Third Person Effect: What's Wrong with Satire?

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Abstract

Political satirical illustration can be one of the interesting forms of expression tool that helps form opinions for people in political issues and discussions. However, the content of the political satirical illustration can be disturbing, especially for countries that have complex socio-demographical backgrounds like Malaysia. By using the Third Person Effect (TPE) Theory, the purpose of this research is to explore the Malaysian youth's understanding of political satirical illustration and how it would enhance freedom of expression in Malaysia. This study employs qualitative methodology using in-depth virtual face-to-face interviews with 12 Malaysian youth aged from 18 to 30 years old in Selangor. The virtual face-to-face interview was conducted via online meeting platforms for around 40 to 90 minutes. Findings from this study revealed that consuming and creating satirical illustrations would help enhance the informants' freedom of expression. However, while the informants recognized that such illustrations frequently depict humiliating and demeaning images, this does not negate the need for such expression in our country. From the TPE perspective, the informants reported that the political satirical illustration can influence the informants' self and other's political expression. Hence, this article suggests that policymakers should allow capable Malaysians to report any unethical or societal harmony disruptive illustrations rather than controlling or restricting freedom of expression using the law per se.

Keywords: Political satirical illustration; Third Person Effect; Freedom of expression; satire; Malaysian youth, public opinion

1.0 Introduction

The use of humor in many ways in the West is common in bringing attention to heated issues. As democracy is best used, the media and political figures have frequently used satires as a mix of entertainment and news; and between politics and humor to manipulate public opinion [1]. Such combinations have somehow blurred the distinctions between serious critical reflections and pure entertainment in society. The acceptance of satire on any media platform, following the widespread use of satirical messages around the world, could also help determine whether a nation is governed in a democratic or authoritarian setting, such as the United States, which offers more flexibility in the practice of satirical messages, compared to Belarus, which limits the open space of public expression [1]. This is because the interpretation of the laws and regulations of freedom of speech in each country varies. In view of this, it is in the interest of the current study to know the Malaysian's understanding of the use of satire in political illustrations as a mode of expression.

In Malaysia, satirical drawings are often used by writers, media players, and politicians to discuss

contentious topics such as social movements, corruption, economic and political issues. Names like Zunar, Fahmi Reza, and Lat, are among local famous cartoonists who draw people in through their thought-provoking illustrations on issues surrounding us. In the current social media realm, especially with its majority of youth users, it is normal to see the use of rude and derogatory remarks in addressing issues or others [2] and irresponsible hate speech is on the rise too [3]. These cultures are commonly seen in satirical illustrations. There were several cases that were charged under the law and investigated for the use of satire. For example, MGAG, a local group generating content on social media is recently under criminal investigation by the Malaysian Royal Police for posting a doctored picture of the Director-General of Health that showed him participating in a work-from-home press conference while not wearing pants [4]. MGAG could be charged under Section 509 of the Penal Code for the gestures 'intended to insult the modesty of a person,' and Section 233 of the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 that criminalizes 'obscene, indecent, false, menacing or offensive' expression online. Other parodical and satirical social media such as @bermanadotcon are also under investigation by MCMC although the Twitter account clearly states this in its bio. 'Your Source of Parody News. Nothing to do and not affiliated with @bernamadotcom.'

It is quite clear that Malaysia does not practice freedom of expression as practiced in Western societies because it is difficult to reconcile national security and freedom of speech. Especially, as there are several controversial cases where cartoonists have been accused of seditious tendencies. A scholar like Mohd Sani points out that the barriers and restrictions to speech in Malaysia are bound by two political arguments: race and religion-related sensitivities [5]. Great care is taken not to impede the cultural and religious sensibilities of different groups in Malaysia, and Islam as the religion of the federation. Hence, the government argues that the existence of restrictive laws in the country is meant to sustain its racial harmony.

