

**POLITICAL PARTY ACTIVISM OF THE MALAY
– MUSLIM POLITICAL PARTIES: UMNO AND
PAS GRASSROOTS PARTY ACTIVISTS IN
TERENGGANU**

WAN ROHILA GANTI BT WAN ABDUL GHAPAR

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TERENGGANU**

by

WAN ROHILA GANTI BT WAN ABDUL GHAPAR

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DAP	Democratic Action Party
H355 Rally	Himpunan Rang Undang –Undang 355
PAS	Parti Islam SeMalaysia
PDM	Pusat Daerah Mengundi
PMIP	Pan Malayan Islamic Party
UPU	Unit Peti Undi
UMNO	United Malay National Organization

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Appendix 1 Interview Guide

**AKTIVISME POLITIK DALAM PARTI POLITIK MELAYU – ISLAM:
AKTIVIS AKAR UMBI UMNO DAN PAS DI TERENGGANU**

ABSTRAK

Aktivis PAS dan UMNO di Terengganu diklasifikasikan sebagai sangat aktif, unik, dan berpolitik dalam kerangka ideologi parti. Secara perbandingan, PAS dan UMNO sangat beruntung kerana memiliki aktivis sebegini komited kerana parti – parti politik di seluruh dunia secara keseluruhannya menghadapi penurunan jumlah aktivis parti yang sangat drastik. Penglibatan aktivis parti dalam aktivisme kepartian di Terengganu telah membuka jalan kepada kajian ini. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk meneroka sejauh mana keaktifan mereka dalam politik kepartian, dan apakah insentif yang mereka terima hasil dari penglibatan mereka di dalam PAS dan UMNO. Kajian ini juga membandingkan insentif - insentif yang diterima oleh aktivis PAS dan aktivis UMNO. Secara rasionalnya, seseorang boleh menikmati pelbagai faedah dari polisi – polisi kerajaan tanpa perlu bersusah – payah terlibat dalam politik kepartian. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah kualitatif, melalui pendekatan temubual bersemuka secara mendalam dengan dua puluh informan. Informan dipilih melalui kaedah persampelan bertujuan. Data telah dianalisa mengikut tema melalui teknik analisis kandungan. Kajian ini mendapati kesemua informan terlibat dengan sembilan jenis aktiviti – aktiviti politik beraras tinggi, sekaligus melangkaui enam jenis aktiviti – aktiviti politik beraras tinggi yang dikenalpasti oleh kajian – kajian terdahulu. Penglibatan dengan komuniti dan program – program kebajikan merupakan aktiviti politik yang paling kerap dilakukan. Gabungan Teori Pilihan Rasional, *Civic Voluntarism Model*, Teori Insentif Clark – Wilson, dan Model Insentif Umum telah menjadi kerangka kepada analisa kajian ini untuk meneroka persoalan insentif yang menyebabkan para

informan memilih menjadi aktivis parti. Kajian ini menemui lima insentif utama yang dikejar oleh informan iaitu ideologi parti, kehendak altruistik, nilai hiburan, nikmat mengungkapkan sokongan, dan ganjaran material. Kesemua insentif ini, kecuali kehendak altruistik, adalah ganjaran yang hanya dinikmati secara peribadi oleh informan sendiri. Dapatan ini menyanggahi pendapat Teori Pilihan Rasional yang mengatakan para aktivis parti tidak mendapat apa – apa faedah daripada khidmat mereka kepada parti. Dari sudut akademik, kajian ini membuktikan persepsi bahawa aktivis UMNO menerima ganjaran material, dan aktivis PAS melihat perjuangan mereka akan diganjar Syurga adalah benar. Dari sudut teori, kajian ini menambah dua lagi elemen yang mendorong seseorang untuk menjadi aktivis parti iaitu agama dan ganjaran Syurga. Secara praktikal, parti – parti politik mestilah memastikan aktivis – aktivis mereka menerima insentif – insentif yang dinyatakan. Apabila insentif – insentif tersebut dinafikan, parti politik akan kehilangan aset yang besar dan perlu bersedia untuk menjadi parti yang lemah.

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ABSTRACT

While the general trends of political parties around the world, by contrast, show significant declines in grassroots party activism, the grassroots political party activists of PAS and UMNO in Terengganu are characterized as highly political and ideologically extreme, participating in high – intensity political activities. This research explores the intensity of their activism in UMNO and PAS, and the incentives that have influenced them to become politically active since it is often taken for granted that people will only invest in political activism in exchange for some sort of benefits. This study also compares the differences of incentives that prevail among UMNO and PAS grassroots party activists. Being qualitative in nature, this study adopts the technique of in-depth interview, involving twenty – six PAS and UMNO party activists as informants. The selection of the informants was performed using the purposive sampling method. The interview data were thematically analyzed through the content analysis method. This study finds that the informants were involved in nine high-intensity political party activities; going beyond the six high-intensity political activities suggested in the literature. They generally encompassed similar types of political activities, by community and welfare programs being perennial. Combining the Rational Choice theory, the Civic Voluntarism model, the Clark-Wilson Incentives theory and the General Incentives model into a framework to understand incentives that motivate informants' political party activism, this study discovers the

presence of five major incentives, namely ideology of the party, altruistic motives, entertainment values, expressive and material rewards. All incentives, except the altruistic motives, are private benefits enjoyed by only those involved in party activism. This defies the argument that political party activists are irrational, having sacrificed their time, money, energy and skills for collective benefits. This study academically substantiates the common perception that UMNO informants enjoy material rewards by virtue of their party activism, while PAS informants regard their party activism as a path to heaven. By way of conclusion, this study extends the literature on political party activism by incorporating religion and heavenly rewards as incentives to political party activism. Practically, political parties should provide incentives to maintain the activism of its members. De-incentivizing them would weaken political parties.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This study addresses one of the central concerns of political science; why some people actively participate in politics while others do not. The specific purposes of this study are to analyse and explore the incentives that motivate individuals to become political party activists and how can these incentives influence the intensity of political activism among the political party activists, with special reference to UMNO and PAS party activists in Terengganu, Malaysia. This chapter provides a general introduction of the study, which includes the discussion of the research background, statement of the problem, research questions and objectives, research methodology, and significance of study. A brief outline of the thesis ends this chapter.

