

Recognition

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Chapter 17

Recognition, Apology, and Restoration of Indonesians' Past Maltreatments of People Labeled as Communists

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ABSTRACT

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Using *social psychological* perspectives, *this paper aims to (1) explore how communism was socially constructed in Indonesia and why communism attributes labeled to a person can lead to negative effects, such as social exclusions. (2) After that, it presents findings of our study explaining that reminding people that human is naturally good and kind can reduce the negative effects of the communism stigma. (3) This chapter also discusses issues of past maltreatments to people labeled as communists in Indonesia, and why asking the government to apologize on behalf of Indonesians has not succeeded so far – the government refuses to apologize. To this matter, it is argued that as a start, what can be done is apologizing to the victims of violence and injustice because of the communist party of Indonesia (PKI) stigma, and the offsprings who don't know the political turbulence. From here, it may be possible that the truth can slowly be revealed.*

INTRODUCTION

In a documentary titled “40 Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy” (Lemelson 2009), one part tells the story of a child (let's say his name is Arman) who is labeled an offspring of a PKI (Partai Komunis Indonesia or Communist Party of Indonesia) member. This label had caused Arman to be ostracized, shunned and persecuted by his friends. Arman moved away from his hometown and tried to forget all the negative things he had experienced. On the screening of this documentary in Atma Jaya University

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in 2013, Arman was one of the guests. For him, childhood was the most traumatic period, and until now he was still trying to avoid his hometown and things related to it.

This is only one of the stories described in "40 Years of Silence." The cinema is but one example of media portrayals having an impact in the digital age. The negative effects of the PKI label are not only experienced by Arman alone; there are many people in Indonesia who suffer because of this stigma. However, Arman's story becomes interesting because, in many countries, stigmatization of children remains far from the core issues of a political ideology of a group. Usually, a child is ostracized on the basis of race, religion, or ethnicity, but not because of political ideology. Often, discourse about political ideology is in the domain of adults who are able to digest the complexities of state and political ideas.

This chapter¹ analyzes the construction of the PKI stigma and how to reduce it; a study that seems rather untouched, especially by social psychology scholars. This chapter also discusses why the issues of apology (which is also related to reconciliation) and justice for the victims of the events of 1965-1966 (see below) always failed. A social psychological perspective is used in examining these issues.

In short, at the end of September 1965, there occurred in Jakarta, Indonesia, the kidnapping and murder of several high-ranking military officers. Of the victims, six army generals were killed and one general managed to escape with a bullet wound in his leg. The PKI was accused of being the mastermind of the kidnappings, which was then declared as a coup attempt (Čavoški, 2013). After the incidents, people who were considered as having an affiliation to the PKI were arrested and jailed by the Indonesian government led by the military without any legal process, triggering a mass movement to "eradicate" the PKI. As a consequence of this movement, five hundred thousand to one million (Pour, 2013) and (Wardaya, 2013) people lost their lives. When released, PKI prisoners and their families had their identity cards specially marked, which resulted in social exclusions and difficulties in finding jobs.

It should be noted that the incident of September 1965, and the consequent purging of people who were considered to be affiliated with the PKI (as members, supporters, friends or family), can be seen from many points of view. A socio-historical approach would highlight the history of the PKI movement in Indonesia and the emergence of conflicts between the PKI and other groups (e.g., religious groups and political parties). Political scientists would consider the political issues that occurred at that time and how the PKI's political interests or goals were understood by other groups, which sides formed alliances with the PKI, and which groups had different interests from them. These two approaches have their own strengths, but a social psychology perspective offers a different frame. Instead of addressing questions about who was the mastermind behind the 1965 incident, or who cooperated with the PKI, such an approach lends to some understanding as to how people can be involved in or support acts of violence or exclusion, and how people might come to believe that apology is not necessary. In doing so, a social psychology perspective helps to explain the psychological aspects and the social context as to why the PKI is viewed negatively, and why killing and ostracizing people who were considered to be affiliated with the PKI became acts that were accepted. Before discussing the issue of PKI stigma and the calls for apology, first the authors will provide a deeper explanation about the field of social psychology and how it can help to solve social problems.

