

RESEARCH ON THE DEMONSTRATION EFFECT: A SURVEY OF THE COALITION FOR CLEAN AND FAIR ELECTIONS (BERSIH) IN MALAYSIA

Jamaludin Mustaffa¹
Mohd Hilmi Hamzah²
Kamarudin Ngah³

¹ Senior Lecturer, College of Arts and Sciences, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 UUM Sintok, Kedah Darul Aman, Malaysia. Email: jam@uum.edu.my

² PhD Student, College of Law, Government and International Studies, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 UUM Sintok, Kedah Darul Aman, Malaysia. Email: h_mamat@yahoo.com

³ Profesor, College of Law, Government and International Studies, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 UUM Sintok, Kedah Darul Aman, Malaysia

Accepted date: 26 August 2016, Published date: 28 September 2016

Abstract: *This study aims to identify the factors that lead and influence participation of community to be involved in street demonstrations. This study also surfaces the effect of the demonstration and the measures suggested by respondents to address the problem of street demonstrations. Methodology of the study is through a survey method using questionnaires in which the samples of 150 respondents from communities in Malaysia are gathered. The results showed that out of the eight claims, the main solution is to put an end to corrupt elections. This is followed by 2) stop dirty politics, 3) clean the list of votes, 4) use of indelible ink, 5) access to free and fair media, 6) strengthen public institutions, 7) the minimum campaign period of 21 days and 8) reforming the postal ballot. The finding also shows that the factors that influence community involvements with street demonstrations is because of the role played by the leaders involved and self-political choice.. Results of the survey also shows that the respondent agrees that demonstration gives impact to the political, economic and social, In summary it can be concluded that the purpose or the main factor community conduct demonstration is because of disagreement with the political leaders and self –political choice in order to stop corrupt elections. Hence the measures proposed by the respondent should be brought forward and heard by certain parties to avoid negative impact to the Country.*

Keyword: Demonstration, The Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (BERSIH)

Introduction

The rise of the people are becoming more common lately not only in Malaysia but in many countries as happens in the Middle East such as Iraq, Syria, Libya and Egypt which has triggered a phenomenon grievances of the people against the government, structure of a government or a government in conducting an election to choose a government. In Malaysia, the issue of the rise of people are becoming more common after general elections to 12 with a variety of street demonstrations that have been made by all walks of life to show their displeasure with the system created by the government. Since the 12th general election, the issue of street demonstrations has becoming a new culture in our society. This is not a new one in Malaysia where previously there were street demonstrations which were held in Malaysia in 2007 where it ended with the arrest by the police (Utusan Malaysia, 2007). While in 2009 the demonstration has been done by the people as against the Internal Security Act and the successful demonstration dispersed with tear gas and water shot by security forces (Berita Harian, 2009).

Now this does not matter what the issue is, what is important is or Malaysians must come out into the streets to make a demonstration to protest the decision made by the government. Arab Spring seems to give a strong breath to the people of this country to continue to follow in their footsteps by moving on the streets. Those who usually drives the bodies were independent organizations. So there is no problem or a particular party that can stop them. Various issues were raised whether social, political, economic, education, and the rights of others will all be voiced through the streets. In western countries this is not something foreign, but it has become a habit for them. Almost every weekend there will be those who are demonstrating in the streets of London (Aminudin, 2011).

Recently a demonstration was conducted by people in Malaysia through an organization which aims to assemble people named The Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections, also known as BERSIH. BERSIH is not a political party that will contest in elections but demands for have a fair election process. BERSIH is an independent body and does not represent any political party and does not care who wins the election, provided that it is conducted fairly, impartially, transparently and in accordance with constitutional rules. However, most of the people are not satisfied with the issue of street demonstrations since it disrupted their daily activities, many business premises were closed for safety reasons which also lead to loss of daily income including causing chaos and damages to public property. Therefore, focusing on the topic, the next discussion will focus on the key factors that cause society to be involved with street demonstrations and how the ruling party influences demonstration to rise.