1.2 Background of the Study

The ultimate goal of political parties in the democratic world is to gain political office through elections. The other goals of political parties may be broader than just for winning elections, but electoral success is always the central objective. In order to secure the votes and maintain people's support for the political parties in the elections, and make them understand and approve party policies and leadership, a strong team consisting of loyal, committed, and faithful party members is necessary to give the parties life, shape, and permanence (Blake, Carty, & Erickson, 1991; Downs, 1957; Layman, Carsey, Green, Herrera, & Cooperman, 2010; Rohrschneider, 2002). This group of party members, known as political party activists, aims to see the group's desired candidate or party gets support, remains relevant and acceptable,

wins the elections, and forms the government (Milliar, 2012; Clark, Khan, & McLaverty, 2002; Vergani, 2014).

Research shows that a substantial number of committed political party activists can help boost the political legitimacy of the party by showing that the party is rooted in the concerns of the people (Pedersen et al., 2004), serves as mini ambassadors to the community that builds local support for the party (Scarrow, 1994; Whiteley & Seyd, 2002), and contributes to the party financially through membership fees and donations (Fisher, 1999; Gallagher, Liston, Marsh, & Weeks, 2002). Political party activists are also election foot-soldiers (Ng, 2017) and ardent political marketers at the ground level, and an integrated part of an electoral strategy (Marshment & Pettitt, 2014). Scarrow (2015) concluded that party activists contribute in the sense of providing volunteer support, financial support, electoral support, and ambassadorial outreach; these activities are considered by Whiteley & Seyd (2002) as high-intensity political party activism.

Involving in a high - intensity political participation takes a lot of time, effort, energy, and financial contribution on the part of those who participate in it (Whiteley & Seyd, 2002). A high-intensity political activity goes beyond conventional political participation like voting and campaigning in elections. It includes taking part actively in vigorous actions in politics (McLean & McMillan, 2003), like coordinating various party programmes, attentively attending meetings and other party programmes, and making sure the party remains relevant. Party activists perform party works not only during elections but also in between elections, provide solid support to the party in both good times and bad, become the testament to the fact that a party has staunch support in the eyes of the community, and carry

the image of a party (Seyd & Whiteley, 2004). This made them unusual people because they voluntarily become active in a costly activity while majority of citizens choose to free - ride rather than getting involved with political and party affairs, as the benefits of political activity are already reaped without being political party activists.

Highly active participants are much more important to democratic politics than it is often recognized. Gallagher, Liston, Marsh, & Weeks (2002) hypothesized that the more active members a party has in a constituency, the more votes it will win there. Whiteley (2009a) affirmed that democracies without active citizens will be undermined, civil society will be greatly weakened, and party activities such as political meetings and demonstrations will be reduced in scope and volume. Nexon (1971) added that their absence may cause the candidates or party to lose elections. Unfortunately, due to heavy burdens and being de incentivized, political party activism attracts only a relatively small number of individuals (Whiteley, Seyd, Richardson, & Bissell, 1994).

Scholars have been bewildered by the motives behind their decisions to be active participants in political parties, despite all the burdens and efforts required. Apparently, rational self-interested individuals will not participate in any activity which produces the collective good (Aldrich, 1983b; Granik, 2005; Whiteley, 1995). Therefore, one of the biggest challenges political parties have to face is to attain a sufficient number of activists to carry out high cost party work that demands time and effort (Marshment & Pettitt, 2014). They have to be incentivized, suggested Whiteley & Seyd, (2002). The paradox of party activism explains that individuals need incentives if they are to join a political party, and to become active in that party.

These incentives help them to overcome the costs of participation, which are not large for inactive members, but which can become quite large for the activists. The absence of those incentives explains why only a minority of citizens and voters choose to be party activists (Whiteley, Seyd, & Billinghamurst, 2006).

1.2.1 Scope of the Study

The scope of this research is the political party activists of the United Malays National Organization (Pertubuhan Kebangsaan Melayu Bersatu: UMNO) and Parti Islam se-Malaysia (PAS) in Terengganu. As a predominantly Malay state, the political rivalry between UMNO and PAS in Terengganu revolves around the narratives of Islam and Malay supremacy, mediated by the needs for development. Both parties project themselves as a champion of Islam and Malay in order to appeal to the Malay-Muslim voters. Both parties have strong grassroots activists. They are very committed, loyal, faithfully strong in party ideology and are most ideologically extreme and radical¹. Their contributions to help parties win elections and stay relevant cannot be repudiated. Wan Abdul Rahman, (1986) disclosed that the lack in number of committed and organized party activists had caused PAS Terengganu to lose the 1985 general election miserably to UMNO, and he praised UMNO Terengganu's efficient activists coordination and strategies in ensuring electoral success. The President of PAS recalled the difficulties his party had faced during the

