

Politician as the Leader in Indonesia's Student Regiment and Its Psychological Impacts

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ABSTRACT

It has been a long debate that politicians should not be involved in any organizations which has a primary purpose to educate civil society. Indonesia student regiment (*Menwa*) is an example of the organization which functions as a vessel for Indonesian students to encourage engagement in the field of national defense and *tri-dharma*, a responsibility to give contributions while students in university. However, for over 6 years, *Menwa* has been led by a politician who also becomes an active board in a political party. Considering the basic function of *Menwa*, ethically *Menwa* should be led by a professional without any political interest to keep maintaining the purity of the purpose. Despite its negative impact, there is also a positive consequence. Politician who becomes a leader in the organization can share political knowledge and value to the members to become active citizens, particularly enhance the political participation of its members. This study aims to identify a relationship between supporting politician as the leader and three aspects of psychological orientation towards politics (POTP). Result shows that members who support the leader (politician) tend to have higher scores in political efficacy (PE) and political interest (PK), two fundamental variables which are needed in democratic country than the other groups.

KEYWORDS: *Menwa*, politics, student, psychological, orientation

ABSTRAK

Telah menjadi perdebatan panjang bahwa para politisi tidak boleh terlibat dalam organisasi apa pun yang memiliki tujuan utama untuk mendidik masyarakat sipil. *Resimen Mahasiswa* (*Menwa*) adalah contoh organisasi yang berfungsi sebagai wadah bagi pelajar Indonesia untuk mendorong keterlibatan dalam bidang pertahanan nasional dan *tri-dharma*, sebuah tanggung jawab untuk memberikan kontribusi ketika mahasiswa ada di universitas. Namun, selama lebih dari 6 tahun, *Menwa* telah dipimpin oleh seorang politisi yang juga adalah elit partai politik. Mempertimbangkan fungsi dasar *Menwa*, secara etis *Menwa* harus dipimpin oleh seorang profesional tanpa kepentingan politik untuk menjaga kemurnian tujuan organisasi. Terlepas dari dampak negatifnya, ada juga konsekuensi positifnya. Politisi yang menjadi pemimpin dalam organisasi dapat berbagi pengetahuan dan nilai politik kepada anggota untuk menjadi warga negara yang aktif, khususnya meningkatkan partisipasi politik anggotanya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi hubungan antara dukungan untuk politisi sebagai pemimpin organisasi dan tiga aspek orientasi psikologi

terhadap politik (POTP). Hasil menunjukkan bahwa anggota yang cenderung mendukung politisi sebagai ketua Menwa cenderung memiliki skor yang lebih tinggi dalam aspek *political efficacy* (PE) dan ketertarikan pada politik (PK), dua variabel mendasar yang diperlukan di sebuah negara dengan prinsip demokrasi.

KATA KUNCI: Menwa, politik, mahasiswa, psikologis, orientasi

BACKGROUND

The history of *Menwa* actually starts from the independence of Indonesia in 1945. Before the independence, when the Japanese forces were still dominating Indonesia, the Government of Japan who occupied Indonesia as colony, trained many Indonesian citizens, particularly students with basic military skills. This community was named as *Gakukotai* which defined as student troops or pasukan mahasiswa in Indonesian language. Thereby, after Japan left Indonesia, this community evolved became bigger and changed the name into WALA 59 ([Rahmanto 2013](#)). At that time, WALA 59 was handled by Indonesia National Army and it was prepared as the secondary defense forces for Indonesia. Due to most of the members are students from various Indonesia universities, the organization had the name changed again into Indonesian student regiment (*Menwa*). Until now, *Menwa* has two primary purposes, first of all, it is related to sharing values about defending the country by appreciating Indonesia and secondly, it is related to giving support to Indonesian universities as students through *tri-dharma*, the term to define the national obligation for all Indonesian universities which consist of three aspects, teaching, research & publication and community empowerment.

