

**Subjective View of Political Officers on Social Action:  
Phenomenology Study of Aksi Bela Islam (ABI) 212 (Action of  
defending Islam) among Members of House of Representative of The  
Republic of Indonesia (DPR RI)**

**ABSTRACT**

It was on 2 December 2016 that the enormous number of Islamic mass was on a gigantic demonstration, known as Aksi Bela Islam (ABI) 212 (Action of Defending Islam), in Jakarta which further was subject to controversy by many parties including politicians. This research aims at finding out how ABI 212 is viewed by the 2014-2019 House of Representative of The Republic of Indonesia (DPR RI).

The research employed the interpretation framework of George Herbert Mead which put the view on ABI 212 as a Phenomenon interpretation. In line with the Mead theory which believes that view is in a subjective territory, the research employed perception phenomenology method with a subjective paradigm through the qualitative data analysis technique from Miles and Huberman.

It was found that each of the representatives has their own view on ABI 212. It was subjective and relative from one to another based on their intellectual and social background. The variety of the views can be united into those who are pro ABI 212 because of the religious partisanship which has been formed long before the ABI 212. In regard with the "multi-generalized other", The organization's view tends to be independent because of some aspects of the party's attitudes such as: the market orientation shifting and the strong Islamic idealism legacy from their previous Islamic organizations.

**Keywords: Conformity and independent attitude, mass media, subjective theory, peaceful religious democracy**

## I. Background

The demonstration on 2 December 2016, known as “Aksi Bela Islam 212 (Action of Defending Islam)” (ABI 212) is a demonstration involving a great number of mass at around 500 thousand up to 7,5 million people. The demonstration, which was organized by the National movement to safeguard the Indonesian Ulema Councils Fatwa (GNPF-MUI), was a respond of some muslims towards the Quran blasphemy case which was committed by the former Jakarta Governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama. Although it was related to SARA (ethnicity, religion, and race), the demonstration went peaceful and without anarchy.

There were pros and cons towards the ABI 212 from many circles and politicians<sup>1</sup>. Some of them are pros and some others are cons. The pros saw ABI 212 as a calling to defend their religion, and some others assumed that ABI 212 was an act of anti-diversity, anti-democracy, and Chinese-discrimination.

**Tabel 1.**  
**Statements of Party Figures toward ABI 212**  
**published by several National Mass Media**

No.	Political Party	Statements of Party Figures
1.	PDIP	Dominantly con, with several pro
2.	Golkar	Pro and con
3.	Nasdem	Con
4.	Hanura	Pro and Con
5.	PKS	Pro and actively gathering mass for ABI 212
6.	Gerindra	Pro ABI 212

<sup>1</sup> Rumahkitab.com “Membava Islam Indonesia Paska Aksi Damai 212. Accessed from <http://rumahkitab.com/seminar-membaca-islam-indonesia-paska-aksi-damai-212/>, on 10 Agustus 2017 at 12.40

7.	Demokrat	Pro ABI 212
8.	PKB	Pro ABI 212
9.	PAN	From con to pro
10.	PPP	Pro and con ABI 212
<i>Sumber : taken from several mass media releases. August 2017.</i>		

GH Mead, in his study of S-I-R interpretation in communication theory, assumes that meaning from an interpretation toward an object grounds the respond of attitude or actions towards it. The meaning will then stored as a reference of various dialectics dialog in understanding other objects which require a response.

In that particular way of thinking, the subjective view of the member of the House of Representative in regard with ABI 212 is important since the interpretation will be a reference for them to view many other aspects in their legislative routines: budgeting, supervision, and political advocacy. The view on ABI 212 will directly or indirectly affect the fate of the nation in the future.

## **II.Aims of The Study**

The study aims to reveal in-depth the subjective view of the House of Representative (DPR) on ABI 212, so that the political trend and situation in the future can be predicted. It is also expected that the research can also reveal some areas which have not been deeply researched before.

## **III.Literary Review**

Della Porta and Diani (1999) conducted a study regarding the social movement on their book entitled *Social Movement: An Introduction*. The study explains that social movement has become an important power besides conventional political parties and labour union which have so far affected the government. To make it effective, the cooperation between the actors from both social movement and formal political institution is needed.

