Prejudice toward Islamic fundamentalists: The role of social domination orientation and interreligious empathy among Christian students in Surabaya

[1]**Aurelia Theresa Nagata The**, and [2]**Marselius Sampe Tondok**

Abstract

Interreligious conflicts can change the state system regarding religious tolerance and the emergence of terrorist behavior. In Surabaya, terrorism incidents have occurred in three Christian churches, and the alleged perpetrators are the Islamic fundamentalist group JAD. These incidents have fueled feelings of threat and fear of death, which can lead to prejudice. This research aimed to determine the role of social dominance orientation and interreligious empathy as predictors of prejudice toward Islamic fundamentalists. It used a quantitative design with a sample of 400 Christian students aged 17-24 in Surabaya. Furthermore, SDO-7, BES-A, and the Prejudice toward Islamic Fundamentalists Scales were adopted. The results showed that social dominance orientation and interreligious empathy predicted the prejudice toward Islamic fundamentalists (R=0.056; R^2=0,061; $F(2, 378)$=12.876; $p<0.001$) using multiple linear regression tests. Social dominance orientation did not significantly predict prejudice (t= -0.91426; p=0.361), unlike interreligious empathy (t= 4.365; $p<0.001$). Therefore, intergroup relations need to consider interreligious empathy in reducing prejudice.

Introduction

Interreligious conflict is known to generate hostility among religious groups. Additionally, it changes the state system related to freedom and tolerance, and this can lead to the emergence of terrorism. Meanwhile, terrorism can be described as an attempt to use violence, threaten the state, and be used for certain political purposes (Arif et al., 2018). The perpetrators are members of radical or fundamentalist groups such as JAD (Jamaah Ansharut Daulah) and ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria). These groups are fundamentalist Islamic groups that want to form an "Islamic World" due to disappointment with political and economic development. Furthermore, the formation of the Islamic world is seen as an effort to improve the welfare of citizens (Azra, 2018).

Fundamentalist Islamic groups often commit suicide through bombs, and the bombers are desperate with the promise of going to heaven and meeting angels (Azra, 2018). They hold a certain understanding regarding the use of violence and intimidation to the point of causing casualties (Junaid, 2013). In Indonesia, there are two types of fundamentalist Islamic groups. First are those under the ideology brought from the Middle East. These include Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia/HTI, Tarbiyah-Ikhwanul Muslimin, and the Salafi-Wahabi Movement. The second are groups adapted to the Indonesian context, such as "Front Pembela Islam"/FPI or Islamic Defenders Front, "Laskar Jihad"/LJ or Jihad Warriors, and "Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia"/MMI or the Indonesian Mujahidin Council (Rubaidi, 2011).

Terrorism acts have been carried out more frequently in big cities because the population tends to be larger and also as a central industrial sector. The rapid development in this industry affects the characteristics of the community. In individual cities, they tend to be independent, more individualistic, separate from each other, and without established leadership. In addition, urban communities are characterized by supervision or control over one another, which also tends to be weak (Demartoto, 2012).

One of these cities is Surabaya, where there was a terrorist incident in the act of bombing the Santa Maria Tak Bercela Church, the Indonesian Christian Church (GKI), and the Surabaya Central Pentecostal Church (GPPS) on May 13, 2018, by persons suspected of being the JAD group. Another followed this bombing at the Surabaya Police Headquarters on May 14, 2018 (Wardhani, 2021), resulting in different casualties. According to terror management theory (TMT), terrorism can cause fear that can combine culturally and socially affiliated ingroups and lead to distrust of outgroups. This can lead to hostility in outgroup groups, especially in terrorism, because there is a death threat (Steen-Johnsen & Winsvold, 2021).

