

Predicting Well-being from Different Dimensions of Religiousness: Initial Application of 4-BDRS Scale in Indonesia

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Abstract: As a nation based on the belief in one supreme God, Indonesia has depicted indigenous religious phenomena worthy of scientific analysis. Due to the endorsement of religiousness in Indonesia, prior research aimed to find empirical evidence on the effects of religiousness on well-being. However, most of the prior research only focused on one religion, either Islam or Christianity. This paper shows and compares how religiousness in both Islam and Christianity can predict well-being. This study will also show the dynamics of different dimensions of religiousness using the Four Basic Dimensions of Religiousness Scale (4-BDRS), which has been extensively used in the West, in explaining well-being. The empirical evidences were derived from 614 college students from religious-based universities using 4-BDRS and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). The result demonstrated that for both Muslims and Christians, total religiousness has a significant positive correlation with well-being ($r=.34, p<.05; r=.39, p<.05$). However, the results of multiple regression test revealed that for Muslims, only Belonging has a significant effect on well-being ($\beta=.16, p<.05$) while for Christians only Believing ($\beta=.17, p<.05$) and Belonging ($\beta=.36, p<.05$) have a significant effect on well-being. Independent sample t-test indicated that Christian college students show a significantly higher Belonging dimension ($M=5.16, SD=1.23, N=275$), than Muslim students ($M=4.89, SD=1.14, N=339$), $t(612) = -2.91, p<0.005$. On the other hand, Muslim college students ($M=6.15, SD=.77, N=339$) display a significantly higher Behaving dimension than Christians ($M=5.91, SD=.91, N=275$), $t(535.2) = 3.41, p <.05$. These results shed some lights on how Muslims and Christians can be similar and different at the same time, regarding their religiousness and satisfaction with life. Efforts to increase the well-being of religious students might give more attention to the Believing and Belonging dimension of religiousness.

1 INTRODUCTION

In recent times, numerous studies have been conducted to investigate the effects of religiousness on well-being. However, most of these studies were done on Christian populations in the West. Only recently have studies been done on Muslim populations (Abu-Raiya 2013). Saroglou (2013), on the other hand, wrote that the relationship between religiousness and well-being was affected by the type of religion and culture. This research studies the interplay between religiousness and well-being in the two largest religions in Indonesia, namely Islam and Christianity, using a comprehensive measure of religiousness created by Saroglou,

namely The Four Basic Dimensions of Religiousness Scale (4-BDRS) (Saroglou 2011).

Religiousness is a construct to measure an individual's level of interest on religion (Saroglou 2013). Considering that religion is a multidimensional construct, a good measure of religiousness should be multidimensional as well (Koenig 2018). A single item index of religiousness or scale that focuses only on one dimension of religiousness fails to understand the complexity of religion. To answer this problem, Saroglou (2011) analyzed all measures of religiousness and concluded that all religions have four dimensions of religiousness: Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging. Saroglou then created the 4-BDRS, which consisted of these four dimensions. Believing

is a set of beliefs about external transcendence (one or many). Bonding is related to the emotional parts of religiousness that unites an individual to the external transcendence. Behaving is concerned with norms and moral requirements, while Belonging refers to cohesion with a community.

These four dimensions of religiousness reflect four psychological processes, namely cognitive, moral, emotional, and social, and they are not limited to any single religious tradition. Therefore, the four dimensions are presumably present in all religions and culture (Saroglou, Vassilis and Cohen, 2013). The universality of the 4-BDRS makes this measurement useful in cross-cultural and cross-religion research. Although these four dimensions are universal, the magnitude and correlations among these four dimensions may vary from one religion to another, as well as from one culture to another. The same is also true on the effect of religiousness on well-being (Saroglou 2011).

A majority of research found that religiousness has a significant positive effect on well-being (Koenig 2018). Religion affects well-being through many ways, both psychologically and socially. People high in religiousness tend to have better coping strategies, which in turn reduces their levels of stress (Ju, et al., 2018; Gebauer, et al., 2012). Religion gives meaning in life, thus people with a high level of religiousness perceive a better purpose in life (Wang, et al., 2016). Furthermore, religious communities tend to support their members. Therefore, people high in religiousness tend to have better social support. Low stress levels, purpose in life, and greater social support are linked to better well-being.

