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Linking religiosity to citizenship behaviour under materialism attitude

Materialism
attitude

Empirical evidence from Indonesia

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to understand the complex relationship between religiosity and citizenship behaviour by examining the role of materialism attitude and empathy.

Design/methodology/approach – This study developed a structural equation model with some measures taken from the previous literature. This study conducted a survey of young people in Indonesia context and used partial least square to test the proposed hypothesis.

Findings – The empirical results indicate the mechanism from religiosity to citizenship behaviour involves empathy. However, under high materialism attitude, an increasing level of religiosity will have a lower impact on citizenship than the individual under low materialism attitude.

Originality/value – This study extends to the discussion on the complicated relationship between religiosity and citizenship behaviour by introducing the moderating effect of materialism attitude and the mediating effect of empathy.

Keywords Religiosity, Empathy, Citizenship behaviour, Materialism attitude

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The relationship between religiousness and national-identity has gained attention in the context of capitalist globalization. Religion is considered to be an essential element of broader civic engagement (Putnam, 2000), while nationalism is expected to bring together people of different classes, religious and ethnicity (Reeskens and Wright, 2012). In the Asia context, the majority faith has shaped the inter- and intra-religious relationship in the process of nation-building and regime formation (Hamayotsu, 2015). The tensions among religious communities during the stiff political competition raise a question on the complicated relationship between religiosity and citizenship.

It appears that religion is a strong predictor of citizenship behaviour. However, the role of religion in the citizenship participation varies according to the context in which they live (Eggert and Giugni, 2011). Previous studies show that the relationship between religiosity and citizenship behaviour is quite complicated. From the US data collected by Putnam, religious people go to the church more than unbelievers. Religious people also experience social engagement, such as giving more money and more time for social causes, which represent an essential pre-condition for civic engagement. It indicates that believers make more active citizens (Putnam and Campbell, 2012). On the other hand, Citizenship Survey in the UK shows that British people who have no time for God conducted a huge amount of voluntary engagement alongside and within a whole state apparatus (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012).



Asia experiences religious diversity, which appears to be irreconcilably divergent (Syed and Özbilgin, 2010). In Western countries, religiosity practices nourish ethical and spiritual life, which poses a barrier to active citizenship in democratic political participation (John *et al.*, 2015). In Indonesia context, religiosity explains the role of the leaders in influencing community behaviour (Casidy *et al.*, 2016). There is also a positive relationship between family income and religious attendance (Permani, 2011). However, the Indonesian decentralization policy has raised a question on how the transformation agenda generates economic redistribution to new fault lines, sectarian, economic and geographic (Shah and Cardozo, 2014).

Although previous studies have shed some light on a possible link between religious and citizenship behaviour, there is lack of evidence that searches for a possible mechanism on promoting religiousness to achieve citizenship behaviour (Reeskens and Wright, 2012). This article aims at examining the complicated relationship between religiosity and citizenship under the diversity context. Along with the emerging issue of welfare concept, the model involves the moderating effect of materialism attitude and the mediating effect of empathy.

Literature review

Citizenship theory

Citizenship typically is associated with a set of practices, rights and duties that define an individual's membership in a nationality. Citizenship not only is a legal status but it also involves practices of making citizenship, i.e. social, political, cultural and symbolic (Isin, 2012). The boundaries of citizenship have always been contested owing to the increasing fragmentation of culture (Isin and Wood, 1999). The citizen with greater compassion and empathy towards others will enjoy as a right person recognized by the community members (D'raven and Zaidi, 2016).

The theory of citizenship concerns citizenship practices concerning government institutions, which have roots in democratic theory (Yazici and Güven, 2017). Citizens face the most common situation, which does not only involve the understanding elements of citizenship but also the traditional civics (Schulz *et al.*, 2010). This concept has been developed based on a tension between individualism and assimilation based on individual perspectives and experiences (Fry and O'Brien, 2017).

Global citizenship is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4 with the aim at ensuring the "inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning", which includes global citizenship as one of its targets (United Nations, 2015). By 2030, the knowledge and skills to promote sustainable development, including global citizenship, are expected to apply to all learners (Reysen and Hackett, 2017). In the organizational context, the concept of citizenship behaviour argues that the job description of the employee is to support the broader social environment, such as helping others (Bolino *et al.*, 2013).

