Preliminary Validation on the Factors Influence Political Belief of Flood Victims in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This study attempt to explore the factors determined the political belief among the flood victims in Malaysia. In disaster situation such as flood, political institution plays a significant role in supplying aid for the victims. However, even with the same relief assistant that had been provided by the government, different appraisals often heard from the victims. Criticizes and compliments regarding the ways of the political institution handling the aid are among the issues that have been highlighted. These different perspectives of views represent the different ideological thought and belief system that hold by the victims regarding on "how the political institution should be performed in disaster situation." Hence, relating to the issue, it seems important to understand the prior factors that developing the political belief among the flood victims, before the belief system is formed in the community. In order to understand the political belief, survey towards 759 respondents among the flood victims were executed. The result from the exploratory factor analysis shown that the political belief scale that has been developed in this study exhibited an adequate internal reliability, produces good convergent validity in measuring similar factors and performed good discriminant validity with the dissimilar factors. The findings show that the political knowledge is the dominance factor that influences the political belief of flood victims in Malaysia. The implication of this findings was discussed.

Keywords: Political Belief, Flood Victims, Flood Disaster, Government, Political Institution
JEL Classifications: H11, H84, P48, Q54

1. INTRODUCTION

Every single person has their own level of political belief toward their political institution. People who believe in their political institution will process every information or services received from the government with the positive way of view, vice versa for the people who are the disbeliever, they may tend to view all the information received with the negative stand of 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 belief system in the society, which are 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 further clarification.

Furthermore, the word politics often have 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 has 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 and Stein, 2006; Siegrist and 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 et al., 2010).

This means some people have a tendency to deny the facts or knowledge about politics because of allegiance on 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 in 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; Hadzlida and Fo'ad, 2013).

Thus, based on those several criteria, it shows that there are redundancies and overlapping aspects that determined the political beliefs and seem to be needed for more clear clarification. The ambiguity of the construct on political belief makes the subject of political belief hard to be understood. Hence, by clarifying empirically on the factors that can influence 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 to organizing or manage the political belief of the disaster victims by creating firm political environment in the disaster situation.

2. POLITICAL BELIEF

To understand the political belief, first of all, the most important thing is to understand what is the real meaning of belief and the theories that explaining the belief. By understanding on those several aspects of beliefs, it then can be merged or integrated into the contexts of politics for getting an answer about 'how people believe in politics. For the time being, the most common meaning of belief has 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 which often response accordingly with their believed (Danzinger, 2007; Gambetta, 2000). The process of people from being believed until they forming their political actions shows that belief was an important aspect that can determine the political situation in the society. Hence, managing the belief system in the society can be count as an essential aspect in creating the pleasant societies, while denying on this aspect can be triggered toward social unrest or political disaster.

Therefore, managing the belief system is the crucial aspect that needs to be put into an account. Before managing the belief, the essential aspect that needs to learn is to understand about how exactly the belief works. In order to understand the work of belief, several theories of belief are need to be discussed. In this study, three types of belief theories that related to the field of the study

were deliberated before we come up with the analysis on the factors that influence people to be believed. The source credibility theory, belief perseverance theory, and belief bias theory were the three theories that become the main focused in this study.

2.1. The Source Credibility

The source credibility explained that people will believe and being persuaded to believe if the information that received is reliable, credible, expertise, trustworthy whether from media, person or institutions. Thus, the competency of the delivering sources is the key to making more people to believe the information that wants to deliver (Hovland et al., 1953). In the context of politics, the used of credible sources are need to be meet with the level of political knowledge of people in the societies. Society with high political knowledge will turn out to be cynicism if the sources 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 be involved more in politics, creating trust, and efficacy in political environment when the sources of information synchronized with the political knowledge of the people (Aarts and 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 with high political knowledge will be more cautious in believing everything and more discern about the information they received, while people who least education tend to believe in everything they heard and least selected (Weitz-Shapiro and Winters, 2015). Thus, based on the theory, it indicated that political knowledge plays a critical role in determining people to be believed in politics. Hence, in managing the political belief of flood victims in the disaster situation, the aspect of political knowledge must be considered as one of the factors that able to determine the level of political belief among the flood victims.

2.2. Belief Perseverance

Belief perseverance is somehow contradicted with the credible source theory. In belief perseverance, it explained that even though some people can be considered have the political knowledge, but they still tend to deny the facts. Although the facts have come from a credible source, they still hold and persistent with their old belief (Ross et al., 1975). In this era with the mass sources of media and internet, people become easier to find their preferred contents that similar with their ideological belief and to find 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 the people who were educated or can be considered have high knowledge about politics, they still able to deny the facts and will persistent with their old belief (Prior, 2005).