In Malaysia the universal moral values practiced are derived from Islam as its fount of virtue and uprightness provide the foundation of a caring society [6]. However, moral values are often reflected in a person's cognitive ability about acceptable rules for ethical conduct [7], [8]. For example, what is often shown in the satirical illustration, although with humor and degrading images, would spark public concern and responses against threats of common value or interest that would then lead to social change and change of policies for the better [9], [10], [11]. So, the question here is, is satirical illustration actually fine to be used as a form of expression of Malaysian values?

It is well understood that ethical and moral values have played a significant role in the socio-economic development of modern Malaysia [6]. However, not all satirical messages and illustrations are meant to disrupt racial harmony whilst some research has proven that this form of expression could awaken the public's understanding and interest in issues surrounding them. Such effects would lead to a more progressive democratic society that would influence society to engage better in any social trends and political issues. Hence, the study would like to understand the Malaysian youth's understanding of political satirical illustration, its effectiveness, and how it would enhance freedom of expression in Malaysia. Specifically, the objectives of the study are 1) to explore the Malaysian youths' understanding on political satirical illustrations; and 2) to explore the political satirical illustrations effect on the Malaysian youths' self and others in political expression.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 The Third Person Effect Theory (TPE)

Originally proposed by Davison [12], the Third Person Effect (TPE) consists of two components which are 1) the perceptual component and 2) the behavioral component. The perceptual component refers to the tendency of the first person to perceive that the media have more influence on others than they are themselves. The perceptual component then may lead to the

behavioral component on the real-life consequences of the perceptions gap. The framework of the TPE was later expanded to one-person, two-person, and third-person to clearly identify the characters of those involved in the TPE process, hence, contributing to the construction studies on TPE although research on first-person effect (FPE) and the behavioral consequences is relatively new and limited as compared to the TPE [13].

In the TPE, the third person is referred to those who have no relation with the first person and are assumed to be homogenous or generally similar. The reversed third person (also known as the first person) refers to an individual's own self who thinks he is distinct and unique from anyone else, hence perceiving they received different impact from media messages than others. However, the second person who are the family and friends of the first person is often perceived to have a joint media influence as the 'first person' too.

For the TPE, an individual often overestimates the impact of negative media messages on others but underestimates its impact on themselves. Hence, the 'social desirability' of the media messages has effects on the direction of the third-person perception gaps [13]. The perceived effects are a result from when people think of themselves to be more superior and knowledgeable when evaluating media messages thus, rejecting or reducing the negative media impact/effect on themselves. This effect is also known as self-enhancement, optimistic bias, and self-esteem [14]. For example, in research done by Chen and Atkin [15], it was found that the first person sees others be more vulnerable on Internet privacy risk than themselves making them recommend others to use Internet protection measurements. The internet privacy risk here is seen as a negative message.

In relation to positive media messages, the first person often overestimates the impact of positive media messages on themselves whilst underestimating the positive media message on others. For example, content such as public service announcements is seen as a "socially desirable" message hence, perceived to have more effect on the first person themselves instead [16]. Public service announcements such as environmental awareness and banning drunk driving are seen as a positive media message making the first person to evaluate themselves with high self-efficacy which then influences their behavior such as taking a role to deliver the message to others. The study shown by [15], the Internet protection measurement is seen as a positive message, hence, the first person with high self-efficacy may deliver a message to others to help the others getting exposed to the Internet privacy risk.

In Malaysia, a recent study using the third-person effect theory was done focusing on Barisan Nasional's (BN) political campaign. Findings from the study demonstrated that when it came to the influence of BN's political communication materials, the reversed third-person effect among BN voters or supporters [17]. For this current study, the researchers will look at the desirability of the political satirical content to the Malaysian youth and the perceived effects it will bring to the informants' self and others.

2.2   Freedom of Expression

Freedom of expression (FOE) or speech is a principle that supports the freedom of an individual or a community to articulate their opinions and ideas without fear of retaliation, censorship, or legal sanction. It is paramount for any democratic system to function adequately. However, since the Independence Day in 1957, Malaysia is familiar with the great tendency to have restricted freedom of expression supported by two political arguments, which are to protect the thin sensitivity of religion and race issues [18]. The practice of FOE should not impinge on these two sensitivities as they are potentially explosive to national harmony, unity and, most importantly, security.

