

SARAWAK ELECTIONS AND MIDTERM TRANSITION GOVERNMENT 2020: UNDERSTANDING THE PUBLIC'S PERCEPTION OF THE MEDIATIZATION AND POPULISM APPROACH THROUGH THE MEDIA CONTENT OF NEWSPAPERS

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ABSTRACT:

This study aims to understand the public's perception by looking into media news content analysis and surveying of public perception of seven of Sarawak's newspapers namely *Borneo Post*, *New Sarawak Tribune*, *Utusan Sarawak*, *Utusan Borneo*, *Suara Sarawak*, *See Hua Daily* and *Sin Chew Daily* were examined. The understanding of the impacts on mediatization of politics and populism towards public perception with Sarawak's newspapers towards the electoral democracy during Sarawak's election and Midterm Transition of Malaysia Government 2020 were analysed based on an online survey. The analysis was constructed on 384 respondents using factor analysis (FA) and regression to examine the role of mediatization of politics and populism towards the opinion and perception of the people of Sarawak. The result shows that mediatization of politics scored a total of more than 10% impact towards the opinion and perception of Sarawak's people where media logic proved an impact of 17% and political logic showed a 12.5% impact. Populism also evinced that a 14.1% impact towards the Sarawak people's perception.

KEY WORDS:

factor analysis, media and political logic, mediatization of politics, newspaper, populism, regression, survey



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1 Introduction

Due to how individuals view themselves based on their ideas or opinions communicated through 'traditional' or digital media, the media communication landscape is altering. Similarly, media criticism tends to focus on execution rather than believing that the media plays a crucial role in democracy. As a result, citizens will fail to fulfil their responsibilities, and democracy will crumble in regions where the media acts as the system's pillar. The world is divided by geographical limits and political power, religious differences, cultural and ideological and economic dominance, and information power, as portrayed in the media.¹ In a democracy, citizens must be allowed to acquire information from the media and express their opinions freely. Media disseminate well-planned, methodical and time-consuming campaigns that can identify target group segmentations intentionally used to modify ideas, trust values, attitudes and behaviour.² In other words, the media work as a conduit or agent for influencing voters during an election. Typically, democracies are filled with different voices expressing diverse ideas and perspectives, some of which are opposing. Democracies have a reputation for being loud. A democracy depends on literate, knowledgeable citizens with access to information to participate as fully as possible in public life and criticise ineffective or oppressive government leaders or policies.

The media may require the attention and acknowledgment of the entire society, and people and politicians are becoming increasingly dependent on newspapers, radio, television and their respective websites for news.³ Consequently, as stated in politics, the media is responsible for assisting the electorate in publicising specific topics for debate agendas or manifestos in their campaign.⁴ If voters are engaged or deliberate, it can influence election outcomes. To do this, some politicians use the media to portray the opposition as representing the disadvantaged to generate anger, dissatisfaction, fear and hatred among the public. This is the practice of populism. However, the media might contribute to media populism by establishing in-groups and out-groups, raging against elites, transmitting provocative emotions and attracting charisma and moral impulses.⁵

The characterised populism is based on the ideational approach by two claims: first, that a country's 'genuine people' are in a moral confrontation with 'outsiders', and second, that nothing should stand in the way of the 'real people's' will.⁶ Populists believe that politics is a moral fight between good and evil – between the actual people of a country and elites or other groups populists regard as outsiders, such as ethnic and religious minorities, immigrants and criminals. The moral conflict between the 'decent people' and the 'corrupt elite' is one of the most critical themes in populist discourse. All political phenomena, including populism, are more specific than cultural, political and social contexts. Because populism is viewed as an ideological combination between the people⁷ and the elite who provide a comprehensive definition of an interest that can spark a populist wave or phenomenon, the dominant populist actors are viewed as experts at detecting and politicising social grievances, whether intentionally or not.

Populist ideology is a centred on the concept of "popular sovereignty" since it shapes the connection between populists, elites, the people and populist actors.⁸ Put another way, the people should enjoy complete sovereignty, yet elites and others are viewed as abdicating this privilege. This is why populists attempt to portray themselves as protectors or restorers of popular sovereignty. The media is most people's primary source of political, social and economic information. Politicians and populists utilise the media to gather information on public or societal criticism, perspectives, and recommendations, which they may address in greater detail. The mediatization of politics is affected by populist leaders' personalities and characteristics.

In the meantime, "mediatization" is a social process of transformation connected with communication media that physically or temporally enhances human communication capabilities in various ways, including distance and time. Mediatization or mediation is a German term, *Mediatisierung*, which causes the media to dominate or play a role in social structures and institutions until a social revolution occurs.⁹ Numerous academic perspectives exist on the relationship between media and society.

The process of mediatization does not always imply that the media system has colonised and infiltrated the nation's political system;¹⁰ instead, when mass media are the primary sources of communication, the depiction of reality affects the public or society that views it, the political system can be described as a medium of mediatization. The mediatization of politics is also frequently defined as representing politicians to the general public. Politicians must also serve as role models for citizens. The relationship between populism and the media has been recognised or observed for a long time;¹¹ the use of media, especially electronic media, has become a vital platform for political parties to rule through populist statements, to the extent that the role of the media industry must be tailored to meet the needs of the ruling political party. It is unsurprising that individuals are more likely to seek information and news from the media during an election.¹² The personalities and qualities of populist leaders are also regarded to impact the mediatization of politics.

The media are an essential forum for discussing and listening to people's concerns. It plays a prominent role in the political arena for politicians' campaigns, where the print, electronic, and digital media platforms have been recognised as a source of information for voters because they provide information directly to them. For instance, certain studies investigated how Malaysian political domains such as *Facebook*, blogs and *YouTube* were utilised to generate content that influenced public opinion during the 13th Malaysian general election or GE13.¹³ According to the statistics, *Facebook* has eclipsed *Twitter* as the most popular social media platform for political parties to promote election-related issues during the campaign. In addition, opposition parties have used the Internet to communicate with voters, and digital media have altered the government's political perspective, most notably regarding seat shifts in parliament.¹⁴ While, there was a connection between the media, themes and voter behaviour during the 14th Malaysian general election or so called GE14, media, themes and voter behaviour correlated (GE14).¹⁵ Development issues are more essential to voters than the reinstatement of East Malaysia's special status, according to GE14 findings, the fourteenth general election was perceived as a fight of manifestos or promises, with populist actors relying on the media to fulfil their objectives or spread propaganda to affect polling results.¹⁶

1 ALMAHALLAWI, W., ZANUDDIN, H.: 50 Days of War on Innocent Civilian: Ma'an News Agency Coverage of Israeli and Palestinian Conflict. In *International Journal of Engineering & Technology*, 2018, Vol. 7, No. 49, p. 145-150.

2 See: MCCUIRE, J. W.: McGuire's Classic Input-Output Framework for Constructing Persuasive Messages. In RICE, R. E., ATKIN, C. K. W. (eds.): *Public Communication Campaigns*, 4th Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1981, p. 133-146; ROGERS, E. M.: *Diffusion of Innovations*, 4th Edition. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983.

3 JARREN, O.: Massenmedien als intermediäre: Zur anhaltende relevanz der Massenmedien für die öffentliche Kommunikation. In *Medien & Kommunikationswissenschaft*, 2008, Vol. 65, No. 3-4, p. 329-346.

4 See: HAYES, D.: Does the Messenger Matter: Candidate-Media Agenda Convergence and Its Effect on Voter Issue Salience. In *Political Research Quarterly*, 2008, Vol. 16, No. 1, p. 134-146; ABBE, O. et al.: Agenda Setting in Congressional Elections: The Impact of Issues and Campaigns on Voting Behavior. In *Political Research Quarterly*, 2003, Vol. 56, No. 4, p. 419-430.

5 KRÄMER, B.: Media Populism: A Conceptual Clarification and Some Theses on Its Effects. In *Communication Theory*, 2014, Vol. 24, No. 1, p. 42-60.

6 MEYER, B.: *Populists in Power: Perils and Prospects in 2021*. London: Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 2021, p. 1-21.

7 See: MUDDE, C., KALTWASSER, C. R.: *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.

8 See: WIRTH, W. et al.: The Appeal of Populist Ideas, Strategies and Styles: A Theoretical Model and Research Design for Analyzing Populist Political Communication. In *National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) Challenges to Democracy in the 21st Century*: Zurich: University of Zurich, 2016, p. 1-54. [online]. [2021-11-27]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-127461>>.

9 LIVINGSTONE, S.: On the Mediation of Everything. In *Journal of Communication*, 2009, Vol. 59, No. 1, p. 1-18.

10 STROMBACK, J.: Four Phases of Mediatization: An Analysis of the Mediatization of Politics. In *International Journal of Press/Politics*, 2008, Vol. 13, No. 3, p. 235-241.

11 MANUCCI, L.: Populism and the Media. In KALTWASSER, C. R. (ed.) et al.: *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, p. 467-488. [online]. [2020-03-22]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198803560.013.17>>.

12 ASOHAN, A.: *GE13: A Social Media Election after All*. Released on 10th May 2013. [online]. [2019-01-25]. Available at: <<https://www.digitalnewsasia.com/digital-economy/ge13-a-social-media-election-after-all>>.

13 THAM, J. S., ZANUDDIN, H.: Malaysia's 13th General Election: Political Communication and Public Agenda in Social Media. In *Asian Journal for Public Opinion Research*, 2014, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 73-89.

14 MUHAMAD, R.: Online Opposition and Elections in Malaysia. In *Asian Social Science*, 2015, Vol. 11, No. 10, p. 281-289.

15 HAMEDAN, N. N. et al.: Media, Isu dan Tingkah Laku Pengundi dalam Pilihan Raya Umum ke-14: Satu Kajian Awal. In *Jurnal Komunikasi*, 2019, Vol. 32, No. 2, p. 293-312.

16 See: GOVINDASAMY, A. R.: From Pakatan Harapan to Perikatan Nasional: A Missed Opportunity for Reforms for East Malaysia? In *Trends in Southeast Asia*, 2021, Vol. 12, No. 2021, p. 1-30.



Figure 1: Sarawak Map

Source: *The Geography of Sarawak*. [online]. [2022-09-05]. Available at: <https://Sarawak.gov.my/web/home/article_view/159/176/?id=159>.

