

**ANALYZING POLITICAL CAMPAIGN EFFECTS: A TEST OF THE
THIRD-PERSON EFFECTS THEORY**

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TESTING THE THIRD-PERSON EFFECTS THEORY ON POLITICAL CAMPAIGN IN MALAYSIA

By

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ABSTRACT

This paper tests the use of Third-Person Effect Theory (TPET) on political campaign on self, family, supporters, non-supporters, and non-supporters of other parties. Previous research mainly tested the TPET on the mass media. Thus, the application of the TPET is extended to gauge the effect of political campaign. This is important as the campaign can have a great influence on those who are the target of the campaign. The study tries to find out the effects of campaign as a vehicle in mobilizing the audience on the voting outcome of the political campaign. The study was conducted nationwide involving 1654 respondents. Data were collected using an interview schedule. Data were analyzed for its descriptive and inferential statistics to answer the objectives of the study and to test the hypotheses of the study. Findings show that, on the whole, the respondents think that the political campaigns are able to influence the party supporters, whether they belong to the reigning party or the opposition party. In addition, the respondents who are supporters of the ruling party said that they and their families are very much influenced by BN political campaign. The supporters of the opposition also have similar perception of their own party. Therefore, the Third-Person Effect Theory holds true for the study on political campaign effects.

Keyword: Third Person Effect Theory, political campaign, supporters, non-supporters, self-effect

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INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses on the effects of party political campaign on different segments of the populace. The effects are analyzed based on the outcomes on self, family, supporters, non-supporters, non-supporters of other parties. Specifically, the objectives of the study are:

- (1) To find out the characteristics of BN and PKR supporters;
- (2) To determine the degree of influence of political campaign on audience; and
- (3) To compare the degree of influence of BN and PKR (PAS, DAP and KeAdilan) political campaigns on audience.

THE ORIGIN OF ELECTION STUDIES

Presidential elections were one of the concerns of the Bureau. Hence studies of interpersonal influence and media effects gained more attention from the Bureau. Scholars from the Bureau conducted large panel studies of opinions and media behaviour to investigate people's exposure to messages and whether people changed their opinions during presidential elections. The People's Choice on the 1940 election (Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet, 1944) and Voting (Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPheee, 1954), and Personal Influence (Katz, Elihu & Lazarsfeld, 1954) were milestones in communication research. The study found that there were minimal effects of the mass media on people's choice, a position that was strongly different from the powerful direct effects of the media.

Central to the findings of the Bureau of Applied Social Research on opinions and behaviour was on reinforcement. A book by Klapper (1960) sums up the minimal effects when he said "... the media work through a nexus of mediating factors and influences. These are such that they usually render mass communication a contributory agent but not the sole cause, in a process of reinforcing the existing conditions" (Klapper, 1960: 8).

It was later in the 1970s, that another set of findings were to emerge, developed and refined by the semi-logical school. Under this tradition, meanings were said to reside in the audience. The audience subscribes to the message by providing their own meaning. There could be a variety of meanings to a given message, and audience members are expected to provide meanings to these messages, given their social contexts, and in giving these meanings; they themselves would provide the appropriate response. In political communication, the effects of messages are determined by the context of the messages and the political environment at the material period of time that these messages appear. These

messages must be receptive to the audience who would then provide their own interpretation and meaning to them.

The semi-logical school of thought, using Stuart Hall's list of differential decoding position, there would be three possible decoding. One is called the dominant decoding, the other would be the negotiated decoding, and the third would be the oppositional decoding. A person under the dominant decoding on receipt of the message tends to agree with it, and subscribes to the various assumptions and worldview of the communicator of the message. A person who appears to be neutral would subscribe to the negotiated decoding, where, being skeptical would tend to agree with parts of the message, and remaining in disagreement with the other parts of the message. Under the oppositional decoding, a person tends to reject the messages coming from the media if the audience is in total disagreement with the message or the communicator.

POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

Political communication was a new field of study within the communication study with several scholars giving various ideas on what its constitution (Chaffee, 1975; Newman 1999). One of the early researchers defined it as "a research that makes claims about the relationships between communication processes and political processes" (Nimmo and Swanson, 1990:7). Political communication goes beyond persuasion and election studies. It is interested in the factors influencing voter preference, the choices faced by the voters when they choose between parties and candidates as they enter the ballot boxes. Are they influenced by the media, by friends, by their own families or parties when do they make the decision to vote? When did they decide to vote? Is it during the day of the election, during the campaign period, or sometime even before politicians decide to call for the elections? Were the decisions influenced by the media? Back at our heads will be to understand the role of the media in influencing voter choice.