It has been described that *Menwa* was formed as the independent troops which facilitates Indonesian students in universities across Indonesia who have any interest in military skills and training. As the organization with a long history since the independence, *Menwa* has a sacred purpose, to help Indonesia in the field of national defense when the country needs it. Students who participate in *Menwa* are also encouraged to be active in the area of teaching (i.e., lecturer assistant), research & publication (i.e., research assistant) and community empower-

ment (i.e., involve with lecturer in a community project). In day to day activities, members of *Menwa* are also impelled to conduct military practices with Indonesian army. The aim of the practices is to share the knowledge of military that might be fundamental as an instrument for defending the university and country in emergency situation. Considering the significant function of *Menwa* for Indonesia, *Menwa* should be led by a professional in the field of military and defense. However, the fact conveys different reality, in opposite, *Menwa* is led by a politician who becomes an active board member in political party and parliament. This situation is possible to obscure the primary purpose of *Menwa* with practical politics and group interest because in accordance with the internal regulation, leader of *Menwa* is given with a room to share his (her) political values to the organization.

Chief or leader as the highest position in *Menwa* has the power to control and direct the vision and mission of the organization. Based on various studies in the field of leadership and organization, the role of leadership is essential for the organization to grow and face challenges in the future due to the function of leader to achieve mission and determined goals ([Ghasabeh, Soosay & Reaiche 2015](#)). Besides that, leaders also play a significant role in delivering transformation and adaptability of the organization to achieve sustainability in the future. A term to define this capability can be named as transformational leadership, a style of leadership which consists of four dimensions, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and individualized consideration ([Ghasabeh, Soosay & Reaiche 2015](#); [Dong, Bartol, Zhang & Li 2017](#)). In the context of *Menwa*,

The role of transformational leadership is crucial to deliver innovation and breakthrough in the organization through the authority to change the internal regulation, replace the members and establish a direction. Authority is the instrument that can be used by the leader to make change and transform the

358 organization following the trend and make it sustained. However, a leader who does not perform is possible to harm organizations in the future. Toxic leadership, a leadership style who focus on intimidating subordinates in the organization can be an example of a term to define the issue of ineffective leadership ([Reed 2004](#)).

Basically, the study of negative impact of toxic leadership has a connection with Millgram's experiment ([Millgram, 1963](#)). This experiment has revealed why oppression and massive genocide conducted by Hitler as the top leader of Nazi occurred in this world. This experiment involved participants to help experimenter in giving punishment, a dummy electricity shock to the confederate in the next room if the confederate gave the wrong answer in responding questions and the confederates pretended to shout after they received a dummy electric shock. Result shows that participants were kept going to give an electricity shock based on the order from the experimenter even though the voltage of the shock can be deadly. From this study, we can infer that authority can be created by the leader and possible to bring the members, even organization into the false direction. From this point of view, leadership, direction and authority are fundamental elements that embedded in the leader and cannot be separated partially. The situation where leader misuses the authority also can happen in *Menwa*. Thus, if the leader can persuade members to follow the direction even though the direction is made against the norms, it is possible for the members to conduct the requested behaviors and *group pressure* is likely to occur in that case. The study of group pressure is started with a classic experimental study which involved participants to judge the length of lines described with the existence of other who gave social pressure ([Asch 1955](#)). Result shows that when majority of confederates agreed to one answer, even though it was false, the participant tend to follow their response. Thus, this concept also followed by numerous researchers to understand many psychological phenomenon, such as bullying

([Sim & Shin 2016](#)); group creativity ([Goncalo & Digid 2012](#)) and also voter turnout ([Gerber, Green & Larimer 2008](#)). In relation with *Menwa*, group pressure is likely to occur in most of members who receive a direction, particularly communal direction.

Based on various studies and literature review, the importance of leader in an organization is fundamental. Despite many controversies in the public which shares the vulnerability of an organization to be trapped in practical politics, politician as the leader also has positive consequences to influence members through values related to politics and government. The importance of values which shared by the leader has been reviewed in a study conducted by [Schaubroeck, Lam & Cha \(2007\)](#) which describes team values shared by the transformational leader can be a significant mediator which facilitate transformational leadership and group performance. Based on this study, it is shown that a leader who is able to share team work as values to the followers will achieve better group performance than the other groups who are not. Moreover, according to [Bass, Avolio, Jung & Berson \(2003\)](#), leader is a central position which represents the characteristic of the organization and the anchor for all members to form perceptions of the organization. Based on this argument, it is very possible for the leader in *Menwa* to share several values on politics and shifting the political awareness of members of *Menwa*. As an attempt to identify this condition, there possible variables which can be utilized to assess the condition of *Menwa* are political interest (PI), political knowledge (PK) and political efficacy (PE) developed by [Burns, Schlozman and Verba \(2001\)](#).