Sarawak is situated just north of the Equator, between latitudes 0° 50' and 5° N and longitudes 109° 36' and 115° 40' E as shown in Figure 1 above. It runs over 800 kilometres along Borneo's northwest coast, covering an area of 124,449.51 square kilometres. The South China Sea separates the state from Peninsular Malaysia by 600 kilometres. To the northeast, it is immediately connected to the State of Sabah, where the Sultanate of Brunei forms a double enclave. Sarawak shares an internal border with Kalimantan, Indonesia. Sarawak is separated into three regions such as coastal lowlands with peat swamps and narrow deltaic and alluvial plains; a broad tract of undulating hills varying in elevation from 300 to 500 metres; and mountain highlands stretching to the Kalimantan border. It is also a home to Malaysia's longest river, the Batang Rajang, which flows southwest from the Iran Mountain range to Kapit, where it swings west to complete its 563 kilometres journey to the South China Sea. The river is navigable by ocean-going vessels for 130 kilometres to Sibu and shallow-draft vessels and small boats like sampans for another 160 kilometres to the otherwise inaccessible interior.¹⁷

Sarawak has a population of 2,907,500 people as of 2020, with 61.2% Dayak, 20.1% Malay, 17.2% Chinese, 3.0% Melanau and 0.5% others, and most people speak English, Malay Iban, Bidayuh and Sarawak Malay. Furthermore, the majority religion in the state is Christianity (50.1%), followed by Islam (34.2%), Buddhism (12.8%), and others (2.9%).¹⁸

To comprehend what and how a political trip evolves in its entirety, the media are seen as a narrator. Consequently, during the 14th general election or GE14, the media emerged as a populist force impacting the democratic elections of the country. After the GE14, when the Barisan Nasional (BN) government, which had reigned for 61 years, was replaced by Pakatan Harapan (PH), which won 113 of 222 parliamentary seats compared to BN's 79 seats, the Malaysian media landscape had shifted dramatically. In addition, the State of Sarawak is viewed as the BN's stronghold, having finally accepted the people's power to win 19 of the 31 contested parliamentary seats in GE14, altering the political landscape. Meanwhile, the Democratic Action Party (DAP) and Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) won 12 seats in the parliament.¹⁹

Local factors or issues, such as the Malaysian Agreement 1963 (MA63) and state nationalism, specifically the Native Customary Rights Land (NCR Land), were the primary topics on which political parties in Sarawak campaigned during the GE14, as opposed to national factors that alter the voting

pattern.²⁰ As is common knowledge, the COVID-19 outbreak has profoundly impacted virtually all global operations. The Malaysian government declared a proclamation of emergency on 12th January 2021, until 1st August 2021, and a movement control order (MCO) on 18th March 2020, until 1st November 2020, due to the increasing number of cases and the effects of the epidemic. During this time, such activities, including elections, were not permitted. Like other countries such as the Council of Europe in 2020, advice was that the government be concerned about elections during a pandemic, even though the Constitution does not mandate this.²¹

The Sarawak State Legislative Assembly was dissolved on 3rd November 2021, following Malaysian King Yang di-Pertuan Agong Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah's consent to revoke Sarawak's proclamation of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak on the same date, paving the way for the 12th state election or called SE12, which was held on 20th December 2021.²² In the SE12, 349 candidates representing eight parties and independents vied for 82 seats. According to the results of the Election Commission of Malaysia in 2021, Gabungan Parti Sarawak (GPS) formed a new government in Sarawak with a two-thirds majority after quickly capturing 76 of 82 seats. Parti Sarawak Bersatu (PSB) gained four seats, making it the most significant opposition and the first Sarawak-based opposition party to win a seat in an election since 2006. In contrast, Pakatan Harapan (PH) only gained two seats, while the Democratic Action Party (DAP) suffered considerable losses.²³ Figure 2 below are the results for Sarawak's election.

In addition to GE14 and SE12, the government's shift to a new coalition known as the National Alliance or Perikatan Nasional in 2020, which includes the Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM) or also called Bersatu, Barisan Nasional (BN), Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS), and Independent, has further altered Malaysia's political landscape. The crisis began when Malaysia's seventh Prime Minister, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, resigned and was succeeded by Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin as the nation's eighth Prime Minister. Following its victory in GE14, the PH alliance governed the nation for 22 months. With the removal of PPBM from the PH coalition, the PH has lost its majority in the *Dewan Rakyat* or House of Representatives. In the context of Sarawak's political circumstances, GPS is also viewed as taking a stand and supporting the new Prime Minister, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, for Sarawak's interests. According to Tan Sri Datuk Patinggi (Dr.) Abang Haji Abdul Rahman Zohari bin Tun Datuk Abang Haji Openg, who is Premier of Sarawak or Sarawak Chief Minister, the GPS would not join the National Alliance or Perikatan Nasional but would operate as an independent political party.²⁴

17 *The Geography of Sarawak*. [online]. [2022-09-05]. Available at: <https://Sarawak.gov.my/web/home/article_view/159/176/?id=159>.

18 *Department of Statistics Malaysia*. [online]. [2022-09-05]. Available at: <https://www.dosm.gov.my/v1_/>.

19 *Laman Sesawang Suruhanjaya Pilihan Raya Malaysia, 2018*. Released on 9th May 2018. [online]. [2019-12-10]. Available at: <<https://dashboard.spr.gov.my/pru14/#!/home>>.

20 CHIN, J.: Sabah and Sarawak in the 14th General Election 2018 (GE14): Local Factors and State Nationalism. In *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*. 2018, Vol. 37, No. 3, p. 173-192.

21 *Election and Covid 19*. Released on 29th March 2020. [online]. [2022-01-23]. Available at: <<https://rm.coe.int/election-and-covid19/16809e20fe>>.

22 BERNAMA: *Sarawak State Assembly Dissolved – Abang Johari*. Released on 5th November 2021. [online]. [2021-11-05]. Available at: <<https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2021/11/742747/sarawak-state-assembly-dissolved-abang-johari>>.

23 AGA, A.: *Len Talif: GPS' Resounding Victory in State Polls Shows Swakians Want Political Stability*. Released on 22nd December 2021. [online]. [2022-02-11]. Available at: <<https://www.theborneopost.com/2021/12/22/len-talif-gps-resounding-victory-in-state-polls-shows-swakians-want-political-stability/>>.

24 *Malay Rulers Special Meeting to Discuss the Country's Political Turmoil*. Released on 28th February 2020. [online]. [2021-01-17]. Available at: <<https://www.astroawani.com/berita-politik/malay-rulers-special-meeting-discuss-countrys-political-turmoil-232009>>.

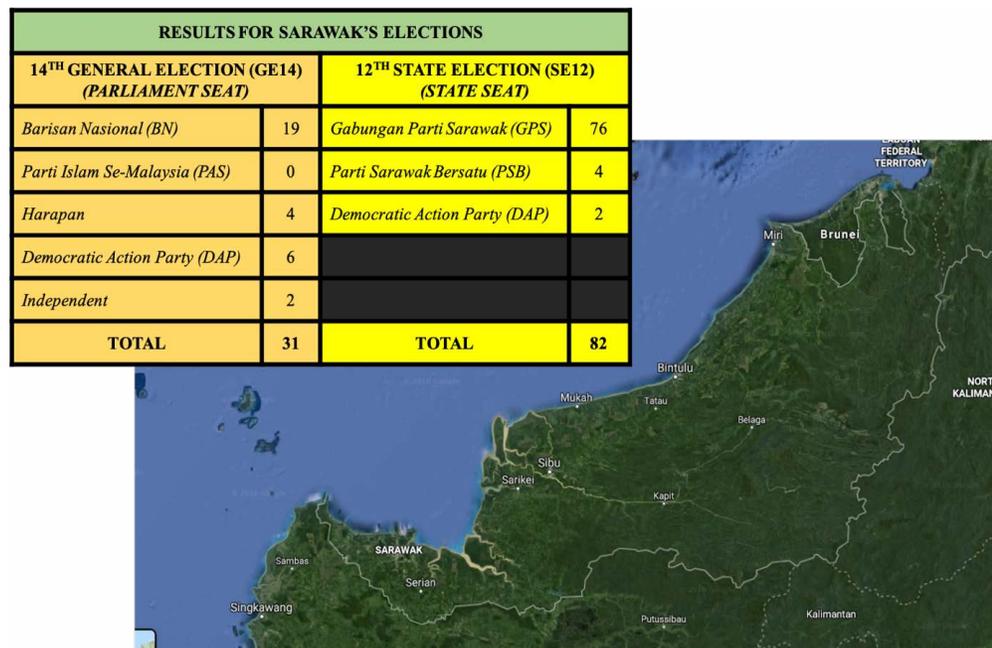


Figure 2: Results for Sarawak's Election

Source: Laman Sesawang Suruhanjaya Pilihan Raya Malaysia, 2021. Released on 18th December 2021. [online]. [2022-01-03]. Available at: <<https://dashboard.spr.gov.my/swk12/#!/home>>.

The current administration maintains ultimate control even though the effect of digital media has surpassed that of traditional media as technology advances. Traditional media outlets in Sarawak, such as *The Borneo Post*, *New Sarawak Tribune*, *Utusan Sarawak*, *Utusan Borneo*, *Sarawak Voice*, *See Hua Daily News* and *Sin Chew Daily*, are still significant in some places, especially in isolated or rural areas with limited or no Internet access. There is a correlation between the agenda of Malay newspapers and the agenda of the Malay public during the GE13.²⁵ The results demonstrate the disparities between the media and public perceptions of significant issues. Thus, media populism affected the voting patterns in GE14 and SE12, especially in Sarawak, where voters delivered surprising results. Newspapers and other print media may be viewed as an instrument or weapons the government uses to expand its authority. Various grave concerns and emotional motivations have accompanied the rise of media populism on the Malaysian political landscape. This dynamic enables the emergence of mediatization.

Nonetheless, mediatization occurs when social institutions, such as religious groups, educational institutions and the media, are viewed as autonomous entities, resulting in social and media reliance.²⁶ The mediatization phenomenon is not new; nonetheless, it has been updated and renamed to widen the study area by incorporating 'traditional' and digital media and populism into the research framework.²⁷ The mediatization concept assumes that participation in the media can report the discourse or ideology of actors or political

25 MANAF, A. M. et al.: Media Agenda and Public Agenda: A Study of Issues During the 13th General Election. In *Malaysian Journal of Communication*, 2017, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 13-26.

26 HJAVARD, S.: The Mediatization of Society: A Theory of the Media as Agents of Social and Cultural Change. In *Nordicom Review*, 2008, Vol. 29, No. 2, p. 105-134.

27 See: FINNEMANN, N. O.: Mediatization Theory and Digital Media. In *European Journal of Communication Research*, 2011, Vol. 36, No. 1, p. 67-89; MAZZOLENI, G.: Mediatization and Political Populism. In ESSER, F., STROMBACK, J. (eds.): *Mediatization of Politics*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 42-56; SCHULZ, W.: Mediatization and New Media. In ESSER, F., STROMBACK, J. (eds.): *Mediatization of Politics*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 57-73; MALY, I.: Populism as a Mediatized Communicative Relation: The Birth of Algorithmic Populism. In *Tilburg Papers in Culture Studies*. Tilburg: Department of Culture Studies of Tilburg University, 2018, p. 3-18. [online]. [2019-01-18]. Available at: <<https://research.tilburguniversity.edu/en/publications/populism-as-a-mediatized-communicative-relation-the-birth-of-algo>>.

actors more precisely, commercially, and with elements such as flowery language, emotion and controversial or propagandistic content, to influence the public's perception of the message. Consequently, it is unsurprising that populists during the most recent GE14 and SE12 elections in Sarawak and the current political crisis in Malaysia have channelled several critical issues through the media.

2 Literature Review

The process of mediatization does not necessarily imply that the media system itself has been 'colonised' and has reached the political system of the nation; instead, the political system can be described as a medium of mediatization when mass media are the primary channels of communication, and the depiction of reality delivered can have consequences for the public or society that views it.²⁸ "Mediatization of politics" refers to the long-term convergence of media's political, social and economic effects. Media influence mirrors political institutions²⁹ and those who have undertaken considerable research on the mediatization of politics, assert that the mediatization of politics has long affected leadership and activity in the political arena around the globe.³⁰ This is shown by the figures in Figure 3 below. Several elements must be emphasised in this process, including the media as the primary source or reference, the content freedom of the media, and the influence of politicians over media logic or political logic. There are four stages or facets of the mediatization of politics³¹ highlighted as seen in Figure 4 below.