Das et al. (2009) found that individuals show higher prejudice because they feel scared after watching terrorism news. Prejudice is an attitude in the form of evaluation and emotional responses directed at other individuals because they are in different social groups. This is described as a poor evaluation of a group or individual based on membership. Prejudice toward the groups is a negative assessment

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[1,2] University of Surabaya, Indonesia

Corresponding author:
Tondok, Departement Psychology, University of Surabaya, Indonesia
Email: marcelius@staff.ubaya.ac.id

of feelings, behavioral tendencies, and beliefs, which are considered outgroups (Kite & Whitley, 2020).

This research used and adapted the theory of prejudice to fundamentalist Islam. There are three aspects of prejudice toward fundamentalist Islam, namely the cognitive component (beliefs) relates to stereotypes or negative thoughts held against fundamentalist Islamic groups. The affective component refers to the feelings that arise toward the groups. The behavioral component refers to the attitude towards fundamentalist Islamic groups related to negative attitudes and behavior directed at outsiders (Myers & Twenge, 2016). Meanwhile, attitude is shown as avoiding, destroying, or harming objects (Sears et al., 1994).

Prejudice is also associated with several antecedents, including social dominance orientation (SDO) and empathy. According to Sidanius & Pratto (1999), SDO describes the extent to which a person can support domination over outside groups. Pratto et al. (1994) stated that there are important points from SDO, namely the desire to rule and dominate, like and support a hierarchical social structure, and be above other groups. Individuals with a high level of social domination tend to like ideologies and policies that strengthen their hierarchy, while those with a low level tend to prefer egalitarian ideologies and policies (Ho et al., 2012).

Ho et al. (2015) showed two aspects of social dominance orientation, namely egalitarianism (SDO-E) and dominance (SDO-D). Egalitarianism is a preference for group-based systems of inequality maintained by intertwined networks of ideology and social policies that subtly increase hierarchies. Meanwhile, dominance is a preference for group-based domination systems in which high-status groups coercively oppress lower-status. This tendency to dominate can lead to prejudice toward outgroups. Individuals consider the ingroup group better than the outgroup, creating a negative assessment. The higher desire to dominate is directly proportional to the prejudice toward Islamic fundamentalists. SDO in Christian students can arise when their religious group dominates.

Furthermore, empathy is understanding what other people feel and experience. This describes conditions in which individuals can feel sympathetic, see other people's perspectives, and feel the emotional state of others. There is an empathy bias or a situation in which the group fails to detect the emotional experiences of outgroup members, giving rise to discrimination, prejudice, and stereotypes. Low empathy can allow individuals not to care or help their outgroup (Lestari & Agung, 2016).

Jolliffe & Farrington (2006) stated three aspects of empathy, namely emotional contagion, cognitive empathy, and emotional disconnection. This aspect is adapted to the definition of interreligious empathy, and emotional contagion is described as an individual's ability to imagine situations experienced by others. Cognitive empathy is the ability to understand the feelings of other religious groups. Emotional disconnection is a regulatory factor involving self-protection against distress, pain, and extreme impact. It causes individuals to imagine themselves in the position of other religious groups. The higher the level of empathy, the easier it is for someone to empathize with other groups, and the lower the prejudice.

This research aims to examine the role of social domination and interreligious empathy as predictors of prejudice toward Islamic fundamentalists. Furthermore, no previous studies have combined these three variables in the context of interreligious relations in Indonesia. Lázaro et al. (2014) examined right-wing authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, empathy, and materialistic value with intergroup prejudice in Argentina. Meanwhile, Nicol & Rounding (2013) placed empathy as a mediator between social dominance orientation and right-wing authoritarianism toward sexism and racism. The selected population was Protestant Christian and Catholic students living in Surabaya. This is because terrorism occurs in places of worship of Christians, namely churches. It is no exaggeration that adherents of Christianity are more prone to prejudice toward Islamic fundamentalist groups. The selected students have sufficiently mature thoughts and views on various matters.