Research on the effects of religiousness on well-being among Muslims showed similar results. Muslims with high religiousness tend to have better indicators of well-being such as more adaptive coping, better relationships with others, and higher satisfaction in life (Aflakseir and Coleman, 2009; Ghorbani and Watson, 2006). However, considering that many studies were not done using multidimensional measure, it is difficult to know which dimensions of religiousness play more significant role on well-being (Abu-Raiya, 2013; Koenig, 2018). A research done by Dimitrova and Espinosa (2016) on Mexicans found that all dimensions of 4-BDRS have a significant effect on well-being, while the study of Dimitrova (2014) among Dutch and Italians found no significant correlations among all dimensions of 4-BDRS with well-being. These results support the idea that culture affects the relations between religiousness

and well-being. However, these studies were done on Mexicans and Europeans and the majority of the participants were not Muslim. Therefore, many scholars in psychology of religion suggested research on the effect of religiousness on well-being in other religions and cultures other than Western Christian populations (Abu-Raiya, 2013; Koenig, 2018; Saroglou, Vassilis and Cohen, 2013)

This study focuses on the relationship between religiousness and well-being within the context of Muslim and Christian college students in Indonesia. Indonesia is a multi-ethnic and multi-religion country. There are 1340 ethnic groups and 6 religions that are endorsed by the government. According to the last census, the total population of Indonesia is more than 237 millions with 87% of Muslims and 7% Christians respectively. This makes Indonesia the largest Muslim country in the world (Badan Pusat Statistik Republik Indonesia, 2010). However, it is important to note that Indonesia is based on Pancasila (The five principles) as the state foundation and not on any religion. The freedom of religion is guaranteed by the constitution. Despite some incidents of religious intolerance, in general people from different religions are able to live peacefully in Indonesia. This is reflected in the result of the latest religious harmony survey done by Religious Affairs Ministry which found index of religious harmony in Indonesia is good (Didah, 2018). Therefore, with its unique culture, it will be interesting to observe how Muslim and Christian religiousness can affect the well-being of religious individuals in Indonesia.

In general, Evangelical Christianity in Indonesia seems to focus on doctrinal differences (Hoon, 2013) thus the cognitive (Believing) dimension is emphasized. However, Charismatic Christian communities are known for their emphasis on the affective (Bonding) dimension through their livelier style of worship. Non-Charismatic churches often criticize the Charismatics to be too emotional (Hocken, 2010). However, these two groups are not mutually exclusive, as some churches attempt to care for both the cognitive and affective in their services.

Islam, on the other hand, focuses on religious practices (the five pillars of Islam): (1) Belief in one God, (2) Pray regularly (*salat*), (3) Give generously to the poor, (4) Fast in the month of Ramadan, and if possible (5) Pilgrimage to Mecca (Saeed, 2008, p. 73).

However, there is a minority strand of Islam, called Sufism, which concerns more on the spiritual

hidden meaning of Qur’anic verses than the physical practices. Saeed describes Sufism as follows:

Proponents of mystical exegesis emphasized the spiritual aspects of Islam, rather than the political, legal and worldly dimensions. Sufi scholars often preferred to explore questions regarding knowledge of God or the nature of human existence and its relation to the divine. They believed that the mystical allusions in the Qur’anic text were related most closely to the human spiritual condition and were impossible to understand through superficial readings or arguments over points of law and theology. Thus, in mystical exegesis, the spiritual and inner meanings of the Qur’an were considered paramount (Saeed, 2008, p. 206).

In the Sufi groups (*tarekat*), the chanting of prayers and the counting of beads are not the focus, but they are practiced for closeness to God and understanding of His divinity (Pringle, 2010, p. 129). Although the Indonesian traditionalists might see a risk of heresy in mystical practices, Islam is clearly capable of expressing the complete four dimensions of religiousness, including the affective dimension (Bonding).

Based on previous studies on the effects of religiousness on well-being, this current study hypothesizes that both Muslim and Christian religiousness will have a significant positive effect on well-being. However, the relationships of the 4-BDRS dimensions to well-being in both religions could not be predicted as there is no known prior research on this subject.

2 METHOD

2.1 Participants

The total respondents who completed usable questionnaires were 614 college students composed of 339 Muslims and 275 Christians. These respondents were taken from two Muslim based universities, one Christian university, and two non-religious based universities in Jabodetabek area (Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang and Bekasi). Most of the students (90%) were between the ages of 18-21 years old. 4% were 17 years old, 5% were between 22-23, and the other 1 % were between 24-28 years old. 25% of the participants were male while 75% were female. Regarding ethnicity, 36% of the participants reported being of mixed ethnicity, 20% as Javanese, 19% as Chinese, 9% as

Sundanese, while the other 17% were from Betawi, Batak, Manado, Ambon, Timor and Papua.