The fundamental debate about citizenship concerns on who is a citizen and who is not, what is citizenship, the contexts of citizenship, and histories under which citizenship becomes relevant (Nyers, 2008). This is not only about legal status but also for recognition as someone with an audible and corporeal presence. The debate about citizenship in the USA concerns on the issue of slavery, race, and immigration, while the studies in the UK are on tension between citizenship, capitalism and class structure (Isin, 2012). In some countries in Asia, the emerging metropolis have become a strategic issue, lending attention to how to manage the tension between market and territorialized nationalism (Ong, 2008).

Religiosity

The religiosity involves various dimensions of religion, while the narrow sense concerns on dedication to religious ritual and tradition (Gallagher and Tierney, 2013). The level of religiosity is related to lifetime risk for both internalizing and externalizing disorder, especially the involved God, forgiveness and God as the judge (Kedler *et al.*, 2003). The Asian context becomes the main source of religious diversity internationally (Syed and Özbilgin, 2010). Religious people are not motivated to affiliate with those who disagree with fundamental aspects of their religion (Van Cappellen *et al.*, 2017).

Religion is a distributed phenomenon, which may not cover the feelings of individual devotee but also complementary thoughts of a population (Whitehouse, 2004). The concept of intrinsic religiosity refers to some internal motivation of a person's religiosity intrinsic religiosity, which also concerns on good psychological health (Bravo *et al.*, 2016). Extrinsic religiosity indicates that religiosity springs from external ones, such as material gain (Bahçekapili and Yilmaz, 2017). Another type of religiosity is the religious fundamentalism, which refers to a being closed-minded and defending beliefs blindly (Ganzach and Gotlibovski, 2014).

Empathy

Empathy refers to an experience of feeling what a citizen thinks others are feeling (Bloom, 2017). This concept is different from sympathy, which refers to the feeling of pity and sorrow for someone else's misfortune, while empathy demonstrates the ability to understand and share the feeling of another (Burris and Rempel, 2012). Empathy is defined as the sharing of another's affective state, which describing an ability to identify another's emotional in her or his self (Coll *et al.*, 2017).

The social cognition theory views the process of cognitive and affective engagement to understand and contextualize the lived experiences, decisions or actions (Endacott and Sturtz, 2015). Understanding the distress will allow dealing with aggressive behaviour seems to be insufficient to promote pro-social motivation, which further inhibits aggressive behaviour (Wang *et al.*, 2017). On the contrary, the theory of mind approaches aims to enhance the ability to identify the other person's beliefs, desires, intentions, emotions and experiences (Kiverstein, 2015).

Empathy is related to state-level pro-social behaviour, antisocial behaviour and welfare, which were consistently related to lower rates of violent crime, aggravated assault and robbery (Bach *et al.*, 2017). However, there is a strong tendency in biases in intergroup empathy that people has more capability to understand for others in their own group members (Valman, 2016). The empathy–altruism hypothesis argues that subjecting all players to the treatment will increase coordination (Grohn *et al.*, 2014).

Materialism attitude

The concept of materialistic attitude refers to an obsession with anything that exists, which involves the personal tendency on possessions as the main source of happiness (Belk, 1985). As a consumer value, materialism also entails the acquisition of centrality, possession-defined success (Richins and Dawson, 1992), and mechanism to gain happiness (Ogle *et al.*, 2014). During the neoliberal time, the states tend to sustain the regimes of universalization, which describes more on human capital than human rights (Ong, 2008).

Citizens with materialism attitude tend to feel aggrieved about others, and materialism implies in a negative impact on perceptions of “doing good” actions (Chowdhury and Fernando, 2013). Young people with high levels of materialism and low levels of trust tend to accept the illegal activity (Arlı and Tjiptono, 2014). Nationalism and capitalism are two

essential movements towards rights that encourage the states to incorporate the social rights into the status of citizenship to close the gap between classes (Isin and Wood, 1999).