Recognition, Apology, and Restoration of Indonesians' Past Maltreatments**SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIAL CONTEXT**

In simple terms, psychology is the scientific study of the human mind and behavior. Because human nature is to be social, psychology evolved by studying the mind and behavior as well as social relations (Myers, 1994). A specific branch of this science is known as social psychology.

Social psychology is a perspective that seeks to understand how humans think, influence, and relate to each other. Human beings are part of society; therefore social psychology studies the psychological factors that appear in society, to then be examined to find how people's perceptions and behaviors can be improved. In society, psychological methods and perspectives can be used as a tool to solve social problems.

Initially, social psychology mostly concentrated on behaviors, feelings, and thoughts of individuals, almost ruling out environmental and cultural conditions, and institutional elements that bind the norm and mind. However, with the understanding that human and the mind can be determined by the context of where they live, social psychology became more sensitive to the conditions of society, culture, and also phenomena that are distinctive or discussed in particular context (Howarth, Campbell, Cornish, Franks, Garcia-Lorenzo, & Gleibs, 2013) and (Himmelweit & Gaskell, 1990).

Humans are very attached to the world around them. People's mind and behavior are strongly influenced by their living environment and the interactions with other people around them. In Indonesia, so far the construction of communist stigma is specific to the Indonesian context. It is important to note that the attempted coup d'état by political parties associated with communism as well as anti-communism were found in other countries. At least after World War II, there were communist coup d'état and coup attempts in Romania (1947), Czechoslovakia (1948), Finlandia (1948; failed), Sudan (1971; failed), Ethiopia (1974), and El Salvador (1979), and the overthrow of communism in Brazil (1964) and Russia (1991). Almost all failed coup attempts set by communists did not end with mass killings of communist members, followers, and sympathizers. In particular, in Brazil, the effect of the 1964 coup by the military ended up with the banning of all political parties. It triggered the communism group to fight the military government through guerilla tactics; some communist party members had been arrested and tortured. Such movements from communist and socialist groups, then, were used by the government as a justification for repression. Nonetheless, as far as it is known, it has never been found in other countries that a child is ostracized because his parents were communists, or people killed and put in jail just because they were accused to be close, **6**ated, or attached to communist ideology. To learn how this was developed and socially constructed, **it is important to understand the socio-historical aspects of the** PKI stigma, what elements formed it, and why it was retained.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PKI STIGMA

Social stigma is an attribute or characteristic given to a person who is considered negatively or is devalued in society (Howarth, Nicholson, & Whitney, 2013). Social stigma has received a lot of attention in the social sciences. Crocker, Voelkl, Testa, and Major (1991) mentioned that various studies had found that

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in many stigmatized groups, the effects were low in mental and physical health, academic achievements, social status, and also poverty and difficulty of access to housing, education, and employment (see, for example, citations to Allison, Braddock & McPartland, Clark, and Yinger in Major & O'Brien, 2005).

Generally, stigmatization affects occur through four mechanisms (Major & O'Brien, 2005). The first is negative treatment and direct discrimination; for example reluctance to give opportunities to speak to employees of Chinese descent. Second is the process of expectancy confirmation. An example of this mechanism is "what should be done" by stigmatized groups. For example, a belief that you do not expect Papuan people to think faster is linked to the stereotypes that Papuans are slow thinkers. The third mechanism is automatic stereotype activation, which is stigma activated by certain situations. For example, in a test the score of a Madurese is lower than a Javanese. The stigma that Madurese are "less educated" can automatically be activated in that situation. Stigmatization can occur because of a stereotype. The fourth mechanism is threat to social identity. The consequences of this threat apply to personal and collective domains. People who are stigmatized may experience low self-esteem, fear of other people's judgment, low status, and threat of losing social identity.

