

Multidimensional Religiousness among Christian and Muslim Students: Are There Gender Differences in Indonesia?

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Abstract: The idea of gender differences has been widely accepted as universal, also when it comes to religiousness. However, evidences supporting this idea were mainly acquired using single or few items measurement. As religiousness has been found to be multidimensional, at least in Christianity and Islam, the gender differences need to be reinvestigated. Most studies in the subject of religiousness were done either in a Christian populated or Muslim-based country, leading to the need of a more diverse samples in a cross-cultural context. As one of the world's largest Muslim nation, yet acknowledging religious pluralism, Indonesia is a fitting population to serve the purpose. 331 Christian and Muslim college students with men and women ratio of nearly 1:1 filled the Four Basic Dimensions of Religiousness (4-BDRS). T-test analysis found no significant differences in religiousness between women ($n=99$) and men ($n=92$) in the Christian samples. On the other hand, Muslim men ($n=62$) were found to have higher religiousness than women ($n=78$) in total religiousness ($t(138) = 2.455, p<0.05$) and Bonding dimension ($t(138) = 3.721, p<0.0001$). These results suggest a complex interplay between gender and religiousness, which involves religious socialization phenomena, patriarchal culture, culture's masculinity, and religiousness development in university.

1 INTRODUCTION

The notion of gender differences is a popular concept in modern society, with religiousness being included in the scope of discussion (Bryant, 2007). Scholars in psychology of religion commonly accepted that women are more religious than men due to numerous surveys that repeatedly found this to be the case (Sullins, 2006). Women were found having higher participation in religious affiliation (Smith, Denton, Faris and Regnerus, 2002), greater daily connection, more assurance and emotional connection with God, compared to men (Buchko, 2004). This idea that women are more religious than men became so universally apparent that study of religiousness routinely includes gender as a control variable (Stark, 2002).

Having said that, a point needs to be made about the concept of religiousness used in previous surveys, in which they mostly use single or few items. Therefore, it seems evident that the claim of

gender differences needs to be confirmed with a more thorough model of religiousness. A recent model was introduced by Saroglou (2011), which provides an integrative framework to study variation of religious dimensions in the field of cross-cultural psychology. In the multidimensional construct, the coexistence of cognitive, emotional, moral, and social dimensions correspond to the four components of religion, respectively looking for meaning and the truth (Believing), experiencing self-transcendent emotions (Bonding), exerting self-control to behave morally (Behaving), and belonging to a group that solidifies collective self-esteem and in group identification (Belonging) (Saroglou, 2011).

The multidimensionality of religion has been acknowledged in Christianity and Islam (Abu-Raiya and Pargament, 2011). Christianity displays multidimensional religious motivation (Beck and Jessup, 2004), and multidimensionality in their specific religious values and beliefs (Snell and

Overbey, 2008); likewise Muslims aspired to have multidimensional religiousness that may be unique compared to other religion (Raiya, Pargament, Mahoney And Stein, 2008; AlMarri, Oei and Al-Adawi, 2009). The majority of research in this field utilized American and Iranian samples, therefore future studies with more diverse samples are needed given the significant geographical and consequently, cultural differences in different places in the world (Abu-Raiya and Pargament, 2011).

Indonesia is a country with religious pluralism, with Muslims making up nearly 90% of its population and 7% of the population identified themselves as Christians (Subdirector of Statistical Demographic, 2012). As one of the world's most populous Muslim nation, Indonesia remains constitutionally secular, applying civil law with citizens formally adhere to one of the six official world religions (Pedersen, 2016). Previous studies on religiousness in Indonesia were done exclusively with either Muslims or Christians, with the use of unidimensional measure in Muslim population (Sallquist, Eisenberg, French, Purwono and Suryanti, 2010; French, Purwono and Triwahyuni, 2011) and initial use of multidimensional measure in Christian population (Saputra, Goei and Lanawati, 2017).

The present study was initiated to attest the universally accepted notion of gender differences in religiousness, using multidimensional model. Considering the lack of study in this subject of interest in a country that is not Christian populated nor Islamic-based, Indonesia is a plausible setting to answer the question. As result of Indonesia's pluralism in religious culture, it is possible to study Christians and Muslims together using a cross-cultural measurement.

In line with the seemingly consistent gender differences in religiousness study involving Christians, it is hypothesized that Christian women will have higher religiousness than men. On the other hand, Muslims with more patriarchal culture is hypothesized to have the opposite result, where men will have higher religiousness than women (Sullins, 2006).

2 METHODS

2.1 Participants

The total participants who completed questionnaires are 331 college students, with 191 Christians and 140 Muslims. The ratio of men and women are

nearly 1:1 with 92 men, 99 women; and 61 men, 78 women, representing Christian and Muslim sample respectively. Participants were taken from two Muslim universities, one Christian university, and one non-religious university in Jadetabek (Jakarta, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi) area. Participants' age ranges from 17 to 23 years old with the average age of 19.2 years old. Participants' ethnicity were 30% Chinese, 26% mixed, 21% Javanese, 7% Sundanese, 6% Batakese, 5% Betawis, and another 5% from Manado, Ambon, and Papuan.