Hypothesis development

Religiosity is expected to bring a significant impact on citizenship behaviour by promoting political movement (Eggert and Giugni, 2011). The effect of religiosity on political knowledge tends to be positive, especially in conflict zone countries (Attar-Schwartz and Ben-Arieh, 2012). Despite a significantly different context in which religion's place in political life are more contentious, the regular religious practices may increase citizens' involvement rates of ethnic minority (Sobolewska *et al.*, 2015).

A citizen who embraces the traditional value of religion tends to generate high levels of nationalism (Bryer and Medina, 2017). The positive relationship between religiosity and citizenship behaviour also occurs in where politics and religion are so intertwined (Olowookere *et al.*, 2016). The advancement of social citizenship responds to the excluded groups and the societal shared goal (Moreno, 2010):

H1. Religiosity has a direct positive impact on citizenship

The relationship between religion and social behaviour becomes weak in a secular setting (Paciotti, *et al.*, 2011). The religious people exposed may show religious bias, which considers themselves as a distinct group (Klaczynski, 2017). Social affiliation is a core feature of religion, which includes beliefs, norms, rituals and communities (Van Cappellen *et al.*, 2017).

This study involves the mediating effect of empathy. The healthy civic society needs develop a sense of empathy among the population (Bryer and Medina, 2017). The major religious traditions encourage the citizens to love of neighbour, which explains the altruistic behaviour and empathy (Francis *et al.*, 2012). Other empirical studies consider the empathy as a moderating variable, which explains the complicated relationship between religious belief, personality traits (Lowicki and Zajenkowski, 2017) and altruistic behaviour (Liu *et al.*, 2017).

Empathy is an emotional resource that has a significant impact on citizenship behaviour (Pohl *et al.*, 2015). Empathy can motivate pro-social behaviour for some reasons. High empathy levels promote an altruistic response, which in turn foster mature pro-social moral reasoning (Paciello *et al.*, 2013). However, empathy may narrow in its focus, which can motivate cruelty and aggression that lead to burnout and exhaustion (Bloom, 2017):

H2. Empathy mediates the relationship between religiosity and citizenship

Materialism has a positive impact on perceived social value, emotional and quality values (Sun *et al.*, 2016). Prosperous middle-class professional may perform a gatekeeper for social protection and promote the reconciliation of work and family life (Moreno, 2010). Hence, the initiative to increase well-being nations is believed to strive to improve the satisfaction of their citizen, which implies on cultural structures (D'raven and Zaidi, 2016).

On the other hand, the materialistic attitude may bring about negative impacts on social involvement (Bauer *et al.*, 2012). Citizenship with high materialistic attitude tends to reinforce isolation from family and friends, which in turn implies on the material trap (Pieters, 2013), such as depleted savings, debt accumulation and credit card abuse (Duh, 2015).

Hence, they may experience decreases in happiness and anxiety (Monbiot, 2013). A community with fewer obsessions for money and luxury things may gain improving their

well-being and self-esteem (Kasser *et al.*, 2014). Materialism influence the community's intention to participate in social activities, including charity and social activities (Pratono and Tjahjono, 2017):

H3. Materialistic attitude moderates the relationship between religiosity and citizenship

Research method

Given the research questions, this study uses the quantitative method with young people as targeted respondents. This study uses a set of quantitative information, which are designed to measure dichotomous responses with low/high questions for disagreeing/agree for independent, mediating and moderating variables on seven-point Likert scaling (1-7 ratings). This study adapts the measures of citizenship behaviour from (Schulz *et al.*, 2010), while religiosity questionnaires from Arli and Tjiptono (2014). This study also adapted the measure of empathy from Hockerts (2015) and the measure of materialism from Richins and Dawson (1992). The Appendix provides the detail measures.

Data

This study used the on-line survey that will recruit the respondents via publicly accessible social networking websites. After distributing the questionnaires to 100 young peoples by email and social media, this study gained support from 300 volunteer participants. They represent young people in Indonesia, amounting to over one million population.

