

Fear and Anxiety Elderly in Political Participation

Irwan Putra and Karim Suryadi

Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Dr. Setiabudi Street No. 229, Bandung, Indonesia

Irwanputra88@student.upi.edu, karimsuryadi@upi.edu

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Abstract: This study determined fear and anxiety felt by elderly in political participation which is based on aging. Social engagement change in elderly is marked by self-withdrawal and self-isolated from their environment. Self-withdrawal in elderly will effect on the decrease in political participation among elderly. The main problem of this study is to understand and reveal fear and anxiety in political participation. This study uses qualitative approach and make phenomenology as research method and use Huntington and Nelson' grand theory of political participation as analysis tool. Result show that reveals lack of meaningfulness, appreciation and support toward elderly in political participation so it invokes fear and anxiety among elderly to use their right as citizen. Even though elderly have political experience, political knowledge and active in observing and searching information related to politics, but they are still reluctant to do their duty as citizen.

1 INTRODUCTION

Aging is something normally occurs in living things not exception human. In Indonesia, older people are called elderly. Someone can be categorized as elderly if his/her age is over 60 years old. To categorize that someone is included in elderly category. Indonesia use age approach or age limit namely age over 60 years old, because it is based on life expectancy standard of Indonesian people.

The aging process will change one's physical appearance, health and psychology. In the old age period, the health change in physic is more visible as a result of aging process. That change can be divided into two stages, namely: psychical change and motor change. Psychical change comprise change in learning, thinking, creativity, memory, sense of humor whereas change in motor aspect occur in speed, strength, learning new skill, and numbness, Hurlock (2002). The physical and motor condition decline because elderly is included into group at a risk (McMurray, 2004; Gallo et al., 1988).

One risk factor of physical and motor condition decline is social engagement which influences action and activity of elderly in the environment they live. Havighurst and Albracht (1953) explained that the age increase make someone will gradually start to disengage his/her self from social life or known as disengagement theory. This disengagement theory explains that there is period in human life in which

human will self-withdraw, and it is inevitable and marked by interaction which is reduced between elderly and the other people surrounding him/her. Even though basically, withdrawal will give

opportunity to individual to prepare his / her self in facing disease, disability and death (Logan and Dawkins, 1987).

Elderly reluctance to participate in political activity is compounded by various kind of alienation done by family and society toward elderly. This is a result of social value shift in society toward individualist society order, so elderly is less respected and appreciated, and being marginalized in society life which is finally become ignored (Hardywinoto and Tony, 2005). The elderly tend to be forbidden to participate because stereotype that elderly are "less good" to participate in political activity, even many families who want that elderly only focus on heavenly life and worship than political affairs.

In certain stage, self-withdrawal among elderly in political activity or political problems also effects on fulfilling needs of elderly as citizen. It is seen that many citizens fail in political participation, it is because political literature which is rigid, namely "because they are incapable, they don't want it, or because there is none who asked for it" (Brady et al., 1995). Whereas, political participation will have done by elderly contributed to their self-development and community and will help community in struggling for their needs and interest, such as health and welfare.

Besides, elderly have potential which can be optimized and contributed to support nation and state development. It is important to encourage elderly to be active and participative in social life, share political knowledge and political experience they possess to young generation. It is crucial, because political experience and political participation of elderly is informal learning for public how to become good and smart citizen. Informal learning refers to knowledge and attitude acquired by individual from their experience, which exceed formal learning (Schugurensky and Myers, 2008).

1.1 Theoretical Study

1.1.1 Political Participation

Political participation in elderly is categorized unique, in which in this age they have been mature from knowledge and experience aspect as the age increased (Campbell, 1971), but in the same way, they are reluctant to participate in social political life and there is fear or anxiety which position elderly to *self-withdraw* from social life (Havighurst and Albracht, 1953). Whereas, political participation theory proposed by Huntington and Nelson (1994) said that activity by private citizens designed to influence government decision-making. Participation may be individual or collective, organized or spontaneous, sustained or sporadic, peaceful or violent, legal or illegal, effective or ineffective, demand citizen not exception elderly to take part in influencing government decision making.