The benefits include being a helpful reference for further research, especially those related to religious prejudice. In addition, the research is expected to contribute knowledge to social psychology, especially in adding insight, studies, and developments in social psychology related to the relationship between SDO, interreligious empathy, and prejudice toward Islamic fundamentalism, especially in Surabaya. Finally, it can add insight into society for campuses and the government in forming policies related to interreligious relations.

This study proposed the following hypotheses (1) there was an influence of social domination and interreligious empathy on prejudice toward Islam fundamentalists among Christian students in Surabaya, (2) there was an influence of social domination orientation on prejudice, (3) there was an influence of interreligious empathy on prejudice.

Method

Research Design

The study used a quantitative design, namely a method based on the philosophy of positivism, and was used to examine certain populations. The philosophy of positivism sees all phenomena as fixed, concrete, measurable, and causal (Adiyanta, 2019), and the data collection technique used was a survey technique.

Participants

Participants were Christian students in Surabaya aged 17-24 years registered at private and public universities. They enrolled in Christian-based private universities and were identified as a minority group. There were 298 and 102 female and male participants at 74.5% and 25.5%. Accidental sampling was conducted to determine the research sample based on a criterion (Meidatuzzahra, 2019). The research sample used the Raosoft sample size calculator calculations and found a size of 377 people when rounded up to 380 taken from an infinite population with a confidence of 95%. The Raosoft sample size calculator calculates the infinite population as 20,000.

Research Instrument

The SDO was the Social dominance orientation Scale Short Version (SDO-7) (Ho et al., 2015), consisting of 8 points and 2 aspects. Examples of points are "Equality between religious groups is not my main goal" in egalitarianism point 5 and

"No single religious group should dominate in society" in dominance reverse point 3. Furthermore, the SDO scale has a Cronbach alpha reliability value of 0.73.

The interreligious empathy scale is adapted from The Basic Empathy Scale in Adults (BES-A) (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006). This consists of 20 items divided into emotional contagion, cognitive empathy, and emotional disconnection. Examples of items from BES-A include "When other religious groups feel down, I can understand their feelings" in cognitive empathy point 9, "The feelings do not affect me at all" in emotional disconnection point 8, "When other religious groups are sad about something, I usually feel sad" in emotional contagion point 2. The empathy scale has a Cronbach alpha reliability value of 0.82.

The Prejudice Scale on Fundamentalist Islam was created based on Myers & Twenge (2016) aspects of prejudice, namely cognitive, affective, and physical. This scale consists of 18 items with a Cronbach alpha reliability value of 0.89. Examples of items from the Prejudice Scale on Fundamentalist Islam are, "I think that Islamic fundamentalist groups are known to raise problems" in cognitive aspect point 1, "I am afraid of fundamentalist Islamic groups because I feel threatened" in affective aspect item 2, "I tend to avoid when looking at the groups" in behavior aspect point no 9.

These three measuring instruments have adequate reliability because Cronbach's alpha is at least 0.7 (Azwar, 2009), and the construct validity was tested using a professional judgment method. Professional judgment will later examine the extent to which the items and scales are under the object to be measured (Azwar, 2009). In addition, the research added closed and open questionnaires about terrorism, such as "When you see the news about bombing cases and causing casualties, how do you feel?", "What is your assessment of Islamic fundamentalist groups?", "Have you ever heard of acts of terrorism in Indonesia?"

Data Analysis

The data analysis technique was multiple linear regression and partial correlation, using JASP (Jeffrey's Amazing Statistic Program) version 0.15 application. Before data analysis, the research tested the assumptions, namely the normality and linearity tests. The data was normal because the residual curve is called a bell. The linearity test was linear because the curve fit-estimation data forms a straight line.

Result

An overview of the participants' characteristics in this study is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1 showed that mostly the participants in this study were female (74.5%), Protestant (54.75%), studied at private universities (73%), and identified themselves as a minority group in their university (56.75%).