The respondents are young people of age between 18 and 25 years old, of which 70 per cent respondents are of age 18 and 20 years. Based on the religious profile, the majority of respondents are Muslim (60 per cent), followed by Christian (30 per cent) and others (10 per cent). The survey asked the respondents' financial profile, only 33 per cent provided information about their daily expenditure. The monthly income of the respondents was US \$6,000 on average, which represents the middle-class income in Indonesia.

Analysis

This study uses a structural equation model to develop the hypothesis. The Smart PLS 2.0 was used to estimate the coefficients of each independent variable as well as to draw inferences about the truth of all coefficients. Partial least square (PLS)-structural equation modelling (SEM) is a non-parametric method, which implies general achievement on a high level of statistic power with small sample sizes (Hair *et al.*, 2012). This method relaxes the classical assumption and relies on the extension of the mixture design (Becker *e al.*, 2013).

This study used PLS to test the hypothesis, which is more relevant to deal with the proposed structural equation model (Hair *et al.*, 2012). Another reason comes from the unrestricted computation of structural equation model with reflective and formative measurements, which allows the small sample size (Henseler, 2012).

Findings

To identify the measurement errors, this study concerns on assessment of reflective models, which involve composite reliability to evaluate the internal consistency, individual indicator reliability and average variance extracted (AVE). Regarding consistency reliability, Cronbach's alpha (CA) shows that the coefficients of all latent variables are greater than 0.7 (Table I). The values are acceptable for exploratory research. The composite reliability (CR) values range between 0.8 and 0.9, indicating high consistent reliability. This study uses

outer loadings of the indicators to test the convergent validity with evidence that all items have values of overloading greater than 0.7 (see [Appendix](#)).

[Table II](#) shows the results of the hypothesis test on path analysis, which shows that the coefficient of religiosity on citizenship has standardized values above 0.20. This result indicates that all variables are significant with alpha 5 per cent, which confirm the *H1* that religiosity has a significant impact on the citizenship behaviour. This output also indicates that there is a direct effect of religiosity on citizenship behaviour. This result confirms the previous works ([Olowookere, et al., 2016](#); [Bryer and Medina, 2017](#)).

The structural results show that religiosity has the most substantial impact on citizenship, followed by empathy and materialism attitude. According to [Table III](#), the constructs explain 51 per cent of the variance of the endogenous construct ($R^2 = 0.51$). The SRMR value is 0.076, which is considered a good fit. This goodness-of-fit measure is essential to avoid model misspecification ([Henseler, 2012](#)). The NFI value is 0.7, which is close to 0.9 that represents an acceptable fit. However, it is essential to highlight that the goodness-of-fit measures for PLS SEM demonstrate the predictive capability of the model, but it is not relevant for identifying misspecified model ([Hair et al., 2012](#)).

Mediation effect of empathy

The mediation effect of empathy explains the direct relationship between religiosity and citizenship by introducing the additional relevant component of empathy. [Table II](#) shows that that the coefficient of religiosity on empathy is significant with *t*-statistic of 2.76 and alpha value of 0.006. Similarly, the coefficient of empathy on citizenship is also significant

Table I.
Construct reliability and validity

Constructs	CA	rho_A	CR	AVE
Empathy	0.734	0.795	0.843	0.642
Materialistic attitude	0.831	0.897	0.883	0.654
Religiosity	0.851	0.861	0.910	0.771
Citizenship behaviour	0.895	0.905	0.927	0.760

Table II.
Path analysis

Path	Original sample	Sample mean	SD	t-Stat	p Value
Empathy → Citizenship	0.186	0.187	0.060	3.100	0.002
Materialism → Citizenship behaviour	-0.219	-0.223	0.050	4.423	0.000
Religiosity → Empathy	0.159	0.172	0.057	2.768	0.006
Religiosity → Citizenship behaviour	0.591	0.584	0.056	10.647	0.000
Religiosity × Materialism → citizenship	0.112	0.110	0.050	2.233	0.026

Table III.
Model fit

Measures	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0.076	0.114
d_ULS	0.608	1.370
d_G	0.358	0.398
Chi-square	465.733	527.444
NFI	0.775	0.745

with a *t*-statistic of 3.1 and alpha value pf 0.002. This result shows that empathy absorbs some of the direct effect, which confirms the *H2* that perceived high religiosity may lead to empathy and ultimately to increased citizenship.