Since satirical illustrations are normally provocative, those with distinct seditious intent can be potentially dangerous or threatening in a specific social situation, especially when controlled under strict authoritarian rule [19]. In Malaysia, the definition of seditious tendency is also seen as

archaic, broad, and vague, making it to be subjected to government rule and control. This also explains why the FOE in Malaysia is restricted to control over things that can and cannot be discussed [20]. It also limits certain discussions in the news or stories that are seen as derogatory or overly critical of the government.

Thus, there are some required restrictions and regulated acts found in the Malaysian legislative system. Particularly in the Federal Constitutions, the FOE of the Malaysians is protected in Article 10 but is not absolute, with imposed prohibitions and subject to certain limitations; and in certain aspects available to citizens only not to any person [21]. The imposed protections in the Federal Constitution are made "to protect the interest of the security of the Federation, friendly relations with other countries, public order or morality and restrictions designed to protect the privileges of Parliament or any Legislative Assembly or to provide against contempt of court, defamation, or incitement to any offense."

Examples of laws that are used to restrict FOE for the purpose of "public order or morality" include the Sedition Act and Defamation Act which protect political figures from being scrutinized. These are the laws that can be used to charge satirical cartoonists who are deemed as prejudicial to public order. Other laws that are used to regulate FOE includes the Internal Security Act (ISA) (Repealed), Security Offences Special Measures Act (SOSMA), Official Secret Act (OSA), Printing Presses and Publications Act (PPPA), Broadcasting Act-Communication and Multimedia Act, Imported Publication Act, BERNAMA Act and the Federal Constitution [5].

2.3   Satire

In the broadest sense, satire is the art of using humor, irony, and exaggeration to ridicule and reveal certain ludicrous aspects of the actions of people, their ignorance, and vices which at the end of the day would affect changes [1]. According to Griffin [22] and Coletta [23], satire is distinct from pure humor as its victims are typically from the real world and presented with a negative and sharp tone referring to moral standards and purposes in the real world. Griffin [22] then further explains that the purpose of satire as moral art is to persuade the audience through exaggeration and ridicule that some issues or persons are in the wrong. Hence, satirical illustration is generally defined in this study as the use of satire in art form to address issues that often relate to the betterment and progress of society. Regardless, using humor as mentioned by previous scholars is more effective for individuals who are heavily active in politics [24].

2.4   Satire in Malaysia

The youth in Malaysia have long started embracing the social media networking dynamism [25]. The openness of social media websites encourages the youth to participate in propagating ideologies or interest trends in our country such as posting, blogging, commenting, tweeting, etc. Such participation and involvement allow deliberation and criticism among various groups in the social media sphere.

The vibrant and fervent online participation has also proven that there is increased evidence of impoliteness and incivility spreading in the use of social media [25],[3],[2]. Examples of online impoliteness and incivility include unfriendliness process of interacting or message deliverance such as using offensive, degrading, and aggressive approaches as well as dehumanizing others. The use of social media nowadays is also proven to be coupled with the increase in unethical expression and language use [25]. One of the famous modes of expression used for this purpose is through satirical illustrations.

Satirical illustration often shows parodical portrayal and degrading images that are ridiculous at times but scholars see that such expression could influence the public's emotional

and behavioral responses [26], [27]. Such illustrations could be beneficial to various audiences as an entertainment expression that lightens the deliverance of any heavy or serious issues [19], especially through cynicism, degrading and illustrating the content as a laughing stock. The use of satirical expressions may vary across nations but one main similarity is to portray a negative image of any individual or issues. It is used as a way to increase public awareness to spark deliberation of issues happening around them.

