

Religious tolerance among college students: How it's influenced by religious orientation and personality traits?

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ABSTRACT

Religious tolerance among college students needs to be maintained to create harmonious conditions and peace among the religious community. This study aimed to explore the influence of religious orientations and personality traits on religious tolerance among college students. This study used a quantitative approach and performed a survey method that utilized three measurement tools of psychological scales: the Religious Orientation Scale-Revised, the Personality Scale of Big Five Personality and the Scale of Religious Tolerance. The subjects of this study were 280 students from six universities in Surabaya. The results of the study show that, there is a significant influence of religious orientation and personality traits on religious tolerance among college students. Partially, intrinsic religious orientation has a positive influence on religious tolerance, and on the contrary, the extrinsic religious orientation has a negative influence on religious tolerance. Of the personality traits (Big Five Personality), agreeableness and openness have a positive influence on religious tolerance. Meanwhile, extroversion, conscientiousness, and neuroticism do not have a significant influence on religious tolerance. Therefore intrinsic religious orientation and two personality traits - agreeableness and openness - are important to develop religious tolerance among college students. While college student who have extrinsic religious orientation tend to have low religious tolerance.

Introduction

Indonesia has a huge diversity of ethnicities, religions, languages, and cultures. However, the diversity may become a threat if it is not fostered and used as social capital to build the integrity of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). The emergence of various horizontal conflicts lately shows that Indonesian's diversity is being threatened. Actually, religious diversity can be a positive energy in actualizing and maintaining tolerance among religious people (Handayani, 2010). According to Byrne (2011), religious tolerance may existence in a pluralistic state as long as the religious adherents can put forward the forms of pluralism and respect for differences.

A study on college student religious tolerance was conducted by Research and Development Agency and Training of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia. This study found personality, organizational involvement, learning outcomes of religious education, and educational environment have impact on religious tolerance (Bahari, 2010). Other study showed that nowadays, students had been exposed to the notion of radicalism that influences behavior, attitudes, and intolerance in religious life (Widyarningsih, Sumiyem, & Kuntarto, 2017). One of the source of radicalism exposure is books containing the ideology of violence that can easily access via the internet (Iswanto, 2018).

Religious activities carried out by students tend to turn into intolerant radicalism in religious life (Saifuddin, 2011). Moreover, the increasing of formalism in religious life in the public space lately affected the attitude of radicalism and religious intolerance among students (Muhammad & Pribadi, 2013). The rise of radicalism among students which has led to religious intolerance is also caused by ideas that contain hatred, hostility, and infidelity to others (Ghifarie, 2016).

Previous studies found some variables that important to enhance religious tolerance, especially in students. The study of Hook et al. (2017) showed that conservatism, religious commitment, humility, and religious intelligence are related to religious tolerance. The more humble the students are, the more tolerant they will be. Another study by Mutsalim & Jaffary (2014) discovered that students who are inclusive in relationships tend to be more tolerant in their religious life than exclusive students. Whereas Aarøe (2012) explain that the most influential variable on religious tolerance among students is response to the out-groups; the more positive they behave towards the members of the out-group, the more tolerant they become, and vice versa.

Religious orientation is also consider as an important variables determine religious tolerance. Study on religious orientation was started by Allport & Ross (1967). Allport & Ross (1967) stated religious orientation is a motivational aspect of religion which divided into two poles, intrinsic and extrinsic orientation person. Person with intrinsic orientation find their master motive in religion, meanwhile person with extrinsic orientation is disposed to use religion for their own ends. Students with intrinsic religious orientation tend to be less aggressive and more tolerant in religious life than extrinsically religious students (Leach, Berman, & Eubanks, 2008). It shows that the type of religious orientation can affect the religious behavior of the student. Students whose religious orientation is intrinsic tend to have a higher tolerance for diversity compared to students whose religious orientation is extrinsic.

Dudin, Protsenko, Frolova, Voikova, & Khokonov (2018) stated the most important factor in determining religious tolerance in students is personality factors, such as self-awareness and self-identity. Personality variables such as self-control can affect a student's religious tolerance (Aziz & Rehman, 1996). The other factors, such as human values that form personality, also affect the religious tolerance of an individual (Hall, Matz, & Wood, 2010).

Considering the intolerant cases in Indonesia and also previous studies above explained, this study aimed to explore the role of religious orientation and personality on religious tolerance among college students. Religious orientation in this study consists of intrinsic and extrinsic orientation. Whereas the concept of personality traits follows Big Five Personality consisting of five trait namely extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness.

Method

This study used a quantitative approach with a correlational causality design. Survey methods was used to collect the data by distributing research instruments to participants.

Participants

Purposive sampling technique was used to select the participant, resulting 280 students of six universities in Surabaya as participants. Table 1 shows the distribution of participants.