Concept of Demonstration

According to Kamus Dewan, the purpose of the demonstration in this context refers to "protest by gathering mass and procession (Kamus Dewan, 2007). Among the types of demonstrations is a procession in which a group of people moving from one area to another, the public meeting where the audience gathered to hear speeches, the crowd gathered in the area and relaxing where protesters gathered in one area and make it the more boisterous with their demands until they are met by the authorities or were forced to disperse by security forces.

Demonstrations can occur spontaneously or it can also be exploited by certain organizations for subversive activities. For a planned demonstration, the organizers will set the stage for attracting

more number of audience. In addition to physically assemble, demonstration also applies in cyberspace.

Article 10 (1) (b) of the Federal Constitution, "street protests" is a rally that carried out marching or walking has been recognized in the law Section 27 of the Police Act 1967 (Act No 211). It is contained in the Peaceful Assembly Act 2011. This Act refers to 'the Peaceful Assembly Act "passed in Parliament on 24 November 2011 for the control of public assembly in Malaysia. The Bill was tabled by the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

The Bill on Peaceful Assembly purpose is to avoid street demonstrations as BERSIH rally in 2011, Hindraf Rally in 2007 and Abolish ISA Movement and the Movement of repeal PPSMI. This Bill includes the right for the organizers and participants to participate in peaceful assembly without arms and to also take into account the public interest and the local community.

Demonstration: An Overview

In Islamic history, early onset of the demonstration is the rebels during the reign of 'Uthman B. Affan radi' anhu. The demonstration back then was triggered by a Jewish leader named 'Abdullah B. Saba' who pretended to convert to Islam. He manipulated the Muslim community and create defamation and abetment to incite people to hate the Caliph 'Uthman. The people was influenced with the defamation and rise to make provocation to criticized 'Uthman openly which gave rise to the people revolution and led to insurgency. After the murder of 'Uthman, slander is still raising and continue to rise during the reign of 'Ali radi' anhu and continues still after his reign. The spreading of defamation from 'Abdullah B. Saba' managed to influenced the people which gave rise to Syiah and Khawarij tribe. The early emergence of the Syiah was to invites people to deify 'Ali, whereas the Khawarij's acts to create collision between the people and the government (during the reign of Caliph' Ali B. Abu Talib). These two factors (the Khawarij and Syiah tribe) was responsible for triggering the war between Jamal and Siffin, resulting clash among them The clash between them was amongst the biggest success of Syiah and Khawarij in causing misunderstandings and defamation between those two friends (Abu Umair Nawawi, 2012).

In the 1970s era, in Iran, demonstrations and revolutions begun. Triggered by the Syiah Rafidhah tribe from the ideology of 'Abdullah B. Sheba and Was driven and guided by Khomeini through Khomeini's writing and thinking, the Iranian people rose to revive the controversial doctrine of the misguided faith, Wilayatul Faqih. They protested and revolted in order to overthrow the Shah of Iran in 1978 on the grounds of oppression and tyranny to revive the battle of Syiah Imamiyyah beliefs. The demonstration caused damages and hundreds of lives were lost. Shah Mohamad together with his empress fled. The rise of Syiah Imam Rafidhah with the belief of 'Imam 12' was announced to be able to embellish the hostility between Ahlus Sunnah and the Syiah's which has been so since ages. This has been and is happening now. Among the evidence was during the US war and its domination towards Afghanistan, Syiah Iran is channeling aid which becomes the major factor in American victory. This was acknowledged by Syiah leader, Muhamed Ali Abtahi. During the American's attack on Iraq against Saddam Hussein, Syiah Iran, too, give way and help the Americans. As a result, colonies Iraq now are dominated by Syiah Iran while natural resources such as oil is monopolized by the Americans (Abu Umair Nawawi, 2012).

The term 'demonstration' became popular in the United States during the movement to restore the rights of citizens in the 1950s and 1970s. Besides Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr. also inspired thousands of people to express their views through demonstration actions.