The first phase occurs when the media are a substantial source of information in the nation and the principal channel of communication between politicians or political actors and the general public. Instead of functioning as a simple guide, the media are perceived as managing and directing public debate or political discourse. During the second phase, the media develop into an independent entity capable of influencing political and social institutions. Political reasoning influences media freedom less than media logic.

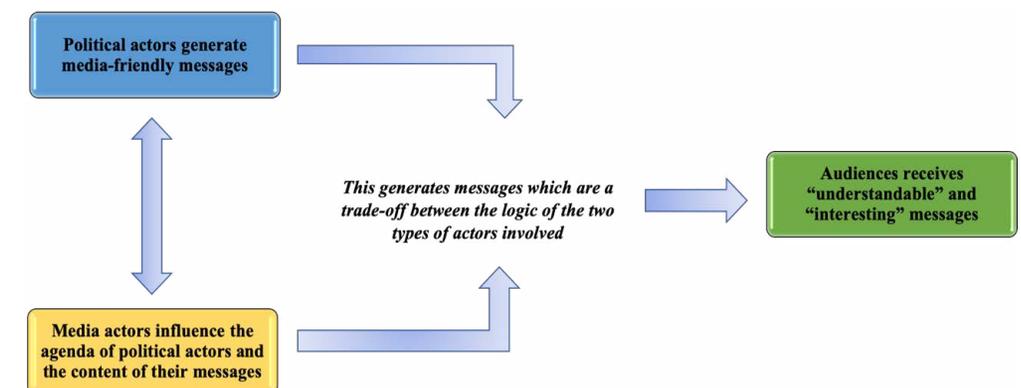


Figure 3: Mediatization of politics model

Source: ALBERTAZZI, D., MCDONNELL, D.: *Twenty-First Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, p. 49-64.

28 STROMBACK, J.: Four Phases of Mediatization: An Analysis of the Mediatization of Politics. In *International Journal of Press/Politics*, 2008, Vol. 13, No. 3, p. 235-241.

29 ASP, K.: Medialization, Media Logic and Mediarchy'. In HEPP, A., KROTZ, F. (eds.): *Mediatized Worlds*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 123-139.

30 MAZZOLENI, G., SCHULZ, W.: "Mediatization" of Politics: A Challenge for Democracy? In *Political Communication*, 1999, Vol. 16, No. 3, p. 247-261.

31 STROMBACK, J.: Four Phases of Mediatization: An Analysis of the Mediatization of Politics. In *International Journal of Press/Politics*, 2008, Vol. 13, No. 3, p. 235-241.

In this context, “media logic” refers to the multiple media forms, production processes and routines that influence how the media perceive and cover current events and direct news reporting. “Political logic”, in contrast, pertains to the decision-making process and the application of political support. Once quantitative indicators are produced and even though this theory is undeveloped, it may be a more practical new technique for media studies to comprehend the power struggle between political and media institutions.³²

Although the media are independent of political institutions, both media and political institutions are interrelated, as media logic and political logic govern the freedom of news content in the third phase. This mediatization tendency does not elevate media logic to a preeminent topic in the political, economic or social system.³³ The final or fourth phase occurs when media logic is perceived to have internalised political logic when media logic controls political institutions and their participants.

During rapid technological development, when people feel that access to experiences and knowledge is limited to observation and inquiry, they are completely dependent on the media.³⁴ The higher an individual’s or society’s reliance on the media, the greater the media’s impact on cognitive, emotional and behavioural or societal change. Given the importance of the media in the process of political communication, all social and political institutions rely heavily on them and ultimately contribute to the process of political media in decision-making, especially during the election process. For example, opposition parties may have a greater need to adhere to media logic than governing parties, particularly regarding party concerns and aims, which are perceived to be less likely to be covered by the media.³⁵

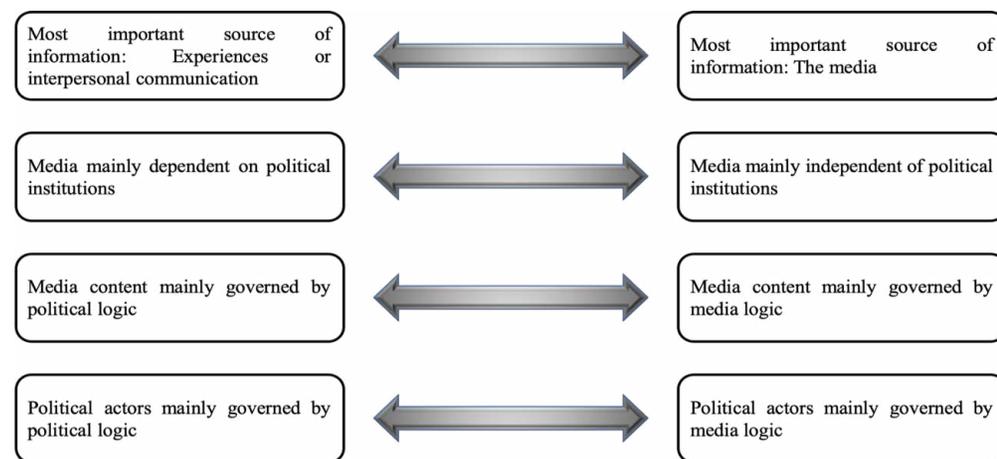


Figure 4: Four conceptual phases of mediatization of politics

Source: STROMBACK, J.: *Four Phases of Mediatization: An Analysis of the Mediatization of Politics*. In *International Journal of Press/Politics*, 2008, Vol. 13, No. 3, p. 235-241.

Numerous studies have been done to assess the nature of politicians and the media’s interactions and the digital mediatization of politics in Malaysia has increased cyberattacks on social media.³⁶ These innovations have made it possible for the public sphere and local citizens, particularly adolescents, to express their thoughts

32 KHO, S. N., CHANG, P. K., ABDUL LATIFF, A.: Mediatization: A Grand Concept or Contemporary Approach? In *Procedia of Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 2014, Vol. 155, p. 362-367.

33 See: NOWAK TETER, E.: Mediatization: Conceptual Developments and Research Domains. In *Sociology Compass*, 2019, Vol. 13, No. 4, p. 1-10. [online]. [2020-01-18]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12672>>.

34 BALL-ROKEACH, S. J., DEFLEUR, M. L.: A Dependency Model of Mass-Media Effects. In *Communication Research*, 1976, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 3-21. [online]. [2019-11-23]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1177/009365027600300101>>.

35 STROMBACK, J., AELST, V. P.: Why Political Parties Adapt to the Media: Exploring the Fourth Dimension of Mediatization. In *International Communication Gazette*, 2013, Vol. 75, No. 4, p. 341-358. [online]. [2019-11-12]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048513482266>>.

36 See: LEONG, P. P. Y.: Digital Mediatization and the Sharpening of Malaysian Political Contests. In *Trends in Southeast Asia*. Singapore: Yusof Ishak Institute, 2021.

on various matters. This will present difficulties and obstacles for the opposing side and tends to investigate politicians’ stated social media engagement and perceptions.³⁷ In order to assess how the process of political mediatization unfolded, survey data from four polls conducted between 2012 and 2016 among German legislators were reviewed. The data suggested an increase in members of parliament using *Facebook* and *Twitter* to inform the public about their political agenda. In addition, there was a study that contributed to our understanding of the role of Pakistan’s media in the increasing public sphere³⁸ of which the findings suggest that politicians have begun to adopt media logic, even though journalists are aware of the limitations imposed by national security and civil unrest. The majority of Pakistani journalists, policymakers and academic media specialists believe that the nation’s media have had a substantial impact. This proves indisputably that Pakistan is still in a stage of political mediatization in which the media influences a mature democracy efficiently.

In the study of the process of political mediatization and the use of old and new media logic in the 2014 Podemos election campaign,³⁹ it is found that the integration of television broadcasts and digital media has intensified, resulting in a rise in political and media engagement. A few characteristics stand out in the research undertaken on political mediatization through the #hashtag display on *Twitter* during the 2013 German federal election campaign.⁴⁰ *Twitter* users are more likely to use hashtags to refer to or mention candidates for political parties, political programme campaigns organised by parties led by Angela Merkel of the Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands (CDU), as well as left-leaning parties and prominent topics or issues at the time, according to the findings of a study. Consequently, the dynamic relationship between tweeting and the 2013 German federal election was also significant. Other research studies were conducted to assess local news content on *YouTube*, *KiniNews* and *Media Rakyat* in order to comprehend how media logic and political logic influence news content in developing nations.⁴¹ In December 2014, 118 video snippets shown on a variety of media platforms were subjected to content analysis. Media and political logic framing negotiations influenced twenty percent of the study’s outcomes. Nonetheless, political logic continues to dominate media logic. In light of technological media advancements, the study found that the evaluation of political media in traditional broadcast media may be expanded to platforms such as *YouTube* such that the theory of mediation remained appropriate. There was challenged the mediatization concept,⁴² which had a significant impact on media and communication studies. Its advocates have endeavoured to transform it into a refined and substantial media studies theoretical framework. They differentiate between two forms of mediatization theory: a robust version based on the premise that a media logic increasingly controls the operations of numerous social organisations and groups and a weak version that disputes the validity of such logic. However, the latter emphasises the role of media in social transformation and acknowledges mediatization as an essential metaprocess in the present. Proponents of the weak form have successfully refuted the media argument. However, the weakened definition of mediatization is problematic in and of itself, as its proponents failed to provide a rational foundation for defining the term.

The comparison of news content on Swedish television and in the United States following the 2008 elections finds that the mediatization of television news coverage of the 2008 U.S.⁴³ elections was more significant than that of the 2008 Swedish elections. However, there are variances amongst Swedish television news programmes. Therefore, the cultures of local journalism and news and political communication may impact the mediatization of news content.

37 KELM, O., DOHLE, M., BERNHARD, U.: Politicians’ Self-Reported Social Media Activities and Perceptions: Results from Four Surveys among German Parliamentarians. In *Social Media + Society*, 2019, Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 1-12.

38 PINTAK, L. et al.: Mediatization in Pakistan: Perceptions of Media Influence on a Fragile Democracy. In *Journalism*, 2016, Vol. 19, No. 7, p. 1-25.

39 CASERO-RIPOLLÉS, A. et al.: Old and New Media Logics in an Electoral Campaign: The Case of Podemos and the Two-Way Street Mediatization of Politics. In *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 2016, Vol. 21, No. 3, p. 378-397.

40 JUNGHER, A. et al.: The Mediation of Politics through Twitter: An Analysis of Messages Posted during the Campaign for the German Federal Election of 2013. In *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 2016, Vol. 21, No. 1, p. 50-68.

41 KHO, S. N. et al.: Mediatization of Politics in Developing Nation: An Analysis of YouTube Political Reporting in Malaysia. In *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 2015, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 274-285.

42 AMPUJA, M. et al.: Strong and Weak Forms of Mediatization Theory: A Critical Review. In *Nordicom Review*, 2014, Vol. 35, p. 111-113.