When a stigma is attached to a group, it does not consider the size of groups; even though the number of members in the group is large, the low status will remain attached. Black people, Madurese, Papuans, and Chinese are examples of groups with large numbers of members; however, because they are stigmatized, their status is seen as 'lower' than that of other groups.

A stigma can be formed by many factors. In the context of the PKI, the factors that formed the stigma, among others, was through information provided in school textbooks and films. The ways in which the PKI was described in history books and movies might have strongly influenced how people came to view them. It is known that, since the New Order (i.e., Soeharto era from 1966-1998) ruled, school textbooks described the PKI as a ruthless group who do not believe in God (atheist) and are dangerous. This construct was also amplified by the movie "Penghianatan G30S/PKI (The Eradication of G30S PKI Treason)" (Noer, 1984) which was compulsory viewing for students every year (Putra, Holtz, Pitaloka, Kronberger, & Arbiyah, 2016) in the nights of September 30th, from 1984 to 1998.

In that movie, the PKI was clearly portrayed as a group which often performed inhumane acts, like torturing prisoners with razor blades, kidnapping, and killing ruthlessly. How they smoked, and otherwise behaved arrogantly and ambitiously, were other images used to create the cruel impression of the PKI. Tempo magazine, the largest national magazine covering social and political issues, conducted surveys in 1985 and 2000 (Heryanto, 2013). In the 1985 survey, conducted after the first release of "Penghianatan G30S/PKI", 900 respondents from Java and Sumatera islands stated that the resurrection of communism was the biggest threat to the unity of Indonesia (33.6%). In 2000, Tempo added a question to 1000 respondents, asking where they learned the history of 1965. Ninety percent of the respondents answered from film, and most of them (87%) had watched "Penghianatan G30S/PKI" more than once. In Indonesia, the butchers of accused PKI members felt proud of what they did and were praised by the community where they lived (Sulistiyo, 2013).

Those two media, textbooks and movies, were reinforced by a Presidential decree, Keputusan Presiden/Pangti ABRI/Mandataris MPRS No.1/3/1966, on March 12 1966, concerning the dissolution of the PKI and its organizations, and banning PKI descendants from joining the military and becoming civil servants. The decree instilled fear in civil Indonesian society. Similar stigmatization processes have occurred in other countries. For example, to stigmatize the Jews, Adolf Hitler used the media of television, radio, newspaper, as well as regulations and instructions.

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There were at least two issues at play in the formation of the PKI stigma: humanity and religion. In Indonesia, the PKI was described as an inhumane and uncivilized group (Heryanto, 2013). The PKI was also depicted as a group which did not believe in God. Therefore, they came to be seen as a group which was very contrary to the elements of religiosity. The negative beliefs of PKI were then used as the official narrative in Soeharto's New Order era (Budiawan, 2006).

PRELIMINARY STUDY ON THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF PKI STIGMA AND THE EFFORTS TO REDUCE IT

The issue (i.e., Labeling) of the PKI was used in a 'black campaign' to topple Indonesian presidential candidate Joko Widodo in 2014. This demonstrated how the PKI label could still be used to bring down the dignity of a person even now, some 50 years after the 1966 decree. In regard to this phenomenon and previous phenomena, one of the authors of this chapter and some other colleagues (Putra, Holtz, Pitaloka, Kronberger, & Arbiyah, 2016) conducted a study on the negative effects of PKI stigma in 2014. Before conducting this study, some colleagues doubted whether negative effects of the PKI stigma still existed. Some thought this "PKI matter" was over, so that there were no more significant negative effects. Moreover, the study would use college students as participants, and college students were known as educated people.

This response was similar in a way to the response received by Milgram (1974) when he conducted his studies on obedience. The experimental studies conducted by Milgram stemmed from his astonishment at the testimonies given by former Nazi soldiers in trial, regarding the mass murder of the Jews. In their testimonies, the former soldiers said that the reason they killed the Jews was not because of hatred toward them, but more because of the understanding that they were following orders. In the trial, most soldiers said "I was just following orders." Following orders was a manifestation of obedience of the soldiers to the military rules imposed upon them.