Table 1
Distribution of Respondents

Demography	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	136	49
Female	144	51
Religion		
Islam	141	50
Protestant	64	23
Catholic	31	11
Hindus	26	9
Buddhist	18	7

Instrument

The measurement tools used in this study were three psychological scale, as follows:

- (1) Religious Orientation Scale (ROS), this scale measures two types of religious orientation (intrinsic religious orientation and extrinsic religious orientation) compiled based on Religious Orientation Scale-Revised (ROS-R) which has been developed by Gorsuch & McPherson (Kamaluddin, Nasir, Sulaiman, Khairudin, & Zamani, 2017). This scale consists of 14 items with good reliability ($\alpha = .912$).
- (2) Personality Scale of Big Five Personality (PS-BFP), this scale measures five personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness) adapted from the Big Five Personality Scale (BFPT-S) developed by Hee (2014). PS-BFP consists of 44 items and have a good reliability ($\alpha = .943$).
- (3) Scale of Religious Tolerance (S-RT) measures the level of religious tolerance of a person referring to the "A Questionnaire of Religious Tolerance" which has been developed by Al Sadi & Basit (2013). The SRT consists of 20 items and have a good reliability also ($\alpha = .927$).

Language and cultural adaptation were carried for all of the research instruments, through the following stages: (1) the translation of the instrument was carried out by two professional translators; (2) the results of the translation were further reviewed by two psychologists; (3) the results of the review by the expert were further used in modify the items; (4) the compiled items were then presented to five lecturers and ten students; (5) the input from readers were used to revise the items; (6) the instrument was tested on fifty students; and (7) selected items are ready to be used as research instruments.

Data analysis

Multiple linear regressions used to analysis the data. While stepwise technique was used to analysis the effect of each type of religious orientation and personality traits on religious tolerance. All data analysis was conducted with SPSS Program for Windows Version 20.

Results

Statistical analysis result on Table 2 show that there is a significant simultaneous influence of religious orientations (intrinsic and extrinsic) on religious tolerance among students ($F = 28.228$; $p = .000$). Both intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientation have influence on religious tolerance but in different direction.

Table 2

Multiple regression analysis of religious orientation on religious tolerance

Statistic	Value
<i>F</i>	28.228
<i>p</i>	.000
<i>R</i>	.411
<i>R square</i>	.169

There is a significant positive influence of intrinsic religious orientation on religious tolerance among students ($\beta = .291$; $t = 5.277$; $p = .000$). It means the higher the students' intrinsic religious orientation, the higher their religious tolerance, and conversely, the lower the students' intrinsic religious orientation, the lower their religious tolerance. On the contrary, there is a significant negative influence of extrinsic religious orientation on religious tolerance among students ($\beta = -.328$; $t = 5.951$; $p = .000$). It can be understood that the higher the students' extrinsic religious orientation, the lower their religious tolerance, and conversely, the lower the students' extrinsic religious orientation, the higher their religious tolerance.

Table 3

Multiple regression analysis of personality trait on religious tolerance

Statistic	Value
<i>F</i>	6.939
<i>p</i>	.000
<i>R</i>	.335
<i>R square</i>	.112

Table 3 shows there is a simultaneous influence of the personality traits (*Big Five Personality*) on religious tolerance among college students. Comparing the influence of two variables, religious orientation have a slightly higher influence than personality trait, 16.9% and 11.2% respectively.

Table 4

The Influence of Each Personality Trait on Religious Tolerance

Personality trait	<i>B</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>
Extraversion	.059	.856	.393
Agreeableness	.167	2.327	.021
Conscientiousness	.032	.474	.636
Neuroticism	-.047	-.804	.422
Openness	.155	2.279	.023

Table 4 shows of the personality traits, only agreeableness personality and openness personality have significant positive influence on religious tolerance. Whereas three other personality traits, that are extraversion personality, conscientiousness personality and neuroticism personality have no significant effect on religious tolerance among college students.

Discussion

The results of this study indicated that both religious orientation and personality traits are predictors of religious tolerance among college students. This results in line with a study conducted by [Avison & Furnham \(2015\)](#) that found two personality traits, agreeableness and extraversion personalities are positively correlated with religious tolerance and religious orientation factors are predictor variables for tolerant behavior in religious life.

Religious orientation significantly influenced religious tolerance among college students. Two types of religious orientation, namely intrinsic religious orientation, and extrinsic religious orientation, differently affected religious tolerance. There was a significant positive influence between intrinsic religious orientation and religious tolerance among students. On the other hand, there was a significant negative effect between extrinsic religious orientation and religious tolerance among students. This finding empirically proved that intrinsically religious college students tended to be more tolerant in their religious life. People with intrinsic religious orientation tend to find out the meaning of their religion and they have more orientation on their belief than on themselves. Therefore people with intrinsic orientation openly accept differentiation and more tolerant to other groups.