43 STROMBACK, J., DIMITROVA, V. D.: Mediatization and Media Interventionism: A Comparative Analysis of Sweden and the United States. In *International Journal of Press/Politics*, 2011, Vol. 16, No. 1, p. 30-49.

Modern democracy depends on the exchange of information between politicians and the public. The media present themselves as an efficient and neutral forum for this dialogue.⁴⁴ Consequently, mass media serve as both a self-interested actor and a facilitator of infrastructure that enables politicians to reach broad segments of the people or target specific vote blocs. In addition, the media make it easier for consumers to be educated about politics and select sources based on their preference for liberal or conservative coverage. People and politicians are increasingly relying on newspapers, radio, television and their associated websites for news and information.⁴⁵ As a result, we frequently collect feedback from multiple sources, integrate it with other data to actively develop a news story, and maintain control over the narrative's key message and interpretative framework until publication. This conforms to the democratic norms of media autonomy and press liberty.

On the other hand, politicians are reluctant to relinquish total control over the political communication process. Each political party and administration have their communication teams and Public Relations pros facilitating proactivity⁴⁶ which outlined three arguments between the media and populist ideology in their research. Populists rely on the media to interact with the populace more directly than through official institutions. Popular mass media are compared to populist political movements due to their employment of comparable communication tactics to attract the most significant amount of attention. Second, it is stated that media sources aimed at affluent viewers protect political elites (and serve as their 'paladins') since both groups seek to preserve the socio-political *status quo*. Thirdly, the mass media and populists are interdependent. It is asserted that mass media adore populist performers because they provide news value and fulfil the media's thirst for radical behaviour and occurrences. However, the media may contribute to media populism through the establishment of in-groups and out-groups, wrath against elites,⁴⁷ the transmission of provocative emotions and the attraction of charisma and moral impulses.

To comprehend the concept of "populism", we must study a component of populist ideology, such as sovereignty, the people, the elite and the populist actor. Figure 5 below illustrates how populist ideology benefits populists but is incompatible with elites. Populism challenges the existing principles of party democracy. A greater comprehension of the sociocultural roots of populist uprisings should shed insight on the variations in populist support between nations. The populism has evolved into a catch-all phrase used to represent a variety of dissatisfaction with democratic politics in contemporary society.⁴⁸ In addition to being a flawed concept, populism is intrinsically imprecise. Its broad usage as a weapon against all types of projects that endanger existing liberal democracies has led to a situation where democratic renewal protest movements are conflated with opposing trends whose goal is the regression of democracy. Therefore, it also has been argued that for political and analytic reasons, the key to distinguishing between 'progressive' and 'regressive' programmes that address the democratic conundrum is to discover how these initiatives construct human identities. Invoking the public is not a characteristic of populism but all democratic forms of politics. In the context of West European democracies, Italy has been an outlier due to the high success rate of populist parties and the enormous diversity of populist party agendas since the early 1990s.⁴⁹ After World War II, populist ideologies continued to influence Italian politics. From the 1950s through the 1980s, Italian democracy was legitimated by conventional mass-based parties. In fact, the Italian case must be viewed as a result of a mix of ubiquitous anti-institutional and anti-party emotions (populist demand) and the response of political enterprises, who deemed populist parties to be the most profitable 'non-policy vote-winning technique'.⁵⁰

44 See: WIRTH, W. et al.: *The Appeal of Populist Ideas, Strategies and Styles: A Theoretical Model and Research Design for Analyzing Populist Political Communication*. In *National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) Challenges to Democracy in the 21st Century*. Zurich: University of Zurich, 2016, p. 1-54. [online]. [2021-27-11]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-127461>>.

45 JARREN, O.: Massenmedien als intermediäre: Zur anhaltende relevanz der Massenmedien für die öffentliche Kommunikation. In *Medien & Kommunikationswissenschaft*, 2008, Vol. 65, No. 3-4, p. 329-346.

46 See: MAZZOLENI, G. et al.: *The Media and Neo-Populism: A Contemporary Comparative Analysis*. Westport: Praeger, 2003.

47 KRÄMER, B.: Media Populism: A Conceptual Clarification and Some Theses on Its Effects. In *Communication Theory*, 2014, Vol. 24, No. 1, p. 42-60.

48 KRAUS, P. A.: Popular Republicanism versus Populism: Articulating the People. In *Social Sciences*, 2021, Vol. 10, No. 10, p. 1-16.

49 VERCESI, M.: Society and Territory: Making Sense of Italian Populism from a Historical Perspective. In *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 2021, p. 1-21. [online]. [2021-08-09]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2021.1939664>>.

50 CURINI, L.: The Spatial Determinants of the Prevalence of Anticlitel Rhetoric across Parties. In *West European Politics*, 2019, Vol. 43, No. 7, p. 1415-1435.

Consequently, findings suggest a relationship between the emergence of populist parties and pre-existing societal factors, such as the heterogeneity of political orientations in Italy, which distinguishes parties of the same populist type based on their specific ideological positions and territorial electoral support distribution.

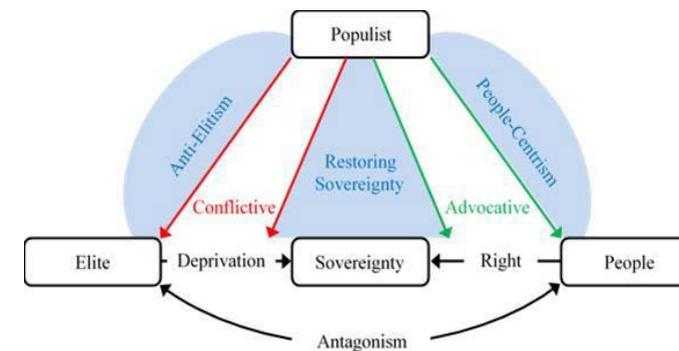


Figure 5: General concept of populist ideology

Source: WIRTH, W. et al.: *The Appeal of Populist Ideas, Strategies and Styles: A Theoretical Model and Research Design for Analyzing Populist Political Communication*. In *National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) Challenges to Democracy in the 21st Century*. Zurich: University of Zurich, 2016, p. 1-54. [online]. [2021-27-11]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-127461>>.

The populist ideology revolves around the concept of "popular sovereignty" since it dictates the relationship between populists, elites, the general public and populist actors. In other words, the people should have complete sovereignty, but elites and others have renounced this privilege. This is why populists seek to establish themselves as the protector or restorer of the people's sovereignty. For example, the former American President Donald Trump utilised the phrase "Make America Great Again" alongside his populist ideology movement in the most recent United State presidential election campaign and also asserts that Trump has utilised social media to develop persuasive campaign statements and memes.⁵¹

The desire to restore sovereignty may manifest as demands for a power transfer in favour of the people at the expense of other stable institutions and individuals. While populist claims for unrestricted popular sovereignty are inextricably linked to particular understandings and valuations of the people, and argue that the groups excluded from the good people will vary depending on how the people are defined (left-wing and right-wing populists will define them differently),⁵² resulting in varying degrees of popular sovereignty. Therefore, this aspect of regaining sovereignty requires both advocacy and opposition. Conversely, anti-elitism is essential for populist communication. The anti-elitist ideology is based on a negative perception of the elite and an emphasis on their negative characteristics. The elite are blamed for unfavourable developments and hazardous situations and viewed as incapable of resolving these issues.⁵³ The responsible elite varies based on the populist actor's political ideology. Right-wing populism frequently targets supranational institutions, foreign governments and elements of the national government that collaborate with any of these entities. In contrast, the elite in left-wing populism refers to the wealthy and powerful economic elite, including corporations and wealthy government or parliament members. If the populist actor believes the government is too intertwined with supranational institutions (right-wing) or economic players (left-wing), shifting blame may be a goal.

In research conducted in Switzerland and the United States, they have found a significant positive correlation between populist emotions and right-wing self-positioning. It utilises a political philosophy

51 JUTEL, O.: Donald Trump, American Populism, and Effective Media. In *Routledge Handbook of Global Populism*. London: Routledge, 2018, p. 249-262.

52 ABTS, K., RUMMENS, S.: Populism versus Democracy. In *Political Studies*, 2007, Vol. 55, No. 2, p. 405-424.

53 Compare to: ALBERTAZZI, D., MCDONNELL, D.: *Twenty-First Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008; MUDDE, C.: The Populist Zeitgeist. In *Government and Opposition*, 2004, Vol. 39, No. 4, p. 542-563.

approach that distinguishes between political-economic and political-cultural issues. The significant findings reveal that radicals on the ideological axis to the left and right were more populist in France and Spain. Despite this, disparities remain between the two nations, emphasising the significance of context-dependent links between populism and other political philosophies. In France, those on the extreme cultural right are more populist than those on the extreme cultural left. Consequently, those on the extreme left of Spain's economic and cultural characteristics are more populist.⁵⁴

The electoral democratic transition is incomplete and may deteriorate, remain unchanged or improve. Political or populist actors are more likely to engage in communication strategies to further populist goals and garner media attention. People and organisations can use the media as a communication tool or vice versa. To demonstrate their responsiveness to 'the people', politicians want to appear in newspaper and television headlines. Frequently, they want to demonstrate their steadfast dedication to the public good and, hence, their deservings of the people's vote on election day.

These political or populist actors employ various communication strategies, such as playing the underdog, utilising professional knowledge, hosting meetings, advertising the media and mounting tactical attacks on the media.⁵⁵ Politicians use the news media to identify public concerns and propose answers. Thaksin Shinawatra, a businessman and politician who served as Thailand's Prime Minister from 9th February 2001 to 19th September 2006 owned television shows such as *Backstage Show: The Prime Minister, Tonight Thailand* and *Wake Up News* to promote his populist worldview.⁵⁶ When he discussed his personal life and listened to the audience's thoughts, Thaksin leveraged this media platform to connect with the public and appear approachable. This method's efficacy is also influenced by news information sources directed by media logic or political reasoning. In this electoral democracy process, it is crucial to evaluate the process of media control or the political logic of the media as a medium of mediatization, as well as the positive and negative consequences of populism.

Hence, positive populism emphasises political engagement or participation, whereas negative populism emphasises civil conflict.⁵⁷ By introducing somewhat political issues and ideas, populism's positive effects could, for instance, improve the democratic duty. Populism may encourage the growth of new political divisions and impede the formation of a more stable political alliance.

3 Methodology

The goal of this study is to analyse the understanding impacts of mediatization of politics and populism on public perception with Sarawak's newspaper regarding electoral democracy during Sarawak's election and the midterm transition of Malaysian government in 2020.

RQ1: What is the form of understanding impacts on mediatization of politics and populism towards public perception of the media content of Sarawak's newspaper during Sarawak's election and midterm transition of Malaysia government 2020?

A research hypothesis examines or predicts the outcome of an experiment and quantifies the relationship between two or more variables. The hypothesis of this study will address the next research objective.

H1: There is a significant impact between the mediatization of politics towards public perception with seven media contents of Sarawak's newspaper during such events.

54 MARCOS-MARNE, H. et al.: Left-Right Radicalism and Populist Attitudes in France and Spain. In *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 2021, Vol. 30, No. 4, p. 1-15.

55 STEWART, J. et al.: Conclusion: Power to the Media Managers. In MAZZOLENI, G. (ed.): *The Media and Neo-Populism: A Contemporary Comparative Analysis*. Westport : Praeger, 2003, p. 217-237.

