performance.

Table 3. Instrumentation

Variables	Source
Political Trust	(Kamonwan Boonrat, 2020)
Party Images	
Party Services	
Party Reputation	

Data collection is conducted using primary data through a self-administered questionnaire. A sample of 319 individuals was randomly selected from a population of 1,179 at one of the largest higher education institutions in Malaysia's east coast region. The questionnaire is divided into two sections: Part A, which gathers demographic information, and Part B, which includes questions related to both dependent and independent variables. Response options are Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree

(D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Table 3 summarizes the number of items and sources of the instrumentation used in the study.

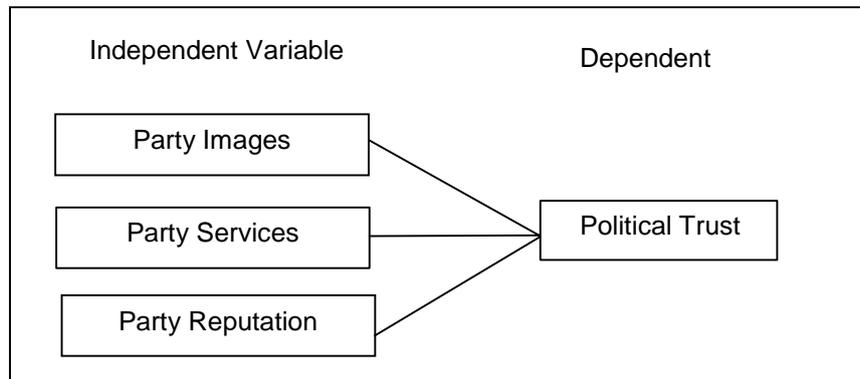


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

Method of Analysis

Descriptive statistics were employed to outline the demographic profiles of the respondents. Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) was used to identify the relationships between Political Trust and the independent variables. MLR helps to understand how changes in the independent variables are associated with changes in the dependent variable. The general formula for Multiple Linear Regression is:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \dots + \beta_k X_k + \epsilon \quad (1)$$

Where, Y is the dependent variable, β_0 is the y-intercept (constant term), $\beta_1, \beta_2, \dots, \beta_k$ are the coefficients of the independent variables of X_1, X_2, \dots, X_k . ϵ is the error term or residual, representing the difference between the observed and predicted values of Y . MLR estimates the coefficients (β values) that minimize the sum of the squared differences between the observed and predicted values of the dependent variable.

The Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) method is commonly used to estimate the parameters in Multiple Linear Regression (MLR). The OLS method uses matrix algebra to simplify the estimation process. Represent the model in matrix form:

$$Y = X\beta + \epsilon \quad (2)$$

Where, Y is $n \times 1$ vector of dependent variable values. X is an $n \times (k+1)$ matrix of independent variables (including a column of ones for the intercept). β is a $(k+1) \times 1$ vector of parameters and ϵ is an $n \times 1$ vector of errors. The OLS estimate of the parameter vector β is obtained using the formula:

$$\hat{\beta} = (X^T X)^{-1} X^T Y \quad (3)$$

Where, X^T is the transpose matrix of X and $(X^T X)^{-1}$ is the inverse of the matrix $X^T X$.

Additionally, an Independent T-test was conducted to examine differences in Political Trust levels between genders. The independent t-test, also known as the two-sample t-test, is used to determine whether there is a significant difference between the means of two independent groups. The detailed explanation of the formula and its components:

$$t = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{\sqrt{\frac{s_1^2}{n_1} + \frac{s_2^2}{n_2}}} \quad (4)$$

Where, \bar{X}_1 and \bar{X}_2 are the sample means of the two groups. $\frac{s_1^2}{n_1}$ and $\frac{s_2^2}{n_2}$ are the sample variances of the two groups. n_1 and n_2 are the sample sizes of the two groups.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographics of Respondent

As shown in Table 4, 74.4% of the participants were female, while 25.6% were male. For political party affiliation, 44.3% of respondents mentioned Perikatan Nasional as the party serving their area, 23% expressed support for Pakatan Harapan, 16.5% aligned with Barisan Nasional, and 16.2% identified with other parties

Table 4. Descriptive Table of Respondents Demographic

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
• Male	79	25.6
• Female	230	74.4
Party Serve in Respondents Area		
• Perikatan Nasional	137	44.3
• Pakatan Harapan	71	23
• Barisan Nasional	51	16.5
• Other	50	16.2

Model Adequacy Checking

Model adequacy checks include the assumption of linearity between independent and dependent variables, normality of residuals, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity (Lee & Lee, 2022; Olive, 2017; Roback & Legler, 2021; Von & Schuster, 1998; Yang et al., 2019).