2.2 Measures

Religiousness. The Four Basic Dimensions of Religiousness Scale (4-BDRS) was used to measure religiousness. This scale was developed by Saroglu (2011) and measures 4 dimensions of religiousness. Believing (3 items, e.g., “I feel attached to religion because it helps me to have a purpose in my life”). Bonding (3 items, e.g., “I like religious ceremonies”). Behaving (3 items, e.g., “I am attached to the religion for the values and ethics it endorses”). Belonging (3 items, e.g., “In religion, I enjoy belonging to a group/community”). The sum of 12 items results in the total score of religiousness. In this study, internal reliability measured by Cronbach’s alpha was .89 for Muslims and .91 for Christians sample.

Well-being. Well-being was measured using The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener, et al., 1985). This scale consisted of five items (e.g., “I am satisfied with my life”) on a 7-point Likert scale. In this study, internal reliability measured by Cronbach’s alpha was .71 for Muslims and .78 for the Christians sample.

3 RESULT

Table 1: Means (and standard deviations) of samples based on religion.

Total Religiousness	Muslims (n=339)	Christians (n=275)	Group Comparison
Total Religiousness	5.63 (.77)	5.63 (.86)	$t(553.51) = .02, \rho > .05$
Believing	6.07 (.87)	5.95 (.91)	$t(612) = 1.56, \rho > .05$
Bonding	5.43 (1.02)	5.49 (1.03)	$t(612) = -.79, \rho > .05$
Behaving	6.15 (.77)	5.91 (.91)	$t(535.2) = 3.41, \rho < .01$
Belonging	4.89 (1.14)	5.16 (1.23)	$t(612) = -2.91, \rho < .01$
Well-being	4.56 (.94)	4.54 (1.06)	$t(550.8) = .27, \rho > .05$

Independent sample t-test (Table 1) shows that Muslim students ($M=6.15$, $SD=.77$, $N=339$) have a significantly higher Behaving dimension than Christian Students ($M=5.91$, $SD=.91$, $N=275$), $t(535.2) = 3.41$, $p < .05$. On the other hand, Christian students ($M=5.16$, $SD=1.23$, $N=275$) have a higher score in Belonging than Muslim students ($M=4.89$, $SD=1.14$, $N=339$), $t(612) = -2.91$, $p < 0.005$. The correlations in Table 2 show that for both Muslims and Christians, total religiousness and all of its four dimensions indicate significant positive correlations with well-being. However, multiple regressions test in Table 3 revealed that not all dimensions of religiousness show a significant effect on well-being. For Muslim students, only Belonging ($\beta=.16$, $p < .05$) was found to have a significant positive effect on well-being. In contrast, only Believing ($\beta=.17$, $p < .05$) and Belonging ($\beta=.36$, $p < .05$) have a significant positive effect on well-being among Christian students.

Table 2: Correlations between religiousness, its dimensions, and well-being based on religions

	SWLS			
	Muslims		Christians	
	<i>r</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Total 4-BDRS	.34	<.05	.39	<.05
Believing	.29	<.05	.31	<.05
Bonding	.22	<.05	.31	<.05
Behaving	.30	<.05	.25	<.05
Belonging	.28	<.05	.41	<.05

Table 3: Multiple regressions analysis of religiousness and well-being based on religions

	SWLS			
	Muslims		Christians	
	β	ρ	β	ρ
Believing	.13	>.05	.17	<.05
Bonding	-.01	>.05	.03	>.05
Behaving	.14	>.05	-.10	>.05
Belonging	.16	<.05	.36	<.05

4 DISCUSSION

The result of this study reveals that religiousness has a positive effect on well-being for both Muslim and Christian students. This means that both Muslim and Christian students with higher level of religiousness will have better well-being than that with lower level

of religiousness. This is similar with the result from previous research (Dimitrova, R., Espinosa 2017). However, the correlations between the dimensions of religiousness and the total religiousness to well-being in this current study are higher than that of Dimitrova and Espinosa (2017) who did their study on Mexican samples. In this current research, the correlation scores are above .2, while in the previous study the correlation scores are below .2. This result, however, is not the same with the result of the study done on Dutch and Italians which found no significant correlations between religiousness and well-being (Dimitrova 2014).

