

# Indonesian Muslims' Cognitive Pattern on Social Media During Political Disagreements

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**Abstract:** The 2017 Jakarta governor election had encouraged polarization among Muslims, including among media social users: those who agreed and those who disagreed with voting for Basuki Ahok Tjahaja Purnama since he was prosecuted for allegedly committing blasphemy. This study has examined the cognitive pattern amongst disputants: whether cognitive pattern and religiosity contribute to political disagreements or not. Participants were Indonesia's Muslim social media users (N= 300). Using multiple regression analysis, the findings have demonstrated that analytical thinking produces higher disagreement than holistic thinking. In addition, higher level of religiosity produces higher disagreement.

**Keywords:** Indonesian Muslim, political disagreements, cognitive pattern, social media

**Abstrak:** Pemilihan gubernur DKI Jakarta 2017 memantik polarisasi di kalangan umat muslim, termasuk di kalangan muslim pengguna media sosial. Ada yang setuju dan ada yang tidak setuju untuk memilih Basuki Ahok Tjahaja Purnama sebagai gubernur. Studi ini membahas apakah pola kognitif dan religiusitas berkontribusi pada ketidaksepemahaman politik; pola kognitif seperti apa (analitis atau holistik) yang paling banyak diikuti umat Islam? Responden penelitian adalah umat Islam pengguna media sosial (N = 300). Melalui analisis regresi berganda, studi ini menemukan bahwa pola kognitif-analitis mendorong terjadinya *political disagreement* lebih tinggi daripada pola kognitif-holistik. Selain itu, semakin tinggi tingkat religiusitas seseorang, maka semakin tinggi pula kemungkinan *political disagreement* itu terjadi.

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## Introduction

In the realm of political behavior, a recent revival of interest in disagreement stems from normative theories of political deliberation that promote a different view of how representative democracy functions effectively. Though liberal democratic theories emphasize the need for individuals to be civically engaged in order to be politically active, deliberative theories focus on collective processes and the exchange of viewpoints. While theoretical discussion of deliberative democracy is lively and well developed, empirical scholarship on the mass public has focused principally on the question of the behavioral impact of political disagreement (Klofstad, Sokhey, & McClurg, 2012, p.1).

Indonesia is a genuine democracy incorporating open society, religious, and ethnic pluralism. Its national motto even translates as ‘Unity in Diversity’. For decades, it has advertised itself to the world as a shining example that Islam and democracy are not incompatible. But the bitter election campaign to choose Jakarta’s next Governor gives the lie to these claims, conducted as it has been in an increasingly tense atmosphere of religious and racial discrimination and rising intolerance that has seen the incumbent candidate (Ahok) accused of blasphemy and Islamist hard-liners charged with treason. This tense atmosphere also occurs in Indonesian-Muslims’ social media society, which is polarized into two groups: those who agree and those who disagree with voting for Ahok as the next Governor. Political disagreement produces patterns of partisan polarization by increasing negative emotions (i.e., anxiety, anger) toward out-groups and out-group members and decreasing positive emotions (i.e., enthusiasm, hope) toward in-groups and in-group members, such as political parties or candidates (Parsons, 2010).

We suspect that Indonesian-Muslims’ social media society holds important potential in explaining their disagreement. Increasingly widespread knowledge in social media creates an explosion of information - including misinformation, which triggers diversity in belief, differences in judgment, and disagreements. While some evidence suggests that political discussion in social networks positively influences political participation (Klofstad, 2007; McClurg, 2003), others find

that discussion in the presence of disagreement reduces participation (Huckfeldt et al. 2004) and increases ambivalence. Experiencing debate over even the most fundamental of disagreements with a reciprocal exchange of views can instill a powerful sense of tolerance for those expressing those view, but on the other hand, exposure to disagreements may also lead to intergroup conflict (Djupe & Calfano, 2012).