For this reason, Milgram brought this obedience issue to the United States by conducting an experiment known as the "teacher-learner experiment" at Yale University. In this experiment, participants were divided into two groups, namely as *teacher* or *learner*. Participants who were given the role of *teacher* had to ask questions, while the *learner* had to answer them correctly. If the *learner* could not answer the question correctly, the *teacher* would be directed to deliver a punishment in the form of electric shocks which were labelled at several levels of voltage, from 50 volts to 450 volts. A high voltage electric shock could result in the loss of consciousness or the cessation of heartbeat, and this impact was communicated by the experimenter to the *teacher*. It is important to note that the participants acting as *learner* were not real participants; instead they were confederates who were assisting with the experimental activities. So, even though *teacher* participants heard that the shocks were received by the *learner*, the *learner* responses were recorded so they were actually fake.

In short, Milgram initially revealed his idea for this experiment to some of his colleagues at Yale University. Most colleagues opined that most participants would not get to the highest voltage of electric shock. The academic staff at Yale predicted that, at the maximum, from all the participants, only about 3% (an average 1.2%) would reach the highest level of voltage. But then the results were found to be very different from the assumption. The results showed that 65% of participants in the role of *teacher* continued to the highest level of electric shock, which in reality could make people lose their lives. Milgram's study showed that situation has a strong role in influencing someone's behavior.

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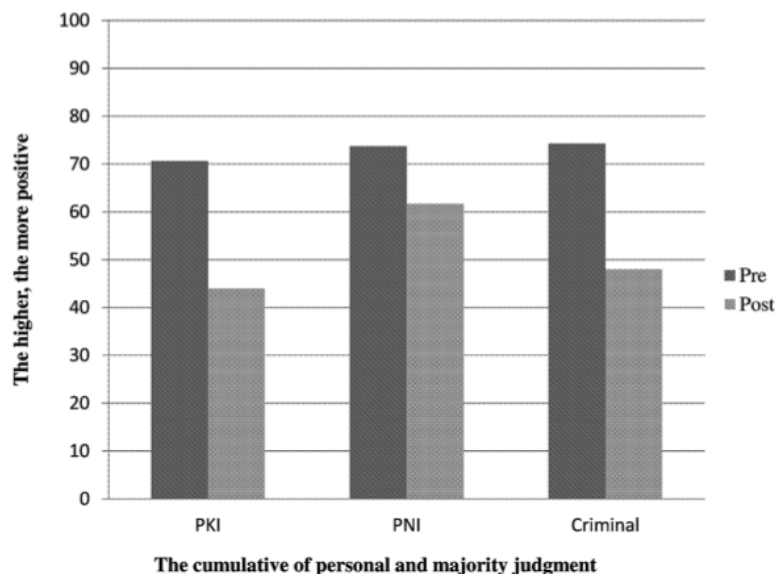
Back to the study conducted by (Putra, Holtz, Pitaloka, Kronberger, & Arbiyah, 2016). Beginning with doubts from some colleagues, it turned out that the study of negative effects of stigma with college students as participants showed that when someone is labeled as a PKI descendant, then negative effects would appear and contaminate all positive perceptions that existed previously. The negative effects impacted adults as well as children who were labeled as PKI descendants (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). Experiment 1 was set to see the effect of PKI labeling to an expert adult (N= 107) and experiment 2 was set to see the effect to a school student introduced as PKI descendant (N= 120). It didn't matter how much of an expert they were or how good their morals or how bright the school student were, the PKI label seemed to obscure all the skills they possessed. The positive perceptions then dropped.