These facts highlight the effect of culture on the relationship between religiousness and well-being. It is likely that the wealth of a nation moderates the effect of religiousness on well-being as revealed in the survey result of Pew Research Center (Theodorou, 2015). This survey found that people in the poorer countries were more religious than people in more wealthy countries. Among these four countries (Italy, the Netherlands, Mexico, Indonesia), Italy and the Netherlands are far more prosperous than the other two, and they do not consider religion to be very important in life. Conversely, Indonesia is the least developed country compared to the other three countries. Almost all Indonesian believe in spiritual life (God, life after death, soul, heaven and hell) that makes Indonesia the world's most believing country (Gallup International, 2017). This fact explains the more significant effect of religiousness to well-being in Indonesia compared to the prior mentioned wealthier countries.

Although the importance for religiousness is decreasing with increasing GDP in a country, it is interesting to note that there are some outliers to this trend. The US is still showing a moderately high religiousness compared to many European countries despite the wealth of the nation (Theodorou, 2015).

As a nation based upon the belief in one supreme God, Indonesia is one of the most believing countries in the world (Gallup International, 2017). God is in the every day conversation of the people. Indonesian culture is collectivist as well. Geert Hofstede's studies into the culture of different countries showed that Indonesia (individualism index = 14), is more collectivist than Mexico (individualism index = 30), and far more collectivist than European countries, such as Italy (individualism index =76) or the Netherlands (individualism index = 80) (Hofstede, 2010, p. 95-97). Hence, people tend to look for support from their relatives, peer, or community (Markus, H.R., &

Kitayama, 1991; Kuo, 2013). Since the belief in God is infused in every part of Indonesian culture, people will be conditioned to use religious coping in time of stress (Pargament, K.I., Falb, M.D., Ano, G.G. & Wachholtz 2013). This is also one of the reasons as to why Belonging shared the highest variance of well-being for both Muslim and Christian students.

Jakarta and its surroundings display a kind of individualistic, secularized environment. So, it seems that religious Belonging can provide the sense of rootedness for college students, who live in Jakarta greater area that is becoming more like other Western cities in terms of individualism and competitiveness. Through religious belonging, they can satisfy their basic need for social ties in a shared value system. This result replicated the research of ten Kate et. al. (2017) who found that Belonging dimension of religiousness has a significant effect on well-being for Catholics in the secularized and pluralistic society of the Netherlands.

However, Muslim and Christian students display differences in the dimensions of religiousness that influence well-being. For Muslim students, only Belonging indicates significant positive effect on the well-being of Muslim students. On the other hand, for Christian students, only Believing and Belonging indicate significant positive effect. Bonding does not show a significant effect on well-being for both Muslim and Christian students. This result was replicated in some previous research that found the importance of Believing and Belonging dimensions for life satisfaction (Kate, J.T., Koster, W.D. 2017)(Saputra, Goei & Lanawati 2017). Both studies have similar non-Charismatic respondents, who tend to focus on the cognitive aspects of religiousness.

In this study, Bonding did not show a significant effect on well-being both for Muslim and Christian students. Perhaps future research should be conducted on Christian Charismatic communities or Islamic Sufism, in which expressions of emotion and mysticism are more deeply felt and explored.

The differences between the religious dimensions that affect well-being between Muslim and Christian students also call for further elaborate research. Why is it that the Behaving dimension, which is shown more by the Muslim students (Table 1), does not predict well-being? Could it be that because the Indonesian (and Asian) culture is more collectivist than Western cultures, that the Belonging dimension is more influential in determining well-being.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study support the hypotheses for both Muslim and Christian college students: The higher their total religiousness, the higher their well-being. However, further analysis revealed that only the dimension of Belonging has a significant positive effect for both Muslim and Christian students. The dimension of Believing has a significant positive effect only for Christians, while the other two dimensions of The Four Basic Dimensions of Religiousness (Bonding and Behaving) did not have a significant effect.

This result emphasizes the effect of culture and religion on the relationship between religiousness and well-being. Both culture and religion can play a significant role. Religious belonging can increase the well-being of religious individuals by providing social ties and a sense of identity within a community with shared values. This happens for both Muslim and Christian students. The Believing dimension, on the other hand, can provide a coherent meaning for one's life, which in turn increases well-being. This happens with the Christian students in our samples. The strong collectivist character of Indonesian culture may accentuate the result of this study compared to the more individualistic Western culture.

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