This study uses the variance accounted for (VAF) to measure how much the mediator variable absorbs in the relationship to the total effect. The VAF determines the size of the indirect effect in the relation to the total effect: $VAF = (0.158 \times 0.186) / (0.158 \times 0.186 + 0.591) = 0.0473$. This result indicates that there is a very small mediating effect.

Moderating effect of materialism

Table II shows that the moderating variable of materialism attitude and the interaction effect have a significant impact on citizenship with *t*-test statistic values of 10.64 and 2.23, respectively. This result indicates that *H3* is acceptable with alpha value of 5 per cent, which means that materialism attitude provides a moderation effect on the relationship between religiosity and citizenship behaviour. The estimated value of 0.591 shows a strong relationship between religiosity and citizenship when the moderator variable of materialism attitude has a value of zero. The increasing level of materialism attitude will change the effect of religiosity on citizenship (Figure 1).

Figure 2 shows the relationship between religiosity and citizenship in various levels of materialism attitude. Under high materialism attitude, an increasing level of religiosity will have a lower effect on the citizenship behaviour than under low materialism attitude. For the individual under high materialism attitude, an expanding level of religiosity will have a lower impact on citizenship than the individual under low materialism attitude.

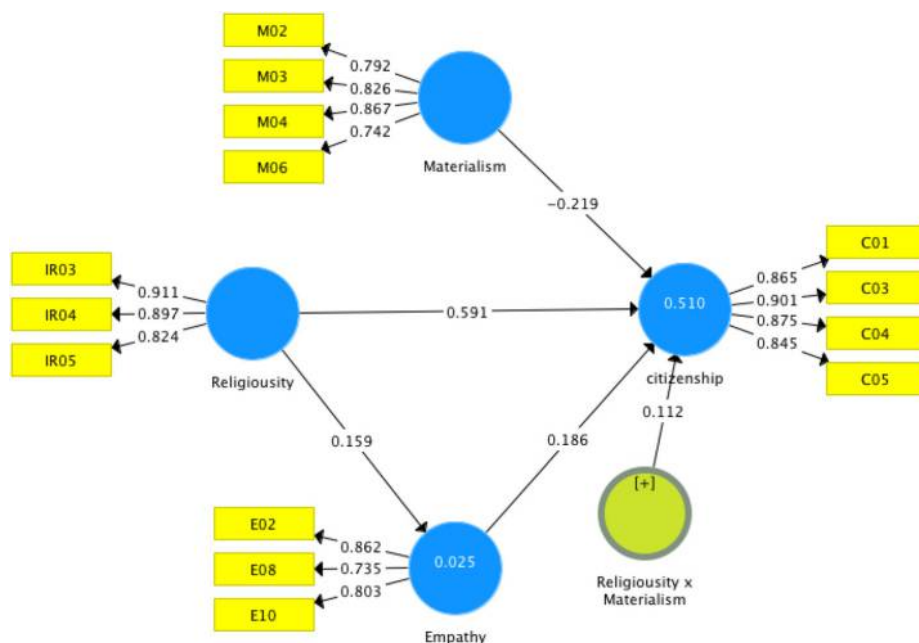


Figure 1.
Path analysis

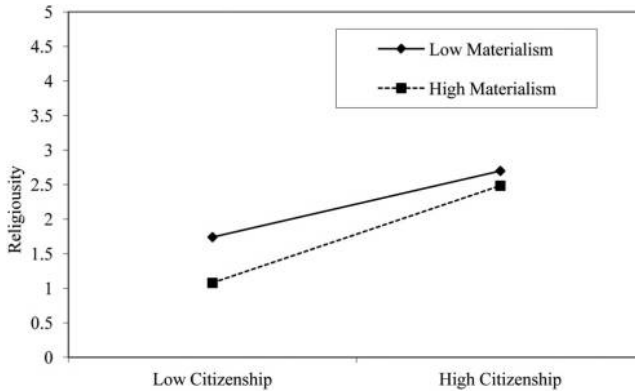


Figure 2.
Moderating effect

Discussion

This study confirms the role of materialism attitude as a mediator variable to clarify the complicated relationship between religiosity and citizenship behaviour. For young people with high materialism attitude, an increasing level of their religiosity will have a lower impact on citizenship than for those with low materialism attitude.