In short, the consequences of everyday political disagreement remain unclear. Some research indicates that disagreement between citizens makes those in the minority less likely to vote in line with their underlying partisanship (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1988; Sokhey and McClurg 2012), that it increases opinion ambivalence (Mutz 2002b, 2006), and that it decreases political participation (McClurg 2003; Mutz 2002b; 2006). Other research suggests that such findings are overstated either because they are conditional on other attributes of social networks or are nonexistent (Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague 2004; McClurg 2006b; Nir 2005). Clarity about what produces such divergent results is needed so we can better assess how political conflict between individuals affects the quality of citizenship. It is in this intellectual context that we revisit what is meant by “everyday political disagreement,” that we reconsider how to measure it in the real world, and that we reassess its implications for empirical analyses and, ultimately, democratic practice.

This study identified the cognitive pattern among disputants which focused on what kind of cognitive pattern (holistic or analytical pattern) do Indonesian Muslims experience most? What is the religiosity level among disputants? Whether cognitive pattern contributes to political disagreements? Whether religiosity contributes to political disagreements? Whether seeking and sharing political updates can contribute to political disagreements?

Literature  
Review

Everyday political disagreement refers to conversations where individuals are exposed to viewpoints that are different from their own. Such exchanges are particularly important for understanding political behavior because without the possibility of learning new information or views, there is little opportunity for social communication to alter past patterns of behavior. Put another way, disagreement drives social influence (McPhee, Ferguson, and Smith, 1963; Sprague, 1982 cited in Klofstad, et al., 2012, p. 2). Political disagreement is also important because it may help us understand how individual preferences translate into citizen inputs into the political system. When there is no exchange of views between citizens, the lines of debate are hard and fast and potentially inhibit compromise among representative officials. That is, preferences are relatively fixed, and the ability of governments to provide representation becomes largely a function of institutional design (Dahl, 1963). Yet when there is some exchange of views between citizens, public representation becomes a matter not just of how we aggregate preferences through institutions, but of how the public reacts to different viewpoints and adjusts its own behavior. For example, if conflicting views create intolerance for others' preferences, it can delegitimize governing elites who do not share the ideas of majorities. Or, if conflict causes some groups of voters (e.g., majority opinion holders) to express their opinions more insistently and to participate more than other groups (e.g., minority opinion holders), then government may be more responsive to some groups than others (Noelle-Neuman, 1993). It is also possible that disagreement affects preferences themselves, suggesting that what is in the public's interest is a dynamic phenomenon that changes as we deliberate, potentially leading to "better" public opinion and policy outputs (Fishkin,

1995). Accordingly, there is acute interest in how much disagreement occurs between citizens in their everyday lives. Yet in what has become a hallmark of this literature, even the basic question of how much disagreement exists between citizens is itself contested. For example, Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague (2004) have argued that disagreement is the modal condition in the American electorate (based upon average network size and various probabilities of disagreement between any two members). Conversely, Mutz (2006) makes an argument for low levels of disagreement. She notes that not only are levels of disagreement between dyads very low in national probability samples, but that levels of communication in those dyads are real so exceptionally low. In short, despite examining similar data, Mutz and Huckfeldt and colleagues draw largely opposite conclusions.

Almost all political science studies of everyday political disagreement employ measurements that focus on some aspect of discussion occurring across lines of political difference. However, this is where agreement about disagreement ends. The basic theoretical question is as follows: at what point do political conversations become disagreeable and start affecting political behavior? This point is illustrated by contrasting the measures used in two of the most cited studies in the field: Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague's (2004) *Political Disagreement*, and Mutz's (2006) *Hearing the Other Side*. Defining the underlying concept of disagreement is not the main thrust of either study. However, their different measurement strategies reflect distinct theoretical predilections in turn, these bracket the potential range of conceptual definitions that could be used to derive measurements of disagreement. By bringing such predilections to the forefront, we can bring order to this literature, point to a venues for further research, and more generally, make further progress in understanding the role that political disagreement plays in American civil society.

Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague measure disagreement as discord in the vote choice of a respondent and her discussant. In this approach, a person who prefers one presidential candidate encounters disagreement even if his or her discussant prefers no presidential candidate. There are many conceptual benefits to such a measurement

approach: it is anchored in political preferences, it is about an individual's perceptions of his or her communication environment, and we have a very good sense of what the disagreement is about (i.e., a candidate, even if we do not know specifics about issue content). At the same time, this measurement maybe more appropriately conceive do fast measuring the absence of agreement rather than the presence of disagreement. In turn, this may overstate the importance of social exchanges with low political salience; that is, exchanges that do not really create the pronounced opportunities for learning that are central to theories of disagreement and deliberative democracy. In this sense, the underlying concept emphasizes a measure that is anchored in preferences that are relatively concrete, but exchanges that have minimal conflict, and thus may not always be perceived clearly or judged to be salient by the parties in the exchange (Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1988; Mutz and Martin, 2001).

Mutz seeks to measure survey respondents' perceptions of how much they disagree with their named discussants. Specifically, her approach is to create an index of disagreement that combines information from a variety of survey questions, including shared vote preferences, shared partisan preferences, general perceptions of disagreement, general perceptions of shared opinions, and levels/ frequencies of disagreement. The strength of this measure is that it does not rely solely on vote choice for determining whether disagreement may exist; it instead focuses on the respondents' explicit recognition of disagreement during social exchanges. Another potential strength is that this approach measures exposure to disagreement by including the frequency of political discussion in the index, rather than assuming that disagreement is not reliant on frequency of interaction. Unlike the Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague measure, this one is weighted toward more intense disagreements. As a consequence, we argue that Mutz's approach potentially overlooks what we see as the more common, but less intense, discussions in which differing viewpoints are exchanged. These two approaches give us insight into the deeper theoretical problem surrounding everyday political disagreement. At question is both presence and degree that is, what constitutes disagreement in a

network, and given that condition, how do we gauge “amount”? If we conceptualize a hypothetical conversation between two people, we could classify any political discussion they have as falling between two possible endpoints: complete agreement or complete disagreement about politics. From this, we can then begin to think about the point at which a conversation is best characterized as being agreeable or disagreeable.

Cultural psychologists have consistently found different patterns of thinking and perception in different societies, with some cultures demonstrating a more analytic pattern and others a more holistic pattern. Analytic cognition is characterized by taxonomic and rule-based categorization of objects, a narrow focus in visual attention, dispositional bias in causal attribution, and the use of formal logic in reasoning. In contrast, holistic cognition is characterized by thematic and family-resemblance-based categorization of objects, a focus on contextual information and relationships in visual attention, an emphasis on situational causes in attribution, and dialecticism (Nisbett, Peng, Choi, & Norenzayan, 2001). What unites the elements of the analytic style is a tendency to focus on a single dimension or aspect—whether in categorizing objects or evaluating arguments—and a tendency to disentangle phenomena from the contexts in which they are embedded—for example, focusing on the individual as a causal agent or attending to focal objects in visual scenes. What unites the elements of the holistic style is a broad attention to context and relationships in visual attention, categorizing objects, and explaining social behavior.

Four domains as the essential constructs of the analytic–holistic thinking dimension: locus of attention (parts vs. whole), causal theory (dispositional vs. interactional), perception of change (linear vs. cyclic), and attitude toward contradictions (formal logic vs. naïve dialecticism). Analytic-Holistic (AH) thinking, in particular, appears to influence information selection, attribution, and ultimately, sense making (Hua, 2017).

The culture and cognition literature, which has focused largely on elucidating East–West variation in basic cognition (i.e., thinking styles and lay belief systems), has characterized East Asian thought as empha-

sizing holistic thinking and Western thought as emphasizing analytical thinking. Holistic and analytical thinking can be conceptualized as broad, overarching interpretive constructs or “cultural syndromes” (Triandis, 1995) that can help illuminate behavior both across and within cultures (Kashima, 2009). Holism is a loose association of cognitive tendencies or lay beliefs that is more frequently found in East Asian than in Western cultures and that perhaps can be depicted best by the yin/yang symbol (Rodgers, 2010).

