Factors Influencing Political Belief of Flood Victims in Malaysia

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Abstract

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This study attempted to explore the factors that determining the political beliefs among the flood victims in Malaysia. In disaster situation such as flood, political institutions play a significant role in supplying aid for the victims. However, even with the same relief that had been provided by the government, there are different appraisals such as criticizes and compliments regarding the way of the political institution handling aid are heard among the victims. These different perspectives represent the different ideological thought and belief system of the victims on 'how the political institution should be performed'. Hence, regarding with the issue, it seems important to understand the prior factors that developing the political belief of the flood victims, before it comes to form a belief system in the community. In order to do so, survey towards 759 respondents among the flood victims had been executed in order to understand the factors that influenced the political beliefs. The resulted from exploratory factor analysis shown that political knowledge was the dominance factor that determined political belief of flood victims. The implication of this findings was discussed.

Keywords: Political Belief; Belief Factors; Political Institution; Flood Victim; Flood Disaster.

1. Introduction

Every single person has their own level of political beliefs toward their political institution. People who believe in their political institution will process every information or services received from their government with the positive way of view, vice versa for the people who are disbelievers are tended to view all the information received with the negative view. These two point of views are the most common types of a belief system that often found in the community. As had been stated by Tetlock (1989), there are two types of a political belief system that can be considered as the most common of

belief system in the society which is the left and the right. The true believers of the right and left will be rigidity differ between each other and often extreme towards their own political positions. The two differences of ideological beliefs are due to the political knowledge of each individual and the interest of the individual for their tendency groups (Cohen, 2003). However, the influences of political knowledge and political interest toward the development of political belief seem to still vague and need to be further clarified.

Furthermore, the word politics often be called as the art of managing perception, thus in the disaster situation such as flood, the experienced of the flood victims with the hazard seem to be able to create perception toward the political institution. Interestingly, the perception that been created still depend on the knowledge of the victims regarding on how they evaluated the capacity of their government in handling the hazard (Arceneaux & Stein, 2006; Siegrist & Cvetkovich, 2000). However, somehow, the knowledge about the politics are filtered in order to make it related or to be pacified with their own belief toward their own political interest (Cohen, 2003; Gerber, Huber, & Washington, 2010). This means some people have a tendency to deny the facts or knowledge about politics because of loyalty toward their professed political affiliation. Thus, the belief in politics is influenced more by the political interest instead of knowledge. On the other hand, psychological experiences also can be regard as one of the notions that can change the belief of the individual, when people who were trauma or in the recessive situation tend to use their harsh experienced to believe or to change their belief toward their political groups (Brune et al., 2002; Noor Hadzlida & Mohd Fo'ad, 2013).

Thus, based on those several criteria, it shows that there are redundancies and overlapping aspects that determined the political beliefs and need for more clear clarification. The ambiguity of the construct on political belief makes the subject of political beliefs hard to be understood. Hence, by clarifying empirically on the factors that can be influencing the political belief of flood victims, a framework of political belief system can be developed and the government, political groups or relief agencies will have a guidance framework for organizing the political belief among the disaster victims by creating firm political environment in the disaster situation.

2. Understanding the Political Belief

To understand the political belief, first of all, the most important thing is to understand what is the real meaning of beliefs and the theories that explaining about the beliefs. By understanding on those several aspects of beliefs, it then will be merged into the contexts of politics in getting the answer on how an individual is being belief in the politics. For the time being, the most common meaning of belief is been defined as "the psychological state that individual have in their mind to think and reasoning that the proposition that their hold is true" (Khine, 2008; Schwitzgebel, 2006). When this definition of belief is realized in the context of politics, it can be understood that the political belief is what people have in their mind about their political position or their ideological stance about politics is true. By believing that they were holding the true ideological side, it will make they think that the people or group that hold the same political position are the true and trustworthy people while the people who against their ideological point of view are distrust. From the trust, it then will be followed by political action that response accordingly with their believed (Danzinger, 2007; Gambetta, 2000).

The process of people from being believed to the form of political action, it shows that belief was an important aspect which can determine the political situation in the society. Hence, managing the belief system in the society can be considered an essential aspect of creating the pleasant societies, while denying on this aspect can be a trigger to the social unrest or political disaster.

Therefore, in managing the beliefs, the crucial aspect that needs to be put into account, is to understand how exactly the belief works. In order to understand the work of belief, several theories of beliefs been discussed. In this contexts of this study, three types of belief theories that seem to relate to the field of the study were deliberated before come up will the analysis of the factors that influencing people to believe. The source credibility theory, belief perseverance theory, and belief bias theory were the three theories that be focused in this study.

2.1. The Source Credibility

The source credibility explained that people will believe and being persuade to believe if the information was received from the reliable, credible, expertise and trustworthy media, person or institutions. Thus, the competency of the delivering sources will make more people to believe the information that wants to deliver (Hovland, Janis, & Kelly, 1953). In the contexts of politics, the used of credible sources are need to be meet with the level of political knowledge of people in the societies. The society with high political knowledge will turn out to be a political cynicism if the source of information received is untrustworthy and not credible enough to be believed based on their political knowledge, vice versa, the society in the community will involve in politics, creating trust, and efficacy in political environment when the sources of information synchronized with the political knowledge of the people (Aarts & Semetko, 2003).