¹ Regular findings in the literature on party activists prove that party activists are more ideologically extreme in their issue preferences than the ordinary electorates. Being an ideological extremist and radical party activist does not mean one carries weapons and involves in extremist activities such as intimidation, violence, and terrorism. Conway and Feigert (1968) concluded that party activists are purposive or purist, driven by their ideological goals and are less likely to compromise on their policy positions for the sake of party victory or attaining material benefits. Moskalenko & McCauley (2008) classified activism as the readiness to participate in legal and non-violent political action, whereas the extremism is the readiness to participate in illegal or violent political action.

early years of PAS Terengganu when they entered elections without having strong grassroots campaign team and had to face strong and resourceful UMNO campaigners². On the other occasion, the success of UMNO Kelantan in defeating PAS in the 1978 election had demoralized PAS Terengganu campaigners, causing PAS Terengganu to lose all seats, including their strongholds in Sura, Marang, Batu Buruk, and Manir (Hamdan, 2015). On the other hand, the losing of UMNO Terengganu in the 1999 General Election did not demoralize its members, yet, they considered it as a wakeup call, and doubled their party works. As a result, UMNO recaptured the state in the 2004 General Election with bigger mandate. The above situations depicted that having highly committed party workers would determine the election outcomes.

1.3 Problem Statement

Political party activism is a voluntary activity that has no kind of monthly payment and no citizen is forced to engage in it. Even if they were remunerated, the material inducements offered were slim (Chong, 1991). Being an activist of a political party entails a hybrid role, where one is the party supporter, party funder, and party worker at the same time (Granik, 2005). The intensity, duration, and extremity of political party activists are purely a personal decision. Verba, Schlozman & Brady (1995) listed out three basic requirements one has to pose to be an activist: time to volunteer in a campaign and party work; the money to fund political activities; and the communication and soft skills to convey party messages and information. Missing one of the requirements de-characterizes party activists.

² Interview with the President of PAS, Haji Abdul Hadi Awang, at Masjid Rusila, Marang, Terengganu on 1 February 2017.

Attending a series of meetings, organizing campaigns, becoming a crew for party annual assemblies, joining demonstrations and election campaigns, and running for political office, both within the party organization and outside, can last for days, which makes this virtually impossible for those with heavy commitments to family or job (Gallagher, Liston, Marsh, & Weeks, 2010; Whiteley, 1995). Teske (1997) added that party activism also incurs social and psychological “costs” as well. Active forms of political participation tend to involve some costs, like meetings, that can be tedious and boring; speaking and presenting one’s views in a public setting is often stressful and discomfiting, whereas debating, arguing, and being in conflict are unpleasant. Eventually, it is challenging to maintain a high-intensity political activism due to heavy burdens and responsibilities placed on individual party activists. In addition, people are less willing to participate in the collective forms of political activity and prefer free riding. Granik, (2005) argued on the reasons anyone would want to participate in politics, if by free riding, they can get the collective good they seek without having to incur any of the costs of participation. It is assumed that there must be something that incentivises political activists to participate.

Consequently, many political parties faced a significant decline in membership and grassroots party activism (Biezen & Poguntke, 2014; Pemberton & Wickham-Jones, 2012; Schuur & Voerman, 2009; Biezen, Mair, & Poguntke, 2012; Whiteley, 2009a). The decline is more obvious among the larger political party, as there is less personal contact between party activists and party leadership, less repeated and sustained interaction between them, and fewer social sanctions for deviant behaviour among party activists (Weldon, 2006). Important findings from Mair & Biezen’s (2001) research into 20 European countries indicate that a long-term decline in membership and grassroots party activism has been occurring over

the last quarter of the century. The decline in members' levels of activism in the British Labour Party in year 1999 was 11 per cent, Conservative Party declined by 17 per cent, and Liberal Democrats declined by 26 per cent (Seyd & Whiteley, 2004; Whiteley, 2009b). Another intercontinental study using cross-sectional data was conducted on 36 democracies, where similar declines in membership and activism were recorded (Whiteley, 2011). It is a worrying phenomenon since activists and members are the central spines to the political parties; hence, the absence of voluntary dimension to party activity has directly weakened the performance of political parties and their organizational capacity, threatening the future of democracy (Biezen & Poguntke, 2014; Mjelde, 2015; Ponce & Scarrow, 2014; Seyd & Whiteley, 2004; Tan, 1997; Biezen, Mair, & Poguntke, 2012; Whiteley, 2011). Fortunately, parties appear to survive as the decreasing number of party members is compensated by higher activity levels among the remaining members and activists (Spier, 2013), and party strength is measured by its activists' capacity to undertake a fixed menu of local tasks (Low, 2014).

In the context of Terengganu, the arena of political contestation and politicization is extremely critical, that elevates the high-intensity political activism among party activists. The high – intensity political party activism of UMNO and PAS party activists is arguably very ideologically driven (Muhammad, 2013; Wan Abdul Rahman, 1986). Politics has become part of activists' lives, and party ideology has moulded their way of thinking and rationalization. Political party activism in Terengganu has remained different from other states, as political, social, economic, education, and cultural aspects are filtered through the lens of party ideology, which finally led to profound disunity between the activists and supporters of blue bloods (UMNO) and the green bloods (PAS). Anuwa, (1994) depicted that Terengganu and

Kelantan party activists are the most politicized in Asia. His judgment was based on the political openness of Terengganu and Kelantan voters in changing the government in 1959 and 1990. His experiences in both states concluded that people, regardless of their socio-economic background, like to talk about politics – in coffee shops, offices, mosques, and festivities. The 24-hour politics is proven when politics is associated with their everyday lives. For instance, a person would be named after his/her party affiliation, such as orang PAS (PAS person) and Orang UMNO (UMNO person). There are UMNO mosques and PAS mosques, UMNO *ustaz* and PAS *ustaz* (religious preachers), and UMNO and/or PAS eateries. It is agreed that both UMNO and PAS in Terengganu are obviously supported by staunch and unswerving party activists that have helped UMNO to retain state legislative power and PAS to regain Terengganu (Junaidi & Mazlan, 2016)⁵.