56 MOFFITT, B.: Contemporary Populism and 'the People' in the Asia-Pacific: Thaksin Shinawatra and Pauline Hanson. In DE LA TORRE, C. (ed.): *The Promise and Perils of Populism: Global Perspectives*. Lexington : University Press of Kentucky, 2014, p. 293-316.

57 See: MULLER, J. W.: *What Is Populism?* Philadelphia : University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.

H2: There is a significant impact between the populism towards public perception of seven media contents of Sarawak's newspaper during such events.

To analyse media material, specifically newspapers, we utilised an online survey as the appropriate instrument to answer the research questions. Depending on the purpose of the study, a survey is the process of collecting data or information by asking questions or requesting input from respondents.⁵⁸ While, this survey necessitates a quantitative or numerical representation of a population's pattern, attitude or opinions by studying a sample of the population, this is not the case with this survey.⁵⁹

All social and political institutions are mainly reliant on the media and ultimately contribute to political media decision-making, particularly during election season. For instance, opposition parties may have a more vital need to adapt to media logic than governing parties, particularly regarding party concerns and objectives, because they are less likely to be covered by the media.

Figure 6 below explains the research design framework that must be implemented for this project. The research technique focuses on problems or events that are the most influential media channels on the local community or voters during the election. In addition, we will only focus on news headlines on the front page of seven newspapers in Sarawak, including *The Borneo Post* (BP), *New Sarawak Tribune* (NST), *Utusan Sarawak* (US), *Utusan Borneo* (UB), *Suara Sarawak* (SV), *See Hua Daily* (SHD) and *Sin Chew Daily* (SCD), from the nomination date, which is on 28th April 2018, until the election day, which is on 9th May 2018. This study investigates the characteristics or facets of the mediatization of politics, including media logic (conflict, emotionalization, media pundits and opinionated and narrative stories) and political logic (policy, politics and polity).

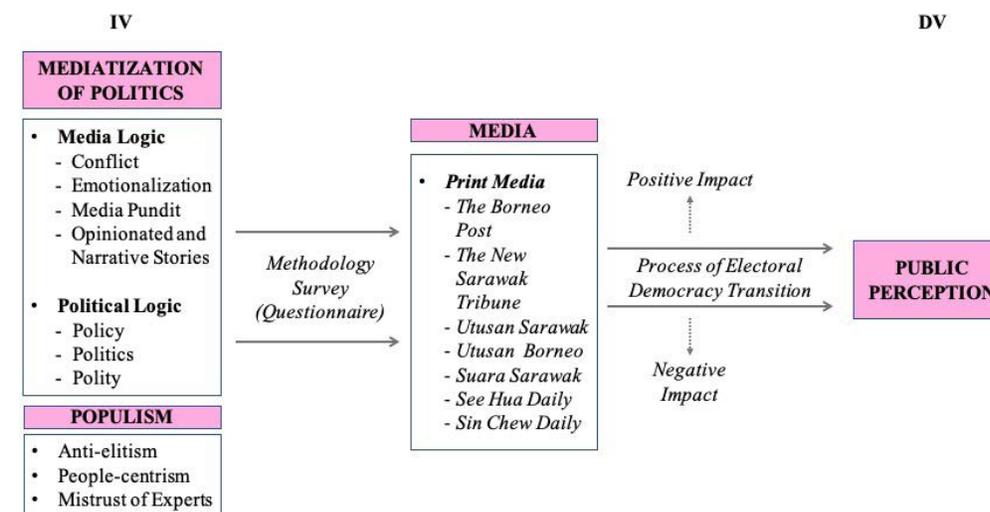


Figure 6: Research framework design

Source: Own processing

In contrast, the features or aspects of populism that will be examined are anti-elitism, people-centredness and mistrust. This will necessitate survey procedures to identify concerns. This mechanism will influence the public's perspective or interpretation of the electoral democracy process in Malaysia particularly in Sarawak whether in positive, negative or neutral ways.

The adoption of a five-point Likert scale is justified because it allows for the accurate evaluation of opinions, commonly expressed in terms of gradation. This scale is extensively used to evaluate the feedback

58 See also: MUSTAFFA, C. S.: *Kaedah Penyelidikan Komunikasi*. Kuala Lumpur : Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2019.

59 Compare to: CRESWELL, J. W.: *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed-Methods Approaches*. Thousand Oaks : Sage Publications, 2009.

and allows respondents to indicate their level of agreement.⁶⁰ The online questionnaire is broken into three pieces and is written in Malay, the local language known as *Bahasa Melayu Sarawak* or Sarawak Malay, so that respondents may comprehend the posed questions. This is because the majority of respondents hail from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. Due to the limitations of gathering data on the ground during the global pandemic of COVID-19 and the government's deployment of standard operating procedure (SOP), we performed an online poll. The researcher has designed an online *Google* form based on a collection of previously developed surveys. The reliability of the questionnaire results was determined by calculating Cronbach's Alpha⁶¹ using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 26.0. In addition, Cronbach's Alpha was utilised to calculate the reliability coefficient of all the examined items.

Besides, the minimal Cronbach's Alpha value for any study is 0.7.⁶² When Cronbach's Alpha values go below 0.6, studies are deemed insufficient. However, when they fall between 0.7 and 0.8, research is deemed adequate, while Cronbach's Alpha levels between 0.8 and 1.0 are optimal. Forty randomly selected respondents from the study area participated in the pilot project. These respondents were selected to represent the population of State of Sarawak as a whole. Using SPSS 26.0, the gathered data from this pilot study was analysed. Cronbach's Alpha was used to evaluate the dependability of the results.

The findings of the test of dependability are shown in Table 1 below. Cronbach's Alpha is highest for the construct Media Logic and lowest for the construct Political Logic, according to the tests done on the four constructs included in this study. The closer Cronbach's Alpha is near 1.00, the more excellent internal consistency reliability. Populism and Public Perception have the same Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.981. Therefore, every structure achieved a score more than or equal to 0.7. In this study, the reliability analysis was utilised to confirm the validity of the results and the consistency of the research findings in describing the dependability of measurement.

To make this study more descriptive, it is vital to select an appropriate sampling technique. The non-probability sampling will be utilised to pick participants from the study population who do not have an equal chance of being selected as study respondents.⁶³ This study employed purposive sampling since every element in the population has the same opportunities and qualities to select a representative sample. All Sarawak parliamentary constituencies will be sampled to provide a representative response from a political standpoint. Those who are eligible to vote will be elected to all parliamentary constituencies by the respondents. According to the Malaysia election commission, there are 1,220,960 registered voters in 31 Sarawak parliament constituencies for GE14 and 1,252,014 registered voters in 82 seats for the SE12.

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha reliability test result

STUDY CONSTRUCT	NO. OF ITEMS	CRONBACH'S ALPHA
Section 3		
Part A: Mediatization of Politics		
Media Logic	23	0.986
Political Logic	17	0.982
Part B: Populism		
Dimension of Populism	18	0.981
Part C: Public Perception towards Media's Role in Electoral Democracy System		
Public Perception	13	0.981

Source: Own processing

60 See: EVANS, J. R., LINDSAY, W. M.: *The Management and Control of Quality*. 5th Edition. Cincinnati : South-Western, 2002.

61 See: HAIR, J. et al.: *Multivariate Data Analysis*. Upper Saddle River : Pearson Prentice Hall, 2010.

62 Compare to: HAIR, J. et al.: *Multivariate Data Analysis*. Upper Saddle River : Pearson Prentice Hall, 2010.

63 PIAW, C. Y.: *Kaedah dan Statistik Penyelidikan Buku*. Shah Alam : Mc-Hill Education, 2011, p. 225-226.

We will utilise Krejcie and Morgan's sample size measurements, which describe sample sizes matching population sizes, to determine the sample size or size.⁶⁴ Thus, the total number of voters in all of Sarawak's parliamentary constituencies is 1,228,960, and the sampling count is as follows:

$$s = \frac{X^2NP(1-P)}{d^2(N-1) + (x^2P(1-P))}$$

$$s = \frac{3.841(1,220,960)(0.5)(1-0.5)}{(0.05)^2(1,220,960 - 1) + 3.841(0.5)(1-0.5)}$$

$$s = \frac{1,172,426.84}{3,053.35775} \quad s = \frac{383.9795}{1} = \underline{\underline{384}}$$

Therefore, the sample size required by the researcher is **384 sampling**.

4 Results

To answer one of the research objectives, which is to analyse understanding the impacts on the mediatization of politics and populism towards public perception of Sarawak's newspapers towards the electoral democracy during Sarawak's election and midterm transition of Malaysia government 2020, a regression test was used, and the hypothesis of the finding also has been generated.

H1: There is a significant impact between mediatization of politics towards public perception with seven media contents of Sarawak's newspapers during such events.

H2: There is a significant impact between populism towards public perception with seven media contents of Sarawak's newspapers during such events.

In this study, we compared the independent variables with the dependent variables. In this study, there are two independent variables: Mediatization of Politics and Populism. Regarding the mediatization of politics, two variables, namely Media Logic and Political Logic must be investigated.

The conclusions are based on the information gathered from 384 respondents via an online *Google* survey. This chapter's discussion of outcomes is broken into three sections: Section 1: Background Demographics and Section 2: Media Source. To answer the study's research purpose and hypotheses, Section 3 has been separated into Part A: Mediatization of Politics, Part B: Populism and Part C: Public Perception.

In this study, the demographic backgrounds of the interviewees are considered. A person's demographic background affects their responses to the online survey questions. The distribution of respondents according to demographic background or factors such as gender, age, marital status, ethnicity, religion, educational level, length of residence and occupation is depicted in Table 2.

64 KREJCIE, R. V., MORGAN, D. W.: Determining Sample Size for Research Activities. In *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 1970, Vol. 30, No. 3, p. 607-610.

Table 2: Demographics background of the respondents

	VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Gender	Male	167	43.5
	Female	217	56.5
	Total	384	100.0
Age	25 years and below	69	18.0
	26 – 35 years old	131	34.1
	36 – 45 years old	104	27.1
	46 – 55 years old	54	14.1
	56 years old and above	26	6.8
	Total	384	100.0
Marital Status	Single	149	38.8
	Married	195	50.8
	Divorced / Widow / Widower	40	10.4
	Total	384	100.0
Ethnicity	Malay	179	46.6
	Bidayuh	64	16.7
	Iban	79	20.6
	Chinese	27	7.0
	Others	35	9.1
	Total	384	100.0
Religion	Islam	202	52.6
	Christianity	147	38.3
	Buddhism	22	5.7
	Hinduism	3	0.8
	No Religion	6	1.6
	Others	4	1.0
Total	384	100.0	
Educational Level	No Schooling	22	5.7
	Primary School	23	6.0
	Secondary School	87	22.7
	College or Institute	75	19.5
	University	177	46.1
	Total	384	100.0
How Long Lived Here	10 years and below	12	3.1
	11 - 20 years	59	15.4
	21 - 30 years	159	41.4
	31 - 40 years	80	20.8
	41 - 50 years	44	11.5
	51 years and above	30	7.8
	Total	384	100.0
Occupation	Unemployed	34	8.9
	Student	51	13.3
	Public Sector	135	35.2
	Private Sector	105	27.3
	Self-employed	59	15.4
	Total	384	100.0

Source: Own processing

The factor analysis (FA) assesses the study's validity and reliability. In this study, we employed the mediatization of politics and populism approaches, each involving structures and features requiring analysis. The results of the factor analysis are presented in Table 3 below, demonstrating that all research constructs are above the acceptable threshold of Kaiser-Meyer Olkin's value (KMO) of 0.5. The following table presents the results of the FA. We conducted a regression towards the study's aspects and Public Perception to determine whether or not these factors have a significant impact on the Mediatization of Politics and Populism as perceived by the public through Sarawak's newspapers during the elections and midterm transition of the Malaysian government 2020. The following hypothesis on the findings has been generated.