The hypothesis test was carried out using multiple linear regression. Table 2 shows the value of $F(2, 378) = 12.876$; p <0.001), which indicates that social domination orientation and interreligious empathy could predict the prejudice towards Islam fundamentalists among the Christian students in Surabaya. Interreligious empathy played a role as a predictor of prejudice toward Islamic fundamentalists ($\beta = 0.226$; p <0.001) when analyzed partially. Meanwhile, SDO did not

Table 1. Demographic Data of Research Participants

Category	N	%	M	SD
Sex				
Female	298	74.50	58.268	10.173
Male	102	25.50	59.157	13.032
Religion (Christian)				
Protestant	219	54.75	57.041	10.500
Catholic	181	45.25	60.254	11.278
University				
Private	292	73.00	58.962	10.579
Public	108	27.00	57.231	11.899
A religious group at the university				
Minority	227	56.75	57.683	10.865
Majority	173	43.25	59.561	11.030

act as a predictor toward Islamic fundamentalists among the Christian students in Surabaya ($\beta = -0.047$; $p = 0.361$).

Table 3 shows the correlation between the research variables and their aspects. Interreligious empathy and prejudice toward Islamic fundamentalists had a significant relationship. Meanwhile, SDO and interreligious empathy had a significant relationship, but SDO did not correlate with prejudice toward Islamic fundamentalists.

About 92.25% of Christian students had heard of Islam fundamentalists, 36.75% felt fear and anger related to the bombings carried out by terrorism, 69.75% considered Islamic fundamentalist groups to be cruel and intolerant, and 74% thought that terrorism could not be forgiven.

Discussion

The multiple linear regression test in Table 2 shows that interreligious empathy and social domination orientation can predict prejudice toward Islamic fundamentalists in Surabaya, and the first hypothesis is accepted. The two independent variables, interreligious empathy and the orientation of social domination can play a role in the emergence of prejudice toward Islamic fundamentalists. In the second hypothesis, the social domination orientation does not predict prejudice, hence it is rejected. For the third hypothesis, interreligious empathy can predict prejudice toward Islamic fundamentalists.

The results differ from previous research in that SDO, and interreligious empathy contributed to the emergence of intergroup prejudice. Lázaro et al. (2014) stated that SDO and interreligious empathy are correlated with ethnic prejudice and heterosexism. Additionally, empathy and prejudice were found to play a negative role in the prediction. In this study, they positively predict prejudice toward Islamic fundamentalists. The results are possible due to differences in the subject population and culture. The population was university students, and the other study was the general public. Another reason that causes differences is the object of prejudice toward Islamic fundamentalist groups.

The results of the second hypothesis test differ from previous research conducted by (Lázaro et al., 2014). It was found that SDO and empathy contributed to the emergence of intergroup prejudice. In Lázaro et al. (2014) research, empathy and prejudice were discovered to play a negative role in predicting prejudice. However, in this study, they

Table 2. Summary of Linear Regression Results

	Prejudice toward Islamic Fundamentalists					
Variable	R	Adjusted R^2	F	B	t	Sig.
SDO, Interreligious empathy	0.056	0.061	12.876			0.001
SDO				−0.047	−0.914	0.361
Interreligious empathy				0.226	4.365	0.001

Table 3. Intercorrelation Matrix of Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.	—							
2.	0.803***	—						
3.	0.814***	0.486***	—					
4.	0.817***	0.502***	0.477***	—				
5.	−0.347***	−0.334***	−0.205***	−0.312***	—			
6.	−0.250***	−0.254***	−0.107*	−0.253***	0.857***	—		
7.	−0.347***	−0.320***	−0.244***	−0.284***	0.868***	0.488***	—	
8.	0.243***	0.158**	0.289***	0.140**	−0.126*	−0.061	−0.154**	—
Mean	3.288	3.284	3.515	3.119	1.796	1.667	1.926	3.656
SD	0.556	0.711	0.791	0.585	0.578	0.658	0.683	0.6855