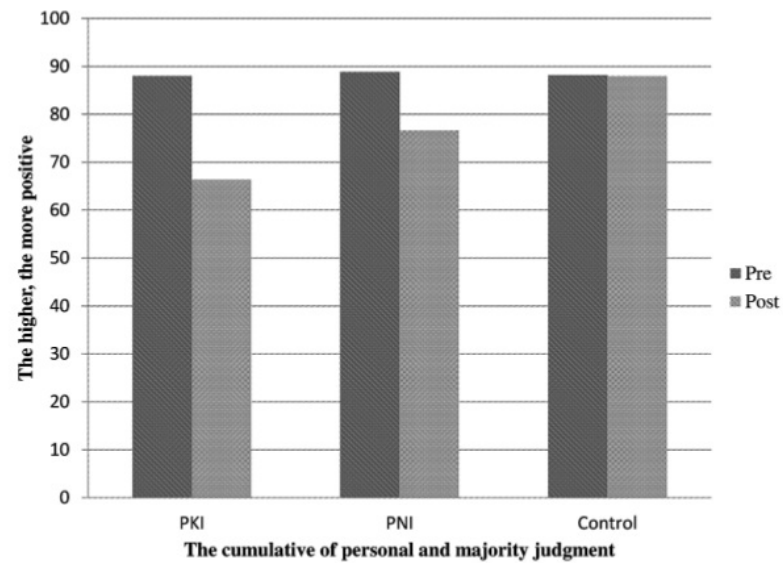
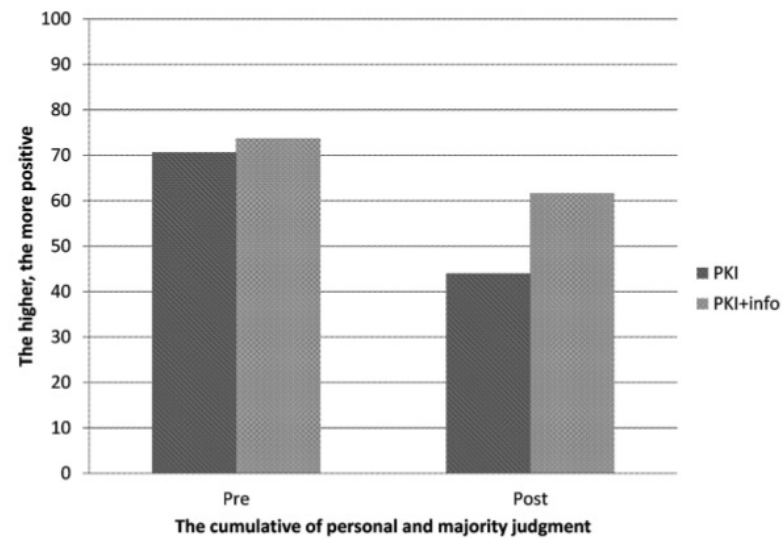
From here, a question then arose: if the PKI stigma really has negative effects, is there a way to reduce those negative effects? Putra, Holtz, Pitaloka, Kronberger, & Arbiyah (2016) continued to the next study, which was the attempt to reduce the negative effects of stigma by reminding people that humans are good by nature. In their last two studies, Putra, Holtz, Pitaloka, Kronberger, & Arbiyah (2016) showed that just by reminding that the nature of human is good and kind, the negative effects of the PKI stigma could be reduced (see Figure 3 and Figure 4).

The first steps of experiment 3 and 4 were similar to those in experiments 1 and 2. The difference was that, on the second steps in experiment 3 and 4, participants were randomly placed either in the PKI group, where the participants were given info that the adult and school student of PKI descendant, or in the PKI-info group, where participants were given info that the adult and school plus info that the nature of human is good. This showed that a group added with info that the nature of human is good was shown to be more positive compared to a group not added with such info. From this study, it could be understood that if history textbooks emphasized more on stories about the good nature of humans, the effects of PKI stigma which extended to the descendants of accused PKI members could be reduced.