This study gains support from the previous work, which argues that there is an assimilation of traditional religion value with materialism attitude (Choudhury and Noor, 1997). Another study also indicates that religiosity accommodates the institutional changes through materialistic civilization, which implies some fundamental objectives of the classical religion tradition (Ghosh, 2007).

The result shows that empathy explains the relationship between the religiosity and the citizenship behaviour. However, there is a weak role of empathy in providing a mediation effect on the relationship between religiosity and citizenship behaviour. The coefficient of mediating variable is very small to give a partial mediation effect. This result indicates that empathy does not give a substantial support for religiosity to gain citizenship. This gains support from the previous study, which argues that empathy may narrow in the focus of religiosity (Bloom, 2017).

Policy implication

This study indicates a positive impact of religiosity on citizenship behaviour in the Indonesian context. Religion has been acknowledged as a strong entity, which can be used as a tool to gain power. On the other hand, national pride is a natural feeling for many citizens, which can be broken by evidence of atrocities in the past. The political participation of young people has received growing attention, especially in Indonesia where religion and cultural differences occur.

It is essential to develop a foundation of empathy instead of a foundation of materialistic consumerism. A way must be found to foster empathy in a world of materialistic consumerism. The dangers of materialistic attitude are abundantly apparent in the citizenship behaviour context. Political competition, which encourages the materialistic attitude of promoting citizenship, can be costly in the future. Stiff competition at the general political competition level will ultimately pay a far higher price if the social initiative to encourage empathy fails.

Religious diversity is a founding principle and a source of national pride in Indonesia. However, tensions among religious communities, which may spring from the political processes, indicate that cherished patterns of religious tolerance directly cannot be taken for granted. There seems nothing wrong with turning Indonesia into one having a religiosity and materialism attitude. The challenge is how to develop empathy based on the citizenship behaviour. For all its progress, Indonesia still has plenty of room for improvement.

Research limitation

This study relied on a cross-section survey, which tries to explain the attitudes and beliefs held by young people in the Indonesia context. The snapshot observation needs other empirical studies in different time and different contexts to confirm the result. Secondly, this study uses an on-line interview, which may focus on young people who are interested in voluntary participation in this online survey. The senior citizens who have no access to the online questionnaires may have a different point of view. Hence, the future studies are encouraged to compare the young people and senior citizens.

Conclusion

This study determines the moderating role of materialism attitude on the relationship between religiosity and citizenship behaviour. Under high materialism attitude, an increasing level of their religiosity will have a lower impact on citizenship than the individual under low materialism attitude. The results extend the theoretical debate on the intersection between citizenship theory and religious practices, which involve not only the understanding elements and concepts of citizenship but also the materialistic attitude and traditional religious value on empathy.

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Appendix**Materialism
attitude**

Code	Variables	Outer loadings
<i>Citizenship behaviour</i>		
C1	The Indonesia flag is important to me	0.865
C3	I have great respect for Indonesia	0.901
C4	In Indonesia, we should be proud of what we have achieved	0.875
C5	I am proud to live in Indonesia	0.845
<i>Religiousness</i>		
IR3	It is important to me to spend time in private thought and prayer	0.911
IR4	I have often had a strong sense of God's presence	0.897
IR5	I try hard to live all my life according to my religious beliefs	0.824
<i>Materialistic attitude</i>		
M2	My dream in life is to be able to own expensive things	0.792
M3	People judge others by the things they own	0.826
M4	I buy some things that I secretly hope will impress other people	0.867
M6	I think others judge me as a person by the kinds of products and brands I use	0.742
<i>Empathy</i>		
M2	Seeing socially disadvantaged people triggers an emotional response in me	0.862
M4	I feel compassion for socially marginalized people	0.735
M5	I find it difficult to feel compassionate for people less fortunate than myself	0.803

Table AI.
The measures and
outer loading**Corresponding author**

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