This happened because the power of interest in their influencing group such as political party has persuaded them to remain in their old belief (Cohen, 2003). They become hard to change because they always have been supported by the member who has the same ideological thought. They can find their supporters in the social media and this phenomenon makes them persistent with their old

belief and did not hesitate to deny the fact even though it was true. When some political issues produce advantageous on their belief and for their political group, they can explain the issue with some critical analysis, meanwhile if the facts are contradicted with their own belief and produce disadvantageous for their political group, they will divert the issue and argue with the strong issue that favors on their side (Geddes, 1990; Ryan, 2011).

According to Ross et al. (1975), there are two sides in managing this type of belief. First, if we want to change their belief, we must not make the person to publicly describe what their belief position and concentrate on persuading them with facts and evidence, but if we want to make them stick with their old belief, we need to make them 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 old belief.

2.3. Belief Bias
Belief bias seems to be related to the concept of belief perseverance. The people who believe will tend to hold their belief and often being bias in their judgment. However, the difference in this type 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 often reject any logic argument if it was not fit with their belief system. The only way they will change their belief is 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, the victims who were the supporters of the ruling party will have more tendency to change their belief if they encounter with harsh experience and not being supported enough by their believed government. This phenomenon was explained by the study of Gasper and Reeves (2011) who have examined on the United States President election since 1970 to 2006. From their study, it is shown that people will change their belief toward the President when they experienced the lack of effort from the President in responding to the disaster situation. Even though they have voted for the president before, but they will not hesitate to change their belief for the other party if 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 arguments about the political issues, but, the way to changing their belief are by taking an appropriate action in the disaster situation or make them experienced the thing that fits with their expectation (Luria, 1976).
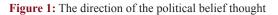
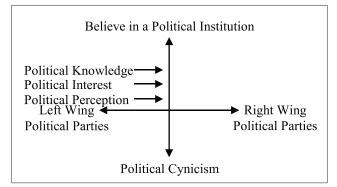## 3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE POLITICAL BELIEF SCALE (PBS)

Based on the analysis of literature and related theories about the political belief, we found that, in developing the construct of political belief, it approximately must be formed by three major factors that seem to be highly contributed in influencing people to

be believed in politics. The three factors are political knowledge, political interest, and political perception (Arnold et al., 2012; Camões, 2003; Delli Carpini and Ketter, 1993). However, before come out for the operational on the measurement of these three dimensions of political belief, there was an essential aspect that needs to be understood beforehand, which is about the context and the word of politic that had been applied in this study.

By the clear explanation about the context of the definition on politic that referred in this study, hopefully, it will able to reduce the confusing among the readers regarding the meaning of politic that has been applied. Commonly, there are two types of thought when it comes toward the word of politic. For some people, the word politic is mostly about the differences that people have in their mind toward believing for their preferable political parties. The word politic for them is more about competing between political parties to win an election, in order to gain the legitimate political power (Green et al., 2002). Thus, when it comes to the issue of political belief, they will only look at the aspect of "what is the political party that most people have been believing in." Either the right wings political parties or the left wings political parties.

On the other hand, the second type of thought, when defining the word of politics, it was defined in more broad meaning. Politics was not only about competing between political parties, but it was about how the power that had been achieved by the political parties was exercised. Therefore, political parties just a part of the broad meaning of politic. The word politic is explained as for how the current government (by the ruling political party) governing, retaining and control the political institution (Danzinger, 2007; Wasserman, 1982). Thus, politic is seen as a whole political institution. Hence, when it comes toward the issue of political belief, they will look whether the people still remained in believing toward their political institution or their started to be disbelieving. If people still believed in differences or able to change their preferable political parties who will run the government, it can be considered as a good exercise of democracy with the stable political institution, however, if people started to disbelieve toward their political institution it becomes even worsen matters. Disbelieving on the political institution was called as political cynicism (Agger et al, 1961; Schenck-Hamlin et al., 2000; Vreese, 2004; Wasserman, 1982).

People who were cynicism will see the person who jumps into politics as a corrupted person and sees the politic is just for gaining wholly a self-interest. They untrusted and disbelieving toward their own political institution. In order to understand the concept of political cynicism, it can be understood with the oppositional word of cynicism which is the political efficacy. The word political efficacy means people trust, put faith and being belief toward their own political institution, thus contrasting with the political efficacy, the political cynicism can be understood as people distrusted, have no faith and disbelieving toward their own political institution (Schenck-Hamlin et al., 2000; Vreese, 2004). Hence, by these two way of thought when defining about the context of politics, this study attempt to apply on the second thought of politic. Thus to reflect with what had been discussed above, Figure 1 below indicates the way of thought in understanding on political belief.

Figure 1: The direction of the political belief thought

Henceforth, with the second thought of politic that has been applied, it then will be related back to the context of politic that used in this study, which is about the political belief among the flood disaster victims. Thus, in attempting to understand on that matters, it needs to come back toward the dimensions that establishing the construct of political belief as shown in Figure 1, which are political knowledge, political interest, and political perception.

