Political Culture of Students at University of Riau

Irwan Iskandar

International Relations Department, Faculty of Social and Political Science, University of Riau, Indonesia

irwan_iskandar@hotmail.com

Received: 9 October 2017, Accepted: 6 November 2017
Published online: 25 February 2018

Abstract: This study aimed to describe perceptions of students at University of Riau for necessity of politics and general elections system and to examine them into political orientations suitable to the students. The sample was taken by using the method of data collection called purposive sampling. The samples used are 27 students representing nine faculties. Data were processed by examining all interviews and then analysing by using political culture approach. The results showed that most students perceived that politics is important in human life. Hence, they keep eager to know the latest political information. Secondly, most students agreed with the implementation of direct election system. For that, they agreed that being abstain in general elections is rejected. Thirdly, political orientations occurred among students was affective orientation.

Keywords: Students perception; University of Riau; political orientation; political culture; general election.

1. Introduction

Politics and culture are two different themes within community. Culture for most people is considered as something good and noble, such as: “Takkan Hilang (budaya) Melayu di Bumi”; “Budaya Nan Elok samo-samo Dijago nan buruak samo-samo dipaelokkan”; “Gadoh aneuk meuapat jrat, gadoh hukom ngon adat pat tamita?”[18]. Yet, it is different with people’s perception about politics, such as; “politics is dirty”, “politics is cruel”, “bargaining to get and to run power” [10] and so on.

In scientific field, culture and politics indeed are different because they have separated aspects of epistemology, ontology, and axiology. However, political scientists have been successful to combine those and resulting a new approach and political culture theory. Therefore, it will be an interesting input if political culture occurred in a certain society in Indonesia can be analyzed based on political phenomenon surrounding the society, especially 2014 was known as “political year”. In that year, in Indonesia it was conducted two national general elections, namely legislative general election and presidential general election for office term from 2014 to 2019.

Indonesian people, including students at University of Riau as public university, were encouraged to use their vote right. Hence, it will be an interesting topic discussing students’ perception about politics and general election, since their position as agent of change in a country will determine political dynamics locally or nationally.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theory of Political Culture

Principally, political culture combines elements of culture and politics in a new study. Therefore, it can be assumed that political culture is a part of culture in a society which characterized with legitimation, power management, process of government policy making, activities of political parties and attitude of government officers also phenomenon occurred in community to ruled power [1].
2.2 Types of Political Orientations

Moreover, it is said that political culture is a pattern of individual behavior—as a part of society [5] -- and his orientation to political life. This pattern of behavior and orientation is influenced by involving and rejecting to political life; tends to assess object and political events; and received from knowledge about political life [6].

Political orientations occurred to an individual can be grouped into [2]:
1. Cognitive orientation (parochial); is someone’s knowledge and trust regarding to politics, role and obligation also input and output of politics. This cognitive orientation can be seen at someone political choice to a certain political party/legislative candidate and President-Vice President candidate in a general election based just on knowledge of symbol of political party/legislative candidate or face of President-Vice President. This knowledge is not based on understanding of vision and mission political/party or candidate of President-Vice President.
2. Affective Orientation (subject); is someone’s feeling to political system, its role, actors and their performance. Affective orientation can be seen at someone political choice regarding to political party/legislative candidate and President-Vice President candidate based not only on knowledge about symbol of political party/legislative candidate and President-Vice President candidate, but also on sufficient knowledge about vision and mission to political party/legislative candidate and President-Vice President candidate. However, decision to political party/legislative candidate and President-Vice President candidate is not followed by active participation in political activities of political party/legislative candidate and President-Vice President candidate, even in political socialization or being a member of political party/legislative candidate and President-Vice President candidate succession. They tend to be only a sympathizer or passive elector. In other words, those individuals have indeed better political consciousness but in another side they tend to not be involved directly in political activity.
3. Evaluative orientation (participant); is someone’s decision or opinion about political objects involving solidity of values standard and criteria with information and feelings. This orientation can be seen from someone’s activity in political activity by choosing political party/legislative candidate or President-Vice President candidate that is known and trusted based on symbol, program, vision and mission. The individual involve consciously, actively, and directly struggling the program, vision and mission of political party/legislative candidate or President-Vice President candidate.

3. Methodology

3.1 Type of Research

This research uses descriptive research method which is a research using nowadays facts from a population and include behavior assessment activity or opinion to individual, organization, condition or procedure. This research is a non-experiment research drawing and interpreting objects without controlling and manipulating research variable [13].

Samples of this research were taken by non-random giving similar chance for every part of population to be chosen as a sample. Therefore, this research is a qualitative research where data were in verbal form as recorded respondent interpretation and without using statistics techniques.

3.2 Research Location

This research discusses about political culture of students from 9 faculties in University of Riau. Political culture is linked to knowledge, understandings, conceiving, feelings and responses of respondents in aspect of urgency of politics and general elections.

3.3 Types and Source of Data

Data used for this research can be classified to:

1. Primary data, which is taken directly from interview about concerned aspects. Respondents were interviewed and asked to answer a list of questions in a provided answer sheet. After that, answer sheets were tabulated and interpreted by researcher.
2. Secondary data, which is taken various written sources such as books, scientific writing, journals, official documents, and other publication related to research questions. Sources from valid internet websites were used as references for the research.