- *Linearity*

Table 5 indicates a noteworthy linear association between party images ($r=0.862$, $p\text{-value} < 0.05$), party services ($r=0.812$, $p\text{-value} < 0.05$), and party reputation ($r=0.771$, $p\text{-value} < 0.05$) with political trust.

Table 5. Pearson Correlation

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Pearson correlation	p-value
Political Trust	Party Images	0.862	<0.001
	Party Services	0.812	<0.001
	Party Reputation	0.771	<0.001

- *Homoscedasticity*

Figure 2 shows that the residuals are randomly dispersed without any discernible pattern, suggesting the fulfilment of homoscedasticity, where residuals exhibit constant variance and lack bias.

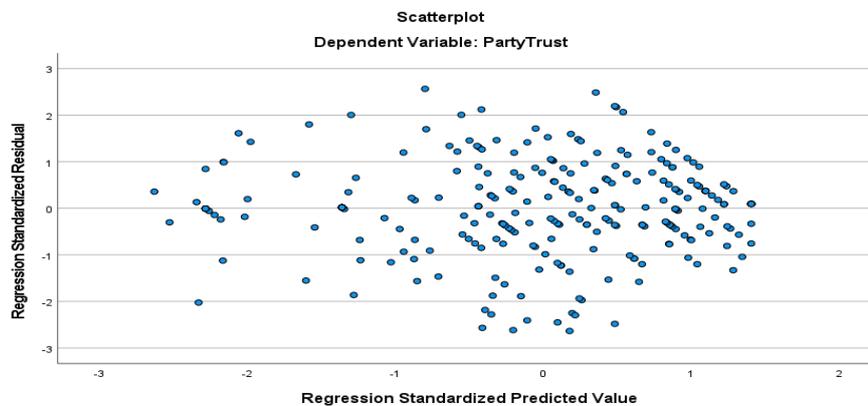


Figure 2. The Scatter Plot of Residual by Predicted Value

- *Normality*

In Figure 3, the plot aligns with a straight line, signifying that the residuals are normally distributed and, consequently, meet the assumption of normality of the residuals.

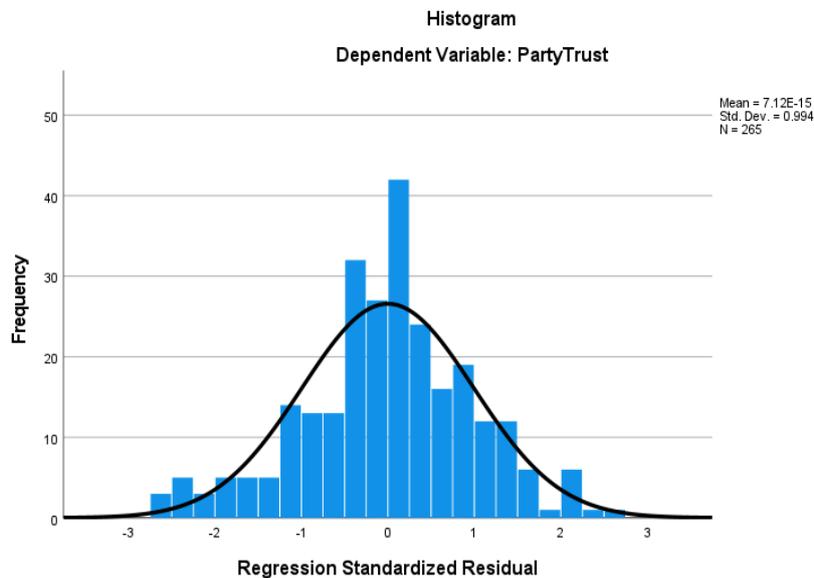


Figure 3. Distribution of Residual

- *Multicollinearity*

The multicollinearity test aims to ascertain the degree of interrelation among the independent variables in the model. Table 6 reveals no indication of multicollinearity for all variables, given that the tolerance values for Party Images (0.578), Party Services (0.295), and Party Reputation (0.272) surpass the threshold of 0.1. The VIF values are also below 10, specifically 1.729, 3.392, and 3.675. Consequently, this model does not exhibit multicollinearity issues.