Terengganu has always been chosen to host party mega gatherings. Impactful party mega gatherings like *Himpunan Harapan Semua* (HARAP), *Himpunan Kebangkitan Rakyat* (HKR), *Himpunan Fastaqim 2.0*, and *PAS Ganti UMNO* (PGU) by PAS, and *Selamat Tinggal PAS*, *Himpunan Deklarasi UMNO*, *Himpunan 50,000 Rakyat*, and *Himpunan Ikatan Hati Warga Felda Kebangsaan* (IKTIRAF) that gathered thousands of party supporters from all over the country have signified party central office's recognition towards its high – intensity political climate. The political enthusiasm of Terengganu party activists is not shaken despite fractions in Pakatan

⁵ President of PAS specially gave a round of applause to PAS workers at the grassroots level during the 2008 elections for their untiring efforts of ensuring the enormous success of Pakatan Rakyat. Read President's Keynote Speech at 54th PAS *Muktamar* (General Assembly) at Ucapan Dasar Presiden (2008, August 15). Retrieved from

http://muktamar54.pas.org.my/muktamar/ucapan_dasar/Keynotes_President's_Speech-English.pdf

Rakyat⁷, and leadership and internal crises involving UMNO Terengganu⁸. Their loyalty was tested when a few UMNO leaders⁹ in Terengganu left the party due to party's internal conflict, and a group of PAS party stalwarts¹⁰ left the party and formed a new political party when PAS was fractioned into two camps. This is in line with May's,(1972) argument that party activists are party loyalists that chose to stay with the party. Their decisions to heavily engage in political party activism through UMNO or PAS lines, rather than free riding the activism of others, have perplexed this research to explore the motives and incentives that have influenced them to join PAS and UMNO and become very active in them, as people will only invest in political participation in exchange for some sort of benefits.

In addition, even though there is a huge difference in terms of the numbers of registered members between UMNO and PAS in Terengganu, its political trends and outcomes are the most difficult to gauge compared to other Malay-belt states like Kelantan and Perlis (Shaharuddin & Mujibu, 2013, p.40). Equally important, the development of political culture and political party activism in Terengganu has not received much scholarly attention. A handful of available works on Terengganu

⁷ Ustaz Satiful Bahri Mamat congratulated the participants of H355 Rally from Terengganu. PAS Terengganu sent approximately 30,000 participants to the Rally at Padang Merbok, Kuala Lumpur on 18 February 2017. Indirectly, this Rally proved that PAS still received solid support after they had decided to leave Pakatan Rakyat. Full statement can be retrieved at Satiful Bahri Mamat. (2017, Feb, 19). H355: Rakaman Penghargaan dan Tahniah. In *Harakahdaily.net*. Retrieved from <http://www.harakahdaily.net.my/index.php/berita-utama/44337-h355-rakaman-penghargaan-dan-tahniah>.

⁸ The Chief Minister of Terengganu, Ahmad Razif Abd Rahman receives full support from all 4,401 UMNO Terengganu leaders of the division, branch, Wanita, Youth and Puteri. He said UMNO Terengganu should stand together and stay united to sweep all 32-state legislative assembly and eight parliamentary seats in the coming election. See UMNO Terengganu isytihar 2016-2017 sebagai 'tahun perang'. (2016, April,2). In *BH Online*. Retrieved from <http://www.bharian.com.my/node/139891>.

⁹ Former Chief Minister, Ahmad Said, Former Assemblymen Ghazali Taib, and Roslee Daud.

¹⁰ Former Deputy President, Mohammad Sabu, former Vice President Salahuddin Ayub, and former Youth Chief Mahfuz Omar.

politics unleashed a flurry of analyses of who voted how, why, and with what significance for the polity (Abdullah, Roslan, & Amirul, 2009; Pasuni, 2014; Amer Saifudi, Mohammad Redzuan, & Zulkanain, 2010; Azmah, 2013; Che Hamdan, 2013; Liow, 2011a; Mohamad, 2013; Mohammad Redzuan & Amer Saifude, 2013; Moten, 2006a, 2006b; Wan Abdul Rahman, 1986). Yet, little is known about political party activism in Terengganu, especially at grassroots level and the motivating factors of becoming political party activists.

In terms of study area, Weiss, (2014) believes that the electoral dynamics in Malaysia have changed. Therefore, solely relying on aggregate quantitative data, primarily from polling results, and tracing the dynamism of political behaviours in a single constituency, state, or political party, and generalizing them into national patterns, are inappropriate. Haute (2011) and Weiss (2014) stressed that enough studies have been conducted on the act of joining and participating in politics, yet very little comparative works between two or more political parties, urban vs. rural voting patterns, young vs. old political behaviours, and politics at the grassroots level, have been conducted so far. Therefore, this study fulfils the literature gap on politics at the grassroots level by exploring and comparing individual motivations to political party activism between party activists of two main political parties in the state; UMNO and PAS.