In Malaysia, satirical illustrations, also often known as internet trolling, are used to criticize and insinuate issues in relation to governance incompetency, economy, environmental and social concerns that have been growing since the 1940s [28]. Oftentimes, satirical messages are used as flaming strategies that contain details that provoke and allude to any individual involved as well as the public [27]. There are few illustrators or cartoonist who has been consistently making satirical illustration as a form of criticism of the unfair and incompetent government of the day. Two of the most relevant now, based on Twitter and Facebook interactions are Fahmi Reza who goes by username @kuasasiswa on Twitter, and Zulkiflee Anwar Haque who is more popular with the alias Zunar. Both of them have been charged with the Malaysian Sedition Act 1948 and the Communication and Multimedia Act 1998 for their satirical illustrations.

3.0 Methodology

This study used qualitative methodology to allow the researchers to explore, learn, and understand deeply the Malaysian youth's opinion on political satirical illustrations. The methodology will also provide deeper insights and a better understanding of the acceptance of political satire in Malaysia. The researchers used in-depth virtual face-to-face interview for data collection. This approach is suitable to explore and understand the current research context. The virtual face-to-face interview via online meeting platforms such as Zoom and Google Meet, was conducted due to the restriction movement order to contain the spread of COVID-19.

3.1   Population and sampling method

The population of this study is Malaysian youth aged from 18 to 30 years old. As defined in the Youth Societies and Youth Development (Amendment) Act 2019, the youth range in Malaysia is between the ages of 15 – 30 years old. However, the study population will start from the majority age of Malaysian youth, which is 18 years old.

Purposive sampling was used to select informants who possess specific characteristics relevant to the research focus. The criteria are 1) social media user with the age range 18 – 30 years old, 2) ordinary Malaysian who has no political position or background, 2) not involved in any political activism activities, and 3) exposed to the existence of political satirical illustrations online. Hence, the informant's request for research participation was sent to screened social media users who have online engagement (such as following or liking) with satirical cartoonists such as Zunar and Fahmi Reza.

A total of 12 informants agreed to participate in the research, but one of the informants withdrew the participation consent at the last minute. To have a rich set of data, the researchers made sure the interviewees were comfortable and interested in sharing their information. The researchers also used probe questions for detailed answers and avoided quantitative interviewing methods such as using yes or no questions.

3.2   Research Procedure

The data collection was carried out within a period of three weeks when initial contacts were made through social media private direct messages. Only those interested replied to the message and agreed to participate in the study. Those who agreed are given the informed consent form for them to read the conditions of the study and its allocated time. The researchers then waited for at least a week to get feedback. After the feedback was received, the researchers scheduled virtual meetings through the online platform of the informants' choice. The choices are Google Meet and Zoom.

Since the interviews were done virtually, the interview session was recorded using the applications' recording function. At times when the internet connection was a bit unstable, the researcher used a manual voice recorder to record the interviewing session. To ensure the informant's privacy and confidentiality, each informant's name was changed to a pseudonym and all the recorded data were deleted after the study ended.

In terms of language choice, the majority of the informants preferred to use *Bahasa Malaysia* and only a few of the informants used English as they were comfortable speaking the language. Many of the informants mixed the use of English and *Bahasa Malaysia* like how they usually conversed in daily communication. Having the informants answer in their daily conversation language use allowed them to speak freely and be comfortable in giving detailed responses to the questions. The shortest interview took only around 40 minutes whilst the longest took around 90 minutes. The recorded data were then transcribed by the researchers to be analyzed.

3.3   Data Analysis

In this study, thematic analysis is used to analyze and report themes generated from the data transcribed. The six phases of the thematic analysis were done manually. Firstly, the data are familiarized by transcribing verbatim all the recorded interviews with no alteration. Any features of the data that are meaningful to the study are highlighted for data coding. The listed codes identified are then analyzed, categorized, and combined to form themes and sub-themes before reviewing them all together. The theme is then defined and named before analyzing the data that can represent the themes to be sorted coherently.

Thematic coding summaries are used to track the themes in the data. The frequency and diversity of instances where each theme appears are documented until the themes are no longer expanding to ensure they are saturated. To report the analysis, the main themes are presented, supported by discussions with pieces of evidence of dialogues and quotes from the informants.

