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Social Capital and Voting Behavior of Semarang People in Local Election 2010

Ari Pradhanawati

Abstract

The aims of the study are to find out the Social Capital and Voting Behavior of Semarang People in Local Election 2010. The research is conducted by using social fact paradigm through structural functionalism theory, social definition paradigm through symbolic interaction theory, and social behavior paradigm through rational choice theory. This descriptive-analytical research is carried out with 277 sample of respondents. The sampling technique used is multistage random sampling with 5% of margin of error and 90 % of reliability. The result of the research shows that the social capital can be utilized as the strategy to win the votes. However, the candidates perform more political image through campaign slogans rather than give out their vision, mission, and programs. Political culture of Semarang people is considered low. Respondents' behavior toward money politic shows that there is an obvious behavior of transactional politics. Besides, the high rate of swinging voters shows the high possibility of swinging votes. Therefore, it is suggested to have persuasive move to prevent transactional politics.

Key words: social capital, voters' behavior, election

Background of the Research

During Local Election 2010, political life in Semarang city covering its political culture, voting behavior as well as the declining rate of political aspiration has become the parameter of how the political condition of Semarang will be in the next five years; whether it will be better or in stagnant condition as it was ten years ago, in which the city did not undergo significant progress despite its status as the capital of Central Java Province along with its easy access toward politics, economic, education, etc.

In the midsts of the increased uncertainty and technology development, Semarang city needs a leader who can understand its people's psychology and who is prepared to develop the city as the capital of Central Java Province in accordance with its nature as a trading city.

Social capital possessed by Semarang society in the form of potential human resources and social network is strong enough to be used to build a good democratic culture which can generate a visionary and trusted leader whose strong legitimacy can be measured from the people's political participation.

However, from the many political activities in the form of several elections that have been held in Semarang in the previous times, we could see that the people's

enthusiasm was unstable. The condition is similar to what is illustrated by Samuel P. Huntington (1997:12-27) that democracy in Indonesia especially in Semarang city is like ocean wave with its tides as exemplified in Legislative Election 2004 (81, 70%), the 1st round of President Election 2004 (79,34%), the 2nd round of President Election 2004 (77,34%), Semarang Local Election 2005 (66,51%), Central Java Governor Election 2008 (62, 85%), Legislative Election 2009 (71, 41%), and President Election 2009 (78, 77%).

The low rate of political participation in Local Election 2005 shows that people's enthusiasm in electing their leader is low. People's doubt toward their future leader can also be the reason for this low rate, as they are not certain whether the future leader is able to change Semarang to be better or not.

The low rate of political participation occurs mostly in urban area, which provides an illustration that the low rate of political participation is related with upper-middle class of societies who are well informed, politically aware, and critically behaved toward the election itself (Joko J Priatmoko, 2008: 208). Of course there are some reasons why the people's participation in politics is low. Among which is the fact of the people's preference to vote the incumbent candidate, the one that they are familiar with, instead of voting the unfamiliar candidates. This shows that the figure of incumbent candidate is still favorable. This proves that local election with popular votes system still relies on the figure of incumbent candidate, although it does not guarantee that it will make the political participation high (Ari Pradhanawati, 2007: 65).

Voters' behavior is unique and difficult to guess both in their behavior and their decision to vote. When they are faced with the situation and fact during the democratic process held by political party, their behavior tend to be critical, ideal, and rational. It proves the fact that many candidates supported by political party are not considered to be suitable with the people's aspiration. Meanwhile, taking Miriam Budiardjo's thought (2008:405-410), it should be understood that political party functions to organize people's participation in politics, as well as to close the gap between social power and government. Therefore, the Local Election 2010 in Semarang city was expected to increase people's enthusiasm hence the local political life could be improved and inclined toward prosperity.

The purpose of this research is to find out the Social Capital and Voting Behavior of Semarang People in Local Election 2010.

Literature Review

According to Ritzer (1990, 13-83), there are three paradigms in sociology that can be used as the means of analysis. These three paradigms include: (1) social fact paradigm which states that the structure in the society influences individual, (2) social definition fact which states that individual thought in the society influences the structure in the society, and (3) social behavior paradigm which states that the stagnant behavior of the individual in the society is considered as a problem. This means that inter-individual interaction as well as their interaction with their environment will change their behavior.