Understanding media effects on the audience and the voters is studying media and politics. The two disciplines are combined to be in one discipline called political communication. So we come to debate what political communication is all about. Some would characterize political communication in terms of the message and the intention of its senders to influence the politic. In a book edited by him, Nair (1999) defined political communication as "the purposeful communication about politics."

Political communication in the words of Nair incorporates the following features:

- a. All forms of communication undertaken by politicians and other political actors for the purpose of achieving specific objectives;
- b. Communication addressed to those actors by non-politicians such as voters, and newspaper columnists; and
- c. Communication about these actors and their activities, as contained in news reports, editorials, and other forms of media discussion of politics.

Political communication is more than what was defined by Nair. Some would include all elements of communication which might be said to constitute a political image or identity (Nair, 1999: 4). Marketing communication would then be included as part of political communication as the approach in making voters aware of the political candidates and parties fall within this realm.

Although there are many views that can be considered important in political communication, yet one could limit the discussion to certain actors, namely, the political actors, political parties, public organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), the media, and the audience. Family discussions and *ceramahs* would fall within the ambit of the present discussion. In political communication, media are expected to have three types of effects on the voters during election campaign, namely, activation, reinforcement and conversion. While one group would be more likely to change parties (convert), a larger percentage would be to activate or reinforce the present dispositions held by the voters. In the United States of America (USA), election campaigns have changed, but the predisposition of voters who are activated, reinforced and who are converted remain stable. In other words, although political campaigns have been sophisticated but the effect on the voters continued to have some traditional notions.

MALAYSIAN POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

Between the 1980s and the early 1990s, Malaysia experienced significant economic growth under Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, the 4th Prime Minister of Malaysia. The period saw a shift from an agriculture-based economy to one based on manufacturing and industry in areas such as computers and consumer electronics. In the late 1990s, Malaysia was shaken by the Asian financial crisis. Opposition to certain aspects of the existing system was put down by the government. The opposition runs the gamut from socialists and reformists to a party that advocates the creation of an Islamic state.

In early September 1998, the Prime Minister, Mahathir bin Mohamad, dismissed Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim, and accused Anwar of immoral and corrupt conduct. Anwar said his ouster actually owed to political differences and led a series of demonstrations advocating political reforms. The Anwar sacking fuelled the rejuvenation of the Islam-based PAS party, who made major electoral gains in Northern states, indeed wresting one, Terengganu, from the ruling Barisan Nasional government. The clean out of Anwar and his supporters caused concerns among traditional and rural Malays who saw their representation in UMNO and the BN being decimated.

The opposition Chinese-based DAP party which previously boasted strongholds in Penang and other urban areas where Chinese business has a strong profile, joined with the opposition coalition (BA or Barisan Alternatif) in fighting the recent election on a pro-Anwar 'reformasi appeal'. Unlike PAS, the result was a political disaster for the DAP, whose traditional Chinese supporters were unnerved by their liason with PAS, or were frightened by the racially-based fear campaign run by the ruling elite at election time.

The final major force in Malaysian politics is KeAdilan (Justice Party), led by Anwar's wife, theoretically multi-racial but in practice more of a Moslem party. While initially, Keadilan could boast significant power and support, defections of Anwar supporters who joined in the wake of the sacking retuning to UMNO, and splits emanating from the very rocky process of moving from a one issue party to a broader agenda, has brought with it significant loss of support. The educated middle class of Malaysia, from which Keadilan were expecting support, still prefer the imperfect, but historically successful BN coalition.

CAMPAIGN EFFECTS AND THE MALAYSIAN ELECTION

Political communication scholars are interested to know the effects of political messages from the media and from other sources. For this study, political campaign is considered one of the sources carrying political messages. The messages are disseminated in terms of brochures, political talks, banners, banting, etc. to influence the potential voters. A party member receiving information through the party organ will interpret the message differently from a non-party or an opposing party member.

Taking the ideas from Stuart Hall (1980) on a list of decoding positions, the BN member would adopt a dominant decoding, meaning that he would share the worldview underlying the presentation of the news, its interpretation, the debates and the solutions proposed in the political campaign.

The Election Commission of Malaysia (EC), established on 4 September 1957 under article of Federal Constitution, was commissioned to nurture, monitor, and to perpetuate the democratic process in Malaysia through an election system that is free, fair and just. The main functions of EC are to (1) review and delimit, Parliamentary and State Constituencies at intervals of not less than eight years, following the date of completion of the last review, (2) carry out registration of electors and revision of electoral rolls; and (3) conduct general elections to the House of Representatives and State Legislative Assemblies, and (4) undertake by-elections arising out of casual vacancies.