Table 6. Coefficients form multicollinearity assumption

Variables	Collinearity Statistics		Findings
	TOL	VIF	
Party Images	0.578	1.729	No Multicollinearity
Party Services	0.295	3.392	
Party Reputation	0.272	3.675	

Significant of the Model

The model's significance is assessed to determine its suitability for the data in the linear regression. Subsequently, the R2 value gauges how much of the variance in the dependent variable is accounted for by the independent variables. A higher R2 value, approaching 1, indicates a better fit for the model. In Table 7, the F-statistic holds a significant value (F=457.063, p-value < 0.05), signifying the existence of a noteworthy regression model. The R2 value (0.840) indicates that 84% of the total variation in political trust can be explained by factors such as sense of party images, party services and party reputation. The remaining 16% is attributed to other unaccounted factors.

Table 7. Analysis of Variance for MLR test

Model	ANOVA	F	Sig	R Square
1	Regression	457.063	<0.001	0.840

Significant of the independent variables

The t-test is used to check the significance of each independent variable. Based on the findings in Table 8, it can be inferred that party images ($\beta=0.326$), party images ($\beta=0.215$) and party images ($\beta=0.447$) significantly influence political trust.

Table 8. Coefficient for MLR test

Variable	Unstandardized coefficient	p-value	95% confidence interval	
			Lower	Upper
Constant	0.037	0.802	-0.257	0.332
Party Image	0.326	<0.001	0.266	0.386
Party Services	0.215	<0.001	0.131	0.299
Party Reputation	0.447	<0.001	0.354	0.541

Independent T-test (gender)

In assessing whether a statistically significant difference exists between the means of two unrelated groups, the independent t-test, an inferential statistical test, is employed. The findings, presented in Table 9, reveal that the F-value for Levene's test (p-value > 0.05) indicates homogeneity of variance. Furthermore, the independent t-test suggests no significant difference in political trust level between male and female respondents (t-statistic = 1.060, p-value = 0.290).

Table 9. Independent T-test Result

Party Trust	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means	
	F	P-value	T	P-value
	0.05	0.823	1.060	0.290

Summary of The Findings

The results of the entire study are summarized in Table 10.

Table 10. Summary of The Findings

Relationships	Findings
There is a significant influence of party image, party services, and party reputation on political trust	Supported
There is a significant mean difference in political trust among gender.	Not Supported

CONCLUSIONS

The findings from the MLR analysis highlight the substantial impact of party image, party services, and party reputation on the political trust of first-time voters. Notably, party reputation emerged as the most influential factor affecting political trust, contrasting with the findings of Hati et al. (2017), who reported no significant influence of political party reputation on voting intention and trust. Despite the widespread availability of information, first-time voters, particularly among the younger demographic, exhibit a strong inclination to trust parties with a positive reputation.

To address the second objective, an independent t-test was utilized, revealing no significant difference in political trust levels between genders. This aligns with previous research by Norris (2017), Campbell, & Wolbrecht (2006), and other studies across diverse societies, consistently indicating minimal gender impact on political trust levels. These results provide valuable insights for political parties aiming to formulate effective strategies for cultivating a supportive political environment and increasing political trust among first-time voters.

The study suggests that future investigations should incorporate additional independent variables to explore the potential influences on political trust comprehensively. To enhance the understanding of political loyalty and its causes, a recommended approach involves employing a longitudinal design in subsequent studies, as it can yield more relevant information over time.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors disclosed no conflicts of interest in this work and declared no potential conflicts related to this article's research, authorship, or publication.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Conceptualization, research design, and supervision of the study.

Author 2, 3 and 4.: Methodology development, instrument design, and data collection.

Author 5 and 6.: Data analysis, interpretation of results, and drafting of the original manuscript.

Author 7 and 8.: Review, editing, proofreading, and final approval of the manuscript.

AVAILABILITY OF DATA AND MATERIALS

Data available on request from the authors.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI

During the preparation of this work, the author(s) used Chatgpt to enhance the clarity of the writing. After using the Chatgpt, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and take(s) full responsibility for the content of the publication.

ETHIC STATEMENTS

This study received approval from the UiTM Research Ethics Board, as indicated by the ethics approval letter reference BERC/02/2023(UG/MR/28).

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