Political participation activity can be explained in four activities, namely: voting, campaign activity, political community, and personal contact. Conceptually, each four dimensions of political participation usually involve various types of people who experience different problems. From this perspective, each explanation about political participation in elderly should combine the idea that sub group among ages can show different pattern from political participation (Verba et al., 1971).

Today, it is very hard for elderly to be active in politics in four political dimensions proposed by Verb et al. Only some of them who are still active in political participation and this is because they had been active before when they were adult. For the rest, elderly only active in voting dimension which is still stabile until old age (Glenn and Grimes, 1968; Jennings and Markus; Verba and Nie, 1972).

Participation activity in public life strongly contributes to personal development in the future. Today, public are still less sensitive to elderly

regarding political rights of elderly, and it is coupled with lack of elderly knowledge related to political problems. There are only few representatives from their social group in governmental institutions or nongovernment institutions and maybe political party so they are not focused intensely on elderly in giving socialization regarding their rights and political participation which can influence government decision making (Huntington and Nelson, 1994).

Finally, the sacred goal of political participation is to influence government decision making, in order that each decision made by government can facilitate or answer the problems in citizen life. Even a perception of citizen no exception elderly which is in accord with prediction that this population will be continued to increases each year and they will influence government policy.

1.1.2 Elderly

Aging population had become one trend of world issue as world population increased. It is interesting to study social political dynamic of elderly particularly regarding their involvement and participation in political arena. The characteristic of this social group is very unique, in which this elderly group are not homogenous group, and old age is experienced in different ways. In fact, finally everybody will experience aging, so it will invoke resistance to accept the aging as normal process (Potter and Perry 2005). There is elderly who view the aging process with submission, resistance, rebellion and despair, so it will accelerate the process of their own physical and mental condition decline.

Old age or often called as *senescence* is a period in which people can feel satisfied with their success. But for some people, this period is the beginning of regression (Neugarten, 1975; Chalhoun, 1995) which is marked by change or decline in body function (Papalia, 2001). It is added by political knowledge which is reduced when reaching elderly periods because cognitive ability decline which often occur in senescence (Lau and Redlawsk, 2006; Riggle and Johnson, 1996). It is which trigger anxiety and fear among elderly in political participation and their family indirectly exclude elderly from social life by constraining elderly access in outside.

In its development, the ideal result/consequence of aging process which is most generally used to explain what is called as "a successful aging" is expressed by R.J. Havighurst in 1961. The concept of successful aging is center of gerontology, and the article written by Havighurst is emerged as concept in first issue about Gerontologist publication (Bearon, et

al, 1996). The definition of the concept of success itself result in ambiguity because there is no definition which is accepted well or model of successful aging which had been tested so far. Havighurst (1961) defined it as “adding life to the years” and “obtain life satisfaction”. Palmore (1995) in encyclopaedia about aging processed, expressed that a comprehensive definition about successful aging is combined with survival and health.

There are social gerontology theories which become the basic for the concept of successful aging, among other is first aging theory proposed by Cumming and Henry with “disengagement theory” (1961) which stated that in the process/series of normal aging, someone is gradually withdraw or disengage from social role as natural response to ability and interest decline, and motivation decline to participate in social life. In this model, someone who is successful in his/her old age will fully resign from work or family life and will be satisfied by only sitting in the chair or self-isolated and doing passive activity to prepare the death (Bearon, 1999). The others argued that the older adult participate in political process as one way to maintain the control over their life.

2 METHODS OF STUDY

This study uses qualitative approach. Qualitative approach is type of study which generate finding without aided by statistic procedure in its analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 2007; Basrowi and Suwandi, 2008). The rational of using qualitative approach in this study is because the researcher wants to investigate the very complex mut

This study use phenomenology method. The phenomenology method is viewpoint which emphasize focus on human experiences or what is called as intentionality which connect consciousness process with the object which become center of attention to see and understand the meaning and unique context of individual experience related to certain phenomena (Almanshur and Ghony, 2012; Herdiansyah, 2012; Smith et al., 2009; Prastowo, 2011).