3.4   Informants' Demographic Background

Every informant interview was conducted at a different time via virtual meeting depending on the informant's availability. The researcher collected a total of 11 informants for this study and believed that the data were saturated. The demographic backgrounds of the informants are presented below.

TABLE 1
Informants' demographic information

ID	Pseudonym	Gender	Age
1	Bani	Male	28
2	Iz	Male	25
3	Man	Male	25
4	Han	Male	26
5	Vie	Male	-
6	Jah	Female	-
7	Nana	Female	21
8	Dee	Female	22
9	Miey	Male	24
10	Shah	Male	33
11	Fah	Female	29

4.0 Findings and Discussion

In this section, the findings are divided into two components of the Third Person Effect (TPE) [29] which are the Perceptual component and the behavioral component. For the perceptual component, the main theme is the Perception towards satirical political illustrations. For the behavioral component, the researchers focus on the influence of political satirical illustrations on political expression and political satirical illustrations in enhancing freedom of expression.

4.1 Perceptual Component: Perception towards Satirical Political Illustrations

a.   A Form of Art

The informants see that satirical political illustrations are also a form of art to express opinions and views on certain matters or issues. This is because satirical illustrations often portray images of cartoons representing the issue portrayed.

> *Bani: ...it is a genre for literature and art form.. I can say...*
> *Han: ...the concept is free... art is free that you can illustrate issues in any direction.*
> *Jah: ...a type of sarcasm in a form of art. It can be in illustrations, it can be from videos, or stand-up comedy...*
> *Nana: It is a form of expressions using arts and bright colours...*
> *Dee: ... exaggerated drawings of caricature... it is a form of art.*
> *Miey: it is appealing and attracting people in art form.*
> *Shah: ... it is a kind of work or art that is mocking certain individual based on certain issue that is going on...*

b.   A Form of Humor and Parody

The informants also stressed that oftentimes, political satirical illustrations use a humorous approach and are illustrated in a parody manner. The humorous content makes the satire more interesting to gain attention, hence attracting people to view or interpret the content.

> *Bani: ...So kalau kau boleh jadikan benda ni lawak, dia interesting la untuk orang dengar. So orang pun tak boring la...*
> *Man: ...in a way it's like a parody. It's fun, it's something new that maybe closer to the youth... maybe it's a way for youth to get closer to political situation in Malaysia.*
> *Nana: ...I think it's humor at its finest.*
> *Dee: ... at times it can humorous towards the public...*
> *Shah: ... it is a comedy and humorous style of satirical illustrations...*
> *Fah: ...it can be humorous...*

c.   Humiliating and Degrading Images

All of the informants see political satirical illustrations would often portray humiliating and degrading images. The contents can be seen as condescending at times, carry aggressive tones and are often delivered in a vulgar way. Some of the informants say that it can come in a way that shames and ridiculing the party involved in the illustrations. Although the satirical illustrations contained such characteristics, the informants do not reject the illustrations but merely open their views and other's way of interpreting the message delivered from the illustrations.

> *Iz: ...it doesn't have to be degrading although most of the time it's degrading but to me, it's not completely wrong but like I said just now it has to be something that provokes thoughts. It needs to force people to think about the hidden message or the clear obvious messages of the illustrations.*
>
> *Vie: ...in my opinion satirical political illustrations can be humiliating and degrading as well but it depends on the artist itself whether they want to make it offensive towards the political figure or do they want to make it a more peaceful protest. It actually depends on the artist as well, so...but from my own personal experience, most of the satirical political illustrations that I have come across are degrading, in my opinion, and humiliating as well.*
>
> *Nana: The politicians in the illustrations would take it something as degrading... but it also depends on how the person takes in such illustrations.*
>
> *Dee: ...it can be humiliating and degrading to the person who is made fun of... it can be condescending too.*

4.2 Perceptual Behavior: The Influence of Political Satirical Illustration on Political Expression

a.   Shaping Self's Political View

All of the informants see that political satirical illustrations do not directly influence their political views but merely help them understand issues better and become more critical of the issues raised in the illustrations. The illustrations would create awareness and raise questions for the informants to better understand what is happening instead. The informants would normally look for further information first rather than believing the illustration a hundred percent. Number of the informants said that it does not shape their political views as they do not have an interest in political content and some even have their own political stance.