The results of the Malaysian General Election 2008 had given an unpredicted blow to the ruling BN party led by the Prime Minister, Tun Abdullah Badawi. The election marks a new political chapter in the Malaysian history whereby the dominant party in the BN coalition received less support. BN lost its two-thirds majority in the *Dewan Rakyat* for the first time. The reasons for the BN setback have more to do with the coalition lackluster performance under the then Prime Minister, than the strength of the opposition. The declining of the economic legitimacy was compounded by a shocking record of managing ethnic relations, particularly the concerns of the non-Malays.

PKR with PAS, DAP, and KeAdilan collectively benefited from the overall unhappiness with the ruling government. They may differ in their ideological outlook, but in this election, the opposition entered into non-aggression pact, openly encouraged its supporters to vote for its anti-government partners - irrespective of the party involved, and regardless of race.

The campaigns of the opposition were fundamentally different from the earlier elections. Their ambition was defined and modest, with an aim of breaking the BN's two-thirds' majority in the parliament which gives the party a stronger hold on the government. The campaign period of 13 days, made the non-BN parties better opportunities to reach the electorate. Among the major issues of the elections were rising oil and consumer item prices, ethnic inequality, and alleged corruption of government (Tunku Mohar, 2008).

BN's campaign was promised upon a progress report and manifesto themed "Security, Peace and prosperity." The BN campaign was seen not able to move beyond its paternal mindset towards an increasingly sophisticated and informed electorate (Welsch, 2008).

However, BN, with its advantage of incumbency, could stage intensive campaign. The opposition parties relied heavily on political *ceramah* and door-to-door campaigning. Despite getting very little favorable coverage by the mainstream media, the opposition parties

compensated for this handicap through the new media, i.e., the Internet, specifically through the parties' websites, weblogs of candidates and *You-Tube* Internet videos.

THIRD-PERSON EFFECT

The theory on the Third-Person Effect has been with scholars for some time but has not caught the limelight as the other theories, such as the Agenda Setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) or Uses and Gratifications (Blumler & McQuail, 1969). The theory referred to as the Third-Person Effect began as a study on media effects, but it developed somewhat differently when it was postulated that audience members would not admit that media had any direct effect on them. They would not acknowledge of the media effects on themselves, but they would, however, believe that the media did have an effect on others, that is on the third person. The audience would, therefore, react on the assumption that the media had an effect on others, and therefore the media was an important source of effect (Tewksbury, Moy & Weis, 2004; Rice, Tewksbury & Huang, 1998).

This third-person effect is more visible when it is transmitted into behaviors. This self-other discrepancy, according to Jensen and Hurley (2002), is now referred to as the perceptual hypothesis within the third-person effect research. Davison (1996) cites examples of behavior on how advertising and PKR practitioners existence depends on perceived media effects on others. In addition, numerous scholars have cited media control and censorship as a visible example of a third-person effect (Lee & Tamborini, 2005; Brosius & Engel, 2005; and Rucinski & Salmon, 1990). Davidson (1983) posited that individuals will perceive mediated messages to have their greatest impact not "on me" or "you" but on them - the third person. Laurie Mason (1995: 610) states that "others" will be seen as more persuadable by a republished message than by an original message.

There is a lot of research on various media and message variables in connection with the third-person effect; an especially large effect is brought about by a low credibility message and a highly obvious persuasive intention (Brosius & Engel, 1996: 143).

Since third-person effect is a theory of perception, present study has looked into its psychological origins. Based on many research literatures, many researches agree that there are several different psychological mechanisms that might predict and cause the phenomenon (Brosius & Engel, 1996; Paul, Salwen & Dupange, 2000). Although scholars have categorized these mechanisms somewhat differently, they have similar indication. Brosius and Engel (1996), for example, have termed these mechanisms as unrealistic optimism, impersonal impact and generalized negative attitude towards media influence while Rice and

Tewksbury (1996) have referred to these mechanisms as biased optimism, involvement and negative messages. Unrealistic optimism or biased optimism refers to the inclination of people to have a more positive image on themselves than on others. According to Brosius and Engel (1996), unrealistic optimism is related to people's attempt to enhance their ego whereby they feel that they have a better position to control media effects.

The second mechanism, impersonal impact or what Jensen and Hurley (2005) termed a social distance refers to how people find media effects to be more prominent on others who are psychologically or socially different from them. Lambe and McLeod (2002) refer to this mechanism as the ingroup/outgroup condition. According to their study on respondents from two different age groups, they found that people from the same age group tend to predict larger effect on those who are from a different age group as them. Lee and Tamborini (2005) also found this mechanism to be prominent in their third-person effect study on people from two different nationalities. Brosius and Engel (1996) assert that this may be the case because the mass media exert stronger control on the societal level, while the personal level is more influenced by interpersonal communication. Therefore, people who are from the same social group tend to believe that they have the same level of media-efficacy.