Regarding perception of change, holistic thinkers are more likely to expect constant change due to the complex interactions between phenomena while analytic thinkers are more likely to believe that the future is predictable and that phenomena will proceed in similar patterns as they have in the past (Peng & Nisbett, 1999). For instance, if the value of a stock is decreasing, an analytic thinker will be more likely to believe that the value will continue to decrease over time. Finally, holistic thinkers are more tolerant towards contradictions. They are more likely to accept that two seemingly contradictory propositions could be simultaneously true and even complementary to each other while analytic thinkers are more likely to feel that only one proposition can be true at a time.

Analytic style correlate to independent: freedom of thinking, freedom of expression (agree and or disagree expression). Holistic style correlate to interdependent: collectivism, harmony, socially engage, which prevent or avoid disagreement and conflict. Hypothesis 1: analytical thinking produce higher disagreement than holistical thinking. Hypothesis 2: Does Religiosity predict low level or high level of disagreement? Religion related to peace, acceptance, respect, harmony. Religious persons tend to be uncompromising; religion as a source of conflict (Brahm, 2005).

## Methodology

Participants are Indonesian-Muslim social media users (N=390). Participants are come from different kind of ethnic



groups, such Javanese (37.7%), Sundanese (23.1%), Minang (10.3%), etc as we can see in Table 1.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Jawa	147	37.7	37.7	37.7
Sunda	90	23.1	23.1	60.8
minang	40	10.3	10.3	71.0
betawi	69	17.7	17.7	88.7
Batak	11	2.8	2.8	91.5
melayu	15	3.8	3.8	95.4
Bugis	11	2.8	2.8	98.2
lainnya	7	1.8	1.8	100.0
Total	390	100.0	100.0	

**Table 1** 'Ethnic group data'

In the beginning of the questionnaire, we also deliver a question: "during the last six months, did you talk with anyone in social media about government or elections?"

Instruments: (1) The Centrality of Religiosity Scale by Huber & Huber (2012), (2) Cognitive Pattern Scale by Varnum et al (2010), (3) Political Disagreements (Klofstad, Sokhey & McClurg, 2012).

The Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRS) by Huber & Huber (2012). The Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRS) is a measure of the centrality, importance or salience of religious meanings in personality. It has been developed by Huber and has yet been applied in more than 100 studies in sociology of religion, psychology of religion and religious studies in 25 countries with in total more than 100,000 participants. The largest single application is in the global religion monitor with representative samples in 21 countries However, no comprehensive overview on the scale comprising a base for its practical application is yet available in English. The present paper aims to close this desideratum. It consists of four parts: first we introduce the basic ideas and construction principles of the CRS, second we sketch the model of religiosity on which the CRS is based on. Third, we provide a taxonomy of the different versions of the CRS. Finally, norm values from 21 nations are provided.

Dimension Items for both the basic and interreligious versions  
Basic CRS versions Additional Items for the interreligious versions  
only Interreligious CRSi versions:

- a. Intellect 01: How often do you think about religious issues?
- b. Ideology 02: To what extent do you believe that God or something divine exists?
- c. Public practice 03: How often do you take part in religious services?
- d. Private practice 04: How often do you pray? 04b: How often do you meditate?
- e. Experience 05: How often do you experience situations in which you have the feeling that God or something divine intervenes in your life? 05b: How often do you experience situations in which you have the feeling that you are in one with all?
- f. Intellect 06: How interested are you in learning more about religious topics? Ideology 07: To what extent do you believe in an afterlife—e.g. immortality of the soul, resurrection of the dead or reincarnation?
- g. Public practice 08: How important is to take part in religious services?
- h. Private practice 09: How important is personal prayer for you? 09b: How important is meditation for you?
- i. Experience 10: How often do you experience situations in which you have the feeling that God or something divine wants to communicate or to reveal something to you? 10b: How often do you experience situations in which you have the feeling that you are touched by a divine power?
- j. Intellect 11: How often do you keep yourself informed about religious questions through radio, television, internet, newspapers, or books?
- k. Ideology 12: In your opinion, how probable is it that a higher power really exists Public practice 13: How important is it for you to be connected to a religious community?