2.2 Measures

2.2.1 Four Basic Dimensions of Religiousness Scale (4-BDRS)

The scale was developed by Saroglou et al. (Saroglou and 13 coauthors from the International Project on Fundamentalism, 2012), consists of 12 items that measures four basic dimensions of religiousness. The four dimensions refer respectively to four components of religion: beliefs, emotions/rituals, moral norms, and group/community. Three items measure each dimension of Believing (e.g., "I feel attached to religion because it helps me to have a purpose in my life", "It is important to believe in a Transcendence that provides meaning to human existence"), Bonding (e.g., "Religious rituals, activities or practices make me feel positive emotion", "Religion has many artistic, expressions, and symbols that I enjoy"), Behaving (e.g., "I am attached to the religion for the values and ethics it endorses", "Religion helps me to try to live in a moral way"), and Belonging (e.g., "In religion, I enjoy belonging to a group/community", "Belonging to a religious tradition and identifying with it is important for me"). Each item was answered on a seven-point Likert scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). A total score for each dimension is calculated with higher scores indicating higher involvement in that specific dimension, and a total score from all four dimensions represent indicator of total religiousness. In the present study, internal reliability measured with Cronbach's Alpha were .929 in the Christian sample and .885 in the Muslim sample. The corrected item total-correlation for the 12 items in 4-BDRS ranges from .470 to .716 in the Christian sample and .471 to .685 in the Muslim sample.

Table 1: Sample descriptive & t-test results of Christian Student.

		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Total religiousness	Men	63.59	13.76	189	.32	.75
	Women	64.18	11.78			
Believing	Men	16.84	3.83		.50	.62
	Women	17.09	3.2			
Bonding	Men	15.36	3.86		.53	.60
	Women	15.64	3.38			
Behaving	Men	16.84	3.73		.08	.94
	Women	16.88	3.3			
Belonging	Men	14.55	4.6	.04	.97	
	Women	14.58	3.75			

^a*M*=Mean. *SD*=Standard Deviation. *df*=degree of freedom. *t*=result of independent sample t-test

3 RESULTS

Normality of the data distribution was interpreted using skewness and kurtosis range suggested by George & Mallery (George and Mallery, 2010), which is ± 2 . All the data distributions being analyzed had characteristic of kurtosis and skewness of $\pm .7$, much lower than the suggested range, pointing to normal distribution. As assumption of normality is fulfilled, independent sample t-test as parametric test of comparing means between groups was utilized.

Results presented in Table 1 show no significant differences in all measures of religiousness of Christian students. In Table 2, Muslim male students show a higher score in total religiousness, $t(138) = 2.455$, $p < 0.05$, and Bonding dimension, $t(138) = 3.721$, $p < 0.0001$, compared to the female Muslim students.

4 DISCUSSION

The results of this study shed different light to the notion of gender differences in religiousness. No significant differences were found between Christian male and female students, however the results for Muslim students partially confirmed the hypothesis. Albeit descriptively showing higher score in all measures of religiousness, Christian women did not differ significantly compared to men. This is inconsistent with findings in America with predominantly Christian samples (Smith, Denton, Faris and Regnerus, 2002; Buchko, 2004). In the Indonesian Christian sample, men and women do not show significant difference in their degree of cognitive understanding in religious ideology and doctrine (Believing), transcendence in religious

rituals (Bonding), being virtuous in their religiously guided moral actions (Behaving), and immersion in religious community (Belonging). These findings suggest that among Indonesian Christians, the universally accepted gender differences in religiousness do not apply.

The complexity of gender differences in religiousness was first suggested by Sullins (2006). His study cast serious doubt on the universal claim that women are generally more religious than men. He argued that the current explanation proposed to reason for women's superiority over men in religiousness is too simple, therefore a better understanding of religiousness interaction with gender lies not in a search for universality but in the acceptance of complexity. In pursuance of a better understanding regarding the results among (Indonesian) Christians, the present study will focus on the distinctive characteristics of religiousness in the sample, borrowing concepts from religious socialization theory.

Religious socialization theory argues that religiousness results from learning process beginning in childhood and persisting until adulthood with family as the socializing agents, both nuclear and extended family (Bengtson, Copen, Putney and Silverstein, 2009). In the context of the Christian sample, men are said to be socialized more into being a household's leader having sets of values pivotal to functional decision making; whereas women are taught to support and submit to men by preserving roles of nurturance and conflict resolution (Frederick, 2010). In the context of Christians in Indonesia, this might not be the case any longer. More Christian families are seen practicing dual-earner household, where women are seen in the workplace, engaging in various functional and leadership roles. It seems like more

Table 2: Sample descriptive & t-test results of Muslim Student.