Another study of social movement comes from Hank Johnston, Enrique Larana and Joseph R. Gusfield (2017). They believe that New Social Movement has several characteristics: (1) plural participants, (2) not using ideology as a mean of unification, (3) working on cultural issues of identity

which becomes a common solidarity sentiment and differs groups, (4) unclear relation among individual group, (5) usually involving intimacies and feelings, (6) showing dramatic anti-violence mobilization, (7) related to the crisis of public participation channeling in democratic system, and (8) having a decentralized, segmented, and dispersed nature.

Yongki Gigih Prasisko (2017) from Universitas Gadjah Mada conducted a study entitled "Gerakan Sosial Baru Indonesia: Reformasi 1998 dan Proses Demokratisasi Indonesia" (Indonesia New Social Movement: 1998 Reformation and Indonesia Democratization Process). He stated that new social movement in Indonesia is different from the West since it was born in a different context. The West used the discourse of liberty from cultural tradition, while Indonesia used traditional cultural values to face government domination.

Dimpos Manulu (2017), also from Universitas Gajah Mada, conducted research on "Gerakan Sosial dan Perubahan Kebijakan Publik: Berkaca dari Kasus Gerakan Perlawanan Masyarakat Batak vs PT. Inti Indorayon Utama di Porsea Sumatera Utara". (Social Movement and Public Policy change: learn from Batak Society Resistance Movement case v.s. PT. Inti Indorayon Utama in Porsea, North Sumatera). He found that social movement had an important role in replacing formal political actor by various alternative groups to solve the weakness of the formal mechanism.

Pramono Anung (2009) has important literature on "Komunikasi Politik dan Pemaknaan Anggota Legislatif terhadap Konstituen" (Political Communication and the Views of Legislative Members towards constituents). He revealed that the meaning of constituents to the legislative members is the result of dialects between the view of the representative and the sociocultural condition of the constituent. It is important to note that the communications among 2009 legislative members were transactional and politically compensational. In addition, it also used the strategy of SUKSES (*Sinergitas* or Synergy, *Uang* or Money, *Komunitas* or Community, and *Tim Sukses* or Campaign team).

### III. Research Method

The research employed phenomenology method with a qualitative approach in a subjective paradigm to construct knowledge on participants' subjective perception in viewing ABI 212. This subjective paradigm is in line with the S-I-R theoretical framework from GH Mead which sees that meaning lies within its subjective symbolic area and not within the object

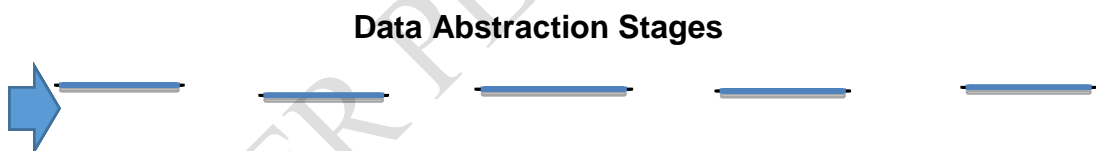
itself. Since it tried to examine the subjective perception, the study can be classified as Ponty's perception phenomenology or Likert's attitude phenomenology.

*Data gathering* was done by implementing two instruments: *first*, the researcher himself as an instrument who has similar profession as the subjects of the research; *second*, structured but open-ended list of questions for an in-depth interview.

The data collection technique was based on Miles and Huberman (1984) with four interactive components since the starting of the field study until the writing of research report: data gathering, data reduction, presentation and discussion. To ensure the reliability of the data, triangulation was implemented to the data from the in-depth interview, mass media news, and reflection of personal experience from the researcher as the member of the House of representative (DPR).

The data abstraction stages was implemented by combining three different reasonings from Miles & Huberman, Creswell, and Ibnu Hammad which consist of Data > Pattern > Local concept > Theory interpretation > Conclusion.

Figure 1 :



With this abstraction stages, there will be a maintained concept which is locally applicable to be interpreted by other researchers.

