

# RATIONAL PREFERENCE IN HABITUAL INTERACTIONS

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## ABSTRACT

*Article focused on human being as a rational creature. Therefore, every undertaken preference could be interpreted as a rational selection. The issue emerged will clarify whether every human action can be categorized as a rational act. This article aimed to clarify the conditions that could be considered as the fundamental for appraising a choice as a rational choice. The method utilized to explicate the subject was literature review. There are several conditions that were discussed in this article, they were the principle of rationality, preferences, interests, and beliefs. The research finds out that the fourth condition is the basis for a rational choice.*

**Keywords:** *rational choice, preferences, interests, beliefs*

## INTRODUCTION

Humans are basically identified as rational creatures. The dimension of human rational is the self-affirmation that uniquely distinguished it from the creatures type of God's creation both biotic or abiotic. When humans affirm themselves as rational creatures, at the same time, it negates the rational dimension in all other living of God creatures. This rational dimension exalts human beings as human, and the other hand it degrades all other creations as infrahuman. As a human, human puts himself at the level of the superstructure of life, while the other creatures placed at the infrastructure tier.

The issue is whether every human action can be categorized as a rational act. Or other questions, in what conditions that human action can be categorized as a rational action. As rational creatures every action is always based on rational considerations. Because of that, the human action is therefore not in pursuance of the mechanical and conceptual behaviour. Mechanical action is not based on any particular considerations. For instance, If at a certain hour, at 12 am, someone needs to eat. He/she eats at that hour not because he/she is hungry, but because he/she automatically realizes the necessity for consuming. Under these conditions, someone does not decide whether to eat at the time, or postpones eating until they famished. People merely perform that action because of the habit. The issue is whether it can be categorized as a rational act.

The main purpose of this paper is to discuss the nature of rational choice, with the major question highlighted, in which conditions a human action is classified as a rational choice. Mechanical action can not be categorized as a rational choice. Besides the unfounded on a choice, a mechanical action includes a consideration in which people can choose a course of action as the preference of choice.

## METHODS

This article is based on a literature review. Therefore, this paper unprovided the empirical facts of primary data regarding rational choice in everyday social interaction. Literatures as the main reference are theories about rational choice in the context of social interaction. Based on the theories, the authors delineate the dimensions of rational choice in daily life.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Rational choice theory is basically built on some principles, such as rationality, preferences, interests, and beliefs. First, the principle of rationality suggests that actors always act rationally. Actors in this context is a primary element that is very prominent (Haryanto, 2012). There are two different views about the actors. In one hand, the argument that the actor always cognizant of his actions, either on purpose or manner of how it should be attained. And the other hand, the actor is not always guided by rational consciousness for his actions.

Pierre Bourdieu (2000) argues that a social agent is determined by habitus that gouged by their past experiences. Schemes system of perception, appreciation, and action that allow social agents to apply their practical knowledge. It based on the identification and conditional recognition, conventional stimulation of the terms through which they are geared to react, and without an explicit definition of the purpose or rational calculation about means to generate appropriate strategies and renewed without end. Both the objectives and the medium used to achieve that goal is always within the framework of a structure that produces and defines the means and objectives to be achieved by a social agent.

In contrast to Bourdieu view, many people who trust that an actor always acts based on the objectives and means are clearly defined by the actor (Dogaru, 2011). Actor in this context act instrumentally. Actor calculates and reckons in the costs and benefits of the available policy options, and he/she chooses actions to maximize the value for themselves. In this context, the actor can be described as homo economicus.

The idea of homo economicus is based on assumptions of perfect rationality and instrumental rationality. Actor is endowed with rationality, has the capacity to set goals, preferences and alternatives of action to achieve the determined goals. He/she also receives the capacity to compare, creates a hierarchy of preferences, and convincing alternatives. Both goals, preferences and alternatives are chosen to achieve the objective, has always been associated with the interests of the actor's self-regard. In setting a goal, preferences, and alternative actions, the actor has full information required both on preference, alternative, the rules as well as about other people who pursue their own interests.

Instrumental dimension of human action is also briefly discussed by Jurgen Habermas (as cited in Roderick, 1986). Habermas argues that the action-oriented to success is an instrumental action. When the action is understandable as the following technical rules can be evaluated its efficiency and in accordance with the physical world. Action-oriented to success is a strategic action when the action is understandable following the rules of rational choice and can be evaluated in terms of efficiency requirement in influencing the decisions of the other social actors that are seen as potential opponents.