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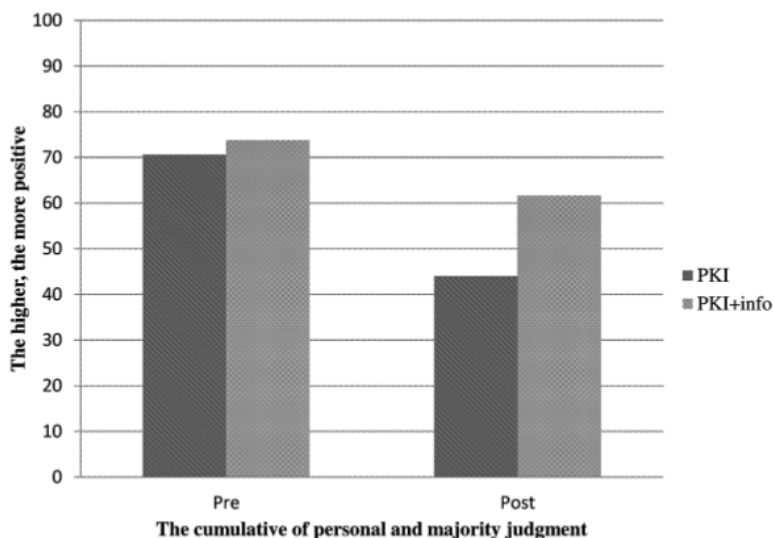
Figure 1. The results of experiment 1



Recognition, Apology, and Restoration of Indonesians' Past Maltreatments*Figure 2. The results of experiment 2**Figure 3. The results of experiment 3*

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Figure 4. The results of experiment 4**PKI, PKI DESCENDANTS, ACCUSED PKI, AND ISSUES OF APOLOGY AND DEMANDS FOR JUSTICE**

Now, let us move on to the issue of apology, reconciliation, and demands for justice. For many years, issues about apology, disclosure of truth and justice for the '65-'66 incidents victims have been raised. However, there has never been a clear resolution. Often, requests for official apology and disclosure of truth were rejected by the government of Indonesia. In the authors' opinion, the failed efforts cannot be separated from the stigma that kept growing and agreed to by many people in general.

It needs to be noted that stigma always works in groups. For example, when Jews (as a group) are seen as bad or negative by other groups, then people (in general) will generalize that all Jews are bad. In this case, the stigma that is accepted or agreed to by many people will have an impact on the understanding that all Jews are the same, equally bad. When this kind of understanding appears, then good Jews are considered nonexistent. While in reality, there can be so many individual characteristics in one group. Let us take Muslim characteristics for an example. In Indonesia, there are Muslims who do good, but there are also those who are involved with corruption. In the context of PKI, a stigmatized group in Indonesia, many people see PKI as bad and which has no positive aspects.

There are at least three psychological factors that can explain the reason why pleas for apology and reconciliation have been rejected. First, they were rejected because what has been experienced by people labeled as PKI was seen as caused by their own fault. In other words, "they got what they deserved" (Hirschberger, 2006). People who have this understanding think that the eradication of PKI was deserved because they had done evil. Often there have been arguments from people who refused to apologize, saying that what happened to them was caused by their own doing. Other examples of victims that are often blamed are people with HIV/AIDS. Usually, other people refused to give donations to help prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS because they think that the disease is a curse for having done immoral acts (like casual or premarital sex).

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The second psychological factor is the model of understanding that there is something wrong in the treatment given to people labeled as PKI, but this is considered reasonable, so the government does not need to apologize. In this model, people think that violence and maltreatments are not justified, but in certain circumstances it can be justified (see Castano & Giner-Sorolla, 2006). What kind of circumstances? One view explains that violence is justified when a group has been categorized as subhuman or has their human values erased. In the case of PKI, we can see that in our society many people think that PKI is a group with no morals, no humanity, and may threaten national integrity at any time. Within this view, then violence can be justified. When violence is justified, then the perpetrators of violence will be considered free from moral sanctions. In other words, "it is wrong, but it is not that bad."