3.4. Collecting Data Technique

To collect data this research used direct observation and examined occurred indications on political culture variable and students’ variable. After doing observation, next step was conducting interviews straight to the students about urgency of politics, general election and its implementation. In doing interviews the questions were focused on interview guidance and based on given questions.

3.5. Analysis Data Technique

In this research, technique of data analysis was conducted by using inductive techniques, which is concluding data from general data to specific. All questions used in interview were checked, analyzed and examined by using political culture approach.

Result of that analyzing data was then interpreted by using intellectual knowledge based on facts, data and information to have a holistic conclusion.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Characteristic of Respondent and Main Questions

Respondent determining was conducted through non-random technique where the limitations were only based on age (18-21 years old) and student at University of Riau. However, each faculty was represented by three students. Therefore, total amount of respondents was 27 students consisting of; a). 11 men and 16 women, b). 7 persons of 18 years old, 10 persons of 19 years old, 7 persons of 20 years old, and 3 persons of more than 20 years.

4.2. Research Aspects

1. Political Urgency

Regarding to the political urgency, the majority of students at UR (93%) said that politics is indeed necessary and important in life, there are even some among those respondents who stated that politics is indispensable or highly important. Even so, it was found only two students (7%) stating that the politics are not necessary or not important.

However, when associated more specifically with politics in Indonesia, the respondents have different opinions. Nevertheless, the majority of respondents (51%) stated that politics in Indonesia have not been stable or messed up, dishonest, and has a lot of irregularities as well as being used as a tool of interest to individuals and groups as well as imaging. The remaining, 49%, of the respondents said that politics in Indonesia's is already good advanced, well or reasonably well and still in a developing stage. Therefore it still needs plenty of improvements.

Information related to political developments is followed by the most of respondents with the percentage of 89% through mass media, such as printed media (newspapers) and electronic media (TV). Some of respondents receive information on political developments from internet accessed through a hand phone and through social media. In addition, the textbook can also be a place of respondents to know the latest political situation. About three respondents (11%) stated emphatically that they did not follow political developments.

2. General Elections

Responses to the electoral systems are different among students in University of Riau. Most respondents (96.3%) agree and fit in with the new electoral system. The new system is considered qualified to Pancasila and can convey aspirations of community in selecting directly. This electoral system is suitable in every component and gives a positive contribution. Only one respondent believes that the system is not suitable without giving a concrete reason.

Furthermore, the direct elections system is approved by 92.6% of respondents. The direct elections system-perceived by the respondents—needs to some changes in order to achieve maximum results. Moreover, 8% of respondents said their disagreement against the system of direct election because many people who don’t know politics can be easily bribed to select a certain person.
Political Culture of Students at University of Riau

Voters’ apathy in an election or golongan putih/golput (the white group) is taken very diverse by the respondents. There are 76% of respondents giving a response to refuse against golput, as golput is an attitude or a sense of not believing in others and fear of given false hope. Only 26% of respondents support golput.

4.3. Types of Political Orientations

After observing responses given by respondents who are students at University of Riau and then relating them to individual political orientation, it is concluded that students at University of Riau are in affective political orientation type.

Although the cognitive political orientation and evaluative political orientation are also exist among those students, however, affective political orientation is more prominent. Several reasons for stating that, which are:

First, students at University of Riau have possessed knowledge and deep consciousness about the importance of politics, general election and its system, and role of political actors in their daily life. Furthermore, they know also political parties, legislature candidates and President/Vice President candidate and also symbols taken by general election participants. They have been able to distinguish symbols from certain political party, legislature candidate or President/Vice President candidate.

Besides able to differentiate symbols, most of respondents have known vision and mission of involved parties in general election. These two knowledge—symbols and vision and mission—have made students at University of Riau knowing, understanding and animating struggles of involved parties in general election. They also occur feeling to participate in legislative and executive elections to win parties they think and feel can represent their aspiration in life of statehood and nationhood.

Knowledge, understanding and animating to the participated parties doesn’t mean that they are active in political practices. On the other hand, they tend to not involve. However, it doesn’t mean that they are golput either. The respondents tend to be sympathizer and passive voter.

5. Conclusion

Political culture phenomena can be met to students at University of Riau. Result of this research shows that type of orientation attached to students at University of Riau is affective type of orientation. However, the three orientations are existing among respondents.

This result is found after knowing that students have knowledge and consciousness about the importance of politics, general election and its system, and role of political actor in their daily life. Furthermore, students at University of Riau have known political parties or legislative candidate and president and vice president candidate and symbols carried by each general election parties. They can differ symbols possessed by certain political parties, legislative candidate and president and vice president candidate.

Besides that, they can differ symbols, most respondents have known vision and mission of involved parties in general election. However it doesn’t mean that they are automatically involved and participated actively in politics. Instead, on the other way, many respondents choose to be not active in political practices. They more tend to be sympathizer and passive voter who just choose with having a role in spreading of vision and mission of involved parties in general elections.

References

Political Culture of Students at University of Riau