- l. Private practice 14: How often do you pray spontaneously when inspired by daily situations? 14b: How often do you try to connect to the divine spontaneously when inspired by daily situations?
- m. Experience 15: How often do you experience situations in which you have the feeling that God or something divine is present?

The cognitive pattern scale was adapted from Varnum, et.al (2010), which divided cognitive pattern as analytic and holistic. *Analytic cognition* is characterized by (1) taxonomic and rule-based categorization of objects, (2) a narrow focus in visual attention, (3) dispositional bias in causal attribution, and (4) the use of formal logic in reasoning. *Holistic cognition* is characterized by (1) thematic and family-resemblance- based categorization of objects, (2) a focus on contextual information and relationships in visual attention, (3) an emphasis on situational causes in attribution, and (4) dialecticism.

<b>Analytic cognition</b>	<b>Holistic cognition</b>
Field independent	Field dependent
Narrow	Broad
Focus on salient objects with intent to manipulate them	Focus on relationship of elements, background
Taxonomic, focus on a single dimension or shared property	Thematic, focus on functional relationship or overall similarity
Dispositional	Situational
Traits and attributes of individuals determine events	External forces, context, and situations determine events
Analytic	Dialectical
Use of formal logic	Middle Way philosophy
Trends continue	Trend reversals are likely

**Table 2** 'The cognitive pattern scale'

Political Disagreement: the respondent's perception of how much disagreement is occurring in his or her network (Klofstad, Sokhey & McClurg, 2012): (1) disagree with others' political choice, (2) disagree related to ethnic/religious discrimination, (3) disagree related to fake

news, or an instance of defamation. We use path analysis to analyze the data.

**Finding and Discussions**

This research shows us that 64.9% respondents have an analytic pattern of cognition, while 35.1 % have a holistic cognition, as mentioned in Table 3 and Table 4.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cognitive Pattern	390	10.85	67.95	50.0000	8.75426
Political Disagreement	390	19.83	61.94	50.0000	9.63833
Religiosity	390	10.34	65.23	50.0000	9.35002
Valid N (listwise)	390				

**Table 3** 'Descriptive statistics'

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Low	137	35.1	35.1	35.1
Valid High	253	64.9	64.9	100.0
Total	390	100.0	100.0	

**Table 4** 'Categorization of cognitive pattern'

Meanwhile, we can also see the political disagreement score from the Table 5. Most respondent have higher political disagreement score (62.3%), and 37.7% experience low political disagreement. Respondent also have high religiosity score (66.2%) and low religiosity score (33.8%), as seen in Table 6.

	Frequen cy	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
low	147	37.7	37.7	37.7
Valid high	243	62.3	62.3	100.0
Total	390	100.0	100.0	

**Table 5** 'Political disagreement score'

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	low	132	33.8	33.8
	high	258	66.2	100.0
	Total	390	100.0	100.0

Table 6 'Religiosity score'

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.291 <sup>a</sup>	.085	.080	9.24414

a. Predictors: (Constant), Religiosity, Cognitive Pattern

Tabel 7 'Model summary'

Moreover, from the Table 8 we can see that religiosity and cognitive pattern predict political disagreement about 85%.

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	3066.354	2	1533.177	17.942	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	33070.767	387	85.454		
	Total	36137.122	389			

a. Dependent Variable: Political Disagreement

b. Predictors: (Constant), Religiosity, Cognitive Pattern

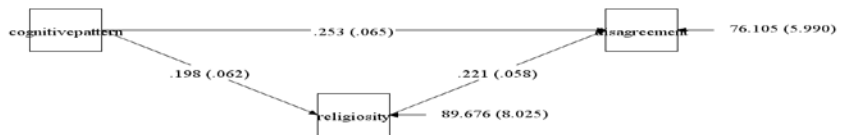
Table 8 'Religiosity and cognitive pattern predict political disagreement'

From the Table 9 we can see cognitive pattern 0.179, t-value 3.592, sig.= 0.000 (sig<0.05), more higher cognitive pattern (analytical) predict higher score in political disagreement. In religiosity variable, coefficients is 0.239, t-value=4.719, sig=0.000, a person with a higher religiosity may possess higher disagreements.