Third, there is the understanding that the maltreatments of people labeled as PKI are completely wrong, but if the government apologizes that would be shameful as other countries would see this (see Brown, Zagefka, Gonzáles, Manzi, & Čehajić, 2008). By doing so, Indonesia would be branded as a country that had committed a massacre. Not ready to be branded as such, the government then puts off the apology. But this is not just the government, but also many people also have refused to apologize because of this understanding. It seems that this kind of refusal usually happens in countries that still need the world's recognition, countries that want to be seen as "good" and have a good track record.

Those three models of understanding are possibly growing in Indonesia. Because of this, it is considered that apology and attempts to disclose the truth are difficult to be realized. The question is then, if apologizing to PKI members or sympathizers is hard, because of the stigma that is so negative, then is it possible to apologize to people who were accused (and not necessarily true) as PKI or to people who were labeled as PKI descendants? From this question, semi-structured interviews were sent to 23 Muslims living around Jakarta from various groups (5 clerics, 4 civil servants (1 retired), 4 public Figures, 5 regular employees, and 4 small traders: 11 men, 12 women).

In a qualitative study about accused PKI still being conducted at the present time (Putra & Rufa- dah, n.d.), when talking about PKI, it was found that answers from most respondents (20 respondents) explicitly reject PKI and 3 respondents implicitly reject PKI. This still indicated a high level of hatred toward PKI. One of the responses was:

Q (Question): According to you, should the government apologize to the family and members of PKI?

A (Answer): No, not at all, the reason? It was obvious they murdered the kyais, the generals, they made the people suffer, they killed but they didn't apologize!

Interestingly, when talking about "accused PKI", as in people who may or may not be members or sympathizers of PKI, the negative response were almost similar to the situation when the question was about PKI. On the issue of apology, it was refused because, among others, PKI (the word "accused" was dropped when answering) was the one which did the evil deeds first. One response was:

Q: Should Indonesia apologize to accused PKI?

A: We don't have to apologize [...] it's obvious it was their fault, so is the family of PKI who is said to murder the generals, the kyais, do they apologize to their families? ...so just the opposite, don't just ask the country to apologize to the descendants of former PKI members. Like that...

Q: Why should [we] not apologize?

A: Well as we said, the point is, even they don't want to apologize to the families of the murdered, [...]

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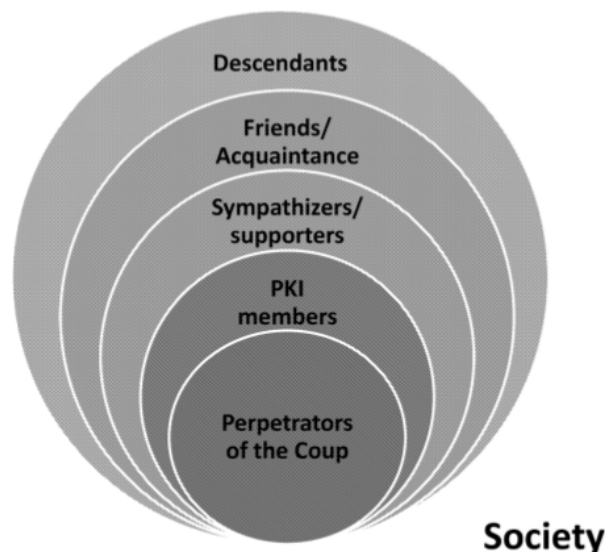
From these findings, it can be understood that even to apologize to “accused PKI” would be difficult, because being accused is automatically associated with PKI members who did bad things². Regarding PKI stigma, it is understood that the stigma extended to the people inside the members’ close and family circles. In this regard, in the case of a plea for apology and justice, the first step which needs to be taken is to develop sensitivity in society where “accused PKI” is different from “PKI”. Some people could be slandered as “PKI”, and it is possible that there are more victims of this slander. Why in society? Because this is where the issue developed, and from here the decision and attitude of the government are very likely be influenced.