Rational choice theory is built on the assumption that people are rational actors. As rational actors, people always take into account the ultimate goal and the means are used to achieve its objectives. Besides the actors are free to determine their behavior either to follow the goals or deviate from that goal. The main element in the considerations made by the actors is the benefit principle of objectives and their actions both for pleasure to the pain and calculations that are hedonistic and all these calculations related to individual pleasure. Nevertheless, an actor is still determined by the perception and understanding of the potential losses or penalties, if those actions violated the kindness and the social contract.

Relating to the rationality dimension, an actor has the capacity to make choices. This capacity includes four main principles: (1) The principle of intentionality. This principle suggests that we always look at the goals that direct our behavior and investigate emotionally and cognitively, (2) The principle of adaptation. It is closely linked with the notion of intentionality. Many human behaviors adapt to environmental factors that exist around the decision to be taken, (3) The principle of irregularity. Individuals operate in the risky environment either constant or uncertain. This uncertainty is not only related to the results to be achieved but also deals with the procedures of their own choices and even uncertain about their preferences. (Jones, Boushey, & Workman, 2006).

The second principle of rational choice theory is a preference (Darity, 2008) emerged from considerations either partial or perfect about relevant reasons to act. Preferences owned by the actor would determine how it acts according to the trust. Preferences may be the reason how he/she should act, confront, or avoid the consequences of his/her own actions. Terminology of preference used in connection with tendency, interests, and desires that drive the choices of individuals toward the actions they take.

According to Robert E Goodin (as cited in Elster and Hylland, 1989), someone's choice is not always perfectly reflects his preference. Sometimes the actor produces choices on the basis of imperfect information, ignoring the expectations of their own future, or lack of full awareness of all the alternatives. At other times, someone's choice reflects the framework of his/her own or his/her expectations and also to avoid liability risks of the alternative preferences that he/she produces by himself/herself.

In addition to its base of unclear information, options that do not completely reflect the preferences due to reciprocal forbearance (Elster & Hylland, 1989) in which an action will give benefit to a person but at the same time also endanger other people. Under these circumstances, everyone will release the opportunity that bring endanger to the other party. In a context such as this, sometimes the actor actually has preferences that guide his/her behavior, but the actor choses another preferences.

The third principle is the interests of rational choice. Swedberg (2005) argues that the interest is a principal and driving force in social life. Interest usually guides human behaviour. Interest in this context is defined as a driving force in social life. Swedberg (2005) said that there are five types of interests, such as the interests of procreation, psychological interests, individual interests, social interests, and the interests of the transcendental. Those five types of interest resulted in a boost to human action. Social life occurs within the context of action to meet the interests.

According to Small, Simmel, & Coleman (as cited in Swedberg, 2005), the interest is the force that drives a person to pursue certain goal within the community. The interest provides power to drive behavior, which takes various forms such as subordination-superordinasi, competition, and so forth. In this context, the actor always tries to maximize its interests. An actor is assumed to have an interest in an object or an event. But, to achieve the interests, the actor should have control over the resources associated with his/her interest. Social system occurs when a resource is controlled by two actors. Both of these actors will interact and become involved in the social system.

Bourdieu & Wacquant (1992) replace the concept of interest with the concept of *ilusio* and *libido*. According to Bourdieu (1992), concept of interest that existed is too instrumental, expressive, and normative. The concept can not explain the non-material motivations. Bourdieu (1992) also stresses that interests relies heavily on those specific areas. The difference will determine the areas of interest. Areas of social life will create a wide variety of interests.

According to Piccione & Teson (2006), social agencies rely on the calculation of instrumental rationality. Agents pursue their dreams as maximization of voice, glory, money, power, and so forth with a very low personal cost. Relating with the voting process, Pincione & Teson (2006) argues that rational choice assumes voters' self. In this view, they choose a candidate who will support policies that give them benefit. In addition to rely on the calculation of instrumental rationality, social agent is also determined by the belief. If the actor has superb confidence, he/she even seizes its destination. People with instrumental rational logic will deviate if they can not measure the cost required and instead they will refer their logic when the cost is settled.

The fourth principle is trust. In the context of social interaction, rational choice involves a relationship of trust. Belief is a constitutive element that forms every social associations in the community. It has long been a concern social scientists. Simmel (as cited in Lawang, 2005) suggests that without prevalent mutual trust between people in a community, it will bring disintegrative among them. Trust according to Simmel (as cited in Lawang, 2005) is one of the most important synthetic force in society. Even further to say that trust is the basis for the individual actions.