1.4 Research Questions and Research Objectives

This study attempts to explore the incentives that motivate individuals to become involved in high – intensity political activities, with specific reference to two Malay political parties in Terengganu, UMNO and PAS. The main research question branches into three sub-questions as follows:

1. “What are the forms of high – intensity political party activities performed by political party activists of PAS and UMNO in Terengganu?” This is addressed by exploring the forms of political party activities these activists involved in. The high – intensity political activities underlined by (Blake et al., 1991; Klein, 2006; Marsh, 1990; Spier, 2015; and Whiteley and Syed (2002) would be used as yardstick to determine their activism.
2. “What are the incentives that encourage political party activism of UMNO and PAS activists in Terengganu?” This research is steered by motivating factors to activism drawn by Whiteley & Seyd's, (2002) seven general incentives, Brady, Verba & Schlozman's, (1995) three major participation factors, Clark's – Wilson's (1962) incentives, and the Rational Choice theory that motivate and influence individuals to become party activists, involve in high – intensity political party activities and maintain their activism. One activist might be motivated by a single incentive and/or factor or otherwise. This research also opts to explore other incentives and factors that are not examined by the four theories. This research also compares the differences of incentives that prevail among UMNO and PAS activists in Terengganu. Both UMNO and PAS are Malay political parties, supported by Malay party activists. Even though they share similar demographic profiles, the incentives that motivated them to become party activists might differ.

Figure 1 simplifies the research questions and objectives of this study.

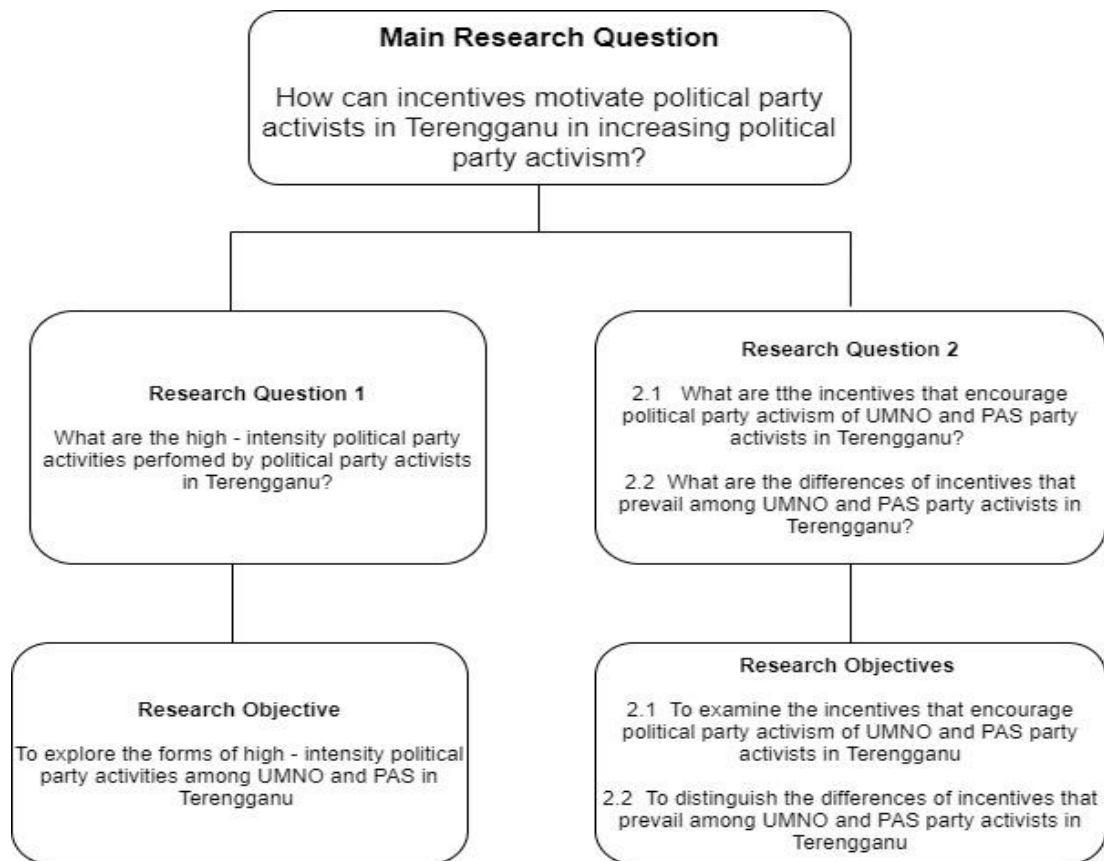


Figure 1 Research Questions and Research Objectives of the Study

1.5 Definitions of Key Concepts

This sub-section defines and explains the key concepts and determinants used by this research.

1.5.1 Political Party

UMNO and PAS are the political parties used as the unit of analysis to explore political party activism at the grassroots levels in Terengganu. The United Malay National Organization (UMNO) is a predominant Malay component party under a coalition called the National Front or Barisan Nasional (BN). It was established in 1946, along with the campaign to reject the proposal of British's Malayan Union that was regarded as a threat to Malay positions in the country. BN has ruled the country since independence in 1957 and has produced six Prime

Ministers so far. UMNO's domination in the coalition gives it an advantage in terms of the selection of the Prime Minister, Ministers, and Chief Ministers. The party tightens its domination by maximizing resources and spatial advantages by internalizing electoral risk and establishing centralized control of resources and a politico-bureaucratic machine. UMNO is always perceived as the party that fought for the independence of the country. It bills itself as the protector of the Malays' interests. UMNO is traditionally viewed as the champion of the Malay race more than as a custodian of Islam (Abdullah, 2018; Azeem, 2011; Washida, 2018).