On the other hand, in the middle-income countries, people with different level of education and knowledge about politics will perform different trend in believing the sources of information in media. People who with high political knowledge will more cautious in believing everything and more discern about the information that received from the types of media while people with the least education tend to believe everything and least selected (Weitz-Shapiro & Winters, 2015). Thus, based on the theory, it indicated that political knowledge plays critical roles in making someone to belief on the political issues. Hence, in managing the political belief of flood victims in the disaster situation, the aspect of political knowledge of the flood victims need to be put into consideration in determining the sources of information that need to be applied.

2.2. Belief Perseverance

Belief perseverance somehow contradicts with the credible source. In belief perseverance, it explained that even people have a political knowledge, people still tend to deny the facts that come from the credible sources and persistent with their old belief (Ross, Lepper, & Hubbard, 1975). In the era of the mass sources of media and internet, people become easier to find their preferred content which similar with their ideological belief and the information that can support their own belief. For them, the information that has more similarity with their belief is more credible and trustworthy source

of information. Thus even with people who were educated or can be considered have knowledge about politics, will be able to deny the fact and tendency to persistent with their old belief (Prior, 2005).

This happened because the power of interest in influencing group such as political party had persuaded people to be still in their old belief (Cohen, 2003). Supported by the member who has the same ideological thought in the media make people persistent with their old belief and did not hesitate to deny the fact. When some political issue support on their belief, they can explain on the issue with some critical analysis, meanwhile if the fact is contradicted by their own belief, they will divert the issue and argue with the strong issue that favor on his side (Geddes, 1990; Ryan, 2011). According to Ross et al. (1975), there are two sides in managing this types of belief; if we want to change their belief, we must not make the individual to publicly described what their believed position and concentrate on persuading them with facts or evidence, but if we want to make them stick with their old believed, make them to publicly their belief. When someone already concludes and describe their own side of belief it embarrassed to take it back. When that happened they will start to deny the facts and hard to change their belief.

2.3. Belief Bias

Belief bias was related to the concept of belief perseverance. The people who believe will tend to hold their current belief and often being bias in their judgment. However, the differences in this types of belief, people who believe only accept the things that fit with their belief system without any deep consideration. They lack in political knowledge and analysis, which make them reject any logic argument if it was not fit with their belief system. The only way they will change their belief are when they experienced the things that contradict with their belief, not by facts or logic arguments (Henle, 1962; Luria, 1976).

In the context of disaster management, the experienced by the victims who support the government have a tendency to change their believed toward their government. This can be seen from the study of Gasper and Reeves (2011) that examined on the United States President election since 1970 to 2006. From their study, it shows that people will change their belief toward the president when they experienced the lack of effort to respond to the disaster situation. Even though they voted for the president, they not hesitated to change their belief when they faced with something that contradicts with their expectation. Thus in managing the people who with this type of belief, they cannot be convinced or persuade with the facts or logic argument, however, the way to making them change their belief are by taking action or make them experienced the thing that fits with their belief system (Luria, 1976).

3. Method

Since this is an exploratory analysis, qualitative and quantitative methods are been applied in this study. Prior to the measurement of the factors that influenced political belief of flood victims, an initially pilot study on the flood victims had been performed in order to understand the aspects that relate to their political beliefs. The interview has been conducted on 12 groups of flood victim in two different evacuation centers. The information received from the interview then been synthesized with

the relate literature in order to create an instrument for measuring the factors that influence political belief of flood victims. From the instrument of 5 points Likert scale that anchors of 'strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5)', survey been conducted toward 759 respondents of flood victims in Terengganu and Kelantan. This numbers of respondents seem appropriated for the exploratory study when the sample to variable ratio rules of thumb is over 10:1 (De Vellis & Dancer, 1991; Williams, Onsman, & Brown, 2012). In analyzing the data, exploratory factor analysis been performed. The method of principal component analysis with the orthogonal rotation (varimax) has been used in executing the data.

4. Findings

Based on the analysis, it indicated the data is appropriated for the factor analysis when the value from Kaiser-Meyer-Oklin Measure of the Sampling Adequacy (KMO) show the value of the data set was 0.89, and the Bartlett's test of sphericity show a significant result when ($p < .05$). Table 1 below indicates the result.