Related to the concept of social capital, Fukuyama (1996) argues that trust is the expectation that appears on a community of regular, honest, and cooperation action that is based on shared common norms. People who do not trust one another will finish the cooperation between them. Even if they choose to still run it, the cooperation will run in formal system of rules. Social trust according to Fukuyama (1996) is not built on contracts and legal rules, but first of all it is the moral consensus which gives each member of the group the basis for mutual trust. High or low trust between each members of the group determine the strength or weakness of social cooperation among them. Social conflicts in this context often reflects the weakness of social cohesion in a community. And furthermore, weak social cohesion reflects the level of trust in a frail group.

Dasgupta & Serageldin (2000) suggests that trust is the center of every issues. Trust is a predominant element in any transaction. Dasgupta & Serageldin (2000) adopts the word trust in the context of the establishment of individual expectations regarding the actions of others who have a connection with his/her actions. When the action is to be chosen before he can observe other people actions. Trust is important inasmuch the presence and absence of confidence regarding to what we choose to do, and in many cases about what we can do.

After explaining the nature of the trust, an notable question that should be described here is why someone trust others? Why there is mutual trust among them? And how can they trust each other? Lawang (2005) suggests that one trust others because they know each other. And trust that appears here is based on cognition. Someone believes in others because he/she knew the person is either physical, psychological, or social background. This cognition process is essentially personal, so trust is also personal. The trust will carry on to be tested in the process of social interaction further.

Trust is essentially reciprocal. Everyone involved in a relationship of mutual trust is to comprehend one another. Nonetheless, it can not be concluded that every person who knows each other will also trust each other. Therefore, in addition to the factor, trust relationships of every person who participates in a relationship that has the same values and interests. This trust relationship will splice to be strengthened if everyone involved in is trying to comply the needs of each one against the other. According Lawang (2005), trust relationship is done for a variety of motives, such as to perform

a specific task entrusted by one person to another. In addition, the trust relationship is also built with a motive to increase confidence and to build a partnership.

According to Coleman (as cited in Dasgupta & Serageldin, 2000), a relationship of trust always involves at least two parties the trustor (the trust) and trustee (believed). Both trustor and the trustee have a purpose and attempt to explain the actions of each actor is very important in understanding the purpose of an actor in such situations. The decision of the candidate trustor is almost always problematic to decide whether to trust or not to a prospective trustee.

Not only candidate trustor's decision should be considered. In many cases, the trustee has a choice between maintaining the trust and confidence detriment. In certain cases, the trustee felt compelled to abuse the trust if by doing so, he/she receives the financial gain or other benefits. Trustee certainly will be fortunate in the short term, but in the long run, trustee will no longer be trusted by the trustor.

In a social interaction process, trust is a very important condition. The first thing that must be considered is the provision of trust allows an action on the part of the trustee that can not occur in other condition. Reposal involves the placement of resources in the hands of those who would use it for their own purposes (trustee), for the benefit of trustor, or both.

The second point is if the trustee is indeed trustworthy, then the person who discourage him the trust on the contrary it provides, whereas if the trustee was not credible, then the person who deliver him the confidence would not allow it otherwise. The third point is the act of giving the trust involves the voluntary placement of resources that are owned by the trustor as a form of trust to another party (trustee), without a real commitment from that party (trustee). And the fourth point is that the trust relating to the time lag associated will affect the action on the part of the trustee in the future. In this context, the trust conceives a commitment to be fulfilled in the future.

## CONCLUSIONS

The description above depicted that the rational choices, especially in the context of everyday interactions. The rational choices occur in conditions where every actor that involved has specific preferences. These preferences are subjective, which is the basis for an actor to act in a certain way, or choose a particular action in interaction with others. A preference in this context relates to tendencies, interests, desires that drive a person to choose a particular action. It expressed the relationship between desire and belief that is owned by an actor. The actor has a certain desire and believes that will bring some values to him.

In addition to preferences, rational choice also occurs in conditions when an actor has a particular interest. Interest can be a motivating factor for an actor to act in a certain way. Interest in this case is to provide the power that drives an actor to take on various forms of social action, such as subordination-superordinasi, competition, and so forth. Any rational actor in this case will always attempt to maximize its interests.

Rational choice in the context of social interaction always involves other actors. That means a rational choice regarding to the relationship of trust with others. Without the mutual trust that is evenly distributed between one person and another person, the community itself will be disintegrative. Trust is one of the most important synthetic force in society. Even that trust is the basis for the individual actions.

It is obvious that rational choice in everyday social interaction always occurs in a condition that each of the actors involved in social interactions that have a preference for his/her actions, interests, and beliefs. The third dimension is significant as a basis for a rational choice. An actor would never choose something if the actor did not perceive it was notable to him, and also if it did not become preference or she does not believe that the choice can maximize the benefits that he/she intends to get through these interactions.

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