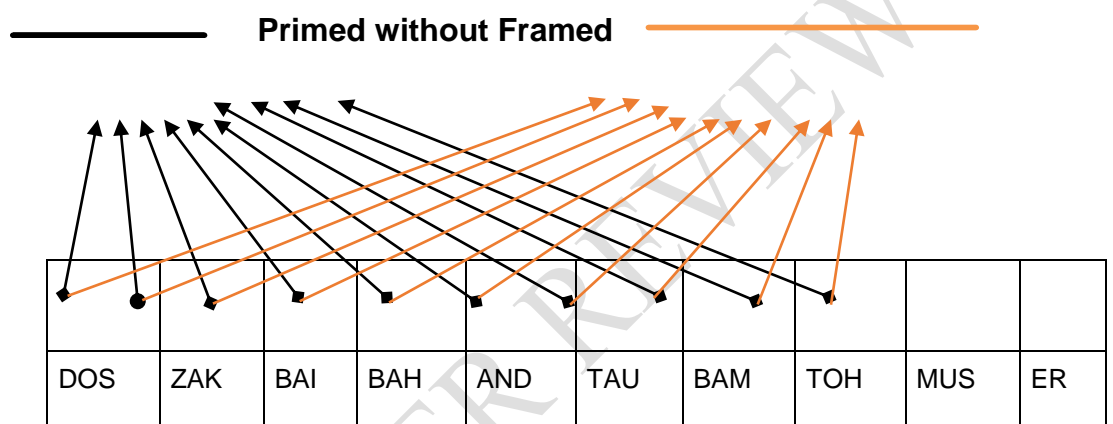
#### **IV. Research Findings**

##### **Attention orientation towards ABI 212**

The study of meaning is not reliable in phenomenology without the assurance that all statements of the participants were made in full consciousness. Thus, this research examined the existence of orientation towards ABI 212. It was examined from two sources: mass media setting agenda<sup>2</sup> and one's social or individual characteristics<sup>3</sup>.

The first orientation was Based on the participants' statements. It was revealed that mass media as part of their routines, except for one participant from Nasdem, TAU. There all confessed that they followed the news on 212 before and after the event. The confession was validated by their ability to tell a long story of the news covering the spectrum on pros or cons from the mass media. theoretically, this fact is called *primed* where mass media got one primed by the media setting agenda.

**Figure 2:**



Sharing a common media consumption, the participants were not affected by the framing of the mass media which generally Cons ABI 212. All participants, except one from Nasdem, stated their support during the interview conducted a year after ABI 212. It means that the contents of the media did not affect the participants to be cons or less pros. That indicates that there was an existence of "limited effect" from the set agenda. The media was successful in the aspect of priming but fail on the aspect of framing. However, this limited effect is different from the similar findings of Paul Lazzarsfed in 1940s in Amerika. Lazzarsfeld's Limited Effect happened by the political gesture of close friend (Lazarsfeld, P. F., Berelson, B. & Gaudet, H.,1944). On this research, the Limited Effect was present because of two aspects. (1) It was because representatives have access to the higher source of information compared to media. The source was from their partners in government or in the House of Representatives. (2) It was because of their rooted religious believe formed way before ABI 212.

The second orientation was based on one's social and individual characteristics. It was proven that even those who show strong individual

characteristic do care about ABI 212 which was indicated by their actions: giving a speech in public to show their ways of thinking, writing or making a statement on mass media before or after ABI 212. On the other side, those who have social characteristic shows their care towards ABI 212 by conducting activities which they considered beneficial for the sake of the constituents without showing themselves on the public: lobbying chief of police, lobbying vice president, setting up medical team, and many other things. Essentially, both characteristics and gestures were grounded by the desire to give something beneficial for their respective constituents. Conceptually, this essence is a new finding since It is hugely different from the old theory indicating that social and individual characteristics are related to the pragmatic interest to benefit one's own self.

Whatever the essence is in the orientation process, the most important thing for this research is the finding of the piece of proof that the view on ABI 212 was grounded by conscious awareness. They viewed ABI 212 in a full consciousness driven by attention orientation so that it qualified the prerequisites to be taken into the study through phenomenology (Milwa & Huberman, 1994, John W Cresswell, 1998).

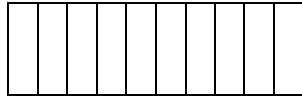
### **Views on ABI 212**

The views on ABI 212 from the representative can be relative and different from one to another. Some variations in views which they personally acquire is to view it as a cultural movement, sectarian movement, political momentum, law enforcement, sociological process, horror of potential blood bath conflict, the movement against domination, and solidarity. After further investigation on 9 (excluding TAU from Nasdem) participants, it was found that

**Figure 3:**

### **Uniting Variety of Views by Religion**

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By the assumption of religious calling, the variety of views can be united to be the view of pros on defending religion. A more thorough investigation on the 10 participants revealed that there was no single participant, including the cons, who doesn't have a desire to defend Islam. Even though there was an existence of pros and cons at the moment, it was only a matter of personal assumption on the choice of how to best defend Islam.