Notes: 1. Empathy; 2. ED = emotional disconnection; 3. EC= emotional contagion; 4. CE = cognitive empathy; 5. SDO = social dominance orientation; 6. Dom. = dominance; 7. Egal. = egalitarianism; 8. Prejudice * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001

Table 4. Intercorrelation Matrix of Variables

Question and Answer	N	%
Have you ever heard of Islamic Fundamentalist groups?		
Yes	369	92.25
No	31	7.75
How do you feel about the bombing?		
Scared, Angry	147	36.75%
Angry	80	20%
Afraid	58	14.5%
Sad	29	7.25%
Other	26	6.5%
Scared, Angry, Sad	22	5.5%
Scared, Sad	21	5.25%
Angry, Sad	17	4.25%
What do you think about fundamentalist Islamic groups?		
Cruel, Intolerant	279	69.75%
Intolerant	84	21%
Cruel	25	6.25%
Others	12	3%
Can acts of terrorism be condoned?		
No	296	74%
Yes	104	26%

positively predict prejudice toward Islamic fundamentalists. The difference in results is due to differences in the subject population and culture. This study's population was university students and the public (Lázaro et al., 2014). Another reason that causes differences is the object of prejudice toward Islamic fundamentalist groups (Lázaro et al., 2014).

Interreligious empathy can predict prejudice toward Islamic fundamentalists in the second hypothesis, indicating its acceptance. This is because interreligious empathy refers to the ability to understand and feel the emotional states of others. Furthermore, it describes conditions in which individuals can feel sympathetic and see other people's perspectives (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006; Marsden & Barnett, 2020).

Interreligious empathy can predict prejudice toward Islamic fundamentalists. This is because students also develop interreligious empathy for the victims of terrorism. Several previous studies have shown that acts of terrorism in the form of suicide bombings are crimes against humanity and are enemies of all religious communities (Setiabudhi et al., 2018). This is reinforced using instruments to show empathy, and the scale does not refer to a particular group. Meanwhile, when the subjects filled out the scale, the interreligious empathy was aimed at the Confucian and Buddhist religions, who had also experienced terrorist bomb attacks in their respective places of worship (Fanani, 2018). Empathy is imagining one's feelings in the events experienced by others and understanding their suffering and needs (Fauziah, 2014).

Christian religious students feel interreligious empathy because of the similar fate felt by other groups. This is in line with the theory of the perception-action model, stating

that individuals who do not have similar experiences will find it difficult to represent other people's emotional states (Preston & Hofelich, 2012). Previous research found that people with similar experiences have more empathy (Israelashvili et al., 2020). Consequently, Christian students will find it easier to imagine being in the position of others. According to Batson (1997), empathy is an emotional response that focuses on others based on the perception of welfare. It is likened to the ability to feel other people's emotions and points of view (Kite & Whitley, 2020). Additional data obtained in Table 4 regarding feelings related to terrorism carried out by fundamentalist Islamic groups explains that many Christian students felt sad, angry, and afraid of terrorist incidents.

Christian religious groups cannot empathize with fundamentalist Islamic groups because terrorist attacks in churches and other places of worship are unforgivable. Additionally, through an open-ended questionnaire, several respondents also shared the impact arising from acts of terrorism, such as: "I became anxious and afraid to go to places of worship," "Fear that interfaith divisions are spreading more, this will happen to us or those closest to us," and "Many innocent victims." These assumptions make it difficult for individuals to imagine being in the position of fundamentalist Islamic groups and even hard to forgive the groups. According to terror management theory (TMT), terrorism can cause fear that can unite culturally and socially affiliated ingroups and lead to distrust of outgroups (Steen-Johnsen & Winsvold, 2021). This fear can also play a role in the emergence of threats that Christian students have toward Islamic fundamentalist groups. According to the Intergroup threat theory, individuals tend to feel that outside groups are threatening and leading to prejudice (Makashvili et al., 2018). Christian students also tend to overgeneralize towards fundamentalist Islamic groups. Outgroups are considered more similar to each other than ingroup members. This is known as outgroup homogeneity (Montrey & Shultz, 2019), and the assessment is based on cognitive judgment, such as stereotypes (Ishii & Kitayama, 2011). Barker (2004) stated that stereotypes are negative representations of other people or groups with exaggerated outgroup characters. They are determined by feelings and emotions in other groups or individuals (Murdianto, 2018). The bombing incident caused Christian students to feel angry, scared, sad and threatened. The groups thought Islamic fundamentalists were responsible for this bombing. Most Christian students in Table 4 also feel that the groups are cruel and intolerant. This causes them to represent fundamentalists as perpetrators of terrorism and to have high prejudice toward Islamic fundamentalist groups.