Malaysian Islamic Party or Parti Islam se-Malaysia (PAS) is UMNO's traditional rival party. Originally, it was the religious bureau under UMNO that had been responsible to oversee matters related to Islam. However, UMNO's negligence in striving for the establishment of an Islamic state due to its secular constitution had led this bureau to establish a new and independent political party called the Persatuan Islam se-Malaya (Pan-Malayan Islamic Organization). Contemporarily, the core objective of PAS is the establishment of an Islamic governing structure in Malaysia by elevating what the party perceives to be the purely symbolic status of Islam in the Malaysian constitution to a more substantive and operational plan. PAS domination is felt in Malay-belt states and rural constituencies such as Terengganu, Kelantan, Kedah, parts of Perak, Pahang, and Perlis. Since 1990, the party has been ruling the state of Kelantan. PAS has emerged as a genuine contender for the mantle of 'party of choice' for Malaysia's Malay-Muslim majority (Abdullah, 2018; Liow, 2011b; Funston, 1976).

1.5.2 High – Intensity Political Activities

Whiteley and Syed (2002) clarified the high-intensity political activism by dividing it into four political activities while Blake et al., (1991) concluded three high – intensity party works. Marsh, (1990) grouped 11 variables of high – intensity political activities into three main components while Klein, (2006) and Spier, (2015) supplemented Whiteley & Seyd's, (2002) high-intensity political activities by adding another two components of high – intensity political activities¹¹. Combining all high – intensity political activities discussed by the literatures, this research considered there are eight general party activities that could be categorized as high – intensity political activities. They are:

1. Contacting party leaders and becoming community representatives
2. Campaigning during elections and in between elections
3. Holding posting inside and outside political party
4. Selecting party leaders
5. Attending party meetings
6. Participating in legal and illegal demonstrations, rallies, boycott
7. Organizing and joining party activities
8. Funding party works

¹¹ See 2.1 for detailed elaborations on various forms of high – intensity political activities by different scholars.

1.5.3 Grassroots Political Party Activists

This research uses the term political party activist and party activist simultaneously. Conceptually, an individual is called a political party activist based on his/her involvement in high-intensity political activities that are not performed by ordinary party members and party supporters. The high – intensity party activities encompass most of the important types of party work engaged by party activists in between elections namely (i) canvassing voters during campaigns, (ii) standing for election outside party, (iii) standing for internal party office (iv) attending party meetings, and (v) delivering party leaflets (Whiteley, Seyd & Billinghamurst, 2006, p.90). Following May's (1972) party hierarchy, political party activists addressed in this research fall into the category of sub-leaders that include divisional and branch party officeholders, constituency activists, and grassroots members. Specifically, it refers to UMNO and PAS activists at divisions (UMNO's *Bahagian*; or PAS' *Kawasan*), State Constituencies (DUN), and branches (*Cawangan*) levels.

1.5.4 Incentives

Whiteley & Seyd, (2002) used the term Incentive to explain the push factor behind an individual's decision to be involved in political party activism. Rationally, individuals will never get involved in any activity that does not benefit them, especially when the costs go beyond the benefits. Therefore, they have to be incentivized, where the respective political party is expected to provide incentives to attract them into becoming activists. The incentives are either private, material, affective, moral concerns, or social norms incentives. Other scholars like Milliar, (2012); Clark & Wilson, (1961); Costantini & King, (1984); Costantini & Valenty, (1996); and Newmen, Shaffer, & Breaux, (2004) used other synonymous terms like

motives, motivational factors, motivations, rewards, benefits, influence, and reasons. This research mostly uses the term incentives, but sometimes uses other terms simultaneously.

1.6 Research Methodology

Studies of party activism in literatures are generally dominated by large-scale sample surveys, statistical analysis, and formal modelling of the correlation of variables (Pierre, 1986; Ponce & Scarrow, 2014; Roets, Cornelis, & Van Hiel, 2014; Schlozman et al., 1999; van Haute, Amjahad, Borriello, Close, & Sandri, 2012; Whiteley & Seyd, 1996). It is understandable that the quantitative approach has always been regarded and perceived as more scientific, precise, and analytical by its admirers. The hallmark of the quantitative approach is to control events through a process of prediction based on explanation, by employing inferential statistical methods. The researcher is expected to function as an unbiased, unobtrusive observer, reporting on only what happens or what can be measured (McNabb, 2010). Evidently, the dominance of the quantitative approach in this field of research is showcased by the formation of www.projectmapp.eu, a comprehensive website formed by a group of party membership and activist experts. It has helped many scholars to obtain complete panel data on party membership and activism of 32 countries including Australia, and nations in the European Union and Latin America.

Despite the dominance of positivistic philosophical stance and due respect given to numeric measurements and statistical analysis in the course of political party activism, Berg, (2001); Flick, (2009); Mahoney & Goerts, (2006) and Vecchione et al., (2015) queried that if humans' complex and intricate behaviours, thoughts, motivations, and emotions are studied in a symbolically deduced and statistically

aggregated fashion, there is a danger that conclusions may fail to fit reality, although they are arithmetically precise. In the context of political party activism, Pierre, (1986) and Teske, (1997b) argued that the quantitative approach typically remains confined on the surface of the party in question, and it cannot provide a full understanding of the behaviour of the activists. Blais & Galais, (2016) claimed that there is a tendency among the respondents to give untruthful responses to appear good and civic-minded. Subsequently, this act leads to wrong research findings and jeopardizes the discussions of the study.