The position of Indonesia as the third largest democratic country in the world requires active citizens, particularly in politics (i.e., joining political party, do voting and deliver critics & solution to the Government) to improve the quality of democracy over time. In order to achieve a robust condition of democracy, then political apathy needs to be reduced. Through three as-

360 pects of POTP, the existence of political apathy slowly can be replaced with political awareness. Many studies have revealed the importance of these aspects in influencing political participation. A study conducted by [Bimber, Cunill, Copeland & Gibson \(2015\)](#) describes the function of PI in moderating the effect of digital media use and political participation. Specifically, this result shows that PI can strengthen the effect between digital media use and the intention to conduct voting. Another study to examine the importance of PE is also conducted by [Feldman and Hart \(2016\)](#) through online experiment. This study revealed the effect of PE in facilitating emotional response towards the issue of climate change. Specifically, this study describes message which emphasize internal, external or response efficacy toward political action can induce hope and anger in responding climate change as the global issue. As well as PI and PE, PK is also crucial for democratic country. One study conducted by [Miller, Saunders and Farhart \(2015\)](#) examined the role of knowledge in politics in moderating a belief in conspiracy theories. This belief refers to a perception of participants to see political environment is formed through conspiracy. Result from this study shows that PK is significant to exacerbate the degree of belief in conspiracy. Furthermore, these three studies have shown the significant effect of three aspects of POTP in reducing political apathy and absenteeism in politics.

It can be suggested that members in *Menwa* who give more support in politician as the leader tend to have higher POTP score compared to others who are not. By considering the logic of POTP, the importance in democratic country and the empirical findings from various studies, this study attempts to examine the impact of politician becoming a leader in *Menwa* as the case study, which measured through the degree of support from members towards the leader. As mentioned earlier, *Menwa* is an independent organization which has a purpose in the field of national defense and university education. Currently, *Menwa* is led by an active politician from Indonesia Raya Movement

(*Gerindra*) party, Riza Patria (RP) for approximately 6 years. He is also a vice chairman in *Gerindra* and members in Indonesian parliament. By considering this fact, RP is possible to share his political values and affecting the degree of POTP of members in *Menwa*. As an attempt to identify the effect of RP's leadership, two instruments were utilized in this study. First instrument is related to measure the degree of support towards the leader and second instrument refers to POTP Scale ([Adinugroho 2018](#)) to identify the degree of PI, PK and PE. We hypothesized that members of *Menwa* who tend to support the leader will also have higher degree of PI, PK and PE compare to others who are not.

METHODS

PARTICIPANTS AND SAMPLE

For over 181 members of *Menwa* were participated in this study. The composition is categorized into two types, members in structural position (64%) and regular members (36%). The composition of sample is higher for structural position due to its relation to the purpose of this study. Members who work in structural position are likely to work closely with the leader to manage the organization. All the members who participated in this study are active members with the age range from 18 to 23 year-old. The proportion is not equal between male (69%) and female (31%) due to majority of *Menwa* members are dominated by male members. Purposive sampling method was applied in the study to identify targeted participants from various universities in Indonesia. The self-report questionnaires were shared through online panel to the participants, however, second author also collected directly to the *Menwa's* headquarter in Jakarta, Indonesia. There is no psychological disorder reported in the data collection process which can affect the quality of the data.

MEASURING SUPPORT TOWARDS THE LEADER

As an attempt to identify how participants give support to

362 the current chairman of *Menwa*, we applied 5 items to measure participant's opinion and attitude towards RP as the legal chairman of *Menwa*. We formed the instrument by relying on classical theory of attitude developed by [Ajzen & Fishbein \(1972\)](#) which defines attitude as an evaluation of an attitudinal object to oppose/against or to support/approach specific attitudinal object. Even though, human behavior is a complex issue which can be explained by relying on one or two approaches, attitude is proposed as the alternative which has a relationship in predicting human behavior.