To study social capital through social fact paradigm, Emile Durkheim states that social fact is considered to be different from idea. According to Durkheim, social fact entails the institution of social that is individual behavior determined by norms, values, and social structure. The object of the study is the external environment which excludes the individual, and is compelling and general in nature, and is a real fact. So, Durkheim's attention is focused on the society, which starts from the social phenomenon and is studied through structural theory.

Functional and structural theory is one of communication theories included in general theory (Littlejohn, 1999). The main characteristic of this theory is the belief that the structure beyond the observer is truly function. Structural functionalism or structural functional with functionalism approach emphasizes its study on mechanisms of organizing and securing the system; whereas the structuralism approach emphasizes its study on those related to organizing the language and social system. Thus, structural functionalism or 'system analysis' principally relies on several concepts, and the most important concepts are the concepts of function and structure.

Therefore, it can be said that structural functionalism theory emphasizes on the regularity and tends to ignore conflict and changes in the society. Its basic assumption is that every structure in the social system has function toward the others, otherwise; if it does not have function then the structure will be diminished by itself.

In studying voting behavior, social definition paradigm and social behavior paradigm will be used. Social definition paradigm was developed by Max Weber who analyzed social behavior. One of the theories in this paradigm is the theory of symbolic interactions saying that people's action and reaction are expected to be able to change the meaning and symbol and to form new meaning. They, then, should be able to consider, calculate and finally choose one of the options available based on their interpretation. The focus of Weber's attention is individual in a society, an individual who is able to do his/her will although it is against others. Weber's object of study is social action and interaction process that occurs between individuals (symbolic interaction).

In symbolic interaction, someone can inform the result of his/her symbol interpretation based on his/her own perspective to others. The others who receive the information will have other perspectives in interpreting the meaning of the information transmitted by the first person. In other words, the persons will be involved in the process of influencing social action. Hence, symbolic interaction theory is a theory which basically says that people act based on meanings obtained from their interactions with others, and that the meanings are continued to be developed and perfected during the interactions. Meanwhile, symbol is used to give meaning in doing the communication (West and Turner, 2007: 96). Therefore, it is clear that without non-verbal communication it will be very difficult and complicated to reach an agreement while communicating.

According to Ralph LaRossa and Donald C. Reitzes (in West and Turner, 2007:96) the basic assumptions of symbolic interaction theory are (1) the importance of meaning for people behavior, (2) the importance of concept of self, and (3) the relationship between the individual and the society. Furthermore, Ralph LaRossa and Donald C. Reitzes (1993) mention that symbolic interaction basically explains about the reference frame to understand how humans, together with others, create symbolic

world and how the world shapes humans' behavior. Symbolic interaction exists because the basic ideas in creating meanings are originated from human's mind about self, and his/her relation in the social interaction, and has purpose to mediate as well as to interpret the meaning existed in the society where the individual lives. The meanings come from the interaction, and there is no other way to create meaning but to build relationship with other individuals through interaction.

Another paradigm used in this research is social behavior paradigm that according to B.F. Skinner (Ritzer, 2003: 72) is focused on the relationship between an individual and her/his environment which consists of various social and non social objects which can bring about changes for the individual herself/himself. The main focus of this paradigm is on the rewards which stimulates the desired behaviors and punishments to prevent the undesired behaviors.

The theory used within this paradigm is rational choice theory. Rational choice theory is focused on human (actor) who has a goal and will make efforts to achieve the goal. The actor is viewed as having choices. Thus, the theory is used to achieve the goals in accordance with the actor's choice. The main claim in rational choice theory is that choice and belief are exogenous and static; and that the choices keep changing in accordance with the changing in the incentive or cost counted as margin. In other words, the point explained in rational theory model is that the choices, beliefs, resources, and actions are related to one another (Elster, 1987:68).

Friedman and Hechter's thought (Ritzer, 1990:220-223) on rational choice theory emphasizes on three advantages existed in rational choice theory, those are (1) it gives contribution on the measurement area, (2) it can be used as an approach to understand conflict within social institution (such as in laws, regulations, norms, and culture values), and (3) it gives possibilities to answer the choices of individual's goals. The possibility to be able to measure through rational choices can be done on the decision making processes within individual aggregation.