The successful demonstration relies entirely on the strength and number of participants taking part. Among the series of demonstrations that have managed to undermine the legitimate government are Iran's Islamic Revolution (1979), People's Revolution in the Philippines (1986), protests in Tiananmen Square (1989) and the rise of the people of Scotland in 1989 to bring down Nicolae Ceausescu. Similarly, the role of the planned demonstration on a large scale when the 1998 economic crisis in Indonesia. President Suharto was forced to resign because of protests. In Germany, the government of the monarchy in the country to take special measures to ensure the country's people are not swayed by the actions of people in neighbouring countries. The best example to see the demonstration effect is when government is sued during the people's uprising Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos when he was the Head of the country. People Power that happened in February 1989 has changed the political scenario in the country (Amindudin, 2011).

Student political movement was also able to trigger a problem on campus and off campus when it comes to issues of public policy and leadership. The university is also seen as an institution that has many youth or young voters. Their support for the government is very important in shaping the country's political system. In Indonesia, for example, the student movement is seen as the biggest pressure groups which have played a role to topple the government of President Suharto. In Thailand, the Philippines, Cuba, South Korea, Europe and the United States, college students political movements have sued the social welfare and national security. Malaysia is also not free from political phenomenon where it began in the youth campus 1960-'s and early 1970's with the introduction of several demonstrations. The phenomenon peaked in the late 1990s with the riots that threaten national security. Youth political activities on campus has reached the national political activity and elections. A number of them have been involved in individual or group campaigning for a particular political party, a member, or against critics of government policies and participating in street demonstrations (Mohd Fuad, Yahaya, Noor Aziah, Abdul Halim & Khaidzir, 2009).

On June 20, a public vote was conducted by English daily and The Star Malaysia through its online service of The Star Online, whereby the public was asked on their views regarding the implementation of Bersih 2.0 (2011) which is expected to be made on a large scale on July 9. A sudden decision has been issued through the official portal of the newspaper. This matter was also reported in Harakah newspaper and through online news portal; Malaysiakini respectively. Poll questions (in English) asked were, "What is your view on the proposed Bersih 2.0 rally in July 9?" The Poll survey ended on 21 June and the decisions showed that 99% of voters consisting of 1,312,917 voters agreed that the assembly should be continued. While 1% of the voters which composed of 14,222 voters said that the assembly should be canceled (Malaysiakini, 2011).

Amin Ahmad (2011) stated that the occurrence of the phenomenon of street demonstrations are intended to deliver a memorandum for all claims to be secured. According to Amin Ahmad (2011), which is also a Fellow at the Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS), demonstrations is in line with Article 10 (1) (b) of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia, Article

20 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Man 1948 and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966. He also stressed that some of the disputes are to be discussed or debated to enrich people's understanding of the Constitution and the idea of statehood (<http://www.IDEAS.org.my>).

There are reasons for community to be involve in street demonstrations and to be accepted by the government. However, most causes are due to dissatisfaction over the solution suggested and implemented by the government but was delayed to be settled. Utusan Malaysia dated December 20, 2007, reported that the street protests was organized illegally due to dissatisfaction from the people that have voiced their concerns to the government but the matter was not resolved satisfactorily (Utusan Malaysia, 2007).

Claims Street Demonstrations in Malaysia: The Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (BERSIH)

The Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (BERSIH) is a public organization based in Kuala Lumpur and is made up of 84 non-governmental organizations (NGOs). BERSIH was established in 2006 with the aim of thorough cleaning of the electoral system contained in the eight (8) requests that must be carried out before the election to thirteen (13).

On 10 November 2007, a rally organized by the Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (BERSIH) which was held in Kuala Lumpur. The rally was aimed at presenting a memorandum to His Majesty the King at the National Palace with four (4) main requests:

- a) The revision of electoral rolls equipped to ensure that the error be corrected.
- b) The use of indelible ink to prevent repeat voting.
- c) The abolition of postal votes, except for diplomats and overseas voters.
- d) Fair media access for all parties in the election so that all political parties can explain their policies and manifesto to the people, especially the voters in Malaysia.