Further studies have indicated that the level of third-person effect increases when a person believes it is socially undesirable to be affected by the communication, especially with what Rice and Tewksbury (1996) concluded as negative messages from the media. Consistent with this general explanation is the finding that greater perceptions of media impact occur when the message presented is deemed to be negative. Rice and Tewksbury (1996) cited that the third-person effect is magnified when the source of the message is overtly biased against its subject. Brosius and Engel (1996) strengthened this proposition with the claim that people strongly involved or people holding extreme attitudes see the media as hostile towards their own position, independent of how the media really covers the issue.

The Third-Person Effect Theory has accounted much when the contents were sourced as negative, such as pornography or violence. Not many studies using the Theory of Third-Person Effect had been applied in analyzing election campaigns, at least not to the extent as the Agenda Setting Theory. This study highlighted the results when the third-person effect was used in understanding recent Malaysian elections. Therefore, this study is to narrow the gap between the existing body of knowledge on third-person effect using political campaign as the medium of disseminating information and influencing the populace in the developing nations.

THIRD PERSON-EFFECT IN POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

Media effects in political communication could also be viewed from the Third-Person Effect Theory. Although this theory has not been widely tested by communication scholars compared to other media effects theories such as the Agenda Setting Theory and Cultivation Theory, it is not a total stranger in the area of political communication research. In their meta-analysis on the perceptual hypothesis of the Third-Person Effect Theory, Paul, Salwen and Dupange (2000) found that 9 out of 32 research studies conducted on the topic focuses on the perceptual effects of political content in the media. To be more specific, Rucinski and Salmon (1990), for example, conducted a study on how political content in newspaper and television can create a perception of effects among policymakers up to a point where they start to contemplate media censorship.

However, focus on the theory in the area of political communication is still at the initial stage and are somewhat still lacking in quantities and qualities, making it hard for the theory to gain prominence like those achieved by its counterparts such as the Agenda Setting Theory, Spiral of Silence Theory (Noelle-Neumann, 1973, 1980) or even the Cultivation Theory. The theory can contribute significantly to the study of political communication as it is able to provide scholars and practitioners insights to how voters perceive media influence and whether their voting behaviors are actually influenced by the media they prescribed to.

Therefore, this study aspires to contribute in the discourse of the third-person effect on political communication. This is especially so when such study is in a dormant stage here in the developing countries where media is continuously becoming one of the most powerful political tool.

HYPOTHESES

Political Campaign Effects on Others

The literature review on the third-person effect has clearly suggested that people tend to perceive that they are not significantly influenced by the media as compared to the others or the third party. However, since the study is based on political campaign which is combination of political talk and other supportive documents such as, brochure, flyer, and banner, the effect might be combinations of interpersonal and media effect. Therefore, the effect can be both on self and family, beside on others (supporters, non-supporters, non-supporters of other party). So, the hypothesis can be postulated as:

H1: Malaysian voters for the reigning party (BN) and for the opposition party (PKR) would perceive that the political campaigns have influence on them and on the others differently.

In-group and Out-group Effect of Political Campaign

For the purpose of this study, the respondents are divided in two separate groups, based on party affiliation. These groups are termed as BN supporters and PKR supporters (the opposition parties). BN supporters are pro-government and they would attend and listen to BN political campaign while PKR supporters would go to anti-government political campaign, hosted by PAS, DAP and KeAdilan. In their study, Lambe and McLeod (2005) tested the impact of the third-person effect in relations to message context and particular groups of people. In relation to the political campaign in Malaysia, the message contexts are related to the political party involved. For example, BN supporters would view and accept content from political campaign a positive context while the opposition parties' supporters would see their party political campaign as positive, too. Similarly, they see each others party message context as negative. However, both BN and PKR supporters would see others had been influenced by the other parties' campaigns as what had happened to them but to a varying degree.

Lambe and McLeod (2005) have classified the two differing groups of people into in-group and out-group. In this study, to the opposition supporters, other opposition supporters are the in-group while BN supporters are the out-group while to the BN supporters, BN supporters are the in-group while opposition supporters are the out-group. This in-group and out-group differentials will have impact on the supporters' perception of the effect. This is especially true when each group has contradictory perception on the campaign contents.

In addition, by taking the ideas from Stuart Hall (1980) on a list of decoding positions, a BN member would understand news contents differently from an opposition member, even though both were attending the same campaign. The BN member would adopt a dominant decoding, meaning that he would share the worldview underlying the presentation of the news, its interpretation, the debates, and the solutions proposed.

The opposition member attending the BN campaign as suspecting biased and suspicious would reject the values of the message presented. The neutral voters (non-supporters and non-supporters of other parties) would perhaps agreeing with some aspects and disagreeing with other aspects of the message delivered or disseminated. Therefore, from

the standpoint of a Malaysian voter, regardless of their political affiliation, this study would hypothesize that:

H2: BN members would perceive BN political campaign as having influenced on them, their family, BN supporters, non-BN supporters and non-supporters of other political parties.