Research Method

The research was carried out on April 6th-8th 2010. The survey populations were voters or Indonesian citizens having voting rights in the local election – those who are above 17 years old or those who are under 17 but already married. The numbers of the samples were 277 respondents resided in 16 districts, 32 villages, and 64 *rukun tetangga* (the neighborhood administrative units under the village which consists of approximately 30-50 households). The chosen respondents were interviewed directly by the interviewers.

The research's type is descriptive-analytic, and the sampling technique used is multistage random sampling with 5% margin of error and 90% of reliability.

The respondents were 49,8% of male and 50,2 % of female with the age compositions as follows: under 19 years old is 10,1%; between 20-29 years old is 19,5%; between 30 -39 years old is 26%; between 40-49 years old is 20,2%; between 50 -59 years old is 17,7%; between 60 – 69 years old is 5,4%, and above 70 years old is 1,1%.

Finding and Discussion

The process of political democracy does not only rely on the political election carried out on the basis of direct, general, free, secret, honest, fair, and peaceful principles, but also on the principle that in the future time the process of political democracy must be able to generate a leader whose strong legitimacy can be measured by the high rate of political participation. In addition, the process of political democracy must be able to develop an intellectual political culture. In this process, candidates' vision, missions, and programs are considered as an important aspect hence the democracy process may have clear direction and goals. However, the research finding shows that the respondents mostly do not know the candidates' visions, missions, and programs. Only 12,7% of the respondents know Mahfudz Ali-Anis Nugroho Widharto's visions, mission, and programs; 6,2% of the respondents know Harini Krisniati-Ari Purbono's; 5,9% of the respondents know Bambang Raya Saputra-Kristanto's ; 6,6% of the respondents know Muhammad Farchan-Dasih Ardiyantari's; and 12,5% of the respondents know Soemarmo-Hendrar Prihadi's. The least information that the respondents know about the candidates' visions, missions, and programs is worsen by the fact that 62,7% of the respondents do not know which candidate have the best programs.

The consequence of the above facts is that the respondents know only the candidates slogans which tend to be bombastic and do not reflect the candidates' visions, missions, and programs. From symbolic interaction theory's point of view, the least information that the respondents know about the candidates' visions, missions, and programs illustrates that it takes them a long time to understand symbols and to adjust the meaning of the symbols. Since the symbols give limitation to humans' acts, and with their limited thoughts, humans may have a freedom to define their acts and goals that they want to achieve.

Political Image and Political Marketing

On the other hand, political image and political marketing as the phenomenon of the President Election 2004 becomes an insignificant tendency in Semarang Local Election 2010 because it is unable to stimulate the candidates to distribute their visions, missions, and programs. This may be due to the fact that the local election is identical with popular votes system, that is relying on candidates' figures. Thus, the candidates' figures become one of the interest factors. The intense political rivalry encourages the candidates to pay more attention on their performance. Good performance can be a determined factor to achieve success in election (Adman Nursal, 2004: 214). On Semarang Local Election 2010, the candidates perform more political image trough slogans such as "*Kami Bersamamu*" (We are With You), "*Keluarga Semarang Rindu Perubahan*" (Semarang Family is Longing for Changes), "*Layani Warga Benahi Kota*" (Serving the People, Improving the City). Then they do political marketing by using advertisements in newspapers, magazines, tabloids, televisions, and radios, billboards, stickers, banners, and also by doing public campaign. They do those strategies more intensively rather than to familiarize their visions, missions, and programs. It is on this symbolic reality that mass media play more roles in influencing

people's opinion. In fact, the construction of reality definition possessed by individuals is highly influenced by symbolic expression created by the media.

Social Capital

According to Francis Fukuyama (1999:151), social capital holds a very important role in functioning and strengthening modern society. Social capital is the *sine qua non* for the development of human source, economic, social, politics, and democratic stability. The important aspects in this social capital among those are social network characteristic, feedback patterns, and community obligations. The point is that social capital can be viewed as social network that has been constructed in society and has been established for a long time. The research found that 54,4% of the respondents joined PKK (women organization held and organized in every village), 33,8% of the respondents joined other organizations such as cooperation institutions, *Karang Taruna* (a kind of youth organization organized by the village), football organization, other youth organization, sermon group, or religion organization such as *Nahdatul Ulama* and *Muhammadiyah*. 62,3 % of the respondents are active in those religion organizations. Only 11,8% of the respondents are not active in any organization. Based on the point of view of structural functionalism, social organizations such as what have been mentioned above are well functioned, hence they can be utilized to become social capital and are expected to draw more votes.