		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Total religiousness	Men	65.94	11.08	138	2.46*	.02
	Women	61.53	10.13			
Believing	Men	17.68	3.41		1.90	.06
	Women	16.58	3.4			
Bonding	Men	16.42	3.0		3.72**	.00
	Women	14.41	3.3			
Behaving	Men	17.81	2.62		.68	.50
	Women	17.47	3.08			
Belonging	Men	14.03	4.32		1.43	.15
	Women	13.06	3.67			

* $p < 0.05$, two-tailed

** $p < 0.0001$, two-tailed

^a*M*=Mean. *SD*=Standard Deviation. *df*=degree of freedom. *t*=result of independent sample t-test

Christian women are being independent and not fully supportive of the concept that women need to submit to men. In other words, a differential religious socialization might no longer be apparent in (Indonesian) Christian men and women to cause gender differences. Since there has yet to be data and research to support this argument, further elaboration is held from the present study.

Seemingly in line with the study's hypothesis, Muslim men show higher religiousness than women. The previous religious socialization theory applies to Muslims in a different way, with religious institution replacing family as socializing agents, for example, by practicing sex segregation in religious practice and ritual, excluding women from religious leadership. This practice in turn promotes strong norms of masculine religious identity and ideals (Sullins, 2006), thus explaining the significantly higher total religiousness in Muslim men compared to women. Another interesting finding is the significantly different Bonding dimension between Muslim men and women. Masculine religious identity is rarely associated with emotional or transcendence quality, but in explaining this finding, the patriarchal culture in Muslim need to be accounted. Masculinity in Islam men include the essential ability to lead the whole family to Allah (Siraj, 2010), where men are expected to be the mediator between Allah and the rest of the family, especially women.

One might argue that patriarchal value is not unique to Muslims, since Christians in Indonesia are applying it as well. The key difference here is the strictly patriarchal practice among Muslims and negotiable patriarchal practice among Christians. It might be different case by case, but in most cases, Christians practice patriarchy in moderation, for example, it is common to see Christian women

becoming a pastor or a missionary while in Islam, most religious affair needs to be executed under the authority of men.

In his studies on the dimensions of culture, Hofstede coined the term *masculine vs. feminine* culture. A society is called masculine when emotional gender roles are distinct. Men are thought to be assertive, tough, focused on material success, whereas women are expected to be modest, tender and concerned with the quality of life (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). If both men and women are expected to have more overlapping roles, the culture is called feminine. According to Hofstede, Christianity maintains a struggle between masculine and feminine elements. The Old Testament reflects tougher values and focuses more on justice (an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth), whereas the New Testament reflects more tender values (turn the other cheek). In Islam, Sunni (the majority Muslims in Indonesia) is a more masculine version of faith than Shia (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). Hofstede's theory of culture seems to be consistent with the findings of this study, which uncovered the fact that Muslim men are more religious than Muslim women, whereas Christian men and women do not show any significant differences in religiousness.

The differences of religiousness development between male and female students might be another possible explanation of the study's result. In Christian female sample, a significant positive correlation was found between age and total religiousness ($r = .228, n = 99, p = .023$), Believing ($r = .302, n = 99, p = .002$), and Behaving ($r = .242, n = 99, p = .016$). In other words, Christian female students' religiousness, cognitive understanding in religious ideology, and religiously guided moral actions increased over their years in university.

Similar correlations with age were not found in the male student samples. Bryant (Bryant, 2007) found that over time, female college students became increasingly more likely than male to place importance on integrating spirituality into their life. Most participants in the present study were in their freshman and sophomore year, when the said difference between men and women were not apparent. This factor might explain the absence of gender differences in religiousness in Christian sample.

Application of above results and explanations require further confirmation due to the sample's conditions. Christian sample in the present study was acquired from one Christian university while the Muslim sample came from two Muslim universities and one non-religious based university. Some differences in religiousness aspect were found between students who go to religious-based higher education institution compared to those in secular institution (Knecht and Ecklund, 2014). In the present study, however, these possibilities could not be clarified due to sample's condition.

5 CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

This first study to test the notion of gender differences in multidimensional religiousness found interesting results. The universality of gender differences is not to be taken for granted. Gender differences in religiousness were not found among Christians, while Muslim men show higher religiousness than Muslim women in some areas. Results differ from studies done in countries such as America and Iran. This indicates that despite their differences, Christian and Muslim in Indonesia are similarly exposed to the country's indigenous quality. Understanding this will help sustain religious peace among believers.

In this study, the complexity of gender differences in religiousness is explained through religious socialization theory, patriarchal culture, Hofstede's theory of *masculine* vs. *feminine* culture, and gender differences in development of religiousness in university. Nevertheless, the role of Indonesia's indigenous characteristics has not been fully explained in the present study. In the future, further studies about gender differences in multidimensional religiousness are encouraged, especially with a more representative sample's conditions. Efforts to ensure the psychometric

application of 4-BDRS as a cross-cultural multidimensional measurement of religiousness in Indonesia are urgently needed as well. The simple psychometric data in the present study show promising future.

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