Similarly, the members of the opposition party would perceive similar effect on them and their family as well as on others, who would either be supporters of PKR (PAS, DAP, KeAdilan) to have a similar effect on them. Therefore, the hypothesis formulated as:

H3: PKR members would perceive that PAS, DAP, and KeAdilan political campaigns would influence them, their family, supporters, non-PKR supporters, and non-supporters of BN party.

METHODOLOGY

A study was conducted in April after the 2008 Malaysian 12th elections on the question of political campaign effect on the respondents, their family, supporters, non-supporters, and non-supporters of other parties. A total of 1654 respondents were randomly selected after the March elections to seek their views on several matters concerning their behaviour during the elections. Among the questions asked were concerned with their demographic characteristic, about themselves and their family; the nation, mass media and general election; political campaign; information on election and party reception; factors influencing party success; and leadership. This study focuses on campaign election per se, whereby the respondents were asked the extent to which the respondents perceived themselves as being influenced by political campaign of BN and PKR (PAS, DAP and KeAdilan). The respondents were also asked to estimate the degree of political campaign effects on their family, supporters, non-supporters, non-supporters of other parties.

The study was conducted a few weeks after the general election, but the questions were framed within the context of the general election. The question asked the respondents whether they perceive the political campaigns (BN, PAS, DAP, and KeAdilan) have an effect on them, family, party supporters of BN, PAS, DAP, KeAdilan and non-supporters. The underlying context of the question was that the political campaign in Malaysia were strongly supported by BN personalities, and would, therefore, raise issues that were positive to BN or negative effect to the opposition parties. Studies of the 1986, 1990, 1995 and 1999 elections

(Idid, 2004) focus on the mainstream media but this study (2008) sees political campaign as having influence on various segment of the populace.

The question asked the respondents to estimate the extent of influence the political campaign had. They were asked to rate on a four-point Likert scale with 1=not influenced at all, 2=not influenced, 3=influenced, 4=influenced greatly. The influence is defined as the degree to which political campaign is perceived to have an influence on self, family, supporters, non-supporters, and non-supporters of other parties.

The assumption of the third-person effect was that the political campaign had no effect on the audience, but the audience would, on the other hand, make the assumption that the political campaign did have an effect on others exposed to the campaign. This study, therefore, asked the respondents to what extent the political campaign has effect on them, and what they think as the effect would be on others, namely, family, supporters, non-supporters, and non-supporters of other political parties.

The third party here is measured by a different concept. Here the respondent is the first person whereas the third party effects are their family, supporters, non-supporters, and non-supporters of other political parties. The general public is of the perception that the contents of the BN political campaign mainly influenced supporters of BN and not the others. PAS political campaign is thought to influence their supporters and other affiliated PKR supporters. Similarly, DAP and KeAdilan (PKR affiliated parties) political campaigns are thought to influence their supporters and other affiliated PKR supporters.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1a shows the demographic profile of the overall respondents. A total of 1654 respondents were obtained for this study. There is an almost equal proportion of male (51.9%) to female (48.1%). About two-fifths of the respondents (40.34%) aged between 21-35 years old, followed by 36-50 years old (39.5%), and 51 years old above (20.1%). In terms of race, almost two-thirds of respondents are Malay (61.5%); the rest are Chinese (29.1%) and Indian (9.4%). Pertaining to income per month, more than one-third of the respondents (35.3%) have income less than RM2000, 47.5% of the respondents having income between RM2001-4000. There is an equal proportion of BN (50.4%) supporters to PKR supporters (49.6%).

Table 1a: Demographic profile of respondents according to party affiliation

Demographic Characteristics	BN	PKR	Total
Gender:			
Male	415(49.8)	443(54.0)	858 (51.9)
Female	419(50.2)	377(46.0)	796 (48.1)
Total	834	820	1654 (100.0)
Age Group:			
21-35 years old	343(41.1)	325(39.6)	668(40.4)
36-50 years old	329(39.4)	325(39.6)	654(39.5)
>51 years old	162(19.4)	170(20.7)	332(20.1)
Total	834	820	1654(100.0)
Race:			
Malay	533(63.9)	484(59.0)	1017(61.5)
Chinese	220(26.4)	262(32.0)	482(29.1)
Indian	81(9.7)	74(9.0)	155(9.4)
Total	834	820	1654(100.0)
Income per month (RM):			
Less than RM2000	271(33.3)	313(38.2)	584(36.2)
RM2001-RM4000	437(53.7)	348(42.4)	785(48.7)
RM4001- above	106(13.0)	137(16.7)	243(15.1)
No response	20(2.4)	22(2.7)	42(2.5)
Total	834	820	1654(100.0)

BN Supporters

In summary, BN supporters are mainly female (Table 1a). They age between 21-35 years old and consist of mainly Malay and Indian. They belong to the middle income group with monthly income of between RM2001-RM4000. BN supporters reside mainly in Negeri Sembilan, Melaka, Pahang, Perak, and Sarawak (Table 1b).