Political Culture

Almond and Verba (Sudjiono Sastroatmojo, 1995: 36 and Rusadi Kantaprawira, 2006: 25) state that political culture is a particular orientation attitude of citizens toward political systems, and the attitude toward citizens' roles within the systems. In other words, political culture is viewed as how the particular orientation patterns of the citizens are distributed toward the political goals within the citizens/nation. The degree of political culture of Semarang people, who have an easy access toward political information, is considered low, especially in the area of people's interest toward politics. The condition is shown by the fact that 76,1% of the respondents say that they are not interested with political matters, and only 23,9% of the respondents who are interested with political matters.

The low degree of political culture of Semarang people toward political matters is more obvious shown through the intensity of people's discussion on political issues especially the discussion on Local Election 2010. The political matter is only discussed by the political elites or the people of the middle social class and above. 9,8% of the respondents state that they often discuss political issues, 46,7% of the respondents state that they occasionally discuss them, and the rest (43,5%) of the respondent state that they never discuss political matters. Although the degree of the political culture is low, Semarang people tend to keep up with the political progress (51,8%), and 48,2% of the respondents state that they do not keep up with the political

progress. The most media they use to monitor the political progress is television (88%) and the others (22%) monitor it through newspaper, radio, internet, etc.

Nevertheless, respondents' optimism in politics is shown through their thought of considering the importance of the local election; 78,6% of the respondents say that the election is important and 21,4% of the respondents say that the election is unimportant, although 54% of the respondents are not certain whether the local election will make Semarang better. This may be caused by the least information that people know about the candidates' visions, missions, and programs, as well as about their achievements. On the contrary, what are more informed to the people are candidates' negative notes which have nothing to do with the candidates' programs.

Although the people get least information about the candidates, their enthusiasm to participate by using their voting right is quite high (81,9%); 3,2% of the respondents say that they will not vote, and 14,8% of the respondents have not decided. The research proves that the voters denote the symbols' meaning in symbolic interaction through their political attitude by showing intentions to use their voting rights. The reasons for their intentions are understanding the candidates' visions, missions, and programs (59,1%), having relation with political party (2,9%), family suggestions (12,8%), candidate's campaign success team (7,7%), and other reasons (17,5%) such as they will choose based on their consciousness, because of their own choice, because they know the candidate personally, because of the candidate's personal character, because there is family relation, etc.

Voting Behavior

The voting behavior of Semarang people can be categorized as rational voters. According to Joko J Prihatmoko (2004: 49) rational voters are those who are getting smarter, critical, are dare to demand, and are not lied by the political elites; in using their voting right they are more cautious and rational. Firmanzah (2007: 222) expresses that rational voters are voters who make decision through a process, use a calculation to gain benefit based on the content of their considerations. Those are revealed by respondents' attitude toward money politic; if the candidate's success team gives the money or other thing to make the respondents use their voting rights, 46,9% of the respondents say that they will accept the gift but they will still vote based on their will, 11,2% of the respondents say that they will accept the gift and will vote accordingly, 5,8% of the respondents say that they will accept the gift and will not choose, 30,7% of the respondents say that they will refuse the gift and will vote according to their will, and 5,4% of the respondents say that they will refuse the gift and will not vote. Based on rational choice theory, voting behavior is not action but reaction. The action not to vote is the reaction toward the situations or other particular things in the election that is considered as unfavorable (Joko J Prihatmoko, 2008: 212-213). This is also in line to Weber's perspective (1969) in Siahaan (1983: 218 -220), who states that individual social action is influenced by *zweck rational*, that is social action which is based on rational individual considerations in giving respond to their external conditions (which include their respond toward others in their effort to achieve their maximum goals with the least sacrifices).