3.1. Political Knowledge

A person can be considered have a political knowledge when they know how their political institution is being performed. Knowledge regarding how the government was formed and what are the responsibilities of the government, were essentials aspect that needs to be understood (Delli Carpini and Ketter, 1993). They know that if they dislike the current government, they may change for others political parties and supporting them to form a new government. However, if a person who disbelieved with their political institution, he/she will think that whoever form a government it will be just the same, and politics was only for the political actors to gain their self-interest (Vreese, 2004).

Interestingly, a study by Arnold et al. (2012) found that the person who has high political knowledge have more trusted toward with their political institutions. This means political knowledge can be considered as a factor that can determine the political belief. Knowledge of politics will make more harmonious democracy environment (Memoli, 2011). The people who have political knowledge will not be bigoted with only one party and they also know the rights time to change for better performance of government. If the dominance factor was on political knowledge, the current government needs to treat their people based on knowledge and information, because the person who was knowledgeable in politics will be more selective and cautious with the information they received, as had been discussed in source credibility theory.

In terms of operational measurement on political knowledge in the context of the flood disaster, political knowledge can be measured based on the general knowledge about politics such as the structure, functions, roles, responsibilities and the facts regarding how government handling the flood (Delli Carpini and Ketter, 1993). Thus, the main questions in measuring the political knowledge will be measured on the issues of who is responsible for handling

and managing the flood, aid and provision for flood victims, the structure of government in handling the flood, and the institution of government that established to manage the disaster situation.

3.2. Political Interest

A person who has an interest in politics can be considered as a person who believed with their current political institution. This kind of people tends to involved in politics, supporting political parties, demanding to be a leader, want to contribute and want to become a representative for their people. In addition, even though they not involved directly in the politics, they tend to have passion in knowing information about the political issues (Denny and Doyle, 2005).

People who have a political interest may come from the people with good political knowledge or from people with least political knowledge. Their interest in politics depends on the political groups that they have interested in. Hence, when there was an issue that contradicts with their political position, they still stance with their old political groups or parties and not hesitate to deny the facts (Weitz-Shapiro and Winters, 2015). This phenomenon had been discussed in belief perseverance theory. Even though interest in politics may make someone capable of denying the facts, but the positive aspect regarding the political interest is these people were a group of people that remained believed with the current political institution. They tend to vote in the election and have positive assessment toward their political system (Camões, 2003). Thus, by that situation, it safe to argued that political interest can be considered as one of the factors that can determine the political belief.

In flood disaster, measuring political interest must be related to the issue of politics in the disaster situation. Aspect such as, having a passion to involving in politics during the flood, often discussed political issues on the flood situation or have the interest to hold a political position for making a better flood management, were the criteria that used to measure the political interest in the context of the flood disaster.

3.3. Political Perception

Political perception is about people judgment regarding their political situation. Even though the person has high knowledge about politics or have high interest in selected political party, when it came toward the situation that related to the political environment, the person should have their own perception of their political institution (Ryan, 2011; Siegrist and Cvetkovich, 2000). In the flood situation, the way of political groups or government in handling the flood will be able to create a political perception to the flood victims. Thus, the experienced received from the situation during the flood will make the people able to developed their own perception toward their political institution. Good management in handling the flood, equal distribution of aid for the victims or good effort in handling the flood will make the victims remain to belief with their political institution, vice versa if the ways in handling the flood are worse or seem to have least on effort to help the victims, they may change their political position or distrusted with their political institution and become cynicism in politics (Arceneaux and Stein, 2006; Vreese, 2004).

Thus, by that kind of situation, it can consider that political perception is one of the factors that can influence the political belief of flood victims. In term of how to measure the political perception, it was based on the experiences of flood victims during and after the flood. How they evaluated the politics and the issues of politics during the flood will be the key in determined their political belief. Prior to developing the instrument of PBS, a pilot study has been conducted on several groups of flood victims as explained in the method.

4. METHOD

Since this is an exploratory analysis, qualitative and quantitative methods have 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 has been performed in order to understand the aspect that related 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 interviews then was synthesized with the related literature in order to create an instrument for measuring the factors that influence the political belief of flood victims. This instrument is called as the PBS.

28 items have been developed for the proposed PBS. Each item employ of 5 points Likert scale that anchors of 'strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5)', survey were 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 (Costello and Osborne, 2005; Williams et al., 2012). In analyzing the data, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed with the method of Principal Component Analysis, and the orthogonal rotation (varimax) was used in executing the data.