> *Iz: ...I feel like it has shaped me to become more critical towards authority instead of just following whatever they say*
>
> *Jah: ...it helps me to see clearer on certain issues like some tv news and some news outlet tak bagitahu about the thing. But when I see some political satire illustrations, it will make me wonder what is going on and then it makes me want to dig it out. And then, after that I will get clearer vision on the whole thing. And it also makes me more critical about our government or political body.*
>
> *Dee: It depends on my pre-existing knowledge about the political topic… it does have some influence on my political view but I'm the kind of person to think about why a person think about something and I would do my research to understand the ideas portrayed first. I want to be as closed to the truth.*

b.   Shaping Others' Political View

All of the informants said that the political satirical illustrations are a powerful tool that can help shape others' political view as it exposes people to new information and urge them to think critically on what is happening. The informants also mentioned that the others' political views could directly influence the Malaysian youth especially when they are not well-versed and not well-informed about our political situation. Moreover, the informants also understood that people will have different ways of understanding and accepting information through political satirical investigations.

> *Iz: … And in terms of others political view, I also think that it has a power to urge people to think outside of the box instead of just following whatever the government say which is sometimes they are not really correct.*
> *Nana: Yes, definitely it will influence their views as its function is to inform others… but different people will have different views on certain political issues. There are some people who would agree instantly with whatever they see in the social media.*
>
> *Dee: This illustration is appealing to the youth, if they are absolutely ignorant or have no knowledge about the political happenings around us, it is easy to be totally influenced by the political artists. But to those who are highly intellectual, they can in a way re-evaluate their political stance too.*
>
> *Shah: People always get their political views changed when they are exposed to these illustrations, from knowing nothing to getting to know about something new. If they don't have any political opinion before and they are exposed to the illustration, they will have an opinion and stick to it. It will directly affect people especially the young generation who don't really study politics.*

c.   Influence Self's Political Expression

The informants also said that the satirical political illustration can influence their self-participation in political expression but not particularly online. This is because the creative portrayal of issues in the satirical illustrations sparks interest to them and provides them the chance to be more critical of issues surrounding them. Other than that, the satirical illustration also became a catalyst to start a conversation or discussion to deliver their own political opinion.

> *Iz: ...I think for my own personal experience, it does actually influence my political expression. As in it urges me to become somehow more creative in criticising the government if I were given the chance.*
>
> *Jah: … Honestly it will make me more critical, more open and then in social media I tend to be a bit aggressive. Ya kutuk-kutuk semua, I like it. I enjoy it actually.*

> *Dee: ...it sorts of a platform and a catalyst to start conversation. When you see drawing, it is very appealing and eye catching. It makes me want to participate more in terms of how I express my political opinions.*

> *Miey: To me, I normally just observe on what is happening... It can also build conversation and discussions to me. If they don't do this, there will be no awareness towards the issue. It is a very creative way to talk about politics.*

d.   Influence Other's Political Expression

In terms of other political expressions, the informants say that they have the same effect as what they would experience for themselves. The political satirical illustration would invite and encourage more people to discuss or talk about the issues presented in the illustration. This is because satirical illustrations help them to be aware on the political happenings and issues in our country. Other than that, Malaysian youth are also prone to share their thoughts and opinions in social media especially when the illustrations' contents are controversial and thought-provoking.