The research result in finding out who will be chosen by the respondents in the election becomes an interesting question as the numbers of the swing voters is quite high, that is 46,4% of the respondents. 23,9% of the voters will vote for Mahfudz Ali-Anis Nugroho Widharto; 5,1% of the respondents will vote for Harini Krisniati-Ari Purbono; 4,7% of the respondents will vote for Bambang Raya Saputra-Kristanto; 2,5% of the respondents will vote for Muhammad Farchan-Dasih Ardiyantari; and 17,4% of the respondents will vote for Soemarmo-Hendrar Prihadi.

The high number of swing voters (46,4%) is a high potential for the voters to change their decision or to be disloyal with their chosen candidate and swing votes. This kind of voters should be managed by the candidates for instance by utilizing the social capital that has been established. This will give positive effect as there are many respondents who are not yet close to the political party (82,8%) and only 17,2% of the respondents who feel close with the political party.

The Result of the Election

The result of the Semarang Local Election 2010 (Semarang KPU/Committee of Election, 2010) shows that Soemarmo-Hendrar Prihadi is in the first rank with 211.323 votes (34,28%); Mahfudz Ali-Anis Nugroho Widharto is in the second with 191.427 votes (31,05%); Bambang Raya Saputra-Kristanto is in the third with 103.482 votes (16,79%) Harini Krisniati-Ari Purbono is in the fourth with 58.394 votes (9,47%) ; and Muhammad Farchan-Dasih Ardiyantari is in the fifth with 51.854 votes (8,41%).

The winning of Soemarmo-Hendrar Prihadi who gets 211.323 votes or 34,28% (Semarang KPU, 2010) is mainly caused by political image factors conducted by other candidates through black campaigns that happens during the candidates' debate forums, or through other media. These black campaigns have caused the underdog effect or sympathy to grow in favor of Soemarmo-Hendrar Prihadi and the voters apparently neglect the moral issues, which in the end have created the Bradley effect that is the result of the survey on the election carried out by survey institution or candidate's success team is reversed, in fact it violates the bandwagon effect (people's tendency to do or to trust the majority votes resulted from survey data held prior to the election). When it is viewed from symbolic interaction theory, the research result illustrates that the voters no longer consider the candidates' backgrounds. It means that the voters are starting to make changes in electing their leader and no longer take into account the background symbol, but they consider more on the candidates' capability.

Soemarmo-Hendrar Prihadi's winning is almost certainly also caused by the swing voters, as the research result shows that 46,4% of the respondents are swing voters, hence it is difficult to predict their votes. Social capital also influences the winning of Soemarmo-Hendrar Prihadi. They may achieve their winning by utilizing social network or organizations such as sport, youth, sermon, etc. Based on structural functionalism, this shows that the winner's social networks function well.

People's participation to vote is only 60,06% which is even lower than that of 2005 Local Election (66,51%). In fact the number of the voters who do not use their voting rights (40%) is higher than the number of voters who votes for the winner –

Semarmo–Hendrar Prihadi (34,04%). This means that the winner legitimacy is also low, though they will be still inaugurated as the mayor as they win more than 25% of votes.

Conclusion and Suggestion

a. Conclusion

Social capital has been established in the society well and it has been function well for a long time, hence it can be utilized by the candidates as the strategy to win the votes. However, the candidates perform more political image trough campaign slogans rather than distribute their visions, missions, and programs. The degree of political culture of Semarang people, who have easy access to the information, is considered low, especially on their interest on politic issues. The discussions on politic issues are only done by politic elites and people of middle social class and above. On the other hand, respondents' attitude toward money politic shows an obvious behavior of transactional politic. If the candidates or candidates' success teams give them money or other gift they will accept it and will vote accordingly. Besides, the high number of swing voters is potential to make the voter to change their decision or to be disloyal with their chosen candidate and swing votes; and thus it is difficult to predict their votes.

b. Suggestion

To decrease the number of swinging voters, candidates should pay attention to the voters and manage them well, for instance by utilizing social capital that have been established. The candidates must be able to describe their vision, missions, and programs to be understood by the grass root level. If the voters' transactional level is still dominant, it is necessary to have persuasive move to convince the voters by distributing the visions, missions, and more feasible programs, hence political culture can be built healthily.

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