Therefore, scholars from the interpretivism approach argued that a central purpose of any research is to identify the causes of specific outcomes for each and every case that falls within the scope of the theory under investigation (Mahoney & Goerts, 2006) since different people experience and understand the same objective reality in very different ways. It seeks to understand a given research problem or topics from the perspectives of the particular local population it involves (Creswell, 2014). Consequently, a core goal of qualitative research is to explain the outcomes in individual cases through empathetic understanding. It explains the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things (Berg, 2001), and analyses data inductively from particulars to general themes (Creswell, 2014). McNabb, (2010) shed light that the hallmark of qualitative research is to describe a set of nonstatistical inquiry techniques and processes used to gather qualitative data on social phenomena. The qualitative data are some collections of words, conversations, field notes, symbols, pictures, or other nonnumeric records, materials, or artefacts that are collected by a researcher and have relevance to the social group under study. The uses for these data are beyond simple description of

events and phenomena, rather, they are interpreted to create understanding on subjective interpretation and for critical analysis.

The central stand of any research is striving to be as objective and neutral as possible in the collection, interpretation, and presentation of qualitative data. Epistemologically, the interpretivism approach emphasizes on the importance of understanding people's perspectives in the context of their conditions and circumstances. Therefore, the researcher must obtain thick descriptions and as much detailed information as possible about people's motivations, behaviour, experiences, emotions, and perspectives. Researchers' influence during interviews must be minimized, as informants have the tendency to camouflage to suit the researcher's interests. Moreover, reflexivity is particularly important, as there is a tendency for a researcher to be biased and self-interpret. Therefore, a researcher must avoid obvious, conscious, or systematic bias and be as neutral as possible in the collection, interpretation, and presentation of data (Ormston, Spencer, Bannard, & Snape, 2013).

1.6.1 Political Party Activism Research Approach

This study adopts a qualitative research strategy that is appropriate when a complex detailed understanding of an issue is required, and when the quantitative measures and statistical analyses do not answer the research questions. In addition, the nature of research methods in political science is commonly on detailed text-based answers that are often historical or include personal reflection from participants in political institutions, events, issues, or process. This is often characterized as the use of thick description and analysis, rather than broad numerical generalizations (Vromen, 2010). Eventually, most of the recent researches on reasons and motivations behind one's activism and voluntarism adopted qualitative approach.

Milliar's, (2014) study on party foot-soldiers in Ghana, Shahidian's, (2001) study on Iranian underground political activists in exile, Ng's, (2015) study on Hong Kong young political activists, Goodwin's, (2010) study on extreme right party activists in Britain, and Munson's, (2008) study on pro-life activists are among the examples of researches that adopted qualitative approach.

In terms of research approach, case study has been selected as it is deemed suitable in investigating contemporary events when relevant behaviours cannot be manipulated (Yin, 2009). Baxter & Jack, (2008) and Yin, (2009) added that a case study should be considered when the focus of the study is to answer “how” and “why” questions. Moreover, case studies enjoy a natural advantage in research of an exploratory nature. As for this study, it attempts to explore why individuals decide to become political party activists and how incentives influence the intensity of their participation. A case study was chosen because of its suitability to answer the research questions in this study, as it is an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of similar units of a spatially bounded phenomenon (Gerring, 2004). A unit could be a nation-state, revolution, political party, election, or person — observed at a single point in time or over some delimited period of time (Gerring, 2004; Yin, 2009). The single unit of this study refers to UMNO and PAS party activists in Terengganu, and a larger class of similar units may refer to general Malay-Muslim UMNO or PAS party activists in Malaysia.

1.6.2 Research Techniques for Data Collection

The validity and reliability of the research findings are two crucial factors which any qualitative researcher should be concerned with. This is because qualitative analysis is a creative process that depends on the insights and conceptual

capabilities of the analysts. It may lead to bias reporting, and the integrity of qualitative researcher is questionable as researcher's overview is highly dependent on his/her interests, biases, and backgrounds. The credible and defensible result and its trustworthiness can be tested when the results are generalizable to wider groups and circumstances (Bengtsson, 2016; Golafshani, 2003; Khairul Baharein, 2008). In addition, trustworthiness is a criterion against which the qualitative study procedures and findings can be accessed to support the argument that qualitative study findings are "worth paying attention to" (Rettke, Pretto, Spichiger, Frei, & Apirig, 2018). It could be achieved through the triangulation technique. By combining multiple observers, theories, methods, and data sources, qualitative researchers can make substantial strides in overcoming the scepticism that greets singular methods, lone analysts, and single-perspective theories or models (Patton, 1999).

Therefore, this study deploys a triangulation technique by combining various data sources, such as in-depth face-to-face interview, combination of theories, and participant observations as strategies of inquiries.

1.6.2(a) In-depth Face to Face Interview

Interview is conducted as researcher can learn and interpret much from what activists themselves tell about their backgrounds, their understanding upon the patterning of their political and personal lives that is significant to untangle the causes and effects of political affiliation, paths to party activism, the processes that lead them to become politically active, incentives and motivations for becoming and staying involved in that political party, and the process by which they become activists, rather than on any different individual attribute they might have (Munson, 2008; Ng, 2015).