**Figure 4**

**The Dominant View of Religious Calling, Democratic, but Risky**

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The dominant political view on ABI 212 shown by the 9 participants altogether is that “ABI is democracy” since it has all the important elements of democracy: the existence of aspiration, involving multi-segmented numerous mass, conducted in a peaceful manner and without eliminating opponents, and the ability to change the situation.

This definition is different from the democracy term in general. ABI 212 for the representative (participants) was not only democracy but also the calling of religious good deeds. Thus, when they support ABI 212, they served two purposes: the democratic politics and religious good deeds. In addition, they also view it as a concerning event. All the participants (pros and cons) agree that it was a very risky event in regard to the sensitive issue as well as the possibility of domestic and international intelligent operation.

### **The subjective theory of peaceful religious democracy**

The most significant finding on an un-observed or the concept of construct on this research, which is based on Figure 3, is the subjective theory about political problems and its possible democratic solutions. This construct is formed by three data on Figure 3 above: (1) the believe that ABI 212 is democracy, (2) the believe that there were SARA (ethnic, religious, and racial) problems which were being solved through ABI 212, (3) the practice of sounding peaceful message to maintain peace during the demonstration.

This peaceful religious democracy is a theory which is personal but typical in the representative community as a problem-solving theory which sees ABI 212 as a choice of the true form of democracy to face a problem. Thus, the solution based on the personal theory of the representative's persona is to get down to the road peacefully with a huge mass.

Even though this theory is typically subjective and unscientific, but it has a huge generalization power. The reason is that the representatives are



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The important drive which make them independent is the party gesture which is market-orientated. The party's gesture was not rigid and give its cadres freedom to improvise any of their actions, including getting involved or cooperate with the cadres from the opposite parties. It created independency in the representative's gestures even though they still have a certain level of conformity inside.

Through the logical reasoning of the moderation effect from the orientation factor, there was evidence that the independency was related to the superiority of religion partisanship message from the former "generalized other" in the Islamic organization in the term of equivocality against the conforming message of the actual "generalized other" in the party.

## V. Conclusion

1. The view of the representatives towards ABI 212 was subjective and varied based on social and intellectual background. However, the varieties were united to be pro Abi 212 because of the religious partisanship.
2. The representatives viewed ABI 212 as a peaceful religious democracy as well as a concerning event. It was conducted in the spirit of Good deeds, taken into account the aspiration of massive mass, peaceful, without eliminating anarchy, and covered by the concern of the dangerous risk.
3. There was a subjective view which was characterized as a personal theory in which anytime similar event as ABI 212 occurs, a similar approach would be also used. This personal theory will most likely

occur since the representatives have the support of organization and mass.

4. There was a connection of views between the “generalized other” from the past which dominates the present “generalized other”. The legacy of Islamic organization value which was formed during the youth period was very strong. It was even stronger than the value of the political party organization in influencing the attitude towards ABI 212.
5. Independency is more dominant to surface because the party’s “generalized other” put aside the political idealism value for the market orientation value.
6. The drive of the attention or orientation towards ABI 212 came from either mass media or the social and individual characteristics of one’s own self.
7. Theoretical implications:
  - a. The setting agenda theory needs to be revised with an assumption that there is the existence of "limited effect" concept from such setting agenda. This limited effect concept, however, is different with a similar concept once found by Paul P Lazzarsfeld in America in 1940s.
  - b. The social and individual characteristic concept needs to be redefined since it was not only driven by the pragmatic or mere personal interest but also the drive of religious idealism and the will to save the constituents from the dangers of politics.
  - c. The exception is needed in the assumption of symbolic interactionism theory. Meaning does emerge from social interaction but turns out it was not both pragmatic and dialectic.
8. Practical Implications
  - a. The government needs to be open in the practice of civil religion so that the religious and national political syncretic is more flexible and able to adapt to the practice of peaceful religious democracy which is fully internalized by the representatives and their mass.

- b. Society needs to be aware of the importance of channeling aspiration through a huge peaceful mass without harming the political opponents.

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