CONCLUSION

To close this chapter, it can be reaffirmed that the failure of attempts for reconciliation and truth-revealing activities are partly because of the growing stigma about PKI in Indonesia. To realize reconciliation, reducing the negative effects of the stigma needs to be done. If this is not addressed, then pleas for apology and justice will always be met with difficulty. Why? Because of the negative issues surrounding PKI, “PKI descendants”, “PKI people” which are still strongly attached to most Indonesian’s minds. From the explanations above, one way to reduce the negative effects of the stigma is to affirm that the nature of humans is good and kind. This assumption can explain that even people who are seen as bad can turn out to be good.

But where should the process of reconciliation start? The effects of rejections toward PKI and propaganda which spread that PKI is a threat for Indonesia encompassed 5 layers of victim types (see Figure 5): 1) accused as the perpetrators of coup attempt, 2) PKI members, 3) followers/supporters of PKI, 4) friends/acquaintances of PKI members, 5) descendants of accused PKI members. In Indonesia, those people in these types of the layers were accused of knowing and supporting the coup attempt (Budiawan, 2006). At that time, PKI was the third world largest communist group and the fourth largest party in Indonesia (based on the 1955 political general election; Wardaya, 2013) with estimation of its members more than two millions. With this, accusing all people affiliated with PKI as knowing the 1965 coup attempts is very much like accusing all Muslims to be responsible for 9/11 incidents.

Moving a step ahead from exploring the layers; it is possible to categorized into central layers and periphery layers. Central layers consist of points 1, 2, and 3, whereas periphery layers consist of point 4s and 5. Central layers refer to those who were considered as supporting communism. Periphery layers refer to those who were considered to be less likely to support communism, that is, people who have less knowledge about communism movements in Indonesia. It is argued that, as communism is officially understood as a threat for the unity of Indonesia, a direct way to build a reconciliation or to ask for apology to people in central layers are not considered feasible. Hence, starting from periphery layers is considered more feasible. Therefore, it can be started with developing an understanding that friends/acquaintances and descendants of PKI members cannot be identified as akin to PKI members. The authors argue that adding examples, such as accusing all Muslims as responsible for global terrorism attacks, is similar to blaming all layers of communism for the 1965 coup attempts, is strongly encouraged. As most Muslims reject the use of violence, this belief considerably does not make sense.

Recognition, Apology, and Restoration of Indonesians' Past Maltreatments*Figure 5. Layers of 65-66 Victims*

Another possibility is by reminding that humans can do wrong, that making mistakes is “human”. There is a Fitriy festival event celebrated by Muslims in Indonesia where Muslims apologize to one another for their mistakes. In this sense, it will be interesting for further study to examine what happens to participants when they are reminded that making mistakes is human and events such as apologizing to one another is described as positive? Can they be led to support apologizing to victims of the ‘65 massacres?

Moreover, during the presidential election in 2014, Jokowi was reportedly a communist stooge and a PKI descendant. Somewhat, this label affected the numbers of potential voters. Pre-election surveys showed that support for Jokowi dropped from 49.9% in May to 45.5% in June 2014 (Firdaus, 2014). Fortunately, Jokowi survived from the negative effects and won the presidential election. However, let us ask, how many people have been vilified as a communist or member of PKI? How many people, because of their dislike of certain people, have slandered them as PKI to get rid of them? Even Jokowi demanded an apology because he wouldn’t accept being vilified as PKI. It is argued that steps to reconciliation can begin with apologizing to the victims of violence and injustice because of the PKI stigma, and the descendants who didn’t understand the political turbulence issue. From here, it may be possible that the truth can slowly be revealed.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ Part of this chapter was presented in the National Symposium: Dissecting the 1965 Tragedy through historical approach, April 18-19, 2016, in Aryaduta Hotel Jakarta.
- ² From a historical point of view, there have been many debates on who killed the generals at the end of September 1965. However, the majority of opinions that are accepted by society is that it was PKI who did it, and it was PKI who did the evil deeds. This is shown clearly from the respondents' understanding about PKI.

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