In the instrument, attitude to support *Menwa's* leader is measured through five items (i.e., *I realize that supporting my leader in this organization can give me positive impact; I believe my friends in the organization will support the leader in a political aspect; Menwa's leader is a figure who become a role model for me; Joining Menwa increases my chance to participate in politics; Menwa's leader can become the greatest teacher for me to learn politics*). All the items were developed by the first and second authors by considering social and behavioral context in *Menwa*, including organizational structure, chain of command from the leader & board and also subjective norms in *Menwa*. The purpose of these items is to capture the attitude of members through attitudinal scale from 1 (less likely to support) to 5 (extremely support).

SUPPORTING LEADERS AND THE RELATIONSHIP WITH POTP

[Ajzen and Fishbein \(1977\)](#) in their classical psychological approach suggested that attitude is a psychological variable which has one requirement, named as attitudinal object. Through the object, human develops form of cognitive evaluation to produce meanings toward the object. This evaluation is categorized into two aspects, positive and negative, each of this will create different behavioral outputs. Therefore, we applied this empirical concept to define *Menwa's* members who create a positive evaluation can be defined as members who accept the leadership of

RP and vice versa. Thus, value sharing that might be related to politics and political purpose is possible to be occurred for members who favor RP as the leader. Through this empirical framework, it is possible to see the possibility of positive relationship between the degree of POTP and how members support the leader in the organization.

Three aspects of POTP are originally driven from classical theory in psychology, cognitive capacity represents PK, interest (PI) as the curious emotion ([Silvia 2008](#)) and efficacy which represents the human belief to see internal ability to produce intended result ([Bandura 1982](#)), which consist of two dimensions, internal and external. Internal focuses in the belief of one's ability to deliver some positive changes through politics, while the external refers to the perception of how Government responds the need of the citizens. In a democratic country, these three aspects are crucial to form a condition named democracy, a condition where Government is made by the people through election and other democratic process like voting and political lobbying in parliament and they are responsible for the people ([Collier & Levitsky 1997](#)). Democracy as the condition of a state is not given, in opposite; it needs huge participation from various elements, including civil society, scholars, practitioners and politicians. Some of important activities in democratic country are voting, joining political party up to delivering critics and opinion to the Government. Therefore, as the fourth largest democratic country, Indonesia needs POTP to be embedded in the society to reach better result. As an attempt to identify the degree of POTP for Indonesian participants, we utilized POTP Scale which developed by the first author ([Adinugroho 2018](#)). The instrument consists of three parts; PI, PE and PK. Items in PI and PE were written with statement and summated rating scale from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). For PK, the items were developed with forced choice model with true or false answer.

TABLE 1. EXAMPLE OF ITEMS IN POTP-S (ADINUGROHO, 2018)

Aspects	Example of Item
PE (I)	I am sure for what I have will be useful for
Indonesia PE (E)	The reason about political decision made by
	Government is the thing that I can understand
PI	The news about minister in cabinet is an interesting issue for me

RESULTS

Comparing POTP Score between Two Different Groups

As an attempt to identify the difference pattern of POTP score between two groups who have different point of view towards the leader, comparison analysis was conducted in this study. In this phase we calculated mean score of POTP between two groups and *Mann-Whitney test* (Hart 2001) as the statistical instrument to identify the significant difference between two groups. Therefore, to identify two groups with high and low support toward the leader, we calculated 30% upper and lower groups (n=54 for each) from all participants involved in this study. This calculation was conducted based on consideration of variance and extreme score which

We applied *Mann-Whitney* for independent sample to identify the significance difference and test our previous hypotheses, where group who support the leadership of RP tend to have a higher score in all POTP dimensions compare to group who has a lower score in supporting their leader. The selection of *Mann-Whitney* was decided based on two considerations, (1) the sample size of each group is considered small and (2) the normality test of each group shows skewed distribution, both for high and lower support groups. From the calculation, Table 2 shows that high support group tends to have higher score in two aspects, PI and PE compared to low support group. Conversely, not for PK which shows insignificant result with similar score between two groups. Driven from this result, it is suggested to partially accept our hypotheses for PI and PE, not for PK.