Table 3: Results of the factor analysis (FA)

ELEMENT	NO. OF ITEM	KMO	BARTLETT'S TEST (SIG.)	EIGEN VALUE	CUMULATIVE (%)	CRONBACH'S ALPHA
MEDIATIZATION OF POLITICS						
1) Media Logic						
Conflict	6	0.890	.000	3.897	64.946	0.889
Emotionalization	6	0.880	.000	3.907	65.116	0.891
Media Pundit	6	0.917	.000	4.745	79.076	0.947
Opinionated and Narrative Stories	5	0.823	.000	3.672	73.443	0.903
2) Political Logic						
Policy	6	0.898	.000	4.424	73.736	0.926
Politics	6	0.839	.000	3.805	63.425	0.877
Polity	5	0.857	.000	3.557	71.136	0.897
POPULISM						
Anti-Elitism	6	0.899	.000	4.206	70.104	0.914
People-Centrism	6	0.916	.000	4.360	72.675	0.922
Mistrust of Experts	6	0.898	.000	4.312	71.868	0.918
PUBLIC PERCEPTION						
Public Perception	13	0.965	.000	9.378	72.140	0.967

Source: Own processing

The summary of findings for the mediatization of politics is shown in Table 4 below. The hypothesis examines whether the Media Logic and Political Aspects of the mediatization of politics significantly influence or impact public perception. To test hypothesis H1, the dependent variable, Public Perception, was regressed to predict Media Logic and Political Aspects.

Table 4: Summary's result on understanding impact on mediatization of politics towards public perception

Hypothesis	Regression Weights	Beta Coefficient	R ²	F	t-value	p-value	Hypotheses Supported
H1	Media Logic – Public Perception	2.122	.170 17%	3.200	15.879	.000	Yes
	Political Logic – Public Perception	2.039	.125 12.5%	3.076	15.879	.000	Yes

Source: Own processing

As for the media logic aspects that predicted public perceptions, $F(1,384) = 3.200, p < 0.001$, indicating that the Media Logic aspects can play a significant role in influencing the impact of understanding on Public Perception ($b = 2.122, p < 0.000$). This outcome directs the beneficial influence of the Media Logic feature. Moreover, $R^2 = .170$ indicates that the model explains 17% of the variance in Public Opinion with a t-value of 15.879.

While characteristics of Political Logic predicted Public Perception, $F(1,384) = 3.076, p < 0.001$, indicating that aspects of political logic can also play a substantial role in determining the impact of understanding on public opinion, where ($b = 2.039, p < 0.000$). This conclusion directs the tremendous impact of the feature of Political Rationality. Moreover, $R^2 = .125$ indicates that the model explains 12.5% of the variance in public perception with a t-value of 15.879.

Therefore, based on the above results, we can conclude that the aspects of the mediatization of politics, namely Media Logic proved an impact of 17% and Political Logic showed a 12.5% impact on Sarawak people's perception with seven media contents of Sarawak's newspapers during Sarawak's election (GE14 and SE12) and the midterm transition of government 2020.

In addition to analysing the mediatization of politics, we also analysed whether populism aspects have a significant impact on public or people's perception of Sarawak's newspapers towards electoral democracy during Sarawak's election and midterm transition of Malaysia government 2020 and the regression test also has been conducted.

Table 5 below provides an overview of the regression's findings regarding Populism. The hypothesis examines whether Populism has a significant impact on Sarawak people's perception. To test hypothesis H2, the dependent variable, Public Perception, was a regression to predict Media Logic and Political Elements.

Table 5: Summary's result on understanding impact on populism towards public perception

Hypothesis	Regression Weights	Beta Coefficient	R ²	F	t-value	p-value	Hypotheses Supported
H2	Populism – Public Perception	2.158	.141 14.1%	3.334	17.043	.000	Yes

Source: Own processing

The hypothesis examines the role of Populism in Public Perception. To test hypothesis H2, the dependent variable Public Perception was regressed to predict the independent variable Populism. Populism predicted Public Opinion, $F(1,384) = 3.334, p < 0.001$, indicating that Populism may have a significant role in determining the impact of understanding on Public Perception, where ($b = 2.158, p < 0.000$). This outcome directs the favourable impact of the Populism feature. Moreover, $R^2 = .141$ indicates that the model explains 14.1% of the variance in Public Opinion with a t-value = 17.043.

Thus, based on the results above, we can conclude that Populism also evinced a 14.1% impact towards people's perception based on the view of seven newspaper articles published in Sarawak during the 2014 and 2012 general elections and the midterm transition government 2020. Regarding the survey, we obtained 384 responses through an online Google survey. This section's sole purpose was to comprehend the public or Sarawak people's perceptions of the media content of Sarawak's newspapers during the Sarawak election and the midterm transition of the Malaysian government in 2020. A factor analysis (FA) and regression test were utilised and proved that the mediatization of politics through media logic and political logic and also populism had a substantial impact on the public's perception of the media content of Sarawak's newspapers.

Theoretical Implications

This study's previous phase indicated that a preliminary exploratory model on the mediatization of politics and populism via the seven media contents of Sarawak's newspapers about the electoral democracy system could be developed. Following the research's plan, the initial phase utilised around 384 voter samples from an online survey to gain insight into the nature of the topics of interest.

The theoretical research indicates that Sarawak's political system is mediatized because its legitimising powers are not dependent on the efficacy of policy outcomes or the quality of arguments made by political parties or populist actors contending for votes. In order to prove its claim of inclusivity of the result, a factor analysis (FA) and regression test was used to examine the populist claim of democratic politics relying on the generation of publicity by using mediatization of politics which consist of media logic and political logic and populism theories that need to be studied; also, the result already proved it as per the above-mentioned result. Hence, mediatization of the political system of governance must be seen as a precondition for promoting democratic politics⁶⁵ and needs to be parallel with populism.

The stronger a government's commitment to democratic principles, the greater its reliance on the media's publicity-generating instruments. There is mediatization of politics wherever the functions of state government and its institutions are dependent on the news media. This includes not only instances in which institutions successfully engage the media but also all unsuccessful attempts to get the media on board with their publicity efforts; as well as instances in which the intention to engage the media is stated (satisfying the public's expectation for transparency) but is never carried out. A significant challenge for Sarawak is to ground their publicity efforts (i.e., their attempts to become public) in the form of democratic publicity that empowers the collective will through the informed opinion-making of citizens or voters. The relationship between populist actor and media institutions is constructed hierarchically and is neither participatory nor responsive. The media select relevant topics and expect journalists to cover them accurately and fairly. This project intends to replace the media's news values with the political system's epistemic values and public benefit orientations when the populists interjected and controlled the freedom of media.

Numerous well-known structural impediments prevent the Malaysian or Sarawak government from straightforwardly responding to the media. No media reference system exists, and only national media with competing agendas exist. In addition, there is no unified, attentive audience. There exists what has been termed a democracy with numerous dispersed constituencies, including geographical, sectoral and irregular observers.⁶⁶

At the level of decision-making elites, the political system operates or seeks to work by the ideas of 'enlightened government' reflexive governance, i.e., governance that is informed by and reflects upon multiple perspectives that mediate different points of view. However, at the level of citizens or voters, this polity has limited opportunity to achieve the same reflexivity, as its access to and presence in the public sphere are mediated by national media, such as newspapers.

It is clear from the preceding that the mediatization of politics and populism is not simply imposed from the outside on the political systems of Malaysia and Sarawak themselves, but rather that the political systems produce specific mediatization with populism demands. However, legitimacy is primarily impacted by the framework news media apply to political processes and events, as well as the visibility filters news media apply to competing arguments and explanations offered by the government or opposition parties. Without the news media, populist legitimacy in Malaysia and Sarawak would not exist. How can digital and 'old' media re-establish at the federal or state level the relationship between social order and democratic legitimacy that has previously defined the national public sphere. The news media are well-established as observers of the cohesion and disharmony of society. Through mass-mediated communication, however, voters and citizens see themselves as being members of a national community and have the right to choose the party or populist actor that can serve their manifesto or agenda within the legal and independent ways which have been stated in the Malaysia Federal Constitution (FC).

65 TRENZ, H. J.: Understanding Media Impact on European Integration: Enhancing or Restricting the Scope of Legitimacy of the EU? In *Journal of European Integration*, 2008, Vol. 30, No. 2, p. 291-309.

66 See: CHENEVAL, F., SCHIMMELFENNIG, F.: The Case for Democracy in the European Union. In *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 2012, Vol. 51, No. 2, p. 334-350; NICOLAIDIS, K.: The New Constitution as European Democracy? In *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 2004, Vol. 7, No. 1, p. 76-93.

Practical Implications

The practical implications of this study demonstrate that the hypotheses above regarding the mediatization of politics and populism are accurate and assist us in capturing the legitimacy impact of media visibility, mainly 'traditional' media such as newspapers in Sarawak, where coverage of the Internet and technology is still lacking. This study is predicated on the premise that there is an interrelationship between the mediatization of politics and populism, as well as the media and political system, which determines the general representation of the federal or state system of government and its public legitimization opportunities.

The will of the people can dictate democracy, yet lobbyists frequently wield power. That is, an elite or populist may rule over the whole people. Perceptions of injustice can lead to violence. If the populace believes that resources are being distributed unfairly, rejects a vertical type of organisation and fights for a horizontal one, questions a system based on equal rights rather than absolute equality, feels deprived or has higher unmet expectations, does not identify with the culture or has little respect for its leaders, there is a loss of faith in the political regime, which undermines its legitimacy. Consequently, democracy is dependent on how it runs and generates, which necessitates that it guarantees security, equity and social cohesiveness.

When residents or voters feel ignored by a political system that claims to represent them and is structured to protect their well-being, they riot, and law enforcement may not be sufficient to maintain order. This is the origin of populism. Revolts against the established order are synonymous with populism. Populism is vital to them since many of their supporters do not wish for the demise of democracy and prefer a more people-oriented form of government. The issue is that people may commit excesses to obtain their desires. If they elect a totalitarian leader, for instance, those who will use any means to achieve their objectives may undermine the political order itself.

In a broad sense, mediatization refers to the proliferation and permeation of communication media into every element of society. Social transformations and, in particular, the political repercussions of these processes are the primary focus of scholars. By virtue of their particular operating conditions, the media create political opportunities while also putting constraints on political actors and institutions. The mediatization concept emphasises the indirect effects of political actors' responses to the operational conditions of communication media.