However, all requests raised in the demonstration were ignored. Until the official launch of BERSIH 2.0 was held on June 19, 2011 at the Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall in Jalan Maharaja Lela, Kuala Lumpur. Also present were Vibo Rais, Nurul Izzah Anwar, National Laureate A Samad Said, Latheefa Koya, Dr. Syed Azman Syed Ahmad Nawawi and others. BERSIH assemblies both named BERSIH 2.0 has been extended to eight (8) requests which are:

- a) Voters registration is automatic as soon as they reach voting age.
- b) Reform of the postal voting system for voters in rural areas.
- c) The use of indelible ink to prevent repeat voting.
- d) Fair media access to all political parties contesting.
- e) The minimum campaign period of 21 days.
- f) The right to an independent body to monitor the electoral process with the freedom to act to enforce matters relating to electoral offenses.
- g) Eliminate corrupt elections.
- h) Stop dirty politics

All the eight (8) requests was also ignored. Thus, a planned rally known as BERSIH 3.0, has been designed to be carried out on 28 April 2012 which put forward the same demands as happened in BERSIH 2.0 (Amin, 2011).

Methodology

This is a quantitative research using questionnaires as a medium of learning. The study population consisted of 150 people in Kuala Lumpur and the election of respondents was made using simple random sampling . For the purpose of obtaining data on the factors that cause people involved with street demonstrations in addition to the factors that affect their involvement with street demonstrations and effects used to demonstrate the unit of analysis is based on individual perceptions. As a macro study, the data obtained in the analysis will be aggregate to see overall public perception of the causes and factors that influence. Data processing is performed by a computer using the software Statistical Package for the Social Science or SPSS version 20.0 and presentation of the findings based on the percentage.

Result

Claim factor in Demonstration

According to Table 1, among the main factors that cause people to hold street demonstrations because they want to stop corruption factors elections show 18.6 per cent percentage. Other factors on the people involvement with street demonstrations are because they want certain parties to stop the dirty politics (13.7%), clean the list vote (13.2%), use of indelible ink (12.3%), access to a free and fair media (12.0%) , strengthen public institutions (10.6%), minimum campaign period of 21 days (10.4%) and reform the postal votes (9.2%).

Table 1: Claims in Demonstration

	Claim	Percent
1	Stop corruption elections	18.6
2	Stop dirty politics	13.7
3	Clean the list of votes	13.2
4	Use a permanent ink	12.3
5	Access to free and fair media	12.0
6	Strengthen public institutions	10.6
7	Minimum 21-day campaign period	10.4
8	Reforming the postal votes	9.2

Factors Affecting Participation in Demonstration

Table 2 shows factors that affect the community to be involved in street protests. The main factor is because of the role played by the leaders which triggers then them to get involved with the demonstration. This is showed by the 41.1 percentage. The second and third factors are due to the feeling of responsibility towards country (18.8 percent) and due to the influence by friends to join the demonstration with a total of 10.8 percent. The remaining factors are explained in Table 2.

Table 2: Factors Affecting Participation in Demonstration

	Factors	Percent
1	Leader	41.1
2	Yourself	18.8
3	Friends	10.8
4	Economic Weakness	6.2
5	Social Media	6.0
6	Social Disadvantage	4.3
7	Finance	4.1
8	Support Outside Elements (West)	3.5
9	Fun	3.0
10	Arab spring	1.8
11	Family / relatives	0.4

Impact of Demonstration

Table 3 shows the effects of street demonstrations. Based on the analysis, the most important impact on the country as a result of street demonstrations are political effect since it would be detrimental to the reputation and integrity of the country as a sovereign state in addition to the security of the country will be labelled as inhuman against activists who were demonstrating (35.9 percent). Whereas 33.9 percent of respondents said that it will have an impact on the economy since demonstration will damage the property, business operations will be affected, causing investors to become fearful and uncertain to issue capital to invest in the country. From a social point, 31.1 per cent of the respondents agreed it will affect socially; such as tourism will be reduced thus there will be an increase in vandalism and racism among people.