PKR Supporters

PKR supporters, on other hand, are mainly old male, with age 51 and above years old (Table 1a). The Chinese make up the bulk of the PKR supporters. The Chinese belong to the low income group with monthly income of less than RM2000 and the high income group of income more than RM4001. PKR supporters are mainly found in Kedah, Pulau Pinang, Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, Terengganu, Kelantan, and Sabah (Table 1b). Perlis and Johor tend to have both BN and PKR supporters.

Table 1b: Party affiliation by state

State	Party Affiliation (%)		
	BN	PKR	Total
Kedah	38(4.6)	81(9.9)	119(7.2)
Pulau Pinang	34(4.1)	106(12.9)	140(8.5)
Perak	65(7.8)	55(6.7)	120(7.3)
Selangor	59(7.1)	68(8.3)	127(7.7)
Kuala Lumpur	58(7.0)	86(10.5)	144(8.7)
Negeri Sembilan	108(12.9)	48(5.9)	156(9.4)
Melaka	129(15.5)	28(3.4)	157(9.5)
Johor	51(6.1)	52(6.3)	103(6.2)
Pahang	65(7.8)	19(2.3)	84(5.1)
Terengganu	26(3.1)	64(7.8)	90(5.4)
Kelantan	56(6.7)	62(7.6)	118(7.1)
Sarawak	59(7.1)	55(6.7)	114(6.9)
Sabah	56(6.7)	66(8.0)	122(7.4)
Perlis	30(3.6)	30(3.7)	60(3.6)
Total	834(100.0)	820(100.0)	1654(100.0)

Degree of Perceived Influence of Political Party Campaign on Audience

On the whole, respondents think that all the political party campaigns are able to influence most of the supporters (Table 2). The most influential political campaign on supporters come from PAS campaign (75.6%), followed by BN Campaign (74.9%). DAP campaign (71.3%) is the least influential campaign perceived by the respondents.

Table 2: Perceived influence of party campaign on self and on the others

Issue	Influence* (%)				
	1	2	3	4	5
Overall:					
BN Campaign	64.1	66.1	74.9	55.1	53.5
PAS Campaign	60.9	59.6	75.6	57.4	55.0
DAP Campaign	57.3	56.5	71.3	55.4	52.3
KeAdilan Campaign	61.2	60.4	73.5	56.8	54.1

*1=Self, 2=Family, 3=Supporters, 4=Non-supporters, 5=Non-supporters of other parties

Comparison between Perceived Influence of BN and PKR Political Campaigns on Audience

Similarly, BN supporters think that all political party campaigns influenced their supporters. In addition, BN supporters openly claimed that BN campaign influenced them (73.9%) and their family (73.8%). However, PKR supporters think that all political party campaigns are able to influence their supporters with PAS campaign having the most influence on their supporters. PKR supporters indicated that BN campaign has little influence on them (54.1%) and on their family (58.2%). Regardless of the type of political party campaign, respondents

agreed that the political party campaigns have little influence on non-supporters and non-supporters of other parties. This implies that regardless of political affiliation, all political party campaigns are able to influence supporters the most. Since BN is the ruling party of Malaysia, BN supporters PKR proudly claimed that BN campaign influenced them and their family. The opposition supporters tend to hide the influence of their political party. This is in line with the negative effect of being against the majority and the dominant party.

Table 3: Perceived influence of PB and PKR party campaigns on self and on the others

Issue	Influence* (%)				
	1	2	3	4	5
BN Supporters:					
BN Campaign	73.9	73.8	78.1	56.7	54.5
PAS Campaign	53.8	52.3	72.8	54.3	51.2
DAP Campaign	52.8	51.9	70.5	52.9	48.9
KeAdilan Campaign	55.8	55.3	71.6	52.6	49.4
PKR Supporters:					
BN Campaign	54.1	58.2	71.6	53.2	52.5
PAS Campaign	68.2	66.9	78.4	60.5	58.9
DAP Campaign	62.1	61.3	72.3	57.9	55.9
KeAdilan Campaign	66.7	65.6	75.4	61.1	58.9

*1=Self, 2=Family, 3=Supporters, 4=Non-supporters, 5=Non-supporters of other parties

Hypothesis Testing

H1: Malaysian voters for the reigning party (BN) and for the opposition party (PKR) would perceive that the political campaigns have influence on them and on the others differently

Table 3 shows that BN party members perceived only BN campaign has the influence on the BN supporters, while PKR party members think that only PAS campaign is able to influence party supporters. Others than that, the mean for BN, PAS, DAP and KeAdilan campaigns are thought not to have influence on self, family, non-supporters, and non-supporters of other parties. The only positive perception, but not significant, is the KeAdilan political campaign on their supporters. The results are based on a test value of 3.0. This means the political campaigns have significantly no influence on the audience, regardless of party affiliation.