Media logic is a typically abbreviated name for the functioning conditions of the mass media. Media logic is a feature of mass media that has a significant impact on society. It also suggests that all mass media adhere to a universal media logic that determines media consumers' reactions and behaviour. As a result, the media has evolved into an independent institution with control over political actors and organisations. The media logic, which has dominated much of the mediatization debate in the television age, implies large-scale, centralised production and dissemination of political information to a large audience. In contrast, media threw doubt on the concept of universal media logic, resulting in an all-encompassing media reliance on politics. Traditional media, particularly television, offered various presentation techniques and content categories that did not exist before the advent of the Internet. In addition, most media adopt disorganised organisational structures, content generation, and distribution strategies.

Moreover, due to the empowerment of users in the media environment, the central tenet of media logic, audience dependence, has become problematic. The immense multiplication and diversification of communications have created a situation in which media users, especially political actors, can evade mass media screening and gatekeeping, so escaping media control. Theoretically, consumers no longer rely on 'pre-packaged' content distributed according to a diverse media production timetable. They may instead choose freely from a variety of alternatives and actively employ digital media to develop content or change 'pre-packaged' media messages. Even though only a tiny percentage of citizens have utilised these alternatives thus far, they have the potential to degrade the institutional autonomy and interventionist capacity of the mainstream media over time.

Considering media in terms of social shaping as users engage with media affordances is incompatible with the core assumptions of the media logic idea. It is, however, largely compatible with an actor-centric approach to mediation. Due to shifting media systems, people's media consumption patterns are changing.

The 'traditional' media's function as a source of information and political influence is being reshaped by emerging media. Emerging media give citizens greater control over the political messages they receive, whereas traditional media transmit communications journalists deem relevant based on news value standards. Citizens are no longer relegated to the role of passive consumers of 'traditional' political journalism and remarks by party and government leaders; they can now respond to official sources and voice alternative opinions via a variety of new media channels.

The performance of the media in aiding the democratic system has long been subject to normative expectations. Although these performance expectations primarily refer to the 'old order' of media professionals producing political news and current affairs for a primarily passive mass audience, they are in essence still valid in the 'new order', where, on the one hand, mass media are better equipped to serve these functions, such as media have widened citizens' window on the world of politics through an abundance of reports and comments by bloggers, citizen journalists and web pages of political candidates. Numerous talks on the media as a remedy for the coming democratic catastrophe have been spurred by these possibilities.

The term "mediatization" refers to the adverse side effects or consequences of the current development of mass media. This indicates that the media substantially impacts political processes, actors and institutions. The mediatization perspective believes that the media have evolved into self-sufficient entities with highly similar operational conditions, selection criteria and display formats. Audiences and politicians have developed a reliance on the media because the news media is the most important and frequently the only source of political information. They have no choice but to adhere to the media's operational conditions, assuring that media logic will influence political processes in the long run. There is a need for a paradigm shift in mediatization since new media developments call existing assumptions into question. Specifically, the concept of an autonomous media organisation devoted to a uniform media logic has become problematic.

Digital media innovations threaten the institutional sovereignty of 'traditional' news media. Not only does the media ecosystem provide a variety of alternative sources of information, but it also offers new ways to participate in public debates. Political actors rely less and less on conventional news channels and media logic. However, this does not automatically imply a decline in the importance of the political media.

If political actors utilise digital media and adapt to their communication options, they must contend with the restrictions that these media impose, such as the possibility of dysfunctional and disruptive effects. These and other attempts to evaluate the political ramifications of mediatization pose the defining question that has driven communication studies for decades – as with other technologies, using digital media can have both beneficial and harmful consequences. This contributes to the underlying uncertainty that defines media-society relations in general. Consequently, political mediatization evaluations must consider the uncertainty of new media affordances. Although an actor-centred approach is sympathetic to the beneficial aspects of mediatization, it cannot disregard issues or facts that violate the euphemistic ideals commonly associated with political words.

Populism is not a democratic conundrum. It is intrinsically related to this political system structure. It has a tenuous relationship with the rule of law, distinct from democracy. It is an extreme representation of the power of the people. It occurs when a crowd or its leaders cannot tolerate the current situation and are willing to violate social norms or legal restrictions to change it. This causes populism to be radical. Populism is anti-systemic and opportunistic if, once in power, its leaders embrace a non-democratic political regime without acting in the best interests of the people. The discourse is vehemently *anti-status quo*, although the audience typically seeks minor improvements instead of a change in political rule. However, the latter may be initially mentioned.

Consequently, empirical investigations concentrate on parties and their leaders. As an ideology, populism has a singular view of the people, associated with ordinary men and women, the exploited and the destitute. Claims to defend the public will or something more complex, such as the nation, which is a collection of fundamental principles on a particular piece of land. The opposite view suggests excluding the dangerous or abusive group and the remainder, the elite. The populist survival mechanism of the virtuous defending against the corrupted is, therefore, the people, i.e., us vs. them.

Because a stream of thought is typically impractical and too abstract, it is also viewed as thin-centred for being unclear but valuable in its fundamental principles, which means that more individuals may be persuaded that it is what they seek. In the end, populism is neither left, right, progressive, nor conservative. Numerous various 'host ideologies' are compatible with populism. If this is the case, populism is less a philosophy and more a method for achieving what the people want. This is one reason why some researchers consider it the weakest explanation for the event. Populism is more accurately described as a discourse as opposed to an ideology, and this distinction could aid comparative research. In other words, populism is a persuasive and strong message. One aspect of anti-establishment is its disrespect for conventions and institutions that do not reflect the popular will or its perception, as stated in speeches, party platforms and press releases.

It appears that individuals are more vulnerable to populism than politicians. Populism is the vocabulary of politics when politics, as usual, cannot exist. Leaders are possibly more volatile, either for being manipulative or for being a target, because they are more likely to be attacked by their opponents and are more susceptible to peer criticism. Populism may be considered a bizarre technique for attaining power. The study of voting behaviour highlights difficulties, including artificial dichotomy and bias. Because not all followers of populist leaders vote for the same political party or adhere to the same political philosophy, it is essential to distinguish populism from characteristics that frequently coexist with it but are not part of it. As a political technique as opposed to an idea, populism is considered a form of mobilization. Instead of populists, legal institutions began to worry about the hazards of mob behaviour. At this level, some differences between left-wing and right-wing groups are discernible. According to social movements, interest groups that organise through non-electoral channels are mainstream actors. Movement parties, in contrast, are challengers mobilising through electoral methods, whereas political parties are mainstream actors mobilising through electoral channels.

They are permitted to go overboard so long as there are people on board. If populism can be found during the economic crisis, social instability or religious extremism, it can also be found during such periods. Nevertheless, it is always a political phenomenon when we remember that the city's citizens are the politicians of the polis. According to this idea, there is always a political meaning or implication. This idea may not be widely accepted, but it is realistic. A recession may spark populism, but it is usually insufficient. The public's perception of impending economic hardship may be a vital issue, as people may feel forced to oppose austerity policies that limit job opportunities or result in high unemployment and taxation. The field has likely already been mined by a lack of confidence in the opaqueness of governmental institutions. Alternately, it could be a persistent lack of representation. Alternately, substantial economic inequality or social heterogeneity permits the rich to wield disproportionate political power. The poor and disadvantaged become increasingly outraged with the wealthy and powerful, and a snowball effect commences.

Populism is frequently used to fight openly or secretly for vital sources of income, such as oil and natural gas, water and forests. We should inform the public about intellectual topics, yet they present something entirely different. Traditional media and the media are both forms of mass communication. Digital media are an additional dimension, virtual and more perilous because they are less controlled; permitting any propaganda that could one day lead to actual riots or other extreme behaviour on the streets.

Populism is extreme, anti-systemic and opportunistic. It is a long-lasting social movement, not merely a passionate speech or a massive demonstration in the streets. Populism is not a system of thought. It is typically a confusing stream of thought and a chameleon-like attitude to adapt to disgruntled persons who feel forced to do something out of the ordinary, who are seeking a way out and perceive it as a solution to their problems.

When politics cannot be conducted traditionally, discursive discourse may be used. When a mob wants to express itself and is willing to listen to leaders who can read their minds and give them what they want, the *status quo* becomes intolerable. A political strategy is a political organisation, mobilisation and decision. At this level, any strategy may be used to accomplish a goal, especially if unreliable agents exist. Populists may be charismatic leaders able to mobilise the public consistently. In a modern democracy, particularly one based on the rule of law, all citizens are regarded as members of the populace. Therefore, in principle, everyone is susceptible to such propaganda.

Despite this, the population is rarely homogeneous. Different groups may or may not have the same ideas or perspectives. Others will be more receptive to right-wing language than they are to left-wing ideas.

Some may be threatened by religious extremism, sports hooliganism, media excesses and other dangerous behaviours that lead to democratic turmoil. People with solid emotional urges may one-day fall prey to radicals who will lead them into an uncertain future if they are not vigilant.

Regarding this, Malaysia's electoral democracy system must be comprehended in terms of the media prominence and news coverage of populist politicians, the general alteration of representative politics, and its impact on the manufacture of political legitimacy in Malaysia. To comprehend the legitimacy effect of media communication on Malaysian integration, we must look beyond the instrumental use of the media by political actors/institutions or political parties and develop a more inclusive methodology to capture the instances in which media structures and practices influence Malaysia's political system. Malaysia or Sarawak will likely become an example of mediatized politics and populism to the extent that they develop a political body that also requires popular legitimacy. Thus, mediatization, populism and democratic legitimacy problems in Malaysian or Sarawakian political integration are interrelated.

We not presume that the trend of populist and partisan mediatization will inevitably weaken democratic regimes. Using the concept of the mediatization of politics and populism as a meta-process that influences and is influenced by social, cultural and political processes, we argue for a more open-ended understanding of the potential effects of mediatization on democracy. The mediatization of politics and populism may have a favourable effect on democratic processes.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

According to the research findings, Sarawak's elections which are GE14 and SE12 resulted in a shift in the state and federal governments and contributed to numerous viewpoints. Thus, Sarawakians' continued reliance on conventional media, such as newspapers, as one of their critical sources for political news and current events may have contributed to their pro-establishment stance.

The purpose of this study was to examine how the mediatization of politics through media logic and political logic and also populism might alter or affect public Sarawak people's opinion of the electoral democratic system in Malaysia, particularly in Sarawak, using the newspaper as the primary source of information. Our aim was to analyse understanding the impacts of mediatization of politics and populism on public perception of Sarawak's newspapers towards electoral democracy during Sarawak's election, and midterm transition of Malaysia government 2020 using seven of Sarawak's newspapers: *The Borneo Post*, *New Sarawak Tribune*, *Utusan Sarawak*, *Utusan Borneo*, *Suara Sarawak* and *See Hua Daily*. As mentioned early on the result, a factor analysis (FA) and regression test were used to prove the theories of the study.

Figure 7 below depicts how online survey results assist us in adapting and adopting the research framework. The GE14, SE12 and midterm transition of Malaysia government 2020 had a significant impact on Malaysia's political landscape and social life. Even rural regions like Sarawak were affected by this issue. Sarawak is a kingmaker in Malaysian democracies due to the high success rate of populist parties or actors and the wide variety of populist party ideologies. Mediatization of politics through media logic and political logic along with populism can alter the foundation of the country's electoral democratic system as we have traditionally understood it. The populists' use of mainstream newspapers as a tool or medium has affected the public's perceptions. The results of the factor analysis (FA) showed that all constructs for mediatization of politics and populism are acceptable based on Kaiser-Meyer Olkin's value (KMO) which more than 0.5. While, as for the regression test, it is revealed that mediatization of politics and populism achieved more than 10% on the impact towards the opinion and perception of the Sarawak's people.