TABLE 2. AVERAGE SCORE FOR THREE ASPECTS OF POTP BETWEEN HIGH & LOW SUPPORT GROUPS

	High Support (n=55)	Low Support (n=55)	Mann Whitney U
P			
E	15,05	12	U=348,5;
Intern	(3,35)	(1,12)	p<.01
al	7,90	7,05	U=574;
PK	4,88 (0,87)	4,88 (0,71)	U=830,5; p>.05
al			

*Mann Whitney is used based on the characteristic of sample distribution

TABLE 3. LINEAR REGRESSION ANALYSIS FOR PI (A) AND PE (B) AS THE OUTCOME VARIABLES

(a) PI					
Variabel	B	β	SE(B)	t	Sig.
Support for the leader	0,755	0,677	.07	9,789	0,000*
<i>F</i> = 95,819		Sig. 0,000		<i>R square</i> = 0,454	
(b) P E					
Variabel	B	β	SE(B)	t	Sig.
Support for the leader	0,373	0,659	.04	9,316	0,000*
<i>F</i> = 95,819		Sig. 0,000		<i>R square</i> = 0,434	

*Significant at 95% confidence interval

**Significant at 99% confidence interval

THE CONTRIBUTION OF SUPPORTING POLITICAL LEADER TOWARDS POTP IN MENWA

In addition to support our argument regarding the contribution of supporting the leader and its impact towards POTP (PI and PE), we conducted linear regression analysis with PI and PE as the outcome variables. We did not include PK in the analysis due to insignificant result in comparative analysis between groups using Mann-Whitney test. The result indicates that supporting the existing leader in *Menwa* who is an active politician can also affect the degree of PI and PE which considered as the important aspect of citizens in democratic country. Result from regression analysis has shown the significant result both for PI (*B*

366 =.677; $p < .01$) and PE ($B = .659$; $p < .01$). This result also indicates that approximately more than 60% of the variance in PI and PE scores is contributed by the support or not to support the leader.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The role of leader and leadership style are two crucial elements for organization to grow and adapt to a new challenging situation over time. To support this argument, [Mills \(2005\)](#) has argued that leadership style play a significant role in determining the direction of one organization. A great leader will aware of any kind of changes that possible to affect the existence of the organization, then he (she) is able to take decision, even though it is risky for the organization. Leadership has become one of the important variables to affect employee's performance ([Veliu, Manxhari, Demiri & Jahaj 2017](#)); pro-organizational behavior ([Graham, Ziegert and Capitano 2015](#)) and employee engagement ([Popli & Rizvi 2016](#)). Even though these three studies do not capture the similar context like *Menwa*, but it can be suggested that leadership style is crucial in affecting opinion of members in an organization that can be valuable to drive the organization.

In relation with political issue, most of the time, political practitioners state that active politician who becomes leaders in an institution that should be led by professional can blurred the vision and mission of the organization. For example, the position as the chief oh Indonesia National Audit Agency which contested by many politicians from various political parties is said to be politically unethical ([CNN Indonesia 2019](#)). Despite many arguments that declare the negative effects of politician becoming a leader, this study shows an opposite result to counter the argument. It can be shown from the result that politician do share unique values to the members which represented in two aspects, PI and PE. Even though PK did not show a significant result like we hypothesized in previous argument, but the role of PI and PE in society cannot be underestimated.

These two dimensions are crucial for society who lives in a democratic environment where the awareness to see politics as the instrument of change is significantly important. Based on the study from [Reichert \(2016\)](#) and [Bimber, Cunill, Copelan & Gibson \(2015\)](#) interest and efficacy toward politics are positively correlated with political participation, a variable which defines a concrete behavior to participate in politics through various activities, such as voting, discussing policies, delivering critics & aspirations up to joining political party. Political participation is the opposite side of apathy and it is needed in all countries where democracy is stated as its principle. Although the positive impacts can be given, politician as the political leader is also need a limitation through specific regulations and policies to avoid “political contamination” which possible to be occurred. In conclusion, the role of politician as the leader in the organization cannot be perceived as the completely false decision because politicians also have a role to share political awareness (through PE and PI) to the members in organization which is valuable for democratic country.

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