Initially, an interview guide was prepared to ensure all interviews cover the same range of topics and all significant points were asked. Interview guide is a written list of questions that need to be covered in a particular order. The interview guide was prepared based on the research questions of the study, with heavy references to the interview guides and survey questions of a number of researches on social and political activism, including Cammett, (2011, p.94-95); Gallagher et al., (2002, p. 102-105); Munson, (2008, p. 200-201); Ribeiro, (2014, p.8-16); Whiteley & Seyd, (2002, p. 59-92); and Weber, (2016, p.8). A pilot interview was conducted with a close friend who is an activist in UMNO Dungun to find any loophole in the interview guide and to familiarize the researcher with the interview. The interview guide was divided into four sections. The first section addressed the personal background of the participants such as demographics, upbringing, schooling, and working experiences. Then, the informants were asked how and why they became involved in party activism and joined their respective political parties. Questions like “How did you become a political party activist?” and “What motivated you to become a political party activist?” were asked. The third section touched on the informants’ activities as party members, their daily activities as party activists, their roles when election is near, and their roles in the party which required much memorization. Lastly, they were asked to comment on political issues like the implementation of *hudud*, unity government between UMNO and PAS, the position of the Malays and of Malay supremacy, rampant corruption, rights of minorities, and leadership of the Prime Minister, Najib Tun Abdul Razak, and PAS President, Abdul Hadi Awang. The second and fourth parts of the interviews were to indirectly trace what motivated and incentivized informants to become party activists. Table 1 shows the interview guide used during the face-to-face interviews.

Table 1 The Interview Guide

Section	Topics Asked
Background of Informants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental political background • Demography • Upbringing • Educational background • Career • Financial background
Factors becoming party activists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial involvement to politics • Mobilization process • What drives them to become active with political party • Feelings and experiences attending party programmes • Items they received as party activists
Party activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positions in the party • Party programmes informant has been involved in • Welfare programmes involved by informants • Activities when election is near • Activism in other organizations • Informants' contributions to party in terms of money, time, and energy
Informants views on policies and development in Malaysian politics, and Terengganu politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informants views on unity between UMNO and PAS • The leadership of Mohd. Najib Tun Razak and Haji Abdul Hadi Awang • Hudud and Islamic state • Custodianship of the Malays • Current issues like GST, rise of price, LPT 3 toll charge, uneven development in Terengganu, oil royalty, 1-MDB

The interviews were conducted in January 2017 to January 2018. The interviews were in fact not really confined to the questions in the interview guide. As the interview progressed, more subject matters were explored, allowing the researcher to undertake new areas of inquiry that were not originally included in the interview guide. These are basically the strengths of qualitative approaches to interviewing because the researcher can ask more complex questions and ask follow-up questions; thus, further information can be obtained. During the interview process, the informants were able to ask for clarifications on terms and words used by researcher, and the researcher was able to observe informants' non-verbal communication, such as their behaviour, attitudes, and expressions.

1.6.2(b) Sampling

As the description between party activists, party members and party supporters is always misunderstood, a set of questions is replicated from the established literature like (Gallagher et al., 2002, p.102-103; Seyd & Whiteley, 1992, p.88–97; Spier, 2015, p.2; Whiteley, Seyd & Richardson, 1992, p.101-105; Whiteley & Seyd, 1996, p.215–34; Whiteley et al., 1996, p.79-94; Whiteley & Seyd, 1998, p.113–37) to identify and characterize the eligibility of party activists. All informants should be party activists, and they are identified as party activists, not as ordinary party members. The selection of informants is based on the scale of activism that was asked before the interview proceeded. There are no specific answers to every question asked since it depends on subjective self – assessment of one's own level of activity (Spier, 2015). This research regards an individual as an eligible political party activist when he/she gives positive answers to all questions asked. Passing the eligibility test is essential in a way that many seemed to be party activists since they perform some party works like making donations, attending party programs, and openly showing their supports to particular political party, yet playing no further parts in the activities of the political party to which they 'belong' (Richardson, 1995, p.135). Seyd & Whiteley (1992) argued that while it seems that party members performed some party works, they are actually performing low key of political activities on any scale of activism. They added that most party activists are more accurately described as party *inactivists*. Moreover, this research applies a purposive sampling technique, where informants should possess specific quality and criteria that meet the purposes of the research.

Of 55 party members found, thirty of them fit the eligibility test. Another 25 were eliminated as they gave negative answers to the questions / some of the

questions. Table 2 shows the additive scale of activism asked to determine the eligibility of informants.

Table 2 Questions asked before the interview to determine the eligibility of activists

1.	How active do you consider yourself to be in UMNO or PAS?
2.	During the last twelve months, how often have you personally attended party local branch meetings?
3.	Approximately how much money do you give to the party every year, excluding membership fees? ¹²
4.	Did you take part in the party general assembly or party elections?
5.	Do you, at present, hold any organizational branch or constituency positions?
6.	Did you take an active part in any election campaign?
7.	How much time do you devote to party activities in an average month?

In order to generate rich information for in-depth understanding of political party activists in Terengganu, this study relies on purposive sampling, a common technique in qualitative research. The purposive sampling technique, also called judgment sampling, is the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses. It is a non-random technique that does not need underlying theories or a set number of participants. Simply put, the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge and/or experience. This involves identification and selection of individuals or groups of individuals that are proficient and well-informed on a phenomenon of interest. In addition to knowledge and experience, the researcher also notes the importance of participants' availability and willingness to participate, and the ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016, p.2).

¹² This question is not applicable to UMNO party activists as donating to the party has not been a culture in UMNO. As a ruling party, the party is financially strong; hence, it does not require its members to contribute money. Conversely, the party pays for its members' activism.