Typically, the mediatization of politics and populism is distinguished by the legitimacy requirements and constraints of national political actors and institutions. This study demonstrated and identified that research on the mediatization of politics and populism should not be limited to 'traditional' media such as newspapers but should be applied to broaden our understanding of the transformation of Malaysia's politics, particularly in Sarawak, and the increasing legitimacy constraints under which political organisations operate.

In this scenario, mediatization processes of politics and populism are connected with calls for the democratization of Sarawak's politics, which, as reflected in the media, are increasingly challenged by the constraining dissensus and scepticism of a significant segment of the public. To fully comprehend this legitimacy impact, we argue that the concept of mediatization should be used not only in the narrow sense to analyse the impact of media on the operational modes of Sarawak's political system but also in the broad sense to capture the transformation of the public sphere and the changing conditions for the generation of political legitimacy at the state and national level. The mediatization of politics and populist agendas reveals the underlying relationship between the visibility filters of the media and democracy, as it compels us to consider the essential democratic norms of publicity and public justification as elements of political legitimacy.

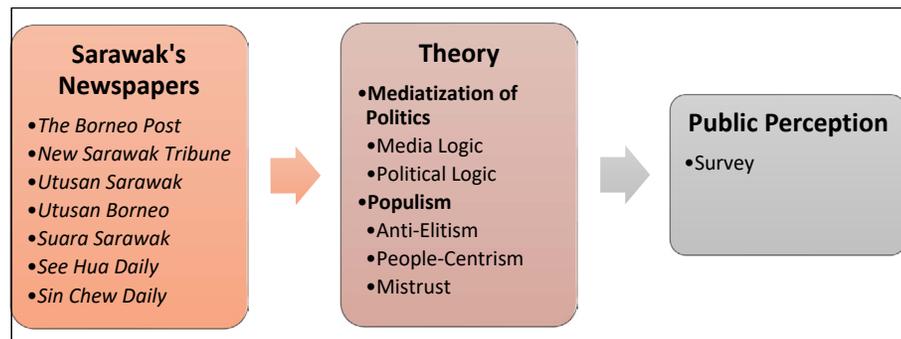


Figure 7: Public's perception on the mediatization of politics and media populism through media content of Sarawak's newspaper

Source: Adapted and adopted from: ASP, K.: *Medialization, Media Logic and Mediarchy*. In HEPP, A., KROTZ, F. (eds.): *Mediatized Worlds*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 123-139; LIVINGSTONE, S.: *On the Mediation of Everything*. In *Journal of Communication*, 2009, Vol. 59, No. 1, p. 1-18; STROMBACK, J.: *Four Phases of Mediatization: An Analysis of the Mediatization of Politics*. In *International Journal of Press/Politics*, 2008, Vol. 13, No. 3, p. 235-241; ABTS, K., RUMMENS, S.: *Populism versus Democracy*. In *Political Studies*, 2007, Vol. 55, No. 2, p. 405-424; OLIVER, E., RAHN, W.: *Trump's Voters Aren't Authoritarians, New Research Says. So What Are They? Released on 9th March 2016*. [online]. [2020-01-13]. Available at: <<https://wapo.st/2xmk07m>>.

As a conduit between the government and the people, the media play an indispensable role in politics. It ensures that the government and issues affecting society are appropriately monitored. The media can influence individual beliefs, and the government can be held accountable for its actions. In both developed and developing nations, the mass media serve two core functions: agenda-setting and public representation. On the other hand, the media's function in society affects society's politics.

Populist actions are motivated by their belief in the power of the media, which encourages them to be featured in the news. The perspectives of populist players regarding the impact of the media are crucial, as their efforts to be included in media coverage will increase legislative and political participation. Modern politics have been 'mediatized' throughout history, indicating that the media's engagement in the political process has grown. The eagerness of political elites to be reported by the media has an impact on their political goals. As Sarawak's voters are cautious about supporting or voting for candidates they do not entirely comprehend, politicians are aware of the media game and use it to their advantage to re-elect themselves. In addition, the media have acquired a position within policy-making institutions as a communicator within the policy community.

The media create the charisma of political politicians, and the candidate's overall image motivates voters to support them. In addition to the candidate's ideological beliefs, the electorate also considers their professional qualifications, such as honesty and integrity. How the media show and project the candidate in society has a significant impact on their public image. In contrast, several media outlets have political leanings that can be read on multiple levels.

Newspapers play a crucial role in politics since they directly inform their viewers and readers of election results. Political strategists' ultimate goal is to combine the advantages of mass voter newspaper penetration with the excitement of a political rally and personal appearance. The political system of any state is dependent on both electronic and print media. People select candidates according to their preferences. Therefore, the media has little or no effect on voter choice. Nevertheless, the media have a direct impact on state and local concerns. In addition, a causal relationship exists between the media and the electorate. The more people are exposed to their political party's campaigns, the more favourable attitudes they develop about their candidate due to accurate information.

By transforming people of Sarawak's experiences into political options, the media both hinder and enable political participation. Aspects of the media influence the performance of presidential candidates and other political elites, and their personal experiences have a direct impact on how they exercise power. The mass media may facilitate the legitimisation of the politicisation of human experiences. Individual experiences are a component of a culture's dominant social patterns. In the mainstream media, personal experiences are collated and presented in an abstract way, which assists individuals in interpreting the experiences of many individuals as societal trends. Furthermore, mass media work as a deterrent, meaning that in the absence of mass media, individuals will rely on their unique reasoning to evaluate and judge various policies and leaders.

In numerous contemporary democracies, the media are widely regarded as a significant factor by most of the population. Political parties are interested in politicising general issues and attracting media attention; nevertheless, the issue's domains and themes vary across parties. There is an interdependent relationship between macropolitical and media agendas, which are impacted by political and media factors. There are obtrusive and unobtrusive issues, further separated into three categories: sensational, noticeable and governmental. Sensational worries are unremarkable and overlooked by the majority of the population. These difficulties include law and order issues in which the media might influence the outcome. The most significant themes are those in which individuals must rely primarily on their own experiences and opinions. Typical subjects include welfare and unemployment, which have real-world consequences for individuals. The final category consists of government concerns, which include foreign policy and administrative issues. The mass media have minimal impact on the micropolitics of government issues. The media have a more significant impact on the actions of opposition parties and parliamentary interrogations than on government decisions on numerous issues. Parties have specific preferences about the topics they argue so that people believe they are qualified to address the issues they support and upon which their party's philosophy is founded.

The media mould Sarawak's people opinion and undermines political power at the federal or state level. The relationship between the mediatization of politics and populism through local traditional media during Sarawak's elections has given the impact of the media on voting behaviour, people's opinion. According to media politics theory, politicians', journalists' and citizens' interests impact the news. Politicians, the media and citizens have distinct objectives and interests. The fundamental objective of journalists is to produce news that will appeal to a broad audience and increase the ratings of their media sources and the shows they represent. Citizens desire to hold individuals representing their state and political office accountable if they fail to fulfil crucial public obligations. On the other side, the goals of people and journalists are determined by politicians' goals. Politicians try to excite the populace and convince them to vote for them. Politicians would like journalists to operate as a conveyor belt for their press releases and pronouncements on every contemporary subject. In contrast, journalists desire freedom of expression and in-depth problem analysis.

A distributional perspective is required to comprehend the factors that influence media news selection. The media tends to emphasise negative news over positive news. Bad bias is seen in numerous themes and mass media, which explains why people prefer negative over positive news. In general, the media produce more negative content than reality. Negative news attracts a larger audience and the general public since it is more frequently discussed on both national and international forums. Positive news is frequently discussed and examined once, after which it becomes irrelevant to the public. Negative news affects individuals mentally, leaving them with a deep mental scar.

The media's portrayal of political parties on social media has evolved, as has our perception. Despite the conservatism, public-facing social media have become a venue where users ridicule rival political parties and leaders to develop vital relationships and increase their popularity among friends. The media have improved political awareness over time, and as a result, individuals are more knowledgeable about foreign and domestic affairs. In the current social framework, the press and media counterattack in proportion to the government's efforts to suppress them. The media have enhanced government accountability over time, as the public is now more engaged with issues and outcomes due to new communication.

The media have a significant impact on shaping a nation's politics. How the media portray a situation influences how individuals view it. The media significantly impact the decision-making process and the body that makes decisions. Even though new media technologies have changed the political potential, political constraints restrain social media. It fears state-regulated financial and regulatory restraints, which regularly obstruct the media's monitoring and agenda-setting roles.

In contrast to ideational and discursive tactics, certain studies demonstrate populism as a political strategy, particularly in a democratic electoral system. This technique is separated into three elements, each focusing on a distinct area of political strategy: policy decisions, political organisation and mobilisation techniques. The fragility of democratic institutions is the driving force behind populist politics, which encourages individuals to believe that, despite their rhetoric, politicians may have a right-wing agenda, are corruptible, or are overly influenced by the elite. Populists are politicians who use populist language to convey to regular citizens that they are not beholden to major economic concerns. As a result, populist ideals emerge as a means for politicians to express that future policy will be influenced by the interests of ordinary citizens. Right-wing populism might emerge as a mechanism for politicians to indicate to right-leaning supporters that they reject left-leaning policies.

Some have questioned this approach, arguing that policy-based definitions of populism cannot account for historical fluctuation, as evidenced by the vast differences between populist, protectionist policies in the middle of the 20th century and neoliberal populism in the late 20th century. Populism is a political approach whereby a charismatic leader seeks or imposes government power through the direct, unmediated, and institutionalised support of many unorganised followers or 'voters'. The relationship between political actors and their constituents is what matters here, not the substance of legislation or the language deployed by political actors.

While this perspective allows for ideological differences, it views the political organisation of populist movements and political parties as consistent. Partisan populism is associated with solid partisan structures and weak civil society organisation, labour populism is associated with strong and weak partisan structures, and electoral populism is associated with low levels of organisation in both dimensions. Those who characterise populism as a political organisation typically highlight the identities and relationships of political leaders. At the same time, personality traits of political leaders are frequently addressed in populist research; some caution against using this criterion as a sufficient or even necessary criterion for operationalising populism. Instead of viewing populism as a fixed ideology, we should view it as a political project that challengers and incumbents of all shades may engage in to achieve various social, political and economic goals.

In particular, we may assess the relationship between mediatization of politics, populism and democracy by examining the public sphere's capacity for top-down and bottom-up Sarawak people's formation. Sarawak or Malaysia has the chance to address its 'elitist bias' and promote *Malaysiatinization* on the level of mass communication through mediatized democracy. When mediated through the media, the representative populist actors of Sarawak will become more emotional, less logical, more popular and less elitist. The mediatization of politics is not necessarily intended to bridge the gap between populist representatives and the Sarawak's people, but it does make representative populist actors more conspicuous, concrete and significant. The Sarawak people's involvement is rapidly gaining importance in what we refer to as mediatized democracy since it adds a dimension to the legitimacy claims under which political actors, populists and institutions operate, regardless of whether they overtly react to it. The function of the audience as a 'public interpreter' of Sarawak or Malaysian politics demands special attention in future research.

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