> *Vie: ...in a way, it helps us understand how other people might feel how the country is being led. So, once you hear from people who are not satisfied with the country being led, maybe you guys can like everyone can sit down and discuss like how this country needs improvement...*

> *Nana: Yes, it will trigger people especially if touches something that is considered as sensitive to them, such as issue that is related to the Namewee movie production recently. They would post comments about it.*

> *Miey: The same thing, art stuff attracts people to put interest on politics. It is a door for people my age to talk about politics.*

> *Fah: Most of them would share their thoughts about in the social media as people love sarcasm to make it as a topic of conversations and communicate about it. People tend to share something that is interesting as it attracts people to give comments or laugh about it.*

In relation to the third-person effect theory, when asked about the influence of political satirical illustration on shaping their own self-political view and others' political views, the informants strongly believe that they do not influence or help shape their political views or beliefs right away. This is because the informants know that they need to read more about the issues portrayed and get a better understanding of them before deciding or forming their political views. However, the informants view that others' political views would be easily and directly influenced and shaped by political satirical illustrations. This is especially referring to the others that the informants assume as those who have lack or no knowledge about political issues in Malaysia. Hence, it can be said that such an illustration would be a desirable medium for the "not-knowing others" as it is highly appealing and controversial to look at. These findings, however, represent the third-person effect theory, although such illustrations as seen as desirable by the informants.

On the contrary, this study discovers that the informants reported that the political satirical illustration can influence the informants' self and others' political expression. Although the self-political views were claimed to not be changed or influenced, the informants do participate in political expression and discussions when encountering such illustrations. This is because the appeal shown by such illustration became an awareness tool and a catalyst to start a discussion or share their political opinion. Hence, the third-person effect application here is invalid.

4.3   Political Satirical Illustrations in Enhancing Freedom of Expression.

a.   Enhancing Freedom of Expression.

All of the informants said that consuming and creating satirical illustrations would help enhance freedom of expression as they help the cartoonists and the Malaysian youth to be creative and more expressive when expressing views. In addition, the informants said that seeing the illustrations would invite and make them braver to express their opinions on the issues. Hence, opening the youths' minds further on political issues in Malaysia.

Han: it can help the youth to voice out man through this political satire illustrations. If the youth see political illustration, they can voice out what they thought about the politic. It can give more awareness because they will think, oh someone can talk about this, so I can talk about this too. So, everybody will talk about that.

Dee: It is a tool and artistic form for freedom of expression. It allows us to express further in a different form that you can't express in words.

Shah: These satirical illustrations will definitely invite people to comments and discuss about the issues portrayed

b.   Influencing Democracy System

All of the informants said that political satirical illustrations can influence democracy in the long run. This is because the satire invites people to be more open and talk about issues surrounding the government and politicians where the youth get the chance to discuss it, develop a critical mind, and decide for their future from the evaluations they would make through their political discussions and expressions. At the end of the day, being exposed to political satirical expressions and discussions would influence people's beliefs and shake them to re-evaluate their political stances and choices. Such illustrations also work as a check and balance for the government or any authority to further improve themselves.

Vie: it does help in democracy because…what is democracy? Democracy is about hearing what other people have to say about things. Like I said, not everyone will be satisfied with your action, some people might be satisfied with your action. That's why voting system and everything is there. It depends on majority of the people.

Nana: …you get to questions why certain politicians behave that way… we get to know immediately whether these politicians are reliable or not and choose in the future.

Dee: …it can be used as political tools to influence people's beliefs on certain political parties and how
we choose our leaders and re-evaluate our political stance.

Miey: Yes, the government need to listen to us, the message should be stressed on and the government
*   should improve themselves.*

Shah: Yes, it will lead people to know on what is happening around the Malaysian political setting.

Fah: Yes, it can influence the way people think and shaping the public opinions about our democracy

system and people will be more forward and open in expressing their opinions.

c.   Disagreeing on the Control of Satire

Lastly, all the informants disagree on having the government control the dissemination of political satirical illustrations. The informants said that Malaysians should be given the opportunity to voice their opinions on the political state of the country. This is especially true when there is misconduct or misuse of power that should be criticized and changed in the government system. Blocking the satire from the youth would not help them to progress and by critical-minded. Furthermore, to progress better, the government needs to be criticized. However, the informants said that Malaysians should know that there are certain limitations. when practicing freedom of expression, we need to care for the national harmony and peace, in this case, when expressing views through satire. Hence, the informant also thinks that the government can monitor satirical content that would cause harm to the society but not have total control over it.