The aspects of interreligious empathy in Table 3 are positively and significantly correlated with prejudice toward Islamic fundamentalists. The highest correlation value is the emotional contagion aspect, described as an individual's ability to imagine oneself in situations experienced by other religious groups (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006). Therefore, most Christian students feel empathy in a situation experienced by other religious groups. Another independent variable, namely social dominance orientation (SDO), was found not to predict prejudice toward Islamic fundamentalists, meaning there is no effect of the variable on prejudice. Therefore, the hypothesis "There is an influence of social dominance orientation of Christian students in Surabaya on prejudice toward Islamic

fundamentalists" is rejected. In Table 3, Pearson's correlation shows that the two aspects of SDO, namely dominance and egalitarianism, are not significantly correlated with prejudice toward Islamic fundamentalists. The variables that cause SDO do not play a significant role as a predictor of prejudice toward Islamic fundamentalists. In this study, the subjects were Christian students belonging to a minority group. Kauff et al. (2016) showed that SDO moderates cross-group friendships and attitudes in outside groups. However, it appeared in the majority group with high social status but not in the minority.

SDO did not play a direct role as a predictor of prejudice toward Islamic fundamentalists. However, these two variables could predict the emergence when tested with interreligious empathy. A follow-up analysis that tested the role of SDO on empathy found a significant predictive ability. Therefore, the SDO level and interreligious empathy are inversely proportional. Empathy can act as a mediator in the relationship between SDO and prejudice toward Islamic fundamentalists. Nicol & Rounding (2013) examined empathy as a mediator of the relationship between alienation and sexual prejudice. Furthermore, it is a significant mediator for SDO but not for sexism and racism. Empathy also correlates with SDO and sexism, while SDO is similar to sexism.

Conclusion

In conclusion, social domination orientation (SDO) and interreligious empathy simultaneously can predict prejudice toward Islamic fundamentalists. However, SDO does not play the role of a predictor of prejudice. It is a predictor of interreligious empathy and is not found in minority groups. The relationship between SDO and prejudice toward Islam fundamentalists could be mediated by interreligious empathy.

Meanwhile, interreligious empathy could play a direct role as a predictor of prejudice. The interreligious empathy is directly proportional to the prejudice toward Islamic fundamentalists who are perceived as the perpetrators of the bombings, an extraordinary crime, and a real negative threat. It is possible as a predictor because the Christian student groups empathize with the victims of terrorist acts. They consider Islamic fundamentalists responsible for the bombings, hence the prejudice tends to be high.

Recommendation

Several weaknesses were found and could be addressed as suggestions for further research. First, future analyses can use interreligious empathy to mediate between social domination orientation and prejudice toward Islamic fundamentalists. Second, other variables related to terrorism, such as intergroup anxiety, can also be used with the quota sampling technique. It is divided based on the criteria of religion, gender, and university to balance the number of participants. Additionally, future analyses can conduct research in cities where Christianity is the majority or use subjects other than students.

Declarations

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Orcid ID

Marselius Sampe Tondok (https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7255-5350)

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