According to Polkinghorne, phenomenology is “a phenomenological study describes the meaning of the lived experience for several individuals about a concept or the phenomena. Phenomenologist explore the structure of consciousness in human experiences” (Creswell, 2010). Phenomenology is not interested to study causality aspects in an event, but trying to understand on how people do experience and its

meaning of experience for themselves (Watt and Berg 1995). Basically, phenomenology not try to seek right and wrong opinion, but to reduce human consciousness in understanding the phenomena appears in front of them. Therefore, the phenomenology theory which is understood by human is reflection of transcendence experience and understanding about the meaning (Kuswarno, 2009).

2.1 Participant and Site of Study

Subject and participant in this study are selected by using criteria which is commonly used in qualitative study. There are some criteria used to determine the subject of study, namely setting, actors, events and process (Miles and Huberman, 2007; Alwasilah, 2003). As for criteria of subject in this study will be suited with need and necessity in field. The subjects of study to obtain data in this study are as follow table 1:

Table 1: The subjects of study to obtain data in this study.

Numb	Informant	Total
1	Elderly	15 persons
2	Academia	2 persons
3	Political party	2 persons
4	LSM (community empowerment organization)	1 person

In total, the subjects who will be taken by researcher as participant in this study are 20 informants. This study is located in Aceh Province and will take four Regencies as site of study, namely Bener Meriah Regency, Central Aceh Regency, North Aceh Regency and Banda Aceh City. The reason to select these sites is because researchers think that these four Regency/City can represent entirely total distribution in Aceh province, tribal diversity and can represent elderly who live in rural area and urban area.

3 FINDING AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results and Finding

Individual or citizen’s political participation will be reduced when entering elderly period. Elderly feel anxiety and fear when they join to participate in political activity in society. It is because there are still many stereotype views prevailed in society and family that elderly need not to participate in political activities. Elderly think that they are not meaningful and respected. Whereas elderly still want to

participate in political activity such as general election and local government leader election because they still want to use their political right as citizen.

According to some elderly, so far family and society consider that elderly need not to participate in political activity, because their physical and motor ability has been declined drastically, even though not all elderly experience that, because some elderly is still healthy in physical and motor particularly elderly who live in rural area. Even for some elderly, participating in political activities make them feel respected and meaningful and contribute to progression and change of society, nation and state in the future.

3.2 Discussion

Hawari (2004) explained that today there is value shift in society. They think that the existence of elderly not give much benefit anymore, even they are often perceived negatively as the burden of family and society. Many elderlies who feel that they are not meaningful anymore and feel despair and worthless in living their life (Langle and Probs, 2000). Of course, this perception will influence life quality and meaningfulness of elderly in the middle of society, whereas elderly is a symbol of wisdom. Elderly population rank highest social class who should be respected by young people (Bernardine, 2007).

In certain stage, the appreciation and respect to elderly will influence on elderly health themselves, because the meaningfulness of life also related to body function in elderly. Because anyone who has reason (why) to live will be able to overcome life problem with every way (how) (Nietzsche in Frankl, 2003). Elderly should be encouraged and involved in all activities, including political participation in order that they are felt respected and have value in society environment. According to Thomae in Monks et al. (2004), the elderly image is interaction result between individual and his/her environment. Elderly who are marginalized and felt less respected will suffer physical and mental decline process more quickly and it will cause them despair and feel that their life has over even not meaningful anymore, so slowly they will self-withdraw from society life, even nation and state life.

Elderly reluctance to participate in political activity because constriction set by their family, because of their physical and motor condition decline make their family feel worry about them or afraid that something unexpected happen to elderly, then family or adult often constrain their activity and desire to be out of home, even participate in political activity. It

is one negative effect of eastern culture on elderly even though basically they want to maintain elderly self-esteem, but sometimes family members become over protective (Hodkinson, 1976). Even though elderly have political experience, political knowledge and active in observing and searching information related to leader candidate, but they are reluctant to do their duty as citizen.