> *Iz: ...they shouldn't because that will only make our nation seems so backwards and also, we are not living in an authoritarian government but by the looks of it we are heading towards that. So, before it happens, we should start exercising our right to speak more against the government or anyone in power who is misusing it.*

> *Vie: I think instead of controlling such illustrations, the government should look to such illustrations and come to their discussion like in which area are we lacking in serving the people.*

> *Jah: ...If they control it, it will just make them look like they are trying to hide their fault and make them look stupid and guilty… to progress you need criticism.*

> *Nana: ...definitely not, because it is invalidating our freedom of speech… because you are saying people can practice they speech freedom but when it comes to sensitive issues, you suddenly cut it out. As a democratic country, the people should be allowed to express their opinion based on what they feel and what they understand.*

> *Dee: If the government control the satirical illustrations, there will be only positive satire? It will not criticize them. No, they should not. I feel extreme satire should not be disseminated such as sensitive issues and insults towards religions and race. If it is simply towards criticizing the government, they should not control or intervene. Intervene only when it became too extreme.*

In terms of freedom of expression, this study found that consuming and creating satirical illustrations would help enhance the informants' freedom of expression. This is because it allows the informants to be creative and critical upon viewing certain issues. In addition, the informants are braver in expressing their political opinions when they see a satirical illustration. The study also found that political satirical illustration can influence our democratic system in the long run. This is because the informants confidently believe that allowing such a medium as an expression would invite and develop more people to evaluate what is good or bad in the governing system as well as the political spheres surrounding them. It is found that the informant thinks that Malaysians should be given the opportunity to voice out their opinions on the nation's political state as well as becoming a sort of check and balances for the government or any political figures to strive for the better. Thus, the informants strongly disagree on the control or censorship of political satirical illustrations. However, there is still a need for the government to monitor the contents to avoid chaos or harm in relation to sensitivity issues in our country. The

informants still believe that there are certain limitations needed in practicing freedom of expression, but not total control over it.

5.0   Conclusion

The findings conclude that the informants see political satirical illustrations as a form of art to deliver criticism and sarcasm in a humorous way. The main characters of the illustrations are often seen to be humiliated or degraded. This form of satirical illustration is a powerful tool to increase awareness and knowledge of pressing issues around them. The effect of such illustrations includes allowing its viewers to re-evaluate their political understanding and participate further in political expression and discussions that are not necessarily done online.

However, since they would elicit negative emotions and anger, they see that it is possible for such illustrations to disrupt societal peace and harmony. The study also concluded that the informants do have a high level of moral awareness. They are able to distinguish between right and wrong, especially on any matters involving race or religious sensitivity, unethical content, degrading and harming others. No matter how many benefits satirical illustrations can bring, they also see that any content with potential harm to others is always wrong.

The implication of this study is that satirical illustrations are considered an effective way to make the youths aware of issues happening around them. With high moral awareness, the youth are able to distinguish what is acceptable and not acceptable to be circulated on social media. Nevertheless, it cannot be ignored that the limited sampling and qualitative nature of this study do not generalize the Malaysian youths' opinion as a whole as it emphasizes understanding the in-depth perspective of the study. To achieve generalizability, further research should be made to a larger context beyond the conditions and specific sample of this study. One practical suggestion is to use a quantitative approach.

In summary, this study concludes that having satirical illustrations as a source of information deliverance and criticisms of any issue or person should not be totally restricted. Instead, policymakers should allow capable Malaysians to report any unethical or societal harmony disruptive illustrations. Having various kinds of expressions would open Malaysians to a freer market of ideas and develop a better socially responsible involvement in our democracy setting.

6.0   References

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