Table 3: Impact of Demonstration

	Impact	Percent
1	Politic	35.9
2	Economy	33.9
3	Social	31.1

Steps/Ways to Overcome Demonstration

The results in Table 4 shows the steps/ways to overcome demonstrations. The most agreed way suggested by the respondents to resolve this is about the opportunity to conduct negotiations. The second step suggested is that the government should be planning something that can restore people's confidence in the existing government. The next step suggested by respondents to overcome these problems is related to law enforcement which needs to play a strong role to curb this problem. the parties must play a role that is to be open to compromise and moderation and the last step suggested by the respondents is closer cooperation with international parties to overcome violence.

Table 4: Steps to Overcome Demonstration

	Steps to Overcome	Percent
1	Opportunities for negotiation	23.1
2	Restore people's trust	22.2
3	Law enforcement	19.2
4	Improve the existing administrative system	17.4
5	Practice tolerance and moderation	12.5
6	Strengthen cooperation with the international to overcome violence	5.6

Conclusion

In summary it can be concluded that the main factor demonstrations happens in most countries is due to leadership in the government of a country that was not transparent thus create no trust from the people which leads to demonstrations that can later led to riots which might cause people to be killed. The same also happens in Malaysia because they want to participate in the demonstration as a result of an election is not transparent and to object government corruption. The role played by the leader of a party also causes people to join the demonstration. The people supports demonstration even when they realize that the demonstration can effect political, economic and social development of their country. Therefore, measures to prevent the demonstration should be made by relevant parties to maintain Malaysia, known as the country of harmony and peace.

Reference

- Abu Numair Nawawi B. Subandi (2012). *Demonstrasi Jalanan Bukan Ajaran Islam*. Forum Manhaj Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaah.
- Abu Omar & Idris Sulaiman (2012). *Demonstrasi dan keburukannya*. Selangor: Badan Perkhidmatan Penerangan Islam Selangor dan Wilayah Persekutuan.
- Abdul Rashid (2009, Mei 12). Bukan salah Akta Keselamatan Dalam Negeri. *Utusan Malaysia*. Atas talian <http://ww1.utusan.com.my>.
- Aminuddin Yahya (2011). *Demonstrasi Jalanan*. *Suara Gunung*. Atas talian www.suaragunung.com
- Amin Ahmad (2011 Jun 2007). BERSIH dan Kebebasan Bersuara. www.IDEAS.org.my Bancian 'Star' - 99% sokong himpunan BERSIH (2011, 21 Jun). *Malaysiakini*. Di talian <http://www.malaysiakini.com/>
- Akta Perhimpunan Aman 2012. (2013). Jabatan Penerangan Malaysia. Putrajaya: Kementerian Penerangan Komunikasi dan Kebudayaan.
- Kamus Dewan. (2007). Definisi Demonstrasi. Edisi Keempat, m/s. 332. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Malaysia (2011). Undang-undang Malaysia. Putrajaya: Jabatan Perdana Menteri
- Malaysiakini (2011, Jun 21). Bancian 'Star' - 99% sokong himpunan BERSIH. *Malaysiakini*. Atas talian <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/167583>
- Mohd Fuad Mat Jali, Yahaya Ibrahim, Noor Aziah Mohd Awal, Abdul Halim Sidek & Khaidzir Ismail (2009). Minat, Aspirasi dan Sokongan Politik Belia IPT Malaysia. *Jurnal Malaysian Journal of Youth Studies* Jun 2009: Volume 1.
- Undang-Undang Malaysia, 2011.
- Utusan Malaysia (2007, Disember 15). Perhimpunan Haram Jejas Pelancongan, *Utusan Malaysia*. Atas talian <http://ww1.utusan.com.my>.
- Utusan Malaysia (2011, Jun 15). Golongan terjejas dinasihat saman Bersih. *Utusan Malaysia*. Atas talian <http://ww1.utusan.com.my>
- Utusan Malaysia (2012, April 29). Peserta BERSIH 3.0 ganas. *Utusan Malaysia*. Atas talian <http://ww1.utusan.com.my>