Table 1. Rotated Component Matrix for Political Belief Construct with Loadings above .40

No.	Items	Political Knowledge	Political Interest	Perceived During Floods	Perceived After Floods
1.	The government was the authority that responsible in managing flood disaster.	.735			
2.	Federal and state governments are responsible for managing the flood disaster collectively.	.731			
3.	The state government has the authority in giving an order to the departments that were under the federal government.	.733			
4.	Only government can deliver the aid effectively and efficiently.	.712			
5.	Only government has the ability to manage the flood disaster better than others.	.692			
6.	The provisions for the assistant in the flood disaster come from the tax revenue.	.599			
7.	Politics is the only channel that society can use to express their opinion toward the government.	.552			
8.	Keep abreast with the current issues about the floods that occurred in the country.	.605			
9.	National Security Council (NCS) was the leading disaster institution in the country	.499			
10.	There are three stages in managing the disaster which is from the level of districts, state and federal	.565			
11.	Information about politics was important in the time of disaster.		.675		
12.	Politics was important in the disaster.		.736		
13.	Often discussed regarding the issues of politics with friends.		.689		
14.	Interest in holding a political position in the political party after the flood.		.772		
15.	Involved in political activities indirectly during the flood.		.811		
16.	Will active in politics after the flood.		.828		
17.	Still support the same political party after the flood.		.479		
18.	Not interested to know anything about politics during the flood.			.649	
19.	Issues about politics in the media during the flood just a waste of time.			.770	
20.	Issues about politics in the media during the flood cause more problems.			.746	
21.	Only state government should be blame if the implementation of disaster management is unsatisfied				.668
22.	No longer involved in any political activities including voting to any political parties' aftermath of the flood.				.644
23.	Involvement in political activities before the flood just a waste of time.				.685
	Eigenvalue	6.75	3.11	1.95	1.27
	% of variance explained	29.35	13.53	8.49	5.59
	Cronbach alpha	.862	.868	.797	.653

Based on table 1, the result shows 4 factors solution which is based on the screen plot. The final result of the analysis indicates 23 items being distributed in the 4 factors extraction, that been dividing with 10 items in the first factor, 7 in the second factor and 3 items in the third and in the fourth factors respectively. Overall, of the 4 factors explained 56.96 percent of variance for the construct on the political belief of flood victims. These 4 factors then are themes related to the criteria of the items, theories as well as on the basis of literature.

Regarding on the result, most of the items that converge in the first factor seem to be related to the issue on the political institutions such as the aspect of responsibility, function and the roles of the government. Criteria for the items somehow relate to the criteria that been highlighted by (Delli Carpini & Ketter, 1993), who argue that people who know the facts and information about the politics, and understand the basic structure and function of government can be considered as the person who has a political knowledge. By having a political knowledge, the person tends to analyze the information that received with more deep thinking before come up to accepted any information that been delivered. Thus, by doing so, the credibility of information received are evaluated (Aarts & Semetko, 2003). These phenomena indicated the political knowledge was one of the factors that influenced the political belief of flood victims based on the information that they received during the disaster, and they tend to evaluate whether to believe or not with their political institution. From the result, political knowledge was the dominant factor that influenced political belief of flood victims with the biggest proportion of variance explained by the value of 29.35 percent. With the cut off .4, the political knowledge seems to have high factor loadings on the value above .499.

For the second factor, it has been themed as the political interest factor. The criteria of the items show the person are obsessed with the politics, often have a conversation and discussed the political issues as well as involved directly in the politics. According to (Denny & Doyle, 2005) political interests are the determinant factor that makes people involved and belief in politics. They interest in findings the issue that regard to politics, however, they have their own political position and tend to be loyalty in their interest position. These occurrences of political interest have been explained similarly with the belief perseverance theory. Thus, political interest can be considered as the second factor that influenced the political belief of the flood victims and based on the result, political interest explained 13.53 of variance proportion for the construct for the political belief of the flood victims.

The third and fourth factors have been themed as perceived during the flood and perceived after flood factors. These themes are based on the belief bias theory that explained people in this categories lacked on analysis and often denied the logic information, however, these people tend to perceive based on their own experience (Luria, 1976). Criteria of the items in these two factors seem to have related to the respective theory when the statement of the items are regarded to the people who are not interested in the politics and want to be isolated from politics after the flood. These phenomena show that this category of people tends to evaluate the political institution based on their experienced instead of information during and after the flood. Based on the result, perceived during the flood factor in more dominant factor in influencing the political belief instead of perceived after the flood with the proportion of variance explained value are 8.49 percent and 5.59 percent respectively.

Based on the result, the factors that influenced political belief of flood victim in Malaysia can be considered came from four major factors. The most dominant are the factor of political knowledge, follow by the political interest, perceived during the flood and perceived after the flood. Figure 1 below indicates the result.

5. Conclusion

From the analysis, it shows that people in Malaysia starting to have more awareness about the politics, especially during the disaster. When the dominant factor was from the political knowledge, it mean, people these days have more understanding about what are the functions and the responsibilities of the government in managing their welfare in the disaster situation. In another word, it means the belief system of flood victims are more focus on the aspect of knowledge and demand more for the credible information instead directly follows any information that supports their own political position. Therefore, in managing the people who are more dominant in a political knowledge belief system, the government need to have more trustworthy representatives, agencies or media which have the abilities to convinced and explained about the effort as well as the obstacle that face by the government. Furthermore, the information from the government also must be able to challenge directly the false information that spread from the other sources with logic and more strength argumentation. By doing so, people will analyze and compare the information received and will support the government if the information received are logic, trustworthy and true.

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