Table 3: One-sample t-test showing perceived effect of political campaign on self and on others

Effects of Political Campaign	Party Affiliat ion	N	Mean	S.D	t*	df	p
BN Campaign: Self Family Supporters Non-supporters Non-supporters of other parties	BN PKR	834	2.9566	0.70577	-1.772	828	0.077
		820	2.1648	0.83630	-28.475	812	0.000
	BN PKR	834	2.9505	0.74497	-1.913	827	0.056
		820	2.3292	0.81733	-23.372	810	0.000
	BN PKR	834	3.1258	0.79414	4.554	826	0.000
		820	2.8658	0.77869	-4.888	804	0.000
	BN PKR	834	2.2754	0.77227	-27.000	827	0.000
		820	2.1267	0.73562	-33.682	804	0.000
	BN PKR	834	2.1816	0.79906	-29.436	825	0.000
		820	2.1009	0.74475	-34.211	802	0.000
PAS Campaign Self Family Supporters Non-supporters Non-supporters of other parties	BN PKR	834	2.1539	0.78784	-30.845	824	0.000
		820	2.7275	0.90046	-8.618	810	0.000
	BN PKR	834	2.0932	0.80590	-32.338	825	0.000
		820	2.6774	0.86945	-10.554	808	0.000
	BN PKR	834	2.9135	0.91522	-2.707	820	0.007
		820	3.1375	0.76503	5.107	806	0.000
	BN PKR	834	2.1713	0.78369	-30.335	822	0.000
		820	2.4220	0.79951	-20.462	800	0.000
	BN PKR	834	2.0474	0.73469	-37.173	821	0.000
		820	2.3592	0.83314	-21.741	798	0.000
DAP Campaign Self Family Supporters Non-supporters Non-supporters of other parties	BN PKR	834	2.1131	0.80078	-31.752	821	0.000
		820	2.4821	0.93037	-15.585	783	0.000
	BN PKR	834	2.0779	0.81626	-32.390	821	0.000
		820	2.4526	0.90018	-16.984	779	0.000
	BN PKR	834	2.8181	0.97768	-5.325	818	0.000
		820	2.8903	0.88461	-3.452	774	0.000
	BN PKR	834	2.1172	0.79327	-31.848	818	0.000
		820	2.3174	0.78511	-24.158	771	0.000
	BN PKR	834	1.9546	0.74296	-40.169	814	0.000
		820	2.2349	0.80488	-26.531	778	0.000

KeAdilan Campaign	BN	834	2.2327	0.79693	-27.654	824	0.000
	PKR	820	2.6695	0.89266	-10.542	810	0.000
Family	BN	834	2.2112	0.80495	-28.131	823	0.000
	PKR	820	2.6238	0.87483	-12.225	807	0.000
Supporters	BN	834	2.8660	0.90746	-4.231	820	0.000
	PKR	820	3.0173	0.86065	0.572	807	0.567
Non-supporters	BN	834	2.1034	0.77743	-33.065	821	0.000
	PKR	820	2.4422	0.80156	-19.743	804	0.000
Non-supporters of other parties	BN	834	1.9742	0.78034	-37.483	812	0.000
	PKR	820	2.3545	0.88151	-20.764	803	0.000

***test value of 3.0**

H2: BN members would perceive BN political campaign as having influenced on them, their family, BN supporters, non-BN supporters and non-supporters of other political parties.

When compared using independent t-test for party affiliation, it is found that there are differences between the perceptions of BN members from those of PKR members (Table 4). BN members think that BN campaign affects them, their family, BN supporters, non-supporters, and non-supporters of other parties. This hypothesis supports the notion of the Third-Person Effect Theory especially when the party is the ruling party of the nation. Positive association is being assigned accordingly.

H3: PKR members would perceive that PAS, DAP, and KeAdilan political campaigns would influence them, their family, supporters, non-PKR supporters, and non-supporters of BN party.

PKR members, on the other hand, think that PAS, DAP and KeAdilan campaigns affect them, their family, supporters, non-PKR supporters, and non-supporters of other parties. DAP campaign is perceived by PKR members as not being able to affect DAP supporters per se. This could be due to the established belief about the party itself. The results also support the Third-Person Theory also although the PKR supporters very well know that they belong to the opposition party.