The results of previous studies also confirmed the influence of religious orientation on religious tolerance. [Hosseinkhanzadeh, Yeganeh, & Mojallal \(2013\)](#) stated that intrinsic religious orientation positively influences religious attitudes and student self-control. Because intrinsically religious students tend to have more emotional empathy than extrinsically religious students do ([Dragun, 2003](#)). Students who are intrinsically religious-oriented tend to have adaptive empathy, and students who are extrinsically religious-oriented tend to be maladaptive ([Haneef Khan, Watson, & Habib, 2005](#)).

On the contrary, college students who were extrinsically religious-oriented tended to be less tolerant in their religious life. People with extrinsic religious orientation tend to use their religion as a way to achieve their goals. Therefore they tend to be communal and use their religion to provide security, comfort, status or social support. Hence people with extrinsic religious orientation consider people from other groups as a threat, so tend to less tolerance.

This study corroborates the opinion of [Mora, Stavrinides, & McDermut \(2014\)](#) that there is an influence of religious orientation (intrinsic and extrinsic) and personality type on the phenomenon of religious fundamentalism, in which individual who get the more dogmatic in his/her religious, tend to be the more irrational and intolerant in his/her religious life. The study of [Duck & Hunsberger \(1999\)](#) showed that the higher the students' extrinsic religious orientation, the higher the tendency for prejudice towards other religions, and the higher the students' intrinsic religious orientation, the lower the tendency for prejudice towards other religions. Meanwhile, the results of the study of [Wibisono & Taufik \(2017\)](#) showed that there is a significant positive correlation between extrinsic religious orientation and religious fundamentalism among students. The higher the students' extrinsic religious orientation, the more radical and lower their religious tolerance.

The results of this study also show that in general, the personality traits measure through Big Five Personality scale, significantly influenced the religious tolerance. The results of this study in line with previous studies that the personality traits influence religious tolerance ([Hiebler-Ragger et al., 2018](#); [Oskarsson & Widmalm, 2016](#)) or intolerant behavior in religious life ([Hazel, 2014](#)). While other studies also found that personality traits influence on religious behavior ([Abdelsayed, Bustrum, Tisdale, Reimer, & Camp, 2013](#)), attitudes, feelings, behavior in religious life ([Paloutzian, Richardson, & Rambo, 1999](#)), maturity in

religious life (Francis & Pocock, 2009), emotional stability and religiosity of a person (McCullough, Tsang, & Brion, 2003).

However, partially only agreeableness and openness have significant effect on religious tolerance among college students. This finding corroborates the study of Butrus & Witenberg (2013) that individuals with conscientiousness and openness personality tend to be more religious tolerance and behaving pro socially. According to Saroglou (2002), someone who has an openness personality tends to be mature in religious life, moderate, open, and deep in spirituality whereas someone who have conscientiousness personality tend to be more mature in the religious life and more tolerant. This study shows that college students with agreeableness and openness personality types tend to be more tolerant in their religion. Students who have the qualities of mutual trust (trust), straightforwardness, altruism, compliance, modesty, and sympathy will influence the patterns of religious behavior that are tolerant, mutual pity, and mutual help to help among religious people. Likewise, students who have properties such as aesthetics, feelings, actions, and ideas, they tend to want peace in their social relationships. Although some previous studies show different results of the influence of each personality type on religious behavior, this study shows that in the context of religious behavior among students, the agreeableness and openness personality types tend to be the strongest influences.

In this study, extraversion personality is not significantly influencing religious tolerance. Previous study found different results on the impact of extraversion personality on religious tolerance. The findings of Aghababaei, Błachnio, Arji, Chiniforoushan, & Mohammadtabar (2015) showed that extraversion personality has a strong influence on psychological well-being and religiosity of a person so that they are more humanistic in the religious life and able to build harmonious relationships with others (tolerant). However the findings of Gebauer et al. (2014) showed that individual who have neuroticism and extraversion tend to be less religiously tolerant compare to other individual who have three personality traits, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness.

However, it is realized that this study contains limitations. Theoretically, this study only includes two personal variables to test their effect on religious tolerance behavior, while external (environmental and social) factors were not included yet. Regarding technical limitations, this study only involved college students in the city of Surabaya with less variations in race, ethnicity, religion, social background. Therefore, further study is needed in order to obtain more comprehensive results on how religious tolerance is influenced by religious orientation and personality types.

Conclusion

Based on the explanation above, different type of religious orientation have different effect on religious tolerance. Intrinsic religious orientation positively influenced religious tolerance, while extrinsic religious orientation negatively influenced religious tolerance. College students who were intrinsically religious-oriented tended to be more religiously tolerant than who were extrinsically religious-oriented. The personality traits also significantly influenced religious tolerance. However, only agreeableness and openness personalizes partially had a significant effect on religious tolerance among college students. Therefore intrinsic religious orientation, agreeableness and openness personality are needed to increase religious tolerance among college students

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