Besides, stereotype view prevailed in society, that is stereotype views toward elderly which make elderly become apathies to political activity and cause them feeling alienated. The widespread distrust will invoke cynicism even alienation of citizen (Suryadi, 2009). Even young people often set forward the slogan 'it is the time the young people lead' as their desire to seize the control from older people, because they think that political style of older people had been out of date and not represent anymore the society in large, and older people generally need longer time to process information than young people (Lau and Redlawsk, 2006; Mata et al., 2007; Riggle and Johson, 1996; Hartley, 2006).

Even though in some occasion, elderly get social support in order that they return to normal life, by participating in political activity but there are many elderlies who are difficult to understand that social support. Not all elderly is able to understand the social support from other people, so even though they had received social support but they are still unsatisfied, which is showed by grumbling, feeling upset and disappointed. Even in certain stage, social support for elderly is given for political interest, to get sympathy and support from elderly. After that mission is achieved, this social support to elderly is ignored again. Even the lack of attention toward elderly make them merely to become political object, not political subject. Whereas citizens' discourse literacy about political problems and citizenship and prosperity become the anchor of civil society (Suryadi, 2009).

Many elderlies who possess good political knowledge to participate in political activity, because citizens who have good political knowledge tend to be interested and participated in government (Delli and Keeter, 1997). As a result of the problems above make elderly reluctant, fear and anxious to participate in political activity. Whereas, elderly participation in politic is very expected because it is become a benchmark that there is no gap in democracy system for all citizens.

Political participation of elderly also should be seen in the context of meaningfulness and the important meaning of old age in the context of human existence, in which elderly who suffer physical and

motor condition decline can be given opportunity to grow and develop and also dedicated to society, nation and state. Because it is in the stage of final development that human particularly elderly want to live more qualified and meaningful. Senescence is a period in which people can feel satisfaction with their success (Neugarten and Chalhoun in Raymont, 2011).

Become someone who is meaningful in life seems crucial when entering elderly period (Wong, 2007). Because elderly who have the meaning of life or considered as meaningful can see the larger goal, when they feel to take more control then they can direct their life and show strong desire to get the better life (Reker and Woo, 2011). The life meaningfulness of elderly relate to perception about life quality (Alavi, 2011). Elderly who feel that their life is meaningful will have higher life expectancy age and better life compared with elderly who feel that their life is not meaningful.

4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aging process will cause a person to experience changes, whether physical, health or psychological. Decreased physical and motor conditions will affect the actions and activities of the elderly in the neighborhood, one of them by starting apathetic elderly to political activities. This happens as a result of the change of social values of society that leads to the order of individualistic society, so that the elderly is less respected and respected even out of the community life. The reluctance of the elderly to participate in political activities is also due to the stereotype of 'less elegant' elders participating in political activities, even many families who direct and want the elderly only focus on the life of the hereafter and worship rather than political problems. The political participation of the elderly will contribute to the development of themselves and their communities and will help the community in fighting for their needs and interests, such as health and welfare. In addition, the elderly has the potential that can be optimized and donated to support the progress of the nation and state. Encouraging the elderly active and participative in social community also sharing their knowledge and political experience to the younger generation.

This assumption will certainly affect the quality of life and meaningfulness of the elderly in society, whereas the elderly are symbols of wisdom. The

elderly should be encouraged and engaged in all activities, including political participation in order for the elderly to feel valued and valued in the community. The elderly who are marginalized and feel less appreciated will accelerate in the process of physical and mental degeneration and will make them despair and feel that their life has ended does not even mean, so that they will slowly withdraw from the life of society, even the life of nation and state.

In addition, the stereotypical view that developed in the community, the stereotypical views on elderly that make elderly become apathetic to political activities and cause them alienated. Result is problems cause elderly reluctant, fear and anxiety to participate in political activities. Whereas the participation of the elderly in politics is expected because it becomes the benchmark not the distance of the democratic system with all citizens.

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If any, should be placed before the references section without numbering.

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