Table 4: Comparison between BN and PKR supporters on effect of political campaign of various parties

Effects of Political Campaign	Party Affiliation	N	Mean	S.D	t	df	p
BN Campaign: Self Family Supporters Non-supporters Non-supporters of other parties	BN	834	2.9566	0.70577	20.747	1640	0.000
	PKR	820	2.1648	0.83630			
	BN	834	2.9505	0.74497	16.089	1637	0.000
	PKR	820	2.3292	0.81733			
	BN	834	3.1258	0.79414	6.674	1630	0.000
	PKR	820	2.8658	0.77869			
	BN	834	2.2754	0.77227	3.981	1631	0.000
	PKR	820	2.1267	0.73562			
	BN	834	2.1816	0.79906	2.108	1627	0.035
	PKR	820	2.1009	0.74475			
PAS Campaign Self Family Supporters Non-supporters Non-supporters of other parties	BN	834	2.1539	0.78784	-13.718	1634	0.000
	PKR	820	2.7275	0.90046			
	BN	834	2.0932	0.80590	-14.094	1633	0.000
	PKR	820	2.6774	0.86945			
	BN	834	2.9135	0.91522	-5.354	1626	0.000
	PKR	820	3.1375	0.76503			
	BN	834	2.1713	0.78369	-6.380	1622	0.000
	PKR	820	2.4220	0.79951			
	BN	834	2.0474	0.73469	-7.996	1619	0.000
	PKR	820	2.3592	0.83314			
DAP Campaign Self Family Supporters Non-supporters Non-supporters of other parties	BN	834	2.1131	0.80079	-8.531	1604	0.000
	PKR	820	2.4821	0.93037			
	BN	834	2.0779	0.81626	-8.735	1600	0.000
	PKR	820	2.4526	0.90018			
	BN	834	2.8181	0.97768	-1.544	1592	0.123
	PKR	820	2.8903	0.88461			
	BN	834	2.1172	0.79327	-5.055	1589	0.000
	PKR	820	2.3174	0.78511			
	BN	834	1.9546	0.74296	-7.229	1592	0.000
	PKR	820	2.2349	0.80488			
KeAdilan Campaign Self Family Supporters Non-supporters Non-supporters of other parties	BN	834	2.2327	0.79693	-10.445	1634	0.000
	PKR	820	2.6695	0.89266			
	BN	834	2.2112	0.80495	-9.918	1630	0.000
	PKR	820	2.6238	0.87483			
	BN	834	2.8660	0.90746	-3.452	1627	0.001
	PKR	820	3.0173	0.86065			
	BN	834	2.1034	0.77743	-8.655	1625	0.000
	PKR	820	2.4422	0.80156			
	BN	834	1.9742	0.78034	-9.188	1615	0.000
	PKR	820	2.3545	0.88151			

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings in answering the objectives of the study and in testing the hypotheses postulated, conclusions are made accordingly. There are differences in the demographic characteristics of the BN supporters and the PKR supporters. BN supporters tend to reside in Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, Perak, and Sarawak. These states are presently being ruled by the reigning party. The BN supporters comprise of Malays and Indians, aged between 21-35 years old, and belong to the middle income group.

The PKR supporters, on the other hand, are residing mainly in Kedah, Kelantan, Kuala Lumpur, Pulau Pinang, Sabah, Selangor, and Terengganu. These are the states under the opposition party except for Sabah and Terengganu. The PKR supporters are mainly Chinese, aged 51 years old and above, and belong to the low income group.

On the whole, all the political campaigns have some degree of influence on their own party supporters. In addition, BN supporters think that BN political campaign has not only influence its supporters but also had influenced them and their family. The PKR supporters, on the other hand, think that PAS, DAP, and KeAdilan political campaigns have definitely influenced on their supporters but they remain reserved in saying that the political campaigns have also influenced them and their family. This is in support of the negative effects that might refrain and prevent people from exposing their stance to public especially when their belief is opposite to the majority belief.

Surprisingly, the ratings for the influence were rated as less influential for all political parties. However, BN supporters openly indicated that BN political campaign has influenced them, their family, supporters, non-supporters and non-supporters of other parties. Likewise, PKR supporters are in the opinion that PAS, DAP, and KeAdilan campaigns have been able to influence them, their family, non-supporters, and non-supporters of other parties, except for DAP supporters. Therefore, it can be confirmed that the Third-Person Effect Theory holds true for both ruling party and for the opposition party campaigns as perceived by their respective supporters. The openness of the supporters in light of revealing their opinion is highly appreciated. These perceptions, to a certain extent, reflect current political scenario of the Malaysian political landscape.

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