		Coefficients <sup>a</sup>			t	Sig.
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	40.123	2.791		14.376	.000
	Cognitive Pattern	.198	.055	.179	3.592	.000
2	(Constant)	31.459	3.280		9.592	.000
	Cognitive Pattern	.125	.056	.113	2.236	.026
	Religiosity	.246	.052	.239	4.719	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Political Disagreement

**Table 9** Analysis of variance religiosity and cognitive pattern to political disagreement<sup>7</sup>



**Figure 1** 'Path analysis'

<i>Path</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>Z-Value</i>	<i>P-Value</i>	
Cognitive Pattern to Religiosity	0,198	0,062	3,163	0,002	Sig
Religiosity to Disagreement	0,221	0,058	3,831	0,000	Sig
Cognitive Pattern	0,253	0,065	3,886	0,000	Sig

**Table 10** 'Path analysis for religiosity and cognitive pattern to political disagreement'

From the statistical analysis described in Picture 1 and Table 9, this study revealed the more analytic and religious a person, the more disagree would be. It might means that religious and analytic person may experience political disagreements more than those who are holis-

tic and low religious. Moreover, Mutz (2002) stated that disagreement in social networks leads people to deliberate, but not participate.

The findings accepted hypothesis 1, namely analytical thinking produce higher disagreement than holistic thinking. Also this study accepted hypothesis 2: higher level of religiosity produce higher disagreement. The more religious, the more possible to possess/express disagreement. It is in line with Terror Management Theory (TMT) (Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1991) which proposes that cultural worldviews, such as those in religions, protect people from thoughts of death. When those worldviews (or religious beliefs) are threatened, that makes people think about death and thinking about death is an unpleasant experience. That unpleasant experience leads people to cling more strongly to their worldviews and religious beliefs (Schimel, Hayes, Williams, & Jahrig, 2007). Since the scale looked at the centrality of religiosity, those who reported higher levels of religiosity view religion as more central to their lives and thus political disagreement could be viewed by them as extremely threatening to them. Basically, anything that goes against their beliefs would be viewed as a threat and the response could be a disagreement on social media.

Related to the religiosity scale that we used in the research, that developed by Huber and Huber, measures the centrality of religiosity. The scale does not give any indication of type of religiosity (such as extrinsic or intrinsic). This could be considered as a limitation of the research.

Disagreements do not always contribute to conflict; without legitimate mechanisms for religious groups to express their views (disagreements), they may be more likely to resort to conflict and or violence. More analytic leads to higher level of religiosity and lead more disagreements. Some suggestion for further research: does analytical person feel more threatened? Whether if a person can deal with that threat by becoming more religious?

## Conclusion

From this study, we found that when social media users use the analytical thinking more frequent, they may possess higher disagreement in social media, especially when they engage in a political discussion. While the holistic thinker possess less disagreements. This findings can be beneficial for politicians who searching a follower. A person with a holistic thinker pattern is the best person to persuade. *Holistic cognition* is characterized by (1) thematic and family-resemblance-based categorization of objects, (2) a focus on contextual information and relationships in visual attention, (3) an emphasis on situational causes in attribution, and (4) dialecticism.

Another finding are higher level of religiosity may lead to higher disagreement. In another word, the more religious the more possible to possess or express disagreement. The recommendation from this point are: unsuggestable to use a religious issues to be spread in social media. Since a religious person already has a potention to disagree, and when they stimulate by a kind of religious issues, may lead to stimulate a sharp conflict. This would be dangerous for the unity of a nation.

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