5. FINDINGS

Reliability analysis for the whole 28 items of the proposed PBS produces a good internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha value is 0.803 (De Vellis and Dancer, 1991; Kline, 2000). Result of EFA indicated that the data were appropriated for performing the factor analysis when the value of Kaiser-Meyer-Oklin Measure of the Sampling Adequacy show the value of the data set was 0.89, and Bartlett's test of sphericity also show a significant result when ($P < 0.05$), which mean the null hypothesis was rejected and the correlation matrix is 'not an identity matrix' (Hair et al., 2006; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2008). In identified the factors that influenced political belief of flood victims, the result displays four factors solution which is determined based on the scree plot. Five items were eliminated sequentially due to the low factor loadings and the issue of cross-loadings.

The final result of the analysis indicated 23 items were distributed in the four factors extraction. Each factor was divided with 10 items in the first factor, seven in the second factor and three items in the third and in the fourth factors respectively. In addition, all the factors have a good convergence validity with the high factor loadings which are above in similar factor, at the same time show

a good discriminant validity for the items when there are no cross-loading between the dissimilar factors.

Overall, of the four factors explained 56.96% of variance for the construct of the political belief among the flood victims. These four factors then were themes with related to the criteria of the items, theories as well as on the basis of literature. Table 1 below indicates the Rotated Component Matrix for all 23 items, with eigenvalues, percent of variance explained and the values of Cronbach's alpha.

Regarding on the result, most of the items that converged in the first factor seem to be related to the aspect of political knowledge such as the general aspect of responsibilities, functions and the roles of the government. Criteria for the items somehow relate to the criteria that have been highlighted by Delli Carpini and 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 was delivered. Thus, by doing so, the credibility of information received are evaluated (Aarts and 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 disbelieve with their political institution. From the result, political knowledge was the dominant factor that influences political belief of flood victims with the biggest proportion of variance explained by the value of 29.35%. With the cut off above 0.4, the political knowledge seems to have high factor loadings on the value above 0.499.

Table 1: Rotated component matrix

Items	PK	PI	PDF	PAF
1	0.735			
2	0.731			
3	0.733			
4	0.712			
5	0.692			
6	0.599			
7	0.552			
8	0.605			
9	0.499			
10	0.565			
11		0.675		
12		0.736		
13		0.689		
14		0.772		
15		0.811		
16		0.828		
17		0.479		
18			0.649	
19			0.770	
20			0.746	
21				0.668
22				0.644
23				0.685
Eigenvalue	6.75	3.11	1.95	1.27
% of Variance	29.35	13.53	8.49	5.59
α	0.862	0.868	0.797	0.653

Note: Items (Refer Table 2). PK: Political knowledge, PI: Political interest, PDF: Perceived during flood, PAF: Perceived after flood

Table 2: Political belief scale (PBS)

Items	Political knowledge
1	The government is the authority that responsible in managing the flood disaster
2	Federal and state governments are responsible for managing the flood disaster collectively
3	The state government has the authority in giving an order to the departments under the federal government
4	Only government can deliver the aid effectively and efficiently
5	Only government has the ability to manage the flood disaster better than others
6	The provisions for the aid in the flood disaster have come from the tax revenue
7	Politics is the only channel that society can use to express their opinions toward the government
8	Keep abreast of the current issues about the floods that occurred in the country
9	National security council (NCS) was the leading disaster institution in the country
10	There are three stages in managing the disaster which is districts, state and federal level of governments
	Political interest
11	Information about politics was important in the time of disaster
12	Politics is important in the disaster
13	Often discuss regarding the issues of politics with friends
14	Interest in holding a political position in the political party after the flood
15	Involved in political activities indirectly during the flood
16	Will be more active in politics after the flood
17	Remain supporting the same political party after the flood
	Perceived during flood
18	Not interested to know anything about politics during the flood
19	Issues about politics in the media during the flood are just a waste of time
20	Issues about politics in the media during the flood will cause more problems
	Perceived after flood
21	Only State government should be blame if the implementation of disaster management is unsatisfied
22	No longer involved in any political activities including voting to any political parties' aftermath of the flood.
23	Involvement in political activities before the flood just a waste of time

For the second factor, it has 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 and Doyle (2005), political interests are the determinant factor that makes people involved and belief in politics. They interest in findings the issues 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 were 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 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 are lacks 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 was about 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 is a more dominant factor in influencing the political belief instead of perceived after the flood with the proportion of variance explained value are 8.49% and 5.59% respectively.

Based on the result, the factors that influenced political belief of flood victim in Malaysia can be considered came from the 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.

6. 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 means that, 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 focused on the aspect of knowledge and will demand more on the credible information instead of directly follows any information that supports their own political position.

Therefore, in managing the people who are more dominant in a political knowledge, 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 have faced 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 the logic and more strengthen argumentation. By doing so, people who were dominance on political knowledge will analyse and compare the information received and will support the government if the information that